

AI in agriculture

EkoNiva implements smart farming solutions

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Robust, powerful, daring

Farm machinery parade in Ryazan and Voronezh

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EKO NIVA milk for the HoReCa segment

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AI enhances human capabilities

When previously asked about an optimal farm size, I used to say, '30,000 ha'. I would probably still think so but for the new AI farming technologies.

We purchased our first farm in 2002, and we were already tapping into digital farm management options then. I asked my university friends to help me bring various gauges and devices from Germany, and we tried to put them to use on the farm. Frankly speaking, I was looked upon as a complete idiot. Hardly anyone believed that a tractor could connect to a satellite and receive data. To be fair, our digitalisation attempts were not much use at that time: AI technology was still in its infancy and the tools we used were primitive.

However, we were far from giving up. In 2008, we even started working on our own software, but with little success. Nevertheless, we have always been keeping

abreast of the latest developments in this field. Within the past six - seven years, there has been a major breakthrough in digital engineering.

Modern challenges and growing scales call for more sophisticated solutions. Now we farm over 600,000 ha in 13 regions and possess a herd of 200,000 head, including 100,000 cows. It is impossible to manage such a large-scale enterprise without smart farming systems.

Before the digital era, it used to take a huge amount of paperwork and time to get the operational data to the data base. First, tasks were distributed to operators, then the operational data was collected from each machine and transferred to the data base, and after that accountants had to prepare a report. Now, we can monitor every machine remotely. We know exactly where each of

them is, what kind of work has been done and how much material has been used. Another important advantage of AI tools is that they make operator's work easier: GPS navigation and cognitive mapping save them a lot of time and effort. This means less fatigue, better performance and a higher salary.

Precision farming systems are also essential to a modern agricultural producer. They help farmers to understand why yields differ within the same field and what this variation has to do with the weather conditions and the chemical properties of the soil. Of course, extensive statistical data is required for the system to work properly and generate a correct algorithm for a certain field. In this case, the smart software will learn to understand fields of any size – from 100 hectares to hundreds of thousands of hectares – offering incredible

opportunities for efficient farming!

It is important to remember that state-of-the-art technologies are not there to replace people, their main purpose is to facilitate people's work and help them make the right decisions based on reliable data. Precision agriculture enables farmers to deliver outstanding results. I think it is quite possible to achieve a 10-15% crop yield increase and reduce costs by 20-30%.

Russia has already reached quite a high level of digitalisation. Our company uses the world's most advanced intellectual solutions and conducts its own research and development in smart farming. [Find more information on pages 18 and 19.](#)

Stefan DUERR
EkoNiva Group President

Village is the heart of Russia



Stefan Duerr, EkoNiva Group President, has taken part in the parliamentary hearings at the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia dedicated to the federal budget for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Opening the hearings, Valentina Matviyenko, Chairperson of the Federation Council, dwelled upon Vladimir Putin's instructions to pay special attention to thorny social issues including the development of rural areas. Stefan Duerr touched upon this topic in his speech.

The President of EkoNiva Group told the Assembly members about his company operating on an area exceeding 600,000 hectares in 13 Russian regions. This year, EkoNiva is planning to produce 950,000 tonnes of milk, which will make the company the fourth largest raw milk producer in the world.

'We are eager to progress further, however the dairy market is quite complex', says Stefan Duerr. 'The areas in which self-sufficiency has not been reached yet – like the dairy industry – still call for state support. It is essential to continue such measures as favourable-term investment loans and capital cost compensation. Since milk production requires a large amount of working capital, it is absolutely vital to maintain low interest rates on working capital loans.'

Stefan Duerr is convinced that besides being the custodian of the national culture and traditions, the rural population is an important indicator of social stability in the country. Therefore, the development of rural areas should be one of the government's priorities. In order to make villages more attractive for young people, the programme of comprehensive rural development must be backed with substantial financing.

'This year, over 1,500 students have undergone internship on our farms', continues Stefan Duerr.

'They are very gifted boys and girls bubbling with enthusiasm. Future specialists are ready to live in the countryside, however, they need a sufficient social infrastructure, good medical care, and, above all, high-quality education for their children. Schools and kindergartens must be conveniently located so that children could attend them every day. It is not a problem to drive to the regional centre to see a play at the theatre or go to a football match, but educational institutions must be in close proximity.'

In conclusion, EkoNiva Group President quoted the famous Russian poet Sergey Yesenin: 'No village can exist without a cow, and Russia cannot exist without the village.' Stefan Duerr's emotional speech was met with applause. Besides, Valentina Matviyenko highlighted that both the Lower House and the Upper House of the Parliament unanimously endorsed the initiative to expand the rural development programme.

By Svetlana WEBER

A 'green channel' for exports to Morocco

EkoNiva Group representatives took part in the online business mission aimed at enhancing Russian agricultural exports to the Kingdom of Morocco.

The online business platform was arranged by the Russian Federation Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Centre of Agricultural Exports.

'The Middle East and North Africa are among our key export areas', says Sergey Levin, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation. 'We consider Morocco as an important business partner.'

Mohammed Sadiki, Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture of Morocco, told about the 'green channel' arranged between the two countries to facilitate trade. In 2020, the trade turnover between Russia

and Morocco amounted to 250 million dollars, and there is potential for further growth.

'The ultimate goal of this event is to make the business cooperation between Russia and Morocco more efficient, providing access to the relevant markets and agreeing on the essential foreign trade mechanisms', says Vladimir Danielyan, Deputy Commercial Director, EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'We understand what our Moroccan partners are interested in, and what we can offer. In highest demand are such crops as lentils, chick-peas, barley and oats.'



In the course of the event, EkoNiva representatives established new business contacts and presented the company's produce to potential clients.

'One of the Moroccan companies showed interest in our butter', says Ildar Rakhmatullin, Leading Export Manager, EkoNiva-Food. 'We are currently working on the

delivery of 82.5 % fat butter to the Moroccan Hotel, Restaurant and Catering businesses.'

The Russian Federation Ministry of Agriculture intends to continue developing a rapport with Morocco to ensure favourable conditions for Russian agricultural producers to enter the market of the Kingdom.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

Space-inspired ideas



Sergey Ryzhikov is a test astronaut and a Hero of Russia. In 2016, he made his first flight to the orbit as the Commander of the Soyuz MS-02 spacecraft crew. Today, he is back on the International Space Station in the role of the Mission Commander. Until April, Lieutenant-Colonel Ryzhikov will stay on the orbit conducting research. Before leaving, he started a very important patriotic project on

the Earth. Now, while he is away from home, Severnaya Niva is helping to bring his space-inspired idea to life.

During his flight in 2016-2017, Sergey saw his birthplace, Bugulma, the Republic of Tatarstan, from the viewing port of the spacecraft. Admiring the beauty of the land below, he decided to make a present to his home town and build an ecovillage near the place where he was born.

Wherever we go, we carry the warmth and affection for our homeland in our hearts. The farther away we are, the stronger these feelings grow. Just imagine how acute they become if the duty calls you to outer space!

The plot chosen by the astronaut for his project belonged to Severnaya Niva. Sergey shared his idea with the company management and received a comprehensive support. The company sold the plot to Sergey and agreed to help with the construction. This was the start of a lasting friendship between the space explorer and rural labourers.

Every time after finishing his space mission, Sergey Ryzhikov comes to Bugulma to visit his friends and see how the construction is progressing.

'We always keep in touch with Sergey', says Pyotr Dubyanskiy, Regional Director for Volga region, Severnaya Niva. 'One day, he phoned me right from the ISS. The telephone identified the

call as coming from Texas. I wondered who could be calling me from America... And there he was calling me straight from outer space! It was 28 October - the holiday of the Icon "The Grower of Crops", which depicts the Mother of God blessing farm workers. Sergey wished us a happy holiday and high yields.'

The construction of one of the buildings of the future ecovillage, a beautiful small chapel, has already been completed. This homely, well-proportioned building is a symbol of love for the Earth and the sky, mutual understanding and eternal values, which help each of us to leave our mark on this world turning it into a better place

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV

Ambitious plans

Kaluzhskaya Niva has welcomed Vladislav Shapsha, Acting Governor of Kaluga oblast. In the course of the trip, Mr. Shapsha visited Troitskiy farm and Penevichi dairy, which is currently under construction.



Anatoliy Artamonov, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on the Budget and Financial Markets, and Leonid Gromov, Minister of Agriculture of Kaluga oblast, also participated in the open-air meeting. The officials inspected the construction site of the dairy designed for 3,550 dairy cows and 8,000 head of young stock.

'At the moment, we are working on the dairy parlour', explained Sergey Lyashko, First Deputy Director General, EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'The builders are pouring concrete for the 72-stall rotary. They are also laying the foundation for the second cowbarn.

The temporary power supply line and the water delivery system are ready for operation. The canteen for farm workers is also about to be completed.

We have repaired the 5-kilometre motorway from

Penevichi to Kurgan, extended it to Penevichi dairy. EkoNiva will provide minibuses for daily employee transportation.

Sergey Lyashko also spoke about further improvement plans. EkoNiva intends to build 60 houses for the employees of Troitskiy farm under the Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas state support programme.

'You have ambitious plans', commented Vladislav Shapsha, Acting Governor of Kaluga oblast, 'I hope, they will be successfully implemented soon.'

The construction of Penevichi dairy began in the second quarter of 2020. The project is planned to be completed in autumn 2021. The total investment in the project amounts to 4.2 billion rubles. More than 150 people will be employed at the new dairy.

By Darya DENISOVA

Exploring China

The 24th China's Global Food & Hospitality Trade Show (FHC 2020) took place in Shanghai in November, 2020. EkoNiva-Food offered the visitors to taste its 1.5% and 3.2% UHT milk.

Heihe Eyoujia Import and Export LLC, EkoNiva's distributor in China, arranged business meetings with dairy product importers and representatives of the local retail chains.

'These meetings have enabled us to determine the first-priority tasks to be tackled at this stage in order to continue successful promotion of the EKONIVA brand in China', says Zhang Jie, Director of Heihe Eyoujia Import and Export LLC.

Besides the existing points of sale, in the North of China, provinces of Heilongjiang and Liaoning, EKONIVA products will now be available on the shop shelves of Fujian.

The products showcased at the booth as well as those sold in Chinese shops feature the original Russian package. Why hasn't the language been changed? This decision was based on the request of

EkoNiva's partners in China. The thing is that Chinese people show more trust in the brand if the information on the package is in the original language. It is considered to be the sign of high quality. EkoNiva will consult its distributors in China to make further decisions on the package design.

EKONIVA products are currently sold in the shops of Heihe, Suifenhe and Harbin.

'The first export of our UHT milk was carried out by ship via the sea port of Dalian', continues Ildar Rakhmatullin. 'At the end of November, we are planning to ship our products by railway to Manchuria. It will be a pilot project helping us to understand the advantages of railway transportation compared to shipment by sea.'

By Anna PALAGUTINA



At the very heart of Kaluga

Kaluga has become the New Year capital 2021! The preparation for welcoming guests is well under way. Teatrnaya street, one of the oldest in the city, has turned into a winter fairy tale.

The major attraction of Kaluga at this time of the year is the fair called Christmas at the Old Market. Its souvenir booths and the exhibition of unusual Christmas trees made of metal, wood and bricks have a tremendous pulling power. There is even a Christmas tree for football fans, urging the onlookers to score a goal and some more exotic flower-studded exhibits. EkoNiva's Christmas tree features delicious dairy treats. The EKONIVA brand is well-known and universally loved in Kaluga, so the company could not miss out on such a unique New Year project!

'Teatrnaya Street is connected with a number of historic events', says Yulia

Katatova, Event Organisation and Sponsorship Department Manager, EkoNiva-Food. 'Today, this place is a hallmark of the city. We are very happy to have our Christmas tree at the very heart of the New Year capital of Russia. It is a great pleasure for us to share the Christmas spirit with the residents of Kaluga and offer them EKONIVA dairy products.'

By the way, on 18-20 December EkoNiva will take part in an agricultural fair in Kropotkina Street. The guests are welcome to taste EKONIVA dairy produce, hot milk with honey and cacao at the company's booth.

By Darya DENISOVA



Welcoming a cheesemaker



Oleg Sirota, a famous cheesemaker and blogger, owner of Russkiy Parmesan cheese plant, has paid a visit to Kaluzhskaya Niva. For two years in a row, the farmer has been purchasing milk from one of the company's farms, Romanovo dairy.

In the course of the visit, the cheesemaker toured Aristovo, Bushovka and Sugonovo dairies located in Peremyshl and Ferzikovo districts. He was impressed with the modern livestock housing facilities and

the science-based approach to ration formulation. Comfortable housing and nourishing feed are instrumental in producing the best-quality milk.

'Every day, we buy seven tonnes of milk from EkoNiva,'

explains Oleg Sirota. 'Of course, for such a large company, it's just a drop in the ocean but for us, it is a significant amount. We have also have our own cows and milk for parmesan. EkoNiva's raw milk is used for yoghurt and fresh cheese production. Our company sets very strict requirements for raw milk quality and transportation conditions. EkoNiva meets all our criteria.'

Russkiy Parmesan has won numerous prestigious awards in our country and in Europe. At the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, cheese and yoghurts produced by Oleg Sirota's factory were part of the regular diet of the French national football team. Istrinskiy and Festivalniy cheeses won bronze medals at the 14th International Käsiade Cheese Festival in Austria.

'The judges were very surprised to learn that such high-quality cheeses were made in Russia', says Oleg Sirota. 'Our products outshone 500 competitors,

which made us very proud! These hard cheeses require a long maturing period because they contain more milk than others.'

Within the past five years, the Istra cheese factory has produced over 1 million kg of cheese. To keep pace with the new trends, Oleg Sirota attends Russian and international exhibitions. It was at one of such events that Oleg first came across EkoNiva's booth.

'A smiling man approached me, and we started a conversation', recalls Oleg Sirota. 'I was amazed when it turned out that my new acquaintance was none other than Stefan Duerr, EkoNiva Group President. He was so easy-going and friendly that one would hardly believe it could be the owner of one of the largest agricultural holdings in Russia. That day marked the beginning of our cooperation.'

By Darya DENISOVA

Smart tillage

EkoNivaSibir has held a demonstration of tillage equipment manufactured by Vaderstad, Gregoire Besson and Bednar. The event was hosted by Vladimir Ustinov's farm located in Kosikha district.

EkoNivaSibir showcased the highly effective Vaderstad Carrier 820 disc cultivator and the TopDown 500 multipurpose cultivator. The machines demonstrated excellent performance when coupled to John Deere 9RX and John Deere 9R tractors.

'The TopDown 500 is capable of performing shallow and deep cultivation in a single pass', says Andrey Solovov, EkoNivaSibir Brand Manager. 'It is extremely versatile and is designed to carry out a number of important tasks: surface harrowing, stubble crushing and mixing and soil loosening to a depth of 30 cm.'

'It is worth noting that the TopDown 500 helps to preserve soil moisture balance', continues

Andrey Solovov. 'The high-power all-rounder ensures immaculate seedbed preparation in one pass and low compaction.'

Vladimir Ustinov, a farm owner, acquired the first Vaderstad TopDown 700 cultivator in Altai area 15 years ago. The machine has been operating in his fields



ever since.

'We value our cooperation with EkoNivaSibir', says Vladimir Ustinov. 'The company supplies high-quality machinery essential for successful agricultural production in our region.'

The Bednar Terraland TN 4000 chisel plough fitted with the Ferti-Cart 3500 fertiliser hopper made its debut in Altai.

'The implement is intended for prompt and efficient ripping of all types of soils to a depth of 55 cm with simultaneous plant residue

mixing', comments Aleksey Gorodnichev, Lead Manager of EkoNivaSibir. 'It places the plant food at a set depth and loosens the plough pan perfectly well, contributing to the overall soil health.'

The Bednar Swifter SE10000 seedbed cultivator featuring the Ferti-Box 3000 fertiliser hopper was another farm tool displayed at the show.

'The major advantage of the Bednar Swifter SE10000 wide-cut cultivator is its impressive daily output', observes Aleksey Gorodnichev. 'It's a reliable high-speed machine suitable for coupling to medium to high horsepower tractors (from 90 to 520 hp). The operating width is 3-18 metres.'

Another showcased cutting-edge implement was the Gregoire Besson Voyager S70 7 + 1 reversible plough. The implement ensures unsurpassed crop residue processing and incorporation.

By Darya DENISOVA

EkoNiva at Shugarovo village festivities

EkoNiva has taken part in the celebration of Shugarovo Village Day. The company generously treated the guests to its dairy products and entertained them with festive activities.

Although Shugarovo is in the vicinity of Moscow, you feel like you are in a different world. Just 80 km from the capital brings you away from the hustle and bustle of the big city, people here are open, sincere, and hospitable. In the 15th century, the village was first mentioned in the chronicles as Shugarovo heath. According to ancient cadastres, it used to be the patrimony of the Chudov Monastery located at Kanevskiy settlement of Kolomna district.

'Our company has started its activities at this historic place fairly recently. However, we have already achieved considerable progress in our work', says Yuriy Kinyakin, Executive Director of Stupinskaya Niva, a branch of EkoNiva-APK Holding.

'We are building a dairy for 3,550 dairy cows and 5,100 calves, the work is almost half completed. Very soon, we will finish the construction of the rotary milking parlour, which is a standard type on all EkoNiva's farms. Besides, cattle are arriving at to the farm – Bortnikovo has become a home to 3,000 pregnant heifers, 500 of which have already calved. Every day, we produce 11 tonnes of wholesome and tasty milk.'

The new dairy will provide over 120 well-paid jobs in Stupino district. Fifty people are already employed on the farm. All in all, Stupinskaya Niva has a staff of 180 employees. Most of them live in Shugarovo. The population of the village is less than two thousand people. Local residents pin high hopes



on the company as it ensures stable jobs and supports the development of rural areas.

'Stupino district is enrolled on the Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas state support programme', continues Yuriy Kinyakin. 'In the near future, a modern stadium and a kindergarten will open their doors to Shugarovo dwellers. Besides, EkoNiva is planning to contribute to the construction of residential buildings in cooperation with the local government. Making the village a comfortable place to live

and work in is our priority task!'

Large-scale festivities – a gala concert, sporting activities, workshops and other amusements – were organised on the occasion of Shugarovo Day. At the event, special attention was paid to the honoured oldest residents and families with many children. They received delicious and healthy dairy gifts from EkoNiva.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

Top performers



Ryazan oblast government granted The Best Worker of the Region Award to the employees of OkaMoloko for their outstanding performance.

The photos of the following employees were placed on the roll of honour: Vladimir Kavin – Regional Director for Ryazan region, Renat Muratov – Deputy Director of Severnoye operation, Gennadiy Smorchkov – Chief Agronomist, Valeriy Mochalov – Farm Machinery Operator, Tatyana Tambovtseva – Milking

Machine Operator, Nikolai Sandarov – Chief Agronomist, Sergey Makhniboroda – Farm Machinery Operator.

'OkaMoloko is the leading raw milk producer in Ryazan oblast due to our top performers', says Vladimir Kavin. 'The total farmland of the company is 100,000 ha and it is constantly growing. The total herd size is approx. 22,000 head, the milk yield is 305 tonnes per day. The figures are fantastic, they would be unattainable without

All over Russia, Agricultural Workers' day is annually celebrated on the second Sunday of October. Agronomists, herd managers, machine operators, milkers and other industry workers are honoured for their hard work.

our professional team. I would like to thank every employee for their commitment and the huge contribution to the development of OkaMoloko.

Renat Muratov listened to the news that his photo had been placed on the roll of honour in modest silence. Renat prefers efficient work to solemn ceremonies. Probably that is why the regional government grants him a Certificate of Commendation for his professional achievements every year.

'I have been working at OkaMoloko for three years',

says Renat Muratov. 'Comfortable working conditions for employees and social commitment have always been the key priorities of the company. When employees enjoy their work, they can achieve incredible results.'

We congratulate all employees of the farming sector and wish them good health and success in their work. Happy holiday, dear agricultural workers!

By Viktor BARGOTIN



Organic food is gaining momentum

What organic products are becoming increasingly popular with Russians and why some manufacturers see no point in organic production? These issues were raised at the online forum dedicated to the World Quality Day.

Right from the beginning, Sergey Belousov, Vice Chairman of the Federation Council Committee for Agricultural and Food Policy and Environmental Management, set an optimistic tone for the conversation.

'Organic production must become a new growth area in the Russian farming sector', emphasised the spokesman. 'Sustainable farming is our top priority, and we need to join hands to reach the desired goal.'

According to Roskachestvo (Russian Quality System autonomous non-profit organisation), joint effort of all organic movement participants will help to solve the most pressing issues.

'Today, Roskachestvo is already authorised to certify Russian organic products', says Yelena Saratseva, Deputy Director of the organisation. 'Currently, we are in the process of another important accreditation, after

which we will be able to certify goods for export.'

Ulmer Harald, Expert of the German-Russian Agricultural Policy Dialogue, shared his experience of developing organic agriculture in Germany.

'The German government intends to expand the organic farmland by 20% by 2030', says the expert. 'Due to the global lockdown, people have started using online shopping platforms more often. The share of online organic goods sales is constantly growing as healthy eating habits and living in pollution-free areas are becoming more and more popular.'

Polina Murashkina, Head of the Quality Department of Globus retail chain,

confirmed that sales of organic products increased on average by 50% during the coronavirus pandemic.

'Now, consumers are placing a higher value on organic products and their eco-friendly packaging', says the expert. 'The current trends are organic flour, coconut milk and sugar, maple syrup and olive oil. Organic wine is at the top of the list.'

In the rural areas, eco produce does not easily find ready markets since local buyers tend to choose cheaper goods. Anatoliy Nakaryakov, Organic Production Director at EkoNiva-APK Holding, believes that farmers in many regions are not fully aware of the organic market potential and therefore are not very motivated to switch to eco-farming.

'Agricultural producers are ignorant about the existing state standards and the export opportunities', continues Anatoliy Nakaryakov. 'Moreover, there is an acute shortage of specialists in this sector. It is essential to devise an integrated training programme and provide additional governmental support to reimburse the conversion costs at least for the first two years.'

By Darya DENISOVA

Northern achievements

Early in the autumn, Severnaya Niva took over the leadership in raw milk production in Orenburg oblast. Dairy milk yield at Kurskaya Vasilyevka dairy reached 70 tonnes. There are also some impressive achievements in crop farming.

'The crop yield of winter wheat has increased to 5.2 tonnes per hectare. We are thrilled to have broken the regional record. Now, we are approaching the productivity level of EkoNiva farms in Voronezh oblast', says Pyotr Dubyanskiy, Regional Director for Volga Region, Severnaya Niva. 'Moreover, for the first time in 18 years, we have grown Volnodonskaya variety, top-quality durum wheat with high grain hardness and gluten.'

Another milestone is the launch of operations in Samara oblast. In 2020, the farm sowed 4,500 ha of forage crops to create fodder stock for dairy farming, harvested a good crop of sunflower and sowed winter wheat for the next year.

In Tatarstan, the construction of Naratly dairy is in progress with ongoing concrete work and steelwork on the site.

'Moreover, we have rented a grain handling facility, which we are going to buy out later

(a former Bugulma Grain Processing Plant No. 2).

It is another production unit that can serve as a grain storage and conditioning line. In the future we are planning to build a feed-milling plant with a capacity of 40 tonnes per hour there', comments Pyotr Dubyanskiy. 'Fifty new jobs have already been created. What is more, we intend to

set up a sunflower oil line. The reconstruction of the entire facility is going to be completed by 2022.'

Bashkortostan dairies are also on the way to their goals. The pedigree herd size keeps growing: 320 Holstein cows arrived in September, 500 more are to come by the end of 2020.

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV



NivaRotor – comfort matters



‘Perfection is unattainable, but chasing perfection, one can reach excellence.’ In 2017, EkoNiva-Tekhnika used this quotation as its motto embarking on an ambitious project – designing its own milking parlour, NivaRotor.

EkoNiva has been operating in the dairy farming sector for 15 years. At its modern dairies, the company uses milking rotaries of the world-renowned brands. However, practical experience has shown that each of the rotaries has its benefits and drawbacks. EkoNiva’s specialists analysed all relevant data and designed a rotary adapted to the needs of a modern dairy farm.

The milking unit is the heart of any rotary. Engineers engaged in the NivaRotor project succeeded in developing a reliable milking system ensuring uninterrupted operation of the rotary.

‘The unit manufactured by Milkrite InterPuls guarantees efficient and comfortable milking’, says Aleksey Losev, Mechanisation Department Manager, EkoNiva-APK Holding. ‘The precisely adjusted pulsation range allows the operator to choose the optimal rate for the cows. We use professional triangle teat liners to maximise performance, reduce udder disease risks and improve the overall cow welfare.’

Engineers have enhanced the rotary cleaning system and installed a state-of-the-art milk temperature gauge, which sends audible and visible alarm signals in case of

milk cooling system failure.

‘We have upgraded the milk volume sensors in the vertical cooling tanks and fitted in a reinforced barrier to protect control panels from cows’, explains Aleksey Losev.

Operator comfort was also one of the priorities for the rotary designers.

‘To design the best equipment for a rotary parlour, engineers should, so to say, put themselves in the milker’s shoes and find out what improvements are needed to make their work comfortable’, continues Aleksey. ‘Our platform is 90 cm high while other manufacturers offer 1-metre platforms. With taller platforms, milkers had to stand on pallets to attach the milking units or prepare the udder for milking. The new design makes it possible to work without any additional tools.’

All parts and components of the NivaRotor parlour are supplied by BLOM and Milkrite InterPuls.

‘A lot of manufacturers intentionally over-complicate their rotaries’, says Bjoerne Drechsler, First Deputy Director General. ‘As a rule, maintenance of such systems costs a pretty penny. The NivaRotor parlour ensures both comfortable industrial-scale milking and a substantial cost reduction as we buy all parts

and consumables directly from manufacturers. EkoNiva’s best specialists have put their efforts in designing the NivaRotor milking parlour.’

Aleksey Losev has been assembling rotaries for more than 13 years in total. Seven years ago, he joined EkoNiva and took the lead in dairy farm equipment management. He knows firsthand that installing one rotary takes about three months.

‘Talent of our employees, their efforts and time are the most valuable investments in this project’, highlights Bjoerne Drechsler. ‘It is hard to estimate the payback period at the moment because we have not started supplying the rotaries to our clients yet. Preliminarily, I can suppose that we’ll get the invested amount back after selling ten milking parlours.’

EkoNiva-Tekhnika offers 36, 60 and 72-stall milking platforms. Besides, the company is happy to provide all the related services: assembly,

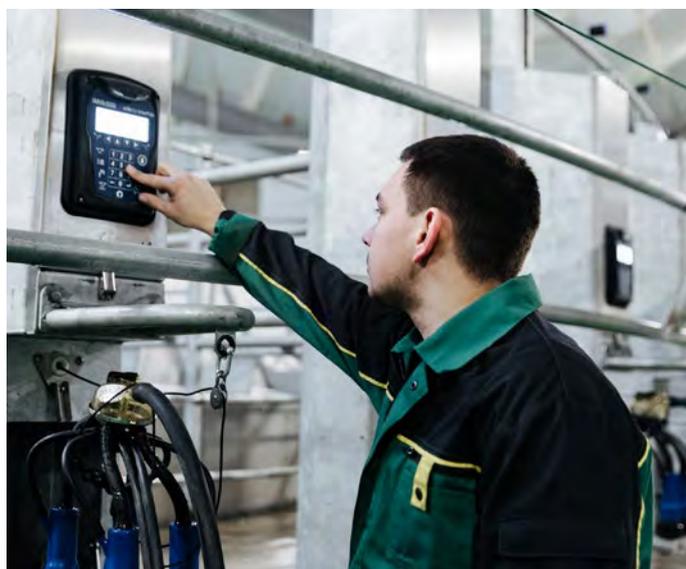
installation, equipment adjustment and control, after-sales support and routine maintenance.

‘In February 2020, the first NivaRotor parlour was launched at one of EkoNiva’s farms, Gusevo dairy, Kaluga oblast’, relates Aleksey Losev. ‘Currently, we are designing a rotary for Penevichi dairy. Another NivaRotor unit will be installed at Naratly dairy, Severnaya Niva Tatarstan. Meanwhile, our team has completed the assembly of the milking parlour at Bortnikovo dairy, Moscow oblast.’

For many years, the milking equipment market had been dominated by three key brands: DeLaval, GEA and BouMatic.

‘During the crisis of 2014, BouMatic left the Russian market and its place is still vacant’, comments Bjoerne Drechsler. ‘The demand for milking rotaries grows every year. This segment has good potential for development. Today, 50% of the milking equipment market is covered by DeLaval, 35% – by GEA and 15% – by other manufacturers. Based on our estimations, we can count on a 25% market share in Russia. In the future, we are planning to build turnkey farms for our customers. We have everything required to set up a progressive farming operation: professional staff, extensive experience, our own design and construction company and service centres.’

By Darya DENISOVA





EkoNiva at Agrosalon 2020

The joint booth of EkoNiva Group has opened its doors for visitors of the international trade show Agrosalon 2020. One of the most significant events in the agricultural industry was held at the Crocus Expo International Exhibition Centre.

For four days in a row, leading manufacturers demonstrated the novelties of the global farming machinery market, while agricultural specialists exchanged their experience and talked about state-of-the-art technological solutions.

'Agrosalon is not only review of the past harvesting season, it is the best platform to discuss plans for the future. 'Live communication always makes it easier to establish a good relationship and find the most efficient solutions', says Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Commercial Director of EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding. 'Despite all the hardships, the outlook for the agricultural sector is quite bright as there is governmental support and the farmers are determined to take the lead not only in the Russian market but on the global scale as well. The year

2020 was marked by bumper yields of various crops.'

'We've gathered an abundant harvest of spring and winter wheat this year', says Willi Drews, Ph.D. in Agronomy, Crop Farming Advisor of EkoNiva. 'The prices in the global market are pretty good, which gives the farmers an incentive to develop and enlarge their business. And we, in our turn, have something to offer them.'

Flying from Primorye area to Moscow to visit the trade show, Valentin Nuzhny covered the distance of about 10,000 kilometres and crossed several time zones. Wasting no time, he hurried to the booth of his partner – EkoNiva-Semena – to discuss strategic issues and long-term plans for the coming season.

'Next year, we are planning to carry out trials of EN Argenta soya beans', says the exhibition guest. 'Everyone knows that Primorye is a risky farming area. Crop rotation and crop pattern largely depend on the climatic and geopolitical conditions and, of course, export trends. The proximity to China, where soybeans are in steady demand, simply obliges coastal farmers to grow them. Soya is crop number one in the region.'

'For us, participation in the exhibition is an opportunity to hold direct negotiations with our partners and conclude contracts on good terms', says Stepan Dudko, Deputy Director General, Seed Production Department Manager, RusAgroNova Group. 'We have been collaborating with EkoNiva for over ten years. It is a large

on deliveries for the next year and, of course, are already looking forward to high yields.

'A good harvest is the result of enormous work of like-minded people', states Mikhail Maslov, a farmer. 'I can't help admiring EkoNiva and its constant professional development. It is the best motivation for me!'

The farmer visited EkoNiva's booth together with his son Georgiy. The teenager loves the company's line-up of dessert products. As always, the branded dairy booth was especially popular with visitors.

Lyudmila Kostina, another event attendee, came to the exhibition with her inquisitive grandson Fedya. Just like his parents, the boy, is going to work in agriculture. Even at this early age, he examined farming machinery with curiosity and asked a lot of questions about the crops he wanted to plant in his mini-garden on the balcony of their flat in Moscow.

'I've passed my love of land to my grandson', explains Lyudmila Petrovna. 'I grew up in a village, so I often feel nostalgic about the countryside life, garden work and the taste of home-grown food. Some time ago, I started buying EKONIVA dairy. I like the company's produce for its natural flavour. I'm very happy that such products are easily available at the shops!'

Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy:

'Live communication always makes it easier to establish a good relationship and find the most efficient solutions. Despite all the hardships, the outlook for the agricultural sector is quite bright as there is governmental support and the farmers are determined to take the lead not only in Russia but in the global market as well. The year 2020 was marked by bumper yields of various crops.'



and well-known company and a reliable partner.'

RusAgroNova has tried out almost all varieties from EkoNiva's portfolio. Now, the enterprise intends to test the recent novelties – EN Argenta soybeans and Cepheus winter wheat. The partners agreed

The visitors and exhibitors of Agrosalon 2020 are very happy with the results of the show: fruitful meetings, mutually beneficial contracts and new ideas for successful joint projects.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



Robust, powerful, daring!

Modern farm machinery shows including the demonstration of the John Deere 8R and 8RT tractors held by EkoNiva-Tekhnika in November at its dealership facilities in Voronezh and Ryazan oblasts boosted the local farmers with enthusiasm. The company offered a selection of cutting-edge agricultural equipment and advanced technological solutions for agribusiness.

Mighty machines

Dobrinno service centre of EkoNiva-Chernozemye welcomed the farmers from different parts of the Black Soil region. Opening the event, Stefan Duerr, EkoNiva Group President, stressed that in spite of all the challenges of 2020, Voronezh farmers had managed to harvest an impressive yield of 6 million tonnes of grain.

'Only strong companies can go through troubled times with dignity and become prosperous again', said Stefan Duerr, 'In a farming business, strong companies are those that use cutting-edge machinery.'

The guests of the event enjoyed the machinery parade, which included the John Deere 6 Series and 8 Series tractors featuring Michelin tyres (6135B, 6155M, 6195M, 8245R, 8295R), the John Deere DB55

Planter equipped with the Exact Emerge row units, the John Deere R4040 and R4150i Self-Propelled Sprayer, the John Deere 8500i Forage Harvester with the Kemper 375 PLUS header, the John Deere W235 Self-Propelled Windrower, the John Deere 560M Round Baler, the RS820 windrower and the ROC RT1000 Raking System.

To continue the show, EkoNiva demonstrated the Vaderstad machinery lineup, including the Carrier 820 Trailing Disc Cultivator, the Rexius 820 Farm Roller, the TopDown Multipurpose Cultivator, the Rapid RDA600C Seed Drill, the Tempo L and the Tempo TPF8 Seed Drills.

JCB machinery was represented by the JCB 426 and JCB 531-70 front loaders, as well as the new JCB TM320 Agri Wheel Loader. Other parade participants

were the new Fliegl KDS 260 manure spreader (Germany), the 2800 Balebuster by Haybuster (USA), the Voyager S70 Semi-mounted Plough by Gregoire

challenging farming tasks maintaining peak productivity.

'The updated eighth series tractors are John Deere's calling card', says Maksim Gudukin, Executive Director of EkoNiva-Tekhnika. 'These all-rounders are capable of performing a wide range of fieldwork. The maximum engine power loss due to towing is no more than 6%. Self-propelled machines of other brands lose two or three times more power. So, when you buy a John Deere 8 Series tractor, you can be sure that all the 'horses' under the bonnet will be working for you.'



Stefan Duerr:

'Only strong companies can go through troubled times with dignity and become prosperous again. In the farming business, strong companies are those that use cutting-edge machinery.'

Besson (France) and the Einbock ERS12 Cultivator (Austria).

The demo-show of the John Deere 8R and 8RT tractors at the end of the event became the true cherry on the cake.

EKONIVA dairy products tasting added to the flavour of the event. The show guests were treated to natural fruit-flavoured quark desserts, yoghurts, kefir and milk produced from EkoNiva's own raw milk.

John Deere engineers equipped the new tractors with the PowerShift and the e23 transmissions. The 8370R tractor featuring the e23 transmission set a new industry benchmark in pulling performance, converting 94 per cent of its rated horsepower.

'John Deere never fails to surprise us', says Igor Skonnikov, farm manager from Ryazan. 'We were impressed with the new bold design, progressive technological solutions and infinite possibilities. These tractors have passed more than a dozen tests and demonstrated excellent performance. We are considering buying a new tractor next year. The John Deere 8R would be a great fit for us.'

By Viktor BARGOTIN,
Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV



Meet the future

In Ryazan oblast, the local branch office of EkoNiva-Tekhnika showcased the brand new John Deere 8R/8RT Series tractors.

These robust machines, featuring the John Deere PowerTech PSX 9.0L engines with power ranging from 230 to 410 hp, can tackle the most



Almaz welcomes EkoNiva

A demo-show of the Vaderstad Carrier 925 and the Vaderstad TopDown 500 cultivators has been held in the fields of Almaz operation, Kemerovo oblast.

Almaz has been operating in Krasninskoye village, Promyshlennaya district since 2014. The farm grows barley, wheat, peas, soya beans, and rapeseed on an area of 10,000 hectares. The enterprise manager says that currently there is no room for Vaderstad cultivators in their garage, however, the Swedish machinery has definitely kindled his interest.

'I watched the Vaderstad Carrier 925 disc cultivator operating', says Mikhail Dolbnya, Director of Almaz operation. 'The machine demonstrated

outstanding performance and manoeuvrability in comparison to its competitors which were quite bulky and not so manageable.'

The Vaderstad Carrier 925 worked in the fields at a speed of 15 km/h removing stubble after harvesting peas and wheat.

'This model can handle several tasks, including stubble cultivation, plant residue incorporation, seed-bed preparation, sowing small grain crops and fighting pests', comments Aleksandr Latsviyev, Sales Representative of EkoNivaSibir.

'During the demo-show, the Vaderstad Carrier 925 excelled at mulching plant residues on an area of 10 hectares, mixing them homogeneously and packing the soil. This machine is also suitable for high-speed tillage. Thanks to the wide range of front tools, discs and packers, it is capable of both ultra-shallow and deep cultivation.'

'The Vaderstad Carrier is a versatile money-saving implement', continues Aleksandr Latsviyev. 'It can help reduce the number of passes, bring down the costs per hectare and ensure the best

start for harvest.'

The Vaderstad TopDown 300-900 multipurpose cultivator showed no less capacity than its counterpart.

'The Vaderstad TopDown 300-900 can adapt to various operating conditions', says Aleksandr Latsviyev. 'It also reduces the number of passes, preserves soil moisture and boosts the overall performance cutting production costs.'

The discs spaced 12.5 cm apart create fine tilth by loosening and mixing the topsoil. The tines spaced 27 cm apart help to loosen and mix the soil with crop residues at a depth of up to 30 cm. Then the packer and levellers ensure an even and fully reconsolidated surface.

'It is very important that Vaderstad TopDown 300-900 breaks up the plough pan, a compacted layer of soil at the border between the ploughed and subsurface areas', observes Mikhail Dolbnya. 'The plough pan reduces water supply to the soil causing waterlogged topsoil and preventing the crops from proper development.'

Though no older than 22, Mikhail Dolbnya is a fully-fledged manager of the operation established by his father 6 years ago. The young farmer is proud to continue his father's business. He shares that all major decisions are made after the discussion with his family. Having attended the showcase, he knows for sure how to choose high-quality agricultural machinery.

By Darya DENISOVA



A delicious farm machinery show

What Russian doesn't like eating a tasty steak while watching a show involving state-of-the-art farm machinery? There was no shortage of either during the meeting with the leading farmers of the region at the premises of Belgorod branch office of EkoNiva-Chernozemye, where the company demonstrated machinery by Vaderstad, ROC and Haybuster and invited farmers to participate in a masterclass on how to grill a perfect marbled beef steak.



EkoNiva has been operating in Belgorod region for only eight months, yet the Vaderstad machinery has already made a name for itself among the local farmers.

'We have performed over 40 demo shows', says Sergey Chekhov, Head of Belgorod branch of EkoNiva-Chernozemye. 'The demand for the Vaderstad cereal seed drills, row-crop planters and disc cultivators is particularly high.'

More and more farmers nowadays opt for ultra-shallow soil tillage. The technology has

become Vaderstad's trademark.

'The Vaderstad Carrier XL 625 disc cultivator is indispensable when it comes to ultra-shallow tillage', says Andrey Kozlobayev, Agronomic Advisor, Vaderstad. 'The implement fully cuts through the whole working horizon at only 3.5 cm working depth. The operation is possible at speeds up to 15-20 km/h.'

Ultra-shallow tillage facilitates moisture preservation in the soil, promotes weed germination, ensures high-quality stubble crushing.

'What the Carrier XL 625 does is breaks down the capillaries in the top soil layer to prevent evaporation', says Andrey Kozlobayev, 'The capillaries below the seedbed level are preserved to provide the seeds with the moisture from the lower soil horizons.'

The Vaderstad Tempo seed drill has been designed for exact seed placement even at high speeds.

'The unique concept of Tempo is that the seed is placed into the seedbed via a pressurised tube', says Eduard Ivanov, Sales Department Manager, EkoNiva-Chernozemye. 'The exclusive Gilstring Seed Meter ensures precision even at the highest sowing speeds.'

The secret behind is that Tempo takes full control of the seed delivery, from the seed meter all the way down into the soil.

'Due to the unique seed control system vibrations or slopes do not affect the seed metering precision', continues Eduard Ivanov. 'The farmers get

an even crop emergence, which translates into a good yield by the end of the season.'

Excellent seedbed preparation in a single pass is possible with the multipurpose cultivator Vaderstad TopDown 500.

'The model is capable of performing a wide range of operations: crop residue cutting, soil loosening up to 40 cm deep, followed by leveling and packing', says Eduard Ivanov. 'The unit helps to retain moisture and reconsolidate soil structure.'

Next in the lineup was the Haybuster tub grinder. A single machinery unit replaces an entire feed mill!

'The machine grinds hay, straw and grain', says Mikhail Kiryakov, Brand Manager of EkoNiva-Chernozemye. 'All you have to do is set the required cut length from 1 up to 5 cm according to the herd manager's guidelines.'

A novelty for the region is the continuous merger ROC RT 1000.

'The implement gently picks up alfalfa, avoiding dust and foreign material', says Eduard Ivanov. 'The hay is not subject to stripping and does not lose its purity and integrity ensuring excellent feed quality.'

The official part of the event was followed by a steak cooking masterclass. Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Commercial Director of EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding, demonstrated the best way to cook marbled meat while giving an outlook for the future of the farming sector.

'Cooking a premium quality steak is just as enjoyable as operating good machinery', jokes Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy. 'Experienced farmers invest in new technologies. The latest trend in agriculture is growing industrial crops. Bumper crops in this area are impossible without the introduction of innovative solutions. Every day we are exposed to natural disasters, climate change, economic crises, etc. Moreover, the Russian farmers are assigned the Herculean task of increasing the country's export potential. The way out is clear: keep abreast of the times and switch over to new machinery.'





Indispensable all-rounders

In the 70s, Joseph Cyril Bamford, founder of JCB, changed the farming world forever by launching the legendary loadall telehandlers.

The JCB 531-70 is the best-seller in the company's product line-up. This versatile machine is a perfect fit for both small farms and large agricultural holdings. It is extremely popular with farmers due to its excellent manoeuvrability, unrivalled performance and a unique combination of vertical and forward boom reach enabling it to handle a large amount of work within a short period of time.

'One of the main advantages of the JCB brand is the in-house manufacturing of all parts', says Aleksandr Burmak, JCB brand Manager at EkoNiva-Sibir. 'Engines, axles, hydraulic cylinders, implements and assemblies are produced at the same factory to ensure the highest product quality, reliability and longevity. The side-mounted Diselmax engine combines with JCB axles and transmission to guarantee a reliable drivetrain performance from well-proven telescopic loader components. The engine capacity ranges from 93 hp to 130 hp, while the high torque at low revs reduces the engine load and makes for considerable fuel saving.

'We have three JCB 531-70 loaders on our farm', says Ivan Yelgin, Chief Engineer, KDV-Agro (Kemerovo oblast).

'Our oldest machine has done over 10,000 engine hours, the second oldest unit – 6,000 engine hours and the youngest one – 1,500 engine hours. All machines operate all year round without breakdowns or downtime. They are absolutely indispensable during sowing. The result of the sowing campaign depends on their prompt and efficient operation. In winter, they remove snow and help at the construction site.'

The JCB 531-70 telehandler has three steer modes. The operator can choose the two-wheel steer for high-speed road travel, four-wheel steer for working in confined spaces and crab

steering for easier movement near walls, fences and buildings.

'Manoeuvrability was the main criteria for us', comments Aleksandr Klippa, Chief Engineer of Sokolovo farm (Novosibirsk oblast). 'The JCB 531-70 meets all our requirements, it can tackle various farm jobs on a relatively small area. The compact wheel base and large steering lock angles save time and enhance the overall machine performance.'

Operator comfort came into focus in the middle of the last century. One of the creative solutions was installing an electric kettle in the cab for

the operator to make tea for himself while working. Now machine operators cannot enjoy this option, however, their cabs are equipped with an air conditioning system, a fully adjustable air suspension seat and a conveniently placed control panel to ensure comfortable work.

'We purchased our JCB 531-70 loaders on the recommendation of EkoNivaSibir, our reliable dealer. The company has a professional team of service technicians and is always ready to help its clients. Currently, EkoNivaSibir offers good conditions for buying JCB machinery. There is a number of financing options, including trade in, leasing programmes and discounts on mounted implements. It is a pleasure to operate JCB units, especially if your dealer is EkoNivaSibir!'

By Viktor BARGOTIN





Agricultural A-league



All over the world, farmers are striving to provide the population with the population with natural products while working efficiently. The solution formula is simple: a strong work ethic, reliable partners and the drive to move forward. Leaders of Kuzbass agricultural sector have shared their experience.

Agricultural sector of Kemerovo oblast is a vital constituent of the region's economy. Even though Kuzbass has not been recognised as a farming region historically, over a million tonnes of grain is produced here every year. This year, the region is in Siberia's top 3 in terms cereal crop production increase. Farming is a dynamically developing sector in the region. This development is undoubtedly enhanced which is undoubtedly promoted by the introduction of advanced technologies and the use of modern machinery.

'The power and quality of machinery is a factor of paramount importance in the structure of any agricultural business', says Aleksandr Lebedikov, Director of Iskra farming enterprise (Leninsk-Kuznetskiy district, Kemerovo oblast). 'For this very reason we decided in favour of John Deere and EkoNivaSibir, a reliable dealer with a proven track record, over 15 years ago. We've never regretted our choice.'

The enterprise is engaged in crop farming: the majority of the land is used to grow wheat,

canola, barley and peas. The enterprise was established in 1993. The fields have seen different kinds of machinery, not always everything went smoothly: downtime and failure to meet the sowing and harvesting deadlines were not rare.'

'The year 2004 is particularly memorable – it was then that the first John Deere machines were supplied to us', continues

Aleksandr Pecherkin:

We mostly go with the John Deere. The machines perform exceptionally, and the dealer, EkoNivaSibir, is by far the best in the region. The specialists are responsible, with outside-the-box thinking, they are able to come up with a solution to virtually any challenge. It is a pleasure to move forward along with such partners.



Aleksandr Lebedikov. 'Our first purchase was a John Deere 9420 tractor and a John Deere 730 air disc drill. By the way, the machines are still in service today and run faultlessly. Each of them has done over 15,000 engine hours. The same year we went ahead with buying two John Deere 9880 combine harvesters at

once. They are more expensive than their Russian counterparts but replace several such units in terms of performance and output quality. Over the years, we have learned to operate powerful and reliable machinery more efficiently, regardless of the weather conditions. We are now able to sow and harvest on time and without any strain. The dealer is always at hand and ready to come to our aid 24/7,

John Deere sprayer. The green and yellow machinery prevails and it is obviously the favourite. Even the office building is painted in the green and yellow colours.

'Machinery should run like a Swiss watch', says Vladimir Bezgans, Director of Lebedi enterprise (Promyshlennaya district, Kemerovo oblast), 'and the dealer is the clockwork. Timely maintenance is the key factor in ensuring smooth uninterrupted operation. EkoNivaSibir has been servicing us since 2010. We have established a trusting relationship, and it is very important.'

The farming enterprise has two John Deere W650 combine harvesters, three John Deere 730 seed drills, a John Deere 8320R tractor and two Gregoire Besson ploughs at its disposal. The latter ones meet the needs of both small and large-scale farming enterprises and can be coupled to tractors of different power output. The ploughs designed by the French manufacturer excellently copy the ground contours and deliver consistent ploughing quality across the field.

Pecherin S. V. farming enterprise (Leninsk-Kuznetskiy district, Kemerovo oblast) was among the first to embrace the numerous benefits of Vaderstad machinery. The TopDown 600 cultivator and the Rapid 800C seed drill have

since the harvesting time is not unlimited.'

To date, Iskra's machinery fleet numbers three John Deere 9420 tractors, four John Deere 9660STS and two John Deere 9880STS combine harvesters, numerous John Deere 730 and 1890 seed drills, telescopic loaders of the John Deere and the JCB makes and a

long become indispensable in field operations.

'We purchased the seed drill in 2006', says Sergey Pecherin, Director of the enterprise. 'The machine is second to none, no wonder it has gained worldwide recognition for its outstanding performance: we have had virtually no failures or downtime. The same applies to the other machinery supplied by the dealer. We have two John Deere 9670STS combines, a John Deere 4730 sprayer and a JCB telescopic loader. One of the latest purchases is a John Deere R4030 self-propelled sprayer.

The machine has everything necessary for efficient operation: intuitive controls, smart time- and money-saving solutions, application precision. The numerous integrated solutions enable the operator to get more hectares sprayed in a day.'

'EkoNivaSibir accommodated our request and extended a payment deferral for a year', says Sergey Pecherin. This proves that the dealer trusts us and we trust the dealer. We paid for the machine without wasting the valuable time. Being No. 1 in agriculture is no easy task, but it is possible. The key is to stay positive, work incessantly and keep developing. Strive to work with the leaders and be one of them. It is no different from professional sport: getting into the agricultural A-league is every farmer's dream.'

Everyone in KDV-Agro (Yashkino district, Kemerovo oblast) remembers the purchase of their first machine of the green and yellow brand well. In 2010, EkoNivaSibir shipped to the company three John Deere 8 Series tractors at once. Over 25 units of the machinery fleet have been



supplied by the dealer.

'Our first machines have done over 18,000 engine hours each', says Viktor Beskorovayev, Director of KDV-Agro. 'It was the accessible and high-level service that tipped the scales in favour of the dealer. EkoNivaSibir has always been and still is unrivalled in this regard.'

'The main area of activity of KDV-Agro is growing of French fry potatoes, which are subsequently processed in-house. The enterprise is firmly set on further development, for which modern and high-performance machinery is required.

Our secret is simple: we never stop learning', says Viktor Bezkorovayev. – We strive to gain insight into and introduce new solutions. We are on the verge of adopting precision farming systems. We carry out soil analysis, test variable rate fertiliser application – generally speaking, we move forward towards better results.'

Pecherkin A.G. farming enterprise is no stranger to experiments. The company is the first to introduce advanced farming solutions, one can

often see the latest machinery novelties in its fields. A few years ago, the enterprise was the pioneer in adopting no-till farming in the region.

'We hadn't considered switching over to no-till until we purchased the John Deere 1890 seed drill', says Aleksandr Pecherkin, Director.

they are able to come up with a solution to virtually any challenge. It is a pleasure to move forward with such partners.'

All the machinery at Pecherkin enterprise is fitted with the AutoTrac John Deere satellite navigation auto steering system. The economic



Sergey Pecherin:

Being No. 1 in agriculture is no easy task, but it is possible. The key is to stay positive, to work incessantly and keep developing. Strive to work with the leaders and be one of them. It is no different from professional sport: getting into the agricultural A-league is every farmer's dream.

'Since we have to work in the extreme drought conditions, we decided to give it a go. Over the next eight years, we had no issues with harvests. A good mulch layer has established to prevent, which prevents the plants from drying out. Every year, our cereals produce approx. 5 tonnes/hectare.'

Modern machinery helps us to gather consistently high crops. The enterprise's equipment inventory has everything necessary and comprises over ten units: tractors, combine harvesters, a self-propelled sprayer and a seed drill.

'We mostly go with the John Deere', says Aleksandr Pecherkin. 'The machines perform exceptionally, and the dealer, EkoNivaSibir, is by far the best in the region. The specialists are responsible, with outside-the-box thinking,

effect is considerable. Once the AutoTrac was installed onto the sprayer, its performance increased by 25%. The same system used on the seed drill enabled us to save 5% of seeds, fertiliser and fuel. The performance of the combines has improved by 15%.

Nowadays, innovative solutions have become an integral part of our lives. In agriculture, the digital breakthrough has created comfortable working conditions for people and significantly improved the production profitability. Yet the Kuzbass farmers realise that this is not the time to get complacent, they are determined to further improve their performance to keep moving towards absolute championship in tandem with the leaders!

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



The future of farming



EkoNiva has always been known for using the most cutting-edge technologies. Recently, the largest milk producer in Russia has made a further significant advance in this area creating its own EkoCrop mobile application.

EkoCrop has been developed primarily for agronomists, chief technicians, herd management specialists, farm managers and their deputies.

'EkoCrop is designed to feed the latest data on the field work into the central database and generate subsequent reports', says Sergey Kapustin, Precision Farming Director, EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'Routine reporting used to involve many people, including agronomists, record keepers, chief agronomists and the management. Delays in information transfer could sometimes last for two days. The app has significantly speeded up the entire process. Now the information chain looks like this: the agronomist responsible for the area – the central database – the end user. It takes no more than a few seconds to pass any data along this chain.'

When the app is turned on for the first time, it downloads all the relevant data from the server: the field map, the number of employees connected to the system, the information on the self-propelled and trailed machinery operating in the field and the fertilisers and plant protection agents being used.

The location of the person holding the device is indicated with a blue dot on the map. Every field has its own registration card and is marked with a colour, signifying the crop growing in a certain field. The card lists all the operations performed in the area. The user can fill it in with new ones. The application contains the information on the weather records from the last month for a chosen locality and a two-day forecast. In addition, it displays the data on crop rotation for the past three years: sowing and harvesting dates, yield, fertiliser type and the application rate as well as tractors and trailed equipment used to apply them. It also offers the plan for the next year.

Based on the data from EkoNiva's meteorological stations, the system prepares the weekly air temperature report and the precipitation diagram. Besides, it provides detailed information on the agrochemical properties of soil.

'Another useful feature of the tool is Field Examination', continues Sergey Kapustin. 'Let's take a corn field, for instance. An agronomist goes there with a tab, examines it and enters the current parameters in the digital form – phenological stage, pest presence per 1 m² and their species, plant diseases and the amount and type of the weeds. He can even upload a photo taken with the in-built camera

or choose it from the gallery. Finally, he adds a comment, and the card is ready.'

Furthermore, the reporting module with flexible settings allows the specialists to access a list of operations carried out for a specific crop within a certain period of time on a chosen farm.

'We have been using the application since May, and it has taken us to a whole new level', shares Aleksey Nizkodubov, Chief Agronomist of the Left-Bank Operation of EkoNivaAgro. 'Now, all the necessary data are at our fingertips, we can instantly get up-to-date information, which enables us to take decisions on urgent issues quicker. It really is an innovation of the future.'

It is worth noting that the app is not merely an accounting and monitoring tool, it is also a reference source. Just recently, the developers have supplemented the application with an illustrated guide to weeds with a description of their botanical composition and control measures.

'We also want to improve its functionality with a machinery guide. From my point of view, this will be of great help to new agronomists who don't know the fleet well enough. They can find the required model and adjust the machine settings step by step.'

Specialists of EkoNivaAgro, Voronezh oblast, had been the first to test the new tool. By September, the tablets were distributed all across the holding.

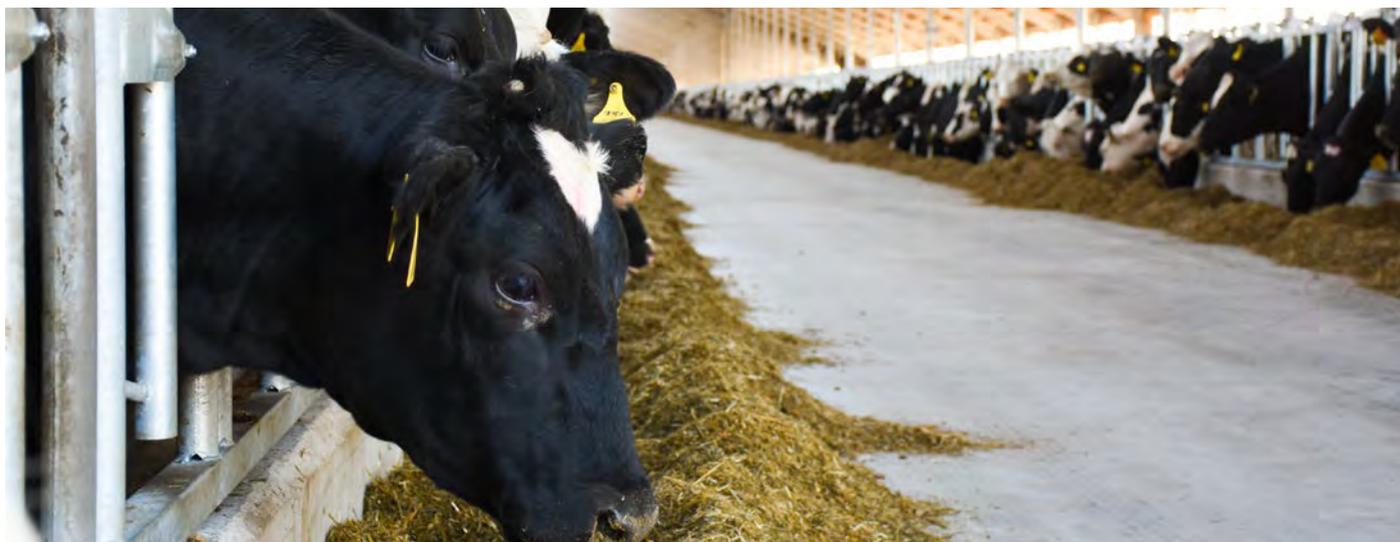
'When the work in the fields commences in 2021, we would like to abolish Excel spreadsheets and stick to our in-house solution only', concludes Sergey Kapustin.

On behalf of our colleagues, we would like to thank the team of developers for the early implementation of the project and congratulate the company on the new important step towards the digital future of agriculture.

Sergey Kapustin:

'EkoCrop is designed to enter the latest data on the work in the fields into a central database and generate subsequent reports. Earlier, routine reporting involved an agronomist, a record keeper, a chief agronomist and the management. Delays in information transfer would sometimes be up to two days. The app has transformed the format into "an agronomist responsible for the area – a central database – end users" and reduced the amount of time to just a few moments.'





Digitalisation of dairy farming

Modern dairy farming involves hundreds of interrelated processes. Feeding is one of the core processes on a farm. Correctly balanced and accurately mixed rations and timely feed distribution determine milk quality and cow productivity. Not long ago, it was people only that could handle and control feeding on a farm, today high-tech machines and unique software take over these responsibilities.

Feeding software was first created by western IT companies in the early 2000's, has been upgraded since then and today provides overall functionality. However, it still fails to manage some processes, which are critical for farmers in Russia, and the foreign IT companies are not interested in improving it.

Therefore, EkoNiva launched the development of its own programme in 2017. The idea was to make feeders' job easier by optimising the whole process from loading feed into the mixer-wagon to delivering the TMR to the feed bunk. The Eko.Feed pilot testing was started already at the beginning of 2018 on Vysokoye dairy farm (EkoNivaAgro, Voronezh oblast).

'The feed centre is the highest cost on any farm', says Konstantin Kapiturov, Manager of EkoNiva-APK Holding Livestock Farming IT Department. 'It is crucial to analyse the cost starting from the highest to optimise the financial result. With the Eko.Feed software you can do it quickly and efficiently.'

Cow rations consist of three types of components. The first type is forage: silage, haylage and hay. Though cows would feel great eating forage exclusively, they would not produce maximum milk. To ensure high yields, the rations must include grain, the most expensive component, but the protein it contains is essential not only to the productivity of high-yielding cows, but also to their health. And the third component is vitamins and minerals. The calculated ratios of these components are entered into the Eko.Feed programme to manage the mixing precisely and get the required TMR.'

'Each operational subdivision has a nutritionist', explains Konstantin Kapiturov. 'This specialist balances diets for the farms under his responsibility based on the parameters of the fodder available on the site and sends them to the farm herd manager. The herd manager of the specific farm uploads the ration into the Eko.Feed and he also enters his herd size and relevant pens, after which the programme calculates

and distributes the loads and optimises the logistics of the involved mixer-wagons.'

Using the Eko.Feed, the herd manager then sends the information to the tablets installed in the cabins of mixer wagons and loaders, then the operators load the feeds into the mixer-wagons and move on to distributing the TMR. This smart application is designed to help an operator to use the equipment with maximum efficiency. Based on the preset parameters (barns, pens, cow groups and diets), it generates a task list and routes for a working shift, which saves operators time and fuel.

'Cows are creatures of habit', points out Konstantin Kapiturov. 'Consistency and daily routine at a fixed schedule are the key to high productivity. The problem is that if a cow comes from the milking parlour, finds an empty feed bunk and lies down, it can refuse to stand up to eat even after the delayed feed distribution. The Eko.Feed prompts an operator the appropriate sequence of the pens to maintain the daily routine of each cow.'

The engineers of EkoNiva's Livestock Farming IT Department keep upgrading the programme. Soon, it will be updated with new design, features and additional functionality for herd managers and feeders. The integration of the Eko.Feed with 1C accounting programme is the next big step. Such a data exchange is imperative for large progressive agricultural holding companies and farms today, as it enhances fodder consumption control and supports automatic data transfer to the 1C system, eliminating manual data input. Thus, a herd manager has more time available for dealing with on-going production issues, and the controlling department benefits from getting accurate information promptly.

'The Eko.Feed has been designed for internal use; we haven't considered launching it onto the market yet', adds Konstantin Kapiturov. 'By now, the programme has been implemented almost at all our dairy operations. Our ambition is to design a server-based Eko.Feed version which would not only process the data received from individual farms, but also consolidate it into company- and holding-level reports. Foreign IT designers have been developing such software for a long time, whereas we only started two years ago. So, we still have a lot of work to do.'

By Viktor BARGOTIN



Good seeds bring high yields

EkoNiva-Semena has been supplying seeds to Kazakhstan for more than 5 years. Within this period the varieties, offered by the company have proved their worth in the fields of the local farmers.

The farming sector of Kazakhstan possesses an enormous export potential.

'The first lot of seeds delivered to Kazakhstan was not big - about 100 tonnes', says Willi Drews, Ph.D. in Agronomy, EkoNiva's consultant.

'Last season, we exported 5,500 tonnes. What are the advantages of our crop varieties? There are three main characteristics: intensive tillering, drought-resistance and a high crop yield. Cereals are in extremely high demand in the country. Kazakh farmers prefer Likamero, Calixo, Triso, Kornetto and Odeta spring wheat varieties of European breeding.

'Agricultural producers from East Kazakhstan region were the first to test the varieties bred by EkoNiva', continues Willi Drews. 'The seeds performed extremely well. For example, in 2018 Likamero produced an amazing crop yield on some farms - more than 7 tonnes per hectare.

Florens and Toccata are new drought-resistant wheat varieties recommended for Kazakhstan.'

Olzha Agro, a multifaceted agricultural holding, received a good harvest even in 2019, which was an extremely arid year.

'Seeds of spring wheat variety bred by EkoNiva demonstrated a very good

yield - more than 3.5 tonnes per hectare in the fields of Kostanay oblast even in harsh weather conditions', shares Aleksandr Tsavalyuk, Seed Production Agronomist of



Willi Drews:

'Last season, we exported 5,500 tonnes. What are the advantages of our crop varieties? There are three main characteristics: intensive tillering, drought-resistance and a high crop yield.'

Olzha Agro holding. 'That year, other varieties produced less than 2 tonnes per hectare. In a high-risk farming area, the choice of seeds is one of the major factors for harvesting a good crop. We know for sure that good seeds bring high yields.'

Barley varieties of EkoNiva breeding are also popular with Kazakh farmers, they choose Calcule, Margret, Paustian, Traveler, Explorer and Eifel. These varieties are characterised by flexibility, high adaptive properties and great lodging resistance.

'In addition to cereals, yellow peas varieties Rocket,

Jackpot, Belmondo and green peas Madras are gaining popularity in Kazakhstan', says Willi Drews. 'Moreover, we are going to conduct trials of the variety Trendy developed by Chez breeders. Trendy is an early-maturing forage pea variety that is distinguished for its high and consistent yield. Crop productivity scores 9 points. It is a very high rate. This grain is rich in protein, its content is 24%.

EkoNiva implements its own plant breeding programme that particularly focuses on boosting crop productivity potential and yield consistency. The quality of grain comes first.

'Our goal is to inform every agricultural producer about the possibilities of new genetics', continues Willi Drews. 'We are ready to submit one more soybean variety of our breeding, EN Argenta for variety trial in North Kazakhstan. It has a short vegetation period that lasts 91-97 days. Besides, the protein content in the kernel in dry matter is approx. 42%.

The cultivar's main distinctive feature is its increased branching.'

Another novelty offered by EkoNiva is the winter wheat variety Cepheus.

'It is a food-quality variety, whose flour properties meet the highest standards', says Andrey Zvyagin, Plant Breeder of EkoNiva-Semena.

'Cepheus is a high-yielding and the most winter-hardy crop as compared to other winter wheat varieties. Our priority is the customer's profit. EkoNiva-Semena's goal is to offer farmers premium-quality seeds with excellent genetic potential. Moreover, we provide professional advice on the modern crop growing technologies and a comprehensive support.'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO





Flax: crop of the future

Over the past few years, flax production has been gaining momentum in Russia. The considerable domestic market capacity and the possibility of entering the global market makes this crop particularly appealing to many farmers. EkoNiva grows flax for seeds. So far, it has been a small-scale activity, however, the company sees considerable potential for its development

Flax is a profitable crop in many aspects. It is fairly easy to grow: observing basic crop farming requirements is enough to ensure good return on investment.

'It is a low-maintenance crop which doesn't call for much input costs or complicated cultivation technologies', says Willi Drews, Doctor of Agronomy, Advisor at EkoNiva. 'The plants are not susceptible to diseases or pest attacks. Over the growing season, flax is relatively undemanding in terms of soil moisture and crop protection requirements. It is an excellent plant to use in any crop rotation. There are very few limitations related to soil quality, temperature, humidity and dew formation. This means, almost 80% of farmland in Russia is suitable for growing flax.'

Flax is indispensable in managing crop disease and reducing insect populations common with other cereals and oilseeds. It also frees the land from heavy metals and radionuclides. At the same time, linseed harvested from contaminated land does not have any traces of radiation.

'In a rotation, flax is a disease break plant for subsequent crops', comments Kirill Adkin, Chief Agronomist of EkoNiva-APK Holding for Kursk oblast. 'It is harvested with conventional equipment. We grow flax for seed production at

Zashchitnoye-North operation (Shchigry district, Kursk oblast). Compared to the last season, when we cultivated only 16 hectares of linseed, this year's area under the crop has been expanded sevenfold to 110 hectares. Next year, plans are afoot to increase this area threefold – up to 350 hectares. The demand for flax seed is on an upward trend. Linseed is sought-after mostly in Central Non-Black Soil region, Northwestern and Siberian Federal districts.'

EkoNiva offers the oilseed flax variety Serpent of British breeding. Its vegetation period is up to 97 days. The sowing rate varies from 5 to 7 million of viable seeds, which corresponds to 35-45 kg per hectare. The seed fat content exceeds 44 per cent.



'Over the years of trial, the variety Serpent has demonstrated high resistance to diseases', continues Willi Drews. 'The maximum yield has been ranging from 1.5 to 1.7 tonnes per hectare. This year, our clients have gathered the first harvests from the seeds supplied by EkoNiva. We have received a favourable feedback on the seed material.'

A great number of products is made from flax, which contributes to the popularity of this commodity in both the domestic and global markets. Vladimir Feoktistov, a farmer from Kolyshley district, Penza oblast, took up linseed production 4 years ago. His friends from the farming industry told him about the advantages of flax growing. The farmer got curious,

weighed the pros and cons and decided that it was worth giving a try.

'Just like our fellow farmers, we grow linseed for sale and export it to Poland', shares Vladimir. 'This year's price per kilogram amounted to 40 rubles, which is excellent. It gave us the impetus to develop flax production at our enterprise. Currently, the area under the crop is almost 250 hectares and we are going to expand it. We make a point of purchasing only high-quality seed material. No other company compares to EkoNiva-Semena, our No. 1 seed supplier. When we saw flax in their product portfolio, we decided to give it a go.'

Last year, the variety Serpent was sown at Vladimir's farming enterprise for the first time.

'The performance was beyond all our expectations', emphasises the farmer. 'In comparison with other flax varieties we cultivate, Serpent stands out with its early maturity and high yields. We have harvested around 1.4 tonnes per hectare, which is an outstanding result achieved with minimum input. From now on, Serpent will be our major flax crop. We will also recommend it to all our friends.'

Nikolay Lozhkin, Head of a large-scale dairy farm in Kirov oblast, grows linseed on 1,000 hectares to produce oil for sale. The cake, which comes as a by-product, is used for feeding dairy cows.

'Linseed cake has a high nutritional value', states Nikolay. 'This easily digestible product increases milk fat content and the overall milk yield. I believe that flax is a highly promising crop. Several years ago, I shared my thoughts on flax production with one of my mates, a farmer from Tyumen oblast. Now he grows 3,000 hectares of flax and exports it to the PRC.'

The demand for flax varieties among agricultural producers is growing, which means that the market price of this crop is also on an upward trend. A lot of countries have already made a strategic choice for flax production, understanding all the indisputable benefits of this crop.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



A well-deserved victory!



Mariya Golova, a fourth-year student of Ostrogozhsk Multi-profile Technical School, has become the winner of the Veterinary Science Section of the 8th National Contest of Young Professionals held within the framework of the WorldSkills Russia 2020 project.

(Voronezh oblast). The hands-on experience received on the dairy farm helped Mariya to prepare for the competition and contributed to her victory.

'The contest was held remotely', shares Mariya. 'I was carrying out the tasks at the technical school and four cameras were broadcasting all my actions and comments to the website of the project in real time. Besides, there was a cameraman following my every step, filming everything thoroughly to provide a detailed video to the jury.'

At the final stage of the contest, Mariya successfully accomplished five tasks: surgical suture, milk quality

assessment with the help of modern lab equipment, clinical examination of a calf and a cat and development of a preventative check-up schedule for cattle.

By the way, Mariya's parents met each other at the Veterinary Department of Voronezh State Agricultural University. It seems, taking care of animals has become a tradition in their family.

'After graduation, I am going to join EkoNiva', says Mariya. 'It is a great pleasure to be part of a professional and enthusiastic team and follow your calling!'

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV

The young veterinarian of the most talented trainees is top of the class at the technical school and one of EkoNiva. She did her internship at Kolybelka dairy

Mission of honour

Roman Litvinov, Director of EkoNivaAgro Left-Bank Operation, Voronezh oblast, has received the title of the Honorary Resident of Liski district.

Roman Litvinov is not the first employee of EkoNivaAgro whose name is registered in the Book of Honour of Liski district. His colleagues Aleksandr Rybenko, Viktor Ostrokostov, Vladimir Frolov, Olga Pasyukova, Aleksey Afanasyev, Nikolay Kolesnikov, Aleksandr Litovskiy and Yuriy Obraztsov are already listed in the Book.

Roman Litvinov joined EkoNivaAgro as a young agronomist in 2004. After several years of successful work, he reached impressive results in his area of responsibility and very soon was promoted to the position of Deputy Executive Director for Production of EkoNivaAgro. After the division

of the enterprise into several production units in 2014, Roman Litvinov was offered the position of the Director of the Left-Bank Operation.

Under the leadership of the young and ambitious director, the Left-Bank Operation of EkoNivaAgro has increased its farmland area to 32,250 ha and launched three modern dairies producing 285 tonnes of milk per day. However, the most important achievement has been creating new jobs for the residents of the district.

For the merits and contribution to the development of the farming sector, Roman Litvinov was awarded Certificates of Honour of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation and



the Department of Agricultural Policy of Voronezh Oblast as well as a Letter of Gratitude signed by the Governor. In addition to this, he was granted the title of Honorary Worker of the Russian Agricultural Sector. The list of personal achievements has been extended by the well-deserved

entry of his name in the Book of Honour of Liski District.

EkoNiva congratulates Roman Litvinov and wishes him further success in his personal and professional endeavours.

By Viktor BARGOTIN

Strategic alliance

EkoNiva representatives have visited Kabardino-Balkarian State Agricultural University. In the course of the working trip, Vitaliy Voloshchenko, Director of Plant Breeding and Early Generation Seed Maintenance Centre of EkoNiva-Semena, and his deputy Sergey Kulinkovich met with the university rector Aslan Apazhev.



The main topic of the meeting was improvement of practical education and arrangement of internship for students at EkoNiva's enterprises. Following the discussion, the parties drew up a draft collaboration agreement.

'In the south of Russia and in the North Caucasus, we work side by side with Stavropol and Dagestan agricultural universities', says Vitaliy Voloshchenko. 'Besides, we have started cooperating with the University of Kabardino-Balkaria and the Highland Agricultural University of Vladikavkaz. For students of agricultural universities in this geographical area, it is very important to receive hands-on training in veterinary science

and dairy farming. It goes without saying that EkoNiva is the best place to obtain the skills they need.'

Today, EkoNiva closely collaborates with more than 30 out of the 54 agricultural universities in Russia, and this number is growing. On the company's farms, students undergo on-site training in veterinary science, agriengineering, agricultural production technologies, food processing, crop growing and breeding.

'Our major goal is to stimulate an inflow of young employees to the holding', continues Vitaliy Voloshchenko. 'For future specialists, it is a chance to gain first-hand experience in real-life situations, to

get acquainted with state-of-the-art technologies as well as social and economic conditions of work in the company.'

Theory is certainly important, but only practice provides a thorough insight into the profession. Young people learn about all the possibilities of modern agricultural production and the outlook for the farming industry as a whole. Most of the students who have completed their internship at EkoNiva are happy to be hired by the company as newly-qualified specialists.

'For educational institutions, strategic partnership and high-quality interaction with business are no less important', emphasises Vitaliy Voloshchenko. 'It allows

them to adjust the training programmes in accordance with the most up-to-date trends and adapt them to the realities of agricultural production. The more an educational establishment is focused on the needs of the modern agribusiness, the higher the level of personnel competence is. This means that the percentage of employment is growing.'

For any agricultural university, this is an indicator of effective performance, and for farming companies, it is an opportunity to train motivated employees who want to work in the rural areas and contribute to the development of the agricultural industry.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

Learning agriculture at school

On 1 September, Pitelinskaya, Shatskaya and Kazachinskaya schools launched agriculture-focused courses aimed at introducing students to modern farming practices and preparing them for entering agricultural universities.

The specialised educational programme is implemented under the auspices of EkoNiva and Children's Ecological and Biological Centre. Inspired by the success of similar projects in Voronezh, Novosibirsk and Kaluga oblasts, the local educational department launched it at several schools of Ryazan oblast at once.

The agriculture-based curriculum includes in-depth studying of biology, physics and other subjects required to enter an agricultural university. Teachers of Ryazan State Agricultural University and

specialists of OkaMoloko hold optional classes of veterinary medicine, agronomy and

machinery building for the attendees of the agricultural course. Besides the theoretical



sessions, students undergo practical training on the farms of OkaMoloko.

'We have done our best to provide maximum on-site training opportunities to the attendees of the course', says Vladimir Materikin, Director of OkaMoloko Vostochnoye. 'If we want students to opt for agriculture, it is essential to arrange efficient hands-on training and show them how to apply state-of-the-art technologies and use modern equipment. Supporting agriculture-focused courses at schools is one of our major tasks. We consider it extremely important to start preparing qualified employees for the farming sector as early as possible.'

By Viktor BARGOTIN

EkoNiva at Skoltech



How to maintain and accelerate the plant breeding process? This was the main issue covered by the Basic Principles of Molecular Plant Breeding course run at the Educational and Scientific Centre for Biotechnology under the auspices of the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech) and the Russian State Agricultural University - Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. Bakhtiyor Rakhmanov, EkoNiva-Semena's biotechnologist, successfully completed the training and received a confirming certificate.

The eight-day practical session brought together specialists in plant breeding, genetics and biotechnology, relevant experts of the leading commercial companies and representatives of research institutes and universities. The audience was united by the common goal to acquire or broaden the knowledge and skills that lie at the heart of advanced plant biotechnology and molecular breeding.

The main emphasis in the training was placed on

mastering the modern tools for breeding process maintenance such as molecular technologies and cell and tissue culture', says Nadezhda Dolmatova, Project Manager of the Skoltech Digital Agriculture Laboratory. 'We've explained to the participants what is needed to implement these procedures in their own companies, both at the theoretical and practical – laboratory – levels. Our recommendations are aimed at speeding up the breeding process and reducing the time required to create new

varieties and hybrids of agricultural crops.'

Among the invited speakers were specialists of the Skoltech Digital Agriculture Laboratory and teachers of the Crop Genetics and Breeding Department of Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. The course included four modules. The first two were devoted to an introduction to molecular plant breeding and basic genetic concepts. Within the programme, the members studied various cell markers and the relevant laboratory equipment.

'Molecular genetic methods in breeding improve selection based on the required plant characteristics, making it faster and more accurate', continues Nadezhda Dolmatova. 'I'll give a simple example: earlier, in order to find out whether a plant is resistant to a particular disease or not, we had to grow it and infect with the disease. Only after that we could make a conclusion about its resistance. Now, you can collect the DNA of a seedling and, using a molecular marker that determines a specific gene resistant to a given pathogen, figure out whether the plant has this property or not. This saves time and resources.'

The third module of the course was dedicated to the organisation and functioning of the cell laboratory. The lecturers focused on the methods of working with cell and tissue cultures, including waste management and contamination prevention. The fourth training session dealt

with biostatics and the basics of breeding data processing.

'It's a great honour to represent EkoNiva at Skolkovo', says Bakhtiyor Rakhmanov, Biotechnologist of EkoNiva-Semena. 'I enjoy studying at Skoltech. Each laboratory has its own optimised research methods and protocols. At such training sessions, we can always learn something new from each other and get in contact with our fellows and teachers for further discussion of scientific works.'

The course Basic Principles of Molecular Plant Breeding is just the beginning of a large-scale project. The new Knowledge Transfer programme is being implemented by the Technology Transfer Centre of the Higher School of Economics in cooperation with Skoltech. In May, 2020, specialists of EkoNiva's breeding centre completed a similar training programmes remotely. Full-time enrolment on the Modern Approaches to Agricultural Crops Breeding course is scheduled for December.

'It is essential to improve the qualification of our staff to be competitive in the seed markets with our own product', says Vitaliy Voloshchenko, Director of Plant Breeding and Early Generation Seed Maintenance Centre of EkoNiva-Semena. 'This approach is prompted not only by the business trends, but also by the need to comply with the relevant provisions of the Food Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation.'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



Winners again!



Representatives of EkoNivaAgro took part in the annual Competition among the Employees of Voronezh Oblast held from 28 to 30 August. To everyone's delight, the football team and the amateur kettlebell athletes came back home with two sets of medals.

EkoNivaAgro football fans often please its fans with the awards won at the district, regional and national sports events. The annual Competition among Employees of Voronezh Oblast was not an exception. Led by the head coach Vladimir Muravlyov, the team players were up against some tough competition with eight other participating teams. In the final match, EkoNivaAgro beat their contenders from the neighbouring area Bobrov District Hospital 3 – 0.

'Whatever sport you do, it is always a pleasure to represent your native town at such events', shares Vladimir Muravlyov. 'We were tasked with winning the Competition among the Employees of Voronezh Oblast, and we have done it. I would like to thank the guys for their commitment and our supporters for rooting for us, which we felt even though they were far away.'

The amateur kettlebell training is only gaining momentum in EkoNivaAgro. Together, Denis Milenko, Aleksandra Taranova and Aleksandr Demiyarov were awarded the honorary third place in team competitions, while Denis Milenko took the first prize in the individual competition.

'I've loved this sport since I was a student', says Denis Milenko, Veterinarian of the Left-Bank Operation of EkoNivaAgro. 'It's the third time I've defended the company's colours. Earlier, in Liski and Bobrov I had won the first and the second prizes. I'm happy with what I've done today and I'm especially proud of our team's accomplishment. On behalf of all my colleagues, I would like to thank EkoNivaAgro for promoting a healthy lifestyle among the staff.'

By Viktor BARGOTIN

A game to rack your brain

EkoNivaAgro, Voronezh oblast, has always taken an active part in sporting events. Its employees play football, volleyball and table tennis, go skiing and fishing, engage in kettlebell sport and fun relay races. The Russian pyramid has just recently become another item on the corporate physical activities list.

The first Russian billiards championship for EkoNivaAgro staff was held on 3 October in Barracuda club, Liski. The participants played Free Pyramid in teams of two until one of them won two games. Even the very first encounters captured the attention of the most discerning experts. The amateur sportsmen showed off their skills on the billiards table with double, draw, straight and cut shots.

'Billiards is a game which requires certain mental dexterity', explains Vladimir Konovalov, main referee of the championship. 'If you want to pot, you need to analyse the positions of all the balls on the table and carefully determine the path, the strength with which to hit the ball and the right point to strike it. While professionals can perform these actions with pinpoint accuracy, for amateur players scoring a point doesn't come so easy. EkoNivaAgro

corporate tournament has brought together such talented participants that refereeing it brings me immense pleasure.'

The final game was played between the Right-Bank Operation team – Andrey Naidenov, Aleksandr Vovnenko – and their colleagues from the Left-Bank Operation – Roman Litvinov and Aleksandr Merkulov.

Left-Bank Operation won the first game 8 - 6. Later, after a solid win of the Right-Bank Operation 8 - 1, the status quo was restored. In the decisive encounter, the Right-Bank team defeated its rival 8 - 4 and became the champion. The silver medals went to the duet from the Left-Bank operation, while the bronze ones were given to the team of the milk processing plant in Shchuchye represented by Aleksey Prostyakov and Sergey Ryzhov.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



Super food for future football stars



In Kursk, young Avangard Football Academy players have received dairy gift bags. EKONIVA products help growing sportsmen keep fit and defeat any contenders.

The employees of Zashchitnoye operation have taken a tour around sports stadiums in Kursk city to promote the benefit of dairy and healthy lifestyle. For a while that day, the pitches featured not intense trainings, but happy faces of 270 young

footballers who received tasty and nutritious gifts from EkoNiva team.

'We attended the training sessions, talked to the guys and discussed the latest football news and trends', says Andrey Skvortsov, Head of Zashchitnoye North

Operation. 'My colleagues and I told the boys about our production site and brand. We are delighted that they've taken a keen interest, and some of them now are willing to visit our farm.'

A person who has once opted for a healthy lifestyle and stepped into the world of sports starts to think about proper eating habits. Food certainly influences the state of our body, our mood, ability to work and even motivation to train and achieve sports goals. A daily glass of milk is a source of calcium, protein and vitamins.

'Milk and dairy products are indispensable in a young footballer's diet', points out Igor Sergeev, Avangard Football Academy Manager. 'Protein helps to restore and build up muscles, and calcium strengthens the bones. I love dairy myself, especially

yoghurt and curds. I always advise my students to eat wholesome dairy products. I really like EKONIVA produce, it has an amazing natural taste and is good for health.'

Proper food boosts your energy. It is the key to physical well-being and longevity. Athletes are careful and thoughtful about their eating choices more than anybody else.

'My dear friends, you are the future of our homeland and you will represent it wherever you are', emphasised Andrey Skvortsov addressing the young footballers. 'Your peers look up to you because you promote sports and set a good example. Healthy diet and lifestyle are the basis for professional accomplishments. We wish you great football victories and excellent health!'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

Tasting at GUM



The legendary Grocery No. 1 at GUM has hosted EKONIVA dairy products tasting. The event was held in the framework of the annual Exhibition of Agricultural Achievements.

EkoNiva offered a wide range of its dairy produce, including quark desserts, Fitness Line drinking yoghurts and bioyoghurts, Snezhok

fermented drink, pasteurised milk, kefir and sour cream, for tasting. The company's closed-cycle production concept 'from field to shop

shelf' aimed at providing top quality at each stage of production resonated with the event attendees.

'Contact with our consumers is absolutely vital to us', says Yevgenia Volkova, Leading Trade Marketing Manager, EkoNiva-Food. 'Tasting is one of the most efficient forms of interaction with the buyers allowing the company to showcase the maximum

number of items in its portfolio and explain the story behind the brand. Consumers, in their turn, can assess the organoleptic properties of the products and choose what tastes best for them.'

EkoNiva's in-house promoters explained the ins and outs of the production process and highlighted all the benefits of the EKONIVA brand. Honest volume and natural ingredients will make it especially attractive for those who look for the best value for money.

Opened in 1953, Grocery No. 1 became an embodiment of the Soviet commerce. Since then, Moscow residents have traditionally purchased groceries for their family celebrations at this shop. It is famous for a wide variety of high-quality goods. Now EKONIVA products made from fresh milk produced on the company's own farms are available on its shelves. From our fields for your health!

By Anna PALAGUTINA



Barista's choice

Crocus Expo IEC has hosted the 23rd International Exhibition of the Hospitality Industry PIR EXPO. It is the most important event in the HoReCa segment.

At the trade fair, EkoNiva-Food displayed its new dairy product range developed to meet the needs of the catering sector.

'We produce EKONIVA Professional Line for baristas and chefs who value the unfailingly high quality of milk', states Stefan Duerr, EkoNiva Group President. 'The EkoNiva team guarantees lot-to-lot consistency. Our top priorities are ingredient transparency and natural taste of each product, which is exactly what our clients need.'

EkoNiva-Food has already established effective partnerships with such companies as Shokoladnitsa coffeehouse chain all over Russia, Cofix coffee bars in St. Petersburg, PRIME cafe in Moscow, Dodo Pizza, Gazpromneft, Neftmagistral and others.

In late 2018, EKONIVA Professional Line hit the shop shelves for the first time. In October 2020, the product packaging underwent redesigning and the protein content in UHT milk was increased to a minimum of 3.2 g per 100 g of milk. The latter indicator is confirmed by the test protocols of All-Russian Scientific Research Institute of Dairy Industry.

EKONIVA Professional Line UHT milk is perfect for latte art as it can be easily whipped into a dense stable foam and is suitable for virtually all kinds of coffee machines.

In the course of the exhibition, the attendees could enjoy the fascinating patterns created by 'coffee artists' using EKONIVA dairy produce.

Vladimir Slobodyanyuk, Professional Barista at Alef Trade MSK, treated the visitors of EkoNiva booth to the classic milk-based coffee drinks such as cappuccino, latte and flat white containing EKONIVA Professional Line milk with a fat content

ranging from 1.5 to 3.5 per cent.

'This milk is good for both thick foam and micro-foam of thin glossy consistency used for latte art', comments Vladimir. 'Stable milk foam without large bubbles lasts for up to half an hour. Hearts and rosettes, the classic latte art patterns, can be created even from low-fat milk. EKONIVA Professional Line milk easily whips into a properly textured foam no matter which coffee machine you are using. It is equally good for a simple espresso machine and a sophisticated automatic unit.'

Svetlana Makarova, Marketing Analyst at Alef

Trade MSK, Russian supplier of premium hot drink ingredients and the relevant professional equipment, shared her expert opinion on EKONIVA Professional Line milk produce.

'EKONIVA Professional Line is a perfect choice for making milk-based coffee drinks with both WMF fully automatic coffee machines and traditional Rancilio ones', says Svetlana Makarova. 'We have started cooperating with EkoNiva this year. Professional Line milk and cream have become a welcome addition to our core product range since Alef Trade MSK is committed to providing its clients with the best service possible. Along with supplying our customers with coffee beans for their coffee shops and cafes, we offer the highest-quality milk to create delectable drinks.'

Galina Samokhina, Quality Control Manager at Unitek, the official and certified dealer of Thermoplan coffee machines, provided a favourable feedback on the EKONIVA range.

'I am very happy with the products', states Galina, 'especially the 1.5% milk, which we often make coffee with. It goes well with the coffee and syrups bringing out the taste of each component. The foam made from EKONIVA milk is distinguished by its density, elasticity and sweetness contributing to the ultimate taste of a cappuccino drink. And the latte is beyond all praise!'

By Anna PALAGUTINA



Autumn in focus



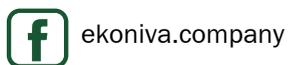
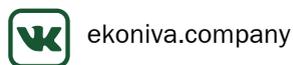
12-31 December, 5-9 January * New Year Quests on EkoNiva's farms

Venue: Dobrino dairy, Dobrino village, Liski district, Voronezh region. Ulanovo dairy, Ulanovo village, Medyn district, Kaluga region
Organiser: EkoNiva-Food

29-31 January* Agros Expo 2021 International Trade Fair of Livestock Farming and Forage Production Technologies

Venue: IEC Crocus Expo, 20, Mezhdunarodnaya st. Krasnogorsk, Moscow oblast
Organiser: DLG RUS, LLC

* The events may be postponed or cancelled depending on the epidemiological situation



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ЕКОНИВА
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