

## 'EkoNiva is more than work'

Elena Levina  
on the company's story

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## Different fields, one goal

Fakel team visits  
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## Welcoming new cheese varieties

Mozzarella for pizza and suluguni  
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## Stefan Dürr: 'EkoNiva was growing along the evolution of the Russian farming sector'

In 2000, the attitude to agriculture in Russia started to change. After Aleksey Gordeyev had headed the Ministry of Agriculture, the Russian farming sector immediately found itself in the government's focus and showed positive development, as now we had regulatory law and comprehensible business rules. At that time, we were already running a successful business selling imported machinery and seeds. But I had always wanted to farm the land.

Thus, in 2000, I was offered to create a farm together with a partner. We set off to a good start: imported farm machinery and seeds, sowed the fields and harvested a good crop. But two years later, I lost everything. It was a very costly lesson but it was useful: stop being so naive and gullible. But as they say: failure teaches success.

It was a hard blow but I didn't lose heart and in 2002 we launched farming businesses in 3 regions at once: Kursk, Voronezh and Orenburg oblasts. We focused on crop production, started growing seeds and were developing farming machinery distribution simultaneously.

In 2005, state subsidies became more accessible to farmers, which facilitated our work. We started expanding: acquired new enterprises in Kaluga and Novosibirsk oblasts. In fact, we were growing along the evolution of the Russian farming sector. And in the meanwhile, we were learning from our mistakes, gaining in experience and developing.

The launch of the national project 'Agriculture Sector Development' marked a take-off point for EkoNiva. The government made it clear that the agricultural sector

was as much of a priority as oil and gas from then on. We decided to take up dairy farming though a lot of my colleagues thought that I was insane. Considering the forage and milk costs at that moment, the business was far from being profitable as compared to crops, poultry or at least pig farming. However, we took a risk. On 1 September 2007, we launched our first dairy farm for 1,400 cows in Voronezh oblast.

We had a lot to learn: a new industry, progressive practices, imported cows. Step by step, we were tackling into the dairy farming having to learn by doing it as there were not many references back then. However, we were able to improve the design of each next dairy farm built. But most importantly, we were building a team of employees of the highest expertise. I can declare with confidence that all our dairy farming specialists today,

from herd to farm manager, are seasoned professionals. The team expertise is the key in any critical situation. If your team can pull together and brace up to deliver an excellent result, the company can get over any hardship.

Moreover, high crop and milk production was not our sole priority. I deeply believe that business must be socially responsible for the people and the land it operates on. Therefore, the rural community with all its issues has always been high on our agenda.

We showed a conspicuous increase in dairy farming and in 2014 became the top raw milk producer in Russia with an output of 400 tonnes per day, which made us consider branching out into milk processing. And after some consideration, we did it. But it's a completely different story.

Stefan DÜRR,  
President of EkoNiva Group



# Special award

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree awarding Stefan Dürr, Founder of EkoNiva Group, with the Order of Friendship for achievements in the agricultural sector and many years of dedicated work.

The corresponding decree was published on the Kremlin's website. In 1994, Stefan Dürr established EkoNiva and has become one of the brightest representatives of the Russian farming industry since then. Today, EkoNiva is the largest raw milk producer in Russia and number three in the world. Its subdivisions, including EkoNiva-Tekhnika, operate in 37 Russian regions. Forty modern dairies house about 115,000 milking

cows producing over 1 million tonnes of raw milk per year. In 2013, the Group started processing milk from its own farms. 'Receiving this state award means recognition of years of hard work. First of all, we owe it to the thousands of EkoNiva employees, without whom our company would not be what it is, to the team that I am proud of', stated Stefan Dürr.

By Eleonora DUBININA



# Regular exports of milk powder

EkoNiva Group, the largest raw milk producer in Russia, has begun regular exports of skimmed milk powder to Armenia. The Group intends to expand the sales to other countries, including Africa and the Middle East.

The first 20 tonnes of skimmed milk powder (SMP) was shipped to Armenia in late May 2024, the second batch of the same volume was sent in early June, and two more shipments are expected soon. By the end of the year, EkoNiva intends to increase SMP supply to Armenia up to 100 tonnes per month. Truck

delivery to Armenia takes 3-4 days, on average. Milk powder has a big advantage as an export product in terms of transportation. It does not need special conditions, such as certain temperature or packaging.

Skimmed milk powder is used to make whole-milk products, such as ice cream, curds, yogurts and other, and

also meats, confectioneries and pastry. It is also one of the basic components of baby food.

A trial export shipment was made last year. At that time, the Group sent 40 tonnes of skimmed milk powder to Kazakhstan. In 2024, EkoNiva

will focus on this area and introduce the product into the markets of neighbouring countries, in particular, Georgia. The company is thinking about SMP deliveries to North



African countries like Algeria and to the Middle East, including Oman.

'Our country aims at becoming a global leader in the food market by increasing exports.

Milk powder produced in Russia can compete globally in terms of quality and price, surpassing foreign manufacturers. Therefore, our goal is to expand into new international markets', says Mikhail Matveyenko, Deputy Director General of EkoNiva-APK Holding (part of EkoNiva Group).

By Eleonora DUBININA



# Russian dairy producers in Beijing



Artyom Belov, CEO of the National Union of Milk Producers (SOYUZMOLOKO), and Stefan Dürr, Union Chairman of the Board, have taken part in a business meeting of the Chinese National Committee of the International Dairy Federation (CNCIDF) and the China Dairy Industry Association (CDIA).

The participants discussed the dairy industry in Russia and China. In 2023, Russia ranked as number 3 food supplier to China and increased exports of milk and dairy products.

Russian producers supply to China dairy commodities, ice cream and ultra-pasteurised milk. SOYUZMOLOKO also observed a growing interest in other produce, such as cheese, fermented

milk products and sweet condensed milk.

'We hope to gain the trust and love of the local population and to be able to present the whole range of dairy from Russia. Our enterprises are ready to increase exports to

China and offer the products that best meet the preferences of Chinese consumers. It inspires us to expand the lineup and create new modern dairy products', says Stefan Dürr, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SOYUZMOLOKO and President of EkoNiva Group.

At the meeting, the parties agreed to organise mutual business missions of the largest Russian and Chinese enterprises. Besides, the Chinese colleagues are planning to participate in the annual congress of SOYUZMOLOKO, which will be held in January 2025. SOYUZMOLOKO will also take part in the general meeting of the Chinese Dairy Association.

In addition, the parties discussed the issue of equipment and spare part supply and agreed to arrange a similar meeting of Chinese technological solution suppliers with Russian businesses.

By Eleonora DUBININA

# EkoNiva cheese for Chinese consumers

The company has reached preliminary agreements to supply its brand cheese to China. The negotiations were held at the international trade fair in Xi'an. EkoNiva semi-hard and premium hard cheeses impressed existing and prospective partners of the Group who highly estimated the quality and natural composition of the products.

At the trade fair in Xi'an, EkoNiva presented natural dairy products from Voronezh oblast, including semi-hard and premium hard cheeses.

The milk processing and cheese plants in Voronezh oblast are certified for exports. EkoNiva cheeses from Shchuchye village can be shipped to the Customs Union countries and Uzbekistan. Moreover, the Group is currently preparing to go through all the necessary procedures to

open new export destinations, including China.

'EkoNiva has been participating in various exhibitions in China for a while, guests and participants of such events enjoy our cheeses greatly. Now, both consumers and infrastructure are ready for it: our cooperation with Shaanxi



province and the city of Xi'an has created necessary foundation for the supply of semi-hard and hard cheeses. This allows for more substantive and

detailed negotiations with current and potential partners interested in our products', comments Aleksandra Averyanova, Export Director of EkoNiva-Food.

By Talgat MUSAGALIEV

## Prompt milk delivery to China

EkoNiva Group has performed the first delivery by rail to the People's Republic of China. The batch included 42.5 tonnes of UHT milk. Previously, the milk was shipped by sea.

The delivery was carried out in partnership with AO RZD Logistics, a subsidiary of Russian Railways. The transportation from Moscow to Xi'an took 23 days, including all customs procedures. Currently, the Group is working on optimising all the logistics processes to reduce the delivery time.

The city of Xi'an is a major land transport hub in Shaanxi province. In January 2024, EkoNiva Group set up an official representative office there – EkoNiva (Xi'an) Dairy Co. The subsidiary is engaged in conducting commercial activities, raising the EKONIVA brand awareness and increasing exports to the country.

With a view to strengthening the economic

ties, in April, EkoNiva Group signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Xi'an Chanba International Port, a major logistics hub and a pilot free trade zone in Xi'an. The parties confirmed their commitment to developing trade relations and boosting sales of wholesome milk products from Russia.

EkoNiva started exporting UHT milk to China in the summer 2020. Currently, the total export volume accounts for approx. 1,800 tonnes with more than 350 tonnes shipped this year. The Group's produce is available in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning, as well as in Shanghai and Beijing.

'The launch of rail delivery and the cooperation agreement signed with Xi'an Chanba are a significant



milestone for EkoNiva Group. Sea freight to China taking up to two months considerably limits the SKU range on offer. At the same time, rail delivery taking just over two weeks opens up new opportunities for dairy export. Currently, EkoNiva's processing sites are undergoing certification

procedure, which will enable us to deliver products of a short shelf life such as semi-hard and hard cheeses, which enjoy an increasing popularity there', comments Aleksey Maslennikov, Deputy Director General for Sales and Marketing at EkoNiva-Food.

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV

## Dolce Vita

This year, the sugar beet area in EkoNiva's Kursk subdivision has been increased by 44%, from 2,700 ha to 3,900 ha. Local farmers are expected to harvest around 215,000 tonnes provided the weather conditions are favourable.



Early spring made it possible to start the sowing campaign two weeks ahead of schedule. The harvested sugar beet goes to Belsakhar sugar plant in Kommunar village, Belaya district. The increase in the sown area and sugar beet volumes from local farmers enables the enterprise to reach its full capacity and process about 240,000-250,000 tonnes of the beets.

Since 2018, Belsakhar is part of EkoNiva Group. The plant was revamped, which improved its efficiency and product quality. For example, the plant had the beet cutters renovated to enhance the quality of sugar beet juice and cassettes. The additional refurbishment includes the installation of a new pulp drier, a press and granulating equipment. Currently, the

capacity allows for processing up to 2,050 tonnes of sugar beet per day and producing on average 300 tonnes of TS2- and TS3-grade sugar.

'This season, we are planning to launch the enterprise in late August. Currently, the gas furnace turbines, diffuser and generator are undergoing a major overhaul. At the same time, we are upgrading the technological process software, which will make the operation more stable. All of these will ensure uninterrupted autonomous generation of electricity for production needs, thus helping to decrease the cost of our sugar', comments Boris Tereshenko, Managing Director of Belsakhar.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

## Pulling power of EkoNiva

Having received the HR Talent Award for the second year in a row, EkoNiva has confirmed its title of Russia's most attractive employer in the agricultural sector. The rating of the best employers is based on the results of an annual online survey prepared by ANCOR, an international staffing group, the Russia-Land of Opportunities platform and Romir research holding.

The large-scale study involved over 21,000 people, of whom over 80% are engaged in the commercial sector of the economy. They evaluated upwards of 500 large businesses with 1,000 employees or more. The shortlist comprised 277 companies from 13 industries.

EkoNiva took first place among the representatives of the farming sector, successfully outperforming the other seven companies. Its HR brand appeal exceeded 51%, while the brand awareness was 12%.

In 2023, EkoNiva was also rated as the most attractive



employer in the agricultural sector following the same survey. Back then, the Group's brand appeal exceeded 45%.

'The awareness of EkoNiva Group employer brand is backed by the company's strong brand image, high quality of its products and services and its significant role in the professional community. For several years, the holding's management and HR department have been enhancing the company's attractiveness as an employer and its competitive edges in the job market. This joint effort is surely paying off, but there is still room for perfection – we strive to further improve our employees' working conditions in order to attract and retain the best and strongest in the team. Again, the staff is our core value and capital', says Tatyana Lyapina, Deputy Director General for Human Resources at EkoNiva-APK Holding.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH

## Best practices in South America

In Argentina, EkoNiva visited the experimental station of the National Agriculture Technology Institute INTA. The agenda of the trip organised with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation included visits to the field plots, seed cleaning plants and quality control laboratories of the republic's leading seed producers. EkoNiva representatives came to discuss the options of fast-track seed multiplication and genetic material improvement. The company plans to develop cooperation with local enterprises to grow soybeans in so-called 'winter nurseries'. Thus, after growing the seeds in the summer in the Eurasian area, EkoNiva will have the benefit of reaping the second harvest in the southern hemisphere during the winter, which will shorten the breeding process and speed up the introduction



EkoNiva specialists are developing cooperation with South American countries to introduce fast-track breeding methods. To this end, the management of the company visited Argentina and Chile and learnt about the seed production systems of these countries.

of the Russian varieties to the market. During the visit, EkoNiva Plant Breeding and Variety

Maintenance Centre and Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA), a private non-profit corporation

that is part of the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture, reached a cooperation agreement. The parties drew up a memorandum, which was signed on the visit of the Chilean scientists to Russia. The Chilean party and EkoNiva are both interested in genetic technology knowledge transfer, joint staff training, work placement and internships.

Besides, EkoNiva employees attended the meeting of the Chilean Seed Association ANPROS and the National Plant Breeders and Seed Growers Association of Russia. The Russian seed growers would like to study the Chilean experience in establishing a unified zoning and seedling plot isolation map, therefore the organisations intend to sign a memorandum of understanding.

By Eleonora DUBININA

# To higher standards together



EkoNiva and Voronezh State University of Engineering Technologies (VSUET) have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation. The parties will design an educational programme to fully respond to the requirements of modern producers.

## Investing in future

Around 50 students from 17 Voronezh and Belgorod agricultural universities and colleges have visited EkoNiva's enterprises based in Voronezh oblast. The prospective specialists got to know all the business segments of the holding through lectures arranged by the Group's professionals and participating in an entertaining business game.

The acquaintance with the company started from Dobrino dairy where the visitors saw the lot with calf igloos, the feed centre, milking on the rotary and the overall herd management.

'I noticed how clean the farm is. The sand beddings are regularly loosened up, the barns are scraped and the feed bunks are maintained in good order. What's truly essential is that the animals are well kept here', says Diana Dobroskokina, student of Rossosh College of Meat and Dairy Industry.

The next stop on the tour was the cheese plant located in Shchuchye village where the young people watched a special robot treat cheese wheels with brine and a starter culture containing *Brevibacterium linens*.

Later, the students headed to the EkoNiva-Chernozemye dealership where the company employees elaborated on the current activities, showcased novelties of farming machinery and presented the in-house spare parts production under the AGROZNAK brand.

At the conclusion of the eventful day, EkoNiva's specialists gave several educative lectures on the basics of cattle nutrition, peculiarities of growing fodder crops, technological processes, quality control system and marketing.

The knowledge obtained during the day helped the students in the wrap-up business game. All the teams successfully defended their

The document provides for joint work on the project, establishing advanced engineering schools under the aegis of the university. EkoNiva will join forces with VSUET and other industrial counterparts to set up Innovative Dairy Technologies school and work out a curriculum that fully meets the needs of dairy manufacturers. The students shortlisted for participation will expand their knowledge and competencies at the partner companies' facilities. Upon completion of the course, they are guaranteed employment. The Advanced Engineering Schools project is launched on 1 September 2024. EkoNiva and VSUET will start working on developing cross-cutting solutions for various applications in the farming sector in line with the Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development

of Russia. Another avenue of cooperation is establishing a leading position in bio- and food technologies as well as delivering a competitive edge in the high-tech projects underway in the country.

'We've been working closely with VSUET for a long time. With the memorandum, our cooperation will step up to a new level. Building an Innovative Dairy Technologies initiative with VSUET, we aim at training qualified specialists for our own production and contributing to the development of professional education and food technologies. EkoNiva has gained an extensive experience in making finished dairy products, and we are ready to share it with the students and university teachers', says Roman Volodin, EkoNiva Moloko Voronezh Executive Director.

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV

with Voronezh and Belgorod universities and colleges, increase the loyalty to the company and popularise agriculture along with the processing industry. Most importantly, we have met talented students who are on track to becoming professionals and joining the EkoNiva team', notes Natalya Zvereva, Deputy Head of HR Department at EkoNiva-Food.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



To mark its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the company has launched a new video project – EkoNiva Caravan. It started touring the holding's enterprises in different regions of the country in pursuit of delightful stories, extraordinary characters, unique artefacts and traditions.

The idea behind the project is to show EkoNiva's everyday activity inside and out. The first stop en route of the Caravan was Zashchitnoye enterprise in Kursk oblast, the cradle of EkoNiva's history, and the

refreshed ourselves with a local speciality carp, we travelled to the next region – Voronezh oblast, the homeland of EkoNiva's dairy farming.

First, the Caravan visited the company's oldest farm in Shchuchye village. There was



'holy of holies' – the field where the first employees had sown buckwheat even before the official opening of the company. At that time, the farm was engaged in ecological farming.

'We are in a landmark place. This is the grain threshing floor where the first organic buckwheat crop from the fields that would later belong to EkoNiva was graded', says Mikhail Ashikhmin, one of the longest-running employees of the company.

Today, Zashchitnoye produces basic seeds. Its total output exceeds 80,000 tonnes of sowing material per year. We saw modern storage facilities and dryers, visited the laboratory where seeds undergo quality control at every stage and even took part in the work. And then, having

a time when it was in a sorry state, but EkoNiva managed to save it, refurbishing the barns, importing animals and retaining the jobs.

'We modernised the Soviet-time collective farm, implementing brand-new technologies', says Aleksandr Rybenko, Regional Director for Voronezh oblast.

Along with the enterprise, Shchuchye was also given a new lease of life. EkoNiva has made a great contribution to the development of the village, making it more comfortable for the locals. Besides jobs, it has a recently opened culture and leisure centre, a museum, a big kindergarten – everything needed for a promising future.

The busy day continued with an exciting visit to Dobrino dairy. The farm is popular

throughout the country for its unique tour project, which has been presented to over 30,000 children and adults. Here, the animals are provided with good housing conditions and healthy feed. They are milked three times per day on a modern rotary parlour, and the milk is sent to the company's cheese plant for processing.

At the facility, we found out that there is a robot operating along with humans. It treats cheese wheels with a brine solution and *Brevibacteria linens* and regularly turns them over for more uniform ripening.

EkoNiva-Chernozemye's service centre was an equally interesting location. We had a unique opportunity to test-drive a novelty, a LOVOL tractor, and were quite impressed: it is a powerful, reliable machine – perfect for profitable agriculture. We were even offered to borrow it for our trip to Ryazan, but we had to decline – it makes more sense to leave the tractor on the farm.

The third stop on the Caravan's itinerary was Ryazan oblast, where EkoNiva runs one of the largest dairies in the country designed for 6,000 cows. It is famous for Alleya, the company's best milk yielding cow, whose 305-day lactation performance has amounted to over 20.25 tonnes of milk.

At the time of our visit, the spring sowing was underway, so

we could not miss the chance to see EkoNiva's fields planted with fodder crops, wheat, barley and flax. Lentils have become particularly popular in recent years and are cultivated on 14,000 hectares, a substantial increase over last year.

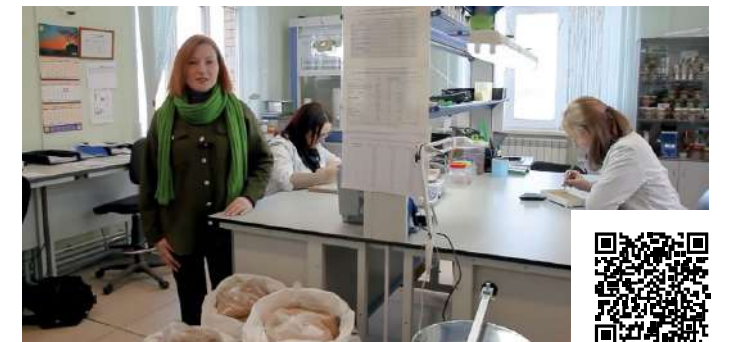
Very soon, the harvest from this field will be sent to the seed cleaning line, where 4,000 tonnes of spring wheat, pea and soya bean seeds were conditioned in the previous spring season. We also went to a modern rail-served grain storage facility enabling EkoNiva to export its grain to the Middle East countries.

The day was rounded off at the football pitch – OkaMoloko's team was gearing up for the regional football competition, and we joined in.

Every enterprise that we visited welcomed us with open arms, gave us treats and gifts, while our mission was to find out what the true spirit of EkoNiva is like. The answers made for putting together a vivid picture of the company: warm-hearted, powerful, reliable, delicious, fascinating, sporty, social, international and, of course, hard-working.

EkoNiva Caravan proceeds with its journey: many more interesting events are yet to come.

By Viktor BARGOTIN, Tatyana IGNATENKO





## Corporate safety policy

In 2022, EkoNiva launched the Safety Policy and Occupational Health and Safety Management System Development project and adopted new methods in this area at its enterprises. Now, outside experts from Safeology Group also contribute to this work. Tatiana Lyapina, Deputy Director General for Human Resources at EkoNiva Group, and Lana Altynbekova, Manager of Safeology Group, elaborated on the current challenges and optimal solutions to them.

**In production, the safety policy exists a priori based on legal requirements and internal regulations. So what makes EkoNiva's project relevant and what are its benefits?**

**Tatiana Lyapina:** 'Although everyone understands the importance of laws and internal requirements, people tend to treat occupational health and safety as a mere formality. Certain stereotypes and patterns of thinking come into play. For example, a long-time employee may think that he has been doing his job for so many years without any problems occurring, so everything will be fine this time, too. One of the key objectives of our project is to break such pattern of thinking, cultivate safety awareness in every employee and responsibility for their own and their colleagues' safety, thus motivating everyone to participate in perfecting the occupational health and safety system. Experts from Safeology assist us in tackling this task, taking into account the specifics of the industry.'

**Lana Altynbekova:** 'I would like to add that although a

certain safety policy does exist at any enterprise, it may still lack proper safety management. In agriculture, there are risks at the levels of human-human, human-technology, human-environment and human-animal interactions, which requires not only formal control but also constant fine-tuning, optimisation and improvement of the safety measures.'

**What tools can be used to this end and what measures are currently being implemented at EkoNiva?**

**Tatiana Lyapina:** 'It is essential to take a comprehensive approach, which encompasses introducing safer production technologies and various digital solutions, carrying out systematisation and risk analysis, studying employees' work habits and behaviour, training managers and line staff to get them engaged in the matter. Of course, all of the above-mentioned cannot be done immediately and requires continuous hard work, especially in such a large company. But it is worth the efforts – for example,

the digitalisation of processes gives us a clearer understanding of the current challenges and frees up our occupational health and safety officers' time to visit production sites, communicate with managers and other employees and promote on-site safety awareness.'

**What activities have yielded results so far?**

**Tatiana Lyapina:** 'In early 2023, we started a pilot project on threat and hazard identification and warning in Voronezh oblast. This year, plans are afoot to scale it up to other regions where we operate. With the programme called Stop Risk, employees can signal any risks at their sites, following which automated reports are generated for the working group to discuss and eliminate or prevent problems. Such feedback acts as a catalyst: it makes people more safety-aware, more engaged and willing to learn how to improve the corporate safety policy together. In addition, the Three-Stage Monitoring programme is to be launched soon. At the first stage, the

manager of a production site keeps track of the safety of operating conditions and work performance. At the second stage, the head of a subdivision controls the follow-up steps taken after the past inspections on a weekly basis. The third stage involves a comprehensive examination of the occupational health and safety system by a special commission.'

**Lana Altynbekova:**

'Basically, it is proactive work directed towards the future, not just dealing with incidents as they occur. And the most important aspect of this approach is interaction with the people leading to a shift in their thinking. Thus, we set a high standard for occupational health and safety staff serving as agents of change. The emphasis is on fostering the communication, negotiation and persuasion skills of both managers and line employees.'

**Tatiana Lyapina:** 'Joint participation in addressing important issues and experience exchange further pull the team of our safety department together, which results in more favourable working conditions and warm atmosphere. Many of the projects implemented contribute to boosting staff engagement, receiving feedback from employees and developing intercommunication, thus going beyond the scope of occupational health and safety.'

Interviewed by Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV



## A comprehensive approach

From the very start of its operation in Voronezh oblast, EkoNivaAgro has paid special attention to all social aspects, developing infrastructure in villages and creating comfortable conditions for raising future generations. The participation in the Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas federal project has been one of the top priorities of the company's social policy for several years now. Ninety-six houses for the EkoNivaAgro staff have been built since its beginning.

The Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas programme solves the major problems of people who live away from the cities – access to health care, social services and education, residential construction, infrastructure development and land improvement.

Apart from the state, regional and municipal authorities, businesses can also finance the programme on a voluntary basis. EkoNiva was one of the first companies to join the federal project, and its alliance with the state agencies has borne its fruit.

'From 2020 to 2021, we have built sixty-six houses for EkoNivaAgro's employees in Liski and Bobrov districts. The company's funding amounted to 58.8 million rubles, which accounted for around 30% of the total construction budget', says Sergey Zharikov, Deputy Regional Director for Economics and Finance.

Young specialists, multi-child families and employees in need of social support receive the keys to their new homes. The programme

participants sign a lease agreement with the municipal government. In five years, they will be entitled to buy their dwelling from the council authorities at the price of 10% of its initial cost, or in ten years – for 1%, provided that they have worked in EkoNivaAgro over this time. Every apartment is partly furnished and boasts modern interior finish, and outside there is a land plot of up to 1,500 square metres, where owners can plant a garden or an orchard.

'Five years ago, my wife and I moved to Voronezh

oblast from Penza to become a part of EkoNiva. Since then, our two babies have been born, hence the need to move into a bigger house arose. I found out about the Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas project, applied for the participation in it and my application was approved. Now, our family lives in a comfortable three-room dwelling, our kids have their own room and we grow plants and flowers outside. We have fulfilled the life plan: we are bringing up two children, we have planted a tree and



EkoNiva has helped us with the house. We are grateful to the company for such wonderful living conditions', says Iliya Ramzov, Senior Veterinarian of a dairy farm.

EkoNiva continued participating in the programme, and from 2021 to 2023, thirty more houses were commissioned in Bobrov district. In Shchuchye, a new community centre built in cooperation with EkoNivaAgro under the federal initiative opened its doors to the public. The company invested over 10 billion rubles in the project. Now, the choice of leisure activities there has increased considerably.

'This April, we began building ten and five houses in Anna and Liski districts, respectively. A total of 57.8 million rubles has been allocated for their construction. The completion is scheduled for the end of the year, upon which time our specialists will be handed the keys. Young people need to return to the villages, then there will be kids having fun on playgrounds and happy families will be walking along the streets with prams. By providing a comfortable working and living environment for people in rural areas, we give these places a new lease of life, which is essential for today's farming sector development', concludes Aleksandr Rybenko, Regional Director for Voronezh oblast.

By Viktor BARGOTIN

# AGROZNAK quality

EkoNiva-Tekhnika debuted at the CTO EXPO international trade fair of spare parts, after-sales equipment and service, which was held at Moscow Crocus Expo exhibition centre. The company presented its corporate booth, where the main emphasis was placed on AGROZNAK, its own brand of spare parts and technical fluids.

CTO EXPO provides a unique opportunity to find the best option from a variety of auto parts, components, accessories, consumables and service equipment for all types of vehicles – from construction to agricultural machines. EkoNiva showcased spare parts and technical fluids under its brand, which hit the market in the autumn last year.

‘For us, participation in this trade fair is a good opportunity to present ourselves, our brand AGROZNAK. That’s how we want to prove that there are reliable manufacturers who produce high-quality, robust parts from domestic raw materials. We provide an extensive 1-year warranty on all the items’, says Dmitriy



Fetisov, Head of Import Substitution Division at EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding. All AGROZNAK items are continuously produced in Russia at a lower cost, so

they are more affordable and logistically accessible. The company has a stringent standard of process and raw material control. The spare parts are subject

to performance tests and monitored for working hours. ‘By developing our own brand of spare parts, we contribute to the import substitution programme and invest in the Russian economy. Today, the AGROZNAK project covers continuous collaboration with more than 40 plants in the country. The spare parts are re-engineered from European models under our careful supervision. We are currently establishing cooperation with another 40 partner facilities and continue looking for new contacts, even here at the trade fair’, comments Dmitriy Fetisov.

Now, the range of the AGROZNAK brand exceeds 2,500 items, and is expected to expand almost threefold.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

# High construction standards



EkoNivaSibir has taken part in the Siberian Construction Week 2024 trade show. Two busy days at Omsk Regional Congress Hall were marked by productive business meetings and cooperation arrangements.

The event brought together representatives of various sectors – construction and architecture, housing and utilities, energy conservation, road construction and

transport. EkoNivaSibir showcased cutting-edge foreign and Russian machinery – the UMG WL50 front loader having a large 3 m<sup>3</sup> bucket and a lifting

capacity of up to 5 tonnes and the JCB 3DX PLUS backhoe loader fitted with a reliable four-cylinder 92 hp diesel engine with water cooling. The display also featured a backhoe loader and a front loader by LiuGong boasting excellent performance.

In addition, the dealer presented the TAFE 6022 tractor from India equipped with the Mitsubishi 26-hp three-cylinder engine. This

model can be coupled with various implements both for farm and utility works.

‘This is our first time at a road-building machinery trade show’, comments Oleg Datsenko, Manager of Omsk branch, EkoNivaSibir. ‘We have been gearing up for the big day! Everyone who visited our booth discovered something useful. Specialists from the housing and utilities, construction and energy sectors showed particular interest, and we were happy to offer them relevant and efficient technologies.’

EkoNivaSibir is represented in many regions – Novosibirsk, Kemerovo, Tomsk, Omsk oblasts and Altai area. Today, the company has eight dealerships, its own spare part warehouses and smart solutions. The company’s mission is to provide state-of-the-art machinery and high-quality servicing.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYKIKH



**Impressive debut**  
EkoNiva-Tekhnika has debuted at Zolotaya Niva, a major Russian trade fair in Krasnodar area. The exhibitor presented state-of-the-art technical solutions for highly efficient agricultural business.

Active in Kuban since last year, EkoNiva-Tekhnika has taken the opportunity to gain ground in Krasnodar area. The dealer presented an impressive farm machinery lineup: the SANY STH742 telehandler, the Apache As1250 self-propelled sprayer, the NARDI NX10E/3 EL5R reversible plough, the NARDI STARSEM FK 570/8 pneumatic seed drill, the Fliegl RFW 18000 liquid manure spreader, the NAGRO RUKAS 6 dissolving unit and the Navmopo self-propelled machinery autopiloting system.

The SANY STH742 telescopic handler was a must-see on the company’s display. The machinery of the Chinese brand is perfect for agriculture and construction. With a comfortable reach capability of 7 m, the model offers the maximum load capacity of 4.2 t. The SANY STH742 is an excellent choice for enclosed spaces due to its compact wheelbase of 2.75 m and a tight turning radius of 3.6 m. The unified carriage and extra hydraulic lines enable the telehandler to be coupled with diverse mounted implements, thus making it an

indispensable multi-purpose unit at all sorts of sites.

‘We have hosted a demo show of the SANY STH742 handler on the premises of our enterprise. The machine is manoeuvrable, high-performance and comfortable, it is a superb replacement for the units that have left the domestic market. We have already placed the order with EkoNiva-Chernozemye dealer for this machine’, says Igor Lysenko, Head of Zarya farming enterprise.

The booth also featured Russia manufactured

equipment, which is compatible with telehandlers of global brands, including SANY, such as a Lumberjack tree-dozer and a beet-piler. The attachments are produced in Voronezh oblast.

Besides modern and reliable equipment, the dealer surprised farmers by presenting proprietary spare parts brand AGROZNAK to address their needs. The range comprising high-quality generic spare parts for the most popular farm machinery brands exceeds 2,500 items: oils, lubricants, anti-freezes, filters, transmissions and their components, axles, shafts, plates, guides, springs, spring tines, belts, gaskets, fasteners, chains, bearings, etc.

‘The need for own spare part and lubricant production became self-evident when the issue of original component availability arose. Import replacement and spare parts production under the AGROZNAK brand enables us to eliminate the main risk, i.e. the shortage of spare parts required for timely and quality maintenance’, says Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, CCO of EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding.

Over several trade show days, EkoNiva’s booth was visited by thousands of attendees. The extensive range of machinery on display made a hit with southern farmers. The trade fair was very productive securing numerous machinery and digital solution supply contracts and preliminary agreements.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



# SANY brand in Altai fields

The brand dates back to 1989 and is now one of China's largest machinery manufacturers offering a wide range of products and bringing innovation into focus. The company's vehicles are exported to over 150 countries and are a popular choice in Russia.

EkoNiva has recently started importing the SANY STH742 Agri telescopic handler to the Russian market and is now presenting it to small and large enterprises. Thus, EkoNivaSibir organised a series of demo shows in Altai area – Zonalnoye, Smolenskoye, Rebrikha and Slavgorod districts.

'The telehandler meets all the current requirements for this class of equipment. It is comfortable, safe and perfect for tackling tasks in



Farmers of Altai area have learnt what SANY telehandlers are capable of at demo shows held in different districts of the region.

open and confined spaces', comments Sergey Arsiy,

EkoNivaSibir Director for Altai Area. 'The model is fitted

with the 100 hp 4.04 l Deutz BF4M2012-10T3R/5 engine and a transmission with two forward and two reverse gears delivering a maximum speed of 40 km/h. The powerful hydraulics ensure a flow rate of up to 105 l/min and a boom auxiliary flow of 60 l/min, while the maximum lifting capacity reaches 4,200 kg and the lift height – 7 m.'

At demo shows, coupled with a 3 m<sup>3</sup> bucket, the SANY STH742 Agri coped with piling maize and soya beans, loading and unloading buckwheat, fodder, sand and cleaning manure.

EkoNiva is set to further develop cooperation with the manufacturer, help farmers in selecting high-quality SANY machinery and provide them with first-class servicing.

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV

# Presenting best farm helpers

In Biysk, Siberian farmers have been offered cutting-edge farm and road construction machinery at the meeting held in EkoNivaSibir's service centre. Over forty representatives of enterprises from Altai area and the Republic of Tyva took part in the event.

The guests were introduced to European and Asian equipment for soil tillage, fodder preparation, crop protection and sowing. The tractor range showcased comprised machines manufactured by Ensign (China), and TAFE (India).

The Ensign YX2204-N is fitted with the six-cylinder 220-hp Shangchai engine with the Common Rail fuel injection system. The model features a synchronised transmission with 16 forward and 16 reverse gears and heavy-duty axles with an automatic differential lock.

The TAFE 6022 compact tractor is a 26-hp machine which is only 1.1 m in width. Thanks to its high manoeuvrability, it delivers excellent performance both in the field and in confined spaces, whether in the garden, warehouse or on the farm. At

the meeting, the TAFE 6022 was demonstrated with a Kerland K1400 rotary tiller made in Poland.

The Chinese brand LiuGong presents the 395B mini loader, 856H AGRI MAX front loader and 777A backhoe

loader. These reliable, durable, comfortable and easy to maintain machines are perfect for carrying out agricultural, utility and road works.

The PVT RHINO 4004 sprayer with a working width of 30 metres helps to

maintain plant health. What is unique about the model is that the spraying unit can be replaced with one for dry fertiliser application in just 30 minutes. The powerful 260-hp engine and hydromechanical chassis enable the machine to work quickly and accurately on any soil.

The RUKAS 12 mixing unit manufactured by NAGRO, developed in Russia, can be used for the preparation of urea ammonium nitrate solutions, liquid complex and compound fertilisers right on the farm. The RUKAS 12 will significantly reduce the cost of fertiliser purchasing and delivering and solution storing in large tanks.

At the event, the participants looked at the functionality of the machines during a test drive and learnt in detail about the latest navigation systems. Besides, they saw a demo show of loaders, including a front loader equipped with a scale platform, highlighting the unique features of the models.

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV



EkoNivaSibir's service centre in Barnaul has hosted LiuGong Client Day. It was attended by a delegation headed by Anton Voronov, Minister of Transport of Altai Area, and thirty representatives of the region's road construction industry.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of LiuGong road-building machinery. Guangxi LiuGong Machinery Co., LLC, a company with a 65-year history, is best in class in China and ranks among the world's top 15 manufacturers. The diverse product range comprises tracked and wheeled excavators, bulldozers, motor graders, road rollers, milling machines and loaders.

EkoNivaSibir showcased the 777A backhoe loader, one of the most popular machines of the Chinese brand. The W915E wheeled excavator, 933E tracked excavator, ZL50CN and 862H front loaders and 375B skid steer loader were also on display.

Today, the LiuGong 375B is used almost on every construction site in Russia. The skid steer loader is equipped with a 65 hp Yanmar engine, efficient High Flow hydraulics (107 l/min), joystick control and an enclosed ROPS&FOPS cab.

'The LiuGong 375B is a high-performance and manoeuvrable machine with

a 0.45 m<sup>3</sup> standard bucket and a maximum lifting capacity of 870 kg. The loader can be coupled with various attachments, such as milling cutters, auger scrapers, grabs, auger drills, which makes it possible to adapt it to works in construction, farming and urban beautification. The unit is easy and convenient to operate and maintain', says Sergey Arsiy, Director for Altai Area at EkoNivaSibir.

The LiuGong 862H front loader with a lifting capacity

of 6 tonnes is ideally suited for tackling construction and mining tasks.

'The operating cycle of the LiuGong 862H is only 9.5 seconds. Such high performance is ensured thanks to the combination of its ergonomic and comfortable cab with a 309° panoramic view, bucket and boom automatic return function, push-pull joystick control, joystick control of the highly efficient hydraulic system. Ease of maintenance



is equally important: the folding wings and high-lift bonnet provide full access to the engine', continues Sergey Arsiy.

The road construction industry representatives carried out a test drive of the front loaders, appreciating their convenient operation when loading and unloading crushed stone. They also built pyramids of cubes with metal loops, using the LiuGong 777A backhoe loader and W915E wheeled excavator. Both machines were distinguished by smoothness and accuracy to the nearest millimetre.

As the client meeting progressed, EkoNivaSibir's specialists introduced the guests to the premises of the modern dealership: office, showroom, machinery repair shops – where over 45 units are overhauled every year – and the boring and overlay welding section. The spare parts warehouse receives regular deliveries, an accounting and storage system is in place to promptly accept and dispatch products. The team of highly qualified maintenance technicians and the fleet of well-equipped service vans make it possible to immediately help clients out.

The guests highly rated the level of event organisation, noted the high technological effectiveness of the service centre and stressed their intention to strengthen the cooperation with EkoNivaSibir in the future.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



# Fully equipped!



Slavgorod subdivision of EkoNivaSibir has arranged its first off-site client meeting on the premises of a partner's production facility. Over thirty farmers from nearby agricultural enterprises visited the event at S.S. Tryasukha farming enterprise, Altayskoye village, Tabuny district.

The meeting made for establishing constructive communication between the farmers and representatives of the dealership. At the demo show, the attendees were presented with the latest technical solutions and shown the capabilities of modern agricultural machinery.

'EkoNiva is always looking for new effective solutions. We are happy to offer our partners affordable models produced by manufacturers from friendly countries', says Konstantin Revyakin, Manager of Slavgorod Subdivision of EkoNivaSibir.

Further, the presenters elaborated on the company's key business activities: from supplying farm equipment of renowned and new brands to maintenance service and provision of spare parts, including the proprietary brand AGROZNAK.

The highlight of the event was a spectacular demo show of the latest novelties, where everyone could see agricultural machines in operation and get acquainted with their

technical characteristics. The most cutting-edge and high-performance models were showcased.

'For the first time in our region, the LiuGong 856H AGRI MAX front loader was presented. It has a unique feature: it is equipped with a weighing system. A special monitor in the cab of the machine shows what weight is in the bucket at the moment. The standard bucket capacity of the loader is 4.3 m<sup>3</sup>, and the lifting capacity is 5 tonnes', continues Konstantin Revyakin. Another exciting novelty is a 6-cylinder tractor Ensign YX2604-M with 260-hp engine power and the Common Rail fuel system. Due to its outstanding specifications, the tractor is a cut above its competitors. It is equipped with an enlarged 450-litre fuel tank, a reduction gear and four rear hydraulic outputs. The tractor has the most efficient transmission in its class with 32 forward and 32 reverse gears.

Besides, the all-round visibility facilitates manoeuvring in challenging areas.

When presenting soil cultivation equipment to the clients, the dealership representatives laid emphasis on Einböck machinery, in particular on the row-crop cultivator. The unit appealed to the local farmers since sunflower is one of the main crops grown in this area. The cultivator can be both front or rear-mounted with a variety of attachments depending on the operating conditions and weeding needs.

Next, telescopic handlers attracted the attention of

the public. These machines are indispensable helpers on any farm. The guests were introduced to the Chinese SANY and the Turkish MST brands. Anyone was welcome to test drive the machines. Fitted with powerful and efficient engines, the SANY loaders ensure reliable performance and fuel economy. They feature modern technological solutions: automatic load weighing systems and rearview cameras. Turkish MST loaders are not inferior in performance to their Chinese counterparts. Thanks to top-quality components, high reliability and low operating costs, MST loaders are a good tool for implementing even the most complicated tasks.

'The farming enterprise hosting the meeting is our long-standing partner: we have been supplying and servicing equipment and continuously supporting S.S. Tryasukha in the development of their business. We are very grateful for the platform and trust provided', emphasises Konstantin Revyakin.

During the event, several preliminary agreements on further cooperation were reached. The company's specialists received feedback, and the clients gained new knowledge. What could be more important? Hopefully, the parties will benefit from the cooperation and this agricultural year will be more successful than the previous one.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



# Elena Levina: 'EkoNiva is more than work'

Over 27 years of her employment with EkoNiva, Elena Levina has progressed from an entry level job to the highest managing position. Today she is Deputy Director General of EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding.

## Elena, how did you find yourself with EkoNiva?

In 1996, I was a student of Penza Agricultural Academy majoring in Economics. I decided to apply for an internship in Germany under Apollo Student Exchange Programme.

I came to EkoNiva office for a screening interview together with a group of other students and ended up with a 4-month's internship on an ecologic farm near Bonne: I was weeding vegetable fields, collecting potato beetles, working as a helping hand in the shop. For my diligent work, I was awarded a trip across Europe, after which I supervised the group of students that arrived after me. And when I came back home, I met Stefan Dürr, the owner of EkoNiva. He convinced me to work for EkoNiva though my intentions had been different initially. I was planning to get enrolled in a graduate programme, but after my supervisor had shown me his PhD thesis on another Communist Party Congress and said that this was the sort of paper we would be working on, I realised there were no prospects for me there and left for Moscow.'

## How did Moscow welcome you?

'In the mid-90's, Moscow was a gloomy place to be at, it was a hard period for the country. But I liked it here at EkoNiva right away. It was a team with a positive attitude, wide vision, non-standard approaches and a warm atmosphere. On 7 December 1997, I began working as a secretary at the same time assisting the students going to Germany for internship. Then we started producing organic buckwheat and I was keeping the books, had exports certificates processed, later we branched out into selling machinery and seeds, so I had to look into these new businesses – we were all multitasking back then, as there were only 20 of us in the office.'

## Was it challenging to launch new businesses?

'Back then, we did not deliberate if it was challenging, hard or impossible to do – we just faced a task and handled it. Though it was tough at times, indeed. I remember having to chip in to pay for the delivery of the machines from abroad as there was no cash on the company's accounts. And we made it: the machines arrived in Russia.

In those years, we were full to the brim with enthusiasm and romance, and it seemed



that only the sky was the limit for us. I remember when we went to Kursk oblast, where our first agricultural project was launched, we all lived in one house, like in a pioneer camp. Back then, we did not think of work and life balance. We did not care about the hours, we worked as much as necessary. That's the way it should be, if you have passion.

EkoNiva is more than an employer. It is a company with a soul, therefore many people are willing to go the extra mile not for money but driven by their heart and passion, because they know how important it is for the company. People thinking differently, eventually, leave.'

## What have you learnt with EkoNiva?

'I like planning things, but with EkoNiva, I have learnt flexibility depending on the actual environment. Here, you cannot just write down your steps and rigorously follow them. You should always be conscious of numerous digressions, obstacles that you need to bypass and ever-changing circumstances. Of course, you need to be aware of your ultimate destination point, but it is highly likely that your route will be very much different from what

you've planned. You should always be ready to improvise.'

**What do you take pride in over the years of working for EkoNiva?**

'I'll skip the vast land area, record milk yields and machine unit numbers. The most rewarding thing for me is knowing that I have contributed to this big progressive company transformation from a small amateurish team.'

## Define the spirit of EkoNiva?

'Never giving up whatever happens, being honest to yourself and people around, being able to declare: yes, we have some hardship sometimes, but we always meet our liabilities. And of course, continuing development and innovation. These are the basic values that we'd like to pass on to our successors.'

## How do you envision the future of the company?

'With all the neuronets and AI, it's even a bit scary to think what is in store for us in 20-30 years. I'd like our company to always adhere to its principles, values and traditions meanwhile keeping pace with the times and always feeling the right moment to transform.'

Noted down by Svetlana WEBER



Biofach trade fair, 1998, E.Levina, Y.Vasyukov, O.Ohly



## Science-backed production

In-house research helps EkoNiva to continue intensive development and efficient operation in the agricultural sector. Keeping up with the latest scientific findings, the company has embarked on a new important project – soil classification in reference fields. In this article, we will give you an insight into this project and its objectives.

EkoNiva is engaged in crop farming in various parts of Russia, which means its production strategy in each subdivision must be based on the soil properties and climate characteristic of the region of operation. As land is the principal resource of a farming enterprise, the key success factors are detailed information on the soil types and properties, sensible soil management, systemic and scientific approach to every hectare, state-of-the-art farm machinery, digital technologies and advanced agricultural practices. All these factors lie at the core of the Reference Field project.

Regional enterprises assisted by line managers from the holding company drew up a list of reference fields with typical soils. The soils were carefully studied by the employees of the Soil Monitoring Department. They made profile pits on a number of plots varying in terrain (interfluvial, slopes, uplands and lowlands) as relief variation has a substantial impact on the results of the farmer's efforts and analysed every soil layer.

A reference field is a starting point in the research. Such plots have been determined in Voronezh, Kursk,

After large-scale sampling, the soil parameters will be systematised and mapped. In parallel with the sampling process, specialists will do the required tests, measure moisture reserves and record yields to establish predictable patterns which can later be used to boost production efficiency in the fields. Based on the research results, the company will develop recommendations for its regional operations, including the list of crops suitable for production and the agronomic practices most appropriate in each region.

Tyumen, St. Petersburg and Kaluga oblasts. The company is planning to carry out similar works in all of its geographies.

'We study morphological (external) soil features in each profile pit, including moisture content, colour, particle size distribution, structure and density, presence and nature of new formations and inclusions, depth of soil effervescence when adding a 10% HCl solution and fertile soil layer in order to determine the type of soil in a given place', say Yevgeniy Leonidov and Yaroslav Pugach, Soil Quality Monitoring and Assessment Specialists.

After large-scale sampling, the soil parameters will be systematised and mapped.

In parallel with the sampling process, specialists will do the required tests, measure

moisture reserves and record yields to establish predictable patterns which can later be used to boost production efficiency in the fields. Based on the research results, the company will develop recommendations for its regional operations, including the list of crops suitable for production and the agronomic practices most appropriate in each region.

There is still plenty of work ahead, but EkoNiva is moving forward steadily and confidently. Soil experts as well as local staff at farming operations and even trainees are very enthusiastic about the project. Backed by science, agricultural producers will find the way to maximise the efficiency of their most essential asset – soil.

By Aleksandr KUTISHCHEV



## Feeding comes first



An annual seminar dedicated to fodder production has gathered specialists from EkoNiva's operations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kaluga, Samara, Ryazan, Orenburg, Voronezh oblasts and Siberia, Bashkiria and Tatarstan. This year's venue was EkoNivaAgro-East Operation.

Nutrient density and feed quality are the crucial factors directly influencing milk quality and cow health. The first day of the event was devoted to forage harvesting campaign planning and microbiological processes occurring in the material after ensiling. Yevgeniy Chernykh, Nutrition Specialist from EkoNivaAgro-Left Bank Operation, elaborated on how to produce haylage from winter grasses. Out of the cumulative amount of the high-quality haylages in the enterprise, grass haylage constitutes 33% with an average output of 5.11 tonnes of DM/ha.

'Feed is one of the parameters determining milk production efficiency', highlights Mikhail Gurnov, Livestock Farming Director at EkoNiva-APK Holding. 'During the seminar, the company specialists can study various approaches to forage production and fodder preparation. Exchanging our experience face-to-face makes it possible to correct mistakes, improve feeding practices and, as a result, increase milk yield and quality.'



the feed as possible. The first step is to determine the plant development phase. Next, the equipment must be adjusted to ensure the optimal cutting length. Finally, the harvested crops have to be properly ensiled.

'At this stage, any slightest mistake, for instance, insufficient sealing can sooner or later result in spoiled feed', comments Vitaliy Yozhikov. 'In order to prevent this, a wide range of rules should be strictly followed: the silage pile geometry, accurate calculation of the equipment weight, correct distribution of fodder layers during packing, thorough pile sealing. The quicker the pile is covered after the final layer is packed, the more nutritious the feed will be.'

This approach allowed the company to harvest 985,000 tonnes of fodder in dry matter from 174,000 hectares in 2023 vs. 831,000 tonnes in 2022 (+19%). The feed quality is confirmed by the steady milk yield growth. Thus, the daily output per dairy cow rose from 29.77 in 2022 to 31.14 kg in 2023 and keeps growing. With the help of cutting-edge technologies, EkoNiva is planning to achieve its main objective – to provide the herd with in-house produced rough and succulent feed.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH



# Highly efficient herd as reality



Buying pedigree dairy cows, farmers expect maximum economic efficiency. For the reality to meet expectations, it is important to choose the right traits upon selection.

According to EkoNiva livestock specialists, the main traits ensuring high profitability are dam's milk production, reproduction, health and milk fat and protein. So, the milk quality is an essential factor to herd efficiency and profitability.

EkoNiva Group sets an illustrative example of building an efficient herd. The holding has been specialising in raw milk production for over 20 years. Currently, it has 40 modern dairy farms housing 115,600 dairy cows and daily milk output of over 3,500 tonnes.

EkoNiva puts a special focus on the milk quality. Across EkoNiva's purebred dairy herd, the average milk fat reaches 3.8%, protein – 3.4%. These parameters are essential criteria upon the reception of raw milk by processing plants. The milk production is calculated with a special formula featuring

energy corrected weight, i.e. adjusted for basis values of fat (3.7%) and protein (3.2%).

'When recalculated based on the energy-corrected weight, due to the positive difference of actual and basis fat and protein values, the total bulk milk becomes higher, which realistically shows the efficiency of



our cows. Farmers tend to select solely by milk production and buy cows with high yields but low fat and protein, so, ultimately, the energy-corrected weight does not look so impressive. With an adequate breeding strategy and milk quality management, the parameters based on energy-corrected weight

reflect the efficiency of the overall enterprise and each individual heifer', says Viktor Voronin, Cattle Sales Division Manager at EkoNiva-APK holding.

EkoNiva delivers high performance due to professional management of milk quality, which starts with highly nutritious fodder crops. The agronomists grow alfalfa, clover, annual and perennial grasses, maize containing protein, starch, vitamins and other trace and macro-elements.

'Raw milk fat and protein depend on the fodder quality, storage conditions and well-balanced nutrition. We balance rations with various ingredients. The forages include silage, haylage and hay high in metabolizable energy and fiber; the concentrates – cakes, meals, grains, vitamin and mineral premixes. The ration ingredients can be adjusted with the consideration of cows' physiological condition', says Valeriya Pavlova, EkoNiva Breeding Department Manager.

In-house developed Eko.Feed software is an essential element of the feed management in the company. This sophisticated IT solution designed to automate and control cow feeding ensures the most transparent cost of the end product and the high quality of milk by mitigating the human factor.

Herd genetics also have a high impact on the milk quality. Since 2008, EkoNiva breeders have been working on improving the pedigree herd to have high milk production. The herd of high genetic potential and pedigree confirmed by genetic test features cows of elite and elite-record status.

'For reproduction, we use imported semen of sires having the gene of high protein to increase the

overall protein in the milk output across the herd in the future', continues Valeriya Pavlova.

'Timely disease prevention and cow comfort are also imperative for attaining the performance targets: to create perfect environment for our cows including soft and dry bedding, fresh water, spacious and well-lit barns and even outdoor exercise lots.

'As of today, we are able to meet our own replacement demand and sell the excess to other largest agricultural holdings of Russia. Last year alone, we shipped about 15,000 heifers to our partners and we expect this figure to increase this year', says Viktor Voronin.

EkoNiva experts accompany customers selecting heifers and provide the economic efficiency prediction for each of them.

'We track the economic efficiency of the dairy cattle by the internal ENI index showing the net merit



of each pedigree cow. It includes all the parameters of profit from milk adjusted for fat and protein, but also traits of reproduction, health and many others. Therefore, when buying pregnant heifers from EkoNiva, farmers get the real life-time efficiency data on each cow. Our specialists calculate the individual ENI based on the partner's herd parameters

that will reflect the company's long-term targets in ruble equivalent. With this index, you can select the right heifer for replacement, do the voluntary culling and choose the semen of the right sire', states Viktor Voronin.

Moreover, the company offers veterinarian service, which includes consulting and overall support from cow

selection to the adaptation on the farm.

In the domestic agricultural market, EkoNiva's offer is the most progressive solution. Upon proper nutrition and management, EkoNiva heifers of high genetic potential can form efficient herd that will maximise any farmer's profitability.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



# Olga Vtulkina: 'I love every calf like a child'



Olga Vtulkina, a calf tender at EkoNivaAgro-Left Bank Operation, has been commended by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, for her labour achievements and many years of dedicated work.

Over 14 years of work at EkoNiva, Olga has learned all the intricacies of young stock rearing and feeding. She takes care of the calves from the first days of their lives to three months of age. Olga's responsible attitude to work and passionate love for animals enable her to achieve impressive results: the average daily weight gain of cattle is 830 g.

### When did your love for agriculture take root?

'My mother worked as a cow milker, while my father was a machine operator at the time. It was my grandmother, who also held a job as a cow milker for many years, instilled in me a true love for animals. As a child, I helped her to feed calves milk on the farm. After finishing school, I studied to be a pastry chef, worked in a canteen for a while, but when it closed down, in 2005, my husband and I moved to his home village Drakino. I was offered a job as a cow milker, but something stopped me... I thought: why don't I have a crack at being a calf tender? I tried and since then I have never returned to my profession as a pastry chef!' (Olga smiles)

### Do you remember your first working day at EkoNiva?

'In 2010, EkoNiva took over the collective farm where I worked. That's how it came into my life. I don't know why, but I recollect unusual blue calf pens. When they were first brought to the dairy, I wondered how little calves would live in them. I was also amazed with the feeding buckets with pacifiers – there didn't use to be anything like that on the collective farm. Now, about 400 calves are housed at Dobrino dairy, and the rows of blue pens don't seem anymore as long and endless as they did during my first days at EkoNiva.'

### How does one learn to understand baby calves?

'That's easy, the most important thing is to love them. It is important not be squeamish around calves, which can stain you with milk or saliva at any moment. Other than that, understanding comes naturally.

They are all so tender, like children. When they see me, they start babbling something similar to mommy... Twice a day, I feed the calves milk and make sure they always have fresh water. When I clean their pens, the happy calves show affection and nuzzle me. But there are also naughty calves – some new-born ones refuse to drink milk when they are brought from maternity pen. They stubbornly



clench their teeth, as if they were given something inedible. I open the mouth a little, put a drop of milk on the tongue – the calves taste it, and then it is impossible to tear them away from the pacifier!

### When did you learn that your labour achievements have been recognised by the President Vladimir Putin?

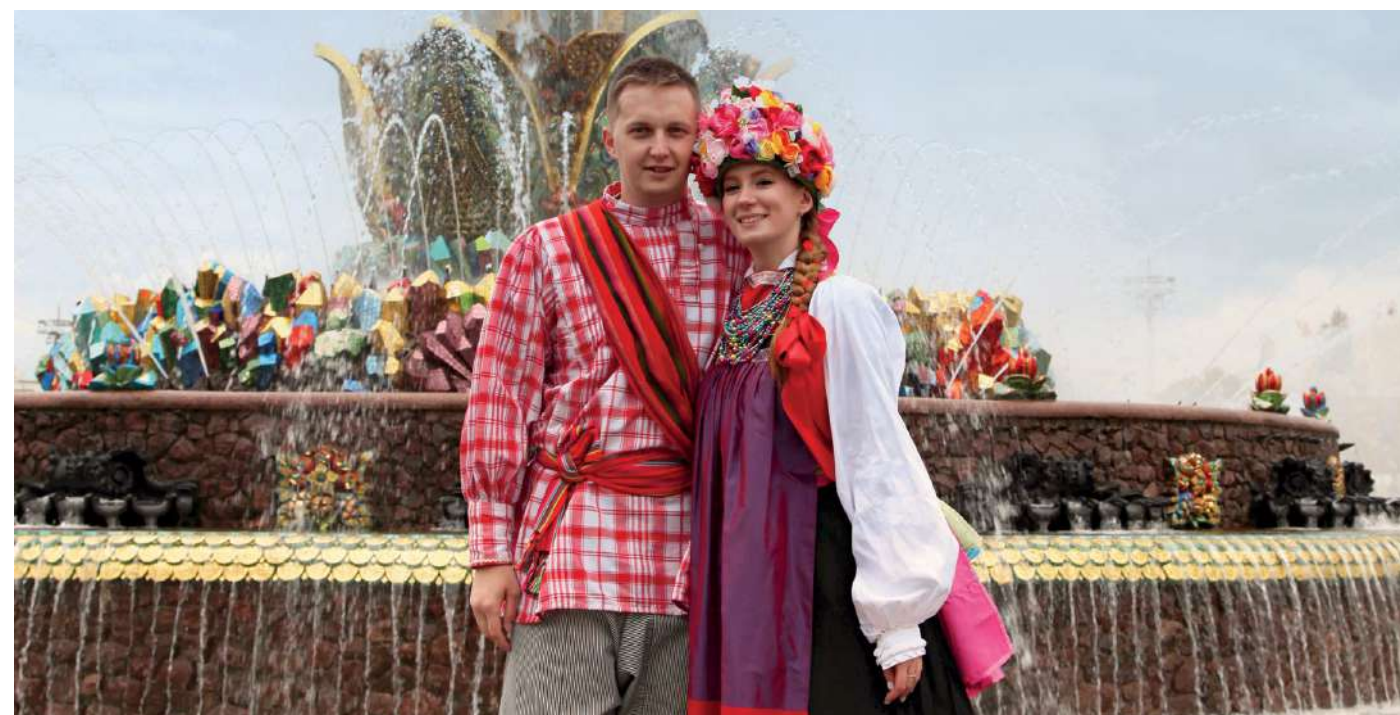
'Everything was so mysterious! I received a call from the HR department and was asked to come right away. When I asked 'Why?' they intriguingly replied, 'Come and see'. I almost jumped out of my skin – what could have happened! Then they told me to bring my personal documents for some kind of award. I collected all the necessary papers, and, after a while, I was informed that I was getting a commendation personally signed by Vladimir Putin. It was an unforgettable feeling! The award ceremony will be held in summer. My father was deeply touched by this news, he said that he was proud of me...'

### What has driven your success?

'I love my job at EkoNiva and don't care about accomplishments. I look after every calf like a child. Sometimes I have a day off and start worrying about a calf that has fallen ill. Then I call my coworker from another shift to find out how the calf is. I have enough love for my pets, too. My husband and I have dogs, two parrots, a canary and a cat. They're creating a cosy atmosphere in our home!'

Noted down by Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH

# Nationwide wedding



An EkoNiva employee and his fiancée have got married at a wedding ceremony listed in the Russian Book of Records.

Igor Moroko, a specialist of the Kursk subdivision of the Group, and his wife-to-be Olga took part in the mass wedding arranged as part of the Russia forum at VDNKh Exhibition Centre.

Over 150 couples from all over the country said 'I do' simultaneously, making the ceremony eligible for entry into the Russian Book of Records. The unique event was timed to coincide with the opening of the First Russian Wedding Festival and was held on Low Sunday. In the past, it was believed that marrying on this day would bring the newlyweds joy, love and prosperity.

At the ceremony, Igor and Olga Moroko represented their native region, Kursk oblast. Igor had learnt about the opportunity to take part in the unusual mass wedding at VDNKh from his colleagues.

'I was offered to have the marriage registered as part of a big wedding at the Russia forum. I told Olga about it, and she was up for it. We thought it would be interesting and unusual, and we were right. We were elated despite the cold weather. The event management was

### Igor Moroko:

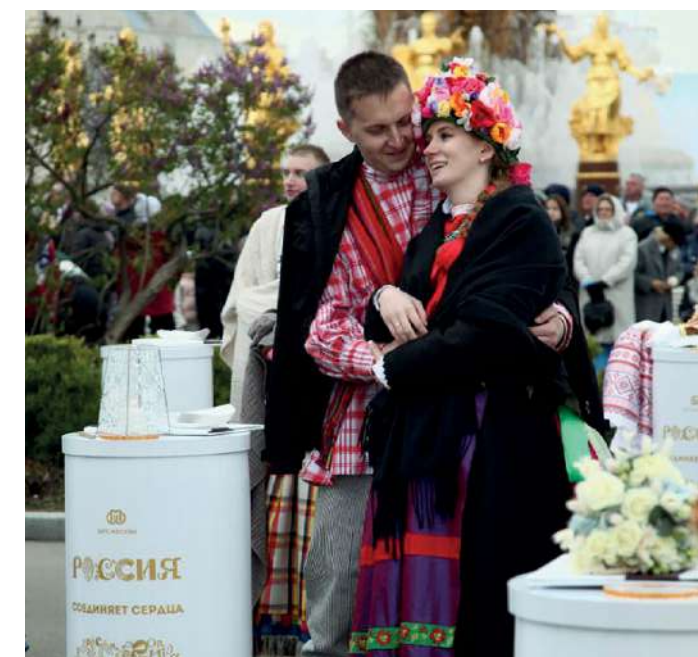
'I was offered to have my marriage registered as part of a big wedding at the Russia forum. I told Olga about it, and she was up for it. We thought it would be interesting and unusual, and we were right. We were elated despite the cold weather. The event management was top-notch.'

top-notch. The timing was accurate too, we didn't have to worry about where to go and what to do. Everything was thought out to the last detail, including umbrellas for each couple, warm blankets and hot tea during the wedding procession and ceremony', says Igor Moroko.

Igor and Olga chose traditional costumes of the locals of Sudzha district, Kursk governorate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The bridal couples marched in the procession from the main arch of VDNKh to the Friendship of Peoples Fountain where their relatives and marriage registrars were waiting for them near the stage.

'The wedding ceremony hosted by a star couple, Yuliya Kovalchuk and Aleksey Chumakov, was a thrilling experience. The following

moments were the most memorable for us: the flame handover of the Russian family



hearth 'Heart of Russia', the exchange of wedding rings and the first wedding dance to a song by Yuliana Karaulova. Renat Agzamov, Russia's Confectionery Arts Champion, sprung a pleasant surprise – a small cake for each couple. We were quite impressed! Although it was hard to be on our feet all day long, we didn't notice it and felt tired only in the evening. We are extremely glad that we decided to celebrate our special day this way', say the newlyweds.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

# EkoNiva welcomes thousands of trainees



EkoNiva farming enterprises provide students with an opportunity to have an on-site training in one of 13 regions of Russia. This year, over 2,000 agriculture students from more than 60 higher and secondary vocational educational institutions of our country undergo an internship at EkoNiva's production facilities.

Since 2006, EkoNiva has been ranked among the most attractive companies to have an on-site training in. In total, the Group has arranged 11,444 internships for more than 7,000 students who gained valuable professional experience in the farming sector. EkoNiva enterprises provide students with comfortable housing, transportation, competitive salaries and an opportunity to learn from the best specialists in the agricultural industry. Many of the company's current managers started as interns as well in the company. Each trainee is assigned an

experienced mentor. Under their careful guidance, the young people broaden their theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for work.

'Every student can apply to see all the advantages of our company, acquire essential skills and be offered a job upon completion', says Yevgeniy Bezpалov, Manager of the Talent Pool Department at EkoNiva-APK Holding.

Yevgeniya Nikitina, a student of Veterinary Medicine and Livestock Farming Technologies Department of Voronezh State Agricultural University, did two internships during MoSt sessions designed

for agricultural student teams. In her opinion, it was this unique production site that allowed her to gain a lot of practical skills for her future profession. Yevgeniya is looking forward to her third internship at EkoNiva.

'I'm an ordinary 22-year-old student with an exciting future occupation', says Yevgeniya Nikitina. 'My first on-site training at Bobrov-2 farming enterprise produced a huge impression on me. It was here that I learnt the key things: how to give injections, draw

blood and set up IV infusions. The team of veterinarians, herd managers and inseminators made an action plan for me including homework every day. Exactly one year later, having finished my third year, I rushed back to EkoNiva. I had missed my work, especially, the cows. During the second internship, I mastered Pocket CowCard, a handheld application which gives access to animal records. I also observed how surgeries were performed. Moreover, I worked as a milking machine operator. I would like to express my gratitude to all my mentors for instilling passion for agriculture in me!'

During the on-site training, many students become active participants of EkoNiva's corporate events. Everyone can take part in various sports competitions that strengthen the team spirit. Upon the completion of training, students can be employed by EkoNiva. For example, in 2023, 180 university and vocational school graduates joined EkoNiva. This year, the company expects to recruit 250 young specialists from former trainees.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYKIKH



# Different fields, one goal



The Fakel footballers with their family members have taken part in EkoNiva's tour project in Voronezh oblast. At Dobrino dairy, the guests were introduced to modern farming practices and the secrets of making wholesome dairy produce, which is an integral part of every athlete's diet.

The working day of Fakel Voronezh players routinely kicked off with a training session and ended in a quite unusual way – with a visit to a farm. Stefan Dürr, EkoNiva Group President, warmly welcomed the squad. He told the guests about himself and EkoNiva's operation. The Group President shared his stance on the importance of football development in urban areas.

'In Germany, I have some friends partnering with professional football clubs. Their example has inspired me, too. I believe there must be football in big cities. We will support Fakel Voronezh team to have the highest

scoring matches', says Stefan Dürr.

After meeting the EkoNiva President, the guests took a tour around Dobrino farm. They were invited to feed milk to the little residents of the farm at the calf hutch site, observe the heifers in exercise lots, gain an insight into the growth stages of dairy cows. The highlight of the farm tour was cow milking in the rotary parlour, which impressed everyone without exception.

'When I see this large-scale yet neat operation with all the processes thought through down to the last detail, its setup reminds me of that of a football club. Whether on a football or a farm field,



teamwork makes the dream work', emphasises Nikita Motspan, Fakel Voronezh Midfielder.

In one of the barns, the squad gave a professional performance demonstrating some ball control techniques: keepy-uppy, dribbling and freestyle elements. Everyone, including the cows, watched the footballers' play with great surprise and interest. Such an unusual show is more than likely to increase the cows' milk yield.

'Fakel and EkoNiva have a lot in common. It is first and foremost hard work. We are united by the same goal: to grow, develop and achieve

maximum results in our areas of activity', says Irakli Kvekveskiri, Fakel Voronezh Midfielder.

At the end of the visit, the players were treated to wholesome EkoNiva dairy. The footballers left their autographs on one of the calf huts and commemorative footballs as well as presented a personalised T-shirt to Stefan Dürr. Fakel Voronezh club and EkoNiva Group continue their cooperation, at the heart of which lies love to loyal football fans and consumers of natural dairy produce.

By Viktor BARGOTIN



# Immersing in dairy farming



EkoNiva has launched the second tour project in Novosibirsk oblast. Now, the residents and guests of Maslyanino district will have an opportunity to immerse themselves in modern dairy production.

The excursion project at Penkovo farm in Maslyanino district is the Group's second enterprise in Novosibirsk oblast open for visits. In April 2023, tours were launched

at Ogneva Zaimka dairy in Cherepanovo district. The tour programme is based on the model of EkoNiva's dairy farms in Voronezh, Kaluga, Moscow and Novosibirsk oblasts. The guests

are introduced to the main stages of milk production here. Tourism is actively developing in Maslyanino district, there are many places for all-season diverse recreation.

'Our guides present modern farming to the visitors, tell them many curious facts and details about the production of natural dairy based on the "from field to shop shelf" principle. The industry is growing very quickly and becoming really high-tech, which is something that many people don't realise until they visit farms', says Yekaterina Bartseva, Head of the Tour Project Development Department of EkoNiva Group.

EkoNiva introduced the initiative in 2013, aiming to popularise natural milk consumption and agriculture in general. The attendees learn a lot of interesting things about milk and its production and are exposed to farming professions. In addition to the dairies, EkoNiva's cheese plant in Voronezh oblast and dairy processing facility in Kaluga oblast are open to the public.

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV

# Welcoming new cheese varieties

EKONIVA range has recently been extended by new pasta filata cheeses – mozzarella and suluguni. They are the latest addition to the product portfolio comprising three semi-hard and four Dürr hard cheeses.

The novelties are manufactured at one of the Group's partner plants. Adhering to the 'from field to shop shelf' principle, EkoNiva exercises complete control over the production of the items made under the proprietary brand. EkoNiva Grade A cheese milk selected based on 29 parameters is delivered from own farms to the processing

facility, where the company's specialists strictly monitor the compliance with the recipe and cheese making technology, ensuring that the finished product fully meets the highest quality standards.

Featuring a delicate creamy flavour and a low salt content, the Mozzarella cheese for pizza with 38% fat makes a delicious combination with various spices

and toppings. This cheese is perfect for melting as it releases its flavour best when heated. The decision to produce Mozzarella cheese for pizza was made after receiving numerous requests from EkoNiva's partners in the hospitality industry. There is a strong demand among professional chefs for high-quality product made in Russia since such cheese plays a special role in the Italian dishes, which are extremely popular in the country. EkoNiva plans to gradually increase its Mozzarella production and supply this product to the HoReCa segment both in the Volga region, home to the partner plant, and across the country.

Another novelty in the EKONIVA lineup is Suluguni cheese with a fat content of 45% distinguished by a moderately salty creamy flavour, elastic consistency and uniform texture. This traditional Georgian

cheese has gained widespread popularity throughout Russia in recent years. The product is in considerable demand in both B2C and B2B sectors, in particular in commercial kitchens.

'Cheese is one of the most promising and fastest-growing categories produced by the EkoNiva Group. Based on the results of 2023, we have boosted cheese production sevenfold and have every intention to keep the momentum going. Our brand is confidently gaining ground in the Russian market and has already earned the trust and love of the consumers', emphasises Aleksey Maslennikov, Deputy Director General for Sales and Marketing at EkoNiva-Food.

The new cheeses are available in EkoNiva's brand shops and will soon hit the shelves of federal retail outlets.

By Eleonora DUBININA



# Team of the year

EkoNiva has won the international TEAM AWARDS 2024 given to the companies that are willing to take staff recruitment, motivation and management to the next level. The accolade recognises building the most ambitious and strong teams.

Represented by the marketing division, the Group landed the Team of the Year award in the Industry and HoReCa category for its Russian Breakfast cultural and gastronomic project

launched in May 2023. The initiative is about discovering the most delicious and healthy national breakfasts made with wholesome dairy products. The first stage featured a series of culinary workshops

held in 20 Russian cities, then the team had a public poll to choose the best local recipes, published a study on breakfast traditions in Russia and implemented many other exciting ideas.

When determining the winner of the Team of the Year title, the focus was on evaluating the staff's ability to improve work and communication efficiency and pull together to reach the common goal despite possible challenges. The scoring also took into account such criteria as innovative thinking, effectiveness, versatility and scalability of solutions.

The Russian Breakfast project is gaining in popularity abroad too: in late April, it was presented in China during the business mission organised by Agroexport and the Russian Ministry of Agriculture.

'Launching the initiative, we wanted to show the gastronomic diversity and culinary traditions of Russian regions', says Yekaterina Dürr, HoReCa Brand Director at EkoNiva-Food and Russian Breakfast Project Manager. 'Almost any breakfast is made with dairy, so we came up with an idea of collecting recipes with our products, discovering dishes that can be tasted in different parts of the country – both at home and in restaurants. This is our contribution to the development of domestic tourism, as the gastronomy is its essential element. EkoNiva employs over 14,600 people, and they are the main ambassadors of our brand in both cities and villages. As we have productions in many regions, a close relation to each location and community is an essential element of our brand and representation.'

By Eleonora DUBININA



'Launching the initiative, we wanted to show the

# Boosting retail business

EkoNiva's retail business is growing stronger. In April-May 2024, five new branded shops were opened in several regions of operation.

Two new outlets were launched in Moscow oblast – in Naro-Fominsk and in Kalininets village, Naro-Fominsk city district. The Group now runs a total of 16 shops in Moscow and Moscow oblast.

In Tula oblast, a third branded store started operating in Venyov town to meet the needs of those who opt for wholesome dairy products.

EkoNiva's retail chain is also expanding into new districts of Kursk oblast, for

example, Pristen village, the administrative centre of Pristen district. The region's residents are familiar with the brand – nine shops already operate here.

In May, EkoNiva launched its second retail outlet in Bashkiria. The choice fell on Yermekeyevo village in Yermekeyevo district, where the Group has farming enterprises, including

Semyono-Makarovo dairy. From now on, the locals and the company's employees can buy natural dairy products in the branded shop.

In total, EkoNiva manages about 80 retail outlets in 14 regions of Russia, offering customers the whole range of its dairy made from milk produced on the company's own farms.

By Eleonora DUBININA



# EkoNiva in focus



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