

Accents placed and goals outlined

By Lyudmila Savenkova

By 2015, Belarus' export of goods and services should more than double

The draft National Export Promotion Programme for 2011-2015 has been considered at a governmental session. "Our primary goal is to boost the export of goods and services," noted Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov. He believes the problem of the negative trade balance in goods and services is the second most pressing.

Mr. Martynov explained that experts at the National Academy of Sciences agree with industry specialists that Belarus could achieve a trade surplus by 2014. "More precisely, by 2014, we could balance foreign trade. From 2015, we could have a surplus of about \$500m," asserted Mr. Martynov. He also stressed that turning these figures into reality will require a careful approach to the import of goods and services. In this regard, the programme envisages export growth outpacing import growth.

The official emphasised that the Export Promotion Programme for 2011-2015 is designed to balance state and regional priorities with goals set by various industries to boost the export of goods and services. "The programme is orienting industries towards particular countries and regions over the next five years," Mr. Martynov added.

The programme envisages the development of new export-oriented manufacture, increasing foreign currency revenue and raising foreign direct investment into production modernisation. This will enhance the export potential of the national economy, increasing the share of high-tech products with higher value added. Additionally, the geography of exports is to be diversified.

Agro-industrial complex needs to accelerate progress

Belarusian agro-industrial development discussed at Scientific-Practical Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation, in Minsk's Knorin Street



National Academy of Sciences' Scientific-Practical Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation workshop

By Kirill Ignatiev

The technical re-equipment of the branch was under focus at the meeting, with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko asserting that imports should be reduced as much as possible, replaced by domestic produce. This led indirectly to the theme of foreign currency leaving the country. The Centre's staff are convinced that the problem can be solved quickly and efficiently, as they boast good experience. Over the

past five years, the Rural Revival Programme has given Belarusian farms over 20,000 new tractors, in addition to about 12,000 different combines, 9,000 fertilising machines and various other machinery.

Never before have Belarusian villages been so well equipped. Modernisation is almost complete, with the issue of quality now replacing that of quantity. The General Director of the Scientific-Practical Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation, Vladimir

Samosyuk, explains that Belarus currently has about 49,000 tractors operational, while needing almost 52,000; some villages still lack the latest machinery. Despite this, the needs of the agro-industrial branch are being satisfied.

The Centre was set up five years ago to elaborate a common strategy for deciding which machinery was needed in villages and at which volumes. The development and manufacture of such machinery was the most important goal at the time. Scientists

and designers demonstrated their best achievements, with over a hundred innovations being designed over the five year period and many of them being assembled. Last year alone, \$140m of combines, seeders, mowing machines, ploughs and other devices were produced — all developed by the Centre. Its staff believe that reducing costs is the new priority for Belarusian agriculture. Achieving European levels of production efficiency will be otherwise impossible. Naturally, scientists are working in various directions. They told Mr. Lukashenko of the numerous projects currently underway. Among them is a new economical pig breeding complex, a biogas complex and a workshop to produce dried cultures (previously, Belarus purchased \$12m of these annually).

The President is keen to see more Belarusian components used in domestic agricultural machinery, in the shortest possible time. It has taken several years to ensure that potato seeders use 80 percent Belarus-made components, which have been tested and adjusted to allow them to rival foreign varieties. The President emphasises that time-scales must be reduced. "We need to at least halve this period. Problems regarding foreign currency and other matters will then disappear. We need to double our efforts in all spheres and maximise production," Mr. Lukashenko stresses. He notes that, at the end of the day, money and profit are all that matter in the farming industry.

Serving mutual interests

France believes NATO-Belarus co-operation can continue, serving mutual interests

This has been announced by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Michel Raineri. He says that the Embassy of France has been acting as NATO representative office in Belarus since January 1st, 2011. He explains that various NATO delegations visit Belarus, with the Embassy of France assisting in arranging visits and meetings. A NATO delegation visited Belarus in January and, in May, NATO officials are expected to visit the country again to discuss future Belarus-NATO co-operation. Mr. Raineri underlines that general matters of Belarus-NATO future co-operation are to be discussed in Brussels.

Providing information on NATO activities is one of the major tasks of the French Embassy to Minsk.



Ambassador of France to Belarus, Michel Raineri (F)

The diplomat stresses that, since the early 1990s, NATO has developed a network of contact embassies to assist partnership and public diplomacy to member-states of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), to members of the *Partnership for Peace* Programme (PfP), of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative

(ICI). Each NATO partner-country has an embassy of one of NATO member-states, allowing it to distribute information on the role and policy of the North Atlantic Alliance. Before France took up this role in Minsk, the Embassy of Lithuania performed these functions.

Mr. Raineri emphasises that contact embassies

are in close co-operation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division, providing information on the policy and purposes of the North Atlantic Alliance to each country, while assisting the NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division in arranging EAPC, PfP, MD and ICI events. He notes that NATO member-states' diplomatic missions in partner-countries voluntarily fulfil the obligations of contact embassies for a two year period. The final decision on the appointment of a contact embassy is taken by NATO major managerial body: the North Atlantic Council. The Public Diplomacy Division closely coordinates the work of contact embassies.

The Embassy of France will act as NATO representative office in Belarus from 2011-2012.

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