

Opinion of the Committee of Agronomic Sciences Division II of the Faculty of Biological and Agricultural Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences

concerning the plan presented by the Government Plenipotentiary for the Central Motorway Port to take over the real estate of the Institute of Plant Breeding and Acclimatisation - National Research Institute (IHAR-PIB) in Radzików and the Branch of the Institute of Technology and Life Sciences (ITP) in Kludzienko for the needs of the Central Motorway Port (CPK).

The Committee of Agronomic Sciences of the Second Faculty of Biological and Agricultural Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, due to the scope of its activities, especially the problems it represents in the present term (e.g. the influence of global climate change on agriculture; the protection of the agricultural environment and biodiversity; sustainable agriculture), feels authorized to express opinion on the above mentioned issue. At the plenary meeting of the Committee on 24.02.2021 it was decided to strongly oppose the acquisition of the IHAR-PIB property in Radzików and the ITP property in Kludzienko for the purpose of the CPK. The Committee unambiguously expresses its negative opinion towards this proposal.

The mission of both Institutes, subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is to implement biological progress in agricultural production, guaranteeing the strategic food security of the country. This is a long-term activity, based on many years of scientific support, systematic transfer of modern know-how and materials for the agricultural environment, from the farmer, through agricultural production, to food processing. Such support for breeding varieties, seed market and agricultural production technology is provided with great success by the Plant Breeding and Acclimatisation Institute - National Research Institute and the Institute of Technology and Life Sciences.

The plan presented by the Government Plenipotentiary for the CPK includes 490 ha of arable land of high quality agricultural class (Błońskie black earth) together with buildings and the entire infrastructure of IHAR-PIB in Radzików (400 ha of agricultural land and the main site of the Institute) and buildings of the ITP Branch in Kludzienko together with 90 ha of agricultural land.

Such decision may lead to the liquidation of IHAR-PIB - the biggest agricultural institute in Poland. Apart from the Headquarters of the Institute, numerous highly specialized laboratories, phytotrons, greenhouses and storage facilities are located in Radzików. In Radzików, the National Center of Plant Genetic Resources (KCRZG) is located, which protects the biodiversity of cultivated plants in Poland, storing over 76 thousand objects. It is the largest gene bank in this part of Europe of international importance. The specialised scientific facilities of IHAR-PIB have been established over 70 years at great financial cost. Taking over the properties of both Institutes will put several hundred people unemployed, including high-ranking scientists and specialists, and cause a breakdown in the implementation of research work and projects. Rebuilding this potential is impossible.

The Committee is also concerned about the international image of the Institutes and Poland's representation at European level in agricultural research. The Institutes have unquestionable scientific achievements. IHAR-PIB, in particular, conducts numerous international and national projects in the field of agricultural research; it is responsible for maintaining the competitiveness of agricultural plant breeding and seed markets as against foreign entities. Promoted EU programmes and strategies, research for organic farming has been present in the Institute's research for many years.

The execution of intentions of the Government Plenipotentiary for CPK will destroy the unquestionable achievements of both Institutes, will definitely weaken the strategic scientific, implementation and expert base of the whole agricultural sector in Poland, causing a serious threat to the national food security.