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How much milk is there in milk?

As much as there is crab in crab sticks

At the beginning of April, our milk production has reached the landmark of 600 tonnes per day. We are able and willing to keep on growing, but does anyone need it?

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With trust in people and love of the land lives and works Vladimir Selikhov, Head of Letyazhye farming enterprise.

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The things you'd hardly see even in cartoons can be found in the Academy of Dairy Sciences, the 'habitat' of milking robots!

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At the beginning of April, our milk production has reached the landmark of 600 tonnes per day. We are able and willing to keep on growing, but does anyone need it?

Currently, a lot of processing factories use just a very small amount of milk to produce dairy products. Processors purchase some milk powder and dry whey from Belarus and huge amounts of milk fat replacers such as palm oil for their production. Maybe, it would not be that bad if all that were indicated on the product label. It is very sad that the 'milk-like drink' is produced not only by small factories but by well-known large processors as well. Soon, natural milk will only be used for production of elite food. This situation is very similar to the one with crab sticks, the making of which harms no crabs. Can it really be so that the same is in store for milk: like crabs, it will be available only to the chosen few, while all the others will have to content themselves with 'crab sticks'?

It is a shame that this is happening at the time when the government is taking serious measures to ensure dairy food safety. There are considerable subsidies aimed at encouraging new investments in dairy production. However, if these measures do not include combating adulteration, all the efforts will be in vain. Adulteration will ruin milk producers.

Electronic veterinary certification of finished goods can become a good ally in this fight. We need to establish more rigorous requirements to milk processors, hold them responsible for violations and increase the amount of penalty for adulterated products. We cannot allow milk to become a product for the chosen few. Milk is for everybody!

Stefan DUERR,
President of EkoNiva Group

The 600 tonnes peak is conquered

Milk production in EkoNiva-APK Holding has exceeded 600 tonnes per day. The company does not stand still, it is constantly moving forward since Russia is still deficient in milk: the production needs to be increased by as many as 8 million tonnes.

Less than a year ago, the milk yields exceeded 500 tonnes per day. Since then, three dairies in the Kaluga, Voronezh and Novosibirsk oblasts have reached their full capacity. Their operational capacity is 16,000, 21,000 and 65,000 tonnes of milk per year respectively.

'We keep working on enhancing dairy herd efficiency', says Ramon Schenk, Deputy Director General for Livestock Production of EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'The daily milk output per a forage-fed cow has grown by 2-2.5 kg within one year. We are working hard on herd reproduction. It is important that 65% of the herd at three new dairies are our locally bred heifers.'

We should remind that currently, EkoNiva possesses 11 modern dairies and 15 reconstructed farms. The total herd size is 54,740 head, including 26,580 dairy cows.

By Yulia SALKOVA

Bond extension

In the middle of March, Ekosem-Agrar GmbH, mother company of EkoNiva Group, received the permission to extend the maturity date of the two corporate bonds. The overwhelming majority of bond holders voted in favour of the four-year extension of the bonds proposed by Ekosem-Agrar. For reference: the repayment under the first bond in the amount of EUR 50 million was to start next year, the repayment under the second bond in the amount of EUR 78 million — in 2018. The other points on the agenda were also supported by the majority of votes. Stefan Duerr, the main shareholder and Managing Director of Ekosem-Agrar, observed, 'We are happy that the bond holders demonstrated their trust in us and supported our proposals. The financial flexibility that we have thus obtained will be aimed at strengthening our leading positions on the Russian milk market.'

The Academy teaches children and makes plans

Anatoly Artamonov, Governor of the Kaluga oblast, discussed the prospects of regional development, ways to attract talented young people into the public and municipal sectors and other important issues with prospective young employees of the region.

The young specialists shared their ideas on implementation of various projects with the Governor of the region. Addressing the participants of the meeting, Anatoly Artamonov underlined, 'The regional development strategy as well as accomplishment of the tasks essential for moving forward is mainly connected with you – young and talented people. On the one hand, you give us good ideas; on the other hand, you can turn them into reality by yourselves. Young people always look ahead!'

Ekaterina Voronkova, Specialist of Kaluzhskaya Niva, one of the leading enterprises of the region, also took part in the meeting. She told the guests about the Academy of Dairy Sciences project, which is aimed at promotion of a positive image of milk in Russia as well as providing children and young people with career guidance.

'Within the framework of the project, we hold tours of a robotic dairy for students of schools and institutions of higher education and their parents', says Ekaterina Voronkova. 'We show all stages of milk production, the housing systems, the milking and feeding processes. We tell our guests how the modern software applications are used for herd management.'

Within the past three months, Kaluzhskaya Niva has welcomed over 500 people. The major part of them are students of local schools and Azarovo orphanage, graduates of institutions of professional and higher education of Kaluga and Obninsk and students of the Agricultural Academy named after Timiryazev.

According to Ekaterina Voronkova, they are planning to increase the number of tours, expand the geographic area of the project and found the Museum of Milk.

'We are going to organise thematic workshops, creative contests and seminars and quizzes dedicated to milk', says Ekaterina Voronkova. 'Our goal is to draw the attention of young people to agricultural professions and instill the desire to live and work in the rural area.'

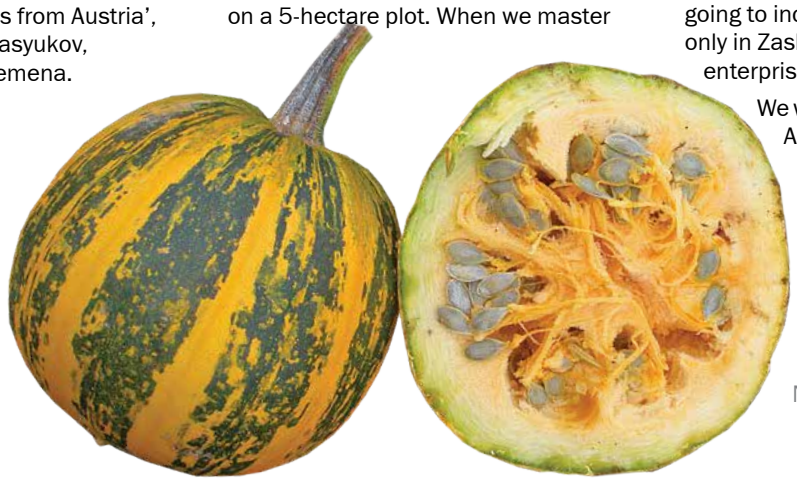
By Anna BORDUNOVA

A golden seed

This year, Zashchitnoe is planning to conduct an experiment. The specialists of the enterprise will start growing oilseed pumpkins for the first time.

'We have been inspired by our partners from Austria', says Yury Vasyukov, Director of EkoNiva-Semena. 'The best pumpkin oil is produced in this country. We have all the necessary resources to grow high quality pumpkin oilseeds.'

This year, we are planning to sow 'the golden seeds' on a 5-hectare plot. When we master the technology completely, we are going to increase the sown area not only in Zashchitnoe but also in other enterprises of EkoNiva-APK.



We will sell the oilseeds on the Austrian market. We are planning to supply the Russian market with the seeds of high yielding varieties and hybrids of pumpkin with high genetic potential.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

The milky way of Sibirskaya Niva

Almost ten years ago, Sibirskaya Niva started developing the new philosophy of dairy farming in the Novosibirsk oblast. The enterprise approached its 10th anniversary with very good results: currently, the company is one of the leading dairy producers in the region.

Sibirskaya Niva began its journey with 3,000 ha and several old cow barns. Currently, the farm is operating on an area of 40,000 ha. The enterprise grows cereal, pulse and fodder crops. It is also engaged in seed production.

Sibirskaya Niva started constructing its first dairy for 1,800 head in Penkovo village in 2008. The company purchased breeding heifers from Europe and started employing modern livestock farming technologies. For the neighbouring enterprises, Sibirskaya Niva became an experimental platform for spreading innovations in the dairy production area. The farmers regularly visited the enterprise to learn from Sibirskaya Niva's experience. For those who worked in the old-fashioned way, everything was unusual: the free-stall housing system, individual hutches, the new milking and refrigerating equipment. The cutting-edge technologies ensured production of high-quality milk.

Since 2013, the company has been developing a new area of activity - milk processing. Sibirskaya Niva launched a milk processing plant, which produces dairy products under the Academy of Dairy Sciences brand.

Last year, Sibirskaya Niva set its own record — 100 tonnes of milk per day — and launched another dairy for 2,500 head.

The farm is not planning to rest on its laurels.

'We have never stopped developing, even under the toughest circumstances!' says Sergey Lyakhov, Regional Director of EkoNiva-APK for the Siberian region. 'The success that we have achieved is the result of the joint efforts of all the staff. I am very grateful to all the employees of Sibirskaya Niva for their titanic efforts. I wish them all good health and strength for further achievements. In the long-term, we are considering construction of another mega-dairy for 2,800 head in Penkovo village, increasing the dairy herd and launching a large-scale milk processing plant with a daily capacity of 300 tonnes. There is enough work for another decade!'

The specialists of Sibirskaya Niva cannot do without work! Currently, the enterprise employs about 600 people, and all of them are true professionals in their respective areas of activity. The farm supports its specialists by creating good working and housing conditions.

All specialists constantly improve their professional skills, take regular training abroad and master state-of-the-art technologies both in crop and livestock farming. The employees of Sibirskaya Niva are sure that whether there is a will, one can master any skill!

By Anna BORDUNOVA

It's all about human resources!

Kaluzhskaya Niva held an advanced training for specialists of HR departments of agricultural enterprises of the Kaluga oblast.

The specialists of Kaluzhskaya Niva shared their experience in recruitment in the farming sector and document processing with their colleagues and told them about the Academy of Dairy Sciences project aimed at promoting a positive image of milk. The guests had a tour of the robotic dairy. For almost all of them, it was the first visit to such a big dairy!

Many guests were interested in the organisation of the working process at the herd management department and allocation of the responsibilities among the specialists. They were surprised by the fact that all the calves are housed in individual hutches while on their farms calves live in cow barns. The HR specialists were interested in the new way of storing feed tested in Kaluzhskaya Niva: putting up wheat and corn grain into sausage-shaped bags. After the farm tour, the HR managers praised the high level of technologies used on the farm, which makes it a good platform for training in all areas of farming.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Winners again!

Vladimir Kavin, Executive Director of Kaluzhskaya Niva LLC, has proved the title of the best head of a farming enterprise for the second year in a row by winning the competition among the workers of the farming sector. Another awarded worker is Sergey Voloshko, Chief Agronomist of the enterprise, who was named the best agronomist in the region!

'We are very happy that this year, the government of the region praised our work so high again', says Vladimir Kavin with a note of shyness in his voice, accepting the winner's diploma. 'The success of the head of an enterprise is the success of all the employees. We have been working towards our goals together and we've achieved worthy results.'

Last year, Kaluzhskaya Niva put a robotic dairy for 1,800 head into full operation and increased the yields considerably. Currently, the farm produces approximately 70 tonnes of milk daily. Within the framework of the Academy of Dairy Sciences project, the company is promoting a healthy lifestyle among children and young people and raising the interest in dairy production. In the area of crop production, the farm is also at the top level. Under the watchful eye of Sergey Voloshko, Kaluzhskaya Niva implemented the technology of storing cracked corn in sausage-shaped bags, which increased the efficiency of fodder preparation and allowed to put up 124,000 tonnes of feed for storage last year. The yield of cereals in 2015 amounted to 4.6 tonnes/ha.

The farm also broke all the records of the Central region in terms of the yield of corn for grain, which reached 8.38 tonnes/ha.

'Of course, it is great that our labour is appreciated, it means that its results are visible', says Sergey Voloshko. 'But an award is not just a delight for the eyes, it is an incentive to move forward and keep on developing!'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

A powerful support

This summer, EkoNiva-Tekhnika will host a housewarming party in the Kirov oblast: the company is planning to open a new service centre.

The service centre with a total area of 4,500 sq. m. is located at the 14th km of the Kirov-Novovyatsk bypass highway.

The location was chosen with the consideration of maximum logistics convenience. The overall investment volume will amount to 150 million rubles. The service centre will provide a complete range of farming machinery maintenance and repair services. It will also become a strong training platform. Here, the company will hold workshops for specialists of the farms, students and EkoNiva's own employees.

Many clients of the company are looking forward to the opening of the service centre. Among them, Nikolay Kharkin, Head of Sredneivkino farming enterprise.

'The opening of EkoNiva's new service centre is an important event for all farmers of the region', says Nikolay. 'The new modern facility will allow servicing the machines even faster, which is especially important during the hot farming season. I am very glad that the company does its best to be as close to those who work on the land as possible. The new service centre is a powerful support to the farmers and an additional incentive to keep growing and developing.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Vladimir Selikhov, ‘With trust in people and love of the land’

I first met Vladimir Selikhov, Head of Letyazhye farm, Tomsk oblast, in Moscow, at last year’s Agrosalon exhibition.
‘I came to look for a new track tractor: ours has recently been burnt by some “well-wishers”!’ said Vladimir with a smile. ‘Don’t be surprised, our tractors have been set on fire nine times, but we are still moving forward!’ This is the way Vladimir Selikhov has been working for over twenty years: with fire in his soul and a smile on his face.

Who doesn’t risk?

Vladimir Selikhov is a man of strong will, incredible optimism and sincere desire to work on the land. When asked what gives him the strength to cope with all the difficulties and keep developing, Vladimir said with all his heart, ‘The love of the land’.

‘Farming is not just labour, it is a way of life’, said Vladimir Selikhov. ‘We are not competing with anybody, we just grow grain for bread, raise cattle and work for the people, for ourselves and for our children.’

When a farm is managed by an ambitious, decisive and passionate person, everything works out well, and the plans come into reality. Today, Letyazhye is one of the largest producers of milling wheat in the region. The crop occupies 50% of all the sown area. The average annual gross yield of grain amounts to 30 thousand tonnes. The farm also grows canola, oats, barley, peas, perennial grasses.

Farming is a risky business in theTomsk oblast. ‘I have been told that I am lucky because my farm is in the south of the Tomsk oblast, but at the same time, this is the north of the Novosibirsk oblast!’ says Vladimir, smiling again. ‘Approximately 250 km to the north of our farm, cereals do not ripen at all. There is a huge amount of precipitation during the growing period, the autumns are rainy and foggy. Therefore, each summer is a new challenge for us. You either win or lose. In order to perform successful farming in extreme climatic conditions, the company uses modern high-power machinery and equipment, implements resource-saving technology and constantly improves the crop farming culture.
In 2006, in order not to put all eggs into one basket, Vladimir Selikhov made a decision to develop beef farming. The company purchased 50 pedigree Hereford heifers and started building a livestock farm. A few years ago, the company became a breeding reproducer of Hereford cattle. Currently, the farm has 545 beef cows, the total herd size has increased up to 1,330 head.

From beekeeper to farmer

Currently, Letyazhye has 12,800 ha of land. For information, the farm started with only 50 ha. As Vladimit Selikhov says, he came into possession of this land by pure chance.

‘Back in 1991, when farming was ‘in vogue’ in Russia, a friend of mine who lived in Novosibirsk, decided to start a bee yard in the Kozhevnikovo district’, says Vladimir. ‘As a local resident, I received the land for this purpose without any extra paperwork.’ However, very soon, the friend changed his mind and Vladimir Selikhov remained the owner of the land plot. At that time, he was still working for Agropromkhimia LLC, and in 2001, he decided to become a full-time farmer and started working with the banks, taking loans, buying new machinery. His first track tractor was the T-150.

Space technology

Now, one can really envy Vladimir Selikhov's machinery fleet. Over one hundred units of self-propelled and trailed machinery! Even the largest farming holdings sometimes cannot boast of possessing so many machines! The major part of the machines are of western manufacture. Among them is a huge range of sowing units, tillage implements, John Deere tractors and combines, JCB universal loaders, Pottinger forage harvesters, Vaderstad machines. Half of the fleet was purchased from EkoNivaSibir. Vladimir is especially proud of his latest acquisition — a John Deere self-propelled sprayer!

'So far, no one in the region has a machine like that', says Vladimir Selikhov. 'And we have bought a second one already! We have also purchased a Seed Hawk seed drill from Vaderstad. This spring, we will launch it into the fields!'

Yes, Vladimir likes experimenting. Four years ago, his farm was the first enterprise in the region to master night-time sowing with the help of GPS and GLONASS systems. Besides allowing to sow faster by means of reducing the sowing time by almost 1.5 times, this technology enables the farmers to sow more uniformly, sometimes, even without the participation of the machine operator.

'We used to sow by rule of thumb', says Vladimir Selikhov. 'We had to "cut out" the field so that the tractor could move along straight lines. The machine operators who could do it correctly, with the least number of flaws, were as valuable as gold. Now we do not have any flaws and we do not have to re-sow. The navigation system calculates the route of the tractor so that the overlapping is just 10 cm, which excludes any deviations. The navigation system can control the tractor both by means of the autopilot system under surveillance of the operator and without any participation of the machine operator. These are truly space technologies!

Intensive learning is better than passive rest!

Purchase of modern machines is an expensive pleasure. Vladimir wants to get maximum payback from each unit. Therefore, he requires the suppliers of the machines to hold regular trainings for his specialists. He grudges neither time nor money for that.

'Very often, many companies are governed by the principle "all I want is to sell"', explains Vladimir. 'After the sale, they can neither service the machine properly nor teach how to get the desired effect from it.'

EkoNivaSibir, on the contrary, helps a lot in these areas. The company holds regular trainings and master-classes for the specialists of farming enterprises and organises demo shows. Upon the request of Vladimir Selikhov, the training programme for machine operators has been enhanced.

'Vladimir always keeps us busy!' says Aleksandr Zuev, Head of Sales Department of EkoNivaSibir. 'His recommendations and suggestions provide us with additional opportunities for improvement. Our main goal is to ensure that the investments into the farming technologies pay back with maximum profit and impressive production results.'

Vladimir himself prefers active learning to passive rest. He regularly attends exhibitions and educational events abroad and studies the experience of the advanced European enterprises. Vladimir has visited machinery manufacturing plants in Germany, Canada, the UK and Austria several times. Quite often, he takes his specialists with him on such trips.

'It is essential to educate the employees and yourself as well', explains Vladimir Selikhov. 'The world is not standing still. We need to grow and develop. Farming does not tolerate any idling.'

Trust without checking!

Vladimir Selikhov is not just the boss for his 120 employees. He is the mentor, the patron and the best help. He builds houses and grants allowance to new workers. In a word, he does everything in his power so that his employees could live and work in comfortable conditions. He judges his employees by their deeds, not by their looks, and never 'throws cold water' on their ideas or suggestions. As Vladimir says, discouragement ruins the initiative and motivation.

'Our work is based on trust', explains Vladimir Selikhov. 'If a person lacks honesty, responsibility and integrity, he will not be any good at work, no matter how smart he is.'

Vladimir thinks that people should feel that they are members of one team and should not be afraid to take responsibility for their decisions.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Vladimir Selikhov has been the Chairman of Akkor, the regional farmers' association, since 2001. In 2007, he received the title of the Honourable Citizen of the Tomsk oblast. In 2013, Vladimir became the Honourable Worker of the Russian Farming Sector.

Second-hand workers are welcome!

Two years ago, EkoNiva branched out into a new product line – used machinery for farmers. Considering the current economic environment, agricultural producers from various regions are keen on using this service. In the past year, the company delivered over 50 units of second-hand self-propelled machinery and over 100 units of trailed machinery for the total amount of 170 million rubles.

For the upcoming season, Aleksandr Lapshin, Director of Chebulinskoye Agricultural Enterprise (Kemerovo oblast) has bought a 9 Series John Deere tractor manufactured in 2005.

'Before the purchase, I hesitated for quite a time if I should buy a new tractor or a used one', narrates Aleksandr. 'EkoNivaSibir helped to allay the doubts and offered a 10-year old John Deere tractor. Without any exaggeration, I should say that despite its advanced age, this piece of machinery is in an excellent state — in a hundred times better state than our domestically manufactured brand-new tractors. Moreover, I have a first-hand experience with John Deere machinery; a 9 Series tractor has been operating on my farm for 10 years. To my mind, the tractor is unrivalled in fuel-efficiency. EkoNiva should keep on supplying used machinery, especially since the company handles the business with great responsibility; all machinery is as good as new: well-groomed, fully diagnosed and ready to work. I am happy to cooperate with the company in this area and I'd like to acquire another 7 or 8 Series John Deere tractor.'

EkoNiva also offers a trade-in programme and a commission service enabling farmers to sell their old machinery promptly, safely and at a market price.

'As of today, buying a second-hand machine at a price much lower than a new one is a way out of the current economic predicament', says Petr Belyakov, Manager of the Used Machinery Project. 'We provide warranty for all used machinery. Last year, the volume of trade-in machinery increased. Besides, we have taken another decision for the benefit of the farmers: now we accept for trade-in not only the machinery produced by a manufacturer we represent as a dealer, but also machines of other brands.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Friends will be friends

Twenty years ago, EkoNiva started to supply the Russian market with imported farming machinery. Kverneland became its first partner. The company is rapidly growing, designing new machines and launching its own manufacturing sites all over the world. The Russian farmers together with EkoNiva decided to visit the old friends from Kverneland and set off for Italy.

Ravenna, a small town in Italy, is famous not only for its Mausoleum of the Roman Empress Galla Placidia but also for one of the most modern Kverneland baler manufacturing sites! This is where the Russian farmers went first.

Alfredo Pedetti, Director General of Kverneland Group in Italy, welcomed them,

'The Russian market is one of the most promising markets for Kverneland', says Alfredo Pedetti. 'We look forward to further development of the Russian farming business. We always listen to the agricultural producers' opinions and work to improve the quality of the machinery. Our machines have successfully proved their performance under the toughest Russian conditions. I am pleased that Russian farmers know the machinery manufactured by Kverneland and love it. I am happy that EkoNiva and its partners have come to our factories. So, please, dear guests, feel at home!'

The specialists of the enterprise gave a tour of the manufacturing departments and told the guests that the plant had been founded in 1922. Some time later, the manufacturing site was modernised, and the new state-of-the-art factory with an annual capacity of 5,000 items was launched in 1999.

The farmers saw how the most popular in Russia fixed chamber balers were built. The company has recently released an updated model range of the 6520 Fixed Chamber Balers with the PowerBind system with direct net injection for fastest netting.

'Last year, the Kverneland balers proved their leadership at the competitions in the Perm area', said Aleksey Letyagin, Sales Manager of Kverneland. 'Our machines overtook all their competitors to win in all nominations of the competition and became the best in terms of speed, performance, quality, bale density and other parameters.'

The specialists presented the new Fixed Chamber FastBale non-stop round baler wrapper for baling and wrapping in one go. Last year, SIMA Show gave the FastBale the Silver Medal for its innovative design.

The agricultural producers also visited the Kverneland factory manufacturing harrows, cutters and choppers in Modena. The factory produces up to 2,700 items of machinery per year.

Currently, Kverneland machinery works in more than 80 oblasts and republics of Russia. This machinery is well-known in the Tomsk oblast. The Kverneland plough has been working in the fields of Denis Kolpakov's agricultural enterprise for seven years.

'The plough is still working flawlessly!' says Denis Kolpakov. 'I am very happy with the Kverneland machinery. The quality is very good. This is the first time I have visited the manufacturing sites of the company. Seeing at what level the manufacturing process is organised made me feel that I want to buy the machinery! The work is organised without a hitch at all stages. Choosing the Kverneland machinery, you know that you are making the right choice! I would like to thank EkoNiva for the opportunity to see this with my own eyes again.'

Sergey Ivanov, Director of Sibirskoye Zerno farming enterprise (Tomsk oblast), not only received a hands-on experience of the high quality of Kverneland machinery but also got a 30% discount for the purchase of any Kverneland equipment.

'We are making preparations for the new season', says Sergey Ivanov. 'I appreciate this opportunity a lot. The discount could not have come at a better time. We are going to buy a new seed drill combination from Kverneland. I often visit various exhibitions and events with EkoNiva. I have seen lots of new and interesting things. However, I would like to point out that this trip is one of the best both in terms of organisation and information content. High level of production, innovative designs, and work synergy at all stages… It is obvious that all Kverneland employees are sincerely engaged in what they are doing!'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

British traditions from the Russian perspective

Ten years of reliable partnership is a respectable anniversary. It is especially pleasant when business relationships gradually turn into friendship. As we previously wrote, this year, EkoNiva and JCB celebrate the 10th anniversary of cooperation. Within the context of this celebration, the companies are planning a range of events for their partners and clients. One of them has taken place on the native land of JCB loaders.

Despite the widespread opinion, the United Kingdom welcomed the Russian group with bright sunshine and warm weather. The same brightness and unforgettable impressions filled every day of the visit to England.

The key event of the trip was the visit to JCB Headquarters in Staffordshire. The family enterprise founded by Joseph Cyril Bamford demonstrated both the home-like coziness and the spirit of innovation straight from the front door. The founder of the company has chosen the right motto: 'Never stop at what you have achieved!'. Welcoming the guests, Andrey Solovyev, Director General of JCB Russia, observed, 'I hope that after the visit to the factory, you will be absolutely sure that buying JCB machines, you are making the right choice! Our machinery is characterised by the highest quality and the most cutting-edge technological developments which will help to make your business successful.'

Before visiting the modern production facilities, the Russian farmers immersed themselves into the history of JCB by visiting the company museum. Here, the guests had an opportunity to see the first products – the tipping trailers, with which everything began inside the narrow garage back in 1945. And just three years later, the company started producing the first loaders. It is interesting that initially, JCB products were painted red or green, the famous yellow machines appeared only in 1953.

The Russian guests could not help noticing the bolide with the JCB diesel engine installed on it. In 2006, this machine set the world landspeed record — 563.418 km/h, which, by the way, has not been broken until now!

Currently, JCB is one of the world leading machinery manufacturers possessing 11 factories in England and 11 more factories in other countries of the world. Over 35,000 machines have been sold in Russia, and the market share of JCB loaders currently exceeds 50%. Despite the crisis, the sales of the loaders not only continued, but also increased: in 2015, 480 machines were sold in Russia. The decision of the company management to sell machines in Russia in rubles and at a fixed exchange rate was one of the key factors of the sales success.

Eleven Russian farmers had an opportunity to see how the legendary machines are born with their own eyes. Every day, 65-70 loaders roll off the conveyor belt of the factory employing 2,000 people. It is important to underline that all the major components of the machines (engines, transmission, hydraulics, axles) are manufactured at the company's own factories, which means that everything is under control and the customers can be sure of the quality.

The factory tour began from the hydraulic cylinders production facility. Seamless welding and robotic assembly at a special chamber guarantee durability and reliability of the hydraulics. Many people were impressed by the process of handling the metal delivered from Scandinavian countries. JCB implements laser or plasma metal cutting. For manufacturing of a telescopic arrow, the metal sheet is bent to form a U-shape. As Gennady Makarov, Commercial Director of Stroyuniversal,

noted, it takes the precision of a jeweller to bend the metal correctly.

'My work is also connected with production of metal structures, and I understand perfectly well how high-tech the equipment must be to bend the metal with an accuracy of one micron. After what I have seen, I think that this year, I will buy a JCB loader.'

Special attention is given to the quality control: at first, the machine undergoes the so-called hot testing of the engine and the transmission, then testing of the hydraulic system and finally, the loader is placed into an UV chamber for leak testing. Preliminarily, a luminescent solution is added to all the liquids in the machine. The solution fluoresces under the ultraviolet light. If any leaks are discovered during the hot testing, the machine is sent back to the factory for adjustment. After the adjustment, it undergoes a complete testing again.

The Russian guests also visited the World Parts Centre, which conquers the imagination both with its size (6.5 standard international soccer fields) and cutting-edge equipment. The automated bar-code system allows the robots to assemble spare parts. If the necessary part is not available at the storage facility, it is delivered directly from the production premises. DHL office is located in the same building to ensure prompt logistics. Every week, 6,000 items arrive at the storage facility and 30,000 items are shipped to the clients.

The general opinion after the factory tour can be expressed in one word - 'Impressive!'. Aleksandr Churilov, Head of Rodina farming enterprise, has as many as five JCB loaders on his farm. There is enough space for the machines to demonstrate their abilities: 12,000 ha on which the farmer grows grain and sugar beets and raises dairy cattle.

'We purchased the first loader in 2008', recalls Alexander. 'It worked well, and we purchased another one. Then the enterprise started expanding, we added two more loaders. Then the hard works required a big front loader. In autumn, I am planning to buy two more machines. There are many offers on the market, but you can't beat JCB. This is not only my opinion, my colleagues are also convinced that this is loader №1 on the world market.'

Even though the trip was quite short, the Russian farmers managed to visit London, walk along the streets of Stratford-upon-Avon, the birth place of Shakespeare, spend some nights in a medieval abbey and even become the Knights of the Order of the Golden Field.

By Svetlana WEBER

First JCB product manufactured in 1945 — a tipping trailer

The four whales of John Deere

Within one trip, Russian farmers together with EkoNiva visited four John Deere factories located in Germany and the Netherlands. Experts from John Deere revealed the secret of the phenomenal machinery quality to the guests from Russia.

John Deere's factory in Manheim (Germany) manufacturing the 5, 6 and 7 Series tractors was the first destination in their itinerary. According to the farmers, it is a real intellectual laboratory. Every day, John Deere corporation invests over two million euro in scientific research and development. As compared to other producers, the company's designers and specialists research, design, manufacture and test all the major components of the machines on their own, which fascinates farmers, as it is a testament to the highest quality standards of the machines. The farmers saw the assembly line equipment. The assembly quality is evaluated by Six Sigma system. It is a comprehensive technique used to improve the processes and prevent defects. For each machine, there is an individual assembly chart, the unique code of which determines specifications of the machine. The most important thing when assembling a tractor is the compliance with the technique. An operator is provided with a specific order of the component installation. After the manufacture, the components are compared using a camera. Only if the two components are fully identical, the operator can move on to further assembly stages. This procedure is followed for each component at each stage. At the same time, our farmers were impressed by the efficiency of the operation: on average, 3.5 hours is required to assemble one tractor. Another equally important observation of our farming producers was that all the tractors were custom assembled. Visiting the John Deere Museum displaying the whole history of the company development from the first plough manufactured to the novelties that are still being designed added a nice final touch on the tour.

In Bruchsal (Germany), the group visited John Deere's tractor cabin factory. Besides manufacturing workshops, it encompasses the second largest in the world John Deere's European Parts Distribution Centre and warehouses with automated storage system.

The highest interest was aroused by European manufacturing base for the production of combines and self-propelled forage harvesters in Zweibruecken (Germany). The enterprise occupies 300 thousand square metres and utilises advanced laser equipment, robotic welding and the 6-stage painting system.

Grain combines pass through 14 automated assembly stations, and 13 assembly stations are required to complete the assembly of John Deere forage harvesters. The factory specialists shared that each combine consists of 17,000 parts, each controlled most rigorously at all assembly stages.

Every week, the factory specialists pick a random machine and inspect it meticulously to detect any defects. One incompliance — and the machine is sent off for refinement. The guests were utterly impressed by the proving ground where new models are trialed at 100% load. For instance, the harvester auger is tested in a special device, three months of operation in which is equivalent to three years in the fields. It enables engineers to troubleshoot in a short period.

The John Deere factory in Horst, the Netherlands, has been manufacturing self-propelled and trailed sprayers since 1947. Roman Shkaraput, Director of Vostok Farming Enterprise (Ryazan oblast) was especially motivated to visit the site.

'We need a sprayer for the new season', shares Roman. 'We don't have to think twice choosing the brand. It is certainly John Deere! A few years ago, it was EkoNiva that introduced it to us. Today, several 7 and 8 Series tractors and a trailed sprayer perform excellently on our farm. Last year, we were the first in the region to acquire and test a novelty – the 6135B tractor. So far, it has been doing a great job. We did not have any doubts about the machinery quality before, but after visiting the four manufacturing "whales" of John Deere, our trust in the brand has only increased.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

LEMKEN: on the wave of innovation

On the threshold of the new season, LEMKEN held a series of Field Days — 2016 in Germany for its dealers. More than 90 representatives of dealer companies from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus had an opportunity to see the LEMKEN machinery production with their own eyes.

First, LEMKEN specialists presented the pride of the company — the new factory manufacturing self-propelled and trailed sprayers, which was commissioned last year in Haren. Production of the full range of crop protection implements is now concentrated at one site. The factory has been built in compliance with the most modern standards. The guests saw how the famous Primus, Albatross and Sirius sprayers were assembled on the assembly lines. This year, the company has launched a full-scale production of the new Vega trailed field sprayer. This sprayer was first unveiled at Agritechnica.

'The Vega sprayer has a unique design and a new spraying system', says Aleksandr Burmak, Sales Manager of EkoNivaSibir. 'This model will enter the Russian market in 2017.'

The guests were pleasantly surprised by the new ergonomically designed workplaces as well as the modern technological operations. The tools and materials are carefully selected for each stage of the process; the assembly sites are specially designed to provide every worker with all the needed instruments. The company invested a total of EUR 12 million into the new facility

Viktor Lemken, owner of the company, welcomed the dealers at the new factory manufacturing tillage implements in Alpen.

'I am glad to see all of you at our production site. It is very important for me to show you how we ensure the high quality of our products.'

The dealers saw all the production stages. They praised the innovative design of the new paint line the size of a soccer field, which allows varnishing up to 2.3 million parts a year.

The company specialists stated that last year they produced 13,370 machines. The major part of them (23%) are ploughs and chisel cultivators, 25% — sowing equipment, and 5% — plant protection equipment. This year, they started manufacturing the new Vega sprayer, the Heliodor 9 compact disc harrow, the working width of which has been increased from 3 to 16 meters, and the Juwel mounted plough with mechanical tilt adjustment.

Besides the technical innovations, the company made investments into the construction of new factories and re-equipment of the existing facilities. The new design and construction facility with the testing site allowing to employ more than 100 engineers was commissioned in Alpen. It comprises a large-scale state-of-the-art manufacturing hall with an area of 10,000 sq. m. In 2015, the company invested the total of 33 million euro into construction works.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Doors Open Day

For John Deere factory, spring came along bringing really 'hot' days. At the beginning of March, the facility was visited by 150 farmers from different regions of Russia. The company also welcomed the representatives of the journalistic community for which they organised The Media Day. Among the guests was a journalist of EkoNiva-News.

The management of John Deere welcomed the journalists and took them on a tour of the facility. The tour started from the welding and painting departments. The equipment is impressive! Over 20 welding units perform simultaneous welding of over hundred components of different degrees of complexity. The displays installed on the welding units demonstrate 3D-models of the components. The welding is performed by semi-automated devices with the use of the latest developments in the area of impulse welding.

The steel blanks for welding are mainly delivered from North America but the Russian components are becoming more and more frequently used. At the same time, the company does not allow any deviation from the John Deere quality standards which are valued by the farmers all over the world. The specialists of the factory told us that the painting process includes 12 stages. First, the parts are cleaned from any impurities, then they go through a five-stage washing and degreasing. Further, the parts are covered with nanoceramic coating, which increases the corrosion resistance, and dried. Only after that, the parts get into the painting chamber. The final stage of the painting process is the paint-curing oven. The painted part goes through a five-step check: from hardness test to varnish level check.

The journalists were shown two parts: one of them was welded and painted at the facility in Orenburg, the other – at John Deere factory in the USA. The journalists did not see any difference. Neither did the farmers who visited the facility the day before.

Aleksey Kuznetsov, John Deere Productions Director in Russia, said that at the end of this year, the company would open a metal handling facility for cutting and bending metal.

The next point of the tour was the assembly department. The most popular models of seed drills and tillage implements in Russia and the CIS countries come off the four assembly lines. Each assembly line is divided into sections, and each part has its own address. Mistakes are simply impossible.

The components are ordered from the suppliers located in North America, Europe and Russia. The orders are created in the SAP electronic management system, which helps to avoid mistakes and reduces order processing time.

A strict quality control is implemented at each assembly stage. There is also a random check of machines at the finished products storage facility. Before shipment, all machines are checked once again.

Dmitry Novgorodov, Director of the factory, stated at the press conference that the localisation of components manufacturing would be enhanced.

'The range of locally produced components will be increased', underlined Dmitry Novgorodov.

The economic and market environment in the world and in Russia was also one of the widely discussed topics. Arne Bergmann, Director, Sales & Marketing for Europe/Russia, observed that the farming machinery market had significantly decreased within past three-four years.

'We as farming machinery manufacturers realise that the situation is quite complicated', says Arne Bergmann. 'But this is just another crisis on our way. Our strategy to feed the world has not changed. Therefore, Russia is a strategic market for us.'

The factory in Orenburg was opened in summer, 2013. Since then, the welding and painting sections have been launched. In the nearest time, the factory will open a facility for laser cutting and bending of metal. The total amount of investments into the production facilities exceeds USD 45 million. The factory produces nine models of machinery, 37 modifications: the John Deere 2720 disc ripper, the John Deere 2623 and 2623 VT disc harrows, the John Deere 455, John Deere 730, John Deere 1830, John Deere 1890 seed drills and the John Deere 1910 pneumatic seed loader.

By Diana TUTBERIDZE

Shortly before the start of the spring sowing campaign, farmers of the Black Soil Region got together at the 20th Agriseason farming industry trade fair at the Exhibition Centre of the Voronezh Agricultural University.

As you sow, so shall you reap!

This year, Agriseason has celebrated its 10th anniversary. About eighty exhibitors presented the state-of-the-art products from the world farming machinery and equipment manufacturers to the farmers of the region.

The proverb: 'As you sow, so shall you reap!' became the motto of the trade fair. The exhibition guests demonstrated a high demand for seeders. At EkoNiva-Chernozemie's exposition site, the farmers' interest was focused on the 8-row John Deere 1780 rigid precision planter. It is a real 'sniper' among row-crop planters. Its perfect seeding precision is based on unique John Deere technology – the VacuMeter (a vacuum metering system) and the MaxEmerge row units.

'The John Deere 1780 planter performs greatly on various soils in both conventional and no-till farming', says Aleksandr Kirichenko, Sales Department Manager of EkoNiva-Chernozemie. 'The frame design is very robust and can handle any load. It is an unfailing tool with a pristine seeding quality, high performance and low operating cost.'

By the way, the power requirements of this planter are quite moderate; it can be easily drawn by the John Deere 6135B tractor (135 hp), which was displayed at EkoNiva-Chernozemie's exposition site. Being quite compact, the machine can be used for tilling and seeding; it is perfect for forage harvesting, fertiliser application and for works on livestock farms and feedlots.

EkoNiva-Chernozemie's specialists informed the farmers not only about modern technology solutions but also about beneficial financial offers from John Deere Financial. One of them is a leasing programme for a period from 13 to 60 months with different repayment schedules. Transaction down payments vary from 20% to 49%. The business seasonality is also taken into account.

Moreover, EkoNiva-Chernozemie offered a number of quite interesting and convenient servicing programmes, for example, preparation of machinery before the farming season start, which helps to troubleshoot, repair farming machines in advance and face the new agricultural season in full operational readiness. Besides, it ensures good cost saving, as those who decide to take a good care of their machinery beforehand and not after it breaks down out in the fields are eligible for good discounts and installment payments. In addition, all servicing has a 6-month warranty.

By Yulia SALKOVA

To Austria – in search of knowledge!

Pöttinger held an annual training for service engineers of the dealer companies. Over twenty specialists from various regions of Russia, including EkoNiva's servicing team, arrived at the major Pöttinger factory in Austria to upgrade their qualification.

'Pöttinger puts a special emphasis on the quality of the service and maintenance of its machinery', comments Aleksandr Zernov, Director General of Pottinger in Russia. 'We have to be 100% positive that our machines won't be idling during the farming season and cause economic losses to agricultural producers, therefore we hold regular trainings for our partners. It is crucial for us to ensure that all regions of Russia are provided with highly qualified specialists able to solve any technical problems of our customers promptly and professionally.'

The service engineers learned about the latest technological achievements of the company in forage harvesting and tillage.

As EkoNiva's service engineers shared, the training was mostly devoted to TERRASEM mulch seed drills with direct fertilisation and wide-cut NOVACAT X8 mower combinations. At practical trainings in the Service Centre, the specialists studied all the technical aspects of these machines in detail.

By Anna BORDUNOVA

Pure soybeans in Russian fields

Why are Russian soybeans rated so highly and how to grow them in our conditions?

Over the past three decades, world production of soybeans has tripled – up to 312 million tonnes a year. Particularly large areas under this crop are in the USA, Brazil and Argentina. However, there is a great interest in this crop also in Russia, especially in the Black Soil Region. It is driven by a high protein demand for the growing livestock farming industry and a high purchase price.

Soybeans accounted for 28% in the 162.8 million tonnes of the world production of vegetable oils in 2014. Only palm oil (38%) was in the lead. However, it is a legume crop in plant taxonomy. It is due to its high content of very valuable and easily digestible protein that soybeans have gained such momentum in recent decades. Approximately 80% of the imported soybeans is used as livestock feed. According to Oil World, soybean meal accounted for 67% of the total meal production in 2014/15.

When formulating livestock rations, herd managers give preference to soybean meal due to its high protein content and good amino acid digestibility.

Amino acid digestibility of the soybean meal protein is from 80% to 87%, which is much higher than that of the rape meal or the protein in peas, wheat or barley.

However, 90% of the soybean from North and South Americas consists of genetically modified varieties (GMO).

Feed value of 1 kg of rapeseed and soybean meal

	Measurement unit	Rapeseed meal	Soybean meal
Dry matter	g	891	890
Crude protein	g	334	432
Lysine **pc-digestibility***	g %	18,9 73	26.8 87
Methionine **pc-digestibility***	g %	14.4 77	14 84
Threonine **pc-digestibility***	g %	15 69	18.9 80
Tryptophan **pc-digestibility***	g %	4.7 68	6.3 86
Crude fibre	g	122	83
Metabolisable energy	MJ	10.4	12.9
Calcium	g	6.6	3.4
Phosphor	g	11.7	6.4

* pc-digestibility — amino acid digestibility in the small intestine

Source: data provided by UfOP/DLG and the Chamber of Agriculture of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

Even under a total ban on cultivation of GMO varieties in Europe and Russia, genetically-modified material finds its way into these countries through the import of soybean meal (over 32 million tonnes annually). The soybeans cultivated in Russia are genetically pure; therefore the demand for them is constantly growing.

The soybean is a short-day crop and it is very demanding in terms of temperatures. Its performance depends largely on the amount of accumulated heat. In Canada, the amount of effective temperatures which the soybeans need to receive from emergence until full maturity is referred to as Crop Heat Units (CHU). Since EkoNiva-Semena sells soybeans of Canadian breeding, calculation of this indicator for each region is of great significance.

Short-season soybean varieties rank in yield below those with a longer growing season. But for Central Russia, the choice of medium and medium-early maturity groups causes certain risks of harvesting unripe or frost-damaged beans.

EkoNiva grows soybean variety OAC Prudence developed by Canadian plant breeders from the University of Guelph (Ontario). This a non-GMO, 2450 CHU variety with an average 1,000 kernel weight of 179 g and protein content of up to 44%.

OAC Prudence entered variety trials at the Shchigry state variety testing plot in 2011, and every year since, it has been reaffirming the top performer status with excellent results in terms of the yield and protein content. In 2015, for example, the yield amounted to 3.72 tonnes/ha, which exceeded Luchezarnaya, the check variety, by 1.23 tonnes. Year over year, the protein content is higher than that of the standard varieties by 3-4 per cent, which is supported by the results of the analysis performed in Zashchitnoe LLC. In the production fields in the Kursk and Voronezh oblasts over the years 2014 and 2015, the share of OAC Prudence exceeded 60%, and the protein content averaged 37.68 and 36.9%, respectively.

The soybean-sown area is planned to be expanded up to 12 thousand hectares in 2016, with the Canadian variety occupying 90% of the area.

Inoculation of seeds with nitrogen-fixing bacteria (Bradyrhizobium japonikum) plays a crucial part in achieving high yields of quality soybeans. Absence of or poor inoculation may lead to yield reduction by one-third or a 10% loss in protein content of the soybean seeds. Thus, the protein yield per hectare may drop by half.

In EkoNiva, the main inoculant is Noctin. It is a liquid special-purpose inoculant based on the Bradyrhizobium japonicum E109 nitrogen-fixing bacterium strain. The agent is applied onto seeds through treatment at a rate of 1.5-3.0 litres per tonne of seeds. During the first year, it is always necessary to apply higher rates of the

inoculant. In case of repeated sowing, the rates of the agent may be reduced. Only pure non-chlorinated water should be used for the inoculant dissolution. The working fluid consumption is 10 litres per tonne. It should be noted that inoculation is performed with live bacteria, and certain requirements need to be fulfilled here:

— the inoculant should be stored in a cool place (below +25°C) away from sunlight;

— during treatment, the bacteria should not be exposed to direct sunlight or heat. No more than three hours should pass from the moment of inoculation to sowing;

— fungicides inhibit the inoculant bacteria. A thorough approach to choosing the treating agent is required. Maxim or Vincit can be used as options.

The OAC Prudence is of an early maturity group, not very branchy. The recommended sowing rate is 650 - 700 thousand per hectare. At a TKW of 165-170 g, and provided that the field emergence is 82%, the seeding rate is 135-140 kg/ha. It is recommended to use mechanical planters for sowing soybeans. In air seed-drills with long air hoses leading to the seedbed, the seed coat is often damaged, and the field emergence gets compromised.

As to the weed control tactics prevailing in EkoNiva, mostly past-emergence herbicides are applied. Pulsar at a rate of 0.8 l/ha has a strong effect and shows a certain afteraction on the second wave of weeds. If soybeans are sown again after soybeans or if crops susceptible to Imazamox are included in the crop rotation, we recommend using Bazagran at a rate of 2 l/ha in mixture with Harmony at a rate of 7 g/ha.

If a farm has large areas sown with soybeans, we advise using soil agents against problematic weeds on early-sown fields. For example, early emergence of the lamb's quarters is a problem for some farms. By the time of general use of after-emergence agents, the lamb's quarters develops a wax coating, and gets quite Pulsar-resistant. Pre-emergence application of Zenkor Ultra (the active substance - Metribuzin) is efficient on such fields. But use caution! Some varieties are quite susceptible to Metribuzin, so you need to find out the variety's reaction first. The Registered Plant Protection Products list gives very high rates of Zenkor. To prevent soybeans from harm, the rate of Zenkor should be 0.25-0.4 kg/ha, depending on the humus content and mechanical soil content.

The optimal conditions for harvesting soybeans are when the crop reaches 14-16% of moisture, and the seed coat does not get damaged so easily during threshing. In the course of cleaning and aeration, the seeds are brought to standard moisture content of 12%.

In order to reduce grain losses during harvesting, it is important to have a field as level as possible and a low cutting height during direct combining.

The use of John Deere 600 F headers with the HydraFlex cutterbar will keep your losses down to 0.3 tonnes/ha.

By Willi DREWS, Doctor of Agronomy, Consultant for EkoNiva

The protein champion!

Intensive livestock farming development is impossible without highly productive feed, and alfalfa should be one of the key components as it is the protein content champion among all forage crops.

Alfalfa is no less valuable as a preceding crop in the crop rotation. It enriches the soil with organic matter, improves its fertility by leaving minimum 200 kg/ha of nitrogen, which is equivalent to spreading 40-50 tonnes/ha of manure. When irrigated, alfalfa prevents soil salinization and nutrient leaching from the root-inhabited layer, thus functioning as a biological drainage. The alfalfa effect manifests itself over several years. It is the best predecessor for cereals and other crops.

Highly adaptive varieties of alfalfa (blue) with a high level of winter hardiness are of great value today as they are capable of resisting adverse growing conditions during the growing season not only in the central regions, but in Siberia too. The alfalfa variety Dakota (Medicago sativa L.) of American genetics, which took its rightful place in the commercial forage seed production of EkoNiva-Semena in 2016, meets these requirements.

The originator of the alfalfa variety Dakota is Great Plains Research (the USA). The variety has been included into the State Register for the Western-Siberian region since 2016. The bush is of upright type; the stems — 76-98 cm high, branch well and resist lodging; the leafiness is 57%. Dakota is of northern ecotype, perfectly suited for cultivation in the northern regions.

It is a mid-season and multi-cut variety. It can withstand a drop of temperature at the depth of root crown as low as −20 °C. Lodging resistance, drought and heat tolerance are high.

Dakota fares well under daily temperatures up to +35…40 °C. It produces 2-3 cuttings over the growing season on the dryland. The crop is ready for the first cutting on day 58-64, regrows for the second cutting in 47-54 days.

The genetics of the variety warrants increased protein content in dry matter of the green mass, as well as a high protein and dry matter yield per unit of area.

Over the years of trials, the variety has demonstrated a sustainable performance: 14.0-15.6 tonnes/ha of dry matter with crude protein content of up to 26.5% and 0.8-1.0 tonnes/ha of seeds.

The variety Dakota is resistant to wide-spread diseases (Ascochyta blight, rust, wilt).

The value of the variety Dakota is its high tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses, thanks to which it is distinguished by high long-term performance and produces significant economic effect both in irrigated conditions and in dryland as compared to other varieties. The advantages of the variety are particularly prominent in the third and the fourth years of life.

Andrey ZVYAGIN,
Seed Production Agronomist of Zashchitnoe LLC

Western genetics from Russia for Russia

Shortage of high-yielding cows with a high genetic potential remains an important issue for Russian farming enterprises.

Previously, this problem was partially solved by import of breeding cattle from western countries. However, livestock farmers observe that in the current economic and political environment, it has become quite complicated. Besides, the stress from the long voyage and the adaptation syndrome lead to a loss of up to 30% of the delivered animals.

EkoNiva has been engaged in pedigree livestock breeding for over ten years. The livestock farms located in the Voronezh, Kursk, Kaluga, and Novosibirsk oblasts have the status of breeding reproducers and certified stock breeding enterprises for Holstein, Simmental, Red-and-White, Brown Swiss and Hereford breeds.

'We raise replacement stock for our own farms and deliver pedigree heifers and bulls for breeding to farming enterprises in the Krasnodar area as well as the Pskov, Tula, Kaluga and Tyumen oblasts', says Valeria Serebrennikova, Head of Breeding Department of EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'We always get good references regarding the physiological and adaptation properties of the livestock. This is due to the use of sexed semen of the best breeding bulls of Germany, Austria, the USA and Canada. Thus, we use western genetics but the progeny is raised in Russia and adapted to the local climate and the industrial farm housing conditions.'

Every animal has a number of unquestionable benefits: udder shape well-suited for machine milking, high milking performance, longevity, disease resistance, strong legs. The heifers have less stress at calving, feel comfortable in the herd when housed in big groups. The cattle belongs to the 'elite' and 'elite record' categories. The live weight of animals exceeds the breed standards. 'The breed purity is confirmed with breeding certificates registered at the regional Departments of Agriculture and the Breeders' Associations of the Russian Federation', adds Valeria Serebrennikova. 'It is also important that we group the cattle on the basis of their age and quantity, in compliance with the individual requirements of each farming enterprise.'

By Yulia SALKOVA

Once and for all!

EkoNiva is literally one big family. Whole families, including spouses, parents, children and siblings, work for the company. The Minakovs from Kaluzhskaya Niva is a vivid example of that.

Almost thirty years ago, as a student of the Kaluga Farming School, Nina Minakova arrived at Bebelevo State Farm, which is now Kaluzhskaya Niva, for internship; and there she met her future husband, Gennady Minakov, who worked as a driver then. It was love at first sight. Soon, the young people got married. After graduating from the Farming School, Nina came to work on the Bebelevo State Farm qualified as a herd manager, but later she was able to master some additional professions. She started as an assistant to shift supervisor. Diligence and perseverance of the young specialist were appreciated, and soon, Ninochka, as her colleagues called her, was appointed supervisor of the livestock department.

As of today, Nina has been working as an artificial insemination technician for over sixteen years. At Kaluzhskaya Niva, she is taking care of over 2,000 cows, and each one is under her rigorous control.

Despite little romance in the work of an artificial insemination technician, Nina talks about her job with love and, most importantly, with passion in her eyes. According to her, this job, though peculiar, is creative and purely feminine. It requires not only alacrity and attentiveness, but also upgrade of the skills.

'Without herd reproduction, a farm cannot perform well in dairy farming', says Nina Minakova. 'If there are calves, there will be milk, performance, and the economic results of the farm will improve. Thus, a lot depends on my work.'

Nina Minakova draws up and monitors plans of insemination, cow and heifer calvings. She admits that she worries about each cow as if it were her own daughter.

'Both good and bad things happen at work', says Nina. 'Cows cannot speak, so I evaluate their look, attitude, physiological parameters. Now, modern management software helps a lot making everything clearer and better regulated, but anyways, it is the hands that serve as my main tool. They feel and understand a cow better than any device.'

In the past two years, there has been almost 100% calf output on the farm. An increasing number of twins and triplets born at Kaluzhskaya Niva is also the result of her skilled handwork.

The numerous awards and a title '1st Class Specialist of Livestock Farming, Herd Reproduction Technician' are a testament to her high qualifications. Besides, two years ago, Nina Minakova won a contest and became the best artificial insemination technician in the Kaluga oblast. She admits, with a smile, she draws the inspiration to achieve the ambitious results from her quiet, reliable family harbour: her husband and children.

Gennady, Nina's husband, was trained as a tractor operator, as it turned out, for thirty years, he has really been behind the wheel but of a 'lighter' vehicle. Since 2013, he has been working for Kaluzhskaya Niva. Their son Sergey also chose to work as a driver on the farm. They do not only steer a wheel together here, but also defend the honour of Kaluzhskaya Niva in football, basketball and volleyball competitions. Moreover, Sergey is currently trained for E and D license categories to be able to operate a trailer.

'I really appreciate it that Kaluzhskaya Niva creates the environment for self-improvement for both young and experienced specialists', says Sergey Minakov. 'All the specialists regularly upgrade their qualifications. The farm is progressive and looks only ahead; it also teaches its workers never to look back.'

When questioned if it is challenging for the family to work together at the same enterprise, he replies, smiling, 'We hardly ever see each other at work. Sergey and I are on the road all the time and often work without days off. Nina frequently works late hours delayed by her horned proteges, therefore we only miss each other more.'

Looking at the Minakov spouses fills your heart with joy — so loving and gentle their relationship is. Their secret of a happy family is explained by the right choice.

'A spouse as well as an occupation should be chosen once and for all', say the Minakovs. 'The spouses have to be on the same page and have the same life goal. We teach our children the same. Different situations may occur in life, the sun does not always shine brightly for everybody. We wish the young people were more tolerant to each other.'

The Minakovs are valued and respected at Kaluzhskaya Niva. 'Responsible, hard-working, occupying the right position,' comments Vladimir Kavin, Director of the enterprise. 'They can set an example for lots of people. I wish we had more families like this.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

The Academy of Dairy Sciences opened its new farm tour season at the dairy of Kaluzhskaya Niva. Within three days, the farm was visited by 154 elementary school students of school № 23 of Kaluga.

The things you'd hardly see even in cartoons!

'Our pupils enthusiastically embraced the idea to visit a real farm and see how farmers produce the milk they drink every day both at school and at home', says Olga Frank, class teacher of 1B class. 'Once they were told that they would meet real robots on the farm, their joy knew no bounds.'

The children saw the much-coveted milking robots in all their glory. They were just in time to see the milking process. The students were standing literally open-mouthed while the robots were taking care of the cow: they milked and fed her, attached the milking units and treated the cow's udder. The specialists of the enterprise told the children that there are 12 milking robots on the farm and these robots milk 1,800 cows. The teachers noted with a great surprise that this number was bigger than the total number of pupils in their school!

'These robots are cooler than the Transformers', shares his impressions Egor Roshchenkov, student of 1B class. 'They manage the cow with one hand! This is fantastic! I have never seen such clever robots even in cartoons!'

Alyona Degtyareva, Veterinarian of Kaluzhskaya Niva, told the children that a calf and, subsequently, a cow does not have upper front teeth. Instead, they have a hard 'gum pad'. The boys and girls learned that the cows have no canines; they have incisors only on the lower jaw and the upper jaw is just a hard dental pad without any teeth. These features allow the cows to eat the plants.

All the students received memorable gifts with the pictures of the well-known characters of the Academy of Dairy Sciences: Professor Zorkin, Cow Marta, Zhu-Zhu Bee and Girl Polya.

'I have already read about the "Academicians" on the Academy of Dairy Sciences site', says Yana Makarina, second-form student.' I liked Professor Zorkin very much. He is so smart! I have learnt that for every litre of milk produced, a cow needs to drink from three to five litres of water and eat 1.5 kg of feed.'

By Anna BORDUNOVA

A cow on ice skates – it is possible!

This spring, the Ice Palace of Liski (Voronezh oblast) welcomed future Olympic champions in figure skating.

The youth tournament among the cities of the Southern Federal District took place on the ice skating rink. The Academy of Dairy Sciences supported the participants of the event! One hundred and sixty figure skaters aged from 5 to 13 from 15 cities of the Federal District took part in the tournament.

The will to win, the tedious waiting, the tears of joy and sadness permeated the air of the Ice Palace. Cow Marta from the Academy of Dairy Sciences shared the emotions of the skaters. She offered to the participants the 'skating treats': yoghurt and 'Academic Milk' from the Academy, which pleased both the sportsmen and their coaches.

Cow Marta helped the children to take their minds off the tense waiting before going on the ice rink. The young skaters participated in the creative contests held by the Academy of Dairy Sciences.

Having won seven gold medals, the Liski residents became the leaders of the competition. All participants received delicious prizes from Cow Marta and promised to take her under patronage so that she could prove that the saying 'Awkward as a cow on ice skates' is wrong.

'We remain faithful to the principle: the Academy of Dairy Sciences will always be there, where sport is', says Christine Frank, Head of the Academy of Dairy Sciences Project. 'This tournament confirmed it once again. The children showed enormous persistence and self-possession. I would like to thank the young skaters for their tremendous will to win and professional competence as well as the ability to win and lose with dignity!'

By Yulia SALKOVA
Photo by Sergey PECHKUROV

Announcements

8 June
A federal field training dedicated to operating JCB machines
Venue: EkoNivaAgro, Bobrov district, Voronezh oblast
Organisers: JCB and EkoNiva

14-16 June
Field Day – 2016 in Germany
Venue: Mariaburghausen in Hassfurt, Germany
Organisers: DLG

30 June – 1 July
Voronezh Field Day – 2016
Venue: EkoNivaAgro, Liski district, Voronezh oblast
Organisers: Centre exhibition company

June
Field Day in the Kemerovo oblast
Venue: Kemerovo oblast
Organisers: Ministry of Agriculture of the Kemerovo oblast

June
Inter-regional Field Day in the Novosibirsk oblast
Venue: Novosibirsk oblast
Organisers: Ministry of agriculture of the Novosibirsk oblast

July
Field Day in the Tomsk oblast
Venue: Tomsk oblast
Organisers: Ministry of agriculture of the Tomsk oblast

16 July
Inter-regional Potato Field Day
Venue: Urusovo village, Venyov district,Tula oblast, ZHAK farming enterprise
Organisers: Grimme jointly with John Deere and EkoNiva

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30 June – 1 July

EkoNiva cordially invites its partners to visit the Voronezh Field Day – 2016 which will take place in EkoNivaAgro (Liski district, Voronezh oblast). The company will showcase the latest achievements in the area of the world farming machinery manufacturing, crop farming and seed growing.

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