

## LITHUANIA

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In 2004, GDP in the agricultural sector of Lithuania rose by 5.7 % versus 2003 (for the whole economy the rise was 6.7 %). Although overall results for agriculture were weighed down by scanty crop harvest affected by poor weather during the whole season, the cattle breeding segment retained its stable growth unchanged (at 8 %). The value of gross agriculture output rose by 2 %, including LTL 2.326 billion in crop production and LTL 2.222 billion in animal production. Total foreign trade in agriculture and food products surged by 23.8 %, to LTL 5.86 billion in 2004.

In terms of significance, the agricultural sector comes among the priority sectors of national economy. Lithuania's integration in the EU and effective utilization of national and EU compensatory and investment assistance have produced the largest impetus for change in national agriculture and rural areas. In 2004, total income of agricultural producers, including direct subsidies and refunds, made up LTL 2.9 billion, a surge of 45 % from the year-earlier figure.

Rural population has gone on steady decline since 1992, however, the ratio of urban and rural population has remained almost unchanged amid faster migration of urban residents to other countries and village: some 66.9 % of national population (2.31 million people) reside in cities and one-third (33.1 % or 1.14 million) live in rural locations.

Lithuania's territory covers the area of 6.53 million ha. As of early 2004, the area of land used for agricultural activities made up 3.96 million ha, including 2.62 million ha, or 66.2 % of total land used for agricultural activities, in private ownership.

### **Education, training, awareness raising and capacity-building.**

Public policy in the areas of applied agricultural science, continuous farmer training, counseling, adult education, improvement of professional skills, farmer self governance, education and culture is being established and implemented by the Rural Development and Information Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Department coordinates training and improvement of professional skills of individuals engaged in agricultural sector and supports the participation of agricultural entities in exhibitions, fairs and contests. The Ministry of Agriculture is also in direct control of Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics and the Leader Programme and Farmer Training Methodology Centre.

Two high schools, 6 colleges and 38 technology and business, agricultural and other professional schools offer agricultural education in Lithuania. In 1995 – 2003, these educational institutions trained approximately 41,000 specialists and highly qualified workers for agriculture. In 2004 alone, approximately 1,300 graduates acquired a profession at agricultural schools of both levels.

### **Organic Farming.**

Organic farms – promising farms of the future. Their number was increasing rapidly in 2003 – 2004 growing by 60 % every year. During the 2004, the area of certified agricultural farming land increased by 20,000 hectares and covered the total area of 42,961 ha – approximately about 1.5 % of all farming land of the country. An average certified farm of agricultural production covered 36 hectares. About 40 % of lands of organic farms are meadows and fallows; 24 % - cereals and leguminous crops, more than 10 % - extensively enlarged areas of buckwheat. Organic potatoes and vegetables are grown in 1.5 %

of organic land-tenure, berry-fields – in 1.0 % and gardens – in 1.5 %. Organic production farms are united by Association of Organic Farming “Gaja”, established in 1990, and “Tatulos programa”, public institution, established in 1993. Inspections of farms are carried out and certificates of organic farming are issued by Public Enterprise “Ekoagros”.