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Some in Poland worried about TTIP.

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Report Highlights:

During a radio interview on May 8, 2016 the Polish Minister of Environment and the Under Secretary of Agriculture presented opinions that TTIP agreement may result in lowering of food quality standards and increased imports of food produced from genetically modified organisms. The Polish turkey meat industry is also concerned that the TTIP agreement will lead to the flooding of the Polish market with American food produced under quality standards which are purportedly less strict than European ones.

General Information:

On May 8, 2016 Polish radio broadcast an interview with Jan Szyszko, Minister of Environment, and Jacek Bogucki, Under Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, titled “Whether US-EU agreement will open the door for American food?” regarding their opinion on TTIP negotiations. Both politicians presented critical position towards TTIP and said there would be no acceptance of lowering current high food quality standards, but US Bogucki stated that agricultural issues are still a subject of TTIP negotiations.

Minister Jan Szyszko said that fears about Polish agriculture are reasonable and emphasized that each country should take care of its own interest. He said that there is no doubt that during the TTIP negotiations the United States presents its own interest. In his opinion TTIP is a great opportunity for the U.S. to open the European market, especially in the area of exports of food produced from genetically modified organisms, which will create a huge threat to Polish agriculture. In the opinion of US Bogucki, prices for agricultural products are generally higher in Europe than in the U.S., because European farmers have to produce food according to high quality standards and environmental protection requirements, which increase their cost of production. US Bogucki also added that until there is a certainty that Polish farmers will be able to maintain food production he will be opposed to signing any agreements.

In a press interview for the internet magazine “Money.pl”, Mr. Piotr Kulikowski, President of Indykpol, the largest Polish producer and processor of turkey meat, said that Poland will be the first country which will lose from TTIP. He said that as a result of TTIP agreement Poland will be flooded with American food produced under quality standards which are less strict than European ones. He said that Americans know very well that they can only benefit from TTIP, while Europeans will lose from the agreement. President Kulikowski said that the TTIP agreement will introduce changes in the entire economy. In his opinion TTIP will also regulate other areas of life. President Kulikowski stated that Americans are masters of bringing any area of life to the financial perspective. He gave an example of medical care, which in Europe is called a “health service”, while in the U.S. it is called a “health business”. In the opinion of President Kulikowski TTIP is a “dip pot” of sometimes contradictory concepts with mixed interests and expectations. President Kulikowski said that the food sector has a strategic meaning for the economy, but its role is not adequately appreciated. President Kulikowski is afraid that the European negotiators of TTIP will be willing to sacrifice the interest of the food industry for concessions in the area of automobile industry or new technologies. He is of the opinion that it would be a big mistake. President Kulikowski ended his interview with a statement that there is a reason why Canada, which is the closest neighbor of the U.S., protects its agriculture and food market.

Comment: Recent statements and interviews of government officials and agricultural industry representatives regarding TTIP follow last week’s leakage of details of TTIP negotiations published by Greenpeace the Netherlands. Although the statements are generally negative for TTIP and present the agreement as a threat for Polish and European food standards, they are presented through media channels and reflect rather the emotional approach of the commenters than solid economic and trade benefits analysis. Presentation of the negative position on TTIP by Polish government officials also echo the recent statement of President of France François Hollande who in early May said that France could not accept a transatlantic trade agreement between the EU and U.S. at the current stage of talks because his country was against what he called free trade without rules. Poland and France cooperate closely and support each other in the area of agricultural policy within the European Union, so Polish officials may be presenting a more stiff position after the recent French “No at this stage” for TTIP. The

position of the Polish poultry meat industry is especially strong because producers of poultry meat are afraid that if the TTIP agreement is signed they may lose their dominant position within the European market.

End of the Report.