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Will Cinderella become a princess?

In the Soviet era, selection and seed production in the USSR achieved outstanding results and were cited among the world's most advanced technologies. However, over the last thirty years this branch of farming has been a Cinderella: neglected and left behind in the backyard, where she cleaned the pots and separated the husk from the grain. What is happening in Russian farming now that it needs, as never before, highly productive seeds and state-of-the art genetic engineering?

Page 3

Top priority
For John Deere the Russian market is among its top priorities.

p. 8

The shores of EkoNiva
They meet not only at work, but also spend weekends together.

p. 20-21

Contents

News

Burning issue

Technical inspection

On our own experience

Animal husbandry

Our people

Our Academy

Will Cinderella become a princess?

In the Soviet era the selection and seed production in the USSR, considered among the world's best, boasted outstanding achievements. However, over the last thirty years the situation has changed dramatically. Selection and seed production have become like a Cinderella: left without care in the backyard where she continues to clean pots and pans and to separate the husk from the grain. The old operating system of the industry was destroyed and a new one was not created. The engineering and manufacturing facilities are worn out and there is no influx of young personnel. There have been no preferences for or investments in the industry for its development except subsidies to purchase elite seeds. This, too, is an arguable issue for it would probably be more feasible to pay subsidies for production of domestic seeds that are not inferior in genetic and technical aspects.

It looks like time has come for Cinderella to prepare for the ball. The crisis has shown that without selection and seed production the country's food security is out of the question. Now that the farming anticipates a revolutionary breakthrough it needs, as never before, highly productive seeds with modern genetic properties. This particularly applies to crops associated with sophisticated seed production.

Therefore, we welcome the state's decision to support the establishment of new and re-equipment of old selection and seed production centres. We hope that this initiative will embrace not only state-run but also private-owned selection enterprises.

EkoNiva plans to intensify its work in this area. We have been engaged in seed production since 1997. Today, we produce more than 30,000 tonnes per year of certified seeds of grains, leguminous plants, herbs, and potatoes. We use the most advanced equipment supplied from all over the world. We currently produce and test crop varieties from 24 selection establishments of Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and North America. In the last five years we have invested over 500 million rubles in the development of a seed production base. We are prepared to move ahead.

EkoNiva is giving a second birth to the production of seeds of such an undeservedly forgotten crop as lentils. It also is launching the production of seeds of hard wheat and oil pumpkin, a totally new plant for us. Another project is the production of F-1 hybrids of maize. A few years ago, we took up selection. We have handed over our varieties of winter wheat for acceptance trials. This year, in association with German and Austrian selectionists, we shall start a selection programme that will cover spring wheat, soy and peas on Russian farms. And that is just a beginning!

Stefan DUERR,
President of the EkoNiva Group of Companies

World's farmers speak a common language

Green Week 2015 became the first international agricultural forum to take place in the context of mutual sanctions between Russia and the West. How was the Russian delegation received in Berlin in these circumstances and did the politicians achieve the agreement that agricultural producers dream of?

Fifteen regions and 200 companies presented their agricultural achievements as well as investment projects and scientific developments in the Russian pavilion.

As a result of efficient interaction, the participants signed 14 agreements amounting to 102 million Euros. Moreover, some Memorandums of Cooperation, both between Russian regions and federal states of Germany and between professional associations were successfully concluded. For example, German Farmers Union and AKKOR signed an application for extension of cooperation.

'The main focus in our cooperation is on the development and implementation of joint educational programs, holding workshops, consulting and sharing experience,' says Vladimir Plotnikov, President of AKKOR.

Participants of the German-Russian Agricultural and Political Dialogue project, including Sergey Belousov, First Deputy Chairman of the Committee of the Council of the Federation for Agricultural and Food Policy and Environmental Management, visited the booths of the federal states of Bavaria and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The senator underlined that at all meetings the participants discussed the urgent necessity to continue cooperation in all areas. Mr. Bakhause, Minister of Agriculture of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania supported this idea.

'We cannot imagine Europe without Russia in it!' — the Minister stressed.

By the way, it was Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania that held a Day of Russia even after the embargo on food imports was imposed. It caused a massive public outcry all over the world. Tatiana Gubina, Vice-president of the Russian Potato Union spoke of new kinds of cooperation. She offered the German party to do potato seed growing in Russia in order to mitigate the impact of the sanctions.

At the press conference, Nikolay Fedorov of the Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation announced that Russia's potential is in high demand on world market despite all the complications. This was clearly shown at the meetings with colleagues from European countries.

'Nobody wants any sanctions or complication of the political situation around Russia. There are many offers from various countries of the world in the areas of activity which do not fall under the sanctions and embargo.'

Regrets regarding the worsening of the trade and political relations and hope that all this will soon come to an end were the theme line of the trade show wherever the representatives of Russia met their German partners. It seems that agricultural producers, entrepreneurs and the business circles consider it necessary to develop and enhance cooperation with Russia. However, the "big league" of politics is against it. Stefan Duerr, President of the EkoNiva Group, expressed the same opinion.

'There is some tension in the relationship but much less than I feared. It is easier for agricultural producers to find a common language, regardless of the fact that it was the European farmers that mostly suffered from the embargo. However, they are showing great understanding for the situation. Nevertheless, the higher the rank of the politicians, the less understanding they show. Many people in the West think that the first step must be made by Putin, but I am confident that the key to solving all the controversies is in Merkel's hands.'

According to Stefan Duerr, many German companies realize that now, in these complicated circumstances, is the best time to invest in Russia. For that reason, they are strengthening their presence in Russia.

'The fact that Russia needs modern Western machinery and technologies is evident,' says Stefan Duerr. 'However, the European technologies cannot just be imported into Russia; they must develop within the country now. For example, it is necessary to produce hybrids of sunflower, corn, and sugar beets in Russia, and our company is ready to move in this direction and start the hybridization.'

By Svetlana WEBER

Stefan Duerr
as leader of the year

The Voronezh oblast has chosen a leader of the year. The expert council of the Leader of the Year prize, consisting of representatives from the oblast administration, business community, cultural workers and clergy determined the winners in 15 categories.

The ceremony was opened by Aleksey Gordeyev, Voronezh Oblast Governor, who said:

"There are people behind each achievement of the region. Priding ourselves on the accomplishments, we must say 'thank you' to our leaders. Voronezh region is famous for its talented people. We are proud that the talents of these energetic and creative people are duly appreciated and properly applied."

The winner in the Effective Management category was Victor Shevtsov, the head of Liskinsky district. The expert council noted his long lasting and efficient work in the development of the Liskinsky district. Victor has been holding this post since 1991. Thanks to his efforts and expertise, the district did not suffer much even in the disastrous nineties. It retained both its industry and farming. Today, the Liskinsky district is a leader both in living standards and in the productivity of its agriculture.

The Breakthrough of the Year nomination was won by Sergey Nitsenko, director of the Zarechnoye Group of Companies. This is one of the leading enterprises engaged in full cycle production of quality beef. It has operated in the Voronezh oblast for over two years. Today, Zarechnoye has a farm of 12,000 head of Aberdeen-Angus horned cattle and a meat processing plant with a designed daily output of 120 tonnes.

The Best Regional Project award went to Stefan Duerr, president of the EkoNiva Group of Companies. He was singled out for many years of effective work towards development of the region's agriculture. EkoNiva, the largest agricultural division of the company, has been operating in the Voronezh oblast for 12 years, turning out around 300 tonnes of milk per day.

Incidentally, the production performance of EkoNiva and the active public stance of Stefan Duerr made him the leader of several more ratings. According to the DairyNews information agency, the head of EkoNiva became one of the Heroes of the Year. And in the Voronezh oblast's rating of influence prepared by the Abireg business information agency, Stefan became the sole businessman among the top ten most influential people of the region.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Plans to go ahead!

At the Farmers' Day held in the first days of the new year, EkoNivaAgro (Voronezh oblast) summed up the results of the year.

The past year was full of events both in production and social life. A mega-facility for 2,800 head of livestock was built in Verkhny Ikorets village. A 50,000 t capacity elevator was put in operation in Vysokoye village. The wheat harvest on some of the fields reached 7.7 tonnes. The status of pedigree farm for breeding the Simmental variety of cows was obtained. Milk production exceeded 280 tonnes per day.

Anatoly Spivakov, the Voronezh oblast vice governor and head of the Agrarian Politics Department, congratulated the front-rank workers of EkoNivaAgro.

"Thanks to your efforts, EkoNiva has become a leading enterprise and the Voronezh oblast, a major producer of milk and meat, which now fully satisfies local needs for agricultural products."

Stefan Duerr, EkoNiva president, noted that even though the production year ended with profit, work must be continued on productivity and economic effectiveness. He also commented on the plans for 2015.

"We must move ahead!" said Stefan Duerr. "The country is short of milk. So we must increase its production. We'll start building a dairy complex for 3,800 head of cattle. Our plans also envision construction of two cow houses, each for 250 animals."

Stefan Duerr pointed out that issue number one is the development of in-house milk processing facilities and production of products under the brand name of the Academy of Dairy Sciences. There are plans to open a dairy plant with an output of 30 tonnes per day.

One hundred farmers were awarded certificates of appreciation from the Russian Ministry of Agriculture, administrations of Liskinsky and Bobrovsky districts, the oblast Duma, Voronezh Oblast Department of Agriculture, and, of course, from EkoNiva.

"The most valuable reward for me is my work at EkoNivaAgro," says Nadezhda Vtulkina, holding her certificate from the Ministry of Agriculture. "This company enjoys an impeccable reputation. It never forgets about people. And it's interesting to work here."

By Yulia SALKOVA

HIGH quality grain storage

A new 50,000 tonne elevator started operating at EkoNivaAgro, Voronezh oblast, in Vysokoye village of Liskinsky district.

The construction began last May. Now five silos, with 3,000 tonnes of grain each, a receiving hopper, dryer, weighing facility and transportation system operate in test mode. On a territory of 8,000 sq metres a cleaning section, accumulating silos, dryers, cooling and storage silos and a warehouse will be erected.

"For our elevator, we've chosen the best equipment of both domestic and foreign models that meets the most stringent grain storage requirements," said Roman Litvinov, EkoNivaAgro-Levoberezhnoye executive director. "The elevator will be used for long term grain storage. In the future, part of the facility will be occupied by raw materials for the fodder production plant which we plan to build nearby."

By Yulia SALKOVA

Making use of 'useless' stuff

Under the auspices of the Association of European Business and the Russian Union of Plant Protection Products Manufacturers, Russia is implementing a project to gather and recycle the plant protection product containers. Sizable progress has been made in two years.

Whereas in the first year some 100 tonnes of empty containers were gathered, in 2014 five oblasts of the Central Black Earth Zone recycled 400 tonnes of used cans. Taking part in the project were such large agricultural holdings as EkoNiva and Prodimex.

The collected containers, which otherwise would pollute the environment, will be put to good use. The enterprises of the Voronezh oblast will use them as raw material to manufacture pipes and plastic tiles. It's important that the agricultural enterprises don't have to bother about how to get rid of the used containers. Their only job is to wash the containers correctly during preparation of the operating solution for plant treatment.

The project is supported by the oblast administration and large farming holdings. Plans have been made to spread it outside the territory of the Central Black Earth Zone. According to Thomas Neck, the project manager, the plans envision involvement in this work of all the agricultural enterprises using PPP, including the Siberian region. Incidentally, a similar project has been operating in Germany for over 15 years.

By Svetlana WEBER

Creating a soul

Two spiritual events simultaneously occurred in villages where EkoNiva operates. The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God temple and the smaller winter temple of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God were respectively opened in Shchuchye (Liskinsky district of Voronezh oblast) and Melikhino villages (Shchigrovsky district of Kursk oblast).

The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God temple was built in 1820. In 1959 it was razed to the ground. Three years ago, reconstruction of the shrine began. The temple was rebuilt on its original site by a collective effort of the entire community and with active assistance from EkoNiva. The first service was attended by 100 parishioners not only from Shchuchye, but also from the neighbouring villages. They believed in the re-appearance of the temple and contributed to its rebirth.

In Melekhino village, the need for a temporary winter temple arose because the temple of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God is now under reconstruction. It had been built more than 200 years ago. In the 1930s, it was completely plundered and the belfry was dismantled. Today, some contributing money, others contributing their work, the shrine has regained its grace. Two agricultural enterprises on the territory of Shchigrovsky district, Zashchitnoye and Russky Dom, generously support the temple.

The celebratory service was conducted by Paisy, the Metropolitan of Shchigry and Manturovo. He blessed the winter temple which was housed in the Sunday school.

"Today is a very special day," said the Metropolitan. "The parishioners have acquired a warm and cosy house where services will be conducted in winter. People come here for the hardest of jobs, for creating their soul. I wish every believer would be able to do this."

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Keeping up the tempo

The head of Kaluga oblast Anatoly Artamonov held a broadened session of the region's Ministry of Agriculture at which, together with farmers, he outlined the tasks for the current year.

At the session, it was pointed out that production of milk in the oblast has grown by 5%. The main task now is to maintain the production growth. The priorities include robotisation of dairy cattle husbandry and a further increase of production of all types of meat. Forty-four robotised milking parlours have been launched under the 100 Robotised Farms programme.

Anatoly Artamonov stressed that it is essential to continue using innovative technologies in farming. "The important thing is not to slow down our work. We must always seek new solutions and advanced work methods."

After the session, the region's head looked over the achievements of Kaluga enterprises. He stopped at a display stand of EkoNiva-Tekhnika. Gennady Nepomnyashhy, executive director, told him about the company's activities in the region and special offers to the farmers for acquiring modern agricultural equipment.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

With every minus there must be a plus

Read in our report how the situation on Russia's imported agricultural machinery market is evaluated by its operators and how they plan to develop in 2015.

Arne Bergmann, John Deere agricultural machinery sales manager in Russia

"Over recent years, the situation on the Russian market has significantly deteriorated. The ruble value declined by nearly half against the dollar and euro and the cost of funding has grown considerably. The farmers usually could fully recoup — in 4 to five, sometimes within 6 to 8 years — the funds expended in an investment to acquire the equipment. Unfortunately, at present there are no conditions for recoupment within such a timeframe.

On the other hand, we expect that many farmers will continue to invest in acquiring high class equipment. We also hope that they will pay due attention to maintaining John Deere equipment in workable condition. Jointly with our dealers we shall ensure availability of the required spare parts and components as well as terms and requisites for servicing.

The John Deere Company unambiguously confirms its intentions concerning business development in Russia. We feel quite confident about Russia's agricultural machinery market potential. We shall continue to support the farmers in the study and implementation of this potential. Sure enough, there are some factors beyond our control that affect the rate of development. As manufacturers, we shall further raise the level of project localisation. We shall also continue to develop and support our dealers. As a separate subject, I'd like to note such an important area of development as integrated solutions. Agricultural machinery becomes an inalienable part of an ever more sophisticated chain of processes in which the dealers offer more and more new intellectual solutions to servicing issues. Among other things, John Deere contributes to this effort by supplying management solutions and software products. Whatever we do here, we never violate our basic rule — quality in all our products and services."

Marco Barsellini, JCB Director General in Russia

"The current situation on the Russian market remains rather unstable. The significant fall of oil prices and the ruble depreciation seriously affect the general market situation. However, in the farming segment things are going better than elsewhere in the economy. Growth of milk, meat and other agricultural products is expected in the next three years. Increased investments will help create new agricultural enterprises and build up the production volume. Hence, it will become necessary to sell more machines (telescopic loaders, tractors, combine harvesters) for maintaining the production growth.

We believe that in 2015 there will be favourable opportunities for developing the agricultural machinery market. The strategic trend is, in the first place, our increased presence on the Russian market and search for new dealers in the regions where we see great potential, for instance, in the Far East. We also plan to present new products on the market, thus enabling our dealers to increase their sales to Russian customers. We shall concentrate on cooperation with our key customers (major landowners) as well as with small and medium farms since we believe that JCB, together with its dealers, can offer them the most efficient tools for farming jobs and the best servicing in the industry."

Leopold Einbock, Einboeck Company Director

"The current year will be a difficult one. The prevailing political situation complicates our position not only on the Ukraine and Russian markets but also in Europe where the farmers have reduced investments in agricultural equipment now that they find it difficult to sell their produce whose export to Russia is mostly banned. Nonetheless, we are in a favourable position given that we have strong partners and dealers who are developing the market, actively promoting and selling our products.

We are sure that the difficult period will soon pass and our political leaders, hopefully, will find in the near future ways and means of resolving our problems. So we'll continue our friendship and cooperation with transnational partners towards improving the market situation.

We shall promptly respond to our customers' requirements, doing our best to support our dealers in all spheres of work."

Top priority

A traditional meeting of John Deere dealers took place in France. Suppliers from all over the world came together there. Representatives of EkoNiva, one of John Deere's largest dealers in Russia, were also present at the event.

The event was used to set out the corporation's development strategy for the near future. John Deere officials noted that the Russian market is one of their top priorities.

"Today the economic situation is difficult, but John Deere remains true to Russia and is resolved to do whatever is necessary to support the farmers," said Sam Allen, Deere & Company President and Chairman of the Board of Directors. "We plan to intensify localisation of the farming equipment production in Domodedovo and Orenburg. This will help Russian farmers to obtain subsidies for purchasing the agricultural equipment."

New farming equipment from John Deere was also presented at the conference. This included a new range of John Deere 9RX unique four caterpillar tractors designed for work on large areas. The presentation of the entire product line will take place at the Agritechnica 2015 exhibition.

Much time was devoted to the John Deere FarmSight navigation systems. As the experts pointed out, farmers' experience across the globe proved that precision agriculture is not a luxury but a means of economy for agricultural enterprises. In addition, this increases productivity due to the opportunity to work round the clock.

The John Deere Financial Company also presented new financial solutions adapted to the complex economic situation in our country. In 2015, the company will make available to its customers favourable financing terms for the entire John Deere product line. The price growth, considering the subsidies, may reach 6% per year in rubles. Buyers of tractors and combine harvesters will have a special leasing programme. The participating customers will be entitled to a reduced appreciation rate.

One of the principal tasks for John Deere dealers still remains the development of a servicing network in the regions of their presence and providing rapid response services. In the short term, the time for responding to servicing applications will be cut from three to one or two hours.

By Anna BORDUNOVA and Yulia SALKOVA

Company, rise up!

A real “company” of agricultural equipment, 30 state-of-the-art machines, opened the 14th Golden Autumn. Harvest 2014 interregional exhibition in Tomsk. EkoNivaSibir participated in the event with its “platoon” of John Deere tractors.

Private John Deere 9460R graphically demonstrated his readiness for field action. Attesting to this was not only its camouflage paint but also the keen interest farmers displayed in the machine. As Alexander Zuyev, head of the sales department, Kemerovo branch of EkoNivaSibir, said, the farmers were looking for a powerful multi-purpose tractor that would cope with all sorts of field operations.

“The John Deere 9460R tractor meets all of the farmers’ requirements,” says Alexander Zuyev. “This is one of the most powerful machines in its class. At 560 hp it can operate at a speed of 40 km/h. Thanks to a reliable three-point mount with a lifting capacity of 6,940 kg the tractor can use heavy ploughs and pneumatic wide grip drills.”

The smaller “boys” like John Deere 8335 (335 hp) and John Deere 6130D (130 hp) tractors appealed to smaller farms. The Series Six tractor is fast and manoeuvrable. It can do a variety of jobs both on cattle breeding and crop growing farms.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Telemaster appears in Siberia

Chiksky Stud Farm JSC (Kochenevsky district of Novosibirsk oblast) is not only a leading dairy production enterprise in the oblast, but also the region’s sole owner of a JCB TM310 Telemaster loader!

The company needed a fast, manoeuvrable and universal machine for loading and unloading operations. It decided to try the Telemaster.

“The loader began to be used in all its applications right after it arrived at the farm,” says Alexander Mogilin, Chiksky Stud Farm JSC executive director. “It loads both fodder and grain. We even used it for snow clearing. It replaces several machines. The telescopic arm rises five metres. According to documents, the loader’s lifting capacity is three tonnes. Actually, however, it lifts up to four! Towards spring season, it will have much more work. I’m sure it will cope fine with all of it.”

Alexander Burmak, EkoNivaSibir sales department manager, said that the JCB TM 310 Telemaster loader is interesting for its unconventional layout.

“This hybrid model is very popular with German farmers,” says Alexander Burmak. “The machine combines the functions of telescopic and front end loaders, which enables them to perform a variety of functions. Unlike many other loaders, Telemaster has a chassis connected by articulated joints, which assures its superior agility and low pressure on surface. Even though only a handful of Telemasters work in Russia, I’m sure that they will soon be used on a large scale.”

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Meet the Newcomer in EkoNiva

There has been a new addition to the wide range of agricultural machines offered by EkoNiva — Haybuster. The trailed straw choppers Balebuster 2564 and Balebuster 2650 deserve special attention.

Haybuster straw choppers (USA) have been working at livestock farming enterprises all over the world for over forty years. However, in Russia, this is a new name. Nevertheless, the versatility, simplicity of construction and, most importantly, performance of these machines have attracted Russian agricultural producers as well.

'We have already shipped the first machine to Zarechnoye LLC (Voronezh oblast),' says Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Executive Director of EkoNiva-Technika LLC. 'This enterprise is one of the standard bearers of beef livestock farming in our country. If professional livestock farmers have chosen this model, this says a lot!'. Due to the specifics of their design, the straw choppers exhibit very high performance. For example, one machine can cover the needs of a farm housing 30,000 head of cattle.

The scope of work performed by Balebuster 2564 and Balebuster 2650 is impressive. The straw cannon will spread straw into long pole barns and large open lots for cattle. With the curved spout or enclosed curved spout, pack barns or pens can be bedded over the top of fences/gates from alleyways.

Hay as well as silage bales can be processed into a mixer wagon for the formulation of a TMR.

Balebuster 2564 is equipped with an optional dual discharge conveyor which blocks off the fan and turns the machine into a bunk feeder.

A 7.6 m or 15.2 m hose kit provides an easy way to apply bedding and mulch into poultry barns and smaller areas where more precise application is necessary or the processor cannot enter.

The Haybuster straw choppers can also be used to control erosion in the fields. The straw cannon can shoot straw mulch up to 30.5 m. It works especially well for slopes and areas that are not easily accessible.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Spring "Marathon" from Väderstad

The new agricultural season is knocking at the door. It is a real marathon not only for agricultural producers but also for the machinery. This is the time when it is extremely important not to let a single machine fall out of the race, to ensure that none of the spare parts will let you down.

'The points of a cultivator are like the bow of a violin,' says Alexey Kirsanov, regional representative of the Service Department of Vaederstad in Russia. 'One cannot play even the best musical instrument if the bow is broken. The same is true for the points. A cultivator in good working order but equipped with worn-out points cannot bring the soil to the required standards. Moreover, unlike bows, points are more subject to wear and take more time to replace.'

The Swedish company Vaederstad designed the new long lasting Marathon points for its cultivators. They are plated with a special type of hard metal that allows them to improve the working capacity.

Regular points wear faster and therefore they lose their shape. Moreover, the front points are more susceptible to wear than the back ones. Therefore, soil cultivation is not even. Marathon points reinforced with tungsten-carbide alloy maintain their form throughout their entire working life. No more depth adjustment to compensate for uneven wear.

Sharp points also have a lower draught requirement and require less diesel fuel.

Based on the experience of the agricultural producers who use Marathon, the points need to be changed each 1,400-1,600 ha depending on the soil type. This is two times longer than the working life of regular points.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Revolutionary outlooks

Fliegl presents new equipment on the Russian market for a variety of jobs.

Due to a special improved design, the new Fliegl ADS 80/100/120 manure distributors have become more universal compared to previous models. A quick change of mounted equipment no makes it possible to introduce not only liquid, but also bulk fertilisers.

The advantage of the new ADS 150 INOX-Profi single axle manure distributor is the VarioSens (Light) smart system enabling automatic fertiliser introduction.

The Universal split fertiliser has become wider. Now it measures 24 metres! Formerly it was 9, 12, 15, and 18 metres. The increased width makes it possible to treat larger areas. Fixed distribution hoses located at an angle ensure an even introduction of liquid fertilisers directly into the soil to a depth of up to 15 cm.

Animal transport vehicles appeared in the Fliegl product range. The TTW 100 Noah and TTW 120 Noah cattle carriers are designed for carrying horned cattle, pigs, goats, and sheep. A separating railing separates the front part of the cattle carrier from the rear, easing the charging and discharging of animals.

"We've worked together with Fliegl for two years now," says Dmitry Kostev, deputy head of the EkoNiva-Tekhnika sales department. "During this time we've supplied more than 70 units of equipment from this brand. According to farmers, the Fliegl equipment triggered a real revolution that changed many outlooks on organisation of work processes. It is a welcome fact that Fliegl is steadily improving its equipment, offering multirole machines adapted to Russian conditions."

By Anna BORDUNOVA

A unique product from Kverneland

The new baler FastBale from Kverneland was awarded a silver medal at the SIMA 2015 exhibition in France.

The FastBale baler is a truly unique product. Today this is the world's sole continuously operating baler with a fixed chamber capable of performing roll pack functions.

The innovative design features consecutive layout of two chambers. Once the mowed mass reaches the required density in the pre-pressing chamber (where roughly 2/3 of the roll is formed) it is delivered to the main chamber where the process continues and the roll reaches its maximum size of 1.25 m in diameter. As soon as formation of one roll is complete, the process of pressing the mowed mass in the pre-pressing chamber is instantly launched while the finished roll, enwrapped in a net, is transferred from the main chamber to the field or the winder. This ensures continuous machine operation.

In 2015, the Kverneland engineers will continue field trials and possible improvement of the baler, taking into account work with different crops. After that, the new product will appear on the market.

FanTAStic cleaning!

155 years of work of the Swiss concern Buhler in the area of grain storage equipment and hundreds of elevators built all over the world speak for themselves. TAS separators from Buhler are the right solution if you need to store grain for a long time or to prepare it for shipment to a seed processing plant.

The EkoNiva-Chernozemye LLC offers Buhler-TAS separators (output from 60 to 250 t/h depending on the model). These machines have been on sale in our country for more than six years now. However, farmers know them under the brand name of Schmidt-Seeger. Some two years ago this brand merged with Buhler.

This year EkoNiva-Chernozemye will put into operation two grain cleaning machines from Buhler: the TAS 204A-4 model (160 t/h of wheat) at EkoNivaAgro LLC (Voronezh oblast) and TAS 152A-2 (60 t/h of wheat) at the Kondakov Farming Enterprise (Tambov oblast).

We asked two specialists, an expert on grain technologies and the head of a farming enterprise, where the TAS separator will work, to share their opinions of this machine.

Andrei Fursov, the head of the Grain Storage Technology department, EkoNiva-Chernozemye LLC, gave us this answer:

"The TAS sieve separators are simple and reliable in operation. They have a long service life and are easy to maintain. The machines are adapted to work in Russia with highly impure grain. Unlike many counterparts, TAS has the largest sieve area for coarse cleaning, which makes it the most productive in its category. In addition, the machine ensures better cleaning from light admixtures thanks to aspiration at the input and output. This, too, is something not every grain cleaner can boast.

Another indisputable advantage of these separators is low vibration due to rotary, not alternate-reciprocal, motion of the supports as is the case with the majority of famous models. One more forte is that the support is set in motion by a single element, which precludes the use of shafts and eccentrics of any type.

As for the price-to-quality ratio, the Buhler equipment outdoes North American machines, i.e. the quality is high while the price is lower. The Buhler machines yield to domestic counterparts but their cleaning performance and operating reliability more than compensate for this."

Says Alexander Kondakov, the head of the Kondakov farming enterprise, Tambov oblast:

"For the coming harvesting season, we'll put in operation a new 7,500 tonne capacity mini-elevator. At the moment, we need only to mount a transportation line. In July last year, we

purchased the following equipment from EkoNiva-Chernozemye: AGI TW48-09 long term grain storage silos with a total capacity of 4,500 tonnes, the MEPU CF25 grain dryer and a Buhler TAS 152A-2 separator. The latter's output is 60 tonnes per hour of wheat. This machine was chosen for several reasons. The TAS separators enjoy an impeccable reputation across the world. Most German farmers use expressly these machines. Russian farmers also give high praise to them. Unfortunately, Russian manufacturers of grain processing equipment lag 10 to 15 years behind and are unable to offer a suitable counterpart of foreign equipment. Therefore, the choice was made on the principle 'we are not rich enough to buy cheap things.' Given that we are building a grain complex using exclusively our own funds, without the state's support, we decided that it's better to spend on high quality equipment rather than economise and then have toy pay through the nose on repairs and suffer from the inferior grain storage quality."

By Yulia SALKOVA

Reliably protected

When a farm plans its expenses, it often allocates millions of rubles for purchasing herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. However, it doesn't pay due attention to preparing sprinklers for operation. What issues must be addressed to make all the plant protection products work properly and what must be done to protect them against literally being thrown away into the wind?

The Agronomist, a doctor for plants

All specialists must be aware of the fact that for high harvests in crop production we use plant protection products (PPP), but not "poisons." For the plants to fully open up their potential, it is essential to support them in a timely manner in the fight against weeds, pests and illnesses. The PPP do not increase crop growth, but make it possible to preserve high quality. This area in the vast science of agronomy is called phytomedicine, i.e. medicine for plants.

A compound's efficiency depends not only on the right choice of the agent and the timeliness of its application, but also on the sprinkler's workability and settings. It has been proved that the amount of the compound that reaches the plant and produces the designed effect varies between 10 and 90% (depending on the quality of pesticide treatment).

Which factors influence the sprinkler operation and what should an agronomist concentrate on?

An important role in field sprinklers is played by the choice of nozzles that create the required drop size and determine the coverage area (the number of drops per 1 sq. cm). Modern field sprinklers eject irregular drops from their nozzles. However, 95% of them vary in the interval from 50 to 400 microns (or from 0.05 to 0.4 mm in diameter). In case of even a weak wind, drops smaller than 0.05 mm are blown away while those larger than 0.4 mm roll down the leaf. The drop size is also determined by the choice of nozzles based on the opening size and type (ordinary flat jets, injectors, or specialised ones for introduction of liquid fertilisers), the strength of pressure in the sprinkler system and other factors.

The thickness of covering the treated surface with drops is also directly determined by the amount of liquid per unit of area and the drop size. According to Syngenta, the compounds are fully effective only when the coverage thickness is no less than 20 to 30 drops per 1 sq cm in case of systemic compounds and no less than 50 to 70 in case of fungicides.

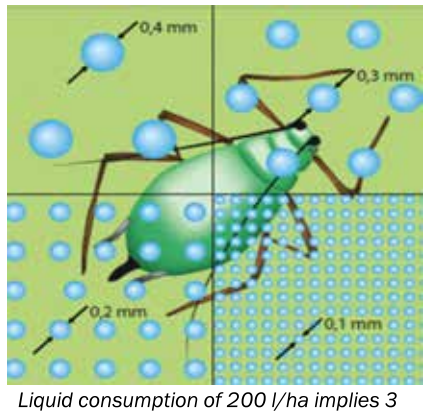
The required coverage when using various PPP preparations

Number of drops, units per sq cm	Plant protection products
20-30	Insecticides
20-30	Systemic herbicides
30-40	Contact herbicides
50-70	Fungicides

Data supplied by Syngenta

Judging by the performance of surface coating, we must not reduce the amount of liquid sprinkled on 1 hectare of an area by less than 200 l in case of herbicides and 300 l in case of fungicides.

Many years of experience show that the use of general effect glyphosate herbicides rises with the growth of the operating solution concentration while its amount comes down to 125-150 l/ha.



Liquid consumption of 200 l/ha implies 3 drops, 0.4 mm in diameter or 192 drops 0.1 mm in diameter on the same area

All controlled!

The sprinklers must introduce the spray material evenly all over the boom width. To check it by a metering cylinder and a stopwatch, each sprayer liquid is measured in one minute. If the liquid consumption in nozzles deviates by more than 10%, the sprinklers must be discarded and not allowed for use. Nozzle wear depends on the tip material (stainless steel, polymers, ceramics), the compounds used (liquid fertilisers are particularly aggressive), working pressure, and observance of cleaning conditions. As the wear grows, the sprinkling regularity rapidly declines. This dramatically compromises the treatment efficiency and increases consumption. Therefore, it is essential to regularly replace the tips after each 10 to 15,000 hectares of treatment. Crop protection agronomists must calibrate the nozzles every month since this directly determines the efficiency of the compounds used.

Preparation for a new season starts in winter. It is very important to identify in good time the defects and to repair the pump, boom and spray material delivery system, as well as to replace the nozzles. In Germany, the sprinklers are regularly

inspected by the Farming Chamber (technical inspection as in case of a motor vehicle). Every third year they receive a permit for further operation.

During vegetation, regardless of weather conditions, the farms must quickly introduce the compounds on large areas. Hence the specialists' desire to increase the sprinkler speed and decrease the spray material consumption. The standard speed on linked sprinklers at the liquid consumption of 200 l/ha, system pressure of 4 atm on the caliber 03 injector sprayer is 8 km/h. A sprinkler with a 3,000 litre tank can thus treat 109 ha in 8 hours.

Increasing the speed of movement increases the loss by drift and evaporation because of a strong oncoming airflow in addition to the wind. Indisputably, for lack of equipment many work at a speed exceeding 12-15 km/h. However, it should be borne in mind that in this case the treatment efficiency may decline significantly. Generally, high speed operation is possible in treating with systemic herbicides when soil and weeds are visible. However, during high speed operation in treating with herbicides the grains forming a tube, the spray material will get into the upper part of the plants and, thus, most of the weeds will remain untreated.

According to recommendations of Lechler, one of the methods to increase the speed without compromising the efficiency is the use of injector sprayers with a large drop spectrum. Thanks to the high movement speed, the drop can penetrate the stalks and create the required coverage thickness.

Obviously, the speed issue should be addressed individually, depending on the crop, its development stage, compound applied, weather, operating experience and sprinkler type.

The Sprinkler productivity depending on its class

Tank capacity	Boom width	Consumption per hectare	Operating speed	Approach time	Fill-up time	Productivity/h with fill-up	Fills-up per day	Daily productivity
litres	m	l/ha	km/h	min.	min.	ha/h		ha/day
800	12.0	200	0.8	4	2.7	6.3	12.7	50.6
1,000	15.0	200	0.8	4	3.3	7.8	12.4	62.2
1,200	18.0	200	0.8	4	4.0	9.2	12.2	73.4
2,600	24.0	200	0.8	4	8.7	12.3	7.6	98.3
3,000	27.0	200	0.8	4	10.0	13.6	7.3	109.0
3,500	27.0	200	0.8	4	11.7	13.7	6.3	109.0
4,000	27.0	200	0.8	4	13.3	13.8	5.5	110.6
5,000	33.0	200	0.8	4	16.7	16.4	5.2	130.9
6,000	42.0	200	0.8	4	20.0	19.8	5.3	158.3

Sprinkling time — 8 hours a day

At high speeds

The use of John Deere self-propelled sprinklers has resolved many precision sprinkling problems arising during high speed operation. The R 4045 model is the most efficient of these machines.

Modern self-propelled sprinklers are offered with auxiliary equipment from John Deere such as the AutoTrac automatic tracking system, BoomTracPro automatic boom adjustment system, and SectionControl device, which automatically switches the individual boom sections on and off at turns and where no sprinkling is required. All these innovations make it possible to operate efficiently at a speed of up to 40 km/h. A simple readjustment of series R sprinklers from liquid to bulk materials, taking 6 hours, doubles the sprinkler efficiency. If you install a bulk materials hopper with a capacity of 5.7 or 8.5 cubic m, the machine turns into a mineral fertiliser distributor.

John Deere self-propelled sprinklers became widely used not only on the farms of EkoNiva, but also at all major agricultural enterprises of Russia. The pioneers here are farmers of the Tula oblast. In 2015, as many as 15 John Deere self-propelled sprinklers will operate on the oblast's fields. Alexander Ivanovich Kochnev (Otkormochnoye farm) appreciated the advantages of the John Deere self-propelled sprinkler as early as 2008. In 2014, he acquired another machine and is quite happy with its performance. Two John Deere self-propelled sprinklers work on the fields of the oblast's large farms, Lazarevskoye and Petrovskoye.

Reasonable investments in modern plant protection equipment demonstrate their high efficiency as seen in the increased productivity, improved quality, reduction of personnel and machinery engaged in sprinkling, and reduction of environmental pollution to a minimum.

By Willy DREWS,
EkoNiva advisor, Doctor of Agronomy

The farmers' hope

Due to adverse weather conditions in the autumn of 2014, experts forecast a reduction of the total winter harvest from between 97 and 104 to between 91 and 95 million tonnes. These and other issues were discussed by the Tula farmers at a seminar arranged by EkoNiva-Tekhnika in Bogoroditsk.

Farmers always pin their hope for a high harvest on winter wheat. This crop uses its moisture supply better than others and has a longer vegetation period. Therefore its biological productivity potential is 20 to 30% higher than that of the spring variety. This is what Willy Drews, Doctor of Agronomy, advisor with EkoNiva, told the participants of the seminar about the winter wheat stalk stand management in view of the alarming situation with germination that occurred in the wake of the severe autumn drought. He drew the farmers' attention to how to optimise productivity in different wintering conditions and stand density. One of the factors contributing to a high harvest is the tillering coefficient by means of which it is possible to optimise the number of ears per square metre. A density of 500 to 550 units per square metre yields up to 7 tonnes per hectare. Willy Drews talked about the plant stand dynamics in different varieties of winter wheat depending on the soil conditions. He recommended some tillering stimulation fertilisers and advised on how to protect the plants against weeds, pests and diseases.

Willy Drews, EkoNiva advisor, Doctor of Agronomy

According to Willy Drews, in spring the soil moisture must be maximally preserved since the moisture input in autumn was very low. Therefore, in spring the number of passages made by the tilling tools must be reduced to a minimum. The preferred option in such conditions is the use of Rapid from Vaederstad or John Deere 730 seeding systems. In a single passage, the drill performs four operations: tilling, seeding, fertiliser introduction and soil packing. The John Deere 1895 pneumatic drill showed its advantages in the No-Till technology.

Aleksey Priskoko, post-sale servicing department head, Tula division, talked about the latest, most advanced machines, Series Nine John Deere tractors. The company supplies both tracked and caterpillar tractors of the Series Nine powered by 410 to 560 hp engines.

The farmers asked many questions about technologies and inquired after the crop cultivation techniques used at EkoNiva. Nikolai Batov, chief agronomist of Volovskaya Tekhnika LLC, received a memorable present from EkoNiva as the most active participant of the seminar.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Hola, EkoNiva!

Distant Argentina is famous not only for its beaches stretching for many kilometres, the world's most beautiful, dazzling blue glacier Perito-Moreno, the Colón Opera Theatre and the bewitching tango. As it happens, the country is the world's leader in the grain crop productivity. Each year 100 million tonnes of grain is harvested here. EkoNiva-APK specialists learned this plus other information when they visited agricultural enterprises around the country.

The trip started with a visit to the National Institute of Agrarian Technologies in the city of Balcarce. Leonardo Cardoso, a research worker of the Institute, spoke about the technology of grain storage in outfits. Due to a shortage of storage facilities, transport vehicles and to the poor condition of roads, Argentinean farmers have to store some 40% of grain precisely so.

"In polypropylene outfits an atmosphere is formed which helps preserve the grain," said Vitaly Polyakov, EkoNiva-APK's head of the grain storage and pre-processing department. "The outfit is 60 to 70 m long. It can store soya, wheat, maize, barley, rapes, sorghum rice, cotton, fertilisers, and oil-seed meal. The wheat capacity in the outfit is 210 tonnes, that of maize around 180 tonnes. This technology is interesting for our farms, too, since we face the problem of not only where to store the grain but also how to preserve its quality."

A group of crop growers visited the Volcano enterprise. Its 12,000 hectares are used for crop production. Its livestock number around 1,000 head of horned cattle. The soil is chernozem of the heavy clayey loam type identical to that in the South of Russia. The enterprise was the first in the Balcarce district to introduce the direct seeding method. Rodrigo Mendes, the enterprise agronomist, talked about the problems he has to address in introducing direct seeding. One key problem is glyphosate resistant weeds. The tool used is the Gherardi seeding system which processes 160 ha per day. The grain is stored at the elevator. During harvest, the mean acceptance rate exceeds 800 tonnes of grain per day.

At yet another enterprise near the city of Tres Arroyos, the agronomist Gustavo Tisien shared his expertise. During the vegetation period of wheat and barley, the rainfall in that area is very poor. Nonetheless, an innovative approach and direct seeding make it possible to harvest up to 4.5 tonnes per hectare. Various methods are used here. For instance, the seeding rate is reduced to 70-90 kg/ha while the inter-row spacing is increased to 38 cm. Thanks to tillering, a single plant develops eight productive ears. During vegetation of maize, 250 to 300 mm of precipitation occur. However, the farmers have learned here how to produce up to 7 tonnes per hectare even with such low rainfall. In doing, so they plant out from one to two seeds per metre (20,000 seeds per hectare). The soya seeding rate comes down to 200,000 seeds per hectare, i.e. 3 seeds per metre. This produces from 1.8 to 2.5 tonnes on a hectare.

"For such extreme conditions, this is an excellent harvest," says Kirill Adkin, chief agronomist of the Zashchitnoye farm. "Here one can learn something to set new goals."

The specialists visited the Rizobacter inoculants production facility, the best producer of biological compounds in Argentina. Here they watched the entire inoculants production and recycling process. They also toured the Sansoni elevator equipment manufacturing plant, which has been producing 30 to 12,000 tonne capacity silos over the last 80 years.

The foreign colleagues of the National Institute in Santa Fe provinces talked about soy processing technology. The extrusion of soy yields 12-14% oil and 85-87% oil-seed meal. Soya must be delivered to processing with protein content from 34 to 38%. The moisture content in this case must vary between 8 and 10%.

At the Gherardi seeding equipment manufacturing plant, the Russian delegation was received by Danil Gherardi, commercial director and grandson of the plant founder. He showed off the production facilities and presented a new seeding system, the AirPlanter. Plant experts spoke about the capabilities and advantages of this seeding system, which can seed maize, soya, sunflower and rapes with a high set-out precision thanks to the MaterMacc pneumatic batcher. Incidentally, EkoNivaAgro, one of the holding's farms, is experienced in the direct seeding method using the Gherardi drill.

The delegation members generally believe that they made a very interesting and informative trip. Many ideas picked up may be later implemented on EkoNiva farms.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

There's a chance!

The dedicated AgroFarm Exhibition is by right considered a centre of the world's stockbreeding knowhow. In addition, that's where presentations are made about advanced investment projects and where important issues are addressed concerning the agricultural industry. This year the exhibition housed 356 exhibits, including those from EkoNiva.

EkoNiva-Farm specialists welcomed guests at their display stand. Anatoly Nosulenko, head of the sales department, noted that notwithstanding the difficult political and economic situation this year farmers are intent on increasing milk production. This is why they are interested in learning how to equip new farms where livestock must grow from 1,200 to 2,500 animals.

"We can fill all the needs of our farmers, including creation of a concept for technically and technologically equipping both small farms and large animal breeding complexes," said Anatoly Nosulenko.

A visit to the display stand of GEA Farm Technologies was very informative. Many new products were demonstrated here. Among the unique items was an automatic milking module, DairyProQ, which won the contest in "The Best Product 2015" category. The module has a robotised arm which automatically performs all of the milking operations, excluding the human factor entirely. Stockbreeders also liked an innovative product from GEA: CowView. This facilitates locating an animal and analysing its behaviour in real time. Another very interesting entry was the Apollo Milk System, a device for automatic dipping, and the BackFlush intermediate washing machine.

Alexander Popov, Director General of Zarya Closed Joint-Stock Company (Tula oblast), a long-standing partner of EkoNiva, plans to build a 1,200 head livestock facility fitted with the Carousel Milking Parlour. At the exhibition, EkoNiva-Farm specialists and the head of the enterprise discussed all the issues concerning the complex design. The supplies of dairy products will soon grow in Tula oblast!

Managers from EkoNiva-Tekhnika briefed visitors on which machines should be chosen for the fodder procuring season. Farmers have at their disposal the latest generation John Deere fodder harvesters and balers, plus a wide range of Poettinger mowers, tedders and swath formers. In their talks about the highly productive seeds of alfalfa and fodder herbs, specialists from EkoNiva-Semena advised on what should be added to the cows' rations for them to yield more tasty and nourishing milk.

The participants of the exhibition discussed key issues of the dairy industry at the VI Congress of the National Union of Dairy Producers. Arkady Dvorkovich, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Federation Government, pointed out that despite the difficult economic situation in the country the state continues to support the agricultural industry.

"This year the state's support for the dairy industry will total, considering all the anti-crisis measures, on average 30 billion rubles. The dairy producers' criteria for receiving subsidies per litre of milk have been simplified."

Airat Khairullin, the President of the National Union of Dairy Producers SOYUZMOLOKO emphasised that due to the sanctions and the ruble exchange rate dairy producers now have a chance to occupy a solid position on the market and provide the country with their products.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

A model of efficiency

The Kursk Oblast Governor, Alexander Mikhailov, visited the Zashchitnoye farming enterprise (Shchigrovsky district of the Kursk oblast) where a seminar on livestock production was held.

First off, Alexander Mikhailov made for a dairy production complex housing 600 head of Simmental cows. Each day, more than 11 tonnes of high quality milk is produced here and then shipped to the Tula Dairy Plant. One kilo costs 30 rubles. The profit margin is 17.5%. Aleksey Zolotaryov, the Kursk Oblast Deputy Governor, noted that those figures are quite impressive.

Yekaterina Brusentseva, head of the stockbreeding complex, conducted a tour around her area of responsibility, telling how much attention is given to feeding the animals, expressly, to making up their balanced rations. The farm produces its own fodders.

The animal housing, milking, and management: all of these are provided based on state-of-the-art technologies. The guests watched how the calves are kept in individual boxes. The youngest ones, which haven't yet turned a month, are covered in winter with warm blankets.

"We've seen today a fine example of efficient dairy production launched by Stefan Duerr in our Kursk region," said Alexander Mikhailov. "Our German colleague has proved that this branch of farming can be cost-effective and highly profitable if the work is organised properly."

The issues discussed at the seminar included the increase of cattle stock and growth of meat and milk production. Last year, the total meat production reached 386,000 tonnes, 100,000 more than in 2013. Today the Kursk oblast is the second largest meat producer in the Central Federal Region and fourth in Russia. In 2015, animal breeders face the task of increasing their milk production without going back on the production of meat. In 2014 the region's animal breeders received 3 billion rubles of state subsidies. This year the support will be continued.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

The apartment issue

EkoNiva-APK specialists have made another tour of American farms to learn how their foreign colleagues address their animals' "apartment issue."

The stockbreeders visited farms in five states: Idaho, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota. These locations were not chosen at random but because climatic conditions are similar to those in Russia. EkoNiva specialists could see how areas for growing the young animals are organised.

In America, young animals are raised on dedicated farms separately from the adult livestock. Right after the birth, the calves are transferred to specialised farms, the so called "ranchos for the young."

"We're very much interested in this method of keeping the animals," says Ramon Schenk, EkoNiva-APK Holding deputy director general for stockbreeding. "We've long wanted to build our own centralised areas for growing young animals separately from the dairy production facilities. This will ease our work significantly, improving animal care hygiene generally and cutting costs."

From the first to the 60th or 65th day of their lives, the calves stay in individual cabins. In summer, to protect the cabins from the sun, they are covered with a tarpaulin while in winter doors are installed and the calves are dressed in warm jackets. At two months, the calves, just like on the EkoNiva farm, are moved to group cabins. At six months, they go to open air areas.

EkoNiva stockbreeders liked the City View farm in Iowa. This keeps 14,000 head of young cows. Full grown heifers and non-calving young cows are kept in open-air areas arranged with due regard to the local environment. The Russian guests also remarked on the farm of Bill Millencamp from Idaho which keeps 40,000 calves. Our specialists pointed out that this is an inexpensive, convenient and effective animal care method, but in Russia the "apartment" would have to be warmer.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

The shores of EkoNiva

The EkoNivaAgro enterprise in Voronezh oblast rests on three "shores," its Pravoberezhnoye (Right Shore), Levoberezhnoye (Left Shore) and Vostochnoye divisions with total personnel of almost 1,700 people. We regularly cover the results of their work. However, the workmen's leisure time goes unnoticed. We've managed to spend several weekends with members of all manufacturing facilities when EkoNivaAgro took time out to arrange an excursion to a monastery.

Visiting holy sites

For their outstanding achievements, the enterprise's workmen were rewarded with trips to several of the Russian Orthodox Church's holy places. These unique sites are quite near but, as is often the case, few could have visited them on their own previously.

Vostochnoye is the newest division acquired a little more than two years ago. Today the largest dairy production facility of EkoNivaAgro is based here. Its livestock has reached 2,800 animals, cared for by 306 people. The lucky employees went on an excursion to the Spassky nunnery in Kostomarovo village. The trip took place on the eve of a major Christian holiday celebrating the baptism of Jesus.

The chief sight of the cloister is the unique Saviour Temple located in the caves of the Chalk Mountains. It was built before the state conversion to Christianity in Russia. It used to be a hiding place of hermit monks, Russia's first Christians. During the excursion around the monastery, where peace and quiet reign supreme, we enjoyed talking to Yelena Kvasova, the livestock record keeper on the Vostochnoye farm. She has worked for twelve years on one and the same farm, which she joined right after graduating from the farming college. She is in charge of all livestock records. Her colleagues joke that she knows the name of each and every one of the 740 animals. "Over the years of work, I've come to love the farm and my profession," Yelena tells us. "I can't imagine another job for myself."

The guests also saw the chief sacred object of the cloister, the Icon of the Kostomarovo Mother of God, before which people pray for children to be born to them. Inspired and rested, the Vostochnoye workmen returned home.

Recipe for a good harvest

The Levoberezhnoye workmen were met at the Resurrection monastery of Belgorod.

"Since time immemorial, they used to say that spirituality and productivity go hand in hand," said father Nikodim, the priest of the monastery, as he began taking the guests around. "Your fields will be as rich as your soul is pure."

The priest's parting words were very true indeed. The Levoberezhnoye division

tills and cultivates around 45% of EkoNivaAgro's entire arable land.

Before the revolution of 1917 the monastery of Belgorod had two above ground temples named for the Ascension and the Resurrection, and one in a cave in honour of Alexander Nevsky. Only the latter has survived to this day. The guests toured this temple in a chalk mountain and saw the monks' cells. After the visit, the guests were invited to the refectory, where they partook of the monks' simple fare including baked potatoes with sauerkraut, and, as a dessert, honey from the monastery's apiary and herbal tea. Tea drinking is known to be a fine excuse for a heart-to-heart talk. Olga Mironenko initiated one such talk. She has worked at the facility in Vysokoye village for four years. Her work title is "an odd-job woman," but her actual responsibility is addressing all the issues related to dairy production. Every day Olga ships raw materials from the farm to the dairy plant, keeps the respective documentation and daily milk production records. They say she has found her true vocation at EkoNivaAgro given that she is a dairy production expert by training.

To be born again

The Pravoberezhnoye workmen made a tour of places associated with the life of Tikhon of Zadonsk. That was a long journey. The participants had to wake up at four in the morning. "It's like getting up for work," the Pravoberezhnoye people joked.

Pravoberezhnoye is the largest division of EkoNivaAgro. Five high technology dairy production facilities are located on its territory.

A group from Pravoberezhnoye had arrived for the morning service at the Vladimir temple of Mary's Resurrection monastery in Zadonsk. After that, they made for the Saint Tikhon Transfiguration nunnery. Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk loved to visit these places in strict privacy. Orthodox Christians of the entire world call these places the Russian Jerusalem. The final part of the tour of holy sites was a visit to the Zadonsk holy spring in honour of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk. Many "pilgrims" not only took up some of the holy water, but even dipped into the font.

"I feel like I am born again!" said Svetlana Rybalkina, head of the dining room.

On the way back, there arose a talk with Marina Kotova, the vet. She felt refreshed and invigorated.

"This is what you don't always get from a week's leave."

Marina got acquainted with EkoNiva during her traineeship in Germany under the APOLLO programme and work in Switzerland. Her choice of the kolkhoz on graduating from the Belgorod Agricultural University surprised both her relatives and friends quite a bit. They thought it was just a whim that would pass. However, Marina has worked at EkoNivaAgro for the five years now. Her husband is even somewhat jealous of her preoccupation with work, as if she were married to EkoNiva. But Marina can't imagine herself in another place. She has taken a fancy to work on the farm. She doesn't care that her work day is not regulated and not every weekend is a rest period.

"I had no idea there's a Russian Jerusalem some two hundred kilometres away from us," says Marina. "When I learned about the trip, I signed up at once. It's very important to give both mind and body a rest. I think we've done that!"

By Yulia SALKOVA

The magnificent seven!

On the Zashchitnoye farm it has become a good old tradition to mark the results of the farming season with sporting events. This year was no exception. Specialists of the farm competed in a volleyball tournament.

The participants of the event gave telling names to their teams. As a result of qualifications, seven teams competed for the cup. Those were Ampere (electrical engineers), Security (security service), Thistle (agronomists), Piston (mechanical engineers), Rozkishna (seed producers), Concrete (construction workers) and Surprise (combined team of the administration).

Two teams made it to the finals — Surprise and Rozkishna. The passions were maintained by enthusiastic support of the fans, who actively rooted for their teams. Till the last minute, it was not clear who would gain the desired victory. In a tough bout, the crucial point was scored by the team Surprise, which won the cup. The silver medals went to the team Piston and third place was taken by Security.

"I wholeheartedly congratulate the winners and all participants of the tournament," says Yuri Vasyukov, Zashchitnoye LLC Executive Director. "We're pleased that despite the work-related problems and daily chores the employees could find time to participate in the competition. This is another factor that brings the team members together, distracting them for a while from the monotony of workaday life."

The gold medals were awarded to "the best of the best." Among the noted categories was The Best Player. This title was awarded to Aleksey Dotsenko, agronomist of the crop selection department. Yekaterina Payenko, lab assistant of the grain production, storage and treatment department, received the medal For the Will to Win. She was, incidentally, the only girl in a male team.

"I've been playing volleyball since the sixth grade, which is why I so readily agreed to participate in the competition," said Yekaterina Payenko. "Of course, the guys supported me, but they made no allowances. The game seemed very interesting. All the participants played at their full strength."

Based on the competition result, a proposal was made to organise a combined women's volleyball team. Representatives of the fair gender on the Zashchitnoye farm demonstrate outstanding achievements both on the farming fields and on sports grounds.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Hello Sportsmen!

On the anniversary of the opening of the Olympic Games in Sochi, the all-Russia ski race "Russian Ski Run 2015" started throughout the country. Voronezh was no exception. Employees of EkoNivaAgro LLC took their rightful place among the 5,000 participants.

These ski races have been held for 33 years. Practically everyone can participate in the event: adults and children, professionals and amateurs, because it is not just a competition. The main message of the ski race is promotion of a healthy way of life. Nine employees of EkoNivaAgro took part in this all-Russia ski race for the distances of 5 km and 10 km for the first time. After trying out a professional ski piste, our skiers confided that they had not experienced such drive for a long time!

'There are so many strong, healthy, and, most importantly, happy people,' says Svetlana Krivoshlykova, an agronomist-seed grower from EkoNivaAgro. 'This positive attitude is so contagious! Sports and the healthy life make people truly happy. It is essential not to forget about it and find some room for skiing, cycling, skating or fitness in your life. Hello sportsmen!'

By Yulia SALKOVA

Milk with the taste of childhood...

...will be produced in Shchuchye village (Voronezh oblast, Liskinsky district) at a dairy plant with a capacity of 30 tonnes per day.

We are planning to produce milk, kefir, ryazhenka (baked fermented milk), varenets (fermented milk product), sour cream and cottage cheese under the Academy of Dairy Sciences brand. The product range will be enlarged with time.

The main production principle will be authenticity of the products and the 'the taste of childhood.' The processing technology at the plant eliminates the use of any preservatives or other artificial additives. All the products will be produced exclusively from high-quality natural milk received from the company's own cows.

'The implementation of the project has now entered an intensive phase,' says Alexandr Belyaev, Head of the Processing and Marketing Division of EkoNiva-APK Holding.

The construction of a dairy plant is continuing; the purchase of equipment is well under way. If we keep up the pace, the milk processing plant will open its doors this September or October.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Milk brightens up life!

Milk, milch, lait, latte, tej… — the word 'milk' translated into various world languages became a good basis for creativity at Academy of Dairy Sciences.

About one hundred children, participants of the regular creative "exam" of the Academy, presented the history and traditions of milk consumption in different countries. They turned their ideas into reality in drawings, collages, household goods, poems and even creative skits.

'26 participants became winners of the contest,' says Christine Frank, Project Manager of Academy of Dairy Sciences. 'And six more children won awards in the *Collage*, *Handicraft* and *Drawings* categories.'

Sergey Frolov and Vyacheslav Medvedev from Shchuchye school won the Grand Prix of the contest. Their creation is a multidimensional frame for the thematic photo "School's just a piece of cake — MILK helps to get straight A's."

'We love milk. It is healthier than soda and it fills you with energy,' says Serezha Frolov.

'We also love art,' adds Slava Medvedev. 'We always invent, draw, or construct something together with the Academy of Dairy Sciences and we participate in various contests and celebrations. Milk brightens up our life!'.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Announcements

March.
Opening of the second part of the Sibirskaya Niva LLC livestock facility in Borkovo village
Venue: Borkovo village, Maslyaninsky district, Novosibirsk oblast
Organisers: Sibirskaya Niva LLC

19-20 March.
Agrosezon 2015 agricultural exhibition
Venue: Voronezh, Chernozem Region's Farming Business Exposition Centre of the Voronezh State Agricultural University
Organisers: Voronezh Oblast Department of Agricultural Politics, Chernozem Region's Farming Business Exposition Centre of the Voronezh State Agricultural University

17-20 March.
Meat Industry 2014 and Dairy Industry 2015 international specialised exhibitions
Venue: All-Russian Exhibition Centre, Moscow
Organisers: Russian Federation Ministry of Agriculture, Russian Meat Union

April.
Seminar on agricultural technologies for specialists of Novosibirsk, Kemerovo and Tomsk oblast farming enterprises
Venue: Farming enterprises of Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo oblasts
Organisers: EkoNivaSibir LLC

April-May.
Demonstration of John Deere equipment
Venue: Novosibirsk oblast
Organisers: EkoNivaSibir LLC

1-2 April.
Agrovyatka 2015 agro-industrial exhibition
Venue: Kirov
Organisers: Vyatka-Expo Exhibition Centre

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12+

March
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