Interview with: Mr Uldis Kirsis, Chairman of the Boad, RAVAS SIA (Farmer), owner

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Interview by: Andris Parups

* Please provide some background about your farming business e.g. Where is your farm located? What size is it? What are its main features? What products do you produce and where is your main market for your products? How long have you farmed this land? (100 words)

The single family-owned farm is located in mid-west Latvia, in Blidene, Brocenu novads. The Farm’s business focus is on (1) milk production, (2) meat production, (3) grain production (rape seeds). All production is sold in domestic market:

* Milk –> to the farmer’s cooperative “Piena partneri”;
* Meat -> to the company “Baltic Calves”;
* Rape seed -> to the company “Latraps.

The Farms livestock consists of 700 cows, of which 350 are milking cows. Altogether the Farm owns 1300 ha of agricultural land. The Farm is in business since 1994, when it started with 4 cows and 150 ha of land.

* Why did you want to invest in improving the environmental impact of your farm? (100 words)

Until the modernization (in 2008) the livestock was placed in two old Soviet-style livestock housing whose maintenance costs were high, and the living environment did not corresponded to modern requirements, as a result options for livestock growth were restricted, efficiency low and operating costs high.

Availability of the EU funding encouraged the family to engage in the modernization project. Reduction of environmental impact is embedded into national regulation concerning technical solutions for livestock housing and collection of wastewaters. Therefore implementation of the EU co-funded project for the modernization of livestock housing automatically prescribed that all environmentally friendly technical solutions are observed. In addition, environmentally friendly management of the Farm allowed introducing operational efficiencies in Farm’s daily operations.

* How did you use the RDP funding to improve water quality on or around your farm i.e. what equipment was purchased or works were carried out using the funding? (150 words)

RDP funding was used for:

1. Construction of Greenfield livestock housing, with:
* Built in pipeline system which channeled manure to a liquid manure basin;
* Additional livestock storage capacity created, space added for livestock;
* Installation of drinking and water cooling systems (operated on heat derived from fresh milk) for livestock and other livestock well-being equipment;
1. Installation of modern milking machinery:
* New equipment for milking cows;
* Separate compartment for milk storage and its cleaning facilities with pipeline system channeling the sewage to liquid manure basin;
1. Construction of liquid manure storage basin, with 7 months reserve;
2. Building of supply system of liquid manure from the basin into specialized trucks for agricultural soil fertilization.
* What overall difference has the project made to your business? (100 words)

Following results have been achieved by the Project:

* Livestock increase by 300%, now consisting of 350 milking of 700 total cows;
* Milking productivity per cow increased;
* Employees productivity increased, larger number of duties per employee carried out;
* Reduction of environmental damage from manure spillage;
* Availability of liquid manure basin allowed fertilize the Farms 1300 ha of agricultural land more efficiently;
* Profit margins increased.
* What overall difference has the project made to the quality of water in the area of your farm? (100 words)

Although no special measurements of quality of water have been taken before and after implementation of the project, t**he State’s Food and Veterinary Service inspections which are carried out annually after the Project indicated that the quality of water in the area of the farms is in line with national regulations.**

* Do you have any advice for other farmers in Latvia or elsewhere who might also be interested in improving the environmental impact of their farm? (100 words)

Project implementation went smooth and key reasons for that were:

1. Take owner’s personal engagement throughout all aspects of project development;
2. Hold to the agreed time plan and allow only for minor adjustments; close monitoring of the work in progress;
3. Choosing suppliers of construction work with good reputation and solid project portfolio;
4. Choosing equipment suppliers with regional presence, within close distance, which is especially important for servicing the equipment and urgent repair works which is critical in dairy business.