

# GOOD EXPERIENCE

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PROJECTS, FUNDED UNDER THE  
LITHUANIAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME 2014–2020

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Good experience

Projects, funded under the

Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020

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A group of authors. Compiler Genovaitė Paulikaitė

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Vilnius

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## About publication

Under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020, EUR 1 978 million was allocated for national agricultural and rural development.

According to the data of the National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, 1 621 364 applications for support have been submitted until December 2018. The amount requested by the applicants reached almost EUR 1 247 million, and EUR 959 million was disbursed as support.

The publication gives brief surveys, indicating thereof the 2014–2020 Programme measures and amounts of funds that were allocated to the specific region and municipalities in each region.

Utmost attention is devoted to farmers, agricultural companies, agricultural co-operatives and agricultural production processing companies that have been granted support under this Programme.

In the course of project implementation, experience is being shared by the proficient farmers who have been involved in the development of farms for several decades, young farmers who have already taken first steps along the road of their chosen activity, farmers who own large farms covering the area of several hundred hectares, small farmers involved in plant growing and cattle breeding, companies engaged in agricultural production processing for a long time and searching for their niche on Lithuanian and world markets.

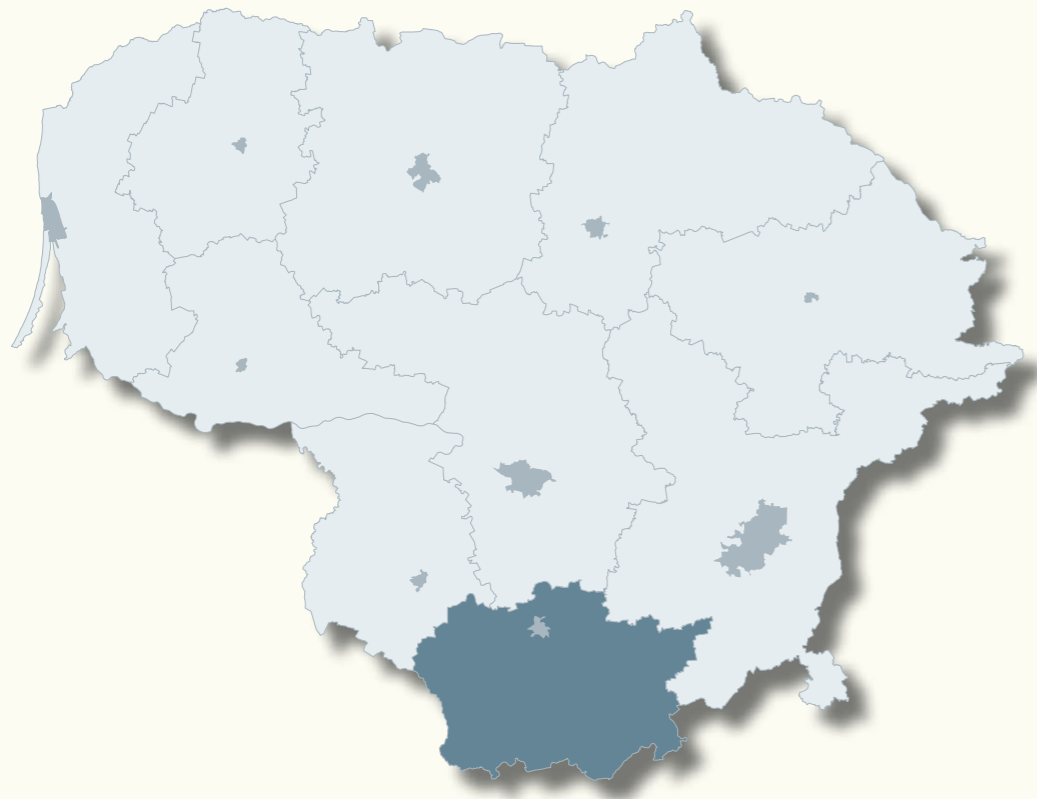
And no matter whether it is the first support granted to them, or they have been supported for several times, the publication heroes confirm unanimously that without support they would not be able to modernize their farms, to acquire modern and efficient machinery, and to create jobs for the residents of neighbouring villages and townships. More than one farmer says proudly that now they are more competitive and able to compete with the agricultural and food production manufacturers and processors from the old European Member States, cherishing the old farming traditions.

Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020  
for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring  
in Alytus Region



# ALYTUS REGION >>>

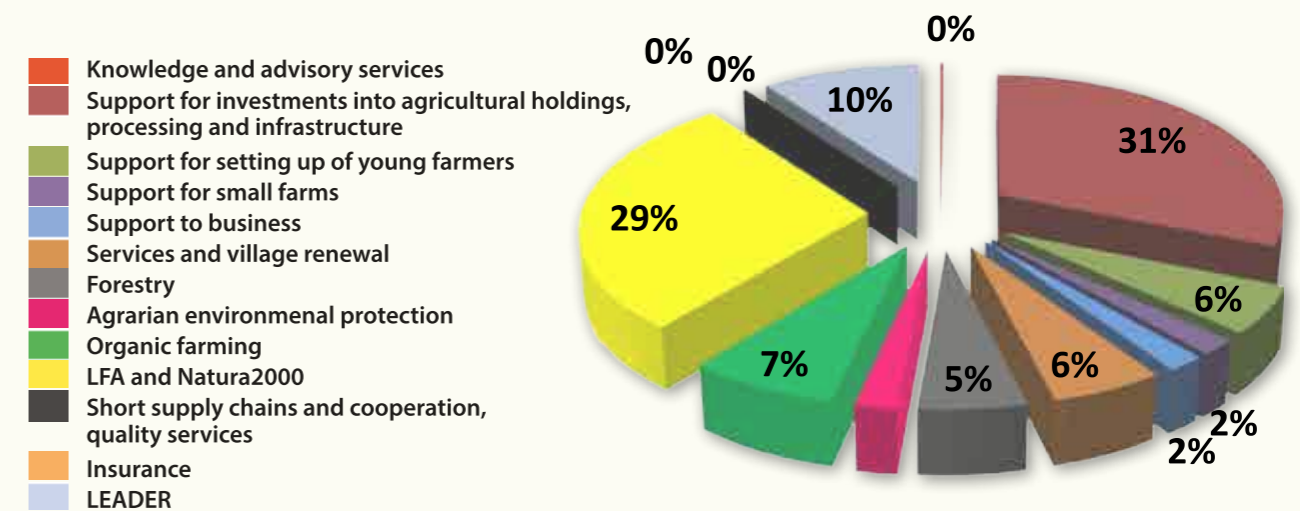
Alytus Region is in the southernmost part of Lithuania, covering the municipal territories of Alytus, Lazdijai and Varėna districts, Alytus city and Druskininkai municipalities.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Alytus District	small farms	988 427	351 623
Druskininkai	130 067	253 810	95 326
Lazdijai District	4 307 064	1 575 139	483 339
Varėna District	2 760 382	884 452	116 978
<b>Total in Alytus Region</b>	<b>9 851 180</b>	<b>3 701 828</b>	<b>1 047 265</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

The approved support structure of EUR 83 371 533 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Alytus Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## For a bird to sing...

*“Aquatic warbler is the only bird, conservation of which called forth signing of international memorandum in 1990”, says Arūnas Pranaitis, Director of the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve. The Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate for conserving of this bird uses support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.*

### Intensive farming is a threat

A bird reminding a warbler by its outer appearance for some time has been one of the rarest songbirds in Europe. The aquatic warbler populations have been almost fully extinct as a result of the rapid intensification of agriculture in the 20th century and decrease of low-lying marshy lands and flooded bogs, still more considerable use of pesticides and other chemical substances. Currently, 95 per cent of the aquatic warbler population has habitats in four countries: Belarus, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine.

“The population of aquatic warblers in Lithuania is quite scarce. According to the 2011 accounting data, some 73–106 sires existed in Lithuania. The main population in Lithuania inhabits the Nemunas delta. In the past years seven singing sires occurred in the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve since only sires may be counted. In summer evenings they like to sing sitting on higher grass tops. These birds do not make couples; therefore, female birds protecting their fledglings lead more secluded lives and it is difficult to notice them”, tells Arūnas Pranaitis.



*Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Director Arūnas Pranaitis*

### Support for habitat protection

Lithuania, stimulating to contribute to the conservation of aquatic warblers, has foreseen the opportunity to receive support under the activity area “Conservation of Aquatic Warbler Habitats” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Two projects of the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate were funded under that activity area.

In protecting aquatic warblers it is important to recreate the proper conditions for their brooding. They prefer wet sedge-grown meadows. Thus, as ornithologists are used to joke, it would be more correct to call them sedge warblers as they do not breed in the reed-grown places. “After coming back in the middle of May aquatic warblers build their nests in the dry last-year grass. Shrubbery is not good for them. Previously, when individual rural residents kept more animals, they mowed each patch of land. However, within some past decades more and more villagers do not breed animals. Not mowed grasslands are still more overgrown with shrubbery. We saw how this impacted the aquatic warbler population. When we started counting aquatic warblers in 1986, we would find some 30 males, but the time has come when one or two sires occurred. It is very good that there is an opportunity to receive support for preserving habitats of these birds. Having received support under the last-year period Lithuanian Rural Development Programme, we saved grasslands from shrubbery”, showing alluvial meadows where conditions are created for aquatic warbler breeding, tells Arūnas Pranaitis, the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Director. “Elimination of shrubs is also important for other birds. Bigger numbers of rare birds, especially those belonging to the order of snipes, gather here to brood in these specific wet meadows. Thus after recreation of meadows we observe the returning of birds that used to brood here earlier. Now we can hear here godwit, common redshank and other birds that have retreated with the deterioration of the meadow”.

As Arūnas Pranaitis emphasizes, habitat recreation is not a one-time job. It needs sustainability. “Using support granted under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, we take care and manage areas fit for brooding. We mow grasslands, part of them leaving not mowed, so that birds after coming back would find old grass for nesting. And we are mowing after August 15, when fledglings are led out of their nests. Cut grass should be brought out of the meadows. Alongside mowing, quite large areas of alluvial meadows are set free from shrubbery. Last year we cut shrubberies from 8 ha, in the year before last from 20 ha of grasslands. Willow shoots or sedges thriving here should be cut more than once until sedge thickets become similar those that used to be several decades ago. All these works are costly and without support we just would not have funds for them”, says the Director.

Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, amounting to about EUR 47.5 thousand, was allocated to the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate for implementing the projects. All project implementation costs eligible for funding shall be covered.

The Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate additionally to this support receives payments under the measure NATURA 2000 for management of wetlands and specific meadows.

### Gratifying results

The Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Director is satisfied with the results of the implemented projects. Aquatic warblers are settling in the recreated areas. “Now it is very important that the populations of these birds would be recreated naturally”, Arūnas Pranaitis shares his expectations. “This is not a quick process, though our implemented project has a big impact on it. We collaborate with scientists from Poland and Belarus. They recognize that biotopes fit for breeding of aquatic warblers have been successfully recreated in Žuvintas”.

In June 2018 in cooperation with Belarus, where aquatic warbler populations are much more numerous, fifty fledglings with nests were brought to the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve.

“Transfer is one of the ways for recreation of extinct or close to extinction populations of birds, though seems to be most complicated. It was necessary to compare the genetic data of aquatic warblers and to be ascertained of similarity and suitability of habitats. Much patience was needed to feed from early morning till dusk fledglings that seemed to be insatiable. The transferred fledglings at a certain age will memorize Žuvintas as their home and next year after wintering in Africa they would come back here. Even though the transfer of aquatic warblers has never been practiced; the transfer programme is based on the long-term experience of specialists in the field of conservation of bird populations. In preparing the transfer methods, the European scientists who were involved in long-term researching of this species participated in the process; consultations were held with organizations and specialists who have already conducted the transfer of other bird species. It is very important to note that experts are unanimous in admitting that we are very good in recreating the aquatic warbler habitats, and this seems to be the main condition for survival of this bird species in Žuvintas”, Arūnas Pranaitis, Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Director, Pranaitis tells about the return of aquatic warblers to the recreated alluvial meadows of Žuvintas.



*Aquatic warbler is the only bird, conservation of which called forth the signing of the international memorandum in 1990*



*Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve*

## No regrets by a young farmer for investing money earned abroad into the farm

*“I lived and worked in Scotland for ten years. Time has come, however, to make up my mind whether to stay abroad or to come back to Lithuania. Since my parents have been farmers for many years, I decided to go home and help them. The more so that there was nobody to take over their farm”, says Marius Sikorskas, a farmer from Druskininkai.*

### Support helps to set up

As he says he could not grumble either over his position or his earnings abroad. He worked as a packing line leader at a biscuit factory. It was the highest step in his career to be reached here. “And my salary was good. Not comparable to being paid in Lithuania. Nevertheless, I decided to return to Lithuania”, keeps telling Marius Sikorskas. “It so happened that after a year from coming back to Lithuania I took over my father’s farm. I wanted to continue what he has started. In 2017, I registered my own farm”.

After his decision to come back to Lithuania, Marius, still working abroad, took interest in support granted to farmers. “I searched for options to renew my father’s machinery, as the one possessed was outdated and inefficient. Some implements he did not have at all and therefore rented. This meant extra expenditure. Thus, after starting up, I submitted an application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020. I asked support for setting up of a young farmer”, the farmer describes his first independent steps in farming.

According to the activity area “Support for Setting up of Young Farmers” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”, EUR 40 thousand was allocated to Marius Sikorskas. “Making use of these funds, I acquired a tractor, a bale wrapper and a bale press,” he enumerates. “The application evaluation, however, is too long. Before submitting an application, three commercial proposals should be collected. As a matter of fact, while the application was being evaluated, prices for necessary machinery and implements jumped by almost thrice. I had to contribute more of my own funds. A good thing is an advance payment when after signing an agreement half of the support sum is being transferred to your account. Another part, however, you may get after several years, after expiry of the project implementation term. Probably, could it be possible to transfer 80 per cent at once? And the value-added tax. It is not compensated. 21 per cent increases expenditure considerably. Half of the sum received before implementing the project is certainly of great help for a starting farmer. When implementing the project, I spent my money earned abroad and even had to borrow. However, new and efficient machinery is already in operation on the farm”.

### Developing a dairy-farm

Marius Sikorskas is developing the organic farm. The main area is dairying. “To tell the truth, I am more inclined to cultivate beef cattle breeding, but due to circumstances I am involved in dairying. When my Dad resolved to set up an organic farm and certified it, he was obligated to develop dairying. I had to proceed with that obligation. On the other hand, this area was of good use to me. At evaluating my application, I received extra points for dairy cows. Before submitting my application, I had thoughts to buy beef cattle, but when I calculated I would not be able to buy the number of cattle with my own funds, when extra points are awarded”, the farmer tells and adds that he did not give up his idea for switching over to beef cattle.

Even though Marius Sikorskas farm is organic, this organic milk from his farm is sold as ordinary. “No organic dairy-farms are around; therefore, there is nobody to cooperate with and thus to sell milk at a higher price”, says Marius.

A farm of Marius Sikorskas at present has 11 milking cows. Annually, on the average, 5–6 tons of milk per cow is milked. “It is good that payments for organic farming are granted. This somewhat compensates the difference of the important result achieved both in milk farming and in plant growing. No doubt, funds for farm development are also important, they are paid according to the 2014–2020 Programme measure “Payments for Areas with Natural or Other Specific Handicaps”. The Druskininkai municipality lands are not fertile; therefore, this spring after seeing a newly drawn plan of such lands we were surprised to see that our land has become fertile. Fortunately, we proved that our lands had not become more fertile, and the map was corrected”, the farmer hopes that the opinion of authorities as regards land fertility will not change.



*Marius Sikorskas, a young farmer, does not regret of investing his earned money into a farm*

## The vegetable consumer is a health resort

Marius Sikorskas cultivates 25 ha of land. His father used to possess as much when his son took over the farm. Vytautas Sikorskas started from several hectares and increased the land area either by leasing or buying. “Now it is impossible to increase the area. Primarily, it is not allowed due to the obligations undertaken, as only organic lands may be joined to the organic farm. There are no e-farms around. Only my sister cultivates such farm, but she does not plan to reduce her possession. Secondly, the lands on sale in general can be hardly found in the Druskininkai municipality. The large farmers have already purchased them”, the farmer thus describes the existing situation.

Alongside dairy farming, he also develops plant growing. He grows potatoes and other vegetables and also cultivates crops. He sells part of grain and some part leaves for feed. “Druskininkai health-resort has a big impact on the development of vegetable growing. I sell all my vegetables here. Hotels and cafes buy them. Most of them are permanent buyers”, the farmer emphasizes the advantage of vegetable growing offered by the health-resort.



*A new house and a new tractor*

### Not intending to give up farming

“To be frank, when coming back to Lithuania, I thought it would be easier”, Marius says smiling. “People were very impoverished as a result of euro introduction. During the first year after coming back it seemed that prices were quite normal. And now... When I need some part or some tool, I go to small rural shops. You can still find here unsold goods. Their price in litas if converted to euro is considerably lower. Some time ago I could find many things. Now it is more difficult to find such goods”, Marius shares his experience.

Difficulties do not scare Marius – he does not intend to abandon farming. Even though he communicated with Aistė for many years when in Scotland, they celebrated their wedding in Lithuania. Marius built a house using the money earned abroad. The first evaluation of his decisions and work has come. At the 2017 competition “Farmer of the Year” in the Druskininkai municipality Aistė and Marius Sikorskai were awarded the third place. “I would like to continue my Dad’s work”, says Marius. “Farming has its own advantages. First of all, you are your own master. If you have done something wrong or have not done something, you can blame nobody but yourself”.



*Marius Sikorskas sells his cultivated potatoes to hotels and cafes in Druskininkai*

## A new tractor would have been just in dreams

*“My favourite proverb: One cannot conquer the world. After having started farming I began to understand the actual meaning of this saying”, says Karolina Kočiūnaitė, a young farmer from Lazdijai District. It is practically impossible for a young person to set up a farm and to acquire machinery without any help. The girl succeeded in making her dream come true only with the help of her parents, the State and the EU.*

### A bank loan used

Karolina registered her farm just in the middle of 2017. No one was surprised at hearing her decision to farm, as for quite a number of years her relatives, friends and acquaintances saw her as a real “child of the earth”, loving her native land, nature, animals and with no fear for work.

Her parents – Vidutė and Darius Kočiūnai, involved in farming since 2012 – made the major impact on her choice. When the head of the family after his long-term service in the police has retired, the spouses made up their mind to undertake beef cattle-breeding. At first acquired seven pedigree breed heifers and a bull of Limousine breed. At present 72 head of cattle of Limousine breed are in their possession. Darius Kočiūnas is a member of the co-operative of beef cattle-breeders “5000 Aubracs for Lazdijai”. The members of the co-operative, when selling cattle to the Polish purchasers, receive higher prices and simultaneously at cheaper prices acquire some means necessary for agriculture.

Karolina, even when she studied at Veisiejai Sigitas Geda Gymnasium, was very lively and whirled round on her parents’ farm. She closely observed how their farm was created and went on growing gradually, how everything got changed and improved. “It was interesting, indeed; therefore, encouraged by my parents I decided myself to have a try at farming”, tells Karolina about her choice.

The girl keeps ten head of crossbred beef cattle. She plans to acquire some 15 head of crossbred cattle more until the end of 2018. These animals are cheaper as compared to pedigree cattle. “In the future, probably, I will breed pedigree animals, though at the moment I have to be satisfied with a cheaper variant”, says a young farmer.

Last year Karolina Kočiūnaitė received support under the activity area “Support for Setting up of Young Farmers” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”. Making use of support, she acquired a new tractor, a loader and a bale grabber. Support amounted to EUR 40 thousand. Since the price for the tractor was higher, a considerable amount of own funds had to be added. A young farmer took a bank credit. Not only her father but also she herself operates a modern tractor and, according to her, it is a real pleasure. “My Dad taught me to operate a tractor long ago, but in the future I would like to operate a combine”, says Karolina laughing.

She will implement the project until 2021. According to the project terms, she will have to increase the number of beef cattle.

Karolina admits that if not this support, she would have not even started farming. To acquire new machinery for the newly set up farm is practically impossible, as prices are very high, and income generated by the farm is minimum. Moreover, quite a lot of money should be allocated for acquisition of cattle and their tending; therefore, one could have just to dream about such purchase like a new tractor. “I think, such support is a huge encouragement for young people to set up their own farms. They create jobs for themselves, and in the future, probably, for other rural residents. The project terms are not very complicated”, says Karolina Kočiūnaitė.

At present, a young farmer owns 21 ha of private land and leases 10 ha. Of which 14 ha belongs to meadows and 17 ha to crops. According to Karolina, she has enough land so far, whereas in the future it will be needed to expand the cattle herd and thus to have more land.

### Lands in Dzūkija are fit for cattle breeding

When asked why she chose cattle-breeding, a young farmer asserted that her parents impacted this step. She has already known the specificity of this field and was used to animals. This field also seemed to her to be most



*A selfie at a new tractor, operation of which is a real pleasure*

beneficial. Lands in Dzūkija are infertile; therefore, they are more suitable for pastures rather than for crop growing. Moreover, during the project appraisal, extra points were awarded for it; therefore, she did not hesitate for long about preferences.

Karolina at present is studying law and pretrial procedure at Mykolas Romeris University. She is a second-year student. “I will be an investigator by profession. I am grateful to my parents who support me and help to tend the farm. I spend half of the week in Kaunas; therefore, I cannot tend my cattle myself and turn to my parents for help”, a young farmer feels grateful to her parents. She hopes to coordinate the work of a farmer and a lawyer in the future, as both are equally interesting to her.

Karolina is of the opinion that modern farmers are quite persistent, sophisticated and actively expressing their requirements to the highest authorities; therefore, they are also able to protect their own interests. In case of any opportunity as the would-be lawyer she is resolute to help agriculturists to fight for their rights and more favourable farming conditions since it is important for her as well.

Karolina Kočiūnaitė obtains new knowledge while participating at seminars organized in Lazdijai District. She says that a lot of valuable advice she finds on the Internet where farmers share their experience and help to find answers to many questions. However, no doubt, she lacks knowledge, thus in the future she hopes to learn much more.

Karolina does not complain of fatigue or shortage of time, even though she simultaneously studies and with the help of her parents keeps the farm. Love for the native land and her activities make her life full-fledged. According to Steven Paul Jobs, the USA business magnate and inventor, the only way for you to perform your job well is to like what you are doing. When you find such job, you feel it with all your heart.



*Karolina Kočiūnaitė with the use of support bought a tractor, a loader and a bale grabber*



*Last hot summer, cattle needed lots of water*



## The best wealth of farmers is a harmonious family

*“Without living in the countryside, without land and farming, we cannot imagine ourselves”, say Rima and Marijonas Kropiai, living and engaged in farming for fourteen years in Varėna Region, the village of Panočiai, close to the border with Belarus. Their sons Mindaugas and Tautvydas approve it. Even though three separate farms have been set up, however, as the Kropiai say, they all are working together.*

### The largest in the eldership

Farmers Rima and Marijonas Kropiai are farming in their native land. Panočiai is the homeland of Rima, and Marijonas is from the nearby village of Dubičiai. Marijonas, after finishing the then Daugai agricultural college, and his wife settled in the village of Panočiai. Marijonas worked in the then collective farm “Tiesa”. The collective farm afforded a big and spacious house for the family with six children. Upon disintegration of the collective farm, an agricultural company was established and Marijonas worked here for some time, and upon its collapse he and his wife Rima decided to get engaged in farming. They started in 2004 from 3 ha of land. It was cultivated by the machinery, inherited from the agricultural company. Step by step the farmers began replacing the out-dated machinery by more novel, more modern and efficient machinery. Old buildings, taken over from the company, were rebuilt. In 2012, Rima and Marijonas Kropiai were awarded the second prize at the competition “Farm of the Year” in Varėna District.

The two sons have also followed their father’s steps: 28-year old Mindaugas and 25-year old Tautvydas. Young men did not leave the village; on the contrary, from their parents they inherited love for land, and they ardently cherish the agricultural traditions.

In 2012, Mindaugas registered the farm. He cultivates almost 176 ha of land. After a couple of years Tautvydas also became a farmer as. His farm covers about 164 ha.

The Kropiai family is one of the largest farmers in the Kaniava eldership. The father and his two sons hold almost 500 ha, of which 130 ha are covered by meadows. All the remaining part is arable land, where the major part is taken by rye, wheat, oats, buckwheat, and peas.

The Kropiai family is also involved in cattle-breeding. At present the father and his sons all together breed 110 beef animals. Marijonas breeds ten Angus heifers, his sons – crossbreeds. Animals are bred in the buildings acquired from the former agricultural company that were repaired. Feed is also stored here.

“All the works we are doing ourselves. We have not hired anybody from outside so far and do not hire. We manage in time” says Marijonas Kropis.

The diligent farmers are delighted that efficient machinery facilitates performance of all the work on the large farm. It was acquired from participating in the European Union funded programmes. “If not the European Union support, we actually should not possess today so many modern agricultural machines, without which the cultivation of the available land plots would be just impossible”, the farmers say.

### Plans of the young

The Kropiai sons were active in setting up a modern farm. Mindaugas, developing cattle-breeding, received support twice under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. Both times support was granted according to the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” under the measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. For modernization of a beef cattle-breeding farm Mindaugas was granted more than EUR 41 thousand. With the use of these funds, Mindaugas acquired a tractor, a suspended turner, a suspended cultivator, a universal beef cattle inspection machine, and the system of feedway fences and gates. Another support of more than EUR 45 thousand was designed for investments in beef cattle-breeding production. “While implementing this project, I acquired modern agricultural machinery and equipment, intended for ensuring an optimum level of production volumes and production quality. I acquired a self-propelled loader, a manure spreader and a trailer for bale transportation”, Mindaugas Kropis tells about the benefit of support.



Three farmers Kropiai – Marijonas, Tautvydas and Mindaugas

Tautvydas Kropis also submitted an application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. According to the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” under the measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, support of more than EUR 29 thousand was allocated to him for the development of plant-growing production. With the use of these funds, the farmer acquired modern agricultural machinery and equipment, ensuring optimum production volumes and production quality. He purchased a cultivator, a sowing-machine, a four-furrow reversible-plough and a semi-trailer.

“We put so much effort into our farm; we create everything with our hands, because we love village, land and our work. We would never go to live anywhere else from our village”, the Kropiai brothers confirm and their father supports them.

### Active in the community life

The Kropiai family – both parents and children – participate actively in the rural community life. Tautvydas has been the Panočiai rural community chairman from 2016. A young man says that it is important for him that his native village should be tidy and beautiful, that all would like to live here and to come for a visit. He is delighted that in the course of two years they succeeded in implementing two projects, necessary for the village: cleaned the pond and put to order the recreation zone near it – outfitted the beach, installed training facilities, arbours, benches, and children’s playground. The Kropiai also support with pleasure festivities, taking place in the village.



The family of farmers Kropiai is large



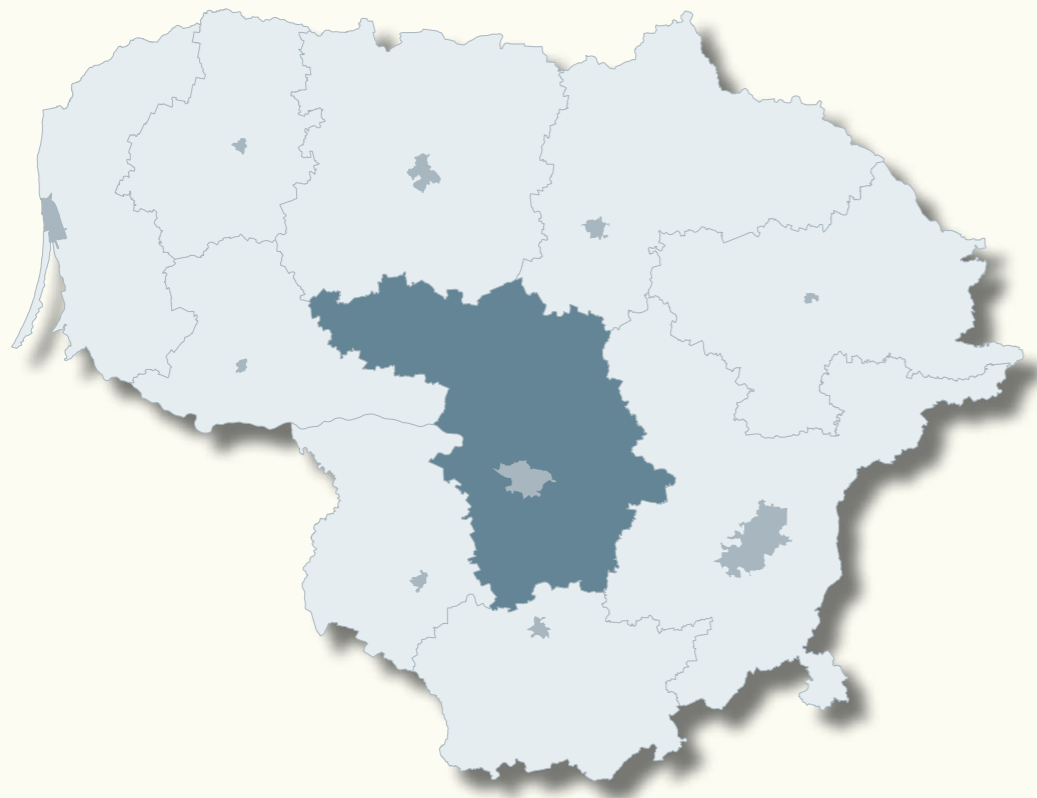
Modern machinery and implements of farmers hibernate in the hangar

Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Kaunas Region



# KAUNAS REGION >>>

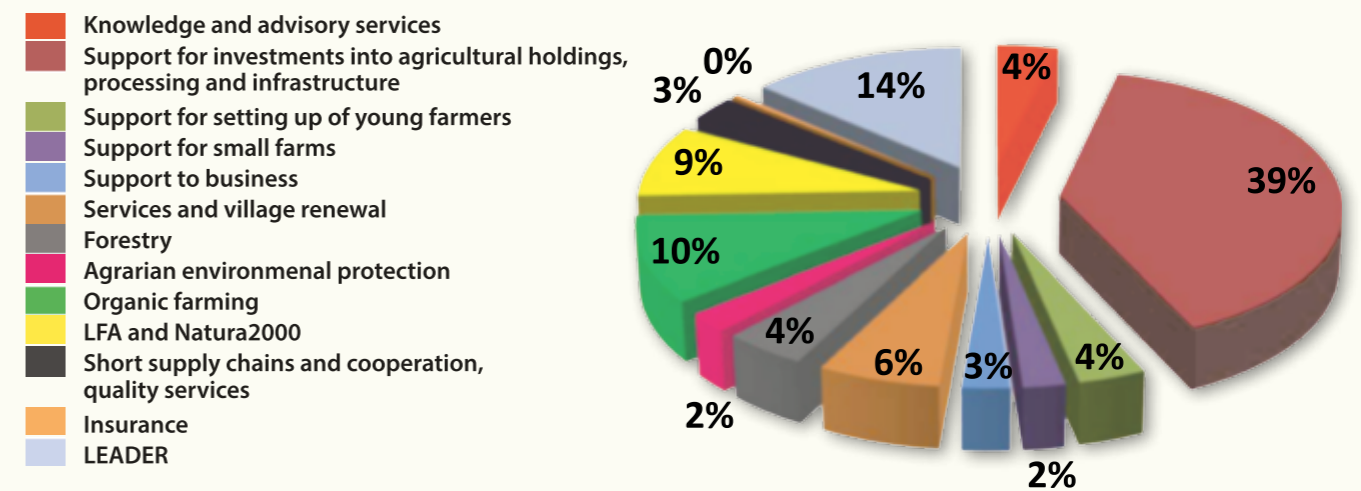
**Kaunas Region** is situated in the central part of Lithuania, encompassing the municipal territories of Jonava, Kaišiadorys, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Prienai and Raseiniai districts, Kaunas city and Birštonas municipalities.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Birštonas	432 495	20 000	56 982
Jonava District	2 454 153	232 843	125 157
Kaišiadorys District	4 275 242	652 366	102 663
Kaunas District	3 373 831	547 765	463 690
Kėdainiai District	11 440 598	441 249	156 293
Prienai District	1 077 628	580 187	474 690
Raseiniai District	4 295 487	810 054	625 455
<b>Total in Kaunas Region</b>	<b>27 349 434</b>	<b>3 284 465</b>	<b>2 004 929</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

The approved support structure of EUR 120 908 896 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Kaunas Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## Birštonas health-resort coming to Šaltinėnai

*Asta and Alvydas Letkauskai made use of support under the activity area “Support for Investments in All Types of Small-scale Infrastructure” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Main Services and Village Renewal in Rural Areas”.*

### Myths dispersed

“We lived in an old house. Since of old it needed repairing. Of special concern was the slate-covered roof. More than once I would hear and find on the Internet information about asbestos harm to health, but nevertheless we still postponed”, tells Asta Letkauskienė. “It seems that first news about support for asbestos roofs I found on the Internet. It was very good that it was possible to prepare all the documents for support in the eldership. A specialist from the National Paying Agency came to the eldership and helped to fill in the application for support and explained all the requirements and the course of procedure. Not any troubles and concerns. Shortly after some news reached us that support was granted”.

Asta and Alvydas Letkauskai decided not only to replace the roof, but also to renew the whole house. “Since we were replacing the whole roof construction, cost of works made about six thousand euros. Under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for asbestos roof replacement we received EUR 1 721. Really, it was big support for us. Under this measure up

to 50 per cent of roof cover costs is being refunded. If not for the change of roof construction, support funds would have made half of the roof replacement costs. Now in our reconstructed house we live with more comfort, better and healthier, as we covered the roof with non-asbestos slate”, the mistress of the house tells joyfully.

After having replaced the roof cover the Letkauskai submitted the application for compensation of the incurred expenses. “We brought the report on the completed project and application for payment to the Kaunas Department of the National Paying Agency. Everything took place without any obstacles and troubles. All those stories disseminated that support causes much trouble and tension have no any grounds. And people who were used to listen to those stories are not in a hurry to make use of the opportunity for improvement of their everyday life. In our village of Šaltinėnai only we and one more neighbour made use of support for replacement of asbestos roofs. Certainly, some part of people get stopped due to the fact support is granted after accomplishing the works”, considers Asta. “Now when talking with people I always say that one should not fear to apply for support. The Ministry of Agriculture has greatly simplified its allocation and administration, and not any long reports that people used to scare each other are needed to be written”.

Asta and Alvydas Letkauskai are delighted that support was granted to them in a simpler procedure than earlier when for roof replacement an architect’s approval was required. Asta and Alvydas did not need such approval.

### Environment also obligates

The village of Šaltinėnai, where Asta and Alvydas are living, is located in the Nemunas Loops Regional Park, thus when replacing the roof or reconstructing the building it is necessary to evaluate the environmental needs as well. Colour of the house and of the roof should not distinguish from the environment, therefore, the renovated house of the Letkauskai is peeping from the dark-brown cap.

“Health-resort Birštonas is already coming to us”, she says. “Tourists who visit the Nemunas Regional Park drop at our village. Especially those riding bicycles. Rural tourism farmsteads located around have quite a lot of guests. In the development of tourism of special importance is the neat and attractive environment, while old asbestos roofs do not actually embellish it.

Asta is delighted that all amenities of civilization are coming into their village. Quite recently light-wave Internet was installed and good communication with the whole world was established. A bicycle track was built nearby Šaltinėnai. It will be extended to Punia. Thus still more tourists will come to visit the village of Šaltinėnai. “When people are tidy, it is good to see them numerously in our village, but not all of them are such. After some visits all roadsides need cleaning”, smiles Asta. “Both the rural community and the eldership are concerned with the beauty and order in the village. Every year all the residents gather for collective voluntary outdoor activity. Farmstead competitions also stimulate to live in



*Asta and Alvydas Letkauskai at their renovated house*

more beautiful and neat environment. Two years ago the community when implementing the project set up the community home in the former school. While implementing another project furniture was bought. Probably, we are not the most active community, but we are implementing projects and organizing festivities and other events. Differently from other villages, Šaltinėnai is quite a cozy village; the major part of the population is under fifty years of age”.

### Expanding the plant-growing farm

Asta Letkauskienė is employed at a kindergarten in Birštonas. Alvydas is engaged in farming. “We are in possession of 50 hectares of land. The biggest portion is under crops. We grow wheat, triticale, barley, oat, and peas. We sell some part of the harvest to “Kauno grūdai”, and another part on the local market-place. We also grow some potatoes, other various vegetables. We have planted 30 ares with strawberries and 20 ares with raspberries. These areas seem to be small, but needs quite a lot of work. Berries and vegetables are sold on the market-place. Quite a lot of berries and vegetables are bought directly from our house”, tells Asta.

However, as Asta says, to sell product on the market-place becomes still more difficult. “We sell products on the Prienai local market-place. At present the number of buyers got reduced considerably”, says Asta with regret.

Asta and Alvydas Letkauskai bought agricultural machinery by using their own funds. “We contribute all we earn. Either to machinery or to our house”, smiles Asta. “We have not used so far farm modernization support. We had thoughts to submit the application under the activity area “Support for Short Supply Chains and Stimulation of Local Markets at a Local Level” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Cooperation”, but it turned out that we were short of time to get prepared for this year call. Probably, we’ll try next year. It is very good that opportunity exists to receive support to those farmers who sell their grown production straightly to the consumer”.



*While replacing the roof, we have renovated the whole house as well*



*The Letkauskai sell vegetables and other products grown on the farm on the Prienai local market*

## The work as an elder was replaced by farming

Juozas Plukys, running the mixed farm in Jonava District, received over EUR 39 thousand for farm modernization under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.

### Bought a combine and a sowing-machine

“The farm was in urgent need of new machinery. The available one was very worn out. We harvested crops with a combine from Soviet times”, tells Juozas Plukys about his decision to submit the application for support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investment in Physical Assets”.

He bought a combine and a sowing-machine from support funds received. “I did not choose the smartest and most modern machinery, but chose the one with its price corresponding to quality. I bought a sowing-machine, covering a four-meter soil section. Its grain bunker holds 1 200 litres of seed. A combine was also chosen as to fit the size of our farm. My farm covers 150 hectares. Its major part is the leased land. With the farms of the sons added, the area totals some 280 hectares. Some 120 hectares are sown with crops, about 140 hectares with rape. To buy the most modern combine for a farm of such size was not worthwhile. No doubt, the most sophisticated combine attracted, but you must assess your own opportunities. We have operated the combine for two seasons already. We are satisfied. It satisfies our needs”.

Son Laimonas is operating the combine. And the farmer himself as well. He owns the 80 ha holding, of which 20 ha is the private land. Other part is leased. He took advantage of the last-period programme support for setting up of a young farmer. After son Laurynas received 50 ha of land from his father, he also started farming. He was granted support of EUR 35 thousand under the activity measure “Support for Setting up of a Young Farmer” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Business and Farm Development”. The support received he used for buying a manure spreader and a cultivator.

“I am close to the age for retirement, let my children cultivate the land and create their farms, let them help each other”, says the farmer with a smile.

### The farm was created using support

“I am a zooengineer, thus in Soviet times I used to work as a zootechnician in the collective farm. And from my young years I was used to farm work. My mother worked on the farm. When the opportunity to work independently appeared, my wife Zita and I decided to start farming. We registered the farm in 1991 and started from the plain field”, says the farmer.

Under the Law of the Peasants’ Farm he received 50 ha of land. “I did not have machinery. Just bought two horses. At that time farmers were few in number and we were used to help each other. It was a sort of mutual help co-operatives”, Juozas remembers the beginning of farming. “After earning some money, I bought the first tractor, actually made in Belarus”.

At first Zita and Juozas were engaged in dairying. They kept 30–40 dairy cows. “I received the first support under the Nitrate Programme. The funds received were used for purchasing a more modern tractor, a loader and a herminator”, Juozas is delighted to speak of the benefit of support. “I also used later support programmes as well. I bought various land cultivation machinery and implements from the 2007–2013 programme funds.

### Got engaged in beef cattle-breeding

“Later, however, we refused dairying. Just had no time. Zita commenced her work with the State Food and Veterinary Service Jonava Department. She is a veterinary doctor. And now she is employed here. I took the post of an elder at the Kulva Eldership. I worked as an elder for twelve years. Not much time was left for the farm, thus we



Juozas Plukys likes to joke that the work of an elder and farming hardly fit together

started crossbreeding of our animals. I bought several bulls of Angus breed. Now we keep some 150 head of beef cattle”, the farmer describes changes on his farm

The mature animals are sold in Lithuania. “There are proposals to transport animals to Poland, but we are loyal to one customer”, says Juozas.

Cattle are fed with feed the farmers are growing themselves. They sow rape, wheat, and peas. Part of the yield is sold, though primarily it is devoted to feed. “We mill peas and grain and use for feeding young bulls, whereas grass fodder is enough for suckling cows”, Juozas shares his experience. “We do not buy any extra fodder. And we use chemistry for land fertilization with moderation. We could undertake the development of organic cattle-breeding, but we have not tried it so far and even did not clarify conditions for it more specifically. It seems to me that e-farming involves much more bureaucracy. In Lithuania, in general, we still have quite a lot of bureaucracy. Even though the Ministry of Agriculture still more simplifies the conditions for support granting, bureaucracy requirements, however, should be diminished.

The farmer cherishes a hope to succeed in being granted the EU support and to put to order the farm buildings which were built at the beginning of farming. However, he fails to find the proper 2014–2020 Programme measure. “Probably it will appear”, the farmer shares his expectations. “And if not, children will renovate”.

Juozas Plukys was awarded the second prize at the competition “Farmer of the Year 2014”.

### Leading the community

Three years ago Juozas Plukys gave up his post as an elder and dedicated himself to his farm. “While working as an elder, I neglected my farm. Various projects were implemented at the eldership. They required very much time, therefore, I performed my work at the farm almost casually”, the farmer says frankly.

Now, however, he is not secluded from the life outside his farm. Juozas leads the “Čičinai Land” community and is an elder assistant of several villages.



A grandchild of Juozas likes to take a view from a new combine



Farmer Juozas Plukys with his crossbred cattle

## Working speed has increased thrice

*“The biggest joy is to see your own work results. When you see your sown crops shooting. When you see them growing. I think all of us, cultivators of the land, have such attraction. I don’t know whether I was born with it or it has been formed in my childhood, but without attraction, without love for the land you could not develop the farm”, considers farmer Algis Frankonis from Kaišiadorys District.*

### Beginning – three hectares

Algis Frankonis is a mechanical engineer by profession. In 1984, after graduating from the then Academy of Agriculture (now Aleksandras Stulginskis University), he was employed by assignment at the experimental farm of the Lithuanian Veterinary Institute. Soon the time for three hectares has come, when the authorities measured three hectares of land for each rural resident. “From then my farming took start. As at that time I kept animals, pastures were needed. Thus a major part of area was taken by grassland. I also planted some potatoes. Income raised from farming was just additional money to the family budget”, the farmer thus describes the start.

After the restitution of land was started, his father Vytautas became involved in farming. Some 3.75 ha of land that his parents possessed before the war was returned to him as restitution. He bought some 33 ha more. “I also used to help my father to do some farming works”, he says.

Upon his father’s death, Algis continued with farming. In 2002, he registered his own farm. “My Dad from the collective farm times possessed some Soviet machinery. Used it in his work. And I, when I took over the farm, operated the same machinery for almost 15 years. I am engaged in plant growing. I grow rape, wheat, potatoes, and other crops. However, when the area of the farm is about 70 ha, to do all works with the old machinery became still more difficult, it took much time. Practically I worked from dawn to dusk, ploughing the fields and sowing”, tells the farmer. “Started thinking that, probably, it is worth to use support? Previously neither my farther nor I have been granted support”.

### Machinery saves time

With the assistance of advisory services, Algis Frankonis prepared and submitted two applications. “Knowing that applying for the lower amount of support than the highest intensity is specified, you receive additional points, I applied just for 29.99 per cent of the project value”, the farmer shares his experience.

In 2015, according to the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, support amounting to more than EUR 18 000 was granted for development of Algis Frankonis plant-growing farm, next time almost EUR 34 000.

“Using support I bought a powerful tractor. Bought it that all my works should be done faster. I am satisfied with my purchase as works are performed thrice faster. Works go on faster because of the four-metre wide sowing-machine with a land tiller. Such sowing-machine needs the powerful tractor. The available old ones in no way could lift it. And when you pour grain into the sowing-machine, can you imagine its weight? Your sowing goes quicker and you have much more of your free time”, the farmer is proud of the efficiency of the machinery acquired. “And it is nothing but pleasure to operate it. Easy in operation. Clean”.

Costs, however, according to the farmer, decreased not very significantly. You spend less for fuel and repair, but maintenance of a new tractor is costly. “This year I paid EUR 2 300 for tractor maintenance. It is good that that it does not get damaged. And how much would cost its repair”, he shares his fears. “Last year I bought a new combine harvester. Bought it without any support. Only for my own money and bank loan funds. Income of the plant-growing farmer depends greatly on the natural conditions. After this summer drought, harvest was almost by half less as compared to the last year. Last year we had a very rich harvest, though not all of it could be harvested. Heavy showers prevented. Part of the fields was inaccessible.



*Farmer Algis Frankonis learns about novelties attending exhibitions, seminars and from the Internet*

### You should see everything yourself

Algis Frankonis makes efforts to perform all the works himself. “When a farm is not large, it is difficult to find a good worker. You cannot pay him as much as large-scale farmers. However, I manage to do all works myself so far. Especially now when I own efficient machinery”, says the farmer. “Even though it is said that crop cultivation is one of the simplest works, you cannot leave fields without care. You should watch them. If you miss the time for control, soon you will find here weeds or some disease or pests attacking. You should also be interested in novelties, including fertilizers, plant protection means, and crop varieties. Each year I sow part of the fields with seeds bought from outside, but a major part is sown with my own seed”.

Since the farmer does not have warehouses for grain, he sells grain soon after thrashing. “Earlier the agricultural company that existed in the vicinity accepted grain for keeping, but it is closed now and no warehouse is available. It is not worth to build a warehouse for myself. Difficult to say when costs suffered for its building will repay”, the farmer keeps thinking.

In addition to farming, Algis Frankonis is employed at UAB “Kaišiadorių šiluma”. “I work here for about twenty years”, says Algis, and when asked whether it would be possible for him to survive just from his farm alone, he doesn’t think twice. “I think, I would survive, but so far I manage to do all works on the farm and perform my job at the company, the permanently received income is anything but a good contribution”.



*Modern and efficient machinery acquired due to support increased the speed of works thrice*



*Now harvest from the fields is transported by two trailers dragged by a new tractor*

## Father' lesson: think well before taking a decision

*Gytis Majeras, a farmer from Kaunas District, is delighted that things learnt from his father are of help to him in farming. One of these is to think well before taking a decision, another is to go along the chosen road consistently, as only working consistently you may achieve the result.*

### Following his father's footsteps

"Farm works are well known to me from childhood, as my parents were involved in farming. Thus when the time has come for studies I without any hesitation entered Aleksandras Stulginskis University. I studied agronomy. Like my father. He is also an agronomist. In Soviet times he worked in the collective-farm. Later started setting up his own farm", Gytis remembers the beginning of his road towards farming.

The first who started farming was Česlovas Majeras, grandfather of Gytis. He regained 10 ha of the restituted land and started farming independently. When after the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence his son Romualdas joined him, Česlovas already cultivated 60 hectares. In 1997 Romualdas Majeras registered his farm.

At the present moment the Majerai farm is one of the largest in the country. The total owned land area is about 4 thousand ha, half of the land is private. As the Majerai say, all the lands, covering the area of one, two, five or ten hectares, they bought from those people they used to lease those lands. "During all these years, my parents did not waste their money, everything they invested in the land. The areas got expanded, more modern machinery was needed, more workers required. Now the father's farm has about 100 people", Gytis is proud of his parents.

The farm is mixed, its basic activity consisting of milk production, hilling plants and crop cultivation.

### Gytis farm is directed towards plant growing

"I set up the farm when already at my studies. In 2013. Started from 10 hectares. Now I cultivate about 250 hectares. I bought some part of the land, another part I lease. More than half of the area I sow with crops. With winter and summer wheat, barley and oats. Some part is under sugar beets. I sell sugar beets to the Kėdainiai Sugar Factory. I also cultivate corn and beans", a young 26-year old farmer surveys his farm activities. "Even though it seemed that all works are familiar, beginning was not that easy. A variety of unclear situations occurred. It is good that at my side I have my father with his long-term experience. You just walk in the room and clarify everything. However, the longer I am engaged in farming, the more questions I have. Every year nature offers new challenges; therefore, I must accept them. If during one year I worked and did something one way, it does not mean that I will be able to do the same. The more you learn yourself, the more interesting it is. Certainly, while farming you must study continuously, follow all know-how, be interested in plant care novelties, and modern technologies entering the market.

### Cooperating with his parents

"My father helps me not only with his advice. Together with my father I also sell the harvested crops. When the amount is bigger, customers pay more. I use the grain store-house located on my father's farm. I mill part of the wheat harvest at the mill", Gytis describes the importance of family harmony by giving examples.

Rita Majerienė set up the mill in 1995. Some 10 tons of wheat are milled here per day. In protection of the flour quality, grain from the family farm is exclusively milled. Flour is sold to several bakeries.

In dependence on the year and weather conditions, Gytis sells, on the average, some 1 500 tons of grain per year. Some part of the harvest is sold according to the preliminary grain purchase prices, other part – without contracts.

"Preliminary contracts are not always of benefit to farmers. Here you foresee the price, and let the buyer pay it. When the market is overfilled, it is a farmer who gains. However, when yields are lower, market prices sometimes are considerably higher than contract prices", Gytis Majeris shares his experience.

He has one worker on his farm. In summer, when more hands are needed, he hires more people, taking the opportunity to pay them according to the service receipts.



*Farmer Gytis Majeras has many ideas for farm modernization and increase of competitiveness and hopes he will succeed in being granted support for these ideas*

### Acquired most necessary machinery

Gytis is glad that things he learnt from his father are of good use to him. One of these, before taking a decision to think, and the other one to follow the chosen road consistently, since only working consistently you may achieve the results.

Thus after having started farming Gytis began to look for support for modern machinery acquisition. "Until you have the opportunity, you should make the better advantage of it", emphasizes Gytis and adds that his father also when setting up a farm more than once used support, even though the first machinery and equipment on the Romualdas Majeras farm was bought for own funds, since at that time not any support was available, and banks looked with suspicion. And the farmer himself did not want to get tied up in credits.

When the SAPARD Programme reached Lithuania, Romualdas Majeras took a decision to modernize the grain farm with its help.

Later the farmer undertook other projects. Since alongside plant-growing he also expands the dairy farm, he acquired modern milking equipment and refrigerators and modernized the plant-growing sector.

In 2015 Gytis submitted the application for support under the activity measure "Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Investments in Physical Assets". "Support of almost EUR 400 thousand was allocated to me for farm development and application of innovative technologies. Making use of these funds I bought the most necessary machinery: a tractor, a combine, and a sprayer. No doubt, when buying I evaluated my financial opportunities and machinery reliability. I frequently attend exhibitions and noticed that sellers offer costly machinery and equipment which may cause additional problems. You cannot be fascinated just by one advantage of the machinery. You must evaluate also the maintenance opportunities", Gytis Majeras shares his experience.

The farmer stresses that if not the aid, he could not buy such machinery for his own money so soon. It would be necessary to lease the necessary machinery or to buy of worse quality, less efficient and less environment-friendly.

"I have quite a lot of ideas of how to modernize the farm, how to increase its competitiveness, and for implementing those ideas it would be good to have support, but I have used the biggest possible sum of this period. We see what opportunities will be after 2020", says farmer Gytis Majeras and thinking over each word he adds: "I feel that I found my own way of life and do not plan to change it so far. When you cut shrubberies, cultivate the land well, it is a pleasure that you can be delighted and show to others".



*Already agronomist with a diploma...*



*Fields of the Majerai farmers in the summer of 2018*

## Farming – new areas, still full of discoveries

*Rasa and Alvydas Lydekos, farmers in Kėdainiai District, grow vegetables, and this work was greatly facilitated after they were granted support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020 for setting up of young farmers.*

### From generation to generation

“I say joking to all and always that it is not me that chose a farm but rather a farm chose me”, laughs cheerfully Rasa Lydekienė. “And this joke contains much truth. I belong to the third generation, farming in this farmstead and on this land. Here my grandparents lived and used to work, later my parents. And when they due to their age and because of illnesses took a decision to stop farming, my husband and I decided to take over a farm and to continue family tradition.”

Rasa and Alvydas set up a farm in 2015. They cultivate five hectares out of thirteen, belonging to the family. Part of the land is leased, until they feel the need to work more. “One hectare is planted with heathberries, and four hectares are with vegetables: potatoes, beets, and onions”, tells Rasa. “Immediately after taking over the farm, we decided to submit an application for support. Parents did not have any machinery, and if needed they would asked their neighbours. Parents were not serious farmers. Income gained from the farm has never been their main earnings”.

After taking over the farm, Rasa submitted an application under the activity area “Support for Setting Up of Young Farmers” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”. “However, we did not receive support for once. Support was granted in 2016. For the creation of the vegetable-growing farm, more than EUR 24.3 thousand was allocated. Using these funds we bought a tractor and implements for land cultivation: a plough, a cultivator, a waste grinder, and a furrower”, enumerates the farmer. “We have operated these implements for two seasons and are very happy. A tractor is good for all agricultural works, only implements are being replaced. Works became done faster”.

Making use of 2014–2012 Programme support for young farmers, Rasa and Alvydas acquired a watering system. “This summer it was of much use”, says Rasa.

### For healthier production

“Since when growing vegetables and heathberries we use only minimum amounts of chemicals, we decided to certify the farm in accordance with the national agricultural and food product quality system. Primarily, I have evaluated whether our farm may be certified. To my understanding, all our production complies with the requirements, and we were very pleased when this had been approved by “Ekoagros”. Inspection was done. We certified both vegetables and heathberries. It is very important that we can provide information to our consumers about the quality of our grown berries and vegetables. For a person it is important to know that he buys a product that is of benefit to his health”, Rasa shares her thoughts.

According to the farmer, this year they had no time to handle product packaging and labels; therefore, they are planning to do this work next year. She expects to receive support for implementing this idea according to the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agricultural and Food Product Quality Systems”.



*“Best regards from a tractor”, says jokingly Rasa Lydekienė*

### Thinking about processing

The farmers buy Dutch vegetable seeds, as their germinating power is better and they are more suitable for the farmers’ soil, this having an influence on the soil. However, one thing is to yield a good harvest of vegetables, another thing to sell it. “Much time had to be spent in Internet searching for opportunities to sell vegetables. We have signed contracts with “Vilniaus augma”, “Citma” and other procurements companies. They sell vegetables, purchased from farmers, to cafes, restaurants and canteens in Vilnius”, tells the farmer. “Like all purchasers, they aim to pay as less as possible to the farmer. Therefore, still more often we are thinking of vegetable processing. The final product always brings higher income. Certainly, our farm is too small for such project. It would be better to cooperate with other vegetable growers. Just not enough time for more serious experience”.

Heathberries bring low income so far. Their bushes are not mature as yet, thus their harvest is not abundant. Berries are bought by acquaintances and friends straight from the house.

In the meanwhile, Rasa and Alvydas Lydekos work on their farm only after their jobs and on free days as both of them have jobs in Kėdainiai. “The native home is only 25 km away, it is not difficult to go to the farm” says Rasa and adds that neither her husband nor she intends to give up either their jobs or farming. “Decision for farming was taken in search of our own selves. We wanted to do something sensible. I felt that everyday routine started. Work, home, children. New challenges were needed. Farming opened new opportunities for knowledge, new areas of unknown but interesting activity”.



*Gardener's summer works and results*



*Vegetables ready for travelling to Vilnius*

## Artists from Prienai work and welcome visitors at homely workshops

*“To turn back to the creative person, to pass over gained knowledge and practical experience, to teach and educate the growing generation, to revive and preserve national identity, to foster the society by propagating a qualitative and morally healthy approach to the values of immaterial heritage”, such mission of the public institution “Meninė drožyba” (Artistic Carving) established in Prienai is seen by one of the founders and leaders of this institution Algimantas Sakalauskas.*

### Cherishing cross-crafting traditions

In 1990, on the initiative of the folk artist Algimantas Sakalauskas, a group of creative woodcarvers was set up in Prienai. At present 11 masters take part in the activities of this public institution. “They are woodcarvers, carpenters and smiths”, Algimantas Sakalauskas enumerates his like-minded colleagues and is happy that their works have spread throughout Lithuania and worldwide. In 1997, on the initiative of artists, the first international workshop of carvers was organized in Prienai. “Meninė drožyba” is active in various projects, organizes plein-air workshops, where not only the elements of woodcarving, joinery crafts are provided, but also crosses, roofed poles, sculptures and other woodwork are restored, carving, cross crafting, smith’s work, carpentry and furniture-making are cherished. The institution implements non-formal education training programme “Traditional Cross-Crafting”.

According to the head of the institution, the activity of the professional masters does not end just at their own creation. “For ten years already, students from Justinas Vienožinskis Faculty of Arts of Kaunas College do their practical work here. In autumn and spring technology classes are conducted for pupils. The centre is attended by pupils of different age. They show interest for woodwork, tools, and the works of carpenters, joiners, and wood sculptors. Visitors may try the sharpness of woodcarving chisels and bring home as a souvenir his own carved piece of work. A big number of excursions come to us and we conduct educational programmes”, Algimantas reviews the activity of the institution.

For some ten years the artists found shelter at the Prienai Nursing Home for Elderly. After their activities got expanded, the premises could not satisfy any more the needs of artists and visitors coming here. “So the Prienai District Municipality started searching for the premises suitable for our activity. Under the contract of use, a building, located strategically in a very good place in Prienai, was given over to us. Nemunas is very close. The building, however, is rather dilapidated. And where have you seen a moneyed artist? We put together as much money as we could, made some minor repairing, but more serious repair was also needed. The interior of the building reminded the Middle Ages. Certainly, we could pretend that the Bohemian lifestyle is acceptable to us, though actually it was not so”, tells Algimantas Sakalauskas.

### Workshops renovated

The founders of the institution after consulting the district municipality decided to make use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. “We received the first support in 2012. We were granted support amounting to over LTL 700 thousand. The Prienai District Municipality contributed more than LTL 91 thousand. We have used money for the interior repairing. Insulated the floor and walls. Since we succeeded in saving some amount of money, we bought equipment necessary for cross-crafting: woodcutting, planing and milling machines, decorative elements for adorning cross-crafting monuments, cutting and grinding machines; we equipped a smithy with necessary tools and instruments.

Nevertheless, according to Algimantas Sakalauskas, Director of the institution “Meninė drožyba”, the building remained not insulated. “During project preparation, its two stages were foreseen: one stage for repairing of the building and another stage for its insulation. Thus in 2016 we submitted an application for support according to the activity “Development of Traditional Craft Centres” of the activity area “Support to Investments in Cultural and Natural Heritage and Landscape”



*Algimantas Sakalauskas carving classes for young people*

under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Main Services and Village Renovation in Rural Localities”. In 2017, over EUR 183.3 thousand was granted. These funds were used to dress the building. Temperature at once went up by ten degrees”, Algimantas is satisfied with the result. “We put to order the field workshops. Old ones looked not well. And we started to host foreign delegations and ambassadors. Such building did not do honour either to us or to Prienai. Thus we renewed the shed. Now we do not feel ashamed to face our visitors. Thanks to support, we were able to create such conditions for work”.

### In youth camps – cherishing of traditions

Cross-crafting tradition is being revived, cherished and disseminated by the Public Institution “Meninė drožyba”. Implementing UNESCO-funded project “Cross-crafting Masters of Prienai and Birštonas Land. Systemic Catalogue”, photos and description were made of the major part of the old crosses of the land; those in need of restoration and conservation were taken to note. “We search for ways of how to revive and protect from extinction the monumental structures commemorating the historically important life stages, dates and prominent people. In 2009, we organized the first youth creativity camp “Works – Singing Birds”. Each year when implementing various ideas we call for help students from Justinas Vienožinskis Faculty of Arts of Kaunas College. We organize youth educational summer camps, during which small architectural structures, located in public places, are renovated and conserved”, Algimantas Sakalauskas makes a survey of the institution activity.

He is delighted that wooden small architecture structures in Revuona Park in Prienai, monumental roofed poles and outdoor benches in the Prienai Nursery Home were restored together with students and local youth. When restoring old monuments, the names of Nobel Prize Winner Česlovas Milošas, children’s literature poet Anzelmas Matutis and other conspicuous people and events of importance for Lithuania were immortalized.

“In 2010 we signed a cooperation agreement with the Institute for the Improvement of Professional Competences of the Vilnius Pedagogical University. This agreement opens an opportunity to implement together the Ethnotechnology Training Programme of Traditional Crafts and Services. Since 2009 we conduct training programmes on national heritage products and traditional crafts, a programme of certification of traditional fairs, certification and attestation of masters of traditional crafts. Each year the centre is also attended by the participants of the Lithuanian traditional project “Mission – Siberia”. They learn how with the use of less as possible simple instruments to make and to erect Lithuanian crosses in the frozen ground”, Algimantas Sakalauskas introduces some more activities of the institution. In 2010, he was awarded a medal of the order “For Merits to Lithuania”.



*Lithuanian cross-crafting was of interest to a journalist from France*



*The revived workshops of “Meninė drožyba”*



*A cross-crafting lesson for the “Mission – Siberia” participants*



## A lettuce farm set up after coming back from abroad

*Irma and Vaidas Nagreckiai, after coming back from Denmark where they worked for 14 years, set up in Raseiniai District. Young people are engaged in the development of a lettuce farm and acquired necessary machinery and equipment with the use of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.*

### A freer niche for lettuce

“Six years ago we came back from Denmark. Our job there all the time was with vegetables. Thus after coming back to Lithuania, we started the activity we knew best and had most knowledge about”, says Vaidas Nagreckis.

They settled in Raseiniai District since here they found an opportunity to acquire land. Nearby there was a farm possessed by Vaidas great-grandfathers. Vaidas himself originated from the neighbouring Jurbarkas District, and Irma from Varėna.

“It seems that we have started from 17 hectares. Now we cultivate 400 hectares”, the farmer surveys the farm development. “The major part of the area was sown with crops – for crop rotation. For vegetables we leave some 50 hectares. We grow exclusively lettuce and only in the open ground. Cucumbers and tomatoes are cultivated by many farmers, and it is very difficult for a new grower to enter the market. With lettuce it is not that easy either. And small farmers grow them. Polish gardeners are highly competitive. Prices to a great extent depend on Dutch and Polish growers. They actually are competitors and we must reconcile with their offered prices”.

Today the lettuce farm of Irma and Vaidas Nagreckiai is the biggest in Lithuania. Lettuce of 15–20 varieties is grown here. They are started to be grown in March until November. “We start planting already somewhat grown seedlings. They are supplied by a firm from Germany. One container stows 150 seedlings, and during the week we plant some 200 000 seedlings. We have purchased the lettuce-planting equipment. We harvest lettuce, on the average, three times during the season. Some are harvested, others are planted. Lettuce is a very fussy crop, therefore its growing is very complicated”, says the farmer. “This vegetable when placed in the supermarket may seem to be easily grown. If you are just late for an hour for watering it, damage caused is hardly repairable. We bought six watering machines that in this hot and dry summer worked almost non-stop. Nevertheless, 90 per cent of success of a farmer involved in lettuce growing to a greater part depends on weather conditions”.

### Support to machinery

Even though a lot of works are mechanized, however, manual work is used to a great extent. Some 40 people are employed on the farm. The farmer collects them and brings to work at a radius of 30 km. “We have much more that needs modernization. Eventually, when we were setting up, we purchased very different machinery. Second-hand and new machinery, in dependence on our financial capacity. Thus two years ago we decided to apply for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. We say if others use why not to try ourselves. We submitted the application and several months later we learnt that our application would be satisfied”, tells Vaidas.

The farm of Vaidas Nagreckis was granted EUR 309 000 according to the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”.

“Making use of support we bought a tractor, a vacuum refrigerator, where it is possible to cool lettuce to three degrees very quickly and safely. Vegetables, if cooled quickly, stay fresh for a longer time. We have also built a complementary shop. Without the shop, the extra tractor and vacuum refrigerator, the development was impossible,



*Extensive lettuce fields of Irma and Vaidas Nagreckiai*

as temperature of lettuce brought from the fields is about 28 degrees and should reach supermarkets only having 5–7 degrees. Without equipment cooling would take about 24 hours. The refrigerator manages to do it in half an hour. Development was also not possible without the additional shop since the existing ones did not satisfy our needs and consumers”, the farmer indicates the benefit of support. “As it was our first application submitted, we did not know much. Now when applying for support, we should do something differently, though support is useful anyway. Certainly, obligations exist. Some are necessary, others rather look like a consequence of bureaucracy, but everything can be done”.

### Selling to trade networks

“We do not sell lettuce per box. We are wholesalers and prepare production for them. For that purpose we have installed the production premises covering 720 sq m in area. Here we are cooling and packing lettuce. Selling for trade networks. They order on the eve the type of lettuce and quantity they need, and we bring in the morning. It is important that lettuce as fresh as possible would reach the trade networks”, tells the farmer.

Irma and Vaidas Nagreckiai grow some 1 100 tons of lettuce per season. Part of lettuce they sell in Latvia and Estonia. “Our visiting card is quality, and our partners appreciate it”, emphasized the farmer. “Nevertheless, we would like the authorities of our country to pay more attention to the farming person here. Taxes in our country are still rather high. Of special importance would be tax privileges within the first two three years. Income tax of citizens also should be differentiated according to the salary size. Those who earn more should pay higher taxes. It is good that lately the tax system undergoes reform. I think the reasonable decision would be that it is not the employer that must pay taxes but each person himself, since now many do not even notice that part which is paid by the employer to the employee”.



*The complementary shop provides opportunities for satisfying the consumer needs*

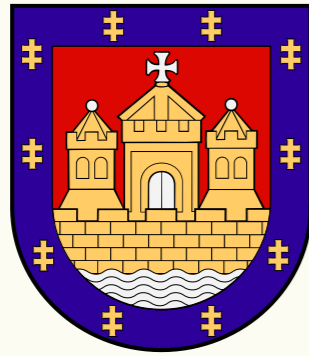


*The farmers grow lettuce of 15-20 varieties*



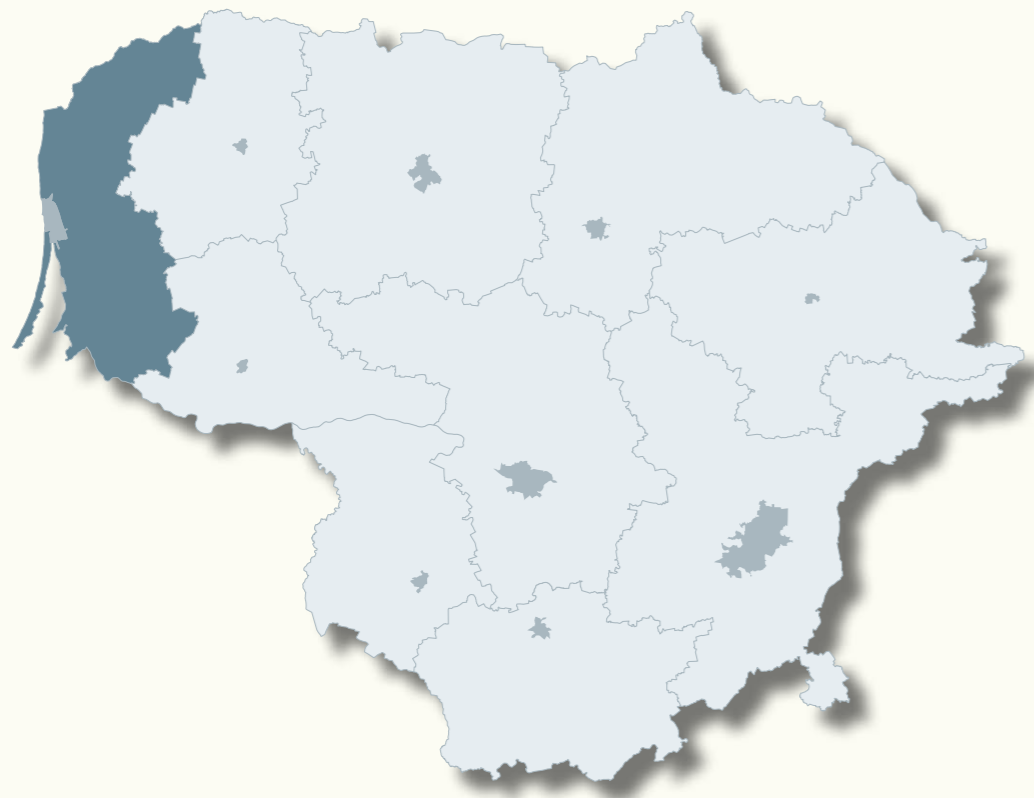
*Vegetables in the shop are cooled to 5-7 degrees*

## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Klaipėda Region



# KLAIPĖDA REGION >>>

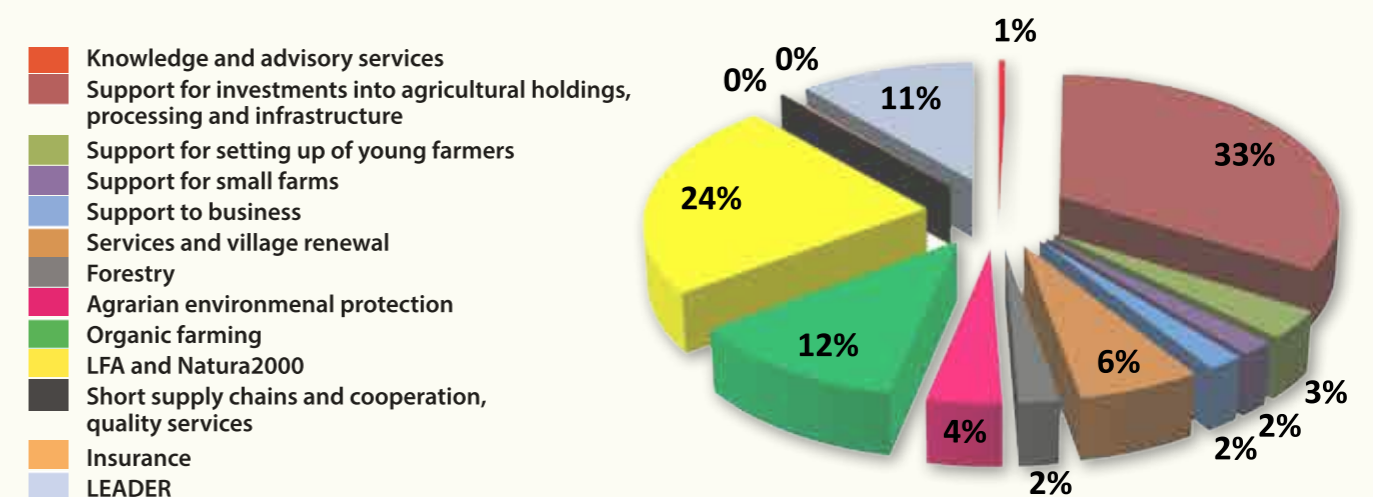
**Klaipėda Region** is located in western Lithuania, covering the municipal territories of Klaipėda, Kretinga, Skuodas and Šilutė districts, the municipalities of Klaipėda, Neringa and Palanga cities. This is the only region where its shores are washed by the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Klaipėda District	3 761 252	629 108	201 639
Kretinga District	1 877 639	122 664	227 000
Skuodas District	2 945 847	309 794	197 593
Šilutė District	7 116 888	1 088 293	430 308
<b>Totalin Klaipėda Region</b>	<b>15 701 626</b>	<b>2 149 858</b>	<b>1 056 541</b>

*Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018*

## The approved support structure of EUR83 821 300 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Klaipėda Region



*Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018*

## A graduate engineer preferred farming

*Mantas Prišmontas is farming in Klaipėda District. Part of his arable land is very close to the seaport. "Farmer's work is not easy, but I was used to the farm from my early days, as my father was a farmer, and I did not see any other way of life", says Mantas, a graduate of Klaipėda University in electrical engineering studies.*

### Being fond of technology from early age

"We had a small tractor, called puppy. Mantas was just nine years old when he came riding it to help me handle leaves. A neighbour got excited when she saw it: who allowed that child to ride a tractor", Edita Prišmontienė remembers her son's attraction towards technology.

My parents – Gintautas and Edita Prišmontai – are engaged in farming since 1993. "I took over the farm from my father when he retreated from active agricultural activities. My parents originated from Skuodas District. Later they lived in Gargždai, and when I was one year old they moved to Venckai. At that time those places were almost uninhabited. Old residents at the end of the war fled to the West, thus anyone who wanted could settle here. Thus I live here from my childhood. My father worked as a tractor driver, and my mother was busy on the farm. After finishing ten classes I was harvesting with a combine", Gintautas confirms the folk wisdom that like father like son.

In 2009 Mantas Prišmontas registered his farm. "I was 22 then", he smiles.

Mantas started farming with 30 ha. He, like his parents, chose crop production. He cultivates wheat, rape and triticale. "Lands in Klaipėda Region are not favourable for winter crops. Marine climate is not very good for them. Either fields are flooded or sudden weather changes make harm to them and crops survive with difficulty in winter. In spring you must sow the fields again. Certainly, it would be better to cultivate winter crops. They could be harvested earlier and sold for a better price, but nature is nature", father and son share their farming experience, both of them at the moment are cultivating 250 ha of land. Of which 50 ha is private. Other part is leased.

Since farmers who would like to cultivate land in Klaipėda District are more numerous as compared to the available land, it is not easy to acquire or lease the extra area. "And other people also wanted to take our arable land area. We lease it from an old man and they thought it would be easy to persuade him, but the old man did not give up and did not sublet the land", Gintautas shares worries of the farmers.

### More modern machinery selected

"I have not used support. And I did not take loans. We bought machinery in dependence on circumstances. We have installed a hangar ourselves. In autumn we pour grain into it, in winter we keep our machinery here. Mantas machinery is also placed here", Gintautas is proud of his son's choice.

"Earlier I cultivated land with my father's machinery. It had to be renewed and I myself wanted the newer and more modern machinery. I applied to the advisory service specialists and they advised me to submit the application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. They helped me to fill in the application and prepare a business plan", tells Mantas.

Under the activity area "Support for Investment in Agricultural Holdings" of the Programme 2014–2020 measure "Investments in Physical Assets", almost EUR 30 thousand was granted for modernization of the



*Not only farmers Gintautas and Mantas Prišmontai, but also little Jokūbėlis feel happy with the award*

Mantas crop production farm. "Using the support funds, I bought a modern sprayer and a manure spreader", tells Mantas.

"Machinery today is very sophisticated. A sprayer is very handy. It knows where to spray or where not to spray. A manure spreader is also self-regulating, and it does not spread manure at places where manure has been already spread", Gintautas supplements his son and says with delight that he, though without any support, bought a combine and a loader and says in joke: Much money torn the pocket to pieces".

"However, no money is left for repairing the kitchen", adds Edita.

Mantas has a good sample to follow. Edita and Gintautas Prišmontai at the competition "Farm of the Year 2015" were awarded the third prize.

### Working by themselves

"Neither my father nor me hire people for farm works. We manage to do everything by ourselves. Since my father and I have jobs, we work at the farm in our free time", tells Mantas Prišmontas. "In recent years grain selling became simplified. Previously, I would transport grain to "Kretingos grūdai". We queued up here for two days. Now, when representation offices of various grain purchase companies are established at the Klaipėda seaport, there are no queues. Transport costs got reduced and time saved".

Mantas and Gintautas sell part of grain by preliminary contracts. "In previous years they were of benefit to the farmers, whereas this year those contracts hardly made a good service to us", says Gintautas Prišmontas. "The last year heavy showers and this year drought did their service. Of the 80 ha of winter crops sown in autumn only 20 ha has survived. The harvest, as compared to the last year, decreased by half. Prices for grain went up quite considerably, but you must sell for the price indicated in your preliminary contract".

According to Mantas and Gintautas, direct payments save the crop production farms. "Even though the lower direct payments as compared to other countries are allocated to the Lithuanian farmers, they are enough for covering the land lease and fuel costs. Thus income derived from the sold yield belongs to the farmer", farmers Mantas and Gintautas Prišmontai share their optimism.



*The sowing-machine, bought by the father, is appreciated by the youngest Prišmontas – Jokūbas*



*New combine is harvesting on the fields of the farmers Prišmontai*

## Agriculturists are dependent on God and authorities

*“Such is life – we, agriculturists, are dependent on the authorities and God. Thus we may give a bit of advice to all: not to be drowsy and sleepy, but use all available support, if possible. If not for the European Union, we should have but a very small part of what we are having now”, father and son – Povilas Mickus senior and Povilas Mickus junior from Kretinga District – share their experience.*

### Settled in the native land

The family of the Mickai family set up in Dirgalis village soon after the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence. Povilas Mickus, whose footsteps his son, also Povilas, follows, returned to the native land.

“My parents possessed 21 ha of land, the major part of which consisted of shrubbery. Arable land made hardly some seven hectares. From 1950 it was not allowed to work on the farm. Everything was taken over by the collective-farm. In 1961, the so-called “enlargement” was started. All we had was evaluated, we were driven to Grūšlaukė, and here cultured pastures were established”, Povilas Mickus senior reviews the family history.

In 1992, having made arrangements with then existing collective-farm chairman, at the site where his parents' farm existed he took some 30 ha of land and, as he says, came to the cultured pastures.



*Povilas Mickus senior and Povilas Mickus junior started setting up their farms in Dirgalis, old homeland of the Mickai family*

### Start was taken from the mixed farm

“We have started from the mixed farm. At a time I kept up to 100 large and small heads”, tells Povilas senior. “We worked altogether: wife, three daughters and two sons. No workers were hired. The youngest son Povilas, even though he could hardly fetch a pail, already did some farming work”.

The first farm building was built in 1993 and at present it houses the grain storage. After a year, cattle-sheds were built, later – premises for keeping feed. Almost each year a new building was erected. The dwelling house was built last of all.

“After receiving 150 thousand Litass of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 I bought a tractor, a trailer, a combine, and a fertilizer spreader. I built a grain dryer. Using various supports, I installed a milk line and refrigerator. Manure cleaning was automated”, tells Povilas senior about the importance of support in developing the farm.

### Both having 400 hectares

At the present moment the Mickai, father and son, together have 400 hectares of the arable land. “As far as remember, from my childhood I wanted to cultivate land”, son Povilas continues his father's story. “I remember we had a small tractor. It was difficult to drag me out of it. I even used to sleep in it. When already at Grūšlaukė Basic School, I made up my mind to stay in the farm. At first my mother gave me five hectares as a gift; soon after I received 16 hectares from my father. Later I was used to lease the land and still bought step by step in small portions. Now both together we have almost 200 hectares and are farming separately”.

Povilas Mickus junior started farming individually in 2010. According to the 2007–2014 Programme intended for setting up of young farmers, support of EUR 137 thousand was granted. Under the activity area “Support for Investment in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, over EUR 173.5 thousand was granted to me for modernization of the crop production farm. Using these funds I renovated the machinery park. I acquired a combine, a tractor, a sowing-machine, a disc plough, a manure spreader, and sixteen units of MEPU grain bins”, enumerates Povilas junior.

### Support is a big plus

The farmers when asked about the advantages of new machinery emphasize that if you work with the more advanced machinery and newest implements the work speed increases by 3–4 times. In addition, you have comfort, less dust, and easier maintenance. And, certainly, the better quality of production.

As the farmers assert, investment repays. “Let say, a grain storage and dryer, probably, have not repaid during one season, but actually did repay during two seasons. We have calculated that in some year when the weather was humid, grain humidity made 18–20 per cent. After transporting grain to the purchaser he cut down some weight due to humidity and made some other deductions, and as a result the loss amounting to 36 thousand Litass appeared. Upon acquisition of the dryer and storage, both money and time was saved. Previously, you would transport grain to Kretinga and wait for a day or two: you stand, and your combine stands, everything goes down”, both Mickai tell.

“It is an indispensable thing that farmers were funded. And really they were funded substantially. At present Lithuanian farmers operate one of the most advanced machinery in Europe. It would not happen, indeed, if not for support”, expresses his opinion Povilas junior. “Certainly, we would be alive without support as well, but really would be weaker”.

### Crop rotation is necessary for rich harvest

Father and son Mickai sow half of the fields with wheat. Also with some triticale, rape, peas and beans. They even tried to grow caraway.

“You cannot maintain the land for long with grain alone. If you want to yield a rich harvest, crop rotation is required. However, we face a specific problem. Our farms happen to be in the professional hunting area of Kretinga District. Beasts here are in plenty. Sown areas suffer from them. Deer graze winter rape for feed, wild boars like caraway”, say the Mickai.

According to the farmers, nature is not very friendly in the recent years. Such year like this was just a tragedy. Last autumn weather did not allow sowing of winter crops and those sown perished and it was needed to sow again. Then there was drought. “You had to give all to the land and plants, and there was nothing to harvest. You take from one pocket and do not put to another” says Povilas junior. “Such is life. We agriculturists depend on the authorities and God.



*Mickai farm*



*A tractor and a combine, acquired from support funds, in wait of the forthcoming busy season*

## You may walk in heels near a farm in Skuodas District

*“Order on the farm is of special importance. And I say to my workers: if you see some litter, don't pass by, collect it. If you do not collect it, next time you will find the rubbish-heap”, says farmer Kęstutis Juozas Palčiauskas from Skuodas District walking in the clean concreted territory near the farm. Not in vain the Skuodas residents who know the farmer say that you can walk with high-heeled and white shoes around his farm.*

### Not willing to lag behind

“After three-year service in the Soviet army I started working as a driver in the Barstyčiai collective-farm, Skuodas District. However, soon the collective-farm collapsed. The authorities began restitution of the lands that were in possession of the families. And I also brought back the land which belonged to my grandparents – 21 hectares. And 7 hectares of forest. Moreover, I inherited from the disintegrating farm an almost new and well-maintained tractor. I operated it during the past years before disintegration, as tractor-operators were then needed in the collective-farm and I replaced the car by the tractor”, Kęstutis Juozas Palčiauskas surveys his road towards farming. “I registered the farm and started farming in 1992”.

From the first days of farming Kęstutis planned to set up the dairy farm, bought one milking cow, later the second one. “Before marrying Ingrida I have already had twelve cows”, and as it befits the farmer, Kęstutis brought his wife to the already established farm.

“When we got married, for some time we milked cows with hands. Kęstutis milked harder ones, and I softer ones. Until then I have milked a cow for several times at my grandmother's farmstead”, Ingrida remembers the beginning of her life as a wife of the farmer.

“People around us one after another increased herds of animals and bought land. We also did not want to lag behind. Thus we also started increasing the number of cows and buying land. Now we have the herd of more than 300 head of Holstein Black and White cattle, of which 150 milking cows. On the average, we milk 7.5 tons of milk per cow. Such milk yields emaciate cows to a lesser extent. Though few in number, but on our farm we have cows calved in 2010, and oldest one dates to 2007. We cultivate about 300 hectares of land, of which about 250 hectares are private. Our lands are not fertile; they are attributed to highly unfavourable lands. We receive payments for this, but these payments do not compensate income I would have received when farming in the fertile lands. We grow crops, but we do not sell grain. We use it as a feed. To avoid storage, we pour grain into grain sleeves. Unless grain for feed is consumed, we keep it outside, near the farm”, Kęstutis Palčiauskas presents the farm.

The Palčiauskai in the course of many years received various awards, and in 2015 they became the winners of the competition “Farm of the Year” in Skuodas District.

As the farmer says, he got knowledge relevant to setting up of the farm by participating in various seminars, but the most substantial help came from the Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service of Skuodas District. “At that time very competent specialists worked in Skuodas”, emphasizes the farmer.

### By small but firm steps

“We use the EU and national support. However, I never undertook big projects. All the projects implemented in our farm are small. It is simpler to receive support for them and simpler to implement them”, the farmer shares his experience.

Of special importance was support granted to two projects under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investment in Physical Assets”. One project was designed for investments in agricultural holdings, another for modernization of the cattle-breeding farm. Support, covering both projects, amounting to about EUR 90 thousand was granted to Kęstutis Palčiauskas farm.

“I have not been granted any aid for construction. According to the administration rules, I even could not apply for it, since my farms were built from second-hand materials. Even though when commissioning the



*Ingrida and Kęstutis Palčiauskai live and develop their dairy farm near Barstyčiai, boasting of the largest stone in Lithuania*

building you must submit certificates of materials, inspection conclusions, the support granting rules do not allow funding of such objects. We have built farms and performed concreting of their surroundings without any support. I used support for acquisition of farm equipment”, says the farmer.

With the use of support Kęstutis bought a ten-unit milking platform, milk refrigerator, and manure scraper, installed a liquid manure reservoir, feed dozer, and self-propelled loader. “It would be difficult to do without these facilities. Since milk purchase prices are not high, the dairy farms are forced to do everything faster and more efficiently so as to reduce costs. Without support, our farm would be weaker and less modern facilities available”, says the farmer.

For animals to be better fed, a robotic feed pusher is operating on the farm. The farm is equipped with 12 video cameras. They help to watch even at home what is going on the farm.

A “kindergarten” for calves is built in the yard. Small single-unit field pens for calves have been also purchased with the use of support funds.

### Masters are recognized

Six workers are employed on the Palčiauskai farm under employment contracts, four of which are milkmaids. “And we also work a lot. In spring I sow the fields. Ingrida takes care of animals. I also act as a veterinary for my animals. When needed, I inject medicines to the vein of an animal”, Kęstutis shares his everyday routine.

“Farmers' wives either work or do not work. I am a farmer's wife who works”, Ingrida says in a joking mood. “If it is needed, I syringe animals, take care of insemination and calves. Animals recognize me. Earlier when animals were not so numerous, all our cows had names. Now names were replaced by numbers. Sometimes it seems that animals, hearing their numbers, react. And when they earlier had names, after calling they came running as dogs”.



*At the tractor, acquired using the support funds*



*The farm has more than 300 Holstein Black and White cattle*

## Fascinated by a sea-eagle flight

The small partnership “Keturi ereliai” (Four Eagles), set up in Šilutė District, with the use of support for the activity area “Support for Starting of Economic Activities in Rural Areas” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”, installed hideouts for professional photographers of the world taking photos of birds.

### Joined by Respect for Nature

„Three of us – Dovilė Jonauskienė from Kintai, professional photographer Borisas Belchevas and me set up a small partnership “Keturi ereliai” in 2017. “Keturi ereliai” is dedicated to the development of nature-based tourism in the Nemunas delta and popularization of this land worldwide”, says Monika Dobrovolskytė and adds that she was attracted to this land seven years ago as she was fascinated by the water and nature beauty. “I finished veterinary studies, but my activity has nothing to do with it. Borisas is a Bulgarian. He came to this land ten years ago”.

“All say that I am a love immigrant, but so far it is not clear either love for nature or love for people”, laughs Borisas.

“All three of us work in the sphere of tourism and want to achieve that acquaintance with this land should not end just with the bath-house and beer. Here it is the Nemuna delta. A very exclusive land and we want to present it to people from all sides”, Monika shines with enthusiasm. “Already earlier we organized birdwatchings for families, individual persons and photographers. We were doing this most often in the warm season, but we always cherished a hope to prolong the season, so that people would come to us in winter”.

“While travelling throughout the world and taking photos I saw that in some countries hideouts for photographers are so arranged that not to disturb birds. And I thought why not to install such a hideout in Lithuania? As it is the paradise of birds. Especially the Nemunas delta”, Borisas, involved in taking photos for fourteen years already, supplements his colleague.

Thus these Šilutė residents had an idea to offer services for nature observing ornithologists and photography professionals by installing a hideout. Quite a good number of people in the world are keen on observing specific birds. A sea-eagle is adornment of our land and enticement for photographers. In order to watch this bird as well as other birds they should be accustomed not to be scared of the hideout”, tells Monika Dobrovolskytė.

### Support helped to implement the idea

When Monika learnt about the opportunity to receive support for the activity area “Support for Starting of Economic Activities in Rural Areas” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”, not any other idea could be searched. “Since completion of the application and project preparation was rather complicated, we applied to the adviser for help. Even now she assists us to handle the necessary documents. We submitted the application. We were jumping with joy when we learnt that funding for our project was granted. Almost EUR 22 thousand”, Monika does not hide her joy. “It is very good that for the implementation of this project the one-hundred percent funding is granted. From the support funds granted we bought the powerful monacle for EUR 2 thousand. It magnifies the vision of the object for 60 times. And what is more important, we acquired two hideouts”.

Hideouts were made according to the special order by the Šilutė Company “Stamela”, and the drawings of hideouts were downloaded from the Internet. The support recipients from Šilutė just improved them, adapting to their own needs.

The first hideout was built this September. “The hideout needs the place with as few people as possible moving around. We succeeded in making arrangements with the farmer and he allowed us to install the hideout in his pasture. He agreed that the territory of the hideout would be fenced from the pasture, since it turned out that cows are very curious and are interested what is happening around the small house”, Monika and Borisas show the hideout, its colour blending with the environment.

People come to the hideout at 5 o'clock in the morning and leave at 5 o'clock in the afternoon; therefore, at least minimum comfort is needed for them. Thus the hideout is insulated. Here you may have tea. A biotoilet is placed.



Monika Dobrovolskytė is happy, having left Vilnius for the sea-shore

Internet is available. Furniture and facilities are adapted to birdwatching and phototaking. Windows are installed on four sides, since, as Borisas is joking, if they are installed not on four sides, photographers would catch most often nothing but the sea-eagle tail. The photographer may watch birds either sitting or lying. The installed video cameras help the project authors to watch what was happening at each moment in the house.

The big advantage of hideouts is their mobility. They may be moved according to the customer's needs.

“Until you train the bird to get used to the hideout, it should be fed for several months. When the bird gets used, you bring customers. The main food of a sea-eagle is fish. Thus when waters are frozen the sea-bird is forced to starve or use for food animals knocked down by cars, this causing a serious threat to perishing of the bird”, tells Borisas Belchevas about the bird. “Sea-eagles are entered in the Red Book, and it is delightful that recently their number has been increasing. Feeding them, we help to preserve those birds”.

The first photographers have already tried the hideout. These were the guests from Malta. Monika and Borisas are satisfied that photographers were not disappointed with their idea. The project received attention at the fair of professional watchers and photographers in Sweden.

### Benefit for the village

As Monika says, the project helped to create one job, whereas the biggest benefit of the project is the additional opportunities for the residents of the neighbouring villages. “Photographers do not come for a single day. They watch birds for several days, and sometimes even for more than a week. They need lodging for the night. They need catering and entertainment”, say the project authors, hoping that their project will be successful and will be in favour with photographers from the whole world.

In other seasons, hideouts will be used for watching other birds. Borisas, who under the non-formal education programme conducts bird knowledge classes to pupils, thinks that the number of those willing to learn about birds in this land will increase.

“This project is of benefit for professional orientation of pupils, since it extends their knowledge about the photographer's profession”, says Monika. “And, no doubt, it encourages nature protection. Probably, signs reminding what cannot be done in the nature are good, but when you show moss to a child, show a beetle living in it, when he hears the bird singing, he will never harm the nature, but will preserve it and protect”.



A hideout for birdwatching



With the powerful monacle, bought from the support funds, Borisas Belchevas says he can see the sea-eagle ring number



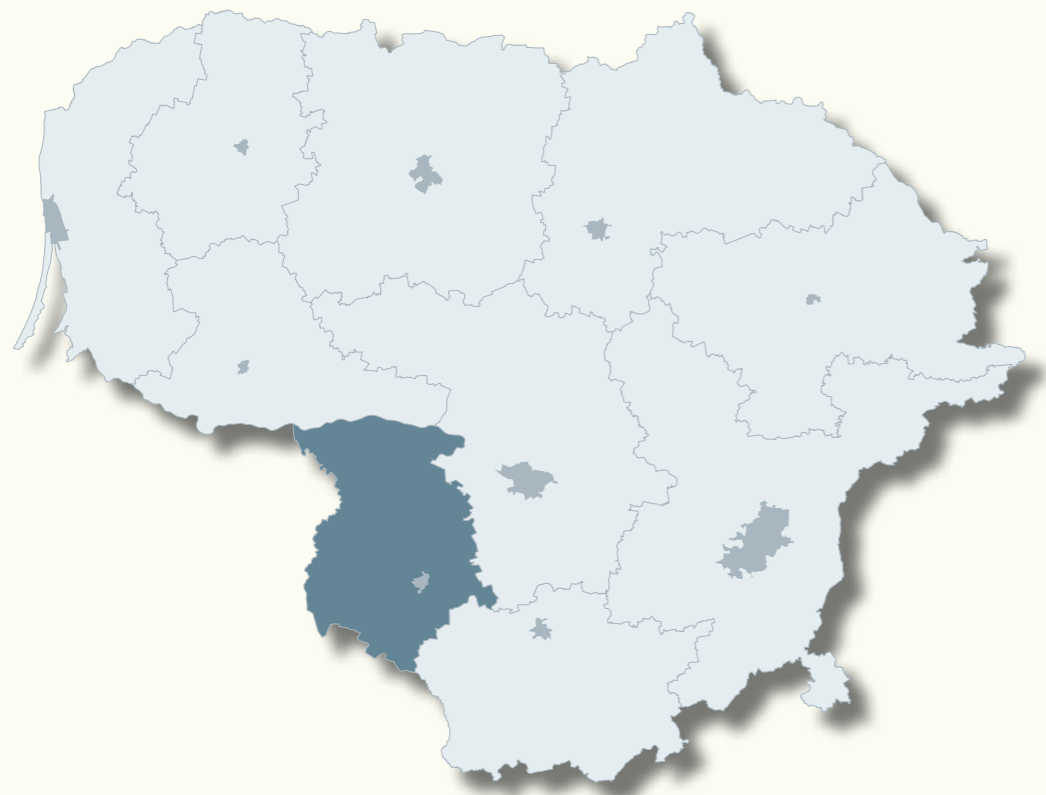
A sea-eagle flight is the dream of professional photographers

## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Marijampolė Region



# MARIJAMPOLĖ REGION >>>

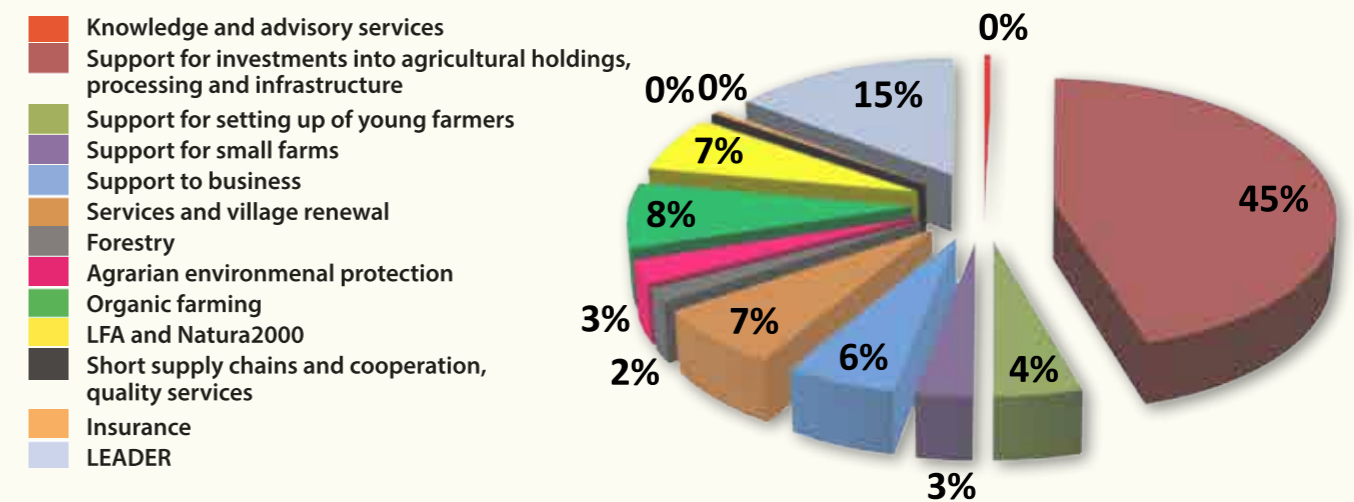
**Marijampolė Region** is in the southwestern Lithuania, covering the territories of Kalvarija, Kazlų Rūda, Marijampolė municipalities and the municipal territories of Šakiai and Vilkaviškis districts.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Kalvarija	897 863	229 145	134 420
Kazlų Rūda	760 557	234 052	47 788
Marijampolė	3 278 071	431 690	491 650
Šakiai District	7 298 183	358 777	192 394
Vilkaviškis District	6 685 390	1 121 820	696 685
<b>Total in Marijampolė Region</b>	<b>18 920 064</b>	<b>2 375 483</b>	<b>1 562 938</b>

*Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018*

## The approved support structure of EUR67 393 734 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Marijampolė Region



*Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018*

## “Šaltekšnis” has improved its production

“Our experience covers for more than 20 years. We have permanent milk producers, from whom we buy milk. We sell the major part of our production to permanent customers. Certainly, in order to survive on the market, and here we have to compete with the largest milk processors, we must modernize. Milk purchase prices are dictated by the major ones. If they pay more, we should also pay more. Thus, modernization without support would be difficult for our company”, says Aldona Piepolienė, director of the agricultural company, established in the village of Sūsninkai of Kalvarija Municipality.

### Initiative is important

The agricultural company was set up in 1992. It is probably symbolical that the company was registered just before Christmas – on December 22.

The beginning of the company’s operation dates back to cheeses, produced by the family of Algirdas Pranciškus Jucys, a shareholder of “Šaltekšnis” Agricultural Company. At that time the family kept quite many cows, milked large amounts of milk, and it was not worth to sell it at a very low price. Thus the family decided to make cheeses. They started ripening milk and making cheese. At the farmstead, a small milk processing shop was built. The produced cheeses were sold on the local market-place. The increasing demand stimulated to variegate cheese-making recipes. The shop, installed at the farmstead, became too small for work. “A neglected building of the former collective-farm stood in the centre of the settlement. For some time it was used as a warehouse, but later was abandoned again as being of no use to anybody.

In 1994, the Juciai family decided to use the neglected building and to attract more people to milk processing activity. Until now “Šaltekšnis” has been operating in that building”, tells director Aldona Piepolienė.

At present the company employs 63 workers. Some 11–14 tons of milk are processed here per day. The company has three milk purchasing points: in Sūsninkai, Radiškė and Mockai. “Small milk producers themselves bring milk to the purchasing points, while we go to take milk from those farmers who have refrigerators. We have a milk truck”, the director describes the company’s activity. “During ten months of the year 2018, we purchased and processed 5 100 tons of milk. We produce sweet cream, curdled milk, curds, butter, cheeses of more than 20 sorts, yogurt, and milk drink. We also sell pasteurized natural milk. We transport the manufactured products with our transport to the trade centres and production enterprises”.

### Modernization using support

More than once AC “Šaltekšnis” was supported from the EU funds. Using the previous support the company installed sewage treatment facilities and reconstructed production premises.

“We modernized production with the use of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 funds. Under the measure “Processing of Agricultural Products and Increasing the Added Value” EUR 40 thousand was granted to us in 2010. Making use of the support funds, we installed the prospecting-exploitation bore with the water supply system, microbiological testing system facilities, a milk pasteurizer, a freezing chamber, water softening and iron elimination filters, an air conditioner, and a milk separator”, enumerates the director.

For the company modernization we used funds granted under the activity area “Support for Investments into Agricultural Product Processing, Marketing and Development” of Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. In 2016, more than EUR 15 thousand was allocated to



Aldona Piepolienė welcomes Prime-Minister Saulius Skvernelis and Government representatives in the autumn of 2018

the company. The total project value amounts to almost EUR 38 thousand without VAT.

“Until then the company used the worn and primitive sour cream filling equipment. Making use of support we acquired a semi-automatic product filling machine. It fills the container itself, weighs and caps”, the director is delighted with changes. “We have also expanded milk filling. Previously, we would fill pasteurized raw milk into pails and hauled to the confectionery manufacturers, but then some demand appeared for milk to be bottled. With the use of support funds we bought a bottling facility. We have also improved cheese production. In summer unripe cheese of our make is very popular, but we did not have the adequate equipment. Thus we bought a pasteurizer with a cheese production module and an automated cutter. This equipment is very necessary for us in producing natural yogurt.

According to Aldona Piepolienė, director of “Šaltekšnis” company, the EU support is beneficial from several aspects. The more the company is modernized, the more opportunities exist for it to survive on the market, as it may supply consumers with more varied, more qualitative and visually attractive production. Another advantage is jobs. The company employs quite many residents from Sūsninkai and neighbouring villages. And what is more important, operation of agricultural company “Šaltekšnis” is an evident example for rural communities: when you have initiative and willingness to work, you may always achieve the result.



A milk bottling line, acquired using support



Agricultural company “Šaltekšnis” manufactures more than 20 sorts of cheese



## The large farm requires big investments

*The farm of Dalia Kairaitienė covers around 1 000 hectares of land. There are 1 200 head of cattle, of which about 700 dairy cows. “We would also have undertaken farming without any support. When we started farming no support existed. Certainly, if not the EU funds, to set up the farm it would be more difficult”, says the farmer from Kazlų Rūda municipality.*

### Beginning was the restituted parental land

“Before the re-establishment of Lithuania my husband and I worked at the collective-farm. I worked as a cook at a kindergarten, my husband as a tractor-driver, a combine-operator and a driver. Since we lived in the parental farmstead, with the disintegration of collective-farms, we were restituted the land possessed by our fathers – 14 hectares. Like most rural residents, we started with mixed farming. Several cows, several pigs. Calves and piglets. Some amount of crops, some amount of potatoes”, relates Dalia Kairaitienė about the beginning of farming, its existence nearing the end of the third decade. “At first, we devoted most of our time to sows. However, with the fall in purchase prices for pigs, we had to change the activity. At that time milk prices increased considerably. This stimulated us to pass over to dairy-farming. We then had four cows”.

The first cows, according to Dalia, were ordinary Lithuanian Black and White. Only later when enlarging the farm the farmers bought heifers of Holstein breed. Gradually, the whole herd was supplemented with Holstein breed. The farmers annually, on the average, milked about 9.7 tons of milk per cow. “Last year we milked ten and more tons of milk per cow, but, probably, this hot summer had an effect on cow milk yield”, considers the farmer. “Each day, on the average, we sell 18–19 tons of milk. Milk is sold to the Marijampolė Canned Milk Factory. Such amount helps to bargain the higher price from the purchaser, but I suggest those who think that we get money for nothing to start breeding several hundred of cows and to make sure what it means”.

Dalia and Aidai Kairaičiai grow wheat, rape, corn and peas on their cultivated land. They sell about 1 000 tons of grain and leave some 800 tons for feed. According to Dalia, if you want to milk more, you need to feed well the animal. Therefore, the farmers buy rape-cake, proteins and other additives.

### Using both support and credits

“It seems that the first EU support for farm development we received in 2004. At that time we had some 200 dairy cows. We installed the first milking platform”, tells the farmer. “Later support for farm modernization appeared”.

Using support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, Dalia and Aidai Kairaičiai bought two “Fend” type tractors and other new modern agricultural land cultivation machinery and implements, erected the dung reservoir.

With the increase of the number of cows, a new milking platform was needed. The farmers decided to submit the application for support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holding” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. More than EUR 179.5 thousand of support was allocated to Dalia Kairaitienė for milk farm modernization. The total value of the project amounted to EUR 409 thousand without VAT. “The contract was signed and we start implementing the project. One of the most important purchases with the use of the support funds is a new milking platform. For its installation we are building the outhouse to the barn. A new milking platform will have 60 units. The previous long-term platform was used for milking cows under treatment and calving”, the farmer describes the project under implementation.

According to her, after implementing the project, the farm will be more viable and more competitive. Modern technologies will help to cut production costs and augment farm earnings, the farm will need less manual work, and computerized cow milking process management will contribute to the milk quality improvement.

“Certainly, we could not do without bank loans when setting up a farm. The EU-funded projects should be



*Dalia and Aidai in Sasnava forestry are planting oak-trees, dedicated to Lithuania's Centenary*

implemented at first and only then expenses eligible for funding will be reimbursed. At the beginning we felt awkward to apply to the bank. Now it is difficult to imagine our activity without the bank – we repay some loans and take other ones. Machinery should be all the time renewed and buildings built. It is difficult for us to save the necessary amount, because some years are better, some are worse”. From 2008 we are friends with banks”, Dalia shares her experience.

### Difficulties verified our decision

Difficulties are as if an examination, verifying whether you are really ready to follow your chosen path. “It was very difficult from the beginning. We cultivated fields with the caterpillar tractors. I milked cows with hands”, tells the farmer.

A serious ordeal for the Kairaičiai was a fire they had to suffer in 2004. A warehouse with thousand tons of wheat got burnt. “We thought we would not be able to survive. We feared we could not pay for fertilizers. It was “Agrokonzernas” that helped us greatly to climb out of the pit. They gave us seeds and fertilizers – and even now the farmers feel gratitude to businessmen for understanding and assistance. “Now, when we are more firmly standing, troubles have not diminished. The larger the farm, the more complicated the management”.

The farm employs about 40 workers. “We do not hire the farm manager and the manager. Those jobs we do ourselves.

All the works performed at the farm we control ourselves”, Dalia shares her everyday worries, and when asked wherefrom she derives knowledge necessary for farming, she just laughs. “When you search for information, you will always find it either on the Internet or in the press; it is also disseminated on TV. We obtain very useful information in the seminars. We travel a lot worldwide. We are not just travelling for sightseeing, but rather for bringing new ideas. If there is opportunity, we always visit farmers in other countries”.

The Kairaičiai daughters also chose farming as their way of life. One of them with her husband has been farming for 15 years already, and another for seven years. “It seems that grandchildren will also choose farming since all their games are related to farming”, says Dalia Kairaitienė and is happy that their children have not scattered throughout the world, that they stayed in Lithuania, that they cultivate the land in their homeland and that they are growing bread for their countrymen.



*The modern Kairaičiai farm shines at a distance*



*Festivities also take place in the farmers' life*



*The harvest time on the Kairaičiai fields*

## Priority for innovation and modernity

*“Each support gives options for new investments. Having received support for implementing the project “Enhancement of Competitiveness of Animal Breeding Performance” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, we could allocate more funds for investments important for farm development”, asserts Gintautas Gumauskas, chairman of the Padovinis Agricultural Company from Marijampolė Municipality.*

### Priority for Modernity

“Several years ago we, the company’s shareholders, were faced with a dilemma: either to develop the dairy farm or to switch to some other activities. We saw that in order to develop the dairy farm its modernization is necessary, and thus enormous investments are required”, speaks frankly Gintautas Gumauskas, the chairman of the Padovinis Agricultural Company, operating successfully for more than twenty years, while showing around one of the biggest and most modern dairy farms in the Baltic States.

To create a modern dairy farm, support of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programmes was used. Under the 2007–2013 Programme, the company was granted support amounting to EUR 730.3 thousand and implemented five projects. Three of these were implemented according to the simplified rules. Support was used for feed and dairy production activity modernization. Three tractors of different power, a stubble plough, two sowing-machines, a trailed sprayer, a bale press-wrapper, a feed shredder, a mower, two telescopic feed loaders, a manure loader, a milk pasteurizer, two milk refrigerators, 25 individual houses for calves, 127 drinking troughs for animals, and 579-unit milking cow barn technological equipment.

The company submitted the application under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” during the first call. “We wanted to reconstruct the old 400-unit farm for tied cows into a modern barn where we could keep 500 freely walking inseminated and in calf heifers. We were granted maximum support of almost EUR 400 thousand”, says Gintautas Gumauskas.

While implementing the 2014–2020 Programme-funded project, the old farm was almost completely ruined and replaced by a new, spacious building comfortable for animals. Its roof was changed, a liquid manure pumping station, ventilators, animal stalls, feeding units, new drinking troughs, water connected, windows, protecting from wind and draughts, were installed, barn fences were replaced, and a loader was bought.

Most advanced technologies have been also implemented in the whole cattle breeding complex. Heat, received when cooling milk, is used for floor heating and supplying water for cow drinking. A responder, fixed to a leg of each cow, transmits information to the computerized animal feeding and monitoring system how and how much the animal is eating, about animal’s health and other detailed information. The complex has a very sophisticated milking parlour with the waiting platform, ensuring that cows in a continuous stream would follow one after another into the rotation type 40 unit milking parlour. The milked milk goes to the 18-ton capacity refrigerator. The 100 kW capacity electric generator is installed in the complex and in the case of electricity interruption it may feed the whole system of the dairy farm.

### Taking care of environmental protection

Lately attempts are made still more often to show that cattle breeding is one the biggest nature polluters. “Our goal is to create as much as possible environment-friendly dairy farm. And farm modernization was started from a liquid manure reservoir,” stresses the chairman of the company. “Support obtained under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for farm modernization permits us to invest much more our own funds in implementing the environmentally sustainable technologies”.

At the present moment the Padovinis Agricultural Company has about 2.6 thousand head of cattle, of which 1.1 thousand dairy cows. According to the chairman, annually for cattle litter some 1.5 thousand rolls of straw were needed. However, straw is not the best litter. “Since of old I thought about replacement of straw. Four years ago at



*Gintautas Gumauskas with his son Girmantas, employed as a veterinary at the company*

the Hanover Land Exhibition I saw a manure separation facility. Making some inquiries, we decided to invest EUR 175 thousand and acquire it”, Gintautas Gumauskas presents an exclusive innovation.

The separation system in possession of the Padovinis Agricultural Company is most sophisticated in the Baltic States. Fresh manure from the farm is pumped to the facility. Liquid squeezed from manure by shafts travels to the cistern nearby, and the solids are turned into litter, fully replacing straw. Solid litter and discharged heat create favourable conditions for animals. The separated liquid is a perfect fertilizer for greenery. Part of it is returned again to the farms for manure dilution.

“We are also thinking of the use of manure for electricity production, though investments into this innovation are stopped by the unfavourable energy policy in the country. We hope that changes will occur in this field and we are preparing for it”, the Company chairman somewhat discloses his plans.

### One of the highest yields per cow

According to Gintautas Gumauskas, the company is gaining 85% of its income from dairy farming. “We have cows which yield 65–72 kg milk per day. This makes 63–70 litres. On the average, annually we milk 11.2 tons per cow. Averagely, from all cows we milk 34 tons per day. Good care and feed allowance have a big impact on achieving good dairy farming results”, the Company chairman feels happy with the results and says with joy that the company according the sold milk amount is among the leading dairy farms.

At the present moment the company from its own funds is building a barn for heifers. With the start of the operation of the complex at full capacity we plan to increase the number of dairy cows to 1.2 thousand and to sell some 37 tons of milk per day.

“Dairy farming is labour-consuming. Our company cultivates 2 780 ha of private and leased land. If we get exclusively involved in plant-growing, in the best case we could employ 20 people. Now the company, including the administration, has 106 employees. The average age of the staff is 35 years. The company employs the Padovinis village residents. Part of the employed comes from Marijampolė and neighbouring villages. The use of the EU support funds in the development of livestock-breeding, especially dairy farming, has also a positive impact on the unemployment reduction”, says Gintautas Gumauskas, chairman of the Padovinis Agricultural Company.



*One of the state-of-the art separation systems in the Baltic States*



*New farm buildings of the Padovinis Agricultural Company – good conditions for both a worker and an animal under care*

## The mark guarantees: really good honey is on sale

Three years ago Augustinas Pečiulis from Šakiai District has changed his profession and his work as a pharmacist at the chemist's shop for beekeeping. Honey from his apiary is certified – products, manufactured in accordance with the national agricultural and food quality system, are awarded the mark “Quality”. The Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agricultural and Food Quality Systems” is of much help for the certified product to enter the market.

### Support has facilitated competition

At the present moment the Augustinas Pečiulis apiary has 70 bee families. They produce some 4 tons of honey per year. “Large amounts of honey are sold directly from home. The major part of our clients does not change for years”, Augustinas is satisfied with his work. “Certainly, we also sell honey at fairs. Last year we also sold honey at the Kaziukas Fair in Vilnius. Some part of the customers draws their attention to the fact that honey I am selling is marked with “Quality” mark. I tell those who do not know that this mark guarantees the good quality of honey”.

According to the beekeeper, he was stimulated to certify honey by his own desire to be sure that he is selling the really qualitative product to his customers. The mark award means new obligations to the producer: bees should be kept in wooden beehives, no chemical substances may be used for beehive disinfection and bee treatment, and honey should be jarred, as chemical reactions are inevitable when keeping it in plastic containers. “It is very good that under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agricultural and Food Quality Systems” costs for label design creation, packing acquisition and advertising are compensated. Once a year we are inspected by PI “Ekoagros” specialists, and examination costs are also compensated from the funds of that measure. All that facilitates competition”, the beekeeper evaluates support positively. “Support is granted for five years. The biggest support is EUR 2895 per year. Upon application submission, support is paid each year. Prior to submitting the application for support, we have already certified honey, propolis and bee bread”.



Augustinas' assistant in handling honey is his daughter Agnė

### Beginning – the two bee families given as a gift

According to Daiva, the wife of Augustinas, their interest in bees started more than twenty five years ago, when her friend bee-keeper gave as a gift to Augustinas the two families of bees. “Our family and our relatives always kept several bee families. Most probably, I have this attraction from my birth. Even as a child I wanted to keep bees. However, I had no conditions for it. In my young days I had no time for bees. Pharmacy studies at the then Institute of Medicine, and later my job at the chemist's. Thus the bees given as a gift by my wife's friend returned to me my childhood dream”, smiles Augustinas.

The apiary got expanded gradually. Its maintenance required still more time. “However, you had to work in daytime at the chemist's and in the apiary”, the bee-keeper explained his decision to leave his job as a pharmacist and to get involved in beekeeping development.

### Support initiated changes

According to him, this change in his life was stimulated by support granted to beekeeping. Having received the support, he bought five beehives, next year he bought a platform for carrying beehives, as bees from early spring to late autumn are travelling after the flowering plants.

“After discussions with my family, I decided to use the EU support as well. I submitted the application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme measure of the last period for semi-natural farms. I succeeded and was granted support. So I acquired a honey packing apparatus, honey comb unsealing and bee bread thrashing machines, a wax melting machine, a comb unsealing brush, and a honey creaming apparatus. The acquired facilities improved the speed of work and product quality”, tells the beekeeper.



Bee worker's organism turns nectar into honey



Not only bees but also a beekeeper creates honey

### New products for the consumer

Now Augustinas has installed small premises in conformity with hygiene requirements. Here combs are unsealed, honey is extracted and jarred; experiments are made in creating new products. “Alongside honey, bee bread and propolis, we also offer creamed honey to our customers. This product is bought with pleasure by customers, as creamed honey does not crystallize and may be easily spread”, Augustinas presents a new product.

It is not the end of Augustinas experimenting. He produces a honey sour drink (kvass) for some time already. As a matter of fact, for the time being only family members and friends may taste it, but the beekeeper hopes that soon he will be able to offer this drink to the wider circle of customers.

The spirit of experimenting carried away his wife Daiva as well. She makes lollipops and gummies from honey. Their daughter Agnė creates wax candles and makes body butter.

“While travelling through festivities and fairs and communicating with our customers, we noticed that a wider variety of products should be offered to them and we use to a greater extent opportunities provided by the apiary”, says beekeeper Augustinas Pečiulis and adds that honey is like food and like medicine, since it is the enormous gift of nature.



Nectar from each blossom has its own taste



The beekeeper is proud of “Quality” mark, awarded to his honey

## Potatoes help to maintain the farm stability

*Alvytė and Eugenijus Valuckai, farmers from Vilkaviškis District, are running one of the largest potato farms in Lithuania. “Most probably, all income earned we devote to the modernization of potato growing”, says Alvytė.*

### Into farming through ruining

“When the day came that you could not stay where you were since it was needed to destroy everything and to ruin everything”, Alvytė Valuckienė speaks of the beginning of a decision taken to start farming in 1992. “At that time I worked as head of the collective-farm kindergarten. My husband was a driver. With the disintegration of the collective-farm, sharing of various types began. Shares were distributed according to the years of your work in the collective-farm. At that time eight hectares of our grandfathers’ land was restituted to us. We did not know much about agriculture, since we did not need it. The agronomist told us that the collective-farm planned to grow sugar beets in the restituted land. “Maybe you will also plant them”, she suggested. Thus we planted sugar beets.

The first years of farming were successful. The harvest was rich. After selling sugar beets the Valuckai bought the first tractor. “Step by step we started setting up. We were offered to lease lands from the restituted land owners who lived in the city. We looked very cautiously to the enlargement of areas. We were in no hurry to buy lands, but little by little our cultivated lands got extended. . We were growing sugar beets. We were ardent defenders of Marijampolė Sugar Factory. At nights stood on the roads”, tells the farmer.

### Support has led to potato-growing

When the EU support reached Lithuania, the Valuckai felt that they should make a decision as concerns the direction of their activity. Selling of sugar beets caused still more trouble. “Eugenijus proposed to grow potatoes. I did not want at all at the beginning. Potato- growing for me was like cattle-breeding – the same type of attachment. And we were young, and wished to leave. Nevertheless, I accepted my husband’s proposal. Later it turned out that it was a good choice. Potatoes brought stability to our farm. We knew we were growing potatoes and worked in this direction. Income is stable. If the year is not so successful and crops and rape harvest is not good, potatoes are always of best help. We stop all the gaps with income received from potatoes. Now we have become professional potato growers, but to reach that level I studied and worked a lot and was willing to do this. I was used to clarify everything to the smallest details”, Alvytė Valuckienė is satisfied with her choice.

When SAPARD support reached Lithuania, the Valuckai already cultivated about 700 ha of land. “It was then that we started buying machinery and implements necessary for potato-growing, installed a potato sorting point, a modern potato storage , and we can trade in potatoes the whole year round”, says Alvytė. “The farm was most significantly modernized by using the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. We bought two new and modern potato digging combines, other land cultivation machinery and implements, since the available ones were worn out and inefficient and thus harvest quality suffered. Earlier we were used to cooperate with the manufacturers of potato chips. They would not even buy potatoes from the farms, not equipped with modern machinery”.

Alvytė Valuckienė modernized the farm still more, making use of support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Support, amounting to almost EUR 50 thousand, was allocated to the modernization of the Valuckai potato farm. “Using the support funds we bought a mechanism for potato palletizing and we feel very happy. It weighs potatoes, pours into a sack and stitches it, transports and transfers to the iron hands of a robot which lifts a sack on a pallet, and wraps it around with a net”, Alvytė is satisfied with a smart machine and adds that this facility not only speeded up works, but also increased competitiveness, improved potato sales opportunities, as the shopping centres do not like to accept crooked or untidily stacked bags on a pallet. “You will never wrap pallets with sacks in such a way manually, since when transporting they will slide down”.

The Valuckai sell about 80 per cent of the potato harvest outside Lithuania. They sell about 1000 tons of potatoes through the co-operative, though operation of the latter does not satisfy the farmers.



*Alvytė Valuckienė is not only a professional potato- grower, but also an ardent fisherwoman.*

At present the Valuckai family cultivates about 1000 ha of land, of which some 150 ha are under potatoes.

“I think I should not have attained such level of farming without the EU help. Certainly, we should have managed somehow, but would not be that competitive on the market”, thinks Alvytė Valuckienė.

Some EUR 20 thousand of support was also granted under the activity area “Afforestation” of the 2014–2020 Programme measure “Investment in Forest Area Development and Improvement of the Sustainability of Forests”. “We bought from the State the neglected land plot overgrown with brushwood. The melioration system here has been completely destroyed. Until the land belonged to the State, nobody attempted to do something, and when we bought it we were threatened with fine imposition for the neglected land. Therefore, we decided to afforest that area. We afforested some 60 hectares”, tells Alvytė.

### Crops for rotation

“To grow the rich harvest of potatoes, crop rotation is necessary; therefore the big part of the land was sown with wheat and triticale. In the poorer lands we grow food oats. We sow corn for grain. This year started growing buckwheat. We have quite a lot of light soils, good for growing of this plant; thus we decided to make a try. It seems that harvest is quite good”, Alvytė is delighted.

And field greening the Valuckai have started somewhat earlier than it was started to talk about it and stimulated with payments. The farmers already since of old part of their fields are sowing with mustard and other crop plants. “If you do not care for your land, you will not yield the rich harvest; therefore, I treat the land with high responsibility”, says the farmer. “I use mineral fertilizers in still smaller amounts on the farm, replacing them with biological preparations. I buy and fertilize with humus and chalk. So far it is considerably costly, but I know that I sell the healthier product to the customer. I am very proud that our farm has a certificate GLOBAL G.A.P. We do our best to keep to this standard”.

### The whole family at work

Even though Nauris and Neringa, children of the Valuckai, have set up their own farms, but the whole family works in concord, not making out where one farm ends and where another starts. “We have divided our works. Neringa is a graduate in agronomy, thus she is concerned with agronomic matters, as well as with documentation. The son- in-law is more involved in electrical engineering. Nauris is responsible for production and search of markets. Farm management belongs to the daughter- in- law. My husband and I coordinate all activities. Eugenijus, however wants to do everything as fast as possible, whereas I prefer the quality of work. Sometimes we come into some conflict, but, nevertheless, we do everything together. We work together, travel together and go fishing together. Earlier we were fishing in Lithuania. Now we go to Sweden. Fish is abundant in that country”, she passes on from work to hobbies. “We also travel quite often with our workers. Not because we want to bind them to us, but because it is pleasant for us to be with them”.

The Valuckai farm has 17 permanent workers. In the busy period some 4-5 people are additionally employed.



*Rich potato harvest was yielded*

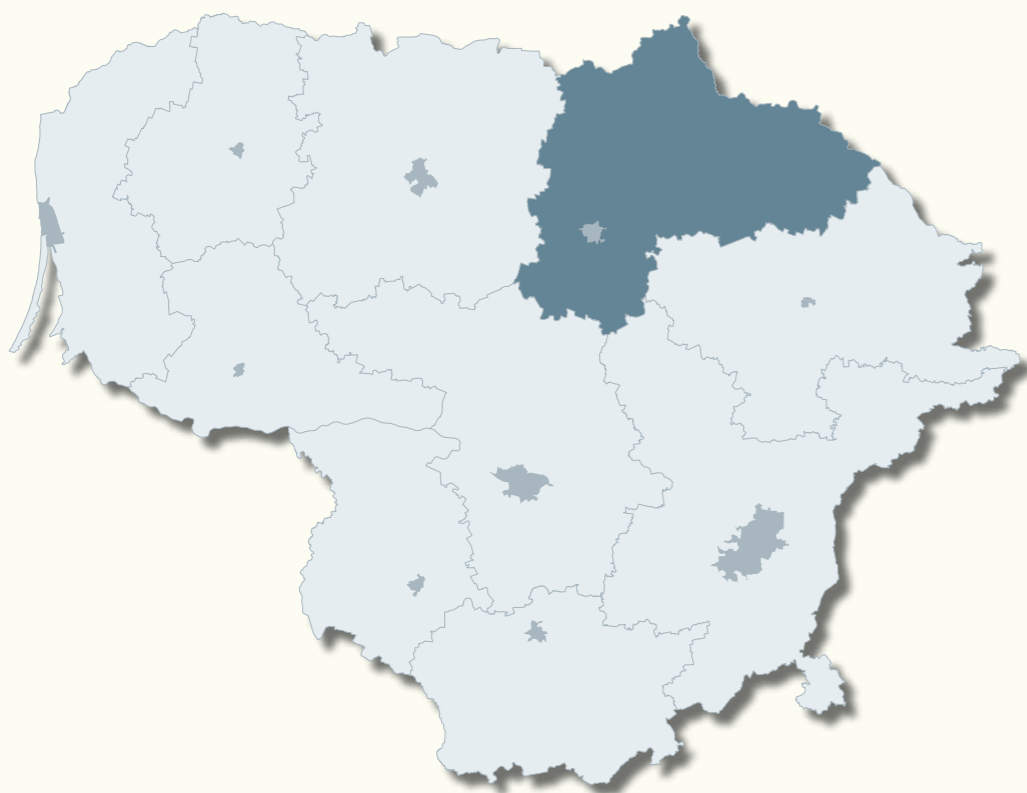


*The last purchase of Alvytė and Eugenijus Valuckai is the smart potato packing facility*



# PANEVĖŽYS REGION >>>

Panevėžys Region is located in the northeastern part of Lithuania, encompassing the municipal territories of Biržai, Kupiškis, Panevėžys, Pasvalys and Rokiškis districts.

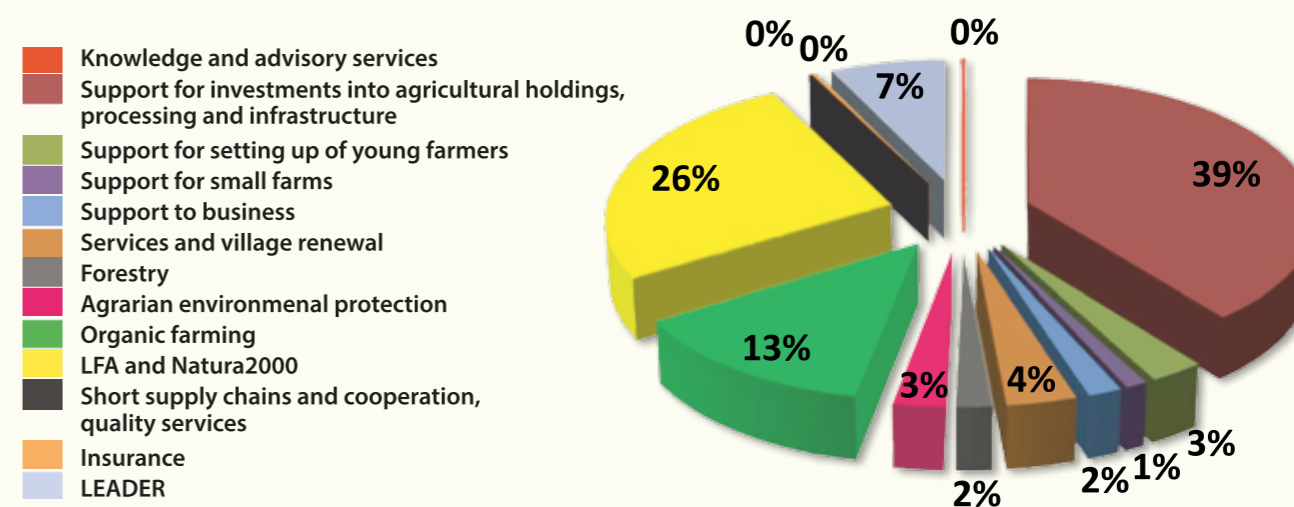


## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Panevėžys Region

Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Biržai District	8 125 533	1 056 044	226 933
Kupiškis District	3 872 240	395 549	49 477
Panevėžys District	4 880 503	484 564	368 106
Pasvalys District	7 185 409	221 789	288 197
Rokiškis District	7 651 393	1 243 341	399 025
<b>Total in Panevėžys Region</b>	<b>31 715 078</b>	<b>3 401 286</b>	<b>1 331 737</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The approved support structure of EUR 152 010 274 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Panevėžys Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## From preserving of ancient breeds to education programmes

The sheep farm belonging to the farmers Kristina and Jūris Milišiūnai in Biržai District, is one of the largest in Lithuania. Of 1 170 sheep, 1 072 are Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep. For preserving this breed the farmers are paid compensatory payments under the activity area “Preservation of Endangered Lithuanian Ancient Animal and Bird Breeds” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agri-Environment and Climate”.

### Moral stimulus and financial support

“If you keep just several animals, no doubt, support granted for conservation of endangered Lithuanian ancient animal and poultry breeds is rather moral, but if the herd is big you receive a quite considerable financial support, as compensatory payments are paid for the number of animals indicated in the application”, says Kristina Milišiūnienė.

Those breeding ancient sheep breeds are paid the support of EUR 187 per contractual animal. However, the participation in the programme on preservation of ancient animal and bird breeds is also a serious obligation. “Upon signing the support granting contract, we were obligated to keep the number of sheep declared in the application for six years – 580 Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and five Lithuanian Coarse-Wooled sheep. The latter, however, are important to us as the farmstead decoration and the possibility to show the visitors how this breed looks like. We are also obliged to control the flock that ewes will be mated with a ram of the same breed. You should look that the genetically related ram would not be allowed to the flock, thus avoiding abnormalities. Thus, conservation of the ancient breeds requires much more work than with the ordinary flock”, the farmer shares her experience.



Kristina Milišiūnienė had an idea to use wool in installing a bath-house

### Three sheep at the beginning

Kristina, after graduating from her studies at the then Veterinary Academy in 1989, was appointed to the Karolis Požėla collective-farm in Biržai District. “This collective-farm kept Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and I, as a young specialist, was entrusted to manage the sheep-breeding farm. Thus sheep came into my life”, smiles the farmer.

As it was the time for disintegration of collective-farms, sheep-breeding did not look an attractive field of activity, some part of the flock was sold to the residents; the other part was brought to the Panevėžys Meat-Packing Factory. Three sheep arrived at the Jūris parental farmstead. Already then Jūris under the Law of Farmers’ Farm received 50 ha of land and was farming. “Lands here are sufficiently fertile, thus we did not plan to develop cattle-breeding. We used to grow flax and sugar beets. As we are located at the Latvian border, part of the harvest we were used to sell to the Latvian people. Sheep for us were as if a grass mower to spoil grass in the garden and different peripheral areas where it was difficult to mow grass. Because mutton was not in demand, we could hardly sell sheep. Thus sheep gradually increased in number until a day came when we had to decide what should be done with them”, Kristina remembers the creation of the sheep farm.

Since sheep were bought with the documents of origin, the Milišiūnai, after consulting a specialist, registered the pedigree flock of the Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep in 1994. Then the flock consisted of more than ten sheep. “Development of the pedigree flock was stimulated by the then established nation prize – we would sell sheep as the pedigree material and would also receive support. Later support appeared for pedigree flocks. However, until 2004, sheep-breeding for us was just a hobby”, tells the farmer. “Then the European Union support appeared. Using the Nitrate Programme, we bought machinery for manure handling. We operate this machinery until now”.

From 2010, sheep breeding became the most important farming field of Kristina and Jūris Milišiūnai. “At that time we already had dairy and meat sheep. Quite a lot of Lithuanian Black-Headed we would sell for pedigree breeding. We then had about 2 thousand sheep”, the farmer overviews the farm history. “My husband at that time was developing the organic grain farm. The sheep farm was not organic. And several years ago we had to make a decision: either all the farm is organic or ordinary. Since we did not want any more to run the chemically treated farm, we decided to certify all sheep.

I regret to say that a requirement was adopted to decrease the flock by half, even though we clearly see that in the existing areas a somewhat bigger flock survives freely. Regretfully, the ordinary farm may keep 15 sheep per hectare, the e-farm only seven”.

### For popularization – education classes

As Kristina jests, she became involved in educational activities only after a kick from aside. For more than a decade ago the Latvian farmers asked for a visit to their farm to see sheep. Many visitors were brought by the former Šiukionys Community Chairman late Nijolė Šatienė. And the advisory service more often started visiting with farmers their farm. And a tourist firm from Riga asked for coming with tourist groups. “At that time we could welcome our guests only in pastures or in a barn. And what is to be done when the weather is not good? When up to ten people would come, I could receive them at my home, but what to do when a full bus would come? We have tried everything. Asked to accept us to the community house or pitched a tent in the yard, until we decided to apply to Antanas Poška whom we knew and who was used to pitching yurtas. “It was then that an opportunity appeared to receive support for tourism development according to the Biržai District Municipality strategy for development of rural localities until 2023. We prepared a project with my sister. Support was granted for its implementation and thus we built two wool-insulated yurtas. Later we built another two from our private funds”, Kristina is glad to have the base for education.

Some days occur when she receives several groups. Both children and adults come to the Milišiūnai farm. For some of them Kristina, conducting a felting class, tells what may be done from wool. For others she organizes a degustation of products from sheep milk and also from mutton. The visitors may get acquainted with sheep breeds, as several sheep of each breed are on the pasture near the yurta, intended for education classes. In one yurta there is a bath-house installed, with its walls and plank-beds covered with a thick wool layer.

“As a project was prepared in a hurry, not everything was well-thought out. We forgot infrastructure. Paths should be put to order; a parking site and territory lighting should be installed. After building a bath-house, it is necessary to collect the discharged water. We also want to build a small house and to place here a collection of sheep figurines and articles with sheep. Several years ago they numbered over 600, and the collection is being supplemented. It is of interest to visitors, especially to children”, the farmer shares her plans and reminds that for all these ideas she expects to receive support from the funds designed for implementation of the 2015–2020 local activity group strategy.

Education classes by Kristina Milišiūnienė are useful for the rural women as well. The farmer shelters in the yurta their knit socks, wool-made pictures and other wool articles, and the visitors may learn what can be done from wool or acquire a warm souvenir for ourselves or their close people.



A yurta for education classes



Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep of Kristina and Jūris

## Whole-hearted work brings the result

*“When you start farming almost from zero, you would not be able without support to create such a farm that we have today”, says Adelė Danutė Adamonienė, a farmer from Kupiškis district.*

### Wanted to do more

“We had nothing to do and thus decided to undertake farming”, when asked why started farming, says the farmer in jest. “I had a job. Worked as an agronomist with the Lithuanian Agricultural Consultancy Service, Kupiškis District Department. However, I wanted to do something more than just at my job. As at that time I had lots of visits to Europe, I got familiar with the way people are farming there. Having coming back from those visits, I still more often started talking with my family what is to be done further. Thus the idea of farming somehow developed, since you start doing what you know best. In 2000, I registered a farm. While working in the Service, I kept four cows and this was a starting point for setting up a dairy farm. Children, and most of all son Arnas, got actively involved in this activity. If not for him and support, this farm would not have actually existed”.

When Adelė and her son Arnas started farming, they had 20 ha of land. They bought 14 cows from their savings. They needed a barn. Then an idea came to purchase the local abandoned farms and to build a farm after their demolition. “It was a very hard time”, she mentions the experienced difficulties. “When we started farming, prices for milk then were quite normal, but very soon they dropped awfully. A farm had to be built. No money. We decided to take a loan, but the banks looked upon farmers with much distrust. And when they came and saw a neglected farm without windows, they just wondered: what a courageous woman that possessing nothing wants to get a loan. And, certainly, I was not granted a loan. However, my son and I were going forward with persistence. We decided to build a farm using our own savings. These years were full of hard work and nervous tension. Construction required physical and spiritual strength. We saved everywhere we could, counted every cent, but today, thank God, much has been done. Despite of all troubles, creation of the farm for me was an interesting pursuit. Not in vain one says when you work pleasure you will always attain the result”.

According to the farmer, when you gain speed in turning round, the farm itself takes the lead. “A milk refrigerator is needed in the farm, and you have no money for buying it. Wishing to earn more, you buy more cows. If you need other facilities or machinery, you increase your cow herd again”, tells the farmer about her farm growth.

At present Adelė Adamonienė together with her son are cultivating over 600 ha of land; they have about 170 ha of pastures, some 400 head of cattle, of which 200 dairy cows. The farm employs 12 hired workers. “Recently we have counted with one of the workers how many years he was working at the farm. And it turned out that seventeen. He was surprised himself”, Adelė is happy to have such people in her farm.

### It was support that saved

“The first support I received from SAPARD. This was my first project. Not big, since like most of the rural people, I did not like debts”, says the farmer. The farmer used support for acquiring a mowing-machine, a soil-tillage aggregate and a refrigerator.

Biggest changes in the farm of Adelė Adamonienė started after being granted support under the Lithuanian Rural Development 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 programmes. “The last period programme support I used even several times, “I received almost one million Litas under the measure “Modernization of Agricultural Holdings” and invested it in the improvement of feed quality for animals, acquired land tillage machinery and renewed the milking platform. These were already big projects. And the latter project, funded under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” was quite big. To enhance the farm competitiveness, more than EUR 318.5 thousand was granted. Using it, we modernized the farm still more. We bought machinery, milking and feed pushing robots.



*According to Adelė Danutė Adamonienė, if not the EU support and her son's ardent work, the farm would not have ever existed*

Thus, works were done much easier and faster. When you can seed fields several times faster with the available machinery, you at once feel the benefit of support”, emphasizes the farmer. “Now we have radically renewed the farm machinery park and modernized farms. By all means, no matter how well machines are operating, they should be under human superintendence. Therefore, my son takes care of the farm and robots, and I am closer to the fields. The farm, nevertheless, cannot be let out of sight”.

Now some 120 cows are milked with robots, and another 70 cows, located in the other firm, by milkmaids. “Making use of the previous support, we have installed a modern milking platform for 18 cows. It serves well even now”, says Adelė.

### Co-operative is the future

Annually 9.5 tons of milk is milked, on the average, per cow at the farm of Adelė Adamonienė. The farm sells about 1 500 tons of milk a year. “Previously I would sell milk through the agricultural co-operative “Pienas LT”, but lately I have replaced it by the co-operative “Lietuviškas pienas”. Everyone always searches where it is better”, the farmer cuts short the conversation about the activities of co-operatives and just adds that farmers willing to defend their interests should earlier or later join into co-operatives.

“For some time already the milk farms experience hard times. We travel worldwide and we nowhere see such anxiety regarding the future like in Lithuania. The system acts not to the benefit of people”, considers the farmer. “Cattle-breeding is a tough business. Young people should be expected to enter it more numerously. However, this field is of no interest to them, since this is not easy and much experience requiring work. Unstable purchase prices and the position of the State are scaring. I think the State should maintain to a larger extent the local producers. I hope the day will come when people would prefer Lithuanian rather than Polish products”.

The farmer adds that, with the emergence of more sophisticated technologies, willing to compete on the market, the sustainable modernization of machinery and technologies is necessary on the farm, these requiring considerable investments. “Probably, it may seem from aside that everything is very simple in farming. As a matter of fact, everything is much more complicated. We, the farmers, live at a constant risk and attain the results only by ardent and dedicated work”, says Adelė Adamonienė and after telling about plant-growing and crop production and their sale, adds “I am a person, cherishing the old rural life traditions. I cannot stop doing something”.



*Robot-milked milk enters a new refrigerator*



*Queuing the milking robot*



*The farm of Adelė Adamonienė*

## One road towards further development of the farm

*This autumn, to honour the Panevėžys District farmers, the National Paying Agency granted an award to Ričardas Jasiūnas, involved in the development of the organic beef cattle production, for the successfully implemented project, funded under the 2004–2020 Lithuanian Rural Development Programme.*

### Decision taken for specialization

“I have been farming independently from 2008. I am the fourth owner of this farm. In 1990, upon having received a 20 ha land plot in accordance with the Farmers’ Farm Law, my uncle started farming. He, unfortunately, died young. Then my mother developed the farm, and I helped her. Later my father became the farm owner, and ten years ago I took over the farm”, Ričardas Jasiūnas overviews the history of farm creation.

At first the mixed farm was being created. Here several dairy cows were kept, the younger animals for meat, pigs, sheep and poultry were bred, potatoes planted and crops sown. “Before I took over the farm, it was mixed. As a matter of fact, once as if a small step was taken towards beef cattle-breeding, but it was related with dissatisfaction regarding milk testing rather than intention to specialize. Since many question marks would arise related to milk testing, we stopped milk sales and used the bigger part of milk for giving to drink to the purchased calves. We reared them and sold for meat”, tells the farmer. “And the understanding about the beef cattle-breeding has changed strongly in Lithuania. I remember when in 1992–1997 I studied at the Panevėžys Agricultural and Hydro Land-Reclamation School and a teacher of the subject of cattle-breeding told about the suckler cows we could not keep from laughing: these foreigners are so eccentric, they breed cows but do not milk them”.

According to Ričardas, before taking over the farm, the public sphere already contained some tips of information about beef cattle-breeding. “At that time my mother’s health was impaired. She could not milk cows any more, thus we had to think about some other trend in farming. In Internet I found several like-minded persons who advised how to turn milking cows to suckler cows”, the farmer remembers a decision to get engaged in beef cattle-breeding.

### Selected Limousines

Being advised by like-minded persons, the farmer started inseminating the available cows with a Limousine bull sperm. “I wanted to breed the Belgian Blue. They are big, fleshy, but as I have clarified they have difficulties in calving. Later I decided to breed Charolais breed cattle, but as it turned out that cows of this breed are also problematic as regards calving, I stopped at Limousines. The more so that in the neighbouring Anykščiai District a farmer is engaged in their breeding. I thought our farm is just very close to the Anykščiai District, lands are the same, and I shall start with this breed”, Ričardas tells when asked about his choice of the Limousines.

The inseminated cows brought forth mixed calves, and with the age those calves acquired still more Limousine qualities. “Already in 2009, I bought four Limousine breed heifers”, says the farmer. “Now I possess 109 head of cattle, half of which is pedigree Limousines, the other part of mixed breed”.

### Support funds for modernization

The first support I received according to the last-period Lithuanian Rural Programme. I was granted EUR 40 thousand for setting up of a young farmer. Then I bought a tractor and a bale press. At that time I cultivated 40 hectares of land. Having received the support, I undertook within the control period to acquire twenty suckler cows. I have fulfilled the obligation”, tells the farmer of the first support benefit for farm development.

With the herd of cattle increasing, cattle could be hardly placed in the old barn, since in e-farming strict requirements are set with regard to the animal welfare and accordingly to the minimum area per head. And the farmer also wanted to acquire more animals. The farm needed more modern and efficient machinery.



*“I am the fourth farm owner”, says Ričardas Jasiūnas*

“I decided to submit an application under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. I indicated in the project that support is needed for a new barn, a shed and a small warehouse, where in autumn the harvested grain could be stored and in winter machinery sheltered. I indicated that upon implementing the above-mentioned the farm competitiveness would be enhanced and the farm would raise higher profits”, tells Ričardas.

For enhancing organic beef cattle breeding, support of over EUR 271 thousand was granted to Ričardas Jasiūnas.

Making use of support, the farmer built the planned buildings. According to Ričardas, now barns are more cozy, lighter and modern. Bales may be neatly placed in a new shed. And new machinery appeared on the farm. Using the support, the farmer bought a bale press, a wrapper, a manure spreader, a bale transporting semi-trailer, as well as a mower, which not only cuts but also collects grass.

“Implementing such project, I could not do without a bank credit. The granted support made more than a half of the total project value, but without it I, probably, should not have undertaken the farm renovation at such a scale”, the farmer shares his thoughts and adds that during project implementation he has faced unexpected difficulties. He was greatly disappointed by contractors. Because of them, a threat existed for the project to be frustrated. “Fortunately, the Ministry of Agriculture extended the term of the projects related to construction from two to three years”, Ričardas says frankly that this decision saved the project.

### Doubts dispelled

Ričardas Jasiūnas hints that at some time he wanted to leave farming. He even finished electrical engineering studies. Intended to work in a city, and only on weekends and after work undertake farming. He worked at a furniture factory for several years. “You cannot run away, when behind your back you have the obligations for support granted and a bank credit? Now nothing is left, but to further develop the farm.

The bred animals are sold in Lithuania. According to Ričardas, even though the customer pays the higher price than buying dairy cattle, it is still far from the price corresponding to the meat quality. “Probably, with time the farmer’s labour will receive due appreciation. I know that quite a lot of farmers sell beef cattle in Poland, transport to other countries and are paid a double price. Sometimes I think it would be good to cooperate with the beef cattle breeders and to export animals”, Ričardas Jasiūnas shares his considerations.



*New barns are more comfortable and lighter*



*Bales are packed in a new shed*

*Ričardas Jasiūnas farm from a bird's view*



## The farm, strong to compete with the Polish and Dutch gardeners

*“My parents were farmers and I also got interested too. I have started gardening”, Darius Morkūnas from Pasvalys District tells of his choice. “Using support received under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” he built a warehouse where vegetables under storage retain their quality until spring.*

### Set up in an open field

Gardening was started by the parents of Darius – Vitalija and Algimantas Morkūnai. “Since I did not have my private land and just leased it, I could not register the farmer’s farm. Therefore, in 1997, I registered the individual company “Sodžiaus rytas” (Farmstead’s Morning), later reorganized into the private limited liability company”, Algimantas remembered the story of creation. “Since we both with my spouse earlier were involved in vegetable-growing, we at once set up a gardening farm. We started growing cabbages and a little amount of garlic. We made attempts to grow Chinese cabbage and cauliflowers. Finally, decided to grow carrots and cabbage”.

Close to the Algimantas Morkūnas company, his wife Vitalija established the e-gardening farm, and in 2011 their son Darius also started farming. All three farms have 150 ha of land. The farm of Darius covers 24 ha.

### Farming changed the dream

“When at school I dreamed of being an engineer. Thus after finishing school I studied construction engineering at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. After studies, however, I at once took up farming. As knowledge in agronomy was lacking, I studied agronomy for one year at Aleksandras Stulginskis University equalization studies”, tells Darius.

Following footsteps of his father, Darius is growing vegetables: carrots, cabbages, beetroots and onions. Carrots, however, are in the lead. They take half of his available land plot.

“You need experimenting quite a lot, unless you find the kind of vegetables, most suitable for your cultivated land. It is very important to choose the appropriate soil for each vegetable, the balanced fertilization is required”, a young farmer shares his gardening experience.

The Morkūnai family on their farm is planting only certified Dutch seeds. “Previously we also bought cabbage seeds. We used to grow sprouts in the hothouse, but after making calculations we saw that it is more worthwhile to buy the already somewhat grown cabbage sprouts. The more so that we buy them from the experienced Polish firm. This firm supplies with sprouts the gardeners of Poland, Lithuania and Estonia. The firm brings sprouts in refrigerators. Each sprout is supplied in a separate small pot”, tells Darius Morkūnas.

### Support for modernization

Today the modern seeding machine is used for seeding vegetables at the Morkūnai farm, cabbage sprouts are planted using special machinery. For harvesting, the farmers have a modern combine harvester. “Most probably, more than half of the available machinery in all three farms we acquired with the use of the EU support”, says Darius. “Our father was the first to apply for support”.

“One thing is to grow vegetables; most important is to preserve them. They need a warehouse, where a zero temperature is to be maintained, since vegetables discharge very much heat. Without refrigerators, they wither very quickly, and start deteriorating. With the expansion of the farm, a warehouse was a must. Thus the first EU support I received under SAPARD I invested in the construction of a warehouse with a refrigerator” tells Algimantas Morkūnas. “Later received supports we used for acquisition of machinery and equipment”.



Darius Morkūnas is developing his gardening farm

“As the existing warehouse could not satisfy the needs of our farms, I decided to submit an application for support under the activity area” Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investment in Physical Assets”. As I am a young farmer, additional points were awarded at evaluating my application. The biggest support amounting to EUR 400 thousand was granted to me. I used it for construction of a new warehouse with a refrigerator. The warehouse has three chambers where up to 1 500 tons of vegetables may be stored”, Darius Morkūnas shows around a new warehouse and is delighted that the Morkūnai farms are strong to compete with the vegetable-growers from Poland and Holland and that they may trade in their vegetables until the new harvest.

Even though all Morkūnai farms are supplied with modern machinery, they cannot do without manual work. Especially, the e-farm of Vitalija Morkūniene. The Morkūnai farms employ about 30 people, and in summer almost 100 workers are working here.

### On sale in Lithuania

Darius Morkūnas, like his parents, sells the major part of vegetables in Lithuania. The farmers use the services of the trade networks. “In strengthening the market position, production quality is of major importance”, emphasizes Darius.

Vegetables after travelling from the fields to the warehouse are sorted, washed, polished and packed. Each package contains a special mark indicating that products from Darius Morkūnas farm are grown according to the national agricultural and food system. “Products produced according to the national agricultural and food system are marked with the mark “Quality”. This is a confirmation that in growing vegetables the limited amount of mineral fertilizers is used and that the farmers participating in the national quality systems are regularly inspected”, says the farmer.



The rich harvest of cabbages was yielded



Darius Morkūnas has built this vegetable warehouse using support



Carrots are harvested with a combine

## Experience of a professional forester is of major importance

*Raimundas Nagelė took advantage of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for developing saplings, acquiring modern and efficient machinery and equipment for forestry works. Support funds help him also in expanding woodland areas.*

### Rational decision

The homestead of Jūratė and Raimundas Nageliai is located close to the border with Latvia, in Rokiškis District, near Suvainiškis Telmological Reserve. On the one side – Roksalas forest and wetland, on the other side – the township of Suvainiškis. Raimundas Nagelė, living in this land already for 26 years and taking care of forest, at a competition of model private forest holdings in Panevėžys County was awarded the first prize in 2010. In 2016, he received the encouraging prize for rational use of forest felling waste for biofuel. At that time the third place was awarded by the commission to Valė Nagelienė, Raimundas' mother, who together with her son takes care of 58 ha of forest holding.

Alongside this activity, Raimundas together with his family set up the rural tourism homestead "Roksalas"; nearby his house, he planted and took care of the vineyard, since he also undertakes wine-making. His wines are included in a list of the Lithuanian national culinary heritage.

Despite of various activities, most important for Raimundas Nagelė is the experience of a professional forester, allowing the creation of an efficient and complex forest in private holdings. To achieve this goal, he makes use of the opportunities provided by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.

With the use of EUR 8 thousand support under the activity area "Investments in Forestry Technologies" of the Programme measure "Investments in Forest Area Development and Improvement of the Viability of Forests" he acquired a soil preparation milling machine. "I thought for a very long time that a milling machine is necessary. I acquired the forest dragging machinery from support funds under the 2007–2013 Programme, but I also saw that machinery for forest maintenance is necessary. A milling machine may be also useful for planting again wood-cutting areas and for forest self-recreation", tells Raimundas.

He had no doubt that new machinery will save quite a lot of effort and time. He acquired a milling machine at the end of the summer of 2018, but started operating it only in October. "Commonly, I plant 50–60% of the forest cutting areas. However, using a milling machine you may plant less and achieve the result not worse as previously, since this equipment promotes establishing roots of planted saplings and spontaneous rooting. Such facilities are especially necessary when shortage of workers is still more felt. It also helps to more rationally use the time, fit for planting. I ploughed 2.5 hectares in less than three hours", states the forester with the long-term forestry work experience.

### Development of saplings is investment into the future

Raimundas Nagelė also made use of support allocated under the activity area "Investments for Increasing the Resistance of Forest Ecosystems and Environmental Value". Support of EUR 2 798 was granted to him for development of saplings. "For a forest to grow better, it is necessary to thin saplings", emphasizes the forester. "Development of saplings is the cleaning of forest from trees and brushes of little value which grow over the main tree species. By thinning saplings, an efficient forest with targeted tree species is being formed".

With the use of support under the 2014–2020 Programme, in 2016 he recreated 2.1 ha, and in 2017 – 3/7 ha of forest. The areas are mostly abundant in birches, firs, pines and alder-trees. Pure fir-groves or conifer areas are absent in the Raimundas forest area. The master leaves conifers in those places where their groups are growing or where their favourable distribution is possible. In 2015, 1.4 ha was already recreated, and in the spring of the next year it is intended to recreate another 7 ha.



*Raimundas Nagelė at his moment's respite*

Raimundas stressed that development of saplings is not only the important and complicated forestry work, but also is a very labour-intensive work. These fellings are unprofitable, but they are important in breeding a good forest. Therefore, it is very important that opportunity exists for receiving support for these works.

Raimundas Nagelė also used support for planting forests. With the use of support under the 2007–2013 Programme he planted 54.7 ha of forest in infertile agricultural and forest purpose lands. Making use of support under the 2014–2020 Programme, he planted 0.69 ha. He planted pines, firs, birches and alder-trees.

### Monitoring is important

The major part of forest areas belonging to Raimundas Nagelė is located in Pandėlis eldership. It is at a distance of 15–20 km from home; therefore, there is no difficulty to go round them two or three times a year. The master is sure that this should be done since the sanitary condition of forest should be maintained and the spreading of pests, fir attacking bark-gnawing typographers should be timely prevented. If a focus is timely noticed and the attacked trees are eliminated, drying shall be stopped. The forest master is also concerned with forest infrastructure maintenance – renovation of roads and ditches.

### A new business niche found

The junior son Simas of Raimundas follows his father's steps. He chose to study forestry. The senior Lukas, after his graduation from international tourism studies, now is studying food technologies at Kaunas College and continues the wine-making traditions, since at present Raimundas is a well-known Lithuanian wine-maker, and wines from his wine-house are included in a list of the Lithuanian national culinary heritage and every year they receive awards. In 2017, his medal collection was supplemented with another two: semi-dry wine from Antonovka apples was awarded a gold medal and grape wine "Soliaris" received a bronze medal at the Lithuanian wine championship.



*Firs in nice lines making their way through snow*



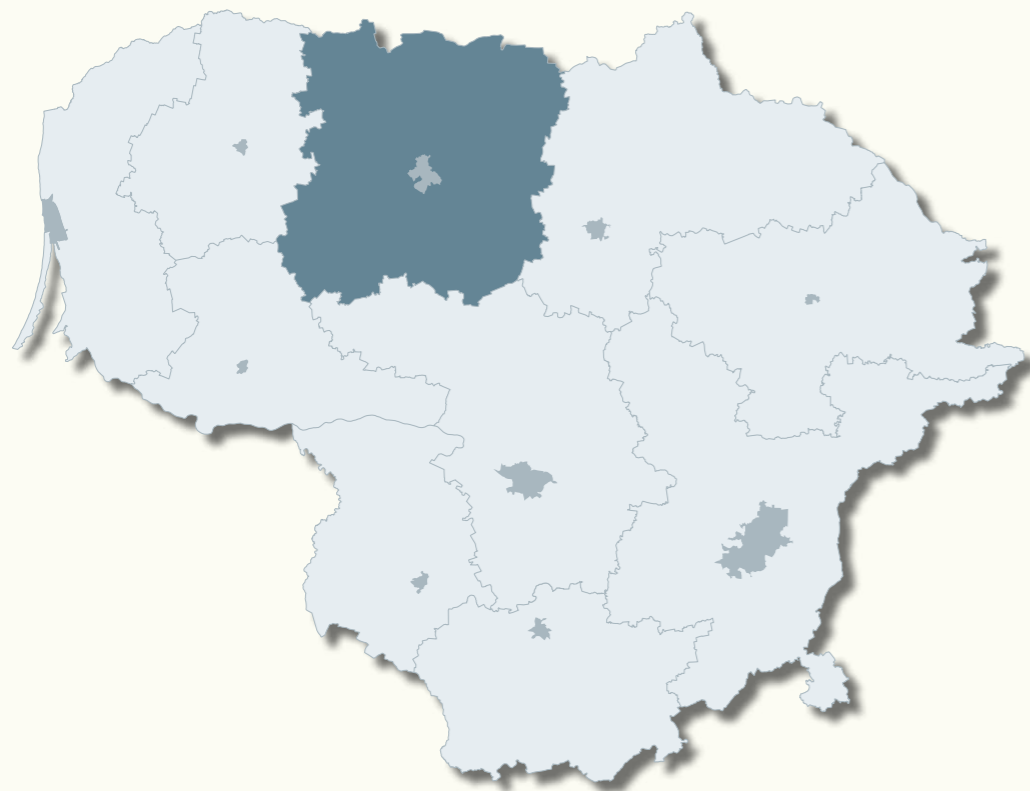
*New technology speeds up works*

Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020  
for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring  
in Šiauliai Region



# ŠIAULIAI REGION >>>

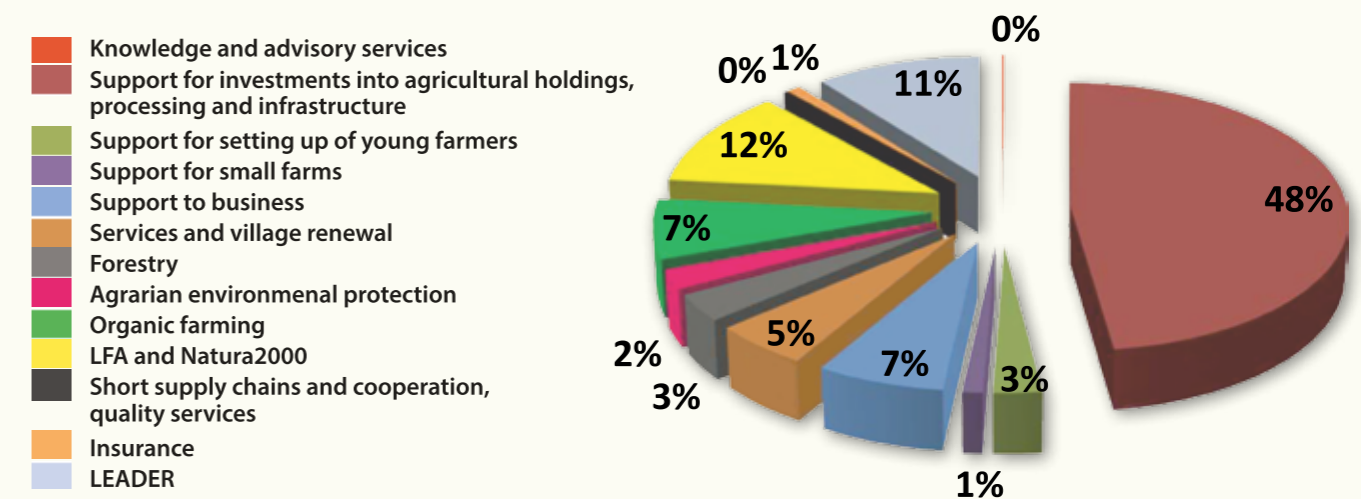
Šiauliai Region is situated in the northern part of Lithuania, covering the municipal territories of Akmenė, Joniškis, Kelmė, Pakruojis, Radviliškis and Šiauliai districts and Šiauliai city.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Akmenė District	1 067 205	76 450	34 487
Joniškis District	5 029 621	224 520	74 838
Kelmė District	7 908 817	881 993	439 379
Pakruojis District	4 059 416	165 550	97 501
Radviliškis District	3 771 974	591 141	136 905
Šiauliai District	3 972 818	368 177	177 599
<b>Total in Šiauliai Region</b>	<b>25 809 850</b>	<b>2 307 831</b>	<b>960 710</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

The approved support structure of EUR 123 889 296 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Šiauliai Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## Most important purchase – a combine`

*“The acquired modern machinery with satellite control system allows us to increase productivity”, the farmers Danutė Aleksandra and Georgijus Kachabrišvili from Akmenė District describe the benefit of support received under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.*

### “I wanted to kiss the land of fathers”

At present the farmers Danutė and Georgijus Kachabrišvili, involved in plant-growing, cultivate about 450 ha of land. This is the largest area of fields in the village of Pagerviai where once the forefathers of Danutė used to live. Separate parcels of land close the native places – in the villages of Klaišiai, Kinkiai and Spaigiai. When in 1993 the family registered the farm in Akmenė land, it was given Number 40.

“I wanted to kneel and kiss the fields in Pagerviai, cultivated by my parents. I just was full of emotions – we have returned to the native land after the long and oppressive occupation that lasted for decades”, even today Danutė feels excited when she remembers the day when the parental land was restituted. “And now when we are going round the fields, always the most favourite nook is Pagerviai – a beautiful village, stretching along the forest-belt near Kruopiai township”.

Going from Spaigiai village to Kruopiai you will see the family machinery yard and warehouses. It is pleasant to stop here. A yard and garages remained from the collective-farm times.



*Danutė Aleksandra and Georgijus Kachabrišvili*

### Farm transformation

“The first support we received in 2005 under the Single Programming Document. Our farm transformation started with that support, from old Soviet machinery towards modern. At that time we bought a new European tractor, a sowing-machine and a plough, a grain dryer”, Danutė reviews the road of farming.

Being granted support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, farmers acquired a grain cleaner, installed a pit for grain intake, and built grain storage houses.

The major changes in the farm occurred upon being granted support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Investments allocated to Danutė Kachabrišvili for the plant-growing farm amounted to about EUR 158.5 thousand.

“The most important purchase is a state-of-the-art crop combine with the satellite mechanism. The combine speed is regulated according to the yield of harvest”, the farmer is proud of her smart harvester. “The satellite mechanism collects all the data into an electronic file and forwards to the data base. From the information supplied you may see how much time you spent discharging grain, how much time you spent stopping and wasting. And the biggest advantage of this combine is that the satellite mechanism is drawing a map of productivity of the whole field. From it you may see concretely the yield obtained at a certain place of the field. Having the specific information, we may clarify the reason of lower productivity: either soil is too wet or some mineral substances are lacking or they are in plenty somewhere or probably there are some other problems. In order to know more precisely what is needed by the land, we have made soil research”.

While buying the smart combine, the farmers have already planned to implement the automated field fertilization. Thus simultaneously they bought a fertilizer spreader with a satellite mechanism, which is capable of reading the combine-drawn productivity map. Thus we spread so many fertilizers in a certain area as it is needed here.

“However, when a fertilizer spreader is dragged by the ordinary man-driven tractor, some overlappings occur. A worker cannot specify the area so precisely where fertilizers have been already spread. Therefore, a satellite control for a tractor was bought. Now our tractor is not overlapping the areas,” Danutė is delighted adding that smart machinery and technology make it possible to increase productivity. Certainly, fertility of the Akmenė land is not comparable with Joniškis or Pasvalys fields. Our harvest per hectare is by some two tons lower”.

According to the farmer, exhibitions help to see what machinery and technologies are better to be chosen. They go to exhibition with all the family. Son Valius Ažuolas graduated from Aleksandras Stulginskis University in agroecology.

He was also a farmer before being elected to the Seimas.

Danutė and Georgijus Kachabrišvili are members of the agricultural co-operative “Joniškio aruodas”, this making options for selling grain at a higher price and buying fertilizers at a lower price. Moreover, for several years already dividends are being paid to the members. “I think co-operation is Lithuania’s future”, the farmer shares her thoughts.

### Some romance

As for many other farmers, the turning-point in the life of Danutė and Georgijus was somewhat unexpected. Every day with an accordion on her shoulder, with music and songs – she worked as a music teacher at the Kruopiai Secondary School and was a leader of amateur art collectives. Later she completed history studies, but when necessary she was always helpful as a music pedagogue. Danutė Aleksandra together with pedagogue Bronislava Petrylaitė took part in the competition of Silver Voices and was titled a laureate. And now when the Kruopiai community members gather, quite often Danutė joins the ranks of loud-voiced women.

The other part of Danutė’s life was formed later together with the independence of Lithuania. The land of her parents, grandparents and greatgrandparents was restituted and she made up her mind to undertake farming. Her husband Georgijus encouraged her to take this step. Danutė and Georgijus got married on January 13, 1991, at the most painful time in Lithuania.

“After exchanging our rings, we went to the Naujoji Akmenė town square, and here from the loudspeaker we heard information about the events in Vilnius, at the TV tower. Our knees shook. We sat on the bench and listened to the news, fearing that the morning of Lithuania’s independence may become dark”, remembers Danutė her emotional experience.

Romantic love between Lithuanian Danutė Aleksandra and Georgijus from Georgia was much written about in the then press and told through the radio. Georgijus lived in Tbilisi, Georgia. He got acquainted with Danutė when she visited the capital of Georgia with a group of tourists. Georgijus after his wife’s death lived with four children. Danutė also lived alone. Her sons had their own families. For some time they visited each other making flights from Tbilisi to Vilnius and from Lithuania to Georgia. However, Georgijus soon moved from Tbilisi to Lithuania, created the family, learnt Lithuanian and received the citizenship of Lithuania. A diligent and skilful urban dweller was full of enthusiasm to cultivate land. At the beginning of farming Danutė and Georgijus had the mixed farm. They grew beets, crops, kept animals, but later decided to grow cereals.

In 2007 they became the winners of the competition “The Farm of the Year”. Danutė and Georgijus Kachabrišvili as a prize received a trip to Scandinavia. The family is fond of travelling, they visited Canada, Vietnam, Italy, many other European states, every year they go to Georgia, the native country of Georgijus. His two sons moved to Lithuania, and daughter Tėja remained in Tbilisi.

“Half of my life is devoted to songs, music, and school, while another part to the land”, says Danutė Aleksandra Kachabrišvili and rejoices that not easy worries of bread growers are meaningful.



*A modern combine, acquired from support, in wait of new harvest*



*A yard reminds the old collective-farm system years*

## Increased opportunities for grain storage

*The agricultural co-operative “Joniškio aruodas”, making use of the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Product Processing, Marketing and/or Development” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” built complementary grain storage facilities and an overground warehouse.*

### Risk got repaid to farmers

When 11 years ago the agricultural co-operative “Joniškio aruodas” was established, many people could not keep wondering at the initiators’ decision. “I think the farmers have not perceived to the end the size of risk. The farms of all 54 co-operative members have been pledged to the bank. Not the part, but the whole farm! And each of them! The co-operative undertook the Greenfield investment, thus it would be impossible to manage without a bank loan, and banks looked upon a new venture very cautiously”, tells Director General Jurita Zubauskienė of co-operative “Joniškio aruodas” about the beginning of co-operative establishment.

The co-operative, joining the farmers, started its activities in 2007. “The co-operative “Joniškio aruodas” was the first agricultural co-operative in Lithuania having its own assets. The capacity of storage facilities of the elevator, commissioned at the end of 2008, amounts to 30 thousand tons”, emphasizes Director General Jurita Zubauskienė.

The first years of activities showed that the correct direction was chosen. The authorized capital of the co-operative during the year increased from 1 million 198 thousand Litass to more than 2 million Litass.

At present the assets of the co-operative are alienated from farmers. The opportunities of the elevator have augmented. Capacity of its storage facilities is 45 thousand tons. The co-operative joins more farmers not only from Joniškis, but also from Šiauliai, Pakruojis and Akmenė districts. Now it has 89 members, owning 15.5 thousand ha of cultivated land. The co-operative performance is profitable. It not only expands its material base, but also pays dividends to its members for shares and payments in proportion to the turnover. The co-operative uses automated grain intake, discharge, cleaning and drying technologies, a modern system of grain quantity and quality accounting is implemented, a railway line is built for grain transportation. The co-operative has 26 employees. Part of the employees, according to the Director General, is family members of the co-operative members. “The co-operative is good because its members may provide services for themselves and what is earned is left to the co-operative members”, emphasizes Jurita.

Dividends are paid to the co-operative members at the end of the year – 10% for the contributed share, and 90% – depending on the turnover of the shareholder and on the extent of services provided to him by the co-operative.

### Activity areas of the co-operative

The main trend of the co-operative performance is trading in grain. Grain, purchased from the co-operative members and other clients, is exported. During ten years it was achieved that the co-operative annually purchases and sells over 120 thousand tons of various cereals, rape and pulses. “Since the big amount of production is sold, price bidding is more successful for the co-operative than for an individual farmer”, Jurita Zubauskienė characterizes the benefit of the co-operative services.

Both the co-operative members and the neighbouring farmers may use the services provided by the elevator. Annually, some 100 thousand tons of grain undergo intake, drying, cleaning, preparation for storage and discharge for sales.

The co-operative also helps its members to supply themselves with fertilizers and pesticides. In the past years, 15 thousand tons of fertilizers and pesticides for EUR 2.5 million was purchased and sold.



*Jurita Zubauskienė, Director General of co-operative “Joniškio aruodas”*

## Support funds for the development

“No doubt, support is of utmost importance for the successful development of the co-operative. We have already implemented four EU-funded projects. The total investment of co-operative “Joniškio aruodas” reaches EUR 10.65 million, of which EUR 3.75 million is EU support”, says Jurita Zubauskienė.

The first support was granted to the co-operative under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 measure “Processing of Agricultural Products and Increasing of Added Value”. The total value of the project “Setting up of the Modern Farm for Grain Processing and Storage”, prepared by the co-operative, was 25.5 million Litass, of which 8.6 million was EU support.

The successful performance stimulated new requirements and plans. “We saw that more storehouses are needed; therefore, we prepared the co-operative production development project and submitted an application under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Product Processing, Marketing and/or Development” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. The total project value is EUR 4.6 million, including support amounting to EUR 1.2 million. Making use of these funds, three storehouses were built, with the capacity of each 3 thousand tons. Thus, this year we could receive by 9 thousand tons more than earlier. The overground warehouse with the area of 2 300 sq m was also built”, the Director feels happy with the implemented project. “When evaluating the submitted projects, the recognized agricultural co-operatives are awarded five points additionally. This somewhat facilitates the condition for the co-operative to be granted support”.

According to Jurita Zubauskienė, this is not the end of works performed by “Joniškio aruodas” and a new application was prepared and submitted. The co-operative requests support for almost EUR 400 thousand for enhancing competitiveness under the 2014-2020 Programme activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Product Processing, Marketing and/or Development”. “Seeking to increase the income of the co-operative members, we would like to build capacities, where malt barley and beans could be stored”, Jurita Zubauskienė, Director General of co-operative “Joniškio aruodas” shares her plans, hoping that the co-operative will soon start new constructions.



*The agricultural co-operative may boast of new storage facilities*



*Summer works*

*“Joniškio aruodas” base becomes still more modern*

## Everything faster and simpler with efficient forestry facilities

*“I cannot imagine our family life without forest. Forest has become our mode of life. My father was a forester, and I am also a forester. My son Nerijus also preferred forestry”, says Vladislovas Narbutas together with his son taking care of some two hundred hectares of woodland in Kelmė District.*

### Revival of homeland

According to Vladislovas, settling of the Narbutai in the Kareivių village around the year 1800 was related to the search for the better life. After starting the creation of their life, they afterwards acquired 80 ha of land and owned 20 ha of forest. My grandfather participated in the 1863 Rebel and was in the exile for about 20 years. After coming back from exile the land was restituted and later divided between the sons.

After Lithuania's re-establishment, the land of fathers and forest was restituted to Vladislovas Narbutas. Since he completed forestry studies and worked for more than 20 years as a forester in the Pakražantis forestry at the Tytuvėnai forest stewardship, he, as all foresters, was permitted to acquire five hectares of forest for the vouchers distributed by the Lithuanian authorities. The State also restituted 20 ha of forest, owned by the grandfather.

“My homeland is in the territory of the Pakražantis forestry, whereto I started to add forest patches, bought from the owners of the restituted forest. These were not large plots. Just several or even some hectares. Forest maintenance requires time and knowledge; therefore, quite a lot of owners decided to sell forest”, tells Vladislovas.

“Quite many owners offered my father to buy their forest. Probably, they were not indifferent to their forest maintenance”, Nerijus supplements his father.

Vladislovas Narbutas increased the forest area also by using support for afforestation under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. A meadow of 5.33 ha was afforested.

### From horse to technology

“Three years ago my father called the “family council” for all of us to decide whether it is worthwhile to request support under the activity area “Investments in Forestry Technologies” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investment in Forest Area Development and Improvement of the Viability of Forests”, tells son Nerijus. “To modernize the works with the help of support was also stimulated by the increasing biofuel market. Forests in Kelmė District are mixed. They mostly abound in deciduous trees. Our family forests contain quite a lot of brushwood, nut-trees and aspen trees. This is a good raw material for biofuel production. We saw that this market was growing rapidly and demand for raw material was increasing. For enhancing the economic value of forest, of special importance is felling of low-value stands of trees. Then my father already had about one hundred hectares of forest. Now we have about 150 hectares. Even though the forest areas went on increasing, the available labour tools were horse and ropes. For performing larger works we tried to hire companies providing those services. However, not many of these you may find in Kelmė District. Part of those who provide forest work services are of the same level like us. Only instead of a horse they use a worn-out tractor. Small forest owners are not of interest to the owners of powerful machines”.

In 2016, support of EUR 29 290 was granted to Vladislovas Narbutas. Since only suffered losses are compensated by support funds, the forester for acquisition of technology decided to take a bank credit. Regretfully, but banks refused to grant a credit to the applicant, who was over eighty. Then Vladislovas made attempts to borrow funds for project performance from the Kelmė Credit Union. Their vague ambiguous answer to the forester did not leave any hope for money borrowing. “Then all our family sat again at the table, calculated money we had and seeing



Vladislovas Narbutas near the oak-tree, given as the family present to the Pakražantis community

that we have enough for project performance decided to do everything from our own funds. We saw that part of money borrowed from our relatives we could return from support funds. Support covered about 45 per cent of the expenses incurred and eligible for financing. It will be possible to repay the other part within several years, as modern technology creates conditions for gaining higher income. When submitting the project, we have clearly calculated its repayment”, the forester shares his experience.

When implementing the project, Vladislovas Narbutas bought a tractor fit for forestry works with a self-loading trailer. “It was a very big step while passing over from horse to technology”, Vladislovas is satisfied with his acquisition.

Another part of the project is rearrangement of 1.2 ha of soft deciduous saplings. After cutting stands of low value, the forester planted the area with fir-trees.

During project implementation, Vladislovas created two jobs. A tractor operator and an accountant have been employed.

### Works were speeded up

As Vladislovas Narbutas emphasized, it was last year that benefit of the technical equipment acquired from support funds was felt. Heavy showers that started in spring continued almost up to the end of December. With such weather prevailing, it was not possible to work in the forest – this meant deterioration of forest floor and roads. “With the weather improving, if not the acquired technical equipment, we would not have done much, as everybody hurried to cut his own areas. When you have your own machines, you just go to the forest and work”, the forester is delighted and added that operating new and efficient machinery all forestry works are done more simply and faster”.

Annually Vladislovas Narbutas produces about 300–500 solid cubic metres of raw wood, necessary for biofuel production. “When we clean forest, we always leave valuable trees. We let them grow. We aim to cut our available forests as less as possible. Last year we sold about 500 solid cubic metres of round wood. We sell to the Lithuanian wood processors both raw wood for biofuel production and round wood. We just export pulpwood, as Lithuania has no opportunity for its processing”, says Vladislovas.

Having performed works in his forest, Vladislovas now helps other small forest owners.

### Farming is not neglected either

Vladislovas Narbutas does not neglect farming either. He is developing the crop production farm. He grows crops. According to him, works in the forest and on the farm do not interfere with each other. In winter he works in the forest, while the most substantial work on the farm starts in spring and ends in autumn.

Nerijus, following his father's footsteps, also combines forestry and farming. He, however, prefers the development of cattle-breeding. So far he keeps crossbred meat-cattle breeds, though he plans to supplement the herd with Limousines.

Vladislovas and Nerijus Narbutai at present have about 80 ha of tilled land.



The forester's helper is a new tractor with a self-loading trailer

## Along the grandparents' well-trodden road

*Mindaugas Valančius, a farmer from Pakruojis District, was born and grew up in Šiauliai. He planned to be a builder and started studies in this area, but 27 years ago with his father Dominykas he came back to the grandparents' farmstead and started farming on 39 ha of the restituted land. Making use of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programmes, he is developing a modern plant-growing farm and comfortable life for his family in North Lithuania.*

### The grandparents' land was restituted

“Here are my grandparents, here is my father”, before starting to tell about farming, Mindaugas opens old photos. “My father's parents lived and used to farm here. They were deported to Siberia from here. My father was also deported with them. After deportation they could not come back to their home. Their house was turned into a many-flat collective-farm house. They settled in the neighbouring Joniškis District. When according to the Law on the Farmers' Farm, some option appeared to receive land, my father hurried up to take it. Even though it was possible to receive up to 50 hectares, he took as much as his parents owned. He started up the plant-growing farm. There was no rape then, thus we cultivated wheat and barley. And some sugar beets”.

When Dominykas Valančius started farming, Mindaugas was sixteen. In 1996, when his father died, Mindaugas took up the lead. Now the cultivated land amounts to 444 ha. More than a half of this area is private, other part is leased. Land plots cultivated by the farmer are of different size: from 6–17 ha to 65 ha. “Now it is almost impossible to expand holdings in Pakruojis District. Free land is completely unavailable. I don't know, whether a person, coming from the city or returning from abroad, who decided to farm in Pakruojis District, would succeed in finding land. Except the case when his parents or grandparents are farming and they would share the cultivated land with him”, considers the farmer.

In 2010, Mindaugas Valančius was a winner at the competition of “The Farm of the Year” in Pakruojis District.

### Support is of great help to the farmer

“If not for support, I have never created such farm, most probably”, says Mindaugas. “In 2003, I received the first support. It was a national aid for young farmers. I used it when building a garage for machinery. The building materials were compensated”.

“Mindaugas almost alone built that garage”, his wife Virginija is proud of her husband's diligence.

Using support, granted under the 2004–2007 Single Programming Document, Mindaugas bought two tractors, a grain combine, a sprayer and a sowing machine. “For farm modernization I also received support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. I purchased a telescopic loader, rollers and a plough”, the farmer is delighted with the benefit of support.

Under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, support of almost EUR 183 thousand was granted to Mindaugas Valančius. The received support was of use in renewing the already worn machinery. “I bought a new tractor, and the most important purchase was a combine. The more efficient combine was needed, since the old one was too small for the existing farm. It was not possible to harvest with it in time”, tells Mindaugas. “I am satisfied with a new combine. At the moment it is most modern in Lithuania. The whole process of harvesting is computer-regulated. The caterpillar chassis protects the soil from compression. It is very important in the case of the more rainy harvest time. The cutting part of the combine, 10.8 m in width, speeds up considerably the harvest time”.

### Benefit of the co-operative

Farmer Mindaugas Valančius is a member of the Board and one of the founders of the Agricultural Co-operative “Joniškio aruodas”. “When in the course of creation of the co-operative, we have pledged all our property, I should say frankly – we did not understand what we were doing. Upon receipt of the message that credit to be taken should



*Virginija and Mindaugas Valančiai are creating a modern farm and environment comfortable for life*

be guaranteed, all of us gathered and signed all necessary documents”, the farmer remembers the beginning of the co-operative activity. “If now it is needed to do so, I do not know who would dare to do this. All is well that ends well, and today we feel the real benefit of the co-operative”.

According to the farmer, the biggest benefit of the co-operative is the opportunity to sell the harvest at a higher price and to buy cheaper fertilizers needed by the farm. Part of the harvest may be stored in the cooperative storage facilities, so that the farmer would not be concerned with building their own, since this would demand quite a lot of expenses.

“The co-operative is also useful in obtaining know-how, necessary for developing the plant-growing farm. It organizes seminars and field days. You will not find on the Internet so much information, as you may learn when communicating with specialists and scientists. To solve the issues important for you, the co-operative agronomist will be helpful”, the farmer is satisfied with the co-operative activity.

### All the family is working

Five people are employed on the Mindaugas Valančius farm. According to the farmer, such number of employees is enough, if necessary, all the family comes to help. “This summer son Martynas brought all grain to “Joniškio aruodas”, Mindaugas is proud of his son. “Now Martynas is finishing the gymnasium. He plans to study economics. The senior daughter Monika is studying agronomy at Aleksandras Stulginskis University. “We will have our own agronomist”, smiles Mindaugas. “Even now Monika helps in the farm. Each summer we must collect stones from the fields. It seems that they appear like mushrooms after rain. All our children go to the fields to collect stones. Milda is our smallest. She studies at the sixth form, but she is keen to help”, Virginija, who replaced her doctor's assistant work by the status of the farmer, is proud of her daughters. “I am in charge of the farmstead's maintenance and the family's catering. Certainly, I would go by car when some parts are needed during the busy season and Mindaugas at that time is not available”.

Several years ago the Valančiai family celebrated a house-warming party in a new house. As a matter of fact, several years were needed to build a house, since the major share of income should be dedicated to farm modernization. “I have one more dream – to revive buildings of my grandparents, still standing in the farmstead. It would be possible to equip here guest-rooms”, says Mindaugas pointing to the old buildings in the yard.



*This tractor is bought with the use of support funds*



*The most important purchase is one of the most modern combines in Lithuania*

## Sustainable and not easy beekeeping business

A beekeeper from Radviliškis Algirdas Šimanauskas keeps about 130 bee families on his farm and is trading in propolis, pollen, candles, bee bread, and honey. With the use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, he renewed facilities.

### Start in beekeeping

According to beekeeper Algirdas Šimanauskas, it was his father that infected him with a beekeeping virus. “My father fled to Kaliningrad from the Soviet power persecutions. While working here, he got injured and when in hospital he learnt Russian, read publications about beekeeping and got interested in this field of farming. After coming back to Lithuania, he became seriously involved in beekeeping. In 1960–1975 he made hives very precisely. Until now I am using them. These beehives are very heavy; they are very suitable for storing bee bread. My father left me 500 bee families, but I started to be seriously involved in beekeeping ten years ago – felt that it was my vocation”, beekeeper Algirdas tells of his start in beekeeping.

According to the beekeeper, it was a real success that at the start of his business he had inherited bees and hives from his father, as it would be very difficult to start from zero.

### Feeling strong

“At present I have six apiaries. They are located in various places of Radviliškis District: Linkaičiai, near Šiaulėnai, Daugėlaičiai, Nirtaičiai, and Šniūraičiai. It is a total success that no plunder of beehives occur – it happened just twice when beehives located close to the house were ravaged and thrown to the pond. As a matter of fact, beehives are not guarded – you bring the property to a meadow and leave there”, says the beekeeper.

According to Algirdas Šimanauskas, various types of support were of much help in expanding the beekeeping farm. “I received the first support in 2010. It was national support. I bought five bottomless beehives, where instead of the bottom a net is used. These beehives are very good for honey-storing. Several years ago I decided to make advantage of the opportunities provided by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020. I submitted an application under the activity area “Support for Small Farms” of this Programme measure “Farm and Business Development”. In 2015, support amounting to EUR 15 thousand was granted to me for the development of the beekeeping farm”, tells the beekeeper. “These funds were paid in two parts, EUR 7.5 thousand each. I had to pay EUR 3 000 as VAT”.

Using support Algirdas bought a honey centrifuge for EUR 3 thousand. “You could never buy such for your own money”, Algirdas feels glad. “After a honey centrifuge was bought, works were done faster. Upon setting a program, I can extract a bigger amount of honey. A very necessary purchase is pollen dryer. You may dry 3–4 kg pollen at a time. I also bought some other smaller equipment. Support, indeed, is invaluable”.

Just this year some misfortune has happened to the beekeeper – 30 bee families perished. “Under the support conditions, the presence of 130 families is required – otherwise, you may lose support. I had to restore the contracted number, thus I bought the lacking families. One bee family costs EUR 100 – I suffered considerable losses. I will increase the number of bee families, sell some of them and strike a balance”, the beekeeper is optimistic.

### Generous summer

The beekeeper is satisfied with the hot summer of 2018. According to him, quite big amounts of honey of good quality were brought by bees in this “Turkish” summer. “I am often asked what honey is best. Best honey is which is most delicious to you. My mother best of all likes buckwheat honey – it is dark, not very good for tea and is butterfish. This year, forest abounded in melliferous dew – bees brought pine and linden honey”, tells the beekeeper. “Honey “harvest”, like for all farmers, depends greatly on weather conditions. If summer is rainy and cold, there will be no honey, as bees fear humidity”.



Various types of support helped Algirdas Šimanauskas to expand the apiary

### Difficulties have not passed by

“One may think that beekeeping is an easy field of business, but it isn't so. Beekeepers face a lot of problems. Beehives should be transported from one place to another, so that bees would bring various sorts of honey. Beekeepers usually carry them with self-made not registered trailers. The authorities for some reason are in no hurry to permit one to register those trailers, therefore, such travels of beekeepers take place illegally, usually at night”, Algirdas speaks of the beekeepers' worries. “Another problem is bee diseases. The major enemy of bees is ticks. They are destroyed by amitraz strips, formic acid. Still another enemy of beekeepers is spraying of crops. Since my all apiaries are registered, in summer I receive lots of messages about crop spraying. Even though sown areas must be sprayed from nine o'clock in the evening till four o'clock in the morning they are also sprayed at a daytime. As a result many bees perish. Beekeepers cannot also miss a swarming mood of bees”.

The major concern of beekeepers, according to Algirdas Šimanauskas, is honey sale. The competitors of the large beekeepers are small beekeepers, owning several beehives. Algirdas sells his honey in Kaunas, on a farmers' market-place. “Here, 7–8 beekeepers are standing close to each other. And sometime you must make your choice, whether you sell cheaper or do not sell at all. I sell honey also in Radviliškis shopping centre. There are days when you earn just 20 euros. The real salvation for beekeepers is by-products: wax, bee bread, propolis, and pollen. I am finishing bee bread sale. We make candles from wax – now customers ask candles embodying the symbol of the next year – candles in the form of piggies. It would be necessary to search for such forms and make candles in the form of piggies”, Algirdas shares his worries and plans.

### Perspectives of the farm

“I have enough premises; one of the biggest beekeeping shops is in Radviliškis. Having received support, I bought all necessary equipment. It would be possible to expand the bee farm, but I have only two hands. Children live abroad. I ask them to come at least in summer and help me with beekeeping, but so far I have not succeeded. My grandson, a student, attempted to take up beekeeping. I set up a bee farm for him, invested money, but a young man was patient for a short time”, says Algirdas Šimanauskas smiling. “Thus I am working with my bees peacefully, without any fuss – the work of a beekeeper is consistent and permanent”.



The real salvation for a beekeeper is by-products: wax, bee bread, propolis and pollen



A new honey centrifugal machine



The travelling apiary



## The largest gardening farm in Lithuania was developed

*“We should have never created without support such a farm as we have today with my wife Daiva. Actually, the whole agriculture of Lithuania, if not the EU support, would not be developed as it is today”, says Linas Šateika from Šiauliai District, the largest vegetable grower in Lithuania.*

### Impetus – a visit to Holland

“After my studies in agronomy I started working in Naisiai collective-farm. Soon an opportunity appeared under the Law on the Farmers’ Farm to receive some land. In 1989, I took 25 hectares. I could take the whole permissible area – 50 hectares, but safety locks got switched on as I did not imagine what and how to do. I started farming with my bare hands. I did not have any machinery. Just later I bought the obsolete tractor, written off by the collective farm”, says farmer Linas Šateika and adds that prior to his decision to grow vegetable he has tried everything. Cultivated crops, feed beet seeds, cabbages, garlic, and other vegetables. “Everything but corn”, smiles the farmer.

Gardening was started after a visit to Holland in 1994. The city of Šiauliai maintained friendship ties with one of the cities in Holland. The Dutch delegation visited Linas, as one of the first farmers in Šiauliai District. The mayor of that city was also here. “They liked very much staying with us. The mayor before leaving asked me what I wanted most of all. I said I wanted to see

agriculture in Holland. Soon I received an invitation and with an old car went to Holland. My brother was driving the car. My cousin acted as interpreter. The chairman of the Lithuanian Farmers’ Union Šiauliai Division was also with us. Whole agriculture in Holland was demonstrated to us, except for a pig farm, though everything was told and shown visually on the slides. The gardening in Holland was of special interest to me”, Linas Šateika remembers the beginning. “I have been thinking about it earlier. I had a cellar, bought from the collective farm, and started doing something”.

The first support to Linas in creating the gardening farm was provided by the Dutch in 1997, when implementing the first project between Holland and Lithuania, aimed at supplying our gardeners with specialized machinery, teaching them to grow vegetables according to the Western technologies. “They consulted us and provided machinery. I had then about 100 hectares of land. The farm was mixed, but I was growing some vegetables. Some 3 hectares with beets, 3–4 hectares with cabbages. For vegetable storage, I started building a refrigerator. I needed 600 thousand Litas for construction and facilities. At that time it was enormous money. It was troublesome for me to get credit. In 1998, banks looked upon agriculture as a not perspective area”, tells the farmer. “Later, upon a guarantee from a distant relative I succeeded in being granted a credit”.

### EU support as an aid

When SAPARD programme reached Lithuania, the Daiva and Linas Šateikos farm was somewhat advanced. I had some machinery and a refrigerator. “I needed a modern vegetable storage facility. I was building it using SAPARD funds. Initially, construction was not smooth. It got protracted. About 700 tons of vegetables were rotten”, remembers the farmer.

Using the support funds, Linas Šateika bought some machinery. For support, granted under the Single Programming Document, the farmer was building a vegetable storage facility with a refrigerator with the capacity of 1 000 tons. The German company was building the storehouse. Even though the company did not increase the price, due to the boost of construction prices in Lithuania, the whole amount of support was spent for services provided. “There were some years when I just worked for the banks”, Linas remembers the farmer’s worries. “We modernized the farm with the use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. Some EUR 200 thousand of support we have already received also under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020. We were not satisfied with one-furrow carrot harvesters. We needed more modern and more efficient. Thus we decided to apply according to the activity area “Investments in Agricultural Holdings” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. The funds received we used for buying a caterpillar four-furrow harvester. We have operated it in the autumn of 2016, but its major advantage we felt in the autumn of 2017. If not this harvester, we would not be able to harvest the major part of carrots from soaked fields”.



*Daiva and Linas Šateikos are active participants in the activity of the Lithuanian Vegetable Growers’ Association*

Linas Šateika does not see the reason to buy all machinery required for the farm. “Probably, there is no use to buy machinery needed just for a month per year. It may be rented. Certainly, if something happens to the rented machinery and you must wait for several days until it is repaired, you start thinking that it would be good to have your own. Machinery if maintained well may serve for a long time. In our farm until now we use machinery received from Holland”, the farmer shares his thoughts.

### Not scared of embargo

Some two years ago the farm was supplemented with another two storehouses with refrigerators. Linas Šateika built them using his funds. “When a Russian embargo started, all of a sudden you had to find a way out”, says the farmer and adds that earlier they exported a lot of vegetables to Russia. “We then had a direct link with one of the trade networks, the co-owner of which was the German firm. With the start of embargo, new places for vegetable selling should be found. Now we are cooperating with the Lithuanian trade networks. Quit big amounts of vegetables we sell in Latvia, Estonia and Belarus.

The available storehouses may store 18 thousand tons of vegetables, 12 thousand tons of carrots and 6 thousand tons of onions.

### For crop rotation – interchanging fields

Linas Šateika is cultivating about one thousand hectares of land. Carrots and onions cover 150 ha each. Seed is bought from Holland. According to the farmer, the Dutch seed breeders recommend the sorts of carrots and onions, most suitable for the Lithuanian climate and the soil cultivated by the farmer.

To maintain the crop rotation, the farmer interchanges fields with his neighbours – most often with the Naisiai agricultural company. When interchanging fields, one should be guaranteed that the soil is well cultivated, fertilized and not exhausted.

The Daiva and Linas Šateikos farm is engaged in sustainable farming and on that basis they grow vegetables in conformity with the national agricultural and food product quality system requirements. The farmers are active members of the Lithuanian Vegetable Growers’ Association, and Daiva Šateikienė is the chairman of the Board of this Association.

The Šateikos farm employs some 60 people. They bring them not only from Šiauliai, but also from Pakruojis and Joniškis districts.



*Linas Šateika cultivates carrots in 150 hectares*



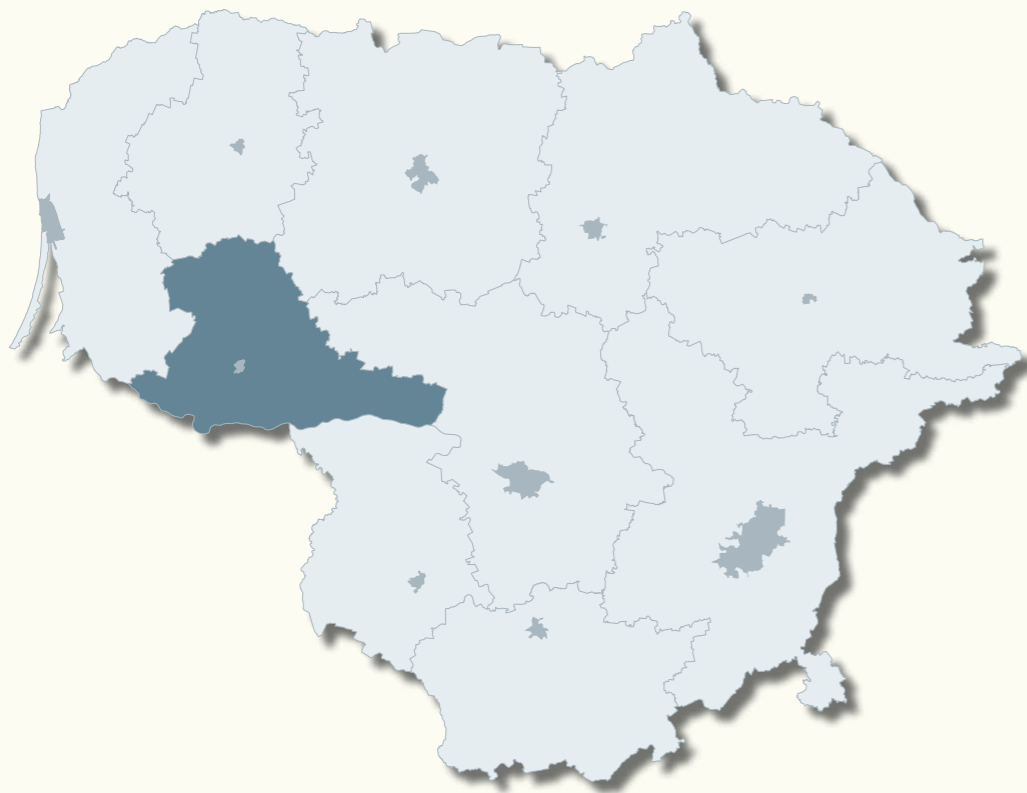
*Heavy showers do not hinder the acquired carrot harvester*

## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Tauragė Region



# TAURAGĖ REGION >>>

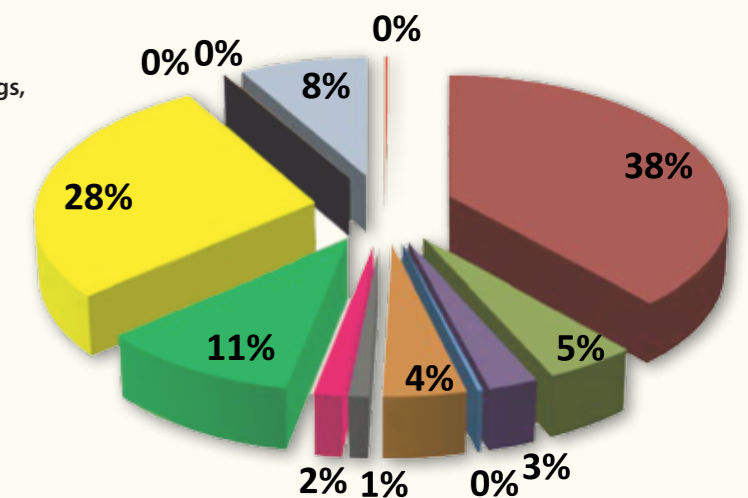
Tauragė Region is in the western part of Middle Lithuania, embracing Pagėgiai municipality and the municipal territories of Jurbarkas, Šilalė and Tauragė districts.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Jurbarkas District	1 816 756	76 450	34 487
Pagėgiai	4 597 174	224 520	74 838
Šilalė District	9 469 981	881 993	439 379
Tauragė District	6 585 712	165 550	97 501
<b>Total in Tauragė Region</b>	<b>22 469 623</b>	<b>591 141</b>	<b>136 905</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The approved support structure of EUR 92 841 020 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Tauragė Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## From Kaunas to the village for farming

*Darius Mickūnas, a farmer from Jurbarkas District, was born and grew up in Kaunas. “From my childhood I spent summers and weekends in this village. Here my grandparents lived. We were coming here not to relax, but to work”, tells the young man.*

### Sometimes farming links generations

“Not far the great-grandparents’ farm was located. Now instead of it just open fields are stretching which we are cultivating. The great-grandparents were deported to Siberia after the war. My grandfather – my father’s father – was also deported with them”, Darius reviews his family history. “After re-establishment of Lithuania’s independence, the grandparents started farming. My father got also involved in farming. He is a forester. Used to go throughout forests, and afterwards decided to go in for farming”.

At present Arūnas Mickūnas, father of Darius, is cultivating some 400 ha of land. Two of his sons are also running their farms. Meanwhile, they are cultivating one hundred hectares each. Darius is a graduate of Aleksandras Stulginskis University in mechanical engineering. Ramūnas is an agronomist.

“Even though farms are separate, but farming is performed together. We coordinate with each other where and what to sow, so as to avoid idle travelling”, says a young farmer.

Darius started farming only in 2016, after completing his studies.



*Darius Mickūnas is farming at the locality from where his family roots arose*

### Support for setting up a farm

“After farm registration, I at once submitted an application for support. Under the activity area “Support for Setting up of Young Farmers” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”, EUR 40 thousand was granted to me”, tells Darius.

For funds received he built the grain storage tower. “Simultaneously, from my own funds I installed a grain dryer and a grain intake pit. The total value of the project was EUR 55 thousand, thus I had to contribute EUR 15 thousand”, Darius is happy with support. “This support was a big stimulus for farming. When submitting an application, I was in some trouble, but not too much. I was mostly fascinated that support may constitute 100 per cent of expenses eligible for funding”.

As a matter of fact in implementing the project I had to face certain challenges. The year 2017 was noted for heavy showers, hindering the tower construction. “We laid the foundation in late autumn. I had to implement the project until the end of 2017, thus I was under stress”, says Darius. “However, we managed to do everything in time. And this year we have already poured the harvest into it. Only harvest was rather poor. It was drought that did harm. Bins are not abundant. Harvest was less by half. Last year the yield was good, but we could not harvest it all. Oats totally remained in the fields”.

According to Darius, his father also used support for farm development. However, he brought his first combine from Germany. At that time, his purchase was most modern and powerful in the village. Later he bought another combine, more sophisticated, with the use of support according to the previous period rural development programme.

“And brother has received several supports. Under the previous period programme, he was granted support for setting up of a young farmer. Under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of this period measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, more than EUR 40 thousand was granted to him. He rather orients himself towards modern machinery and implements”, Darius is glad at his brother’s success and adds that without support it would difficult to develop the farm. Direct payments are of a great help for the farmer.

### Beginning of farming is not easy

“I do not know how successful would be farming if I had to start everything from zero. Probably, I wouldn’t dare. It is good that my father’s experience was extensive. Now you can hardly find land, and if you happen to find, these plots are most often very small, ten or even several hectares”, the young farmer speaks frankly and adds that even having father with so extensive experience in farming, various challenges arise. One of these is selling of the harvest. “Part of the harvest I sell according to the preliminary contracts. Here you bargain for prices and amounts. Harvest of this year impedes the fulfillment of contractual obligations”, Darius regrets.

The Viduklė co-operative helps to sell grain. “I am not a co-operative member so far, but I may use its services. The co-operative helps to sell grain at a higher price”, the young farmer sees the perspectives of the co-operative activities.

Harvest also depends on a seed variety. Darius this year has sown up several pilot plots. “The size of the harvest we’ll be seen after harvesting. I will select a variety, most suitable for our cultivated land”, the farmer shares his plans.

Darius does not regret of choosing farming. If not farming, summers spent in the village would be just loss of time. His enthusiasm for farming has not been dampened even by the fact that you cannot leave the farm throughout the busy season. Work goes after work. After the busy season you have more time. You may travel and spend much more time in your native city. The farmer also thinks about his farm expansion. “If I succeed in making use of the 2014–2020 Programme, I would like to build the second grain storage tower to store some other grain as well. It is good that you may pour several heaps in the hangar. You cannot pour separate heaps in the tower”, the young farmer Darius Mickūnas somewhat discloses his plans.



*Having received support, the young farmer built the grain storage tower*



*Today modern machinery is operating on the Mickūnai fields*

## A fifth-generation farmer from Bitėnai

*Mindaugas Karklelis, who completed his accounting and commercial studies at Pagėgiai Municipality, has been running a dairy farm for already 25 years. “I am a fifth-generation farmer on this farmstead”, says Mindaugas smiling and adds that without support he would not be able to create such farm as he has now.*

### Robots are employed on the farm

“I thought about acquisition of a milking robot even when I had thirty cows. The old barn, however, was not suited for its installation”, says Mindaugas Karklelis. At present he keeps more than one hundred dairy cows, and two robots replace humans at a farm, built several years ago.

The farmer acquired his first robotic milker with the use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013. The second one was acquired from support under the 2014–2020 Programme.

According to the farmer, it is better to entrust the hardest work to robotic technology that never gets tired and is not cranky, these qualities having an impact on an animal and milk yields. “When a cow enters the milking stall, a robot scans a chip implanted under the skin at the neck. According to the cow’s milk yield, her lactation period, a robot pours special combined feed into a feeding trough. When the cow is eating, her udder is washed, milking cups are attached, and milking is performed. This procedure lasts for not more than ten minutes. The same robot performs milk tests. Then the system automatically gets self-washed and starts the same procedure with another cow”, tells the farmer.

Cows, being aware that they will receive their favourable feed, enter the milking stall willingly, though there are some that do not come. In this case a robot sends a message to the farmer’s cell phone, indicating an unmilked cow. Such stubborn cow is to be brought to the milking stall. The cow, intending to eat feed for the second time at the milking stall, fails to cheat the robot. “I do not agree with those who say that upon installation of robots people are fired. We have two people on the farm and they are still working. They can perform some other work”, maintains Mindaugas.

Some 35 litres of milk, on the average, is milked per cow daily, and it makes about 1 200 litres per year. In 2017, the farmer sold almost 12 thousand litres of milk. This year he expects to sell up to 12.5 thousand litres.

“To achieve good results, it is necessary to focus on animal genetics. Since I breed animals myself, I have almost passed over to pedigree Holstein breed. This is the eighth-generation of animals. I sell the born bull-calves to Israel and I leave heifers for herd improvement. The second important thing is feed, and the third one is prevention and animal wellness. If you miss these things, you should work until the problem is eliminated or you will have to reject the animal, and this is not that simple. The productive herd of dairy cows is being formed in more than a year”, Mindaugas shares his experience.

### Grain storage facilities built

Grain storage towers are erected near the farm.”It was not easy to persuade the project appraisers of the need of grain storage facilities in the development of dairy farming, but we managed to do this”, the farmer is happy with this structure and the harvest of this year is stored in new storage facilities and is delighted with facilitation of works. “We use grain for feed. Previously, to avoid grain heating, we would dig grain over again”.

Mindaugas Karklelis and his wife Enida cultivate 200 ha of land. They grow crops. Grain is used for feeding animals, and straw for bedding. “Even though it is persuaded on the market that rubber mats are very good, they cannot replace natural bedding. Mats are something coming from the last century. In the West countries the farmers go over to natural bedding. Lately mattresses have been offered. They are good but very expensive”, says the farmer.

Machinery for land cultivation and animal care was bought using support, granted pursuant to the Single Programming Document and the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013.

The farmer built the farm without any support. “I built it from used building materials, and in that case the EU support is not granted”, tells Mindaugas. And he lets out of planning to build a barn for calves. Developing the farm, Mindaugas Karklelis thinks over what for bigger investments are necessary and what can be done with the lower costs. On his farm the stalls are made of cheap wood. A major part of works he performs with his own efforts. He calls for help the firms only for performance of works that requires special machinery. He is in no hurry to renew the available



*Mindaugas Karklelis, a fifth-generation farmer from Bitėnai*

machinery, as he maintains it very carefully. “Part of the machinery serves on the farm for ten years already and will serve for another ten years”, observes Mindaugas.

### The first support for the dung-yard

Of importance for the start of my farm was support, granted according to the Milk and Nitrate directives. At that time I acquired a slurry truck, manure loader and spreader and installed a lagoon. Since for construction of a dung-yard a project was needed, I have also prepared the project of farms. This facilitated granting of support in later periods”, tells Mindaugas Karklelis.

However, before building the dung facilities, a serious challenge has to be overcome. “At that time we were farming at our farmstead, which was located in the territory of the Rambynas regional park. Even though in the period between the wars some 1 800 sq m was built up, a dung yard was not permitted to be built near the barn. The park directorate treated it as a new structure. The dung-yard is just the appurtenance to the farm. All my attempts to prove this to the park directorate failed. I had to build a dung-yard 1.5 km away from the farm, and to transport dung. Construction in a new place also was more expensive, since it was necessary to install electricity and to build infrastructure”, the farmer remembers the start of farm creation. Some who did not see any opportunities to establish here their farms moved to the cities, others went abroad. Now, if they would like to return, no land is available. The old parents, who stayed here, not seeing any prospects, sold it.

### The farmstead is memorized in the book “Paradise Road”

Mindaugas Karklelis is a grandson of Lena, described in the book “Paradiestrasse” (Paradise Road) by the German writer Ulla Lachauer, translated into 18 languages. Lena Grigoleit (Elena Grigolaitytė-Kondratavičienė) is a descendant of Prussian Lithuania, annihilated in the summer of 1941. In truth, it is stated in the book that the grandmother did not believe too much that her grandchildren will take the road, trodden by several generations – will be farming. She thought that the owned land will be sold by auction. Fears of the grandmother have not been actually proven. “Regretfully, in Lithuania we do not have rural culture that exists in the USA and Germany. In those countries it is honour to take over the farm, set up by parents. In Lithuania, opinion prevails that farming is for those, who are not able to establish somewhere else as if they are weak in the head. If you do not need to tell about your education, it is not so bad, but if they learn about your education some of them are surprised and wonder: whether you could not find anything better. I hope that with time such approach will change”, Mindaugas Karklelis shares his thoughts.



*The newest structure on the farm – grain storage facilities*



*Major part of machinery and implements, necessary for the farm, was bought with the use of the EU support*

## Faster works due to modern machinery

*“I could not decide for a long time as regards support. It is accompanied by obligations and I have not decided about my further farming. And only when I saw that upon acquisition of efficient and powerful machinery, you can farm normally, I decided to submit an application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme”, says farmer Kęstutis Ačas from Šilalė District.*

### Familiar works from childhood

“I was born at the grandparents’ farmstead in Paupis village. Now this is my place for farming, but for a long time there have been collective-farm fields. Due to land reclamation, my parents were forced to demolish their house and to move to Varsėdžiai settlement. Here my childhood passed”, tells Kęstutis, the eleventh child in the Ačai family, which brought up twelve children: five sons and seven daughters.

With the re-establishment of Lithuania, 22 hectares of family land was restituted to my parents. Kęstutis then was in the ninth form. “When needed, I operated the tractor and did other works. Farm works are familiar to me from childhood”, Kęstutis remembers his first lesson in farming. “In my school years, however, I was mostly keen on beekeeping. My brother finished beekeeping studies and worked as a beekeeper in Jonava District. I helped him to look after bees. After disintegration of collective-farms, he brought part of his bees to the native home. It happened so that he turned to priesthood, and I took care of his bees”.

After school Kęstutis entered Aleksandras Stulginskis University. Completed his studies in 2010 as a bachelor in ecology and environmental research. Later at Kaunas Technological University studied public administration.



*Free time moments with the family – wife Kristina and children Jokūbas and Gabija*

### Farm, taken over from mother

Kęstutis Ačas registered his farm in 2004, taking it over from his mother. “My mother kept dairy cows on her farm. It seems that seven. Upon taking over the farm I saw that small dairy farm is not efficient and is labour- and time- consuming. I decided to mate dairy cows with a meat bull and thus to have a cross-bred meat herd. Now I am breeding Limousine and Angus cross-bred cattle. The herd is not big. In summer I had 38 head of cattle and in autumn they numbered 27”.

In 2010, making use of support for semi-subsistence farms, Kęstutis Ačas acquired soil tillage machinery.

He was in no hurry to search for some other support. He was stopped by obligations, accompanying support, and doubts if it was worth to develop the farm. Seeing that EU support was beneficial for machinery renewal, he made up his mind.

### Efficient machinery helps to speed up works

The first support under the activity area “Support for Investment in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” was granted to Kęstutis Ačas in 2015. Almost EUR 50 thousand. “With the use of support I bought a powerful tractor, a bale press, a wrapper, and a herminator”, the farmer enumerates his purchases. “After a year, under the same measure, I received support for modernization of beef cattle-breeding. Also some EUR 50 thousand. I use the simplified form of applying for support, since it is easier to administer the smaller project, and there is no need to take credits for project implementation. Using this support, I bought a sowing-machine, a mower and a rake, a semi-trailer for animal transportation, and a sprayer. Since I aim to do everything myself, not hiring anybody, machinery is of help in more efficient farming. You can do all works faster. As I have an official job, I can work on the farm only in the evenings and on free days. And my family also needs attention. We with my wife Kristina have two children”.

### Undertaking the seed farming

In the recent years Kęstutis Ačas has been also involved in seed farming. He cultivated oat seeders of “Kertag” variety. And in autumn he sowed rye of “Duoniai” variety. This variety was created in Lithuania. It is also very good for more acid soils. “I was stimulated to undertake seed farming by UAB “Agrolita”. I have signed a contract with them. They buy seeds from me”, tells the farmer. “Seed farming brings much more income. And there is no such involvement, as you have with animals. When you keep animals, you must be daily involved. You need to make feed and look after animals”.

### Organic farm benefit

Kęstutis Ačas is developing an organic farm. As a matter of fact, when selling cattle this is of no special importance for price – price is higher by 15 cents per kilo. “However, there is some other benefit of organic farming. We contribute to the environmental protection and grow healthier products. Undertaking organic farming, amounts of products grown are less, but they are healthier for people. This lesser amount of production per hectare is partly compensated by payments for organic farming. Since all my 60 hectares are attributed to lands in highly unfavourable areas, I am paid EUR 61.60 per hectare. This is a great help. If not these payments, after selling production the costs suffered by the farmer would not repay. Not speaking about the acquisition of more modern machinery”, considers Kęstutis. “But when support is being granted, when you receive payments, it is possible, if you are farming prudently, to live normally from a small farm”.

### Volunteering at a free time

In-between their works Kęstutis and Kristina find time for volunteering. They are volunteers at the Šilalė deanery family centre. They conduct seminars for the newlyweds before marriage. According to Kęstutis, a secret of happy family life is to understand and accept the partner as he or she is. “It is no good that people try to change each other”, says Kęstutis Ačas.



*“Duoniai” variety came up nicely*



*Kęstutis Ačas is breeding Limousine and Angus crossbreds*

## Viability of a blackcurrant farm is enhanced by support

*“I make use of various programmes. Without them, I would not have taken a risk to buy at one time so many new modern and more environment-friendly machines”, says farmer Algirdas Macijauskas from Tauragė District, involved in blackcurrant growing. Modernization of the farmer’s blackcurrant farm took place with the use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programmes for 2007–2013 and 2014–2020.*

### Experience extending for a decade

“I laid out the blackcurrant field in 2004. At that time huge perspectives were promised for berry cultivation. No doubt, I was stimulated to take such a step by the then support of the Ministry of Agriculture for establishing berry fields. Acquisition of shoots was compensated. Thus I planted blackcurrants over the area of 13 hectares”, Algirdas Macijauskas reviews the beginning of his activities.

Initially, the farmer sold berries straight “from the bush” – the buyers would come to the blackcurrant field and picked as many berries as they wanted. Part of the berries was picked and sold by the farmer and his family members. However, this was not the most efficient way of blackcurrant farming. Much work. Picking berries with hands, a considerable part of harvest was lost as it was difficult to pick berries in due time. “Berry picking became easier when a neighbour acquired a berry combine harvester. And we used it for harvesting”, tells the farmer. “Then we also started



*A vehicle for transporting berries, acquired from support funds*

be interested in opportunities for farm modernization. To compete with other berry growers, more modern and more efficient machinery was needed. The more so that competition in berry-growing was becoming still more serious, since we are competing not only with the Lithuanian berry growers, but also with the cultivators from other countries, especially from Poland. We decided to use the last-year Lithuanian Rural Development Programme. Being educated as an economist, I prepared a project and completed an application. I am delighted that the project received a positive appreciation and almost EUR 50 thousand of support was granted for farm modernization”.

### The most important purchase is the berry harvester

“The granted support contributed considerably to the blackcurrant farm modernization. Then I acquired two tractors, and the most important purchase was the berry combine harvester”, the farmer shares his joy. “This was a very substantial support, since 50 per cent of the eligible project implementation expenses was to be compensated”.

The blackcurrant farm was modernized using support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Almost EUR 50 thousand was granted as support for blackcurrant farm modernization. “With the use of that support I bought one more tractor and a tractor semi-trailer, a blackcurrant field weeder, and a sprayer. Since I bring berries to the customers, transport was needed. Thus I bought a cargo microbus”, Algirdas Macijauskas enumerates his purchases. “This time 70 per cent of eligible project implementation costs were compensated. It was a good help for the farmer. Certainly, quite a lot of machinery necessary for a blackberry farm I bought without support”.

### Using scientists’ consultations

Funds for investments in agricultural holdings are not the only support received by Algirdas Macijauskas. Under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, support to him was granted for advisory services. “This is a very good measure. I know that in case of any issue regarding blackcurrant field maintenance I will be given professional advice. Consultations of the scientists from the Horticulture and Gardening Institute are very useful”, says the farmer and adds that support amounting to EUR 1 500 for consultancy is a big help for a farmer. “If you need to pay such a sum for consultations, you should have to sell about 7.5 tons of berries. Another thing – this measure helps easier to obtain consultations from scientists. If not this Programme measure, it would be very complicated to invite a scientist to the farm”.

According to Algirdas, consultations of scientists are very helpful in running a blackcurrant farm, as blackcurrants are attacked by blight and mites. These plants have fungi diseases. “Now after noticing the signs of some disease, I call at once the Institute and receive professional advice. And scientists also come to the farm and provide a good deal of useful information”, says the farmer”.

### Support for enhancing confidence

As the farmer notices, still more consumers search for more qualitative products, grown with the use of lesser amount of chemical means. “Products, manufactured under the National Agricultural and Food Quality System, are marked with the “Quality” mark. This enhances the confidence of consumers. Support funds, received according to the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Quality Systems of Agricultural and Food Products”, I have already used for acquisition of packaging and creation of labels. All that makes it possible to gain easier the customers’ confidence”, Algirdas Macijauskas emphasizes the benefit of the measure.



*Blackcurrants are harvested with the combine harvester*

### Children following their father’s road

Sons Mindaugas and Audrius followed their father’s steps. Both exchanged their urban life for farming in the native Tauragė District. For modernization of their farms they used support for small farms. “And the daughter, using the social network Facebook, started selling berries, and she does it with success. When you sell berries directly to the customer, you need not wait for settlement and price is much better”, the farmers shares his experience. “I like direct contacts with customers. A considerable impact has the facts that the blackcurrant farm is certified and that blackcurrant is grown using a very limited amount of fertilizers and other chemical substances”, Indrė Macijauskaitė supports her father and lets it out that lately they have been processing part of the berries – using the services of other people they produce blackcurrant juice and sauces, but they have an idea to apply for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 and acquire facilities for processing and a refrigerator for extending the shelf-life of berries.



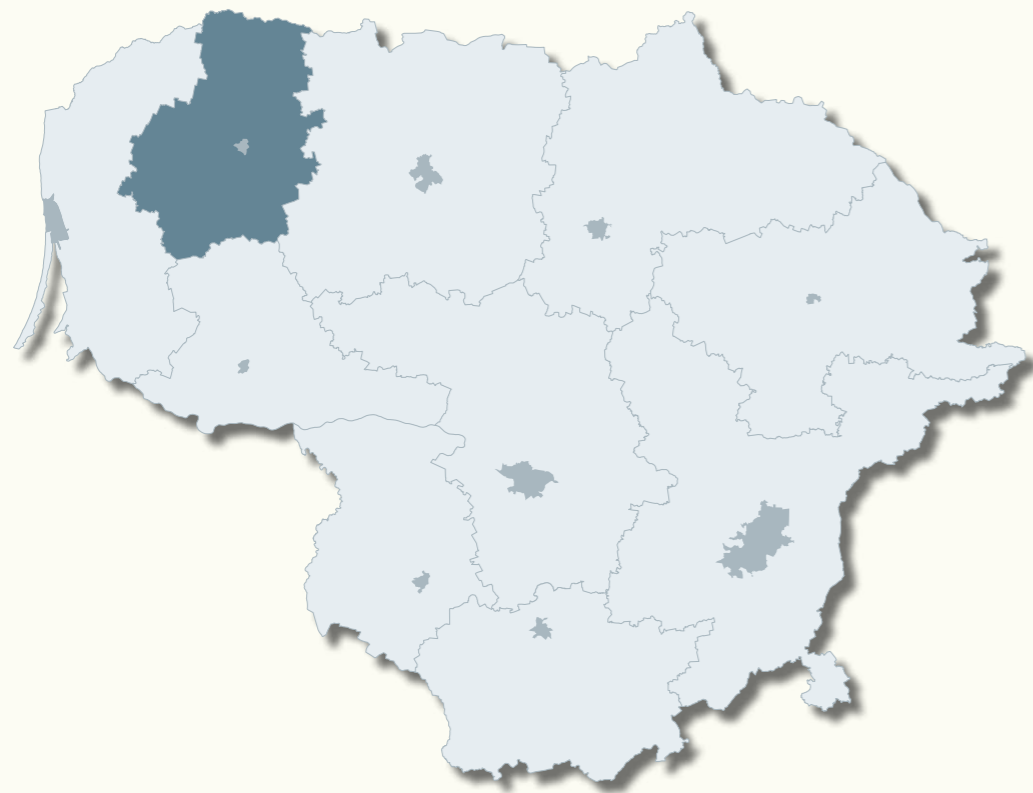
*Son Audrius helps Algirdas Macijauskas to harvest berries with the combine harvester*

## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Telšiai Region



# TELŠIAI REGION >>>

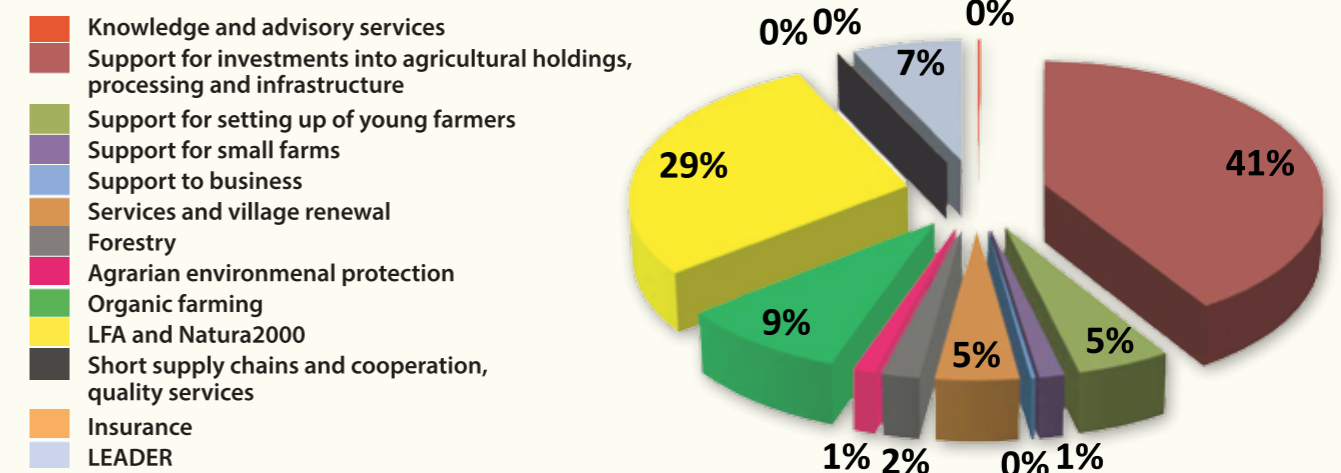
Telšiai Region is situated in the western part of Lithuania, covering the municipal territories of Mažeikiai, Plungė and Telšiai districts and Rietavas municipality.



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Mažeikiai District	3 203 048	489 643	126 138
Plungė District	8 282 185	987 850	426 020
Rietavas	2 378 017	1 128 589	143 571
Telšiai District	9 953 670	1 988 373	291 002
<b>Total in Telšiai Region</b>	<b>23 816 920</b>	<b>4 594 455</b>	<b>986 731</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The approved support structure of EUR 106 001 933 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Telšiai Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The farmer needs a lot of patience and persistence

*“To develop a modern farm, to implement innovative technologies and to be competitive on the market, very big investments are needed”, emphasized Alma and Darius Kaubriai, farmers from Mažeikiai District, and stressed that support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 helped them greatly to acquire new machinery.*

### Started almost from zero

Having started with nine hectares received as a gift from his parents, now Darius Kaubrys cultivates almost 700 ha of his private and leased land. “In my youth I worked for some time in one of agricultural companies; some time later tried to find happiness in Spain. However, the native land always remains native. I came back to Lithuania, started cultivating the land, owned by my parents, and later leased some more. Machinery was not numerous and in a poor condition. The beginning was very difficult. I had to put much effort”, tells the farmer. “Some six years ago I noticed the buildings on sale in the village of Kabaldikai. The company that was once based here went bankrupt. A lot of private land was around the buildings. Thus we bought it”.

In 2015, the Kaubriai farm was recognized as the best and most innovative in Mažeikiai District. During the awards at the Competition “Farm of the Year 2015”, organized by the Lithuanian Farmers’ Union, a honorary diploma and a glass statuette, as if symbolizing the fragility of the farming business, were awarded to Alma and Darius Kaubriai.



*Farming for Darius Kaubrys is everything – work, hobby and leisure*

### “Farming is everything for me: work, hobby and leisure”, says Darius smiling.

“Nothing but fanaticism, thus such immersion into the farm may be described”, assures Alma. “He likes to watch how each plant sprouts up and grows, and how a fruit sets. He is much interested in machinery. He is the first, if he has an opportunity, to visit an exhibition or a plant, where he can find some novelties and ideas.”

“At present, farming is completely different. Machinery is more novel, more efficient and safer. Everything is modernized and computerized, tractors have navigation systems, and their control is not needed. Operating the previous machinery, I would never be able to sow 70 hectares per day. It would have taken at least a week. However, to start farming as we have done almost from zero is very complicated and hardly is possible, as no free lands are available. It is easier for those who take over large farms from their parents”, Darius speaks of the changes in the life of the farmer and rural people.

### The trend is plant growing

Alma and Darius Kaubriai are developing the plant-growing farm. They grow wheat, barley, rape and peas. According to them, rape and wheat are most profitable, but each year is different, as the market plays its games. This year beans were most profitable. “Plant-growers are very dependent on nature. In the autumn of 2017, we could sow almost nothing, as many roads after heavy rains were inaccessible. Drought was in 2018. Crop capacity has decreased by twice. The favourable autumn, however, gives a hope that the next year will be more generous. We have sown more than expected”, says the farmer.

### Support helped to grow

“When we acquired more land, we could not do much with the available machinery. It was at that time that under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 applications were accepted for investments in the modernization of agricultural holdings. We have implemented even four projects. We bought a tractor, a sowing machine, a stubble plough, a spreader and a combine. Since then, the farm started to grow, as having machinery we were able to cultivate more and more land”, Darius characterizes the benefit of support. “Having learnt that applications

are accepted for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, we decided also to take this opportunity, as the farm still needed some machinery”.

Under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme” 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, support of EUR 147 thousand was granted to Darius Kaubrys for modernization of his farm. With the use of it, the farmer bought a more powerful tractor, a sowing machine covering the larger area, and a telescopic loader. “And all machinery available on the farm is necessary. If you have a tractor but do not have a combine, you will not be able to harvest in time and all your work will be in vain”, says the farmer.

According to him, if not support granted he would not have created such a farm as it is now – it would not be possible to buy such machinery and several implements at a time from own funds, as agricultural machinery and implements are very expensive.

Even though the EU support helps the Lithuanian farmers to rise, the Single European Union Agricultural Policy, as Darius Kaubrys is convinced, is neither honest nor fair for the agriculturists of the Baltic States, as direct payments paid to them are lowest and they have to compete with the farmers of other countries who are granted much higher payments. Darius Kaubrys supported a protest action organized six years ago. “We sought payments to be equalized, but this has not been achieved. At the end of this year, the Lithuanian Agricultural Chamber organized again several protest actions as regards the Single European Union Agricultural Policy after 2020, as it is targeted within the period of 2021–2027 to allocate for Lithuania as direct payments EUR 3.344 billion or by 5.8% more than in 2014–2020, though it is foreseen to allocate for the Rural Development Programme by one third less than in 2014–2020. The average of the EU direct payments is EUR 266. Half of the countries are below this average. Lithuania is third from the end – after Estonia and Latvia, while Belgium, Holland and Greece are at the top. Why for them in one way and for us differently? Lithuanians, in my opinion, have more complicated conditions as compared to French and German farmers, as we have the colder climate and shorter vegetation. Of course, the former protest actions were given some attention, payments somewhat increased, though still we work and compete under unequal conditions”, says the farmer from Mažeikiai.

Together with Darius his wife also works. Earlier her life was linked with medicine, but after her marriage with the farmer she turned her into different direction and now cannot imagine a different life. Both sons of the Kaubriai are becoming still more serious helpers, even though the elder son is just ten and the younger is seven years old. The family also has four hired workers who have started working here at setting up the farm.



*The farm of Alma and Darius Kaubriai is recognized the best in Mažeikiai District in 2015*



*Machinery, acquired with the use of support funds, is operating on the farm*



## Quality system supports a beekeeper and helps the customer

“Several years ago we decided to participate in the National Agricultural and Food Product Quality System, since it sets higher quality requirements for a product. As honey from our apiary is in conformity with the system, why not to take the opportunity and to mark it with the national quality mark, confirming to the customer that this product is of high quality”, says Donatas Abrutis, a beekeeper from Plungė District.

### Possibility to reveal exclusivity

“When our honey was certified by “Ekoagros” as being in conformity with the National Agricultural and Food Product Quality System requirements, we have applied for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agricultural and Food Product Quality Systems”. Support was allocated to us and we bought glass jars, labels, visiting cards and advertising stands; we are preparing material for a leaflet about our apiary”, tells Donatas Abrutis

Products produced according to the National Agricultural and Food Product Quality System, are marked with the mark “Quality”. Even though this mark makes the product easier recognizable, but, as Donatas says, only a few people so far pay attention to it. “This mark should be more widely popularized in the public sphere”, thinks Daiva. “During our educational classes we always tell about the participation in the measure of the National Agricultural and Food Product Quality Systems and about the mark”.

Donatas Abrutis, while developing beekeeping, has also used the earlier EU and national support. The funds received he used for acquisition of stainless steel containers, a honey extractor and beehives.



Beekeeper Donatas Abrutis

### The inherited pursuit

“Bees have come into my life very early. My grandfather and father used to keep bees. Not many. Some 4–5 beehives. After his grandfather’s death, then a student, he took care of his bees”, Donatas remembers the beginning of beekeeping and adds that those people whose parents kept bees earlier or later start keeping them. “After the re-establishment of Lithuania’s independence, I decided to undertake beekeeping. I bought two bee families. Later, two more. Afterwards all of a sudden there were twelve families. Now with Daiva we have about one hundred families”.

“I got infected with beekeeping from Donatas”, laughs Daiva.

“Now in some areas she is more important than me. She extracts honey and sticks labels. This is a time and labour consuming job. I am walking around in apiaries and my wife is involved in handling honey”, Donatas tells of their work distribution.

### Organizing educational classes

Alongside beekeeping, Daiva finds still more pursuits that are dear to her heart. She started making candles. “We are fond of burning candles. Especially, on autumn evenings. And wax candles diffuse special odour. However, previously we bought candles, even though we had enough wax. Then I decided to make candles myself. I like this pursuit very much. I think that an educational candle-making programme should be created. This programme would be as a sort of aromatherapy. How fragrantly smells wax”, Daiva shares her impressions and ideas.

Educational classes for Daiva and Donatas Abručiai, living in the surroundings of the Samogitian National Park, is nothing new. They organize classes for some years. At first, friends would come to tell about bees and honey and to visit a farmstead. “Later friends of our friends started to ask for coming, and Daiva’s friends still more induced to organize the classes”, tells Donatas.

“We organize educational classes for children and for adults. We tell about the life of bees and show a beehive for our guests to see how bees are living. When adults are on a visit, we show what is kept by the beekeeper in a beehive. We have installed a small apitherapy house. Some guests wish to try apitherapy and to lie on the plank-beds above the bees in that small house”, Daiva presents the educational programme.

“We also talk how many legs bees have. Each programme participant is given a drone for touching, since many of participants have never kept a bee in their hands, and drones, differently from worker bees, do not sting. Some of them ask for a box so as to put a bee and bring home”, Donatas supplements his wife.

Honey degustation is the delicious part of the programme. A honey taste depends on the time when honey was brought and extracted. Honey collected from spring flowers is of one taste, from raspberry flowers it is of some other taste. Summer blossoming imparts other spectrum of taste to honey. Honey colour also differs. Beekeepers also give to taste honey mixed with curcuma and cinnamon. In 2017, at a meeting of friends in the autumn forum “My Bees”, honey from Donatas Abrutis apiary was recognized as the most delicious honey of the year. “Even though we keep bees in the same places, with the same plants around, but honey always is of different taste. I am quite often asked what honey is best for eating. I answer that it is good to eat various types of honey, since different varieties contain different useful substances”, Daiva shares her experience. It turns out that honey is of completely different smell and taste depending on its being extracted or trickled from the same comb, since at extracting taste somewhat differs.



Together with his wife Daiva

### Leading the beekeepers’ society

Donatas has been at the lead of the Plungė Beekeepers’ Society “Spiečius” for almost ten years. The Society unites beekeepers from Plungė and Rietavas. “The chairperson, who has been previously in this position, decided that I should lead the society. At one of the meetings, he asserted, not telling me, that he proposed me to head “Spiečius”. Thus I fell into it”, Donatas is joking.

Beekeepers from Plungė participate actively in training. “Certainly, not all of them have time and possibilities. Some have trouble with their health, as most of the beekeepers are people of senior age. Others have some other problems, but the major part of them is curious people. The society also has young members. The youngest is 17 years old, and her parents are beekeepers. There also still others who after coming from Germany and Norway decided to get engaged in beekeeping as business. You cannot expect to earn millions here, but you can create a normal life”, Donatas Abrutis characterizes the opportunities of beekeeping.



Educational classes at the farmstead of Daiva and Donatas Abručiai and at the apiary

## If not for support, forests would proliferate

*“In our country, many farmers have used the EU support. If not this support, we would have forests proliferating, since nobody would be willing to cultivate land”, says Vladas Rekašius from Rietavas Municipality, involved in the development of organic beef cattle-breeding. “At the present moment it is impossible to acquire land. I still managed in time to catch the train. My mother gave me as a gift 24 hectares of land, some 13 hectares I bought myself.”*

### Encouraged by his French neighbour

“I have started farming with three calves. Then I still worked in the forest and did not think seriously about farming. However, if you live in the village, you must keep animals. Thus with the collapse of the collective-farm, I bought three crossbred heifers. I was seventeen at that time”, Vladas Rekašius remembers his road towards farming. “After Lithuania entered the EU and direct payments appeared, I looked very cautiously to filling up declarations. I was not resolute to get involved in farming, even though vacant lands were over there. But when farmer Frederic Jafre from France settled in the neighbourhood, I thought that I also could take back and start cultivating the land of my grandparents. And that time I became accustomed to the land. From my childhood I was with my mother in the farms. My father was a machine-operator. All works have been well known.

Vladas Riekašius registered his farm in 2006. Having taken a bank loan, he bought some ten crossbred beef heifers. He repurchased the farm of the collective-farm from residents, who had acquired it for shares. “The ceiling of the building was wooden, everything was old. After demolishing, I bricked the walls and covered the roof. Beef cattle do not need warmth, protection from wind is more important”, the farmer shows the structure.

Soon after the farm registration, a specialist from the Advisory Service urged me to submit an application for support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 measure designed for setting up of a young farmer. “Certainly, consultants helped me to complete an application and to prepare a project. I felt stronger when support was granted to me. Using it, I bought a tractor and a press. I had then 40 hectares of private land. Now I have about 70 hectares of private land and in total cultivate 131 hectares. I cultivate crops in approximately one fourth of the area. I grow them rather for crop rotation. For two years I sow crops, then meadows are here again. Some part of the grown grain I sell, the other part I leave for feed”, Vladas describes his road to success.

### Support for modern machinery

“In total, I received support six times. Mostly under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Support three times was granted under this measure. I use the simplified form. In that case, support is granted simpler”, the farmer shares his experience. “I would not be able from my own funds to buy so much machinery, necessary for farming”.

The first support under the 2014–2020 Programme was allocated for the development of cattle-breeding. “Then I received over EUR 45 thousand and bought a manure spreader, milling cutter, sowing machine, roller, and organic plough”, Vladas enumerates the acquired machinery. “After being granted the second support, I bought a press for feed preparation and other machinery, required for the farm. Both times 70 per cent of incurred and funding-eligible expenses were compensated from support funds. Thus I had to add just some 30 per cent. This a great help for the farmer”.

The farmer is especially happy with machinery, acquired after being granted the third support. More than EUR 48 thousand was granted to Vladas Rekašius for investments in agricultural holdings. “With the use of this support, I acquired a tractor, mower, ploughs, and a trailer. A telescopic loader much facilitated the farm works. With its help,



*Vladas Rekašius was encouraged to farm by his neighbour, a farmer from France*

manure may be faster and easier managed and fodder bales neatly loaded in the barn. This loader may lift the bale to the necessary height”, the farmer is delighted.

Vladas hopes he will succeed in using the EU support again. “My wife Alma and I brought up three children, but they are already creating their own lives. Now just two of us are left, and works should be facilitated. The farm is in need of a 150-horse-power tractor, a mower and a big rake. I am waiting for a call and, probably, I will succeed in being granted one more support”, Vladas shares his expectations.

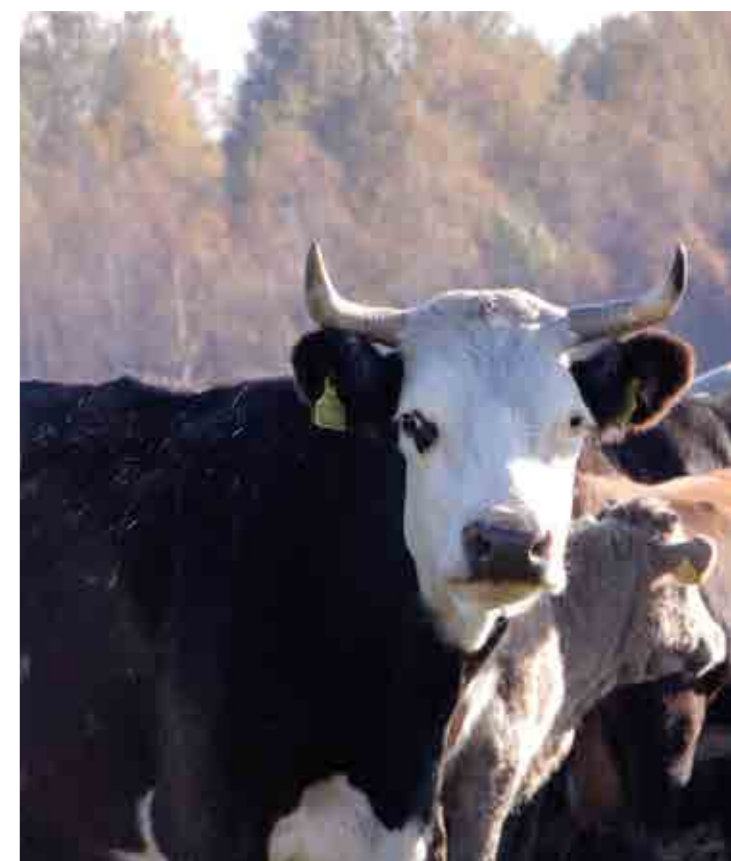
### Organic farming preferred

“There was nothing too much to be considered”, Vladas tells when asked about his decision to develop organic cattle-breeding. “We have not used mineral fertilizers for meadows and fields. We use just manure. And upon registration of an organic farm, you also receive payments”.

With the farm being developed, support for consultancy is also of much help. “They take care that land tests should be performed, give advice how to preserve land, so that to avoid too intensive exhaustion of land. Their advices and an opportunity to take part in field days are of special importance in farming. I have not completed any agricultural sciences. Just finished nine classes and started working”, Vladas makes casual mention with Samogitian restraint, as if weighing each word.

If animals are sold in Lithuania, according to Vladas, organic farming has no impact on price. “To find the market abroad for a sole farmer is very difficult. Quantity is too small. However, there are many farmers around engaged in livestock breeding. We are still more often talking that we need to get united and to sell animals together. If we could organize a van at the same time, it would be better for all of us. In Poland they pay by one third more”, considers the farmer and after some time adds. “With some farmers it is possible to come to agreement, with others not very possible. We’ll see, probably, we will succeed”.

At present, Vladas Riekašius keeps about 140 head of crossbred beef cattle. “I have bought two bulls of Charolais breed, but I do not intend to change the herd into a pedigree one. Pedigree animals are somewhat fastidious. They need better feed”, the farmer discloses his plans.



*The farmer breeds some 140 head of crossbred beef cattle*



*The herd on the pasture in autumn*

*A telescopic loader, acquired from support funds, facilitates work*

## Support has stimulated to follow father's footsteps

*Gintas Palekas, a farmer from Telšiai District, is one of the first farmers who decided to apply for support under the activity area "Support for Cooperation between Small Farms' Subjects" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Cooperation".*

### From the capital to the village

The Daiva and Alfonsas Palekas family have four sons: Gintas, Tomas, Paulius and Vilius. The youngest Vilius is fifteen. He lives with his parents and is a student at Telšiai Vincentas Borisevičius Gymnasium.

Gintas, after finishing school, chose agriculture – studied geodesy and land management. After studies a qualified specialist started his life in the capital. He acquired a flat, created the family, though having worked as a land-surveyor for ten years he did not manage to lose touch with the village.

As he says, he had to travel a lot on business throughout Lithuania's villages and communicated with a big numbers of farmers. Upon coming to them he not just worked as a land-surveyor, but also was interested to learn how they succeeded, about their machinery and farming innovations they were applying. And the farmers shared with pleasure their experience and problems.

Gintas was a permanent guest at his parents' house as well – helped them with their work on the farm not because of his duty but because it was a pleasure to him. And four years ago he and his family moved from the capital to Telšiai. He acquired the land in Žarėnai and started farming. His brother Tomas has already chosen to be a farmer several years ago after coming back from the capital. "Forefathers and grandfathers lived and worked here. We also will do our best to survive in Lithuania", says Gintas and adds that emigration does not attract him.

Daiva Palekienė does not suppress her joy remembering the day when she learnt about the decision of her two sons to move from Vilnius to native Žarėnai. "By good fortune, we received as a gift something extraordinary and completely unexpected – our children came home. Her sons, however, lived well in Vilnius, had good professions, and good jobs. Gintas bought a flat", tells mother.

"After leaving the tranquil life in the countryside, I was suffering in the capital for a long time. A whole year passed until I got used. The first month I could hardly sleep. We lived in the centre; fire-engines and police cars are running and hooting. Noise and mess. Briefly, the life is intensive. Though I am glad of a chance to know Vilnius, its life, I met many good people here, but that was not enough for me to stay in the capital. At least once a month I was used to come to Žarėnai", Gintas speaks of his reasons to take a decision for returning.

### Support was a stimulus for development

Gintas acknowledges that it was the European Union support and State aid granted to farms that stimulated him to make up his mind to follow his father's footsteps and undertake farming. Especially to small and medium-sized farms.

Already when living in the capital, Gintas made a careful analysis of the measures, offered by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme, and their given opportunities. He discussed these issues with other farmers and representatives of institutions in charge of agriculture. From his parents' experience he knew if you want to move ahead you must use every offered opportunity.

"If not a financial support, Lithuania would be left without farmers", Daiva Palekienė, Gintas' mother, a farmer with the 25-year experience interferes in the conversation.

Daiva modernized the farm with the use of the previous Lithuanian Rural Development Programme. Tomas, while using the 2014–2020 Programme, intended for small farmers, built barns. He, like his parents, is involved in cattle-breeding.



*Gintas Palekas in 2018 started spring works with new machinery, acquired from support funds*

### Commitment to help a partner

Gintas started with plant growing – decided to cultivate crops. More than 40 hectares are sown with crops. He has already acquired some agricultural implements, but for farm expansion they were not enough. It's good that his parents' farm is nearby – their help is always at hand. However, as he says, it is better to lend a hand than to wait for help. Having defined the priorities, the farmer decided to take the opportunity for being granted support under the measure, designed for cooperation of small farms. The more so that Gražvidas Strikauskis, a brother-in-law, a small farmer from Tryškiai, agreed to become a partner.

To increase competitiveness of the farms of Gintas Palekas and Gražvidas Strikauskis by cooperation, support amounting to EUR 90 thousand was granted. The project value is EUR 150 thousand. The farmer had to contribute EUR 60 thousand.

"Agricultural machinery is not cheap. What should I have bought for my EUR 60 thousand without support? Probably, some used machinery", considers the farmer. "With the use of support of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, he improved his farm condition. During the first project implementation stage, for the spring busy days he acquired a modern tractor and ploughs. During the second stage, he acquired a trailer and a stubble plough.

Gintas Palekas has committed himself for support to help the partner Gražvidas Strikauskis, who is cultivating over 15 hectares of crops. His partner is also satisfied that with the help of Gintas works will gain momentum. He even considers whether it would be expedient to expand his holdings.

Gintas is in no hurry so far to share his future plans. It is most important to preserve what he has created. It is needed to build a house in the native land. It is necessary, if you want to get from the land, to invest quite a lot into it. Gintas for the time being is living in Telšiai, but he has already acquired an old farmstead, instead of which he is planning to build a new house for the family.

"I am happy that our grown-up sons are very good, attentive, and not afraid of work", Daiva Palekienė is happy to have such sons.



*A new tractor drove in just before the 2018 spring busy season*

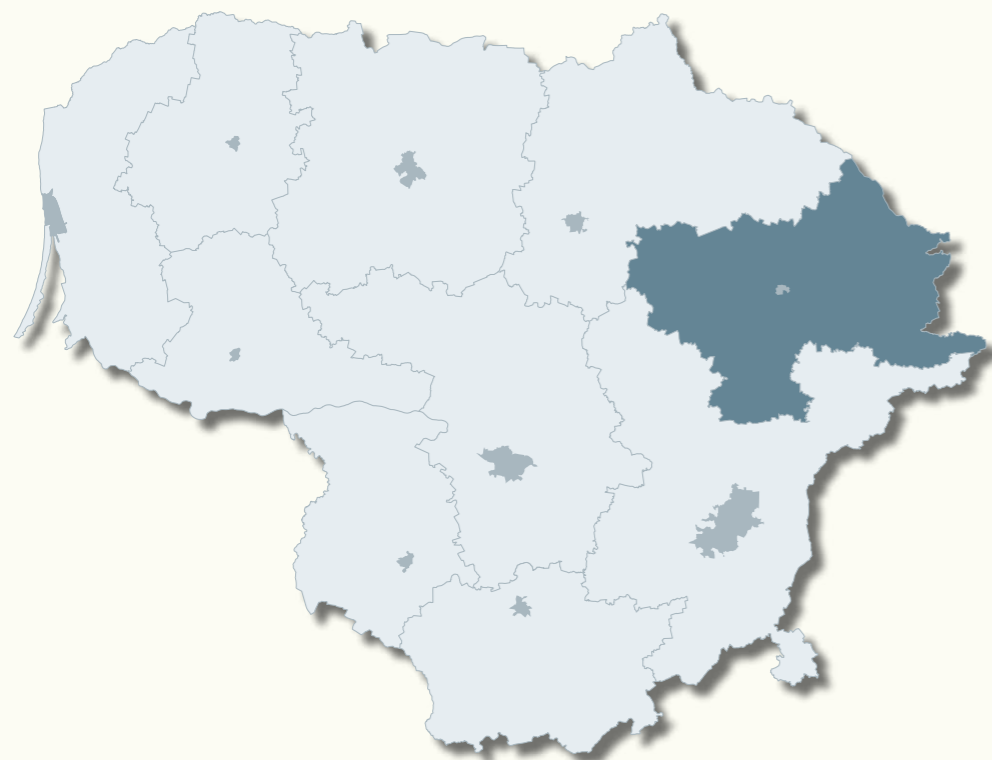


*New ploughs are making nice furrows*



# UTENA REGION >>>

Utena Region is in northeastern Lithuania, including the municipal territories of Anykščiai, Ignalina, Molėtai, Utena and Zarasai districts and Visaginas municipality.



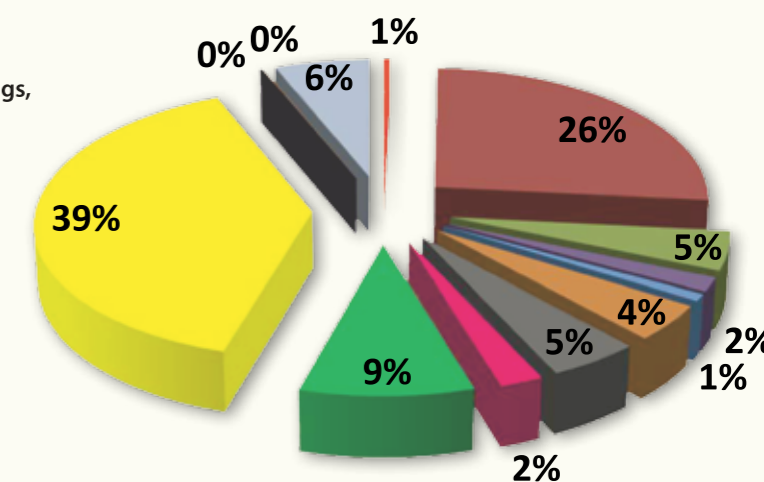
## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Utena Region

Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Anykščiai District	12 486 002	1 121 612	198 091
Ignalina District	4 233 611	479 212	395 617
Molėtai District	3 023 044	904 499	307 341
Utena District	4 693 346	1 679 418	453 661
Zarasai District	1 515 150	991 651	307 839
<b>Total in Utena Region</b>	<b>25 951 153</b>	<b>5 176 392</b>	<b>1 662 549</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The approved support structure of EUR 137 881 646 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Utena Region

- Knowledge and advisory services
- Support for investments into agricultural holdings, processing and infrastructure
- Support for setting up of young farmers
- Support for small farms
- Support to business
- Services and village renewal
- Forestry
- Agrarian environmental protection
- Organic farming
- LFA and Natura2000
- Short supply chains and cooperation, quality services
- Insurance
- LEADER



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## Importance of support for cooperation is evident

*Benefit of the project we did feel as soon as we have implemented it. Now at once we may launch by three times more canoeists than in the earlier years”, Inga Kilčiauskienė, a farmer involved in alternative business, based in Anykščiai District, on the most picturesque river shore in Aukštaitija, says joyfully. She made use of support under the activity area “Support for Co-operation between Small Farms’ Subjects” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Cooperation”.*

### Of benefit to small farmers

“Since the 2014–2020 Programme activity area “Support for Co-operation of Small Farms’ Subjects” requires submission of an application together with a partner, involved in the same activity, I have done this with my husband Audrius. He runs the rental of canoes and has a business certificate for this activity. He also has a motor vehicle and a trailer for their transportation. I take-care of accommodation of our visitors and of the campsite located at the Šventoji River”, tells farmer Inga Kilčiauskienė, engaged in rural tourism in the homestead, inherited from parents. “It was not difficult to prepare an application for support. I have done it myself. Specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture always gave me a piece of good advice on any issue”.



*By one third more canoes may sail at a time in the Šventoji*

The value of the farmer’s project on the development of alternative activity in the village is EUR 11 thousand, and 60 per cent of that amount was compensated from the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. During implementation of the project Inga and Audrius Kilčiauskai bought 15 canoes with all facilities and a computer, which is necessary for communication with clients, issuing of invoices and administration of the Internet webpage.

“It is good that we could implement the project by stages. We buy several canoes, submit documents to the National Paying Agency, and upon money receipt, we start a new stage”, the farmer shares her experience.

Inga and Audrius Kilčiauskai started their business eleven years ago with ten canoes at their disposal. Before implementing the project they had 45 canoes and after implementing the project 60 canoes. “Now we can afford 120 people at a time to admire the Šventoji River and its tributaries Jara and Vyžuona”, Inga is delighted to tell about the increased scope of the services provided.

### Listening attentively to the proposals of guests

According to Inga, quite a lot has been done in the homestead with account taken of the clients’ proposals. “Some guests asked whether they could pitch a tent, and stay at the homestead for a night. Thus an idea came to our mind

of installing a campsite on the bank of the Šventoji. And it was just that moment when applications were accepted for support of this type of activity under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 measure “Encouragement of Rural Tourism Activities (Simplified Procedure)”. I prepared two projects in succession for creation and development of a campsite. From the funds received we installed sleeping places, a campsite, built an arbour and a bathhouse. Now we can accommodate 60 people for the night”, Inga tells about the business development and adds smiling that the idea for business was prompted by tourists visiting their homestead by chance. “They would come to our homestead and would ask whether we could rent them canoes or at least know who rents them. We just shrug our shoulders: no, we do not have and do not know. And then started thinking: if people need, we can satisfy their needs. And the name for the homestead was offered by our guests. When dropping here they usually asked whether it was a green station. Eventually, our homestead was named “Green Station”.



*Inga Kilčiauskienė says that many ideas were offered by their guests*

### Going ahead by small steps

“The project we have implemented using funds received under the 2014–2020 Programme activity area “Support for Co-operation of Small Farms’ Subjects” is already fourth, but we never undertake grandiose plans. We are doing everything while implementing small-scale projects and without any bank credits. We undertake such projects for implementing of which own money is enough”, Inga says frankly and encourages those who doubt whether it is expedient to apply for the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 support for co-operation of small farms’ subjects. “When I was preparing the first project, everything seemed to be so awful, highest requirements, lots of paperwork, but when you start preparing; all seems to be much simpler. And after application submission, if something is lacking or is not clearly written, the National Paying Agency is asking to supplement or clarify”.

Inga and Audrius are modeling their business like bees their comb for more than a decade. Their comfortable homestead is adapted to recreation and entertainment and other events. Here you can go to a bath-house or bathe in the hot tub. You can find here playgrounds for children, basketball, volleyball and football grounds. Who want to spend their time in natural surroundings may pitch tents on the campsite, have a short rest in the arbour and sit near the bonfire. “If not for the support, we would not be able to do so much and to offer so many services to our visitors as can do today”, says IngaKilčiauskienė.



*Those willing to admire the Šventoji are still increasing in number*

## Berries keep laughing on the shrub

*The blueberry plantation cultivated by farmer Valerija Aleknienė in Ignalina District dispels the myth and reflections whether such farms are necessary in general. The farmer was a second-prize winner at the competition "Farm of the Year 2018" organized by Ignalina District Department of the Lithuanian Farmers' Union.*

### Children's idea, mother's work

In the spring of 2019, the blueberry plantation of Valerija Aleknienė will celebrate its 10 year-jubilee. "This idea came from my son and daughter living in Vilnius", laughs the farmer. "Their idea and intellect, and mine is work and land".

According to Valerija, the initiator of the blueberry plantation is her husband's brother living near Trakai. He is involved in planting blueberries long ago. "He offered us. Gave seedlings. That way everything took start. I have registered my farm some time ago, bought some agricultural machinery, watering system for the blueberry farm to be set up", tells the farmer with her daughter Gražina Umbrasienė, her main helper and the manager of all works, seated at her side.

Initially, the farmer planted blueberries in a small area, which gradually was expanded up to two hectares.

### A modern trailer was bought

The blueberry plantation of Valerija Aleknienė is tended very carefully. "We weed it in May for the first time, and the second time weeding is before picking berries. Every second year we mulch blueberries with peat. We buy peat from the nearby located Galai peatbog. For mulching of one blueberry plantation 90 cubic metres of peat is needed. A modern trailer for hauling and spreading of peat was urgently needed. We decided to submit an application under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, designed for small farmers", tells the farmer.

Support amounting to EUR 15 thousand was granted to the farmer under the activity area "Support for Small Farms" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Farm and Business Development". The farmer earlier had a plan to buy a trailer with a higher capacity of 13 tons, but a myth that was still alive in the society about the opportunities of small farms and simultaneously about their needs hindered. The project appraisers were convinced that a trailer with a six-ton capacity will be sufficient. However, when bringing peat with a trailer, smaller by half, we waste twice as much time and fuel", it was one of the reasons that changed the opinion of appraisers. "It is clear for everybody that the more you drive, the more you pollute the environment".

By signing the support granting agreement, Valerija Aleknienė was obligated to plant with blueberries another 50 ares. At present the Aleknai blueberry plantation covers 2.5 hectares. Being delighted with the benefit of support, the farmer mentions that as a matter of fact support should be granted in a simpler procedure. "In order to use benefit, it is necessary to have a quite considerable amount of your own funds or that sum should be borrowed, since at first you must buy a purchase, foreseen in the project, and only then after submitting all receipts you will receive compensation. It is very difficult for the starting farmer to overcome this obstacle. Just completion of the application and project preparation if done by the advisory firm will cost you about two thousand and five hundred euros", says the farmer.

Valerija Aleknienė was also granted support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Agricultural and Food Quality Systems".

### All the family is busy

Work on the blueberry plantation in all seasons is in plenty, but most of all in summer. Just weeding is needed thrice, and you should use a hoe. The blueberry plantations should be watered. It is good that the watering system is installed.

"Berry picking is also labour-consuming. They ripen at different time. Only 2-3 berries of ten in the bunch are ripe. After a week, some more berries ripen. Again you must pick them. Almost every week you are picking berries. Certainly, if you look after them carefully, berries as if are laughing on the bush", Valerija shares her work routine and joy. She is happy that all thirteen members of her family take care of the plantation. Children and grandchildren



*Valerija Aleknienė cherishes her blueberry plantation almost for ten years*

are good helpers at work. Only they can work in the blueberry plantation on weekends and during their holidays, since they live in Vilnius.

### Customers themselves are picking

The blueberry plantation of Valerija Aleknienė yields about one ton of berries a year. Part of the yield the farmer sells to the customers who come to pick berries. For convenience of our customers, at their service is an arbour and a coffee apparatus. Another part of berries the farmer sells on the local market-places. "We pick and weigh at a day time, and early in the morning we transport to Vilnius. In summer, people are queuing for our berries", the farmer is delighted.

During the berry-picking season Valerija calls to help people from outside. The farmer uses service receipts to make settlements with her workers; others ask berries for their work.

"At present we are building a warehouse for berries. Hopefully, we'll have it next year and will be able to extend the shelf-life of berries for several days. And if a refrigerator is acquired, the shelf-life could be extended up to one month", Valerija Aleknienė shares her plans.

The farmer is growing early and medium season blueberry varieties.

"The blueberry plantation is attractive to the eye. In spring it becomes decorated with pink-coloured flowers, in summer your eyes feast upon rich blue colours of berries, and in autumn the berry bushes are clad in purple", Valerija Aleknienė is happy with her farm, since for her blueberry-farming is not just the financial benefit, but also the repose of the soul".



*Before travelling to the capital*



*In the Aleknos blueberry plantation is a berry picking time*

## From adventure to organic sheep farming

*“To start sheep farming was just a sort of adventure”, Kristina Gražytė-Satkūnė, a farmer from Molėtai District, just laughs in answer to a question how she, a graduate in law and a resident of Vilnius for more than a decade, had an idea to set up a sheep-breeding farm. “In truth, there were some preconditions. Vaidas and, both of us, have originated from that land”.*

### Called by the Grandparents

The farm, where Kristina and Vaidas are involved in sheep-breeding, is located at Dūriai Lake in the village of Bimbiriai. “And my grandmother’s name was Bimbirytė”, Kristina indicates the symbolic link of her family with the village. “My grandmother from her birth to death lived in that village. I used to spend my childhood summers here. The Vaidas’ grandparents also lived in the vicinity – on the other side of the lake. Vaidas used to visit them”.

After death of Kristina’s grandparents, their farmstead and some land were left. “At first, we built a summer house at the lake. Then we thought: we’ll spend spring in the village and come back to Vilnius”, Kristina tells about their first steps towards farming and adds that they did not have a single thought about setting up a sheep-breeding farm. “Vaidas and I thought more about rural tourism. And first German Merino sheep were bought with an idea about tourism. These sheep are white, and I also knew that Merino wool is softer than of other sheep”.

They appreciated the docile temperament of sheep and that they are easily controllable, noted for not seasonal mating and good meat quality and output.

When Kristina and Vaidas decided to decorate their farmstead with sheep, some person appeared who offered to bring sheep from Germany. Thus already in the first summer a young family had 15 Merino sheep. “In autumn we went to Vilnius. The same person, who brought sheep, took care of them. We kept sheep in the grandmother’s old small barn. Absolutely village-style. Hay is bought, water is from the well”, says Kristina.



*Kristina Gražytė-Satkūnė with her husband Vaidas and son Vincentas*

### No farm will be without support

Sheep spent winter well. Kristina and Vaidas bought another 15 Merino sheep. “When we bought the first sheep in 2013, registered the farm, and in December 2014 I submitted an application for support for setting up of young farmers. In 2015, under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, support of EUR 40 thousand was granted to us. With use of support we bought the first purchase for the development of agriculture – a tractor.

Next year young farmers decided to make use of the activity area “Support for Small Farms” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Farm and Business Development”. Support of EUR 15 thousand was granted to them for the development of the sheep-breeding farm. “With the use of the funds granted, we bought a grinder, a mower and stubble plough. Thus we had some machinery and implements for cultivation of grassland. Afterwards we also increased the cultivated land areas. Now we are cultivating about one hundred hectares, of which almost 40 hectares are private. The major part is covered with grassland. For sheep feeding about

13 hectares are sown with oats and wheat. And a flock of sheep is also on the increase. At present we reached some two hundred”, Kristina Gražytė-Satkūnė surveys the changes on the farm.

The increasing farm required more investments as well. The farmers decided to submit one more application under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 “Investments in Physical Assets” for the sheep-breeding farm development. In 2016, support amounting to more than EUR 48 thousand was granted to them. “Then we moved forward significantly. We bought a rake, a bale wrapper, two trailers – small and big, and sheep sorting equipment. We have installed two large pens for sheep”, the farmers are delighted for support. “After implementing that project, we submitted one more application. In 2017, we received almost EUR 30 thousand for modernization of the Bimbiriai farm. We purchased the more powerful rake and spreader. Since our farm is old and low, it is not possible to enter it with a tractor. It is not easy to roll bales with hands. Thus we strongly needed the loader. We also bought it from support funds. I say frankly, no support, no farm. The farm could also hardly survive without direct payments. Income derived from the farm is not high, whereas it needs very considerable investments.



*Lovely and curious are sheep from the Bimbiriai house*

### Triple benefit

Kristina and Vaidas are running an organic farm. However, lamb, even from the organic farm, until recently has been sold as not organic. The reason is that no certified slaughter-house existed in the vicinity. “We decided to install our own slaughter-house and certify it. We are completing its construction and in 2019, I think, we could offer not only fresh or refrigerated organic lamb, but also mutton sausages, smoked and dried products,” Kristina shares her nearest plans.

Alongside meat, the farmers from Molėtai also sell lambskin. “So far they are not in high demand, but, we hope, everything will make a progress”, Kristina is optimistic. “We have also found how to use wool. We make woolen quilts. This service, however, we buy now, but think that it would be worthwhile to invest in the manufacture of woolen quilts. And also we have about 200 laying hens. We are selling organic eggs.

The farmer was also granted support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Agricultural and Food Product Quality Systems”. “We most of all need packaging and labels. We intend to use support for that purpose”, says the farmer. “Very useful support is for advisory services. We can make necessary tests and in the case of any question we know where to apply”.

The grandfathers’ farmstead is also reviving. Under the 2014–2020 Programme, support of EUR 2 thousand was granted for the Bimbiriai house – for replacing asbestos roof cover.

“My husband likes to be here and he does not want to go back to Vilnius at all. So far we have jobs in Molėtai, but Vaidas thinks of giving up his job and being involved just in farming. We have distributed our works. Vaidas does all farm works, and I am more concerned with projects and documents. The Bimbiriai house is the farm of both of us and, I think, it is not fair that it should be registered in the name of one member”, considers Kristina.



*Laying hens are the Bimbiriai house residents*



*Sheep recognize their master*

## Challenges as a stimulus to move forward

To undertake production is a big challenge, especially if the company has been previously engaged exclusively in wholesaling. Almost everybody can run trading business, whereas to manufacture a product, not produced before, is a real challenge. "Baltic drains" UAB decided to overcome the challenge making use of the support funds under the activity area "Support for Investments in Setting up and Development of Economic Activities" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Farm and Business Development" and established the plant in the village of Nemeikščiai, near Utena. The enterprise so far is the only one of its kind in the Baltic States, involved in manufacturing of drain membranes.

### Support helped to make a decision

According to Darius Šileikis, Director of the Company, "Baltic drains" UAB previously had the name of "Makrostogai" UAB and was engaged in wholesaling of building materials, mostly of roof covers and their accessories. The Company was founded in 2009 and, according to the Director, after the market and its needs have been studied, the Company's owners decided to start production, since in this activity they saw lots of opportunities. "To start manufacturing is not that simple. It is not trading, which may be undertaken by almost everyone", says Darius Šileikis, Director of the Company. "If you want to manufacture something, you need knowledge, persistence, time for collection of know-how, learning of process, and gaining experience. And market itself and its needs, prices and raw materials are subject to changes".

When opportunity appeared to receive the EU financial support, according to Darius Šileikis, this just has intensified their decision to invest in manufacturing. "When support is granted, you at the same time take the responsibility, but simultaneously you feel stronger", says the Director. "Finally, if the owners of the Company invested their own financial resources, it would be more difficult with the working capital, and, most probably, additional financial resources should be sought. And this is a serious commitment and additional expenditure".

Under the 2014–2020 Programme for investments, intended for creation and development of economic activities, over EUR 97.4 thousand was allocated to "Baltic drains" UAB. This accounted for 40% of the drain membrane production line value.

To make these facilities to be operable, the owners had to contribute quite a lot of their own money. Those investments were designed for installation of electricity-supply, water-supply and sewerage systems, training of the staff, salaries, adaptation of premises to production, and warehousing.

### Secondary raw materials used

The project was started in 2015 and lasted for almost three years. At the time the drain membrane line was ordered, mounted and commissioned, it was June 2018. The plant manufactures drain membranes DRENAVENT and DRENAVENT SUPER of different width and thickness from high-density recycled polyethylene, as well as highest class drain membrane with geotextile fiber DRENAVENT GEO and their fastening tapes. According to the Director, manufacturing from recycled raw materials is the additional benefit.

Drain membrane is used for protection of vertical and horizontal surfaces. It is intended to drain water from surfaces, to protect foundations, preparatory layers, floor plane surfaces and terraces against humidity, damage, and penetration of plant roots. This material also improves the ventilation conditions and provides additional thermal insulation. In addition, it is easily mounted and performs lots of important functions. Such drain membrane, according to the Director, is used not for protection of foundations, but also in building roads, railways, and even skiing tracks.

As the Director says, production is marked with the conformity CE marking and its quality complies with the set requirements. This marking affords trading throughout Europe.



Darius Šileikis, Director of the Company, said that Programme support was substantial in establishing the plant

### Waste-free operation

The small shop of the plant is cozy and warm. Several workers are in charge of the line and take off the manufactured and rolled product. According to the Director, even though demand in winter went down, the reserve is stored for the spring when drain membrane manufacturers are very busy and clients are forced to wait even several months for the product.

"I come to work at six o'clock in the morning and switch on the line, as it is heating for almost three hours. Manufacturing is possible only when the line is heated. Then raw material is poured. It is melted and the film of required thickness is formed. The film is pressed between two drums and holes are made. The product travels along the line, where unnecessary edges are trimmed, and drain membrane is rolled", the Director tells and emphasizes that they operate waste-free – trimmed product edges or defected products may be turned into granules and used again.



The EU funds were used for acquisition of a production line

### Everyday challenges

As the head of the enterprise says, search of new market is everyday concern. The production capacities of the company are bigger than now employed. Alas, but not only the Lithuanian market but also the market in the Baltic States is not large. Export opportunities are sought. From June, when they have launched the production line, the company has its own clientele: the big trade centres in Lithuania, customers from Finland, Russia, Poland, Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia.

The company initially had five workers, while at the end of the year they have ten. "If we succeed as it was planned, to expand production and product range, we'll recruit at least five workers from Utena, as we plan to launch three shifts. So far only one is operating", says the Director. "And in production various challenges may occur. Some outside thing may be found in the raw material and as a result you receive a product of poor quality. Then you should stop a line and clean the facility or to wait for good-quality raw material. Reliability should be guaranteed at all stages. Production is a not boring and interesting activity, but not that easy one. Probably, that is why we move forward. My task, as the head of the company, is to ensure the streamlined process, so that everything, from the order of raw materials to the production delivery to the final consumer, would work as a clock and all of us would work with a smile".



Rolled drain membrane is weighed, packed and labelled



Freshly "roasted" drain membrane is being rolled



## Lithuanian Black-Headed Sheep for Guests' Delight

Ingrida and Andrius Tatarūnai is a young family which settled in Dusetos more than a decade ago. In the village of Didžiadvaris, Zarasai District, they have a rural tourism homestead "Pasartėlė". Encouraging preservation of endangered Lithuanian ancient animal and bird breeds, payments are paid to them under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep, serving as a decoration of their homestead.

### Homestead changed the life

According to Andrius Tatarūnas, acquisition of a rural tourism homestead predetermined the direction of his family life and activities.

In the course of ten years a rural tourism homestead got expanded and became more beautiful. A five-hectare area encompasses several ponds and four buildings for accommodation of guests. "Pasartėlė" homestead is located on the shore of Lake Sartai, called the paradise of fishing.

"Pasartėlė" rural homestead is most of all suitable for family recreation, fishing, homey family festivities and small seminars. Here one can rent fishermen's inventory and bicycles; enjoy traditional and steam baths, and a hot tub.

Ingrida Tatarūnė, who for a long time worked as a head of the Investment and Development Department of Zarasai Regional Municipality Administration and now, encouraging the farmers to manufacture local products and still more time dedicating to her homestead, says that each year it becomes more and more difficult for suppliers of rural tourism services to survive from this business alone. Dependence on seasons is very evident. Therefore, it is natural that those living in the village start farming.

### Breeding Lithuania Black-Headed Sheep

One of the newest activities of "Pasartėlė" owners is sheep-breeding. To tell the truth, the first steps are being taken in this field so far. The Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep is rather a decoration of the homestead than business. For the time being they keep 14 sheep. For cherishing this breed, a payment is granted under the activity area "Preservation of Endangered Lithuanian Ancient Animal and Bird Breeds" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Agri-Environment and Climate". This, according to Ingrida and Andrius, is a stimulus for farmers to breed in Lithuanian homesteads endangered or ancient animal and bird breeds as a decoration. A payment of EUR 187 is paid per head of Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep of ancient genotype. "Submitting an application for support, we were obligated to keep sheep of this breed for five years. When we declared sheep, we then had ten. Thus we are receiving a payment for them", the farmers share their experience. "Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep is an endangered breed. It was developed in Lithuania in the middle of the 20th century by mating local coarse-wooled ewes with English wool and German meat Black-Headed rams. Even though with the allocation of the European Union support, the herd of this breed of sheep in Lithuania has increased rapidly, many farmers give up sheep-breeding. It is due to comparatively low support and commitments, arising when granting support, and because this breed is not meaty. It is not very expedient to breed this sheep breed for supply of fresh meat. We would like to supply our consumers not only with meat, but also with mutton products. This is more worthwhile. The more so that meat quality of the Black-Headed sheep is exclusive, it is acceptable to many people, since its smell, characteristic of mutton, is weak".

At present the farmers treat their homestead guests with mutton pilau. "We hope that guests still more numerous will drop at our homestead to taste mutton and to admire the flock of sheep on Pasartėlė pastures", says Ingrida hopefully.



Andrius Tatarūnas is breeding Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep

A huge minus in sheep-farming in the Zarasai lake district, according to Ingrida and Andrius, is that the nearest sheep slaughter-house is in Rokiškis District. Since you must not only pay for slaughtering, but also you must cover quite a long distance; therefore, the mutton price increases considerably. "In order to be competitive on the market, the cooperation of local farmers and authorities in settling important issues is necessary. One of the examples to be welcomed is the projects developed by the Zarasai Department of the Lithuanian Farmers' Union. The association submitted the application for establishment of the slaughter-house in Dusetos. The Zarasai District Municipality Administration submitted an application for designing and preparation of technical documentation", Ingrida is delighted. She hopes that the emergence of the slaughter-house and the meat-packing shop will improve the conditions for local farmers and several jobs will be created. This will stimulate local farmers to reprocess their production and thus to increase their income.

### A sheep pen is installed

Upon acquisition of sheep, they should be properly placed. Ingrida and Andrius decided to make use of the activity area "Support for Small Farms" of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Farm and Business Development". For the development of a small traditional cattle-breeding farm – for increasing the attractiveness and improving keeping conditions – support of EUR 14.8 thousand was allocated to the farmers. With the use of these funds the Tatarūnai fenced the area of almost three hectares for pasturing of Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep. The remote homestead space was put to order, so that from here guests could watch calmly the pasturing sheep with lambs. "The European Union support for those who live and work in the village is very important. Without this support, we just could not offer certain services to the incoming tourists, and some services should be not so well developed. However, there is the reverse side of the coin – quite big financial obligations, undertaken by the support beneficiaries in order to be granted funding, and still a very big number of bureaucratic procedures", Ingrida shares her thoughts.

"When developing business we think permanently how our projects will supplement each other and how to diversify business in order to create the higher value added. However, it sometimes seems for support beneficiaries that it is most important to fulfil all necessary and unnecessary procedures, rather than to think what will be created. We think that in granting the European Union support it would be expedient to take into consideration how projects supplement each other", Ingrida and Andrius Tatarūnai propose, welcoming everyone with hospitality who want to rest in the natural surroundings, to fish or just to admire the Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep.



Ingrida and Andrius Tatarūnai – a selfie with blooming tulips



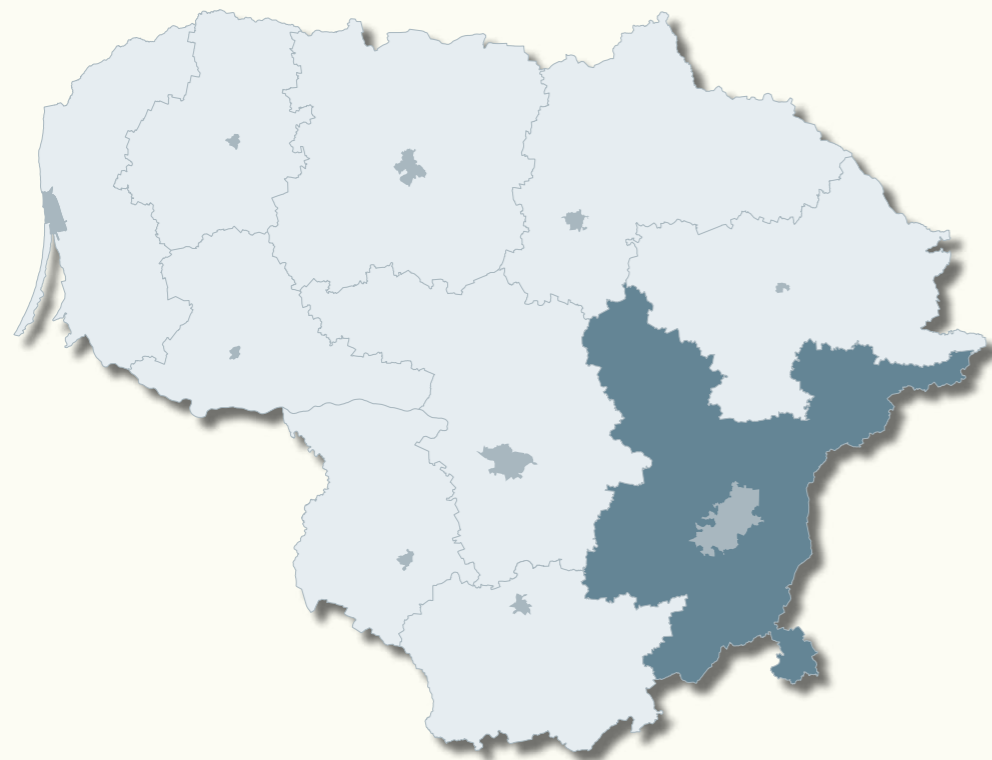
Winter in "Pasartėlė"

## Support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for measures encouraging agricultural activity restructuring in Vilnius Region



# VILNIUS REGION >>>

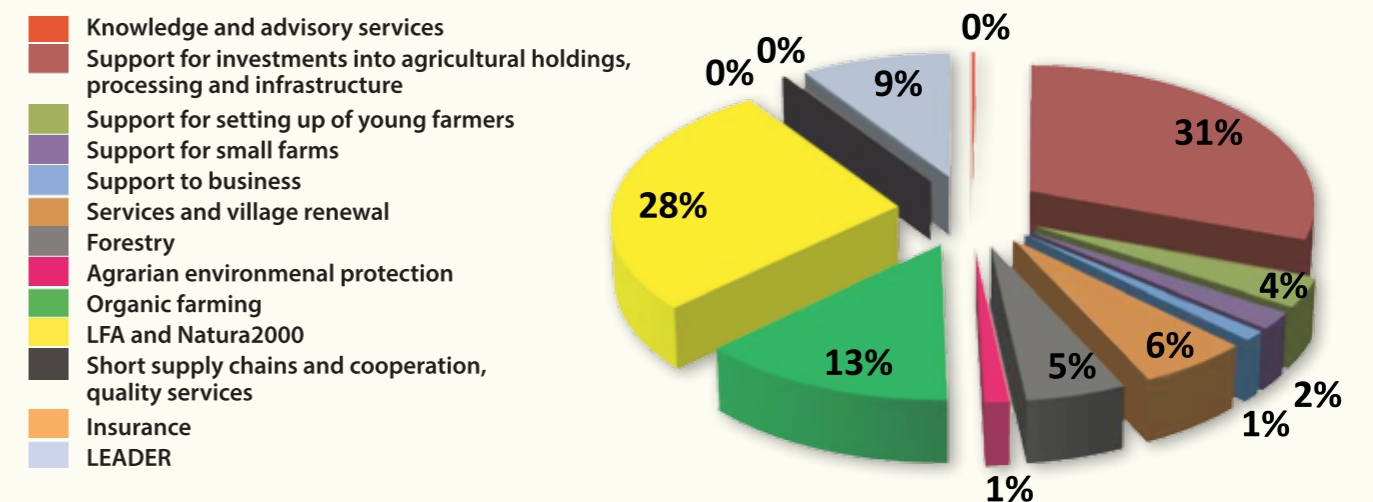
Vilnius Region is situated in southeastern Lithuania, covering Elektrėnai municipality, Vilnius city municipality and the municipal territories of Šalčininkai, Širvintos, Švenčionys, Trakai, Ukmergė and Vilnius districts..



Municipality	Support amount approved according to measures, EUR		
	Support for investments into agricultural holdings	Support for setting up of young farmers	Support for small farms
Elektrėnai	11 551 774	646 514	130 625
Šalčininkai District	4 353 421	675 385	657 298
Širvintos District	5 303 495	1 044 011	350 431
Švenčionys District	4 159 891	506 419	268 427
Trakai District	2 325 915	454 432	342 720
Ukmergė District	8 225 222	803 067	251 573
Vilnius city	-	-	11 966
Vilnius District	1 449 479	667 954	912 463
<b>Total in Vilnius Region</b>	<b>37 369 196</b>	<b>4 797 781</b>	<b>2 925 504</b>

Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## The approved support structure of EUR 189 191 578 according to the investment trends of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 in Vilnius Region



Prepared according to the monthly data of the National Paying Agency of November 2018

## Works benefitting future generations

*“When planting and breeding forest, you erect a monument for yourself still being alive. You plant and all your life you can watch how forest grows”, Kazimieras Šiaulys, a forest owner who lives and works in Elektrėnai Municipality, shares his reflections. He, with the use of support under the activity area “Prevention and Restoration of Damage Caused to Forests” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Forest Area Development and Improvement of the Viability of Forests”, restored about 15 ha of forest.*

### Beaver s’ eviction

Kazimieras Šiaulys has about 1 300 ha of forest. Some 30 ha of forest was occupied by beavers. “I bought that area which turned into wetland together with forest”, says Kazimieras. I cannot look calmly to a marsh emerging in the forest. Every plot of forest for me should be tidy and useful. I would have restored it even without support, but it is very good that an opportunity was envisaged in the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 to be granted support for such forest works, and its sustainability is foreseen in the programme of the current period.

According to Kazimieras, landscape in the Trakai and Elektrėnai municipalities is very favourable for setting up of beaver colonies – clayey ground hills and moisture accumulating flatlands. “Some time ago the land-reclamation system was installed in those places. The system was nothing important, just inherited from Soviet times. A tractor dragged a plough, ploughed a ditch, and it was called land-reclamation. Close to those ditches, beavers start settling. Their heaped up ditches prevent water flowing and, if nothing is to be done, the forest area starts being flooded. A tree, its roots suffering shortage of air for a longer period, begins drying. Two three years and a forest, flooded by beavers, is ruined”, tells Kazimieras Šiaulys about damage caused by beavers.

To restore such forest areas, according to Kazimieras, is not that simple. You should recreate the land-reclamation system, clean and restore land-reclamation ditches. If water channels are not well arranged and the water starts accumulating quickly, beavers will come back and will start building their lodges again. “The fight against beavers is going on for several years; therefore, it is necessary to look after the restored ditches and to ruin the newly-built lodges of these smart rodents”, Kazimieras shares his experience. “Eventually these rodents find places where they are less interfered and where they do not cause damage. If settled in some lakelet and having gnawed a tree for food, they actually do not do any damage. It is worse, when they flood a big area of forest. In that area a degraded tree, in the best case, is good just for firewood. And not always. The regeneration of the forest area, occupied by beavers, requires considerable funds, whereas only forthcoming generations could enjoy benefit from the works done”.

The first support for regeneration of forest areas that suffered from beavers Kazimieras Šiaulys received under the programme of the previous period. “Then I restored large damaged forest areas. Under the 2014–2020 I was granted support twice. According to the activity area “Prevention and Restoration of Damage Caused to Forests” of the measure “Investments for Increasing the Development of Forest Areas and the Improvement of Forest Viability”, I was granted EUR 4 270 and EUR 16 880”, tells the forest owner.

### Simpler, but without alternatives

According to Kazimieras Šiaulys, as compared to the previous period programme, support for restoration of damage caused to forests under the 2014–2020 Programme was granted in the simpler procedure. “Previously, a forest owner had also to submit a small investment project. When using this period support, such project is unnecessary. A specific amount of support per hectare and for specific forests was established. For example, EUR 1 789 is paid for regeneration of damaged pine-wood, EUR 3 657 for oak-wood, and EUR 1 563 for spruce. In flooded areas of my forest, black alders were growing. For its regeneration EUR 1 433 per hectare was paid. Such amount is allocated for compensation of expenses for seedlings and work. However, prior to forest regeneration, quite a lot of other works are to be performed: land-reclamation ditches should be restored and quite often a small



*“Some time I have counted – I have planted about one million trees”, says Kazimieras Šiaulys*

road is to be made to access the flooded place. Payments allocated for these works are not enough, though, certainly, it is very good also to receive this amount”, characterizes the benefit of support Kazimieras Šiaulys. “And the submission of an application is simplified – just electronic variant is to be submitted. For young people, however, such submission of applications, no doubt, is very convenient. Only, in my opinion, not much was thought about the senior forest owners. It would be more expedient to leave also an alternative method of submitting a hard copy. It is understandable that novelties are quicker enforced, when no alternatives are left. However, we suggest at meetings with the representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Paying Agency to afford submission of paper applications.”

Kazimieras Šiaulys has also taken advantage of support for forest breeding. “I have already developed some 200 hectares of forest”, says Kazimieras. “I have calculated some time that I planted about one million trees”.

### Not in a hurry to fell forest

Kazimieras Šiaulys is also developing wood processing. He modernized a wood-processing company with the use of support of the previous period programme. At present one thousand cubic metres of wood per month is processed at his company. “I just sell sawn wood and do not sell logs. It is not worthwhile” says Kazimieras. “On the average, about one-fourth of the processed wood is felled in my forests. The remaining part of wood I buy from forestry enterprises and other forest owners. Forest is as if a deposit in the bank, but more reliable”.

The wood processing company employs some 40 people. “Earlier we also performed forest contractual works. However, lately we rejected that activity. Young people are entering the market. They come with the considerably more sophisticated machinery than we are possessing. We do not feel that it is expedient to renovate the available machinery; therefore, we do not fell forest for some years. For forest felling I hire subcontractors”, Kazimieras reviews his activities and adds that forest for him is not a source of income but rather a moral satisfaction. Thus he spares no effort to care and cherish it.

### An unexpected turn

“Sometimes I think if somebody in due time has given me a piece of advice, I could have studied forestry. This field is very interesting for me. In fact, I am a pedagogue by profession. For some time I worked as a schoolmaster. When I had an opportunity to undertake private business, even when being a schoolmaster, I started wood business. However, a day has come when I had to decide. Either to reject business and to plunge into pedagogical activities, or to reject it and to be absorbed in business. I then thought that our State would not be able to pay such salaries to the teachers in the nearest future their work was worth of, and I chose forestry. Since from my childhood I felt an attraction to forest, I took up forestry. I expanded forest areas gradually. Simultaneously I developed the wood processing business”, tells Kazimieras Šiaulys.

He, as the first deputy of the Association chairman, is actively involved in the activities of the Forest Owners Association of Lithuania.



*Visiting the oak-wood planted several years ago*



*A line of young spruce*

*Well-cared forest grows nicely*

## Income is for quality rather than for quantity

The agricultural company “Ekogrikis”, based in Trakai District, is running an organic farm, thus a modern tractor, purchased with the use of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, not only speeds up work, but is much more environmentally friendly.

### A more efficient tractor was bought

“The agricultural company “Ekogrikis” was established six years ago. The name of the company implies our aims to grow organic products. We are cultivating more than one hundred hectares of land”, Karolis Zalieckas, head of the company, presents the company’s activities. “However, we operated old machinery, and the pace of work to a great extent depends on it. We needed more efficient and more modern machinery, and that is why we decided to apply for the EU support”.

The agricultural company “Ekogrikis” submitted an application under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. “As we requested for a small amount, we submitted an application in the simplified procedure,” tells Karolis and is delighted that the application was evaluated quite quickly and the project was successfully implemented.

Almost EUR 41.8 thousand was allocated for investments in the plant-growing farm. This made 60 per cent of the total project value. With the use of support, the company bought a modern multi-functional tractor with a loader. A tractor is fit for all works: collecting stones, ploughing fields and sowing them up.

A new tractor completely replaces our two previously possessed”, says the head of the company. “If there is an opportunity, we intend to submit one more application. A modern combine harvester is needed. So far we use the old one for harvesting. Also we need to renew other machinery and implements. However, we should take into account our financial capacity; therefore, we invest gradually in the machinery modernization”.



Karolis Zalieckas, Director of agricultural company “Ekogrikis”

### Products are exported

“Ekogrikis” is involved in organic rye, oat and buckwheat growing. “All cereals are of high food quality and are totally exported, because Lithuanian organic products are highly appreciated abroad”, Karolis shares his experience. “In Lithuania organic products are not appreciated to the extent they are in the Western countries. We only little by little start understanding the benefit of ecology. Another thing is that very few enterprises exist in Lithuania, engaged in the processing of organic products. As far as I know, our cereals in foreign countries are used for baby food, as well as for food of pregnant women and people with diabetes mellitus, as these cereals comply with the requirements set for protein content and other parameters”.

Lands, cultivated by the agricultural company “Ekogrikis”, are not fertile. You cannot yield here rich harvests, but, according to Karolis Zalieckas, the company has a tendency towards quality rather than quantity. “We sell our cereals for a price several times higher than it is paid for cereals grown on a farm using chemicals”, says Karolis.

The lands of the company are attributed to the lands with natural or other specific handicaps. “Those lands yield several times lower harvest and a payment amounting to several tens of euros per hectare for not gained income does not compensate it, but, certainly, that money is also good, because agriculture is quite a risky business. Not everything depends on people. We are dependent on nature to a great extent. And lately nature has been not very favourable to farmers. Either rainy periods, or droughts. Thus direct payments are a very significant help; if not the EU support, in my opinion, Lithuanian agriculture would not reach such efficiency as it has now. However, Lithuania is among the countries that receive lowest payments. It is good that representatives

of farmers and the authorities make efforts to persuade the European Commission to equalize direct payments. As a matter of fact, prices for services and salaries in Lithuania are rapidly keeping pace with the EU old Member States. We pay for machinery and implements higher prices than farmers in other countries. The sellers assert that we are paying higher prices, because the too small market exists in Lithuania and machinery transportation costs are higher due to the longer distance of its shipment. And direct payments are lower”, Karolis Zalieckas shares his thoughts about support to farmers. “We hope for good changes in the short term and that our company will be able to acquire a new combine and other machinery and to replace implements by new ones. And at present we have to calculate very carefully and observe financial flows”.

### Farming as a family business

Karolis, a student of Mykolas Romeris University, is proud that his best adviser is his father Vytautas Zalieckas. He registered his farm, cultivating crops and buckwheat, in 2001. “It happened so that our whole family became involved in agriculture: my father, my brother, and I undertook this business”, tells Karolis. “From childhood my brother and I whirled around our father and made efforts to help. We were not afraid of climbing a tractor or a combine. All farm works were known to us. It seems that farming is in our blood”.

“I am lucky that my sons did not move to the alien lands, but stayed in Lithuania and are creating here their lives”, Vytautas Zalieckas is proud of his sons.



The company acquired a multi-functional tractor from support funds



In spring buckwheat fields abound in pink flowers



Karolis Zalieckas with his wife Ugnė, awarded with some endurance horse riding prizes

## The company's changes, impacting the European market

*“Actas” AB set up in Šalčininkai District with the use of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 support has become more modern, competitive and is able to satisfy the consumer expectations.*

### A long-term tradition

“Actas” AB is the only company in Lithuania, involved in manufacturing natural vinegar. This product is produced by smallest organisms – acetic acid bacteria. These bacteria in the fermenters, filled with beech wood shavings, using oxygen, converts ethyl alcohol into vinegar.

The history of the enterprise dates back to 1959. Then it was the vinegar production shop belonging to the Šalčininkai Distillery. Later the shop was transferred to “Vilniaus degtinė”. It came to privatization as a State enterprise.

Considerable changes started in the company in 1996. The range of vinegar products was then expanded. Production was begun of natural spirit vinegar with flavours, natural apple vinegar, natural wine vinegar, and marinade. With the production volumes increasing, new jobs were created.

“Implementing new technologies, expanding the range of products, we made use of various types of support. In 2009, being granted support from the EU structural funds, we implemented the automated vinegar filling line, ensuring high quality of products, outer appearance of the products and lower production costs. We are also actively using the Local Employment Initiatives Programme. We have implemented several projects funded by this foundation”, Director Aloyzas Ubis makes a survey of the company's development.



*Aloyzas Ubis, Director of “Actas” AB*

### Twice more efficient line and warehouse

Support under the activity area “Support for Investments into Processing of Agricultural Products, Marketing and/or Development” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets” opened new opportunities for the company. “Why not for us to submit an application for support, we asked ourselves after learning that companies involved in the production of food products are given an opportunity for modernization with the use of the EU funds”, “Actas” AB Director explains his decision. “At that time we greatly lacked warehouses, and during the cucumber season the company's production packing facilities did not satisfy the needs of the company”.

For modernization of vinegar production by expanding the range of products and warehousing facilities, support of almost EUR 423 thousand was allocated. “Support funds according to our application made almost 40% of the total value of the project. The total value of the project is EUR 1 million 87 thousand. However, in the course of project implementation the intensity somewhat got reduced, since we applied a 10 per cent sanction against the contractor who failed to fulfil the order in due time”, explains Aloyzas Ubis.

The project of “Actas” AB was implemented in 2017. The company built a building covering 1800 sq m and consisting of two parts. The mechanized warehouse was installed in the part covering 900 sq m. Here products in pallets are placed on shelving with several tiers. At the same time the warehouse may deposit 812 units of pallets with production. Another part of the building contains the production premises covering 900 sq m. It houses a new modern production line with bottle blowing facilities. According to the Director, previously, the company used to buy bottles for product filling from other Lithuanian manufacturers. Now the company itself produces packaging for product packing.

The cost of the construction of the building amounted to over EUR 300 thousand and of the production line to over

EUR 600 thousand. “This line was twice more efficient than the previous one. Now we can fill with vinegar 600 thousand bottles per hour, while with the old one only three thousand bottles per hour. The result is evident – this summer we have satisfied also the needs of the consumers during the hottest season for us – the cucumber season”, the Director is happy with the new production line acquired during the project implementation.

A new production line may be operated just by four people, whereas the old one by seven–eight people.

In implementing the project we arranged a platform of 2 700 sq metres. It also facilitated for the company the unloading of the brought raw materials and loading of the shipped out production. .

“The received support has accelerated to a great extent the company's modernization. We in any case should have searched for renewal options, but we would be able to acquire such production line and build the warehouse not so quickly. Due to the slower modernization of production, you start lagging behind on the market. The market does not have the word – wait. If you do not manage to take some place, it will be very quickly taken by others”, Aloyzas Ubis characterizes the benefit of support. “Now we feel stronger on the market. And the image of the company got improved due to new structures and high-level technologies. This helped us to make preconditions for further changes on the European market of producers”.

At present “Actas” AB sells its products in all trade networks of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Ireland. Part of the products is sold in Belarus.

### Modernity has not ended so far

“Actas” AB Director Aloyzas Ubis emphasizes that the works done is just part of the ideas in creating a modern and competitive enterprise. “We have prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Economy an application for support in the digitalization of production. We plan to implement the deep vinegar fermentation. Certainly, if support is not granted, we will, nevertheless, do it, but after its receipt all the processes will go faster”, says Aloyzas Ubis.

Now “Actas” AB employs 44 people. According to the Director, the major part of employees is from Jašiūnai, where the company is located. The fluctuation of employees is not high, as the stable kernel has been formed. The company supports financially the regional events, helps schools and the eldership.



*With the help of support the company built a new and modern building for production and warehousing*



*A new warehouse of the company*



*Modern technologies were implemented*

## From helping father to her own farm

*“Farming is full of challenges. Its majesty nature does not grudge constant surprises: either drowning fields in the water, or drying completely. In spring everything starts nicely, while in autumn it is impossible to yield a harvest”, says farmer Agnė Vyšniauskaitė from Širvintos District and adds that without support, just from personal savings, she would not be able to create such farm during six years of farming.*

### Let happen what is destined

“The initiator of our family farm was my grandfather Stasys Vyšniauskas. After Lithuania’s re-establishment and restitution of 12 hectares, he started farming. Later my father Vidmantas joined him. They together planned works, expanded the farm, and, in fact, were one of the first farmers in Širvintos District. My grandfather and father were very ambitious in achieving their goal to make their farm bigger and more beautiful. The common goal was implemented. Later, my father was farming alone for many years”, Agnė Vyšniauskaitė surveys the road of their family to farming. .

Today a third generation of the Vyšniauskai family is toiling on the family farm, and the farm has grown from 12 to 500 ha of land, of which 350 ha is private. The major area consists of crops: winter and summer wheat, triticale, and buckwheat. Hothouses cover 2.2 ha.

“As is said, if something is destined to happen, it will happen”, says smiling Agnė, the youngest farmer in the Vyšniauskai family farm. I have studied public administration. After studies, I had a job in the private sector. I worked successfully. As if everything was very good. However, when returning to Alionys on weekends I saw that it was difficult for my father to work there alone. I saw, the more my father expanded the farm and cultivated land areas; the more difficult it was for him to do everything in time. Even when studying I was used to come home on weekends and help him to do works. All this time I had in my head a decision and one day I said to myself: it is time to come back to the village and seriously, not by chance, to undertake farming”.



*Agnė Vyšniauskaitė, a third generation farmer*

### Set up her own farm

“When our senior daughter decided that city is too much for her and came back to the farm, we were very happy”, Gražina and Vidmantas Vyšniauskai are very proud of their daughter.

In 2012, Agnė Vyšniauskaitė became a farmer. “After discussions with my father, we decided that activities should be separated and two farms established”, says Agnė. “Initially, I cultivated over one hundred hectares of land. Now I am cultivating 240 hectares”.

Like her father, Agnė is developing crop production and growing winter and summer wheat, as well as some peas and buckwheat.

“The beginning of my independent farming was not easy. I did not have any machinery. I rented all machinery required for farming. It was not convenient and I had to pay plenty of money. With the start of the busy season, machinery was hardly available. As a result, the works on the farm would be late. Even though my father helped me a lot, his farm capacities and available machinery was insufficient for me to successfully develop my farm. Since I, as a start-up, was lacking funds, my father suggested considering the opportunity of making use of support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme. I thought that it would be a good opportunity to modernize my farm”, tells the farmer.

### Sad news replaced by good news

“I submitted an application for support, but it was rejected due to the lack of funds. At that time I was very discouraged by this failure. However, after some time all of a sudden I received a letter that consideration of my application was started anew, and still more later I received a notice that under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”

support of almost EUR 130 thousand was granted to me. I acquired the most requisite machinery: a tractor, a sowing-machine, a sprayer “Amazonė”, a fertilizer spreader, and a frontal loader. Now I understand that without that machinery my farm actually should be not so productive. All machinery is new and operates very precisely. The sowing-machine, sprayer and spreader are computer-operated; therefore, when sowing, spraying or spreading fertilizers, seeds or fertilizers will never reach for the second time the already cultivated land plot, as it has happened previously with the rented machinery. It is understandable how many seeds and fertilizers we are saving now! If I have an opportunity for applying for support next time, I would like to buy a combine”.

According to Agnė, upon acquisition of this modern machinery, no expenses were left for machinery rental, and the number of employees got reduced. Now, just using one facility, the much larger area is cultivated and works are done faster. With new machinery used, all works are done in due time, this impacting the yield of better harvest.

### Vegetables the whole year round

The same year Vidmantas Vyšniauskas also received support. With the use of support of EUR 1 920 thousand, received according to the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, Vidmantas and his daughter Agnė embodied their old dream – built modern hothouses covering an area of 1.5 ha. Here vegetables are grown all the year round. A powerful boiler-house of 2.5 MW ensures heat in the hothouse, and most advanced technologies permit the continuous supply of Lithuanian fresh vegetables. “We are very delighted being granted support”, Agnė feels happy.

### The family tradition – farming

The junior in the family Gražvydas also gives preference to farming. He was always at his father’s side from childhood and, no wonder, he chose to study agribusiness technologies. After completing his studies he plans to join family business. And this evidences that the Vyšniauskai farm has the future.

“We did not make any pressure on our children and did not give any instructions as concerns their way of life; therefore, we are very happy that children are following their parents’ footsteps”, Gražina Vyšniauskienė says with pride.



*A young farmer chose crop production – she grows cereals*



*Modern machinery and implements, acquired from support funds, help speeding up works*

## Never forgetting of further improvement

We got acquainted with Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė at “Rudens kermošius” (Autumn Fair) in Ukmergė. Upon seeing a young stylish woman in the crowd of people, I even did not have a thought that she is a winner of the Švenčionys District competition “Farmer of the Year 2017”. “Work is work, but I never forget that I am a woman; therefore, in the daily routine I always find some time for myself. Maybe, I sleep less but always find a minute for cherishing my femininity”, smiles Jolita.

### Netikėtas gyvenimo posūkis

“I graduated from several universities. I have a Master’s degree. I studied engineering real estate management at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. Later, international commerce master’s studies at Vilnius University”, tells the farmer Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė. Like many contemporary young people, after studies, she travelled throughout the world, worked in various companies. While living in Barcelona, she studied Spanish. Now she speaks fluently four foreign languages. Jolita was a leader of more than one international project. One of the last was related to wind power plants. However, more than a decade ago she decided to come back to her parents’ home in the village of Šutai. “It was necessary to strengthen the enthusiasm of parents, and a different approach was needed in the farm”, says Jolita about her decision to exchange her successful career at international companies by farming and adds that farming was never disagreeable to her. “As far as I remember, we always had several cows. My mother and father are hard-working people, and always alongside their main jobs, they always had the extra source of income. And my brother Vienantas and I always helped them”.

In the middle of 2009, Jolita registered her farm. Like her parents Danutė and Vaclovas Gabrinovičiai, she is running the dairy farm. “I all of my cows call girls. Each of them has her own name and temper”, Jolita introduces with enthusiasm her herd of 220 cows, half of which are dairy cows. Different moments and different sentiments occur in life, but when I come to my girls, they act like antidepressants. They approach and lick and you at once feel a sort of comfort. And it is very difficult to reject any cow. Up to the last moment I do my best to preserve them all. A real trial to me was when I had to reject 16 cows at a time. Unfortunately, the herd had to be renewed. I bought 20 in-calf heifers from Latvia. It was so painful to say farewell to old cows. Not always the animal productivity is that important.

When asked about the breed of her cows, the girl laughs: the herd is very colourful. “For me it looks nice”, Jolita adds with a roguish look. “And my farm is unusual. Its roof is bright yellow”.

### Road towards a modern farm

After having chosen the road of a young farmer, Jolita decided to build a new and modern house for her “girls”. With the use of support for young farmers under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007–2013, she built a new farm. It contains modern facilities of a well-known German firm for milking, milk freezing and other needs of the farm. In a cold free stall barn, heated water troughs are installed. The walls of a 16-place milking platform are laid out with the uniform stainless steel cover. “It is safe for cows and is convenient for maintenance. And may be used for more than one year. Somebody likes to joke that my “girls” live better than some people. You should not be afraid to invest in the welfare of animals. The better conditions for cows, the better the result”, Jolita shares her experience and adds that her brother Vienantas, with whom she works hand in hand, helped her to choose facilities. “As two hemispheres exist in the brain, thus two cerebral hemispheres in our farm are we, my brother and I. I do not know how I could manage without him. Feed preparation, selection of machinery – this is his concern. I actually will not be able to hire such an employee”.



Farmer Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė was recognized the best farmer of the year 2017 in Švenčionys District

Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė continued her farm modernization applying for support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Agricultural Holdings” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”. Support amounting to EUR 400 thousand was granted to her for enhancing the farm competitiveness. “I used these funds for farm reconstruction, milk block construction and all farm facilities”, Jolita is happy that now her farm is one of the most modern. “Even though we invested quite a lot of our money, but support of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme is of importance in the development of an innovative farm”.

### Purchasers are business partners

Some 6 tons of milk is milked annually, on the average, per cow at the farm of Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė. “Some cows yield 8–9 tons per cow, other cows – just 4–5 tons”, Jolita presents the farm results. “I sell milk from the very first days of farming to “Rokiškio sūris”, since they are not only purchasers, but also business partners. If not for them, I have never bought those 20 heifers from Latvia for herd improvement. They gave me a credit. I felt their help also at the painful moment of my life, when my father died”.

### Optimistic forecasts

Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė not for the first year takes part in the World Milk Congress. In 2018, it took place in Korea. “Lithuania was represented just by three people. The Congress had about 1 200 participants from the whole world. And the most promising news I brought from the Congress is that demand for milk in the world is greatly increasing. Demand for milk is especially increasing in Asia. Scientists presented interesting facts about the effect of milk on human organism. It turned out that children who do not get milk are growing slower and they are smaller in height. In some countries of Asia, milk is a sort of luxury”, Jolita Gabrinovičiūtė shares her impressions. “Quite many of new acquaintances got established in the congress, and I hope that some part of them will serve for milk of Lithuania in discovering new markets”.



“This is my antidepressant”, the farmer is delighted with her cows



A yellow roof of the farm glows from afar

## Lots of work in the forest and income is low

*Foresters calculate until a tree grows, it should be approached for more than ten times. The planted trees must be protected against forest residents, which make attempts to bite off tops of young trees, and later to see that brushes and low-valued trees would not overgrow them. "In order to breed a good forest, the development of young stands is of special importance. Many forest owners do it. It is very good that forest owners are granted support for the development of young stands", says forest owner Antanas Hofmanas from Ukmergė District.*

### From generation to generation

"My father was a forester. The Hofmanas family dynasty of foresters dates back even to the eighteenth century. The archives contain that 300 years ago Ernestas Hofmanas helped the counts Kosakovskiai residing near Ukmergė in forest and hunting management. An opinion exists that during three hundred years the representatives of our family managed to breed even three generations of mature forests. And my mother is also from the family of foresters. She is a daughter of the forester. Her two brothers were also foresters. Thus, our family is related to forest through my father's and mother's families. I still cannot persuade my grandson Mantas studying forestry to complete his studies as soon as possible and to take care of forests. For a longtime he travelled throughout the world and it seems that being fed up of this he returned to Lithuania. Probably, I'll succeed in stimulating him to complete his studies", shares his expectations Antanas Hofmanas, a merited forester of Lithuania, after making a short survey of his family history. As he says, his entire life is related to forest. He studied at the Vilnius Forestry College, later at the Forestry Faculty of the Academy of Agriculture (now Aleksandras Stulginskis University). In 1960 he started working in the field of forestry and did not leave it until his retirement. He is actively involved in the activities of the Forest Owners Association of Lithuania. Until now he heads the Ukmergė Department of this Association.



Merited forester Antanas Hofmanas

Worries of forest owners have become to Antanas Hofmanas as his own, when restitution of his parents' forest was made two decades ago. "Now together with my wife Marija we own about one hundred hectares of forest. Forest is my life. Being on retirement, I do not go away from forest. My forest is 15 kilometres away, thus every day I go there. For me forest is health and leisure. Even though I am over 80, I still hold a saw in my hands", the forester shares his energy.

### Beneficial opportunity

Forest should be looked after. If not – spruce, pines and beech trees will be soon overgrown by aspen, alder, nut-trees and other shrubbery. Young stands should be grown by leaving more space for selected and valuable trees. The development of young trees requires much work, and no income is derived out of it. Everything that you cut, you leave in the forest. As a matter of fact, of late you may use it for biofuel production, but collection of cut shrubberies is very costly. Therefore, it is very good that now there is an opportunity to receive support for the development of young tree stands", Antanas Hofmanas appreciates the importance of support.

With the use of support under the activity area "Investments for Increasing of Forests Eco Systems Resilience and Environmental Value" under Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure "Investments in Forest Area Development and Improvement of the Viability of Forests", he handled some seven hectares of young tree stands. "I applied for support for two years. One year I received EUR 847 for the development of young tree stands, and next year EUR 571. This support helps to cover labour expenses. All of it is given to the contractor. Even though support is given quite simply, since the size of support is fixed per hectare of young stands, bureaucracy could be somewhat less. Why is it necessary to send all document copies to the Forest Service? To my mind, additional bureaucracy prevents more than one senior forest owner applying for support", reflects Antanas Hofmanas.

According to the forester, if young stands have been well-managed, the value of forest increases, as the desirable tree

density is formed. Getting more sun and having more space, the remaining trees – spruce, pines and birch-trees grow faster. Stands become stronger, cleaner and of better quality.

In the opinion of Antanas Hofmanas, a merited forester and an active member of the Forest Owners Association of Lithuania, more substantial funds could be allocated for the development of forests. The painful subject so far is roads. "It quite often happens that from asphalt-covered road to the forest is barely some several hundred metres of the hardly passable field road. The forester cannot undertake road management from the funds of granted support, since that short road does not belong to the forest. I think it is possible to manage those hardly passable sections. Probably, some of the funds from the Lithuanian Rural Programme could be allocated for this purpose", considers the forester. According to him, it would be worthwhile to review the status of these small roads, as quite often many of them are not designated in any documents. Funds are not allocated for not registered roads.

### Respect for merits

"I am still a hunter. It is necessary to take care not only of the forest, but also of the forest residents", Antanas Hofmanas mentions his hobby, taking quite a lot of his time. He dedicated more than fifty years to hunting and cherishing the national traditions of hunting. He is the head of the hunters' club "Miškininkas" (Forester). He has a big and valuable collection of hunting exhibits. His hunting dogs have received highest awards.

Quite a lot of his time he allocates to forest owners of Ukmergė District. Possessing the extensive experience in forestry, he is happy to share it with other people who love and cherish forest. Antanas Hofmanas was awarded the title of the merited forester of Lithuania for his many-sided activities. He is an honorary member of the Forest Owners Association of Lithuania. In 2015, M. K. Čiurlionis Fund awarded him with the title of the Enlightened Person. Antanas Hofmanas not once received letters of gratitude from various State institutions.

"Born and grown in the forest and until now still staying in the forest", thus Antanas Hofmanas says about himself half-seriously and as if joking.



*Development of young stands needs lots of work, and no income is derived, thus, according to the forest owner, it is good that costs incurred are compensated*



*Well-tended forest grows nicely*



## Support opened export opportunities

*“After being granted support under the activity area “Support for Investments in Processing, Marketing and/ or Development of Agricultural Products” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 measure “Investments in Physical Assets”, we passed over to another level, since the purchased machinery makes it possible to use completely safe packaging. Thus new export opportunities were opened”, Šarūnas Stumbrys, the founder and Director of UAB “Biogami”, says of the benefit of support.*

### A daughter offered an idea

Šarūnas Stumbrys, the founder of UAB “Biogami”, operating in Vilnius, as he asserts, has never thought of establishing a company for manufacturing of baby food. “If somebody a decade ago said about this, I would be very surprised that such a thought could cross somebody’s mind”, says the businessman in jest and explains: “I am a pharmacist. Income received at my job fully satisfied me”.

Life began to go topsy-turvy when a daughter was born in 2010. “When complementary feeding was needed, all of a sudden it caused some worry. The baby girl did not eat any instant porridge at all. My wife and I decided to cook baby food for her. We bought organic cereals. Before each feeding of a baby we cooked it for 20 minutes and then mashed it. The procedure took some 20 minutes. During those minutes our baby daughter was crying and squalling, requiring food as soon as possible. We understood that we must do something”, Šarūnas overviews his road to business. “Then we tried to grind grain in the coffee-mill, but this resulted in fine granules and flour. When cooking, such porridge became lumpy. Since flour is not the best product, we started sifting it, leaving for food only bigger particles. Their cooking lasted just five minutes. However, it is a game requiring much effort and time. We decided to make more pre-cooked food. As my parents are medical specialists: my mother is a pediatrician and my father is a pharmacist, I am used from my childhood to examine the components of food products. The more so, I am a graduate in pharmacy. I have clarified that different cereals contain different elements necessary for the human organism. Gradually we started using various cereals.

Our acquaintances who came to us asked still more often to give them our pre-cooked food. After using them, they asked for more. Šarūnas little by little was developing his business idea.

### The first attempt turned out to be a failure

A day has come when Šarūnas decided to leave his job as a pharmacist, he bid farewell to his partners and started creating his own business. In 2012, he registered a private limited liability company. He purchased, as he thought, several kilograms of organic cereals; performed, as required, tests of grain samples paying two thousand Litass for each, and, as it turned out, out of eight samples, no one was suitable for baby food. “I was left without savings and without raw materials. At first, I wanted to run away as fast as possible, to leave off everything and come back to pharmacy. Later I calmed down. I never lacked obstinacy and persistence. I asked myself: “If other people can do, I also can”. And started everything again. It was really very difficult. And, besides, a son was born. Children want to eat and there is no money”, Šarūnas remembers his hardest times.

### Support helped me to rise up

At that time easy credits were granted through credit unions. A credit of 50 thousand Litass Šarūnas Stumbrys, Director of “Biogami” Company, indicates as the first support, important for business. “We equipped a small shop and bought first facilities. We started production with three porridges. Now we are producing porridges of ten sorts.



*Šarūnas Stumbrys, the founder and Director of UAB “Biogami”*

We created and received patents for the trade mark “Mamukas”. We started selling our first products in organic food outlets. Later we were noticed by two trade networks, operating in Lithuania. We packed our porridges into paper packaging. This is not convenient. The product may easily retain moisture and lose its quality. We could not even think about exports with such packaging”, says Šarūnas. “When I made out about an opportunity to receive support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, I already knew what I need it for – we wanted to buy the production- packing facilities to be able to pack our products into water-proof packaging”.

For modernization of UAB “Biogami” production base, support of EUR 47.5 thousand was granted. When selecting equipment, the entrepreneur evaluated its maintenance as well. Let’s say, equipment from China could be bought cheaper, whereas its maintenance was very complicated. Thus they bought from Europe. This considerably reduced equipment maintenance costs. Moisture-proof and air-proof packaging is bought from the Swedish firm, which has earned recognition of the most well-known manufacturers of the world. Products are manufactured and sealed in the protective gas atmosphere. Thus, product is naturally conserved. “So far we are exporting about 10% of our products. Porridges, bearing the trademark “Mamukas”, you may find in the shopping centres of Poland, Bulgaria, England, and Ireland. Cooperation is being established with the Ukraine and Asian countries. This is for the time being our small but growing business”, smiles Šarūnas.

At present the “Biogami” company employs seven people.

“It is delightful that the number of farmers involved in growing cereals, complying with requirements set for baby food, is increasing. And it is very good that Lithuanian mothers understand still more the importance of baby food. As regards me, I would be happiest if our company would grow to the international level and “Mamukas” porridge could be found in the shopping centres of the world”, Šarūnas Stumbrys shares his expectations.

UAB “Biogami” is the first manufacturer of organic porridges for babies and children in Lithuania. The company is involved in manufacturing products containing only the highest quality raw materials, grown in Lithuanian and EU organic farms. The products are exclusive as no food additives or preservatives are used throughout the entire production process. Products are manufactured in cooperation with Lithuanian pediatricians and gastroenterologists so that they would conform to the requirements set for healthy food of babies and children.

In September 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture awarded three best national companies, manufacturing organic food products. A third-prize winner – UAB “Biogami” – was appreciated for manufacturing of organic products for smallest consumers.



*Equipment, acquired from support funds, opened up new opportunities for the company*

# Innovations in the village: from scientific research to modern technologies

Even though great changes are taking place in Lithuanian agriculture, quite many fields exist where Lithuania lags behind from the old EU Member States. It is needed to update knowledge, to more actively apply innovative measures in agricultural production, and to adapt science inventions. One of the instruments, assisting to achieve these goals, is the activity area “Support for the Establishment and Operation of the EIP Operational Groups” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Cooperation”. Following it, the implementation of joint projects, initiated by the European Investment Partnership (EIP) operational groups, targeted to enhance the development of competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry, is supported.

**The specific feature of this activity area is that EIP operational group should join partners of three different types:**

- \*agricultural and/or forestry subjects (foresters, forest managers),
- \*science and/or studies,
- \*representatives of advisory institutions.

The EIP operational groups may also involve other rural development sector actors, who together, by applying knowledge and innovations, would implement EIP projects, the results thereof would contribute to agricultural and forestry sustainability and competitiveness

**Seeking for the wider application of the results achieved by the EIP operational groups, support shall be provided for implementing the EIP projects according to 12 themes:**

- ❖ sustainable use of soil,
- ❖ increase of plant productivity and decrease of production losses,
- ❖ plant health, control of harmful organisms and weeds,
- ❖ adaptation of farming systems in reducing the effects of climate changes;
- ❖ enhancement of animal pedigree value and productivity,
- ❖ ensuring animal welfare, wellness, environmental standard in animal-breeding farms and organization of animal nutrition;
- ❖ management of short food supply chains using local resources for feed production and development of local markets;
- ❖ agri-environmental protection and organic farming;
- ❖ creation of forest ecosystems in abandoned and not suitable for agriculture lands and farming therein;
- ❖ farm management improvement by applying new farm management measures;
- ❖ horticulture, berry farming and gardening technologies;
- ❖ energy production by using agricultural raw materials and its use in agriculture and forestry; knowledge transfer system development.

**The highest possible amount of support for the project is EUR 200 thousand. Support intensity in dependence on expenditure type is from 60 to 100 per cent.**

**The Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 for funding the above-mentioned activity area foresees EUR 11.645 million.**

**Until December 2018, 18 applications were submitted under this activity area, of which 15 were approved.**

**31 per cent of the support amount, allocated for this activity area, was approved, 19 per cent was paid out.**



## In vitro – a technique for creation of an elite herd

“Lithuania does not have the developed base, where scientific research on the implementation of the most advanced biotechnologies in livestock-breeding would be performed, and only a small part of the farms apply progressive herd renewal methods. That is why it was expedient to establish the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group to perform scientific research, consult, implement innovative biotechnologies and tackle issues concerning the improvement of pedigree value in the dairy and beef cattle herds and sheep flocks”, says Vaclovas Gavelis, leader of the project “Increasing the Pedigree Value and Productivity of Dairy and Beef Cattle Populations and Sheep Flocks Using Innovative Technologies”, funded under the activity area “Support for the Establishment and Operation of the EIP Operational Groups” of the measure “Cooperation” of the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.

### From science to practice

The project, funded under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, is implemented by the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LHSU) with the partners: the Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service, the Dotnuva Experimental Farm, the Upytė Experimental Farm, the Aleksandras Stulginskis University training farm, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences practical training and testing centre, “Seduvos avininkystė” UAB, and the Lytagra Agricultural Company.

Support of more than EUR 391 thousand was allocated for implementing the project. The project duration is three years. The implementation of the project was started on April 3, 2017.

According to the project leader, the livestock-breeding farms participate in the project willingly, since they see here the economic benefit. The recovery of embryos using an *in vitro* technique is expensive; therefore, the participation in the project, funded by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, is expedient for animal breeders. Farms may very fast increase the pedigree value of animal herds and achieve better economic results”, says Vaclovas Gavelis.

Thus the main reason that stimulated the breeders of cattle and sheep together with scientists to search for new opportunities in creating competitive herds was that Lithuanian pedigree animal breeders using old techniques are not able to breed the desirable number of local and marketable heifers of high genetic and pedigree value.

### Embryo implantation

“In the West an *in vitro* technique is being used quite for a long time to create a herd of good breed. The Lithuanian scientists also showed interest in this technique, though practically it has not been applied. Thus funding, allocated under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, for the project, interlinking science and practice, in my opinion, will open new opportunities for our national livestock-breeding”, says Prof. Vytuolis Žilaitis of LHSU Large Animal Clinic.

In implementing the project, tests relevant to *in vitro* technique application were performed with the herds of dairy cows and beef cattle and sheep flocks.

“Heifers under study by their pedigree value are grouped into three groups: very good, good and below good. Ovules are collected from very good heifers. They are fertilized *in vitro*, and the obtained embryo is either implanted into the lowest-category heifer or is frozen. Ovules are collected only from heifers, as the offspring pedigree value is always better than that of parents. Using an *in vitro* technique, superior cows are obtained from the superior ones”, Vytuolis Žilaitis characterizes the technique.

It is of special importance for large dairy farms, as at present every year some 28–35 per cent of dairy cows are rejected.



An *in vitro* technique will help the farmers to renew and improve the sheep flocks and herds of dairy cows and beef cattle

Since for fertilization of ovules, semen of a very good quality sire is necessary, it is bought by using the public procurement tender, announced at an international level.

During the performance of tests with beef cattle and sheep, not only an *in vitro* technique, but also oestrus synchronization is applied. “It is very important for beef cattle breeders that animal care should as much as possible be simpler and less labour-consuming. Calving or lambing requires greater care. Upon oestrus synchronization, offspring are produced at the same time. Less risk, less work, less labour costs, and less number of calves die”, emphasizes Artūras Šiukšcius, Deputy Director of the Institute.

### Expected results

“The company focuses much attention on animal genetics, thus I hope that the *in vitro* technique implemented during the project period will help to reproduce the cow herd of superior breeds”, expects Vilius Viskontas, Director of the Lytagra Agricultural Company and notes that if not the support, allocated under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, the company on its own initiative and with its own funds would not be able even to start it.

According to the project leader Vaclovas Gavelis, the predicted result of this project is more productive and more efficient dairy and beef cattle-breeding and meat and dairy sheep-breeding.

“During project implementation, the centre will be established in the reproduction laboratory of the University, which will help farmers to renew and improve the herd using an *in vitro* technique. As it is not a simple matter to produce a new life from ovules, this should be done in one place”, says Prof. Vytuolis Žilaitis, emphasizing the importance of the establishment and operation of the EIP operational groups.



“Seduvos avininkystė” UAB is testing an *in vitro* technique



Upon oestrus synchronization of animals, offspring are produced at the same time, this reducing their mortality



## Science helps to improve soil

“Farmers already since of old speak about the still increasing soil exhaustion, since humus degrades if mineral fertilizers are used without introducing organics, and soil erosion begins if humus is still more lacking”, speaks Aušra Žliobaitė, the Head the Cooperation and Law Department at the Chamber of Agriculture and the leader of the project “Soil Structure and Quality Improvement Using Microorganisms. Reduction of Nitrogen Compounds Emission, while Maintaining the Productivity of Plants Using Microorganisms of New Generation”, about the expected opportunity to receive support for tests, related to soil quality improvement.

### Farmers' expectations

“We noticed that in some places of cultivated land some signs of soil exhaustion appear and we for a long time have been searching for opportunities to revive its structure. We have made efforts earlier to apply various technologies, preparations; therefore, we got involved with pleasure in the project. Soil should be not only restored but also preserved, and for that purpose science-based knowledge is needed”, speaks farmer Neringa Budrevičienė, a project partner from Vilkaviškis District, of the opportunities offered by the activity area “Support for the Establishment and Operation of the EIP Operational Groups” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Cooperation”.

“Land is catastrophically eroding and for several years already the ways are sought for prevention of soil erosion. Most often I use stubble tillage and crop rotation. When the Chamber of Agriculture invited to join as a project partner I agreed without hesitation. It is very good that tests are perform in my land, as the specificities of a locality also have an impact on the soil”, Romualdas Kubaitis, a farmer from Anykščiai District, shares his expectations.

### Cheaper and faster

As is noted by Aušra Žliobaitė, leader of the project “Soil Structure and Quality Improvement Using Microorganisms. Reduction of Nitrogen Compounds Emission, while Maintaining the Productivity of Plants Using Microorganisms of New Generation”, funded in 2014-2020, the measure that appeared during this financial period curtailed the farmer's road to a scientist. For one farmer in case of any problem to apply to scientists is complicated and costly. This process became simpler due to the support for the EIP operational groups. Farmers just identify the problem, consultants transfer it to scientists and together with them are searching for ways of its tackling. Benefit is gained by the entire sector”, emphasizes Aušra Žliobaitė.

The trend and the main goal of the project is upon joining knowledge and competence of scientists, advisory institutions and farmers to perform pilot tests and to tackle the issues relevant to soil quality improvement, reduction of nitrogenous fertilizer application and increase of production fertility, as well as quality improvement issues, seeking to increase the plant-growing efficiency and sustainability of the use of resources. The project foresees to increase the profitability of farms by reducing the application of nitrogenous fertilizers and maintaining or even improving the production fertility due to microelements of a new generation and by improving (restoring) soil structure and production quality.



Discussing the interim results of the project at the Chamber of Agriculture

## Interim test results

The project “Soil Structure and Quality Improvement Using Microorganisms. Reduction of Nitrogen Compounds Emission, while Maintaining the Productivity of Plants Using Microorganisms of New Generation” is implemented by consultants of the Chamber of Agriculture, the Nature Research Centre of the State Scientific Research Institute, and 11 farmers with their farms: 7 in cereals, 2 in gardening and 2 in berry growing.

“During the project implementation, we are stimulating the farms to improve and restore soil structure by applying microorganisms and microelement fertilizers of a new generation. Thus to reduce the use of nitrogenous fertilizers and maintain or even improve the fertility and quality of production”, emphasizes Aušra Žliobaitė.

According to Dr. Sigita Jurkonienė and Dr. Virgilija Gavelienė, scientists of the Nature Research Centre, the project partner representatives, the test results show that using microorganisms and microelement fertilizers of a new generation, a better yield is gained from crops, vegetables, and berries, this indicating the improvement in soil structure.

The farmers, participating in the project, affirm: if test results justify their expectations, they are ready to apply them in the larger areas of their fields. According to them, the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 helped to take a decision easier as regards the participation in the project.

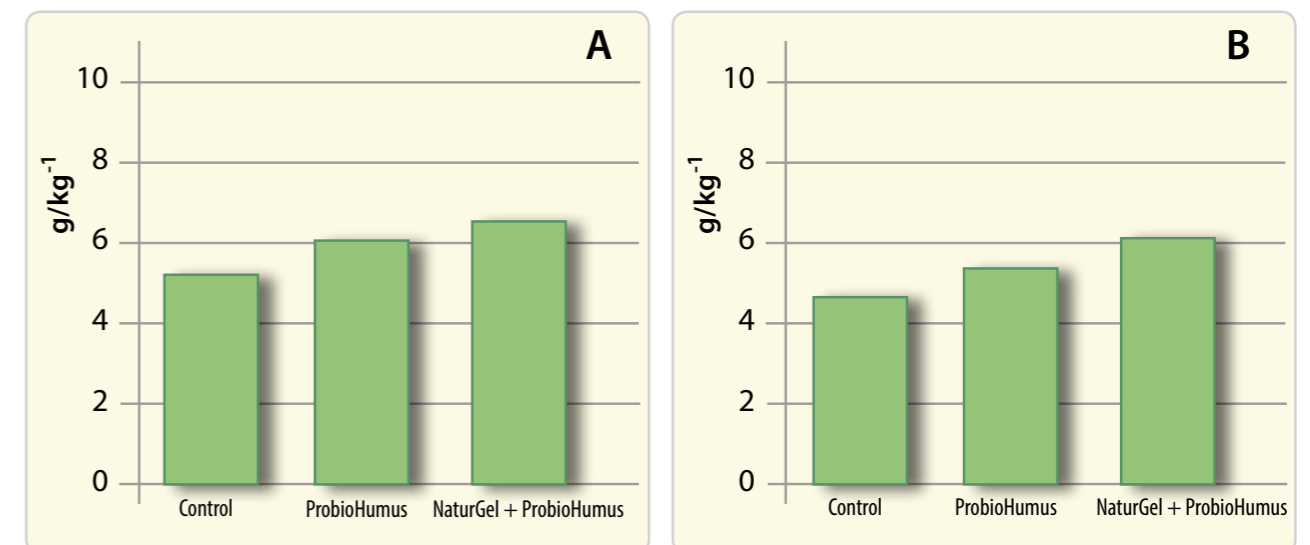
As compared to 2017, after performance of soil tests in 2018, it was noticed that in the field where NaturGel+ ProbioHumus was used in organic farms and where NaturGel+ ProbioHumus was used in farms using chemicals a norm of nitrogenous fertilizers was reduced by 50 per cent:

1. More mineral nitrogen remains in the soil,
2. Amount of humus and organic coal increased in the soil:
3. Humufication process has started.

It is notable that in the course of tests in 2018, drought made a negative impact on the production results of the farms, this having an impact on test results: farms with account taken of the type of farming (grain crops, gardening, berry farming), method of production applied (organic production, exclusive quality production, traditional production), farming region (localities favourable and unfavourable for farming) suffered different harvest losses, which reached from 15 to 50 per cent. Gardening and crop production farms underwent major losses. However, it was noticed that in pilot farms where preparations NaturGel and ProbioHumus were applied, plants have endured the impact of drought better, they were healthier, germinated and ripened at the same time, fertility in pilot fields was from 13 to 45 per cent higher than in the control field.

It was observed that in organic and National Quality Products (NQP) farms, growing vegetables with the use of NaturGel and ProbioHumus, sugar content was significantly higher in vegetables; it was also noted that vegetables contained a higher amount of Vitamin C, the weight of root-crops, as compared to the control, increased by 12 g, length and diameter in separate variants in the organic farm differed insignificantly (3 – 5 per cent), and in inorganic – length using preparations was bigger by 15–21 per cent.

### Sugar content in carrots: A – organic, B – NQP farm.



## How to reduce production costs and increase production

“Lately, farmers still more often apply to scientists with a request for advice how the cattle-breeding production costs should be reduced, the production volume obtained should be increased and its quality improved”, tells Jurgita Baranauskienė, leader of the project “Competitive Farm”, funded by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, about the intention to make use of support for stimulation of the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP), proposed by the European Commission.

### Three partners are a must

The specific feature of the activity area “Support for the Establishment and Operation of the EIP Operational Groups” under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measure “Cooperation” is the cooperation between farmers, advisers and scientists in implementing the project, encouraging innovations in agriculture and forestry.

The partners of the project “Competitive Farm” are Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU), Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service, Lithuanian Agricultural Companies’ Association, Lithuanian Farmers’ Union, the Upytė Experimental Farm, AB “Šilutės veislininkystė”, farmers Feliksas Vaitelis from Kėdainiai District Dangirutė Kazakevičienė from Marijampolė Municipality, Vaidutė Stankevičienė from Biržai District. EUR 5.6 thousand was allocated for the project with the duration period of three years.

### Innovative animal feeding

“The main idea of the project, the implementation of which was started in 2016, is to interlink the innovative feed growing, preparation and animal feeding technologies, using the balanced feed and supplementing it with the use of innovative hydroponic technology of vertical agriculture with seven-day sprouted beans, peas, barley, wheat, lucerne, rape, and sunflowers”, Jurgita Baranauskienė presents the project idea. “It is very good that is possible to perform tests, foreseen by scientists, in real farms. Changes are observed in the natural environment, the problems arising are resolved at once, and the specific reasons of their emergence are identified”.

At the first stage, the change in the yield of a cow receiving green feed was observed. Scientists and farmers stated as in comparison with a control group of cows not receiving green feed yields were higher, milk contained more proteins and fats. It is expected that if the feeding ratio is supplemented with green feed the meat quality of animals will increase.

### Importance of links with scientists

“Previously, tests were performed with dairy cows. Expectations have justified themselves. We buy organic peas and beans. They sprout very quickly. Animals eat them very willingly. We expect that tests will prove that feed, supplemented with greens, helps to create the higher economic efficiency”, Vladas Kurutis, the head of the pilot farm, shares his experience.



Plantation of fresh grass



The project participants, looking round the fresh grass grown for cow feeding

“We performed tests with 2-12 month old young animals. We have formed four groups by animal age. In each group, five animals received green feed, five did not receive. From the animal hair you may see those animals whose feed ratio was supplemented with green feed”, Vitas Riškevičius, head of the pilot farm of the cattle-breeding section, draws attention to the glossy animal skin of the animal. He noticed that insemination of green-fed heifers has improved significantly.

“We learnt of the benefit of fresh green feed when attending international exhibitions, thus we feel very happy that we became the partners of the project being implemented in Lithuania. We had some problems with seed germination. I noticed that on the first day of germination after eating the sprouted seed, some sort of light intoxication appears. At once we received recommendations of the scientists”, Vaidutė Sinkevičienė from Biržai District, having the farm with 450 dairy cows, is delighted with a new opportunity afforded by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020.

“We are small farmers. We have 39 dairy cows and the same number of young animals. At one of the seminars we heard about the project “Competitive Farm” and requested for participation. The beneficial effect of fresh green feed we saw at once through milk amount and quality”, say farmers Dangirutė and Valdas Kazakevičiai from Marijampolė Municipality. “It is very good that scientists gave us some advice. If not the project, it would be complicated and expensive for smaller farmers to cooperate with scientists”.

## Results

Upon generalization of the test outcomes, the following innovative feed technology results were distinguished.

### Fattening cattle:

- ❖ Costs per kg of increased weight in the pilot group was by 3.02% higher than the costs of the increased weight in the control group.
- ❖ The highest costs for fresh green feed was formed by sprouting lucerne, since price for its seed is 4.92 euro/kg. Price of other seeds is 0.25–0.29 euro/kg.
- ❖ The average increased weight per head of fattening cattle in the pilot group was by 3.24 per cent higher than that of the control group.

### Dairy cows:

- ❖ In the farms, where pilot feeding was performed, a cost price per one litre of milk fluctuated from 0.26 to 0.32 euro/kg. The feed expenses in the costs price made 0.12–0.13 euro/kg, of which fresh green feed accounted for 10–20% in dependence on the type of fresh green feed.
- ❖ The milk yield of cows fed with fresh green feed was by 10–15% higher than of those fed with traditional feed.

## Soil moisture regulating systems tested on farmers' fields

An agriculturist is still dependent on the whims of nature. The project "Regulation of Soil Moisture Regime" of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group supported by the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 is in search of the ways to help farmers to undertake successful farming at the existence of boundary climate conditions.

### The idea was suggested by a farmer

"Climate change phenomena are stimulating the still more intensive collaboration between scientists and farmers. And it is very good that this road between them became shorter due to the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 where funding is foreseen for the activity area "Support for the Establishment and Operation of the EIP Operational Groups" of the measure "Cooperation". Since farmers for some time already are inquiring scientists how to retain moisture in the soil and what is to be done that nutrient elements important for plants would not flow together with water, we joined without lengthy considerations the EIP operational group, prepared the feasibility study and submitted it to the Ministry of Agriculture, and upon its recognition as eligible for support we submitted an application. The implementation of the project was started in December 2016, Assoc.-Prof. Dr. Inga Adamonytė, leader of the project, shares her experience.

The project for joint activities is united by Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service, Lithuanian Farmers' Union, Lithuanian Agricultural Companies' and Grain Growers' Association, Agricultural Co-operation Company "Mūsų ūkis", PI "Aleksandro Stulginskio universiteto mokomasis ūkis" and four farmers: Alfredas Bardauskas from Raseiniai District, Edgaras Varkalis from Rietavas Municipality, Andrius Baltrūnas from Rokiškis District and Paulius Pikšrys from Kėdainiai District.

"As moisture regulation systems are successfully applied in the USA, Canada, Holland, Germany and elsewhere, our project is targeted to join the parties concerned for joint activities, to disseminate knowledge about innovations in every possible way, to comprehensively assess the soil moisture regulation tools and their application efficiency in Lithuania. To also clarify the economic and ecological benefit possessed by these tools and their contribution to the increase of competitiveness of agriculture and to identify the automated system control opportunities", specifies Inga Adamonytė.



The moisture regulation system is installed on the farmer's field

## Regulation systems installed

One of the first project implementation works is to install pilot moisture regulation systems in six farms that are situated in different regions and with different agro climate. Another important step includes pilot tests and data collection, monitoring and fixing of various water specifications, conclusions and generalizations, permanent farmers' consultancy and application of regulated drainage system under specific farm conditions.

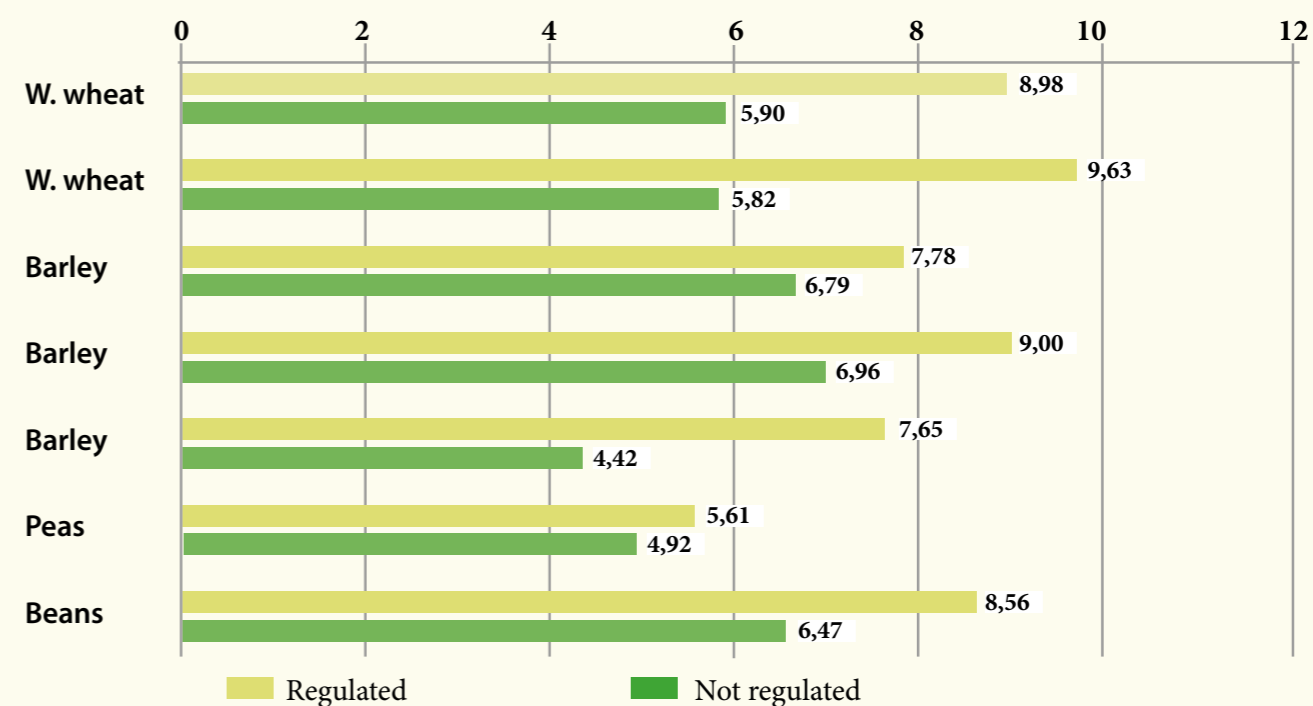
"Much is spoken theoretically about the soil moisture regulation benefit, but the results of the first-year project monitoring (2018) make it possible to practically be certain of this", emphasizes the project leader.

"Land in my farm is not good. We suffer from rain and from drought. Since earlier I have implemented several projects with Aleksandras Stulginskis University, we have gained collaboration experience, and as due to climate factors there is a permanent need to regulate soil moisture, I became a partner of this project. Last autumn a moisture regulation system was installed in one field. It is very good that an experiment is conducted in a field that is quite well-known to a farmer. It is very convenient to observe the effect of moisture regime regulation on fertility", farmer Alfredas Bardauskas from Raseiniai District shares his thoughts about the project. "Nevertheless, if support under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 was not allocated, I would not participate in this experiment. Price of such things is quite high, and the farmers on their own would not be able to implement such project, and at present I have envisaged other priorities".

"Soil moisture regulation is of special importance to farmers. Such systems are being applied in the world, whereas for Lithuania it is a novelty, thus we decided to test their efficiency. The system has been already installed, and its effect is to be tested. If the system justifies itself, we'll make efforts to implement it at least in one field, where an experiment is performed, and if we feel the benefit we'll use it in other fields as well", says farmer Paulius Pikšrys from Kėdainiai District.

The field where the moisture regulation system is installed is sown with winter wheat, therefore this year I had an opportunity to make comparison with winter wheat growing in other fields. The system not only regulates the moisture but also helps the soil to retain all materials necessary for soil. Spring water flowing into irrigation ditches does not wash them away. It is very good that the implementation of the project is accompanied by collaboration with scientists", farmer Edgaras Varkalys from Rietavas Municipality is delighted with the new "Company" measure, stimulating the European Innovation Partnership.

### Biological fertility of agricultural plants (t/ha)



## GOOD EXPERIENCE

Projects, funded under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020

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The publication gives a survey of support, received by each of the regions under the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 measures, with the specific successfully implemented or being implemented project samples. The Programme innovation of the period encouraging the cooperation between scientists, consultants and agricultural producers is provided. These are projects funded under the activity area “Support for Establishment of EIP Activity Groups and Development of Their Activities” of the measure “Cooperation”.