

# Agrarian prospect can't be seen without true hosts

Within the rural revival programme, Rudnya agro-town — in the Mozyr District — is exemplary

By Kirill Dmitriev

Everything one might need for a comfortable life is at hand — including good job opportunities, leisure facilities and superb schools, not to mention cosy homes. The state rural revival programme is in its second five-year period already, so Rudnya cannot perhaps be called a model — but it certainly is exemplary among the many revamped settlements and can teach others a thing or two. Heads of agro-towns yet to finish their renovation should visit the Mozyr District, to see with their own eyes how revival should be done.

It seems that the President's choice of town on the eve of the agro-cultural season was made carefully. Zarya farm unites almost every aspect of farming — from breeding herd animals and poultry (for eggs, meat and milk) to crop growing. Moreover, it boasts labour efficiency, with impressive results. Zarya is a wonderful example of how to organise a farm.

Alexander Lukashenko has many times stressed that similar levels should be achieved more widely. "Everywhere should be like Rudnya," he emphasises, referring not just to its appearance but to its approach to business. The state has injected a great deal of funding into agro-towns but much still needs to be done, with local initiatives leading the way. Local authorities should know how much accommodation is needed and for whom, and how best to use their fields, choosing



Alexander Lukashenko visits Rudnya secondary general education school in the Mozyr District

crops carefully. They should also know how to protect the local environment. The state has given 'start-up capital' to agro-towns, helping them with equipment, machinery and the construction of modern farms. Now, the time has come for wise local management.

As the President notes, Belarus has agreed to offer the same level of state support for rural areas as that observed in Russia and Kazakhstan (fellow Single Economic Space members). With this in mind, state support is to be slightly reduced. Mr. Lukashenko explains, "All land should be 'in order' by the end of this five-year period — to ensure it resembles this town: a good example. It's a crime not to use land properly. We'll be

enhancing this work, while also cutting state allocations to rural areas."

Construction and reconstruction of farms and animal-breeding complexes are among our priorities, as is staffing. We can build the best farms and purchase the most advanced equipment, but good management is vital to ensure they're used effectively. The President stresses, "It's essential to have strong leaders." He believes that universities need to keep pace with progress and would like to see farms such as Zarya become centres of practical training for rural managers. Mr. Lukashenko proposes a simple recipe: that such farms take on a dozen promising specialists and students annually, teaching them the profession.

They need to independently 'taste this bread'.

The application of this approach is evident at Zarya. The Director of the local school, Alexey Kokhan, seems no older than his senior pupils but is a talented and wise manager. He explains, "Do you see these new houses? The farm builds a dozen annually. I've received one and most of the residents are young families (aged under 30) — either with children or planning on having them. This will keep the agro-town alive. Children grow up seeing that their parents are comfortable here — with good jobs and salaries and all the necessary conveniences. As they become older, these young people tend not to yearn to leave, except per-

haps to study and later return home." Mr. Lukashenko notes that local youngsters tend to apply for agricultural and technical universities, learning skills which are later useful in their hometown. It's a pleasing trend, since the country needs such specialists.

During the President's visit, various topics were discussed, with decisions made immediately. One such was regarding organic meat production, with animals being allowed to roam more freely in Polesie's fields. Local people have already gained experience of how best to breed such cows but the technical aspects of processing can still be improved. Organic beef could be sold in Russia at \$15 per kilo while, in Japan, such

beef commands a price of up to \$500 (although local technologies are truly sophisticated). Japanese cows eat the best grain and even high quality beer and are placed in sound-insulated boxes at a certain age. Belarus might not apply exactly the same methods but it's clear that organically produced meat is far more profitable and is certainly the way forward.

The President stresses, "Organic meat is a must. We'll establish its processing, jointly finding markets for sales. Our specialists are already studying foreign experience and we are to buy a processing line. It's not an expensive business for the state. We shall pack our meat as they do in Europe and then sell. There's huge demand in Russia, so we'll develop this avenue. Many fields remain idle in the country."

Salaries are another hot issue, as the President admits, "I've been recently observing — including in media reports — that companies and workers are now tackling the issue of how to raise salaries, as we've agreed. Please, raise salaries if your company enjoys labour efficiency and growing sales. However, no increases should be given where there is a lack of labour efficiency, or we'll endure a repeat of the recent financial-economic crisis." Mr. Lukashenko stresses that managers who fail to ensure efficiency (and, consequently, good results) are failing their staff — since they cannot therefore raise salaries. Where this is the case, they should bear responsibility.

## Air travelling passengers' interests taken into account

Belarus and Russia resolve discord regarding passenger flights

Belarus' Deputy Prime Minister, Anatoly Kalinin, tells us, "We've lifted all disagreements in the field of passenger air transportation and agreed that, in summer, flights will follow a 50:50 scheme: Belarus and Russia will offer five flights each." He stresses that the interests of passengers guided the decision.

"The convenience of passengers is the key factor for air carriers. We need to arrange as many flights as needed for the business community, tourists and other citizens. Economic matters are secondary," Mr. Kalinin



Green light for flights

adds. As earlier announced, the Belarus-Russia dispute was triggered by the number of flights offered by Minsk and Moscow. In line with an intergovernmental agreement on air transportation (from December 12th, 1997), Belarus and Russia

have commercial parity regarding the number of flights between their capitals. Belavia planned that, in summer 2012, it would conduct four Minsk-Moscow flights daily while Russia wished to run five.

On March 26th, Belavia was forced to suspend flights to Moscow, as the Russian Federal Agency for Air Transport revoked the national airline's permit to conduct regular flights between Minsk and Moscow for summer 2012. In response, Belarus revoked the relevant permits for all Russian air carriers. The same day, the two states' aviation authorities decided to temporarily resume flights.

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