

# Changes in land use in rural areas in north-eastern Poland

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## SUMMARY

Land use changes are the subject of many studies. Different countries register different land use methods. The methods of use are also defined differently. The distinguished land use methods depend on, among others, geographical location, historical and economic conditions. The basic public register in Poland constituting a source of information on land use is the real estate cadastre (called the land and building register). This register includes information on the division of land into types according to their actual use. The basic objective of the research was to examine the variability in time of the scope of land use functionally related to forest areas. The analyses carried out show the scope of changes in forest areas in the studied area, in particular their scope and area. The study answers the question of whether the dominant land use method changed from agricultural to forest in the analyzed period (1981-2024). The research was conducted for the Sokółka district located on the border with Belarus, i.e. the north-eastern border of Poland, which is also the border of the European Union, in 1981, 2010 and 2024. The data sources used in the study were land use data collected in the real estate cadastre and aerial orthophotomaps. Cadastral (geodetic) data, including the cadastral map from 1981 and land and building records data from 2022, were obtained from the District Centre for Geodetic and Cartographic Documentation in Sokółka, Podlaskie Voivodeship. Aerial photos from 2010 and 2024, allowing for determining the actual changes in the use of the studied area, were obtained from a publicly available geodetic portal. The research showed a slight increase in the forest area, up to 6% at the expense of agricultural land. Therefore, the agricultural character of the district has not changed. The research showed that in the analysed area agricultural land use still predominates, just as it was in 1981 and in 2024.