

**THE TRANSITION PERIOD OF LITHUANIAN CATTLE
BREEDING IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION INTO EU****I. Krupelyte, D. Uchockiene, P. Doubravsky, G. Kascenas****Summary**

Agriculture development takes an important part in Lithuanian transition process of integration into EU. Dairy farming traditionally is the main branch of Lithuanian agriculture. There were 11535 cattle herds in 2000 - 2001. 70.7% cattle herds' size varies from 3 to 10 cows. The total number of controlled cows is 90360 that make 20.3% of all cows.

The goal of Lithuania is to reduce the gap in cattle productivity, genetic potential and breeding system between Lithuania and EU countries during this transition period. The milk productivity of cows increases constantly.

The productivity of milk-recorded cows has increased in the ten last years in average from 3316 kg (in 1996) to 4863 kg (in 2001) (+1900 kg).

The improvement of genetic potential has approximate hold over constant increase of milk yield. Some abroad-proven bulls were used along with Lithuanian bulls in the last few years due to improve dairy cows.

In the current transition period the legislation system of Lithuania is being adjusted to EU law. The cattle breeding associations leaded by the example of most EU countries should take over all breeding services that are governmental now. Lithuanian Holstein Cattle Breeders Association is most advanced in this process. With the support of international projects HGAGA is prepared to take over governmental breeding services.

Introduction

Lithuania is actively preparing for conditions and rules of world markets and is in transition period of integrating into EU. New-formed active inner market makes new demands, too. According to these reasons, changes are seen in all the areas of agriculture, including the cattle breeding. The national

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I. Krupelyte, D. Uchockiene, P. Doubravsky, Lithuanian Holstein Cattle Breeders Association; G. Kascenas, "Litgenas", Kalvarijos 128, Kaunas LT-3018, Lithuania.

institutions in Lithuania are in transition toward market-oriented structure to address the quality and efficiency needs, required by the market. In the strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development in Lithuania, the dairy sector has been acknowledged as a priority branch of agriculture.

Dairy cattle

Cattle take the main part in Lithuanian agriculture. The income from the cattle rearing, including those from selling for slaughter or bred are about 60% of the whole income, generated in the livestock production. The tendency of cows' decreasing in number is seen during late years. There were 586.0 thousand of cows in 1996. 131.0 thousand (22.8%) of them were controlled. And in 2001 there are only 461.0 thousand cows, 91.0 thousand (20.3%) are controlled. Private farmers own 67% of controlled cows. 70.7% of herds are rather small-scale, where from 3 to 10 cows are kept.

These numbers clearly illustrate the unfavorable situation for development of dairy industry and cattle husbandry. In addition, a very small part of Lithuanian cattle herd is inspected for productivity.

Obviously, during the last few years the productivity of cows rises as fast as the average in Europe and in the developed European countries. In 2001 the average milk productivity of recorded cows was 4863 kg in Lithuania. That makes +416 kg in comparison with average milk productivity in 2000 (4447 kg).

However, the difference of productivity in comparison with the developed countries is still rather big - in 2000 the average productivity of cows in Lithuania makes only 56 percent of average productivity in Sweden, and 73 percent of average productivity in Germany.

Substantial increase in cow productivity has been marked in recent years. It was influenced by many factors such as improved keeping technologies, better fodder base and so on. Of course one of the reasons why milk yields have been increasing till now is that the best-proven sires of Lithuania are used for dairy cattle improvement in Lithuania. Some abroad-proven bulls were also used along with Lithuanian sires in the last few years.

There are 70.5% of Holstein/B&W cattle in the whole dairy cattle population of Lithuania. And it is getting bigger every year, since they are recognized as more efficient than Red ones. Holstein bulls are being used for dairy cattle improvement since 1982. There are 70.0% of Holstein genes share in Black&White cows and 74.2% - in Black&White heifers. Reds are improved by Danish Red and Swedish Red&White bulls mostly. There is

51.3% of Danish Red genes share in Red cows and 22.5% - in Red heifers, and 10.4% of Swedish R&W in cows and 29.7% in heifers, respectively. This shows an intensive import of genetic progress in recent years.

Farmers, who are engaged in breeding, inseminate their cows only with the semen of highly productive bulls. This had an influence in milk productivity increase in the last few years. Average milk yield per cow in breeding farms of Black & White population were 6152 kg and 5129 kg - of Red population in 2001, respectively.

Fact that is untoward for successful dairy cattle improvement is that thousands of stale semen doses are kept in the State AI centres. This semen is of old bulls, which were born in 1970's or 1980's, and these bulls have extremely negative breeding values. But this semen has a very low price and that is why a lot of it gets to the market. If the notion of farmers would be on the higher level they would prefer the semen that has a little bit higher price and much higher quality.

The estimation of bulls according to Animal Model has just been started in Lithuania. First data of breeding values of bulls which are used in Lithuania has been published in 01 01 2002. But some difficulties are still encountered. There is a lack of specific data that is needed for proper bulls' breeding value estimation. So the reliability of this data is not assured. Also there is no limit set for breeding value below which bulls would be not allowed to use for insemination. And there's no liable institution that would controlled this in Lithuania.

The organization of cattle breeding

Due to specifics of animal breeding, greatly developed cooperation is necessary in this sector. Animal-breeders in highly developed countries accomplish the animal breeding work by themselves, through their associations. The associations of cattle-breeders are state recognized institutions, which are responsible for executing of breeding tasks and rendering of animal breeding services and consultations for their members.

After Lithuania's independence cattle breeders established their associations, which were facing many problems at the beginning of their work. These problems rose because of the lack of skilled staff and financial resources in the associations and because of the fact, that government was not ready to hand over the tasks of animal breeding to these associations and to support the executing these tasks.

At this moment the animal breeding is still in responsibility of state institutions. Several of them, according to the documents, regulating their work, are engaged in various animal-breeding tasks. Often the duplication of the same function is encountered. The cooperative relations between active institutions in animal breeding area are not formed.

Some changes are made, but only in the legislative acts, ruling animal breeding work. Lithuania takes an obligation to finish the changes in legislative documents, which adjust animal breeding, according to the EU standards till it becomes a member of EU. From that time Lithuania must be ready to accomplish all the requirements, which are legitimated by the EU law. The process of associations' recognition by the State as animal breeding institutions has been started and is in continuation now. It means, that during this rather short time Lithuania has to prepare to hand over the tasks of animal breeding (accomplishment of animal breeding program, Herd book management book of descent, trade with pure-bred animals, etc.) from the state to private sector.

There are three dairy cattle breeding associations in Lithuania. These associations, following the example of most EU countries should take over all governmental breeding services. But for now, state still does not assure the financial support for the development of the associations and for the executing breeding services for the farmers. The associations are endangered to accomplish only representative functions and government institutions discharge the main part of breeding work.

HGAGA is mostly advanced cattle breeders association in Lithuania. It has the largest number of members, it comes up to 800 and it is increasing steady. The number of cows in HGAGA's population increases also, it comes up to 18000. That makes up to 20% of all controlled cows. Members of HGAGA are the most advanced farmers of Lithuania. They own more than half of 60 top cows of B&W population of Lithuania. With the support of international projects HGAGA has prepared to take over the governmental breeding services, including herd book keeping, implementing breeding program, cattle trading and so on. It is most active in the reorganization process.

Conclusions

In order to bring about desired changes, it will be necessary to do:

- to improve the quality of animals by:
- performing breeding work
- using imported genetic potential;

- considerable increase of milk recording density;
- to attract more cattle breeders into associations;
- efficient coordination of work between different institutions involved in animal breeding;
 - to finish the changes in legislative documents, ruling animal breeding;
 - to ensure State financial support for the cattle breeders associations, in order to provide breeding services.

Information sources

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RAZDOBLJE TRANZICIJE GOSPODARSTVA LITVE U PROCESU INTEGRACIJE U EU

Sažetak

Razvoj poljoprivrede važan je dio u tranzicijskom procesu integracije Litve u EU. Mlijekarstvo je tradicijski glavna grana litvanske poljoprivrede. U 2000.-2001. bilo je 11535 stada goveda. U 70.7% veličina stada goveda kreće se od 3 - 10 krava. Ukupni broj kontroliranih krava je 90360, što iznosi 20.3% svih krava.

Cilj Litve je smanjiti raskorak u proizvodnosti, genetskom potencijalu i sustavu uzgoja goveda između Litve i zemalja EU u ovom razdoblju tranzicije. Proizvodnja mlijeka krava neprestano raste. Proizvodnost krava je u zadnjih deset godina porasla prosječno od 3316 kg (1996) do 4863 kg (2001) (+1900 kg).

Poboljšanje genetskog potencijala prosječno stalno povećava prinos mlijeka. U zadnjih nekoliko godina upotrijebljeni su, uz litvanske bikove, neki bikovi dokazani u inozemstvu, radi poboljšanja mliječnih krava.

U tekućem razdoblju tranzicije zakonodavni sustav Litve prilagođava se zakonima EU. Stočarska udruženja, potaknuta primjerom većine zemalja EU, trebala bi preuzeti sve, sada državne, službe uzgoja. Litvanska udruga uzgajача goveda Holstein najnaprednija je u tom procesu. Uz pomoć međunarodnih projekata HGAGA je spremna preuzeti državne službe uzgoja.

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