

'Hiking in the mountains is always a challenge'

Stefan Dürr speaks about
EkoNiva's 30-year-long path

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Keeping up

EkoNiva presents top trends
in agriculture

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From field to plate

Launching a line
of ready-to-eat meals

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Stefan Dürr: Hiking in the mountains is always a challenge

Stefan Dürr loves hiking in the mountains. For this reason, probably, throughout our interview, he compares running EkoNiva for 30 years with mountain experience. Stefan elaborates on ascending rapidly, the feeling of finally making it to the top and the importance of a loyal partner along your journey.

Before ascending

Setting off for the mountains, always be prepared to face challenges. Hazards, bad weather, steep drops and a substantial risk of falling off a cliff are inevitable on your way. You have to evaluate all the dangers adequately to make sure you will reach the top

even if you take a false step as you are responsible not only for yourself but also for the people that follow you. Of course, it would be easier to go for a walk in a park instead, to enjoy flowers, nice paths and safe environment. However, you will never create a company like this strolling along in the park. You will face

various risks if you ascend rapidly, but, otherwise, it is impossible to move uphill quickly. The correct mindset and smart decision-making help to avoid perils and prevent you from tumbling down a cliff.

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Natural product in eco-packaging



EkoNiva has started using milk bottles made with up to 25% recycled plastic.

The company launched production of drinking milk in new Vivilen polymer packaging from SIBUR. The Vivilen granules

consist of both virgin and recycled polymers.

In early 2024, EkoNiva's specialists tested and analysed pilot batches of dairy

products in new packaging to make sure that the bottles containing reusable plastic meet the most stringent safety requirements and are suitable for beverages and food products.

EkoNiva is gradually shifting to using packages

made with recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET). MosMedynagroprom, the Group's enterprise in Kaluga oblast, has already introduced such type of bottles into the production of 1-litre pasteurised milk. Besides, the company is currently testing white rPET bottles for filling fermented dairy products, ryazhenka and kefir, and planning to use packaging from Vivilen granules for a wider lineup.

Utilisation of recycled materials is a major step towards a circular economy and one of the Russian Government's strategic initiatives. Consumers are increasingly becoming interested in environmentally friendly products, and retail chains also opt for recycled plastic, following their sustainability policy. With its new eco-packaging, EkoNiva contributes to the efficient use of plastic and creates a trend for responsible consumption.

By Eleonora DUBININA

Double-cropping becoming reality

EkoNiva Plant Breeding and Variety Maintenance Centre and the Institute of Agricultural Research of Chile (INIA) have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation aimed at introducing fast-track breeding techniques and facilitating bilateral experience exchange between the two countries. The document was executed during a return visit of the Chilean representatives to Russia.

At the beginning of the year, EkoNiva's team had a trip to the INIA and the republic's plant breeding and seed production enterprises to discuss breeding acceleration tools. They specifically looked into setting up so-called 'winter nurseries' for EkoNiva's seed lines multiplication. The focus will be on soya beans, chickpeas and lentils. After growing the varieties in the Eurasian area in the summertime, the Group will harvest a second crop in the southern hemisphere in the winter.

'The cooperation with our Chilean partners will enable EkoNiva to significantly speed up the seed multiplication – by 2-3 years – without affecting the genetic material quality', emphasises Vitaliy Voloshchenko, Director of EkoNiva Plant Breeding and Variety Maintenance Centre. 'This, in its turn, will reduce the duration of certain breeding process stages and thus the period of new Russian varieties' entering into the market.'

The memorandum also provides for the exchange of scientific

information, genetic resource adaptation experience and collection materials for the implementation of the joint programmes, maintenance and use of different varieties in both countries.

'Chile, like Russia, is concerned about food security, so it strives to create a gene bank and develop plant breeding', says Christian Alfaro Jara, Deputy Director for Research and Development, Institute of Agricultural

Research of Chile (INIA). 'Under the memorandum, plans are afoot to develop plant breeding and genetic progress training programmes, exchange genetic material and arrange off-season nurseries. In Arica known as the city of eternal spring in the north of Chile, there is a breeding station where any crop can be cultivated and harvested three times a year.'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



Leading the way

EkoNiva has once again hit the top ten most productive dairy enterprises. Nesterovo farm in Ryazan oblast took 8th place in the rating prepared by the National Association of Milk Producers (Soyuzmoloko) and Streda Consulting.

The study was based on the yield of fat- and protein-corrected milk (3.7% and 3.2%, respectively) per dairy cow in 2023. Nesterovo dairy, where the milk production reached 12,773 kg per head, was ranked among the top ten most high-performing farms in Russia. The Group's average yield of energy corrected milk per dairy cow amounted to 11,669 kg.

For the second year in a row, EkoNiva's subdivision in Ryazan oblast has gained a high position in the performance rating. It is one of the Group's best enterprises

in terms of herd productivity. Besides, Shatsk dairy in this region is home to Alleya, the holding's highest-yielding cow by gross milk output for 305 days of lactation in 2023.

The Group consistently increases both its herd size and productivity in all of its regions. Last year, the average number of cattle throughout EkoNiva totalled over 235,300 head, including more than 112,500 dairy cows. The average daily milk yield in the reporting period reached 3,440 tonnes (2022: 3,261 tonnes). The output per dairy cow grew from 29.3 to 30.6 kg in bulk and from 30.7 to 32.0



kg in standard weight over the year. The performance boost results from optimisation of the herd structure, continuous improvement of the feed efficiency, proper ration formulation and, of course, from the employees' concerted efforts to rear heifers, ensure good cow comfort and health.

EkoNiva has been leading the way in the dairy industry for about ten years now, producing the most milk in Russia and Europe and being the only domestic enterprise to have passed the milestone of 1 million tonnes of raw milk per year.

By Eleonora DUBININA

Connecting BRICS+ dairy businesses



The guest list included R.G. Chandramogan, Director General of Hatsun Agro, one of the largest milk processors in India, Seif Thabet, Director General of Juhayna, an Egyptian company specialising in dairy production, Zemfira Khisamutdinova and Gulfiya Kabilova, representatives of Solico Group, a major food manufacturer from Iran. Invited by Soyuzmoloko, Wang

Xinxiang, Director General of LiGao, a Chinese manufacturer of milk processing equipment, and Patrick Laroche, a representative of Rovic Leers, one of the agricultural machinery market leaders in South Africa, also joined the event.

The delegation visited EkoNiva's enterprises in several regions. The first destination was Bortnikov dairy in Moscow oblast, where

Representatives of large milk producing and processing companies from the BRICS+ countries have visited EkoNiva's operations. The Group and the National Association of Milk Producers (Soyuzmoloko) organised tours of the holding's farming enterprises and processing plants for the delegation and discussed topical issues of the global dairy industry.

the guests learnt about the operation of the modern farm designed for 8,650 head of cattle and participated in the meeting of the BRICS+ countries' milk producers and processors. The business representatives exchanged their work experience, discussed features and advantages of dairy markets in different countries and the challenges faced by producers today. The attendees of the meeting concluded that the global trend towards increasing milk consumption continues, which means the dairy industry

has excellent prospects for growth and development.

During the following days of the visit, the guests went to Ulanovo farm and MosMedynagroprom milk plant in Kaluga oblast, as well as Shchuchye cheese factory and Dobrino farm in Voronezh oblast. After seeing the full technological chain of milk and dairy production 'from field to shop shelf', they agreed that Russia is one of the countries to boast the most favourable conditions for dairy business development in the world.

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV



Agriculture 4.0

EkoNiva and the Higher School of Economics (HSE) have discussed the development of their joint Basic Department. Preparation of courses and programmes as well as their promotion are well underway.

EkoNiva's Basic Department will teach the ropes of the modern farming sector – Agriculture 4.0. The key topics on the agenda of the meeting between the company management and HSE experts included digitalisation

and artificial intelligence in the farming sector, industry-specific economics and analytics. The team defined three cooperation domains with the university. The first one involves projects based on EkoNiva's case

studies: four cases created for the Computer Science Department and four – for the students of the Graduate School of Business (within the HSE). Learners can opt for any task and write a paper on it.

Another cooperation domain is minors – programmes or specialised courses allowing students to obtain additional industry-relevant qualifications. Two of them – Digitalisation and Management Technologies in Agriculture – are under development now. They will be available for master's and bachelor's degree students as an option. The third cooperation format in the pipeline is master's degree programmes in crop and livestock farming bioinformatics.

EkoNiva is the first in the farming sector and processing industry to create a Basic Department in association with the Higher School of Economics. Its main goal is to train high-calibre professionals and build a talent pool for the company.

'We consider agricultural biotechnology as one of the priorities in the education for the next 10 years. For our

university, such initiatives are significant. Different departments join their efforts to train not merely the employees companies look for, but the top-tier specialists to meet the needs of today's high-tech farming', points out Nikita Anisimov, HSE Rector.

'Today, agriculture is one of the leading industries in the country. We have state-of-the-art enterprises. We need the most talented staff and perhaps a slightly different corporate culture to compete with IT companies, banks and other attractive employers. Interaction with the HSE's culture not typical for agricultural community will let us take a fresh look at the ordinary things. Working on innovations together, we can make our collaboration more fruitful, for example, in artificial intelligence and biotechnology. EkoNiva has been the dairy industry leader in Russia for many years. Now, we aim to rank first in the world, and it is impossible to do it without the best students, teachers and staff', says Stefan Dürr, EkoNiva Group President.

By Eleonora DUBININA

New agriclassses

EkoNiva has opened four new agriclassses in Voronezh oblast. Over one hundred Year 7 pupils will learn about farming practices and gain new knowledge for a conscious career choice in the future.

The project is implemented jointly with Voronezh State Agricultural University n.a. Emperor Peter the Great and Voronezh Institute of Education Development n.a. N.F. Bunakov. The course has begun in the agriclassses of Sadovoye comprehensive school, Anna district, and Leader comprehensive educational centre n.a. A.Gordeyev in Bobrov town. Soon, it will start at school No.1 n.a. M.A. Mashin, a Hero of the Soviet Union, in Liski, and Buturlinovka school. At the core of the educational process is the AgroStart additional career counselling

programme focusing on agricultural technologies.

The curriculum from Year 7 to 9 comprises classes in the subjects required to get a job in agriculture, visits to EkoNiva's facilities within tour projects in Voronezh oblast – Dobrino dairy and the cheese processing plant in Shchuchye. The young people will also find out more about highly demanded jobs in this industry.

'We strive to make the farming sector more appealing for schoolchildren and show them that we work at state-of-the-art facilities with high-tech workplaces, science-based solutions



and digitalisation and can provide them with multiple personal and professional growth opportunities', says Aleksandr Rybenko, Regional Director for Voronezh oblast, EkoNiva Group.

The AgroStart additional career counselling programme

represents a rapidly developing sector of economy and is designed to promote agricultural education, jobs in farming and agricultural engineering with young people.

By Alyona FROLOVA



Delicious and nutritious

EkoNiva Group and Rosselkhozbank have commissioned a new feed mill in Aristovo village, Ferzikovo district of Kaluga oblast. The investment in the project totalled around 470 million rubles, with the bank acting as a financial partner.

The infrastructure of the feed mill comprises a 10,000-tonne grain reception, handling and storage line, a crumbled feed line with a capacity of 10 tonnes per hour and a pelleted feed line producing 2 tonnes per hour. The crumbled feed line carries out technological operations of macro- and micro-dosing, crushing and mixing. The pelleted feed line provides for a possibility of

adding liquid components into the formulation. The feed mill also has raw material bins with a total capacity of 200 tonnes and finished product bins with a volume of 216 tonnes. In addition, a modular gas boiler house was built to generate heat and steam.

The production line of the feed mill is controlled by cutting-edge automation tools, in particular industrial controllers, for the finished

fodder to meet the stringent quality standards. The facility also has its in-house laboratory to check the quality of incoming raw materials and manufactured compound feed.

The design capacity of the feed mill is approximately 73,000 tonnes per year. It produces compound feed for milking cows and pelleted feed for young stock, all intended for covering the needs of Kaluzhskaya Niva, EkoNiva

Group's regional subdivision in Kaluga oblast.

The facility currently employs 31 people and operates in three shifts. The staff is expected to increase to 40 people in the future, which will allow the enterprise to reach its full capacity.

'The new feed mill will make it possible to provide EkoNiva's Kaluga subdivision with the necessary amount of high-quality compound feed', says Roman Litvinov, Regional Director of EkoNiva Group for Kaluga Oblast. 'This, in its turn, is essential for ramping up raw milk production. We also hope that our project will become another driver of local community development offering new jobs.'

'Increasing the self-sufficiency in milk is a strategic goal approved by the Food Security Doctrine', points out Margarita Filatova, Director of Kaluga Regional Branch of Rosselkhozbank. 'The commissioning of the new feed mill creates the right framework for boosting EkoNiva's performance. We will work together to further develop the dairy industry of our region and entire country.'

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV

Marked on the South Caucasus map

EkoNiva has started supplying dairy products to Azerbaijan, striving to strengthen its presence in the South Caucasus.

The company exports conventional 1-litre UHT milk and EkoNiva Professional Line milk with fat ranging up to 3.5%, 200 ml UHT milk with 3.2% fat and UHT cream with 10% fat. The products are available in Rahat and Neptun retail chains as well as local hospitality businesses.

The Group is looking into expanding the range of the dairy sold to Azerbaijan. Last autumn, as a participant of the business mission of Russian agricultural exporters, EkoNiva presented curds, semi-hard and premium hard cheeses as

well as other branded products to its potential partners in Baku.

The goods are transported by refrigerator trucks meeting the temperature requirements necessary for preserving their freshness and health benefits. By now, EkoNiva has delivered about 30 tonnes to Azerbaijan.

The Group started exporting its branded dairy in the summer 2020. Today, its products are available in 10 countries around the world. EkoNiva's enterprises in Voronezh and Kaluga oblasts are certified for foreign sales.

'We are now entering the markets of the neighbouring countries where high-quality

Russian dairy is in high demand', says Aleksey Maslennikov, Deputy Director General for Sales and Marketing, EkoNiva-Food.

'Azerbaijan is one of the promising destinations, so we

are going to scale up our sales in the country and broaden the export range as soon as the consumers become familiar with our brand.'

By Eleonora DUBININA



Make hay while the sun shines

EkoNiva's organic farming enterprise has boosted its daily milk yield and cow productivity by a quarter. The key growth factor was fodder quality improvement.

The specialists harvested and ensiled perennial grasses for haylage and maize for silage based on the experience of previous years. The grasses were cut in the budding stage, when they reach the highest concentration of crude protein and have easily digestible fibre. The maize cobs were harvested in the milk and wax stage of ripeness. At this phase, the plant is distinguished by optimal digestibility and starch concentration. The nutritional value and feed assimilation were improved. Besides, special attention was paid to meeting all harvesting and storage requirements.

'From January to September 2024, we received

an average of 18 kg of milk in bulk per day per lactating cow. The figure for the same period in 2023 was 14.6 kg, which means an increase of 23%. Our milking herd is getting bigger with the offspring produced by the 19 new heifers received in February. Back then, the output was about 6.8 tonnes of organic milk per day', says Valeriy Gushchin, Director of Savinskaya Niva.

With 520 milking cows, the farm has boosted its gross milk yield by a quarter – it currently amounts to 8.5 tonnes. In addition, the company's specialists keep enhancing the crop quality. The in-house bred soya bean variety EN Argument was sown in the fields to be used for the production of



concentrated protein fodder in the future. Quinoa and several varieties of lentils were also planted as part of the trials carried out by EkoNiva. The results will be analysed after harvesting.

'Organic production in Russia has just started developing', says Valeriy

Gushchin. 'The demand is growing over time thanks to the popularisation of mindful consumption and healthy lifestyles. We can see it clearly now that buyers are opting for truly organic products.'

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV

'Golden' Volga



The Group's varieties have won five awards at the Privolzhye 2024 testing ground. For the second year in a row, EkoNiva-Semena has participated in the large-scale project organised by the Soya Bean Grain Association of the Volga Federal District.

In 2024, different varieties of around 10 crops – both irrigated and rainfed, with various protection schemes and nutrition patterns – were

presented on 500 demo plots in the real production conditions of Sev-07, a large enterprise in Privolzhye district, Samara oblast. The varieties of the

participating companies were sown on the same day and received equal treatment. The trial plots were systematically monitored by agronomists and scientists.

As part of the project,

EkoNiva demonstrated soya beans, winter and spring wheat.

The results were impressive – five awards at a go, four of which for the in-house bred varieties.

'This year, in addition to soya beans, we have introduced spring and winter wheat into the trials. The winter wheat variety EN Mars of EkoNiva's breeding showed excellent performance, becoming the leader by revenue per hectare and the only third-class

rainfed variety with a gluten content of more than 23%', comments Marina Balashova, Marketing Department Manager at EkoNiva-Semena.

The soya bean varieties keep showing their worth. EN Argenta, which already gained recognition in the Central Black Soil region, Tula and Ryazan oblasts of Central Russia, produced great output in the Volga region as well. It became the best in two categories – as the highest-yielding variety and the most profitable early-ripening rainfed one. EN Argenta significantly outperformed its rivals in the early maturity group and under irrigation conditions. Another winner from EkoNiva's portfolio was the soft spring wheat variety Kanyuk. It was awarded as the top-yielding variety boasting a high gluten content and revenue per hectare both on rainfed and irrigated plots.

Next year, plans are afoot to expand the range of participating varieties – EkoNiva-Semena intends to present barley, peas and lentils at the Privolzhye 2025 testing ground.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

New trips, new awards



EkoNivaTehnika-Holding has taken part in global dealer conferences hosted by its key Chinese partners LOVOL and SANY MARINE HEAVY INDUSTRY. Following the events, the Group brought home three prizes.

As part of the Integration and Strategic Synergy Global Partner Conference, LOVOL granted EkoNiva two awards at a special ceremony held at its Weichai/LOVOL plant. The holding was recognised in the Image Building and Innovation and Development categories.

'We are honoured to receive the awards and happy to be part of this great show. Every day, our team does its best to create a positive image of the brand in Russia and make our clients trust in and be proud of LOVOL machinery', shares Bjoerne Heinz Drechsler, First Deputy Director General at EkoNivaTehnika-Holding.

'In 2024, EkoNiva delivered the best LOVOL sales performance, strengthening its position as the manufacturer's largest dealer in Russia. It keeps improving the brand awareness in the country. For example, at our Detchino service centre in Kaluga oblast, we run a dedicated LOVOL training

facility and regularly arrange specialised classes', says Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Commercial Director at EkoNivaTehnika-Holding.

The company was granted another award at the SANY MARINE HEAVY INDUSTRY 2024 Global Dealer Conference held in Zhuhai, China. It brought together representatives of over 100 partner organisations from 30 countries across the world. Fu Weizhong, Senior Vice President, welcomed the guests with an inspiring speech.

'I would like to thank you all most sincerely, especially those who travelled a long way to join us. Your support and trust are essential for our future growth and long-lasting strategic partnership. The rapid development of our company would not be possible without the efforts of each and every dealer. I believe we can create a better future together.'

EkoNiva was ranked as one of SANY MARINE HEAVY INDUSTRY's best partners of 2024 and won the Newcomer of the Year award.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO

Success stories behind names

Employees of EkoNiva's Ryazan subdivision have received state awards to be entered on the honour board of outstanding agriculture workers of the region.

The Honoured Worker of Russian Farming Sector title was granted to Vyacheslav Meshcheryakov, Operation Deputy Director, and Galina Stryuchkova, Deputy Senior Accountant. Vladimir Materikin, EkoNiva's Regional Director for Ryazan Oblast, earned a medal for services to the region.

The honour board features the top teams and the best workers of Ryazan farming and processing sector. Machine operators Andrey Samokhin and Sergey Pylyov, chief herd nutritionist Spartak Dubrovskiy and operation deputy director Vladimir Kiryukhin were recognised for their distinguished work. The staff of EkoNiva's

Ryazan subdivision was also acknowledged for high production performance in 2024.

'Every worker receiving an award has made an invaluable contribution to the development of our company', says Vladimir Materikin, EkoNiva's Regional Director for Ryazan Oblast. 'Each year, we raise the bar for our performance in crop growing, improve our agricultural technologies and implement digital solutions in livestock farming. Thanks to the honest and diligent work of our employees, we remain the raw milk production leader in Ryazan oblast.'

By Kristina AMANN



Unlocking genetic potential



EkoNiva has taken part in the VIR 130: Plant Genetic Resources, an international conference dedicated to the anniversary of the Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry (VIR) foundation. The company's specialists and trainees presented their perspective on the problem of scientific school formation today.

The Group's representatives met with fellow scholars at the round-table discussion 'Plant Breeding and Seed Production: Exchange of Experience, Development Issues' held under the auspices of the National Union of Plant Breeders and Seed Producers. Vitaliy Voloshchenko, Director of EkoNiva's Plant Breeding and Variety Maintenance Centre, and Dmitriy Mashtakov, a trainee plant breeder from the Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, gave a presentation on the current problems of developing modern competence of plant breeders and scientific schools.

'It is good to see that advanced plant breeding technologies accelerating the process, such as phytotronics, are in priority', says Vitaliy Voloshchenko. 'EkoNiva is one of the few businesses seeking applied collaboration with the VIR. We are cooperating with the Institute of Plant Industry not only in plant breeding, but also in education and research.'

The company and the VIR are engaged in joint outreach

activities and training of academic staff. The Vavilovets HR project has been running for six years. During this time, about 90 students from 16 agricultural universities across the country have participated in it. This year alone, 17 students have done internships at Kursk branch of the company's Plant Breeding Centre. It is here that prospective scientists can gain a better insight into such complex disciplines as plant breeding and seed production. Every year after their practical training, the project participants visit the Institute of Plant Industry. They get acquainted with its history and modern research, visit the gene bank, cryo-reservoir, herbarium, famous scientific library and memorial office of Nikolay Vavilov, a world-famous plant breeder and geneticist, botanist and geographer, teacher and statesman.

'We want to give our students an opportunity to connect with the greatest legacy of the world's genetic resources', emphasises Vitaliy Voloshchenko. 'This, of course, excites interest in plant breeding among young people and contributes to

the promotion of Vavilov's ideas and development of the talent pool, which is one of our fundamental long-term tasks.'

'I am delighted to work with professionals of EkoNiva, as they are open-hearted and eager to share their experience. In my opinion, it is essential for every young specialist to be surrounded by like-minded people, colleagues and have a good academic advisor. The latter plays an important role in guiding students, with him or her you can discuss your thoughts and ideas. In general, preservation of existing and

development of new scientific schools, mentorship at production facilities are of great significance nowadays', says Dmitriy Mashtakov.

In addition, during the international conference, the VIR and the National Union of Plant Breeders and Seed Producers awarded outstanding representatives of the industry at the joint event. Among the medal takers were Yuriy Vasyukov, Deputy Director General for Seed Production at EkoNiva-APK Holding, and Vitaliy Voloshchenko, Director of the Group's Plant Breeding and Variety Maintenance Centre. The company cooperates with the Union and has been its active council member since the first days of its establishment.

'EkoNiva contributed to the formation of the modern seed production in the Russian Federation, in particular, to the adoption of the first law on seed production in the country', comments Yuriy Vasyukov.

'Today, the Union is a strong organisation that represents the interests of the entire Russian plant breeding and seed growing community in all the government agencies. In recent years, the number of the Union members has tripled. The Union is enlarging, which means that it is strengthening its position and continuing to work for the benefit of the industry.'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



Setting the mood at Agrosalon



EkoNiva Group has presented cutting-edge solutions in the field of agribusiness management at the Agrosalon 2024 international trade show.

The event created a great opportunity to sum up the results of the past season and discuss plans for the future through live communication. Several hundred existing and potential partners visited EkoNiva's booth.

'We keep enhancing our team by opening branches in new regions and our own part storage facilities, aiming to ensure high machine performance in peak season and quickly responding to all market changes', notes Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Commercial Director of EkoNiva-Tekhnika.

In 2024, the dealer moved from No. 4 to No. 1 in sales of LOVOL machines in Russia. It opened the country's first spare parts warehouse for the SANY brand, which significantly boosted interest in these machines.

'We have diversified our business, keeping up with the times and adding a lot of Russian brands to our product portfolio. Rosagroleasing supports us in promoting them – this year, we have almost tripled our sales', continues

Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy.

EkoNiva-Tekhnika's product range comprises 35 brands of cutting-edge foreign and domestic machinery, and it is not a limit. EkoNiva-Semena is also constantly enlarging its portfolio with high-yielding seed varieties, including those developed by the company's breeders.

KomarichiAgro farming enterprise in Bryansk oblast is a customer of several years ordering machinery maintenance, spare parts and field crop seeds from the Group.

'EkoNiva is not just a reliable friend and partner – it always provides us with the best technologies and novelties. The latest of them is the company's in-house bred soya beans. For the second year in a row, we have been growing EN Accent in our fields and are particularly pleased with the quality. Despite the severe drought this season, the net yield amounted to 2.5 t/ha with 45% protein. We plan to further work with EkoNiva, overcoming all the challenges and opening new horizons',

says Christian Kovalchik, Manager of the enterprise.

The Russian farming sector is now striving for independence in seed production and crop breeding, so the company is following the trend. The Russian State Register of Plant Breeding Achievements includes thirteen in-house varieties of EkoNiva, ten of which are already supplied to the clients, while three varieties are still in process.

'Currently, the spotlight falls on soya beans, a profitable and popular crop. We also keep sharing our experience in the cultivation of lentils, for which we have

launched our own plant breeding programme', says Yevgeniy Kucheryavenko, Executive Director of EkoNiva-Semena.

So far, the company's commercial portfolio includes two varieties of red and green lentils, but several more are undergoing trials.

Apart from plant breeding, the Group is engaged in pedigree cattle sales. EkoNiva's heifers are valued for their high genetic potential and the company's excellent customer service.

'We partner with major agricultural holdings and developing farms and keep stepping up the national sales volume from year to year. Our cows are now milked in more than 20 regions of Russia – from the south to the Far East', states Viktor Voronin, Manager of Cattle Sales Division at EkoNiva-APK Holding.

At Agrosalon 2024, the farmers made optimistic plans for the coming season, while a tasting of EkoNiva's high-quality dairy products added to their positive mood.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO





With the Siberian subdivision team

Catching breath and restoring balance

Up in the mountains, when you reach the plateau, the fear abates, and you can catch your breath and restore your balance while relishing the picturesque serenity. At this

point, it is essential to keep your cool and stay humble not to get too big-headed.

We have not made it to the plateau, yet, but we are approaching it, the most dangerous cliffs behind us. With lessons learnt, experience and resilience gained in, we can resume our journey keeping in mind that it is not getting any easier, but on

the road to success, there are no shortcuts.

What takes your breath away

Over 30 years of operation, the company has built its spirit: courageous and goal-oriented, but warm-hearted and caring about people. Our people know how to function as a team and attain results even if the journey

uphill is long and tedious, without any stops to rest. Our priority at the moment is to communicate our core values to all 16,000 employees.

It is a complex task as you can't stipulate them in the job description. In fact, something intangible is passed on from one employee generation to the other.

As a rule, top managers embrace our core values quickly or just quit. As for the middle management, the company has yet to invest more time and effort here.

Time to ponder

When you are up in the mountains, nothing distracts you from your thoughts and you have time to ponder over things. My major concern now is the future of the Russian countryside.

The village has changed a lot since the Soviet times. Any twentysomething living in the rural area today can in no time find a job and a place to live in any city or town of Russia and leave his or her village. On the other hand, the image of agriculture and rural lifestyle is improving. Our goal is to make people understand that modern agriculture implies an interesting job, a competitive salary and a community life no less diverse than in the urban settings.

Yes, any person can leave the village, but also any person can come to settle there, and it is our target to make it a trend. To populate the rural area, we need to provide the infrastructure, housing,



entertainment and fixed working hours. Another issue to solve is how to attract non-agriculture related businesses to the rural areas to make the community less isolated. Socialising and having a diverse dating pool, for that matter, are essential for young people. Therefore, it is important that other industries

that we can make it to the top of the ratings.

On inner drive, rock'n'roll and wisdom

I hope we won't lose the inner drive that made EkoNiva happen 30 years ago, helps us to handle challenges at each stage and keep on developing.



Long years together

such as IT also set up their offices in the rural areas, which will make the community life more exciting and ensure growth of the countryside population.

Finding new ways to go

Some people have been encouraging me to sell the company. The timing would be perfect: lots of money in the country and good prices for milk. They say that I'd be better off with tones of money in my pocket. Assuming I did it and had lots of money, what would I do next? I have an overwhelming urge to create, make things work and look for new ways. Yes, these ways can be unpredictable and full of perils, my life experience already suggests that I should be more careful and reasonable. But if you follow only this cautious voice inside, you will never make a difference.

In other industries, there are indisputable rating toppers, but in the dairy business there are no obvious world leaders. Chinese companies are trying hard to claim the position, but it is fair to say that Russian conditions suit better for the purpose. Russian enterprises have already reached the global level of management, structure and efficiency. I am positive

I expect our youthful drive to be combined with experience and wisdom. It is like a mature adult with lots of knowledge and skill but still eager to rock'n'roll, play football or set off for a mountain hike.

Sharing talent and expertise

I am often asked how I am able to maintain such an intense pace of living, what encourages me to implement innovative ideas and continue to move



up to the top. Well, my biggest inspiration are people around, both those I work with and those I work for, or just extraordinary people I come across on my way, for example, Aleksey Gordeyev, who was a game-changer for our whole industry in the early 2000s. With him, our agricultural sector was transformed into profitable business. He supported large holdings causing rapid development and growth of the industry.

As for me, I often refer the

parable of the talents from the Gospel. It tells how people were distributed talents according to their abilities. I think I am blessed with many talents in various areas by our Lord's will. Thus, it is my duty to implement and multiply these talents and achieve more than those who were less lucky or those who bury their talent in the ground. To whom more is given, more is asked.

Noted down by Svetlana WEBER



All new for Siberia and Altai



EkoNivaSibir has signed a dealership agreement for the supply and maintenance of Zoomlion tractors in Novosibirsk, Omsk, Kemerovo and Tomsk oblasts as well as in Altai area and the Altai Republic.

In addition to a wide range of farming equipment, the Siberian subdivision of EkoNiva-Tekhnika offers its clients original Zoomlion Agriculture Machinery spare parts on the most

favourable terms.

'Simple and robust design, versatility, ease of maintenance and operational comfort distinguishing the Zoomlion RN904, RS1304 and RS1604 tractors make them an excellent

choice for farmers', shares Aleksandr Suvorov, Manager of Machinery Sales Department for Altai Area, EkoNivaSibir. 'The brand-new PL2304 and PG2004 models also deserve special attention. The former is fitted with a 7.47-litre engine having a capacity of 230 hp. The PowerShift transmission with 40 forward and 40 reverse gears makes it possible to couple the vehicle with various attached and trailed implements. This tractor is the flagship of the entire Zoomlion machinery line-up. Last but not least, the PG2004 model features a turbocharged 200-hp engine with the Common Rail system, the 48F+24R automatic transmission and a reliable hydraulic axial piston pump – everything for handling agricultural works of any kind.'

The Zoomlion TF150 wheel combine harvester has been a massive hit with Siberian farmers. The machine is powered by the Yuchai National IV engine delivering 260 hp. The

Bosch intelligent fuel injection system and the upgraded 7,000-litre grain tank ensure high performance and fuel efficiency of the model.

'We are now in the process of arranging order placement for the Zoomlion TF220 rotary combine harvester', continues Aleksandr Suvorov. 'Like the brand's other vehicles, this machine is ideal for tackling tasks in harsh and extreme conditions thanks to the reinforced bearings, European-made Danfoss belts, rotor and wheel drives and hydraulic pumps. Besides, there is going to be a demo show of the Zoomlion DV3804 hybrid tractor in early 2025. This new-generation model is fitted with a 350-hp engine and an innovative MIDD hybrid transmission system.'

EkoNivaSibir is looking forward to showcasing Zoomlion's novelties to farmers across Siberia and Altai area.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH

Ni Hao, China

Last autumn, three subdivisions of EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding arranged client trips to China for their partners and friends.

EkoNiva-Tekhnika and EkoNiva-Chernozemye teams organised an exciting business and cultural programme, the highlight of which was the demonstration of the latest machinery novelties and technologies at Weichai/LOVOL in Weifang.

'The plant manufactures high-tech, powerful and the world's most reliable engines', says Sergey Krasavin, Ryazan Branch Manager, EkoNiva-Tekhnika. 'Besides, about 140-150 tractors roll off the conveyor belt every day. The presentation of one of them – the new 350-hp LOVOL P8350 – has been highly rated by our clients.'

The plant's representatives showcased a wide range of tractors designed for intensive fieldwork. The TR1504, TR1804, TR2004 and TR2204 models are distinguished by reinforced frames, upgraded

transmissions and massive power reserves, which makes them ideal for pairing with heavy implements such as deep rippers and combined tillage tools.

The LOVOL TN2604 was acclaimed by the attendees as the best tractor model. Featuring a 260-hp 6-cylinder

Shangchai engine, the LUK twin-disc clutch, the CARRARO front axle and a dual-speed 540/1,000 rpm PTO, it is suitable for a vast variety of agricultural and transportation tasks.

The LOVOL GK 120 PRO combine harvester fitted with a powerful and fuel-efficient

engine also impressed the guests.

'I enjoy going on trips with EkoNiva', shares Murad Mustafayev, Director General of Zolotoy Pochatok Tekhnika. 'This time, we have had plenty of shirt-sleeve meetings with other farmers, where we could exchange experience and ideas. I was amazed by Weichai's hydrogen engine development and the quality of the demonstrated LOVOL tractors, which are virtually on par with those of well-known European brands.'

In November, EkoNivaSibir also arranged an unforgettable trip – its 33 clients visited LiuGong facilities in Liuzhou and the SANY telescopic handler plant in Zhuhai. The insightful tours provided an opportunity to take a closer look at some of the industry's most respected brands, which had already won the hearts of many Siberian farmers.

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH





Expanding into south

EkoNiva Group has taken part in YUGAGRO 2024, an international trade show held in Krasnodar area. The holding's experts presented efficient Russian and foreign agricultural machinery, seed varieties of in-house and imported breeding and highly productive pedigree cattle.

EkoNiva-Tekhnika showcased several novelties, with the Sirius 500 cultivator manufactured in Russia coming into the spotlight. This versatile vehicle performs four operations: discing, loosening, levelling and rolling. Unlike its counterparts, the Sirius 500 is fitted with discs measuring 510 mm in diameter and thus handles a greater volume of crop residues. Its 18 tines are spaced 28 cm apart, which facilitates proper soil loosening and mixing. The self-cleaning rollers suitable for operating in harsh conditions and on wet soil make the cultivator the best option in the segment.

The first Sirius 500 unit

was designed last year in Voronezh oblast and successfully passed testing. One of the advantages of this machine is the immediate availability of consumables and spare parts. The serial production is to be launched in 2025.

Another new solution demonstrated by the dealer was a bulk bucket with a capacity of 2.5 cubic metres to fill big bags with grain. Its unique feature is the integrated scales for loading products with an accuracy of up to one kilogramme. The operator controls the entire process via a display available in the loader cab and can stop or resume it at any moment.

'The bulk bucket offered by EkoNiva has been a great addition to our fleet, saving time and eliminating weight discrepancies. We used to fill big bags by hand, but now, thanks to this implement, we can load 20-30 tonnes per hour – with speed and accuracy', shares Mikhail Borodin, Manager of Druzhba farm, Kursk Oblast.

Crop growers had an excellent opportunity to learn about the varieties of both Russian and foreign breeding, including those developed by EkoNiva-Semena. Today, the company's experts are actively working on improving soya bean traits to produce adaptive high-quality varieties suitable for various climatic zones.

'Kuban is home to the country's leading plant breeding and seed production institutes. Despite the competition, EkoNiva-Semena is ready to cover the needs of our farmers, offering seeds of major spring and winter crops', says Aleksandr Novosyolov, Sales Department Manager at EkoNiva-Semena.

In addition to machinery and seeds, Krasnodar enterprises purchase highly productive pedigree cattle from the Group. At the trade show, the company's specialists dwelled on the key traits and advantages of Holstein and Simmental cows.

YUGAGRO 2024 was as productive for EkoNiva as ever as proven by multiple contracts signed and preliminary agreements reached to deliver seeds, cattle, machinery and digital solutions.

By Viktor BARGOTIN





Top trends for Siberia



EkoNiva has taken part in the Siberian Agricultural Week 2024, the region's largest international trade show. The company's booth hosted numerous meetings over the three days at Novosibirsk Expocentre.

The event featured a presentation of cutting-edge imported farm machinery and comprehensive maintenance programmes, consultations on genuine spare parts, their equivalents and the in-house AGROZNAK brand. The season's novelties – the Zoomlion PL2304 and PG2004 wheeled tractors and the Fascar round baler – became the highlights of EkoNiva's extensive display.

'The PL2304 tractor is a flagship machine of the Zoomlion range that can be considered a worthy alternative to leading European models', points out Aleksandr Burmak, Senior Sales Rep at EkoNivaSibir. 'Designed by Zoomlion North America Research and Development Centre, it features the reliable German ZF automatic transmission, the Carraro front axle by the Italian manufacturer and an axial piston pump with a capacity of 165 l/min. The tractor is also fitted with a front PTO, which makes for coupling it with various attachments. The well-thought-out ergonomics of the controls,

the comfortable cab and the excellent panoramic view ensure safe operation even in the most challenging weather conditions.'

The versatile Fascar round baler debuted at the Siberian Agricultural Week, but it had already gained recognition among Siberian farmers earlier in 2024. The spacious bale chamber handling large amounts of material without clogging enables the machine to run at a high rate of two bales per minute.

At its booth, EkoNiva-Tekhnika also showcased several reliable machines that have stood the test of time and had been tried on farms throughout Siberia – the LiuGong 856H Agri front loader and the 395B skid-steer loader, the SANY STH742 telehandler and the stylish and comfortable Indian Tafe 6022 tractor. Besides, all the booth guests took a great interest in EkoNiva's spare parts brand AGROZNAK.

The broad range of basic

field crop seeds presented by EkoNiva-Semena could not but impress the farmers.

'Early-maturing soya bean varieties as well as conventional cereals – spring soft wheat, barley and peas – are in high demand now in Siberia', says Aleksandr Suntsov, Sales Rep at EkoNiva-Semena. 'One of the crucial factors behind good yields is high ear grain content guaranteed in our varieties. We also offer our partners oil flax and lentils.'

EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding advisors told the visitors about other services of the company. Dmitriy Lezhanin, Head of the Training Centre, presented professional development programmes and Yuliya Klink, Client Financing Specialist, shared information about the advantages of acquiring machinery through leasing.

'Now, more than ever, we need to show farmers that our business is sustainable', continues Aleksandr Burmak. 'Trade shows are the best platform for this. Besides, I appreciate the Siberian Agricultural Week for the opportunity to catch up with our clients. The company's booth has been buzzing with attendees, which speaks volumes about our popularity in the region.'

By Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH



In touch with farmers



Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy, Commercial Director at EkoNivaTekhnika-Holding. 'We provide special terms for the equipment from warehouse, carry out delivery of pre-ordered trailed and tillage units, arrange parallel imports and preferential-rate deals through Rosagroleasing. The latter, by the way, is now one of the most efficient ways to purchase agricultural machines.'

The guests were showcased the latest novelties, used and refurbished equipment tailored to the needs of Tula oblast. At the meeting, the farmers also discussed machinery purchasing, delivery and servicing conditions with the

A round-table discussion on the latest trends and development prospects of the farming sector has been held at EkoNiva-Tekhnika's service centre in Bogoroditsk, Tula oblast. The event brought together managers of local agricultural enterprises and the dealership's specialists.

Stefan Dürr, EkoNiva Group President, chaired the client meeting focusing on the holding's business strategy for the near future. He elaborated on the outlook for the Russian dairy industry, the importance of soil fertility and efficient milk production practices and emphasised EkoNiva-Tekhnika's contribution to the overall performance. With 42 service centres across 39 regions, it is currently the largest agricultural equipment dealership in Russia. The company is engaged in machinery sales, maintenance and repair, spare parts supply and in-house manufacture of farm implements. Its key strengths are deep market knowledge, detailed analytics, a good reputation and a well-developed service centre network. Besides, the company's financial resources make for maintaining a large inventory of spare parts.

As part of the event, around 25 self-propelled machines and trailed implements of various European, Asian and Russian brands were demonstrated at

the premises of the service centre.

'As always, we offer our partners powerful and reliable farm machinery', shares



Gennadiy Nepomnyashchiy:

'As always, we offer our partners powerful and reliable farm machinery. We provide special terms for the stock equipment, carry out delivery of pre-ordered trailed and tillage units, arrange parallel imports and preferential-rate deals through Rosagroleasing. The latter, by the way, is now one of the most efficient ways to purchase agricultural machines.'

dealership's representatives.

'Buying a good vehicle is just the first step – timely and proper maintenance is of utmost importance', notes Levan Tsertsvadze, Manager of Agromir. 'EkoNiva's service has always been excellent – the specialists are competent, helpful and 24/7 available, resolving any problems as promptly as possible.'

The company has been cooperating with the dealership for several years, first opting for European and American machinery only, but now considering Asian and Russian manufacturers' products.

The client meeting also covered the issue of supplying spare parts for imported equipment. EkoNiva offers various solutions: genuine spare parts, high-quality equivalents and its own products under the AGROZNAK brand, the range of which is currently being expanded.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO





Joining forces

EkoNiva-Tekhnika is traditionally finishing the farming season with the partners and clients, discussing pressing issues of the industry and looking for the ways to tackle them.

President of EkoNiva Group Stefan Dürr opened the event in Ryazan branch of EkoNiva-Tekhnika. He shared the story of company creation and the experience of working with new suppliers' machinery. Thus, in 2024 alone, EkoNiva-APK has purchased over 150 modern high-performance machines, which have proven to be robust and comfortable to deal with.

'This year, we've added some more units to our fleet: 29 LOVOL tractors, 47 UMG front loaders, 7 MST telehandlers and 14 BONUM grain trailers currently run on

our farms. At first, the machine operators were cautious about the new equipment, but now the feedback we get is quite favourable. What's important is

Maksim Gudukin:

'The domestic agricultural market is going through difficult times. To meet the challenges, farmers, machinery suppliers and authorities need to join forces, share the best practices and be updated on efficient solutions.'

that our Chinese partners take into account our needs when developing their products. This strongly suggests that they are going to be serious competitors

to the Western counterparts in the future', says Stefan Dürr, President of EkoNiva Group.

EkoNiva-Tekhnika supplies its machines to more than 3,000 agricultural enterprises all over Russia. A lot of farmers have already recognised the value and reliability of new Russian and imported equipment.

'We have three LOVOL

line-up in the power range of 90-350 hp was in the limelight.

Unveiling the long-awaited new product – the LOVOL P8350 – took everyone by surprise. EkoNiva Tekhnika is one of the first dealers in Russia to have received the Chinese tractor for trials and tested it out in various conditions with different implements.

'The LOVOL P8350 has been designed for heavy work both out in the field and on the farm. The tractor's high efficiency is ensured by the 350-hp Weichai engine combined with the continuously variable transmission (CVT) and twin rear and front wheels', says Maksim Gudukin, Executive Director of EkoNiva-Tekhnika.

The machinery display at the demo site also featured the SANY and Kramer telehandlers, the UMG front loader, Grégoire Besson tillage implements, Bednar equipment, BONUM grain trailer and other high-performance units to benefit any agribusiness.

'The domestic agricultural market is going through difficult times. To meet the challenges, farmers, machinery suppliers and authorities need to join forces, share the best practices and be updated on efficient solutions', points out Maksim Gudukin.

TD1304 tractors, one LOVOL TH854 unit and a LOVOL grain-harvesting combine in our fleet. We are quite happy with the machines, and whatever minor deficiencies the combine had, they are now being remedied together with EkoNiva specialists. The tractors are engaged in all kinds of field operations demonstrating high performance and cost-effectiveness. There were no issues with the maintenance, the dealer's team always responds promptly, diligently and delivers high quality', says Valentin Zyuba, owner of Novosyolki enterprise.

The event showcased 25 units of modern farm machinery. The LOVOL tractor



Laser biostimulation of seeds

Is there a way to increase the field emergence, seedling vigour and hence the overall crop yield? Experts suggest an ingenious method of seed photoactivation with laser irradiation prior to sowing. Specialists of the company together with the representatives of Agrolaser Research Institute carried out a joint production trial on pre-sowing optical seed treatment of the Moskovskaya 56 winter wheat in the fields of Severnaya Niva Tatarstan.

Modern intensive crop production largely relies on pre-sowing seed treatment with chemicals to maximise the crop yield. However, there is a negative effect of such treatment on the germination and seedling vigour that is often disregarded and can only be mitigated with plant growth stimulants. An alternative solution is using the coherent optical (laser) irradiation in the range of 630-650 nm (nanometres).

'Earlier studies involving numerous crops confirm the stimulating effect of the laser on the plant growth and development and guarantee at least a 25-30% yield increment. Seed photoactivation with laser irradiation prior to sowing is similar to a morning ray of light waking up a person', comments Oleg Krylov, PhD, Senior Research Associate of Agrolaser Research Institute.

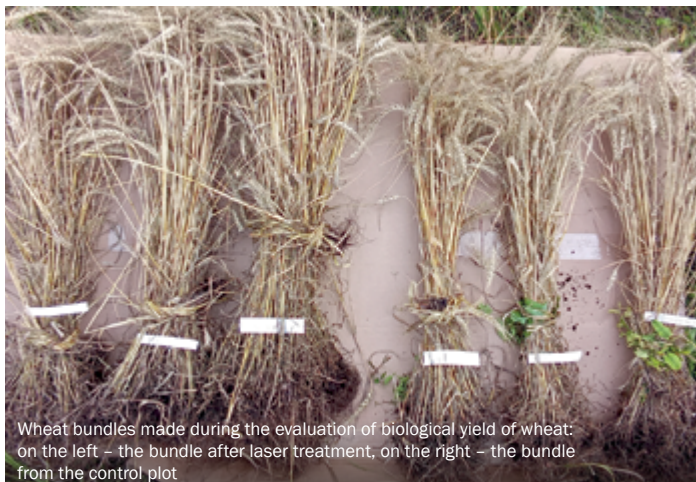
The technique of pre-sowing cereal seed treatment with optical coherent irradiation has been used to increase the yields since the 70s-80s of the 20th century. The ongoing interest can be attributed to the method's high economic efficiency at low energy costs.

'The laser is a unique device generating optical irradiation with high

achromatism, small angular beam spread, coherence and polarisation. Small angular divergence ensures a radiation focus up to 1 mm. The pre-sowing seed priming ensuring the effect of growth phytochrome photoactivation is based on the underlying laser radiation properties', continues the scientist.

The seed treatment modes for the production trial were selected in the laboratory of Agrolaser Research Institute based on a comprehensive criterion including seedling vigour, germination, whole plant weight and green weight as well as leaf length as an indicator of photosynthetic capacity. The seeds were sprouted in sand boxes. Already in the laboratory conditions, the vigour and germination of the treated seeds increased by 11.9% and 12.3%, respectively, as compared to the untreated seeds.

The winter wheat seeds were laser treated with the Luch-Zerno unit on the threshing floor of the farm before sowing. The farm specialists together with the institute researchers performed the field observations. All the crop management practices applied



Wheat bundles made during the evaluation of biological yield of wheat: on the left – the bundle after laser treatment, on the right – the bundle from the control plot

at the testing and control plots were implemented in full compliance with the process flow charts adopted by the farm. During the vegetation period, the winter wheat at the test and control plots performed well without any symptoms of disease or pest damage.

The pre-harvest biological yield estimate showed a distinct improvement. The laser-treated variant produced a 53% yield surplus against the control ones. The yield gain came from the increase in the number of productive plants by 57%, the number of productive stems by 51%, the productivity per ear by 11%. When determining the yield formula

on the testing plot, the researchers received a boost in thousand kernel weight and test weight of 15.1% and 1.6%, respectively.

The trial also included fractional content analysis. The kernels harvested on the control plot were more shriveled and less filled. The share of small fraction was 37-58% higher than in the laser-treated seeds.

The joint production inspection demonstrated that pre-sowing laser seed treatment has the potential to become a common element of the cultivation technology and enable the farm to improve its economic efficiency.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO





Argument in favour of EkoNiva



The stereotype of soya beans not being suitable for cultivation in Siberia has long been outdated. EkoNiva's plant breeding department offers varieties that guarantee a rich crop in the risky Siberian farming zone.

High interest in soya beans in the region can be attributed to global popularity of the crop and good prospects of exporting to China. Siberian farmers used to ignore soya beans as the natural and geographical conditions in the region were ill-suited for the crop, however modern plant breeding has been a game changer. EkoNiva-Semena breeders created and released new varieties featuring enhanced productivity, multi-factorial resistance and a required value of days to maturity.

'Soya bean is a warm-season crop that requires minimum 10-12 °C of the soil temperature to germinate', comments Willi Drews, Doctor of Agronomy, EkoNiva-Semena Consultant. 'To fit the Siberian growing conditions the variety should be ultra-early maturing and have a maximum sum of effective temperatures of 2,000 °C. Soya bean is a photoperiod sensitive short-day crop. To transition into the reproductive stage, it requires a certain sunlight-to-darkness ratio. Deviation of the day length affects the plant's vegetative

growth duration, height and productivity. This narrows down the latitude range a given variety can adapt to. For instance, Biysk is located at 52°53' N, Barnaul at 53°22' N, Novosibirsk at 55° N, Omsk at 55° N, Kemerovo at 55°21' N and Tyumen at 57°09' N. The EN Argument variety can be cultivated at up to 54° N.

The ultra-early variety EN Argument needs the effective temperatures sum of 1,900 °C to ripen. Besides, when growing this variety, a farmer has to comply with a certain protocol. First, the seeds should be treated with an inoculant at sowing since soya beans require a lot of nitrogen – 1 tonne of this crop takes up 80 kg of the substance. They can obtain the majority of it from the air via Rhizobium bacteria forming nodules on their root system. In the absence of inoculation, soya beans will produce a meagre crop with little protein in the seeds. Secondly, soya beans follow cereals or maize

in the crop rotation. The standard cropping pattern features two years of maize and two years of soya beans. Notably, soya bean itself is considered a good previous crop for cereals and maize as it leaves behind a lot of nitrogen in the soil.

The seeds should be sown into the soil warmed up to 10-12 °C strictly adhering to the recommended sowing rate, which is 650-700 thousand/hectare for EN Argument. A lower sowing rate is appropriate when soya beans are planted in wide rows (35-45 cm) with precision seed drills.

Effective weed control is also of paramount importance, as soya beans are slow growers early on in the growing season and cannot compete with the weeds. Fortunately, there is a whole range of herbicides to choose from in accordance with the crop rotation and target weed species.

At last, the soya beans have completed the vegetation cycle and the crop in the fields to be good. Now it's time to focus on the proper harvesting technique. Experts recommend using

the Flex draper headers, with flexible cutterbars to cut close to the ground while adapting to surface contours. The cylinder should run in the low-speed range (around 500 rpm). Besides, it is important to combine soya beans for seeds at an optimum moisture of 14-16 per cent.

This farming season, EN Argument performed well even in unfavourable weather conditions (a long rainy spell prior to the harvest time). On one of EkoNiva's farms in Maslyanino district, Novosibirsk oblast, the average yield amounted to 2.3 t/ha at 41-50% protein. On Novy Put farm in Altai area, EN Argument delivered 2.6 t/ha, while at demo trials in Irkutsk oblast it yielded 2.5 t/ha and there it was the only soya bean variety to have reached maturity.

By following the main soya bean cultivation guidelines, taking timely prevention measures and protecting the crop from adverse factors, you will lay the foundation for a successful harvest with high protein. Choosing the right variety is essential.

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



It starts with love

Nadezhda Ovchinnikova, Chief Breeding Herd Manager at Sibirskaya Niva-Maslyanino, has been awarded the Leading Beef Cattle Breeder title. In this category, Nadezhda notched a convincing win in the 3rd nationwide competition for the best professional outperforming over 100 participants from 60 regions of Russia and Belarus.



When did you realise that you would devote your life to agriculture?

'Love for farming is deep in my roots. I was born in Shugur, a remote, little village in Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous district. When I was a child, my favourite thing to do was to help my grandmother and mother on a fox farm. After finishing school, I had no doubts about my future profession – I decided to enter the Institute of Biotechnology and Veterinary Medicine in Tyumen to do a degree in herd management.'

What was your path from a herd manager to the chief breeding specialist?

'When I graduated from the institute with honours in 2015, I got an invitation to take part in EkoNiva's Spring Livestock Academy project in Liski district, Voronezh oblast. I was so impressed by the production facilities of one of Russia's top agricultural holdings that I set my heart upon doing a traineeship here – I couldn't miss such an opportunity. My first professional steps on Voronezh farms turned out to be my winning ticket – I got

hired as a herd manager at Vysokoye dairy. Without the help of EkoNiva's considerate mentors, I would hardly have been able to make such a great success of my job.'

What helped you during



Nadezhda Ovchinnikova:

'My five-year-old daughter Yeva is my greatest happiness! She takes after me in loving animals – she adores cows and calves. My daughter often asks me to let her accompany me to work, so who knows, she may well continue our "dynasty" of agricultural specialists.'

the nationwide competition of breeding herd managers for the best professional

title?

'I had started preparing a month before the event – it

to draw up a set of documents for pedigree cattle sales. I was so nervous that I couldn't even find the differences in the forms offered as possible answers straight away. The knowledge gained during my student years, by reading literature on beef cattle breeding and at on-line sessions with Tatyana Pokusayeva and Valeriya Serebrennikova, my mentors deserving special thanks, helped me a lot.'

What is happiness to you?

'My five-year-old daughter Yeva is my greatest happiness! She takes after me in loving animals – she adores cows and calves. My daughter often asks me to let her accompany me to work, so who knows, she may well continue our "dynasty" of agricultural specialists.'

What would you wish to beginner herd managers?

was as if I was going to take a state exam at the institute. I used the questions from the last year's regional contest held for breeders in Novosibirsk oblast, in which I had participated and claimed victory. This year, I have gone through four testing stages: animal evaluation, hands-on experience, theoretical tasks and paperwork management. For me personally, the last stage was the longest and most challenging – I needed

'What matters most is patience and love for animals – I think these traits are essential for doing our job. I would also advise reading as many up-to-date articles about animal nutrition and care as possible. And as for EkoNiva, it ensures stability and bright future for its employees. Working for our company is a good career start.'

Interviewed

by Irina KRASNOSHCHYOKIKH



In 2023, the milk yield at Sibirskaya Niva-Maslyanino totalled **10,913** kg per milking cow. The enterprise's herd size amounts to **13,816** head of young stock and **11,941** lactating cows.



Happiness of many children

'Mother' is an essential word for every person. The bond between a mother and her child is unbreakable. EkoNiva employs thousands of mums and several hundreds of them are with many children. Though every mother deserves respect and admiration, on the Mother's Day eve we would like to talk to the female workers bringing up large families to learn their secret of happiness, children raising and most importantly the secret of juggling work and motherhood while maintaining inner harmony.



Valentina Vartke's family



Valentina Nesterova's family

Valentina Nesterova, a crop growing department warehouse auxiliary worker in the Group's Kaluga subdivision, has eight children – 6 girls and 2 boys. From the very beginning, her husband Aleksey, an operator in the same company, has been in sync with her about starting a large and tight-knit family.

'Even one child is quite a challenge, to say nothing of eight – each of them being unique, restless, adorable and requiring an individual approach. I'm trying to be considerate of their interests

and they are always willing to help me. I'm fond of fantasies and often wonder what if...? What if I could go back in time, would I have changed anything? And I know the answer – I would have said "yes" to my husband again and given birth to all my children.'

Olga Kuchina, a livestock worker at Verkhniy Ikorets dairy, is raising 3 daughters and 4 sons. Olga puts a strong emphasis on instilling family and human values into her children and believes that it is good to be the children's



Olga Kuchina's family

best friend and mentor, share common interests and be on the same page with them. One of her sons, Ilya, has also decided to pursue a career in agriculture and now studies herd management.

'What motherhood has taught me is to tell really important things from trifles. My profound joy is to watch my children growing, succeeding, making achievements and to know that they are physically and mentally healthy. Love and trust are crucial to raising a child. Don't moralise too much – lead by example.'



Natalya Alyakina's family

Natalya Alyakina, an assistant of crop production service in Samara subdivision, is bringing up 2 biological and 3 adopted children. When the children of her own were still little, Natalya and her spouse adopted a boy,

and later, two siblings from a dysfunctional family.

'A large family is pure happiness. All of my children are wanted and loved. You should never divide them into birth and non-birth ones or prioritise them in any way. The most important values to teach children from a young age are trust, diligence and honesty. Never take other people's things. This phrase has probably become the main rule for our family.'

By the way, Natalya's middle son Ivan joined the livestock team of EkoNiva right after his mandatory military service as his parents had instilled in him love for cows early on.

Each of the 5 children of **Valentina Vartke**, a worker of Maslyanino enterprise in Siberia, is her best friend and a helping hand.

When asked if it is hard to have a large family, Valentina laughs in response:

'Motherhood is not complicated, believe me. Each of my children has their own temper and each of them has taught me patience and



Alina Lider's family

passion for life. Someone is quieter, someone is more mischievous ... but we all do the chores together – make dinner, clean the house or do crafts. For example, my youngest child of 3 years old, adores mopping the floor. (*laughing*) I'm confident: if a family has a lot of children, the parents will raise them well.'

Due to a convenient work schedule, **Alina Lider**, a janitor in the Siberian subdivision, can easily combine work and motherhood. She's a happy mother of 2 boys and 2

an oils and lubricants warehouse specialist at Tyumen enterprise, is a proud mum of eight children. The eldest are grown up and live separately, but always come home for family dinners at the weekends and on holidays to catch up, share the plans and have heartfelt talks.

'When we have children, our lives start making sense, we have someone to live for and something to strive for. Yes, in a large family you sacrifice your time, finances, rest, sometimes even sleep. But it



Olga Chudnovets's family

girls. 'The first steps, the first words and the very first achievements of my toddlers gave me unforgettable emotions. Frankly, in the beginning, it wasn't easy to embrace this new role of mum, but soon it gave a powerful incentive to my life and work. You gain in new experience – the experience of a lifetime worth to live for. To all parents dreaming of a large close-knit family, I would sincerely wish patience and optimism. The joy of parenthood is the foundation of a family.'

Margarita Aliyeva,

is worth it. Our children are our continuation, but each of them is an individual. It is important to have heart-to-heart talks with them and express your love. With the birth of each next child, the mother's love only gets bigger and more multi-layered as it is different for each one.'

Olga Chudnovets, a cheese cutting and packaging operator at Shchuchye plant, Liski district, Voronezh oblast, is parenting five children, two of them – Olga's nephews adopted by her a few years ago. Olga finds patience, consideration and being on the



Galina Repyakh's family



Margarita Aliyeva's family

same wavelength with the child the most crucial traits for a working mother.

'I hope I am the first person each of my offspring will phone in any situation, good or tough. Trust-based relationship is essential. I'm trying to be not only an advisor to my children but also a learner. My family and our common interests are the top priority for me. For a woman, starting a family is always some sort of self-renunciation: you no longer

reservation. 'Our children were taught independence from infancy, which is of a great assistance for a working mother. I love my job, and it translates to my family: my youngest is all crazy about calves and tractors, and the eldest are already considering universities to choose to pursue their careers in our company. Inner harmony is what I'd like to wish to all the mums out there as it ensures happiness for the entire family.'



Oksana Kulikova's family

live for yourself. You are happy when and if your children are happy.'

Olga's husband Vadim also works at Shchuchye cheese plant as a robot operator, which his youngest son Yegor is extremely proud of. The six-year-old boy is also dreaming of a career at EkoNiva's plant.

Galina Repyakh, an order and logistics specialist at the dealership holding, also cherished a dream of starting a large and happy family. She is raising 3 sons – only the minimum programme completed as she jokes. The golden rule of the Repyakhs' family is to accept each member's personality without

Though **Oksana Kulikova,** a record keeper at NivaStroy, never dreamt of a large family, today she is a mother of 10, including 7 adopted children. Nevertheless, she has never regretted her destiny. Oksana's lifehack for a working mother how to deal with all the duties is to use modern home appliances and delegate more to the children.

'Each kid is a unique personality. When addressed for advice by people intending to start a large family or adopt, I always answer: hold on and think it over. Motherhood is sheer happiness, but also an ultimate responsibility. It is a lifelong project.'

By Tatyana IGNATENKO



Visitors with career prospects



Seventy students from Kaluga and Moscow secondary vocational colleges have visited EkoNiva's enterprises in Kaluga oblast. For a day, they immersed themselves in the operation of a modern dairy farm, learnt in detail about milk processing and cutting-edge agricultural machinery.

The future specialists first went on a tour of Ulanovo dairy to observe all the technological processes: from baby-calf rearing to rotary milking. The students were especially impressed with the care and love the animals were

treated with.

'It was my first time at EkoNiva's enterprise. Before, I had never fathomed that cows could be kept in such comfortable conditions. And they produce high milk yields, as if expressing their

gratitude', says Yekaterina Shletgauer, a third-year student at Kaluga College of Economics and Technology.

The visitors' next destination was EkoNiva's milk plant in the town of Medyn, the Group's only processing facility

producing organic whole and UHT milk.

At the holding's largest dealership centre, the students saw the best domestic and foreign farm machinery offered by EkoNiva-Tekhnika. They also learnt a lot of useful information about the basics of cattle nutrition, growing fodder crops, technological processes, quality control system and marketing.

The eventful day ended with a business game, in which the students applied the acquired knowledge of agriculture. They were divided into groups and offered to create a new dairy product, taking into account certain inputs. All the teams successfully presented their cases and received souvenirs. EkoNiva also invited the students to do their practical training at its production sites next summer.

By Viktor BARGOTIN

Academy of Processing is catching on

EkoNiva's enterprises in Voronezh and Kaluga oblasts have completed the sessions of the annual Academy of Processing programme. This year, it comprised three three-day crash courses of seminars and practicals. The project was attended by 41 promising students of specialised higher and secondary vocational educational institutions from different parts of our country.

'EkoNiva first launched the Academy of Processing in 2012', says Yekaterina Ustinova, Human Resources Specialist at EkoNiva-Food. 'The training project allows students across the country

to get to know our company better. They learn the ins and outs of modern production not just from books but firsthand experience – at EkoNiva's three Voronezh facilities: Anna milk plant, Shchuchye cheese

factory and Dobrino dairy in Liski district. In October this year, we launched the Academy of Processing in Kaluga oblast – on Ulanovo farm and at MosMedynagroprom plant.'

The comprehensive

programme of the autumn session included an in-depth review of the Group's history, tours of EkoNiva's enterprises, team-building activities and interesting lectures about the technological processes of milk, cheese and fermented dairy production. Upon completion, the students were granted diplomas and souvenirs.

'When I first joined the Academy of Processing last March, I knew right away that I would apply for a traineeship at EkoNiva in Voronezh oblast after graduation', shares Nikita Yesaulov, an alumnus of Altai State Technical University and an assistant technologist at Anna milk plant. 'It was exciting to feel like you were part of the team and see what it was like from the inside. What fascinated me most was the specialists' attitude – they all place a high premium on training, gaining up-to-date knowledge and honing their professional skills.'

By Viktor BARGOTIN



Win to travel



EkoNiva's Voronezh operations have held a creative contest featuring no losers: all the participants travelled across Russia during a year and gained vivid impressions.

The top winners were granted a journey to Lake Baikal as a major prize and a trip to Saint Petersburg for the 2nd and 3rd places. Besides, all contesters were awarded Voronezh regional tours, tickets to the theatre

and concerts.

Fourteen winners of EkoNivaAgro-East team set off for 'The Blue Eye of Siberia'. They had to go a long way by train and by plane to reach Baikal, a natural wonder of Russia.

'I was overwhelmed when I first saw the lake. We all were so mesmerised by its breathtaking beauty that we couldn't take our eyes off it for 15 minutes straight. It took us a while to believe that it wasn't a dream, it

was real', says Yekaterina Prosvetova, Administrator at EkoNivaAgro-East.

The three days of the trip were packed with events and activities: dog sledding, skating on the crystal-clear ice surface of Baikal, visiting the Tazheran steppe, the Maloye More Strait, Olkhon Island, Shamanka Rock, local history museums and even going on a picnic to cook tasty omul fish soup. Mind you, the foregoing was only part of the programme.

'The journey has been exciting and unforgettable for each of us. I am confident that this adventure will inspire our team for bigger achievements', says Viktoriya Moysova, Ecology Specialist at EkoNivaAgro-East.

In January, the next round of the contest will take place in Voronezh oblast, and representatives of EkoNiva's operations will come together again to present their creative performances.

By Viktor BARGOTIN

Sports & leisure

EkoNiva's enterprises in Voronezh oblast have been known for a while for their performance not only in milk production, but also in sports competitions. This year, the operational cluster has held over 10 athletic events and closed the season with four tournaments: in volleyball, minifootball, billiards and table tennis.

These sports events were initially designed to unite employees within EkoNiva's Voronezh subdivisions, but in recent years, the competitions expanded to the interregional level.

For instance, the volleyball tournament, which opened a series of athletic competitions in November, brought together ten teams: five enterprises of EkoNivaAgro, the processing plants in Shchuchye and Anna, the managing company EkoNiva-APK Holding, as well as teams from Kursk and Kaluga operations.

Volleyballers of EkoNivaAgro-East clinched victory in the intense standoff. The team from Kursk took

well-deserved second place, and EkoNivaAgro-North claimed the bronze.

'The interregional tournaments feature much

higher competition, but Voronezh teams have delivered good performance. I would also like to give credit to the organisational level',



comments Artyom Rykalov, IT Administrator of Kursk enterprise.

Another team of Voronezh farming enterprise – EkoNivaAgro-North – won the tournament in minifootball. Aleksandr Filipenko earned the gold in the billiards. In the table tennis tournament closing the season, victory was claimed by Sergey Krivyakin in the men's singles. In the women's singles, Olga Dmitriyeva defended her title again, and Roman Sorokin and Sergey Krivyakin became the champions in the doubles.

'This year, I've taken part in all sports events, except for skiing. And I am not the only one, we have a lot of healthy lifestyle enthusiasts, so the management invests a lot of time and effort into this. We are happy to have new athletes on our teams and welcome everyone who wants to join in,' says Aleksandr Voronin, Technician at EkoNivaAgro-Right Bank Operation.

By Viktor BARGOTIN

From field to plate



EkoNiva is expanding its product range under its own brand with a line of ready-to-eat and frozen meals. It comprises curd fritters, pancakes, sandwiches, an omelette, baked pudding and sitnik (filled flatbread). The novelties are already available in several branded EkoNiva shops in Moscow oblast and Voronezh.

Currently, the range of ready-to-eat meals includes traditional curd fritters, pancake rolls with curds and cheese, two types of cheese sandwiches with pesto or Caesar sauce, a cheese and spinach omelette, a curd baked pudding and a cheese and greens sitnik. All the dishes are made with natural ingredients and EKONIVA dairy – milk, curds and cheese. The ready-to-eat food is prepared at the commercial kitchen of a partner company complying with HACCP (Hazard Analysis and

Critical Control Points) food safety standards. The products are securely gas or vacuum packaged to keep them fresh



Yekaterina Dürr:

'We always pay close attention to consumer needs and strive to live up to their expectations. People no longer expect only good taste from their food, they opt for proper and healthy nutrition more often now. We can guarantee that our meals are made from only high-quality and natural ingredients as we have strict control over all the production processes "from field to plate".'



corporate chain and feedback is received, the holding will explore opportunities to expand the range of ready-to-eat and frozen foods. During the launch period, tasting sessions will be held in shops for consumers to appreciate the natural taste and high quality of the novelties. Besides, the dishes have recipes, so anybody can cook them at home using EKONIVA dairy.

'The ready-to-eat meal range has been developed to meet the growing demand for such products', says Yekaterina Dürr, HoReCa Brand Director at EkoNiva Group. 'We always pay close attention to consumer needs and strive to live up to their expectations. People no longer expect only good

taste from their food, they opt for proper and healthy nutrition more often now. We can guarantee that our meals are made from only high-quality and natural ingredients as we have strict control over all the production processes "from field to plate". One more goal we are achieving is to demonstrate to consumers the gastronomic features of our products and prove that top-grade ingredients can enhance the taste of familiar curd fritters or pancake rolls with curds.'

By Eleonora DUBININA



for up to five days.

In addition to the ready-to-eat food, EkoNiva's retail outlets offer frozen curd fritters. As the new dishes hit the shelves of the

The HACCP system is designed for systematic identification, analysis and management of potential risks associated with food production. It represents a set of documented measures to ensure food safety throughout the entire path to consumers: from production to sale.

Russian breakfast for everyone

Russian Breakfast, the first national gastronomic festival, has taken place in 20 cities across the country. Throughout October and November, restaurants and hotel guests all over Russia had the opportunity to try breakfast dishes made with EkoNiva's dairy products and regional specialities.



The event involved about 200 catering facilities in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Sochi and Krasnodar, Yekaterinburg

and Tyumen, Yaroslavl, Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk, Rostov-on-Don and Samara, Astrakhan, Volgograd, Voronezh,

Kaluga, Ryazan, Tula and Ufa.

EkoNiva launched the Russian Breakfast in partnership with METRO and the Gastronomic Map of Russia. Yekaterina Shapovalova, the author of the project, pursues the goal of reviving the interest in national cuisine and unveiling its diversity as well as encouraging restaurants and hotels to include it in the menu. What is remarkable about the project is that it embraces over 30 hotels of various formats serving Russian breakfasts buffet style or a la carte. As part of the festival, the chefs devised their own variations of morning meals: porridges, milk desserts, curd, cheese and egg dishes. EKONIVA dairy products were

mandatory ingredients in all categories and each chef drew inspiration from the regional cuisine. As a result, restaurant guests could try such dishes as whipped curd balls in nardek (watermelon syrup) with berries and fragrant mint in Volgograd, baked apples with pulled duck and cheese in Voronezh, green buckwheat with mushroom cream and beef in Sochi and a curd dessert with yoghurt, watermelon jelly and beet crisps in Astrakhan. These are only few of the ingenious dishes presented during the festival. In addition, the best chefs of the project held special open workshops in four cities – Moscow, Voronezh, Novosibirsk and St. Petersburg – where they cooked regional breakfasts for the guests. Thus, all the guests were able to explore the incredible diversity of Russian cuisine and products.

By Eleonora DUBININA

Volga region joining Tour project

EkoNiva has extended its tour project to Tatarstan, launching it on Naratly farm in Bugulma district. It is the Group's first dairy in the Volga region open to the public.

The programme of the visit is similar to the other tours within the company's project. EkoNiva's guides have developed a special overview route around the farm showcasing the main stages of milk production. First, the guests see animals – from calves to adult cows – and learn about their housing conditions, fodder preparation and balanced ration formulation. The visitors then have an opportunity to watch milking in a rotary milking parlour and find out how milk is transported to processing plants. The tour also includes creative workshops and a tasting of EKONIVA products.

The geography of our project keeps expanding. EkoNiva's Volga subdivision covers Tatarstan,

Bashkortostan, Orenburg and Samara oblasts, and we will be delighted to welcome their residents to our farm. The convenient location of the

dairy at the border of these regions and near the junction of federal highways gives us a big advantage', says Yekaterina Bartseva, Manager of EkoNiva Group's Tour Project.

EkoNiva initiated the project in 2013, pursuing the goals of promoting natural milk consumption and drumming up interest in agriculture. Students of schools and

universities, tourist groups and business partners visit the company's dairy farms and plants. Over the first nine months of 2024, EkoNiva's tour project welcomed about 61,000 people – more than in the same periods of previous years.

By Talgat MUSAGALIYEV



EkoNiva in focus



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