



# Digital and Green Transition

## Boosting the efficiency of rural enterprises in Poland

### PROBLEM

Small farmers and rural entrepreneurs need green and digital business skills but are too busy to travel from their remote regions to national (or even regional) training hubs.

### SOLUTION

A dynamic mix of in-person and online training methods to build green skills and boost digital literacy at the same time.



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## Taking rural entrepreneurs digital and green

This project aimed to test a mix of communication and educational solutions by employing innovative content marketing tools and new formats of education to connect with new groups of entrepreneurs and farmers from rural communities and champion sustainable development by helping them integrate green and digital practices into their operations.

FDPA crafted a set of educational resources that blended digital and green skills competencies and promoted these to potential beneficiaries using engaging social media posts.

The training content highlighted the practical applications of digital business management tools, alongside free mobile apps designed to support sustainable farm management practices, including soil health assessments, weather forecasting, and crop selection advice.

To deliver this knowledge where it was needed most, FDPA used a training mix that included highly accessible webinars, in-person coaching from regional advisors, and interactive small-group workshops delivered in partnership with local agricultural extension service experts.



# Overview



Raising visibility

FDPA created compelling Meta and Instagram content to highlight upcoming webinars and other items of interest (e.g. new reports, online tools, datasets and more). It also ran a series of 5 social media ads to ensure the broadest possible reach for its services.

As a result of these efforts, over the course of the year, visits to its Meta page increased by 158% and its follower base increased by 22%. Content interactions increased by 115% and clicks by 881%. FDPA’s Instagram account, which had previously been dormant, enjoyed a similar boost of engagement, with its reach increasing by 70,000% and the number of visits by 1,230%.

Webinars for rural businesses and farmers

Free webinars on four different topics related to sustainable agriculture were offered, each lasting 2.5 hours. In all cases, numbers of attendees surpassed FDPA’s initial expectations. After each webinar, participants answered a post-event survey that offered them the chance to suggest topics they’d like to see for future webinars. The recordings were available for participants who couldn’t attend (or for those who could, but wanted to revisit the content).

Webinar Topic	Attendance (number/rate vs. registrations)	YouTube Views
Innovations in Precision Agriculture	316 / 74.7%	--
AI for Small Business Success	204 / 83.3%	127
Non-Chemical Solutions for Crop Protection	1,082 / 104%	42
Low-Emissions Agriculture	404 / 80%	30

Implementation

**Innovations in Precision Agriculture:** This session highlighted how digital technologies are transforming agriculture. The facilitators introduced ISOBUS standards, GNSS signals, and tools such as 365FarmNet and SatAgro, demonstrating real-world uses such as field mapping and targeted fertilization. Participants learned about the “Cropwise Seed Selector”, which helps identify the best corn varieties for their region using weather and field data, and “Cropwise Planting” for creating smart planting maps.

**AI for Small Business Success:** In this session, participants discovered how language models have been harnessed for content creation, translation, and data analysis. They learned how AI had generated compelling marketing texts and visuals, while experts delved into the legal dimensions of artificial intelligence, particularly around data privacy and intellectual property.

**Non-Chemical Solutions for Crop Protection:** Experts explored how biological and digital technologies can cut pesticide use, boost crop quality, and promote eco-friendly farming. Highlights included Integrated Plant Production (IPP), biopreparations, crop variety selection, and satellite-based data analysis. The event also stressed practical tools, certification, farmer funding, and the rising importance of education and advisory services in sustainable plant protection.

**Low-Emissions Agriculture:** This session presented scientific insights and real-world advice to encourage emission reduction for agriculture. The need for this was framed using compelling data on agricultural emissions, underscoring the urgent need for smarter carbon footprint tools. A case study focused on the operating a 1 MW biogas plant, illustrating not just environmental gains but positive impacts on local communities as well. Practical funding paths were explored, including initiatives such as “Energy for the Countryside” to help farmers move forward. The webinar encouraged participants to see low-emission technologies as both attainable and beneficial.





## Coaching in digital skills

Selected rural entrepreneurs received personalised coaching in basic digital business skills from FDPA staff at regional offices. Participants represented a variety of sectors, such as healthcare, tourism, food and technical services. Their digital proficiency varied widely: a few were entirely excluded from the digital sphere, (with three having no email and five lacking social media) while others were already managing websites and utilising basic digital marketing tools.

Each participant benefited from at least one form of tailored digital support. Several entrepreneurs went on to launch Meta pages or enhance their online visibility with posts and content generated through AI tools such as ChatGPT and Canva. The coaching sessions covered a range of topics, from diagnosing and inventorying digital tools and exploring opportunities for digitalisation to mastering simple digital solutions. Participants learned the basics of Meta profile management, how to create engaging posts with AI assistance, and how to use various communication tools effectively. In each case, the aim was to meet learners where they were and empower them to confidently take the next step in their digital journey.

## Small group training in digital skills

For many farmers, securing access to agricultural subsidies is a pressing need. Although most participating farmers had an email address and the majority possessed government ARiMR (Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture) accounts, they rarely managed to use them independently. Not one had ever submitted applications online by themselves, and 60% admitted to seldom checking their email. Their caution stemmed from a fear of making mistakes and concerns about fraud. All participants confessed to not knowing even the basics around online security, and nearly a third found logging in a significant challenge. As a result, many farmers chose to wait in long queues at government agency branches, relying on staff for assistance with subsidy applications, or depended on their children, who often lived in distant cities.

To address these gaps, this one-day in-person workshop immersed participants in essential digital skills for agriculture. Attendees explored the fundamentals of email management and discovered online platforms tailored to farmers, including the ARiMR portal and the Agricultural Advisory Centre, which offers a wealth of courses and training materials. They were guided through the INTER-NAW app (which allows them to create tailored fertiliser plans based on the unique characteristics of their land), and capped off the day with a lively Q&A session followed by one-on-one input.

## What happened?

Over the course of the project, over 1,700 farmers and farming professionals participated in four webinars related to sustainable agricultural practices, including soil testing and ecological pest control methods. Webinars were also offered in precision farming, which harnesses technology to cut costs, boost yields and protect the environment. By analysing soil, weather and harvest data, farmers can fine-tune their methods, leading to higher-quality food, healthier livestock and reduced climate impact. These digital skills empower farmers to work smarter, not harder, and drive sustainable agriculture forward.

## What did clients think?

Participants found the content highly practical and relevant to their needs. According to post-event surveys, webinars were the preferred learning method, followed by on-demand online courses. Both webinar content and presenters received high marks.

Feedback from the AI webinar (103 respondents) was encouraging: 34% felt the knowledge would "definitely" help their business, and 50% said it would help "to some extent". Thirty-four percent intended to implement these solutions within six months, and 31% planned to do so later.

# Outcomes





For the low-emissions webinar, 92% had never used emission calculators before, but after attending, 96% recognised their value.

Face-to-face trainings were valued for the hands-on approach and immediate applicability, especially for daily farming operations. For FDPA, the webinars proved most efficient at reaching wide audiences, while coaching was ideal for those with low digital skills. FDPA aims to continue blending these approaches, using field staff as "digital ambassadors" for hands-on, practical support.

However, in-person coaching and training remain challenging to deliver. Farmers' busy schedules make recruitment difficult, and microentrepreneurs struggle to find time for sessions—often postponing or withdrawing. Additionally, since these programs rely on enthusiastic field staff, FDPA carefully selects branches with a passion for providing non-financial services.

## What helped?

FDPA feels that its strong foundation of trust between field workers and local communities has been essential to the project's success. FDPA is a familiar and respected name in rural Poland, known for years of providing both financial and practical support to farmers and microentrepreneurs. Unlike many other MFIs, FDPA places as much emphasis on education and training as it does on microlending, giving it both a unique „brand” and more experience delivering hands-on non-financial services.

Despite these strengths, key barriers such as time constraints, knowledge gaps and limited resources for marketing and promotion still make digital engagement a challenge. To help bridge this gap, FDPA is exploring new solutions—such as offering small grants or free access to premium digital tools (such as Canva Pro or Meta Ads credits)—so entrepreneurs can try out online promotion without worrying about the cost. By allowing people to experiment safely and see real results, FDPA hopes to inspire greater confidence and encourage lasting investment in digital outreach.



Fundacja na rzecz Rozwoju  
Polskiego Rolnictwa

Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture (FDPA) is foundation created in with a mission to promote sustainable rural development and entrepreneurship and the creation of non-agricultural jobs and to provide equal opportunities for women, the unemployed and young people.

The mission is implemented through microlending activities and investment grants for the creation and development of small businesses in rural areas as well as through local development programmes, and training and advisory programmes. FDPA operates through 5 regional offices across the territory of Poland.



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