



Thonglung Sisulit

Laos is among our most promising partners in Asia, being connected to Belarus by long-held friendship, mutual support within international organisations and common views on the global agenda. However, our business ties are underdeveloped; our approximate

Circle of partners expands

Deputy Prime Minister of Laos pays official visit to Minsk

turnover of \$11m is far from satisfactory but could easily be expanded through promotion of co-operation.

Deputy Prime Minister Thonglung Sisoulith's visit was special, coming in response to our Foreign Minister's visit to Laos last year yet also signifying the strengthening of top-level relations. Mr. Sisou-

lith's foremost task in Minsk was to prepare a forthcoming visit by the Laos President to Belarus.

On meeting his guest at his working residence of 38 Karl Marx Street, President Lukashenko spoke of the significance of the event, saying, "I'm pleased that the President of Laos will soon pay a visit to Belarus. It's great, since we are ap-

proaching direct contacts between Belarus and Laos."

Until recently, business contacts with Laos have been implemented primarily via Vietnam but, of course, it's preferable to hold direct bilateral dialogue. Belarus' usual foreign political strategy is to use good relations with one country to gain a foothold with neighbour-

ing states in the region, which has clearly worked well in this case.

The Laos guest confirmed the importance of the forthcoming visit for enhancing fruitful collaboration, adding, "Although our countries are separated by great geographical distance, we've always viewed Belarus as our sincere friend."

Agrarian business of the worldwide level

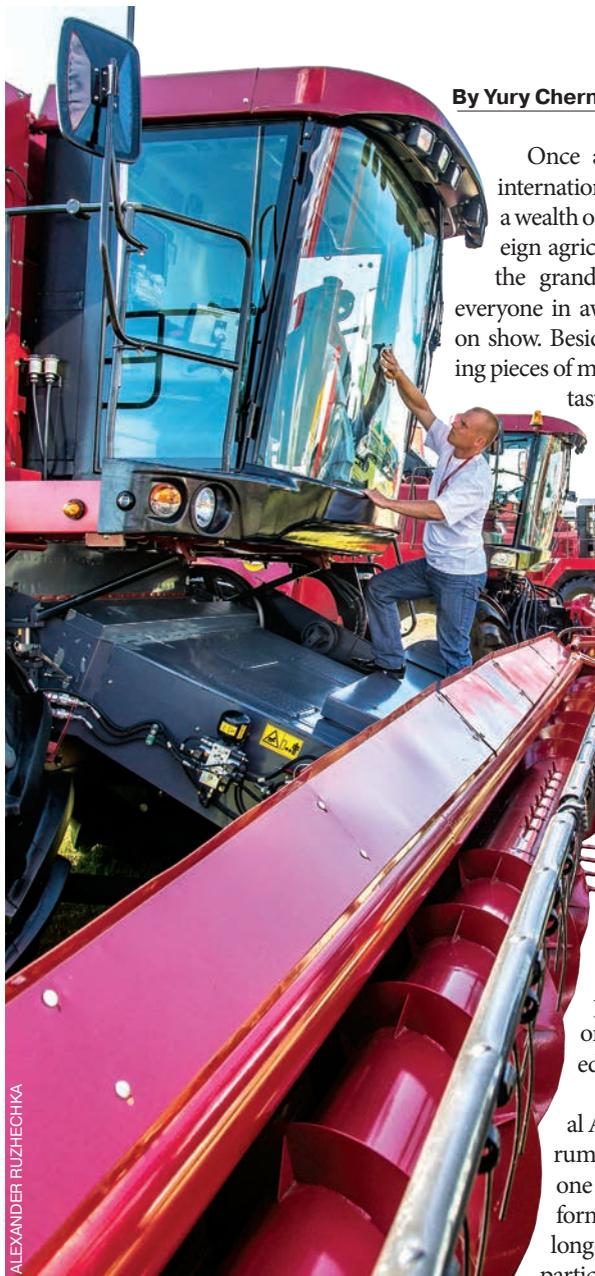
Minsk hosts 23th International Specialised *Belagro-2013* Exhibition, welcoming over 400 companies from 18 countries



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By Yury Chernyakevich

Once again, the biggest international forum gathered a wealth of domestic and foreign agricultural firms, with the grand opening leaving everyone in awe at the wonders on show. Besides viewing amazing pieces of machinery, plenty of tasty food was available for sampling at Minsk's Football Manege: cheeses from the dairy factories in Lepel and Glubokoe, sliced meat and sausages from the Brest and Gomel Meat-Packing Plants and, even, vintage wines from Krasnodar. Various stands offered tastings and promotions. No one left disappointed — or hungry!

The International Agro Industrial Forum in Minsk became one of the biggest platforms within the CIS long ago. Traditional participants and guests were joined this year by

firms from the USA, Singapore and other far-flung places: 400 companies from 18 countries in all. Many attended just to see Belarus' latest innovative agricultural developments. In fact, last year Belarus generated about US\$5 billion from its export of agricultural products and, by 2015, the figure may reach \$7 billion. Belarusian products are proving competitive globally, being sold to 63 countries, including Australia, China, Iran, Israel, Mongolia, Mexico and the USA. Dried and condensed milk, butter, cheeses (including cottage cheese), meat and sugar are among the most popular; Belarus is ranked first for condensed milk exports worldwide, fifth for meat and seventh for butter. Such figures speak for themselves, showing that the quality of Belarusian produce is admired and appreciated by nations across the globe.

Belagro-2013, as ever, presented not only the achievements of the agricultural branch but the technical expertise involved in running a successful business. Technology on show included an automatic analyser for beer and malt, machinery for planting potatoes, mechanical tilling machines and the latest in 'mobile shops'. OJSC Gastellovskoe's demonstrational field, near Minsk, was used for larger machinery, with a free bus transporting guests from one site to the other. Entry was open to all, allowing everyone to see the impressive capacity of the latest tractors, harvesters, sports utility vehicles, truck cranes, sprinkling-machines, excavators, loaders and cranes.

Few can have left in any doubt that innovations continue to appear year on year.

Belferma International Specialised Exhibition was held for the first time, hosted by OJSC Gastellovskoe, focusing mostly on animal breeding. Belarus' major producers of mixed fodder, antibiotics, feed additives and plant-insecticides were joined by foreign rivals, allowing innovations to be compared. In a more light-hearted vein, guests were invited to take part in a ploughing competition, sheep shearing master classes and the *Champion of Taste* contest. Meanwhile, the most impressive agricultural equipment was seen in action, to the delight of all. The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus also took part in demonstrations; Vladimir Malokovich, of the NAS' Bobruisk Biotechnologies, tells us that its environmentally-friendly grain molasses, nutrient yeasts and probiotics are finding markets in Belarus and far beyond.

Needless to say, a rich business programme accompanied the agro industrial week in Minsk, with the Belarusian-Netherlands Business Forum playing 'first violin'. Many famous companies from the Netherlands took part, including Heineken, (the latter grows brewer's barley in Belarus) and Philips Lighting (which supplies lighting for hothouses in Belarus). Many farmers were united with new investors and partners, signing preliminary arrangements on mutually beneficial co-operation. Meetings were certainly productive and efficient.

Green light for ecology

By Sergey Mokhorev

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has hosted the signing of an agreement between the Government of Belarus and the European Union on the financing of Green Economy of Belarus

The international technical assistance project will help to attract funding of 12m Euros for eco-activities. Small 'green initiatives' are to be supported while about 5m Euros is to be used to build wind turbines in the Novogrudok District. This will help determine the feasibility of wind power serving the needs of the economy.

According to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Vladimir Tsalko, around twenty environmental projects are to be funded, following application by individual district executive committees, forestry commissions, administrations of specially protected areas and other agencies and organisations. The guiding principle is to ensure that the environment remains unaffected and that resources are conserved.

Demand for budget leisure

By Anton Ivanov

Within a couple of years, chain of hostels should at least double across Minsk

The hotel business is developing well in the capital, with demand for economy class mini-hotels continuing to rise. The first hostels appeared in Minsk two years ago and, last year, six more budget hotels opened in the Belarusian capital, with beds for 309 guests. As of early April, there were 22 such hostels, sleeping 464 people.

Hostels are much cheaper than hotels, charging from \$10 a room, for eight people, to \$57 for comfortable doubles. Four more budget hotels are planned, located at the intersection of Narochanskaya and Timiryazev streets, on Koshevoy Street (near Vostochny Bus Station), on Korzhenevsky Street (near the Alpine Snow Sports and Recuperation Centre) and at the High-Tech Park.