

## In top third for business conditions

By Sergey Stepanov

**Belarus improves World Bank and International Finance Corporation ranking for Doing Business-2014: Understanding Regulations for Small and Medium-Size Enterprises — ranked 63rd among 189 countries**

The IFC ranking takes note of positive changes in business conditions in Belarus, including easier registration of a new enterprise: fewer fees and the putting aside of temporary bank accounts for registration. Belarus made getting electricity easier by speeding up the process of issuing technical specifications and excavation permits and by reducing the time needed to connect to the electricity network.

Moreover, according to experts, Belarus has made transferring property easier by introducing a fast-track procedure for property registration. The country improved its insolvency process through a new insolvency law that, among other things, changes the appointment process for insolvency administrators and encourages the sale of assets in insolvency.

Singapore takes first place worldwide, followed by Hong Kong, China, New Zealand, the USA, Denmark, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Georgia, Norway and the UK.

# Top-quality products on show at prestigious forum

Minsk hosts 19th International *Prodexpo-2013*, with tasty samples on hand

By Yuri Chernyakevich

More than 200 companies from around the world took part in the prestigious international forum this year, with stands full of bakery and confectionery, meat and dairy products, as well as production and shop equipment for the food industry. Visitors could evaluate quality not only by eye but through organised tastings.

Among the meat pavilions was Vitebsk Meat Packing Plant's stand, manned by Lyudmila Ivolgina. She explains that most of their output is sold in Minsk but that various suburbs have quite different tastes, with some preferring smoked products and others summer sausage. "Participation in the exhibition is very useful for us, as we learn about demand and can seek out new partners," she admits.

The meat section was well-represented, with each participant trying to surprise visitors. Minsk Meat Packing Plant featured a violin made of sausage while Bobruisk Meat Processing Plant featured a 'sausage armchair'.

Belarusian dairy stands attracted huge numbers of visitors, including those from Moscow. The latter commented enthusiastically on the quality of Belarusian milk, sour cream and cottage cheese. I'm confident that the produce



Exhibition showcases various products from processing enterprises

under the 'made in Belarus' brand also seems to be warmly accepted across other Russian regions, thanks to high-quality products gaining a good reputation. Our niche on the Russian market appears to be permanent.

Slutsk Cheese Factory, about to launch new labeling and packaging, is one of the country's major players in the food industry. An aggressive marketing policy is also in the pipeline, explains marketing specialist Irina Samusevich. She tells us, "We plan to update our range of

cheeses, which currently includes 'Parmesan Gold' and 'Tyzengauz' — the most expensive. We've been producing mozzarella for pizza for a long time and are working on blue cheeses now, as well as those made from goats' milk (a niche yet to be explored in Belarus). From spring, we plan to be selling goat's cheese and goat's yoghurt in shops: all very healthy!" she declares.

Following your nose brought you to the chocolate stands of OJSC 'Kommunarka' and 'Spartak', where the selection was huge. It was hard to

know where to look first! With attractive new packaging and dozens of tasty novelties for New Year and the World Ice Hockey Championship, the stands were a dazzling sight. I particularly liked the '3D book' from 'Spartak': a children's gift box.

*Prodexpo-2013*, hosted by the Football Manege in Minsk, gathered thousands of visitors: all eager to evaluate the quality of the goods on show. Of course, the trade fair's main objective was not promotion for its own sake, but to sign profitable contracts for 2014.

At last year's forum, about 20,000 contracts for delivery were signed; this year may have seen even more.

According to Vasily Pavlovsky, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Food, Belarus aims to increase agro-exports to \$7 billion by 2015. These seem ambitious plans, especially as 2012 brought about \$5 billion of sales. However, Mr. Pavlovsky emphasises that 2013 should see at least \$6 billion in agro-revenue. By building on existing markets and entering into new ones, the target is achievable.

## Home-grown businesses are always highly evaluated

By Olga Kruchenkova

**Belarusian-Israeli Agro-Industrial Park will be located in the area of the twelve farms in the Orsha and Tolochin districts**

On the government side, the work on the project is being carried out by the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Israel, Yair Shamir, got acquainted with the proposals of Belarus. The working meeting between the leadership of the Israeli delegation and representatives of the scientific community was held in the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee before a tour of the Orsha and Tolochin districts.

"Based on the experience that Israel has in co-opera-

tion with Belarus and other countries, I believe that this project could be very successful", said Mr. Yair Shamir after the presentation.

An environmentally friendly area of 58,000 hectares, plus arable land of 43,000 hectares, was selected for the creation of the Agro-Industrial Park. There are 12 agricultural plants situated here. The list of potential investors consists of fourteen companies from Israel, Russia, Germany, the USA.

According to Igor Voitov, the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology, the project has several directions — from product certification to the development of new nano- and biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

"One of the first projects that we plan to implement in



Scheme for Belarusian-Israeli Agro-Industrial Park

the Belarusian-Israeli company is the creation of an independent, international certification centre for agricultural and industrial production, the amount of which increases from year to year in order to be able to meet demand in the EU and other markets," said the Chairman of the SCST. "We are also

interested in biotechnology applied in animal and fish farming. The Israeli side has offered to consider issues related to the establishment of bee farms. They have a huge bio-industry, and Belarus could become a supplier of raw plant material, including medicinal herbs and forest products."

## Time brings major reorganisation

By Andrey Yegorov

**By late 2014, the current Industry Ministry of Belarus is to have become the Industrial Policy Ministry, announces Belarus' First Deputy Prime Minister, speaking at joint session of two houses of Parliament**

Mr. Semashko expects that, by the end of the year, the Industry Minister will present data regarding future staff numbers, structure and functions for the new Industrial Policy Ministry, enabling it to be established by the end of 2014 and to become operational in 2015.

The First Deputy PM is convinced that the Industry Ministry needs reorganisation, although not everyone is happy about the idea. "The very Industry Ministry rejects the idea and I understand their point of view. Just 127 people have survived staff optimisation, while

Ukraine's similar ministry employs over a thousand people. However, I'm convinced it's the right choice," Mr. Semashko emphasises.

Sharing his views on how to resolve the issue, he tells us, "We need to revise the entire management structure in Belarus. Some employees from the ministries directly or indirectly involved in developing industrial policy should be transferred to the Industry Ministry." He adds that the best foreign practices should be thoroughly analysed.

"We need to revise the industry management principle and switch from sector-wise to functional management. In fact, an increasing number of companies are becoming private, joint ventures; we need to guarantee equal terms and conditions for private companies and joint-stock ventures (where the government has a stake) alongside state-run companies," Mr. Semashko concludes.