

High standards for learning

President Alexander Lukashenko notes that Belarus has fully ensured its food security through intensive agricultural development, on visiting Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University

By Veniamin Khmylevsky

Currently, the BSATU runs courses in 12 agricultural specialties and, in 2010, gained certification for its quality management system. It has already trained more than 42,000 agro-engineering professionals, following the integrated system of continuous professional education. Currently, about 30 per cent of its full-time students are graduates of agricultural colleges and it teaches 162 foreign nationals from 12 countries, including providing further training for managers and specialists from Russia and Kazakhstan.

The President's tour of the BSATU allowed him to comment on its facilities, status and prospects. Visiting the pavilion, where practical classes are held, he was able to view the Soil Mechanics Laboratory, chatting to students and staff and answering all questions. Mr. Lukashenko also entered a lecture on the use of alternative energy sources in agriculture, and took part in the discussion.

The President noted that, worldwide, there is a struggle for energy resources and, above all, raw hydrocarbon deposits. The use of alternative energy production and of local resources is essential. "By the end of this five-year period, we should see 30 per cent of electricity generated from our own sources. The nuclear power plant will free the use of 5 billion cubic metres of natural gas," he asserted.

Speaking of agriculture, Mr. Lukashenko stressed that every country seeking sustainable development, independence and a good standard of living is focused on improving the agro-industrial complex. He explained, "Agriculture is food, which everyone needs every day; it also provides raw materials for the processing industry — a sphere in which



Alexander Lukashenko at the meeting with the teachers and students of the BSATU

a significant part of the population is involved. People's standard of living and the stability of the state depend on this sector."

According to the President, food security is of particular importance, since food riots can threaten any nation and are a tragedy for society. He recalled the difficult 1990s, where even Minsk's flour reserves were only enough for making bread for 2-3 days and rationing was in force. "Agrarians faced the task of reviving agricultural production while considerably outstripping the volumes and rates of the USSR times, to ensure food security for our country. Huge efforts were made to mobilise all internal resources, to overcome these difficulties," he added.

Belarus now fully satisfies its need for food, with about half of the volume exported (worth over \$5bn in 2012); by the end of 2015, this should be worth \$7bn. "We can be proud of the fact that Belarus leads the CIS for key agricultural prod-

ucts per capita, rivalling Germany in meat production and producing about double the milk of the most agriculturally developed European countries," Mr. Lukashenko told those present. He mentioned the state programme of rural development for 2005-2010, which focused on the social sphere, creating favourable conditions for people in the countryside. He added that, today, it's necessary to focus on the production sector while, long term, rural life should centre around modern agro-towns, with the rural economy being more efficient. "We shouldn't divide up large farms; we aren't against farmers but our future lies in large commodity economics," said the President.

Belarus has about 1,500 agro-towns offering good social standards. As Mr. Lukashenko noted, much attention has been paid to building foundations for the successful development of agriculture. "Agricultural production's competitiveness is based on modern, highly-

efficient technologies — for crop production and livestock. Therefore, it's vital to continue the technical modernisation of agriculture."

The training of qualified personnel is no less important for the successful development of agriculture. Here, the President requires that priority be given to the practical training of students at university. He noted that out of date training facilities are holding back the proficiency of learning but added, "Technologies change rapidly so we, like others, will never manage to keep pace educationally. The question is how to revise curricula so that future young professionals acquire the best production skills and knowledge of recent years, studying directly in the workplace, at particular farms."

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that the Government is eager to raise agricultural training quality, continually improving provision. He noted, "It's not enough to provide new equipment for a village since this

won't give the desired results without trained personnel, being a waste of money." He added that university students are the future engineers of change, designing the machinery of the future, which can pay for itself in the shortest possible time. "Highly qualified agrarians will work with you, as well as other experts, to ensure the development of the most efficient technologies for the production of agricultural goods. Our agriculture will become self-sufficient and self-financing," Mr. Lukashenko asserted.

Students asked the Head of State a number of questions relating to their specialisation of agriculture. Mr. Lukashenko told them that Belarus is completely modernising the production of linen products. Regarding the possible merger of Belarusian Association Gomselmash and Russian Rostselmash, the President noted that it would be profitable but admitted a lack of progress in negotiations.

Mr. Lukashenko explained

that various people have approached Belarus to buy its companies but emphasised that such deals won't go through unless they are truly mutually beneficial. "Offers are made under pressure, with people saying 'give us this company or sell this one'. Where we are ready to merge, they often refuse to pay the right price so I give them a straight refusal." However, he adds that Belarus has its own interests, such as acquiring Rostselmash (for Gomselmash) to supply joint products to markets.

Regarding the nuclear power plant, the President emphasised, "Before exporting electricity, we need to fulfil the needs of our domestic market, at normal prices. All that remains can be exported if feasible, generating more income than the electricity costs to produce."

Mr. Lukashenko admitted that Belarus has a shortfall of electricity, due to lack of modernisation, requiring purchase from the Russian Federation. He explained, "From Russia, we buy electricity at a price cheaper than it costs to produce our own: for a long time, we didn't upgrade our energy enterprises." He notes that the country has already invested about \$9bn in modernising such enterprises and plans to complete the process over the current five-year period.

Mr. Lukashenko noted that he'd like to build a second nuclear power plant in Belarus. "If I had the opportunity, I'd start building a second nuclear power station, for sure. However, we lack a contractor or a loan to pay for construction, although we have possible sites," said the President. In conclusion, the President advised the students to take full advantage of their opportunity to acquire knowledge.

Easter holiday congratulations exchange

At the initiative of the Russian side, a telephone conversation of President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin took place

The leaders of the two states exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the Easter holiday, wishing happiness and prosperity to the peoples of the fraternal countries.

Moreover, the presidents exchanged congratulations on the eve of the Victory Day. Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Putin discussed the current situation in the bilateral relations and in the international arena, as well as problematic issues which are of mutual interest and which should be considered in the near future.

Talents need assistance

State Science and Technology Committee announces Republican contest among young scientists for Presidential scholarship in 2014

The contest invites doctors of sciences (under 45), candidates of sciences (under 35) and scientists without degrees (under 30) who have achievements in fundamental and applied research,

Who are you, long-liver?

566 Belarusians celebrate centenary

Traditionally, women tend to outlive men, and reach their centenary. By early April, there were 482 women and 84 men who had celebrated their 100th birthday (almost seven-fold more women), according to the Chief

as well as sci-tech and innovation activities, and who haven't received similar Presidential scholarships over the previous five years. Applications are to be submitted until July 1st. Detailed information on the procedure of contest organisation and the list of necessary documents is available on the State Science and Technology Committee website: www.gknt.org.by

Specialist of the Veterans and Elderly Department, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Tatyana Maximova. Across the regions, the Grodno Region led, with 121 people aged 100 years or more in early April. The Brest Region is placed second and the Minsk Region third.

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