

**AKKOR Letter to Iowa Farmers
March 2017**

**FARMERS' EXCHANGES: A GROUP FROM THE TVER REGION GET
TO KNOW THEIR NOVGOROD NEIGHBORS BETTER**

At the end of March 2017, farmers from one region made a trip to their neighbors to learn about a successful farmers' cooperative.

The trip was initiated by a person whom Iowans got to know pretty well over the years. Her name is Svetlana Maksimova and she is a member of the Russian Duma (lower House of the Russian Parliament), at the recent AKKOR Annual Congress she was also elected an AKKOR Vice President, a proud mother and grandmother, and just a good solid person.



Photo above: Farmers from the Tver Region visit their neighbors. Svetlana is in the middle of the top row.

The main purpose of the visit was educational. Tver Region is known as a vegetable growing area. Especially, root vegetables, - potatoes and carrots. They learned that there was a very successful coop not far away called “Novgorod Farmers”, so arrangements were made a group of private farmers and some regional agricultural officials made the trip.

When the group arrived to the Novgorod cooperative the guests were well prepared and asked a lot of questions.

Farmers' cooperation is seen as the most efficient way to successful farming. National programs have been launched but, as they say, it is better to see once that to hear a thousand times.

The coop is located in a village called Bronnitsa. The head of the coop, Ivan Pireev, shared with his guests the challenges that were on their way and how they were able to overcome them and not be discouraged.

Being well informed gives people a big advantage. When local funding is limited or non-existent, there are still ways to get to where you need to go. One of the unknown “secrets” is how to utilize incentive programs and federal grants to your advantage and to the advantage of your embers. Pireev was able to tap into such resources and shared with the visitors what worked the best.

Another lesson that the Tver delegation took home was value added practices that the Novgorod coop uses. Among them was how to correctly set up vegetables storage. Storage is very important but another advantage that the visitors learned about was how to best process different vegetables and potatoes. The coop. is equipped with packaging machines that after thorough cleaning are vacuum sealed and delivered to local retailers and to federally financed chains (like schools and hospitals).

These improvements in produce presentation not only increased the volume of sales but also the profit ratio and, according to Mr. Pireev. – “It presents us in a more favorable way to the consumer than our competitors”.

Another stop was “Euro-Chemical-Services”, - a company that produces and delivers fertilizers and as a designated distributor of major machinery building companies they also sell agricultural equipment and machinery.

The visitors had an opportunity to see the company’s demonstration floor and were quite impressed with new models of tractors and combines. Of course, there were a lot of questions on the terms of machinery purchases. The fun part of this portion of the trip was the opportunity to get behind the wheels and make a few rounds on the test grounds.

When the guests were ready to leave their hosts surprised them with an unusual gift, - a full package for planting and growing a Siberian pine nut tree. At the beginning of 2017 “Euro-Chemical-Services” launched an ecological project “The March of Pine Trees” because 2017 is proclaimed the Year of Ecology in Russia and the company wanted to make its contribution to preserving our planet.

Given that Svetlana Maksimova is a member of the Agrarian Committee of the Russian Duma, she also met with the top regional ag officials to discuss the impact of federal agricultural incentive programs.

Novgorod is an ancient Russian city founded in the 8-th-9-th century AD. Its history and its beauty are amazing. The guests had an opportunity to visit the Novgorod Kremlin (the first church was erected in 1045-1050)



Photo: Novgorod Kremlin (1045 AD)

We leave you with these images and with our wishes for a good planting season and a good spring for all.

Elena Minenko, AKKOR head office