



Government notes Belarus' possibility to be among top 30 countries with most favourable business environment

Companions find mutual interest

By Alexander Semenovskiy

Belarusian-Russian company manufacturing soda coming to Belarus

"This innovative import-substitution product can be sold both in Belarus and in neighbouring countries," notes Belarus' Construction Minister, Anatoly Nichkasov.

"Belarus has never produced sodium carbonate before but is teaming up with Russian partners to set up a transnational company to do so," he explains. The Architecture and Construction Ministry is now negotiating collaboration with potential partners.

Mr. Nichkasov stresses that sodium carbonate is important for use in Belarus' well-developed glass industry, which produces not only glass but plastics, tableware and crystal. "It's a very expensive mineral compound which must currently be imported," the Minister emphasises.

In 2012, the Ministry began working on technology to produce sodium carbonate from Belarusian raw materials. According to Mr. Nichkasov, Belarusian specialists are working with Russia's Bashkirian Chemistry JSC to select appropriate Belarusian dolomites and potassium salts (salt solutions of the latter are an important element of soda production).



Product in demand

Our Architecture and Construction Ministry has been expanding its export of construction services to Russia over the past year, with particular focus on large panel house-building in Russia. Belarusian development companies have received licenses to undertake construction works in Russian regions, more than doubling their workload since 2011.

Breakthrough to EU markets

Bereza Cheese Making Plant supplies first batch of whey powder to Holland

Since July 1st, 2012, the EU Standing Committee for Food Chains and Animal Health has allowed five Belarusian companies to supply EU states with food commodities. Bereza Cheese Making Plant is among these enterprises, delivering 20 tonnes of whey powder to Holland this January: a landmark for the company and the whole dairy industry of Belarus.

Previously, the enterprise had only dispatched casein to the EU, supplying CIS markets with over 80 percent of its exported produce.

Partnerships in reserve

The January press conference sees President highly praising partnership between business and state, noting that 'all businessmen who wish to work honestly in Belarus and earn enough money to live well are able to do so'

By Dmitry Overianov

Business cannot develop independently of the state and, of course, many promising projects need assistance and material help. State support for small scale entrepreneurship is common around the world, including in Belarus. In doing so, the state hopes to receive more tax revenue and to raise GDP. At present, small businesses account for around 23 percent of GDP but the Government wishes to raise this to 30 percent within two years (as per the state programme to support small and medium-sized entrepreneurship from 2013-2015).

Similar programmes have been applied in the past but this expands the list of executives, covering not only state authorities but public associations — such as the Guild of Marketing Specialists and the Minsk Capital Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers. They will take charge of collating information and organising conferences, as the Chairman of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, Igor Chernyavsky, explains. "As responsible executives of the state programme we'll try to ensure that entrepreneurs see and feel the dynamics of economic development. We'll organise fully-fledged

dialogue."

Training is to be organised in the regions for those involved in entrepreneurial activities, as a modest 60 percent of such businesses exist outside of Minsk. Naturally, campaigns are to be held to encourage more people to take up the baton, with local authorities acting as executives of the programme. Support will be given for start-up projects, particularly those with an element of innovation.

The recently established Belarusian Association of Venture Investors unites businessmen keen to invest in alternative projects. Of course, the state should be encour-

aging private initiative, since the nation benefits as a whole. Another avenue for attention is female entrepreneurship, with a business incubator to open in each region offering support to women.

Over the next three years, over Br400bn is to be spent on the new programme, funded nationally and from local budgets. The Belarusian Fund for Financial Support of Entrepreneurship, which accepts applications from small and medium-sized businesses, holds Br24.5bn in assets. So, entrepreneurs — take note! Propose your projects now, for yourself and for the benefit of your country.

Centre moving to the regions?

2013 Belarus National Business Platform subject to public discussion

By Vladimir Khromov

The 2013 event is expected to introduce several novelties, including discussions on the theme of 'Future Visions of Belarus, or What Kind of Country Are We Building?' Entrepreneurs are keen to show that they can think beyond their own interests, with consideration for the challenges and risks facing Belarus in 2013.

Inequality exists between the private and public sectors of the economy, with weak mechanisms of antimonopoly control, expensive credit resources, and high regulatory, rents and taxes charged. In addition, there is a lack of highly professional managers. The question of the cost of credit resources and access to finance is one of the most sensitive, according to surveys of entrepreneurs. Debate is heated as to whether credit and monetary resources should be segregated into a separate bloc but experts agree that this is a matter for macroeconomic policy, which should be solved through other instruments.

The agenda of this year's event has been prepared, including a dis-

cussion on the effectiveness of the implementation of decisions made at last year's gathering, which was entitled 'Modernisation — Together'. This contained 105 proposals, of which 28 received Government support. Already, 5 have been fully implemented, 9 are underway and 15 are partially fulfilled. Tax cuts have been positively assessed and entrepreneurs are hoping to see the question of provision of leased premises solved. A law entitled 'On Economic Insolvency (Bankruptcy)' is being drafted and conditions for real estate developers have been improved.

"Actually, dozens of questions have been solved," stresses the Chairman of the Presidium of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, Vladimir Karyagin. "Of course, much is yet to be done, so we should keep addressing these questions each year." Last year, the results of decisions made at the 2009 and 2011 Belarus National Business Platform came to

fruition, showing that the cycle of adopting relevant legislation takes 2 to 4 years. "This point must also be considered," emphasises Mr.

Karyagin.

Authorities and businesses have sufficient joint decision-making tools, including public advisory boards under ministries and departments. According to experts, one of the most important current instruments for implementing platform ideas is the programme of state support for small and medium-sized businesses for 2013-2015. "Business representatives helped create

the document, which is our great achievement and hope, although not all solutions have yet been implemented," emphasises Mr. Karyagin.

Before the event assembles, an analytical report will be prepared in February, detailing the state of our small and medium-sized businesses. This will be presented to the Government and other authorities before being delivered at the platform. A third Business Optimism Index (IDO) has begun, with respondents asked additional questions regarding platforms and programmes of state support for small and medium-sized businesses. Data will then be included in the final version of the platform.

Mr. Karyagin notes that businesses shape the agenda of the platform, since it must reflect their needs and promote their interests to local authorities. Businesses are moving progressively into the regions, with 95 percent of issues at the platform relating to their functioning.

