

Agriculture is a lifelong magic and there is no power that can break it!

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Conversation of Emil Ivanov with Eng. Yordan Koichev and Stoyan Zhelyazkov, managers of the company MURRA 2002 in the village of Lozenets, Straldzha Municipality, Yambol Region

- **MURRA 2002 started 16 years ago. What is the current profile of the company you manage?**

Yordan Koichev: MURRA 2002 manages 9000 decares of land, 1700 of which are pastures. Our own land is 4500 decares. In addition, we have a buffalo farm with 600 animals.

- ***In other words: a closed cycle, production of a final product...***

Stoyan Zhelyazkov: This is our major goal. After we implement the last investment project – construction of a dairy products plant, which we believe will happen next year, we will truly be talking about a final product. Our mission in this business is to build up and to grow!

- ***MURRA 2002 is one of the few companies in Bulgaria that simultaneously produces crop and livestock output. The success of this multi-faceted format depends exceptionally on expert presence. What is your expertise?***

Yordan Koichev: The key in crop production, where our strategy is structured on the basis of production of cereal, oilseed and some forage crops, is plant protection, fertilization and selection. Our consultant in this segment from 2002 to this day, and for the future as well, is Viola AE in Sliven. We are aware that without reliable, high-quality and professional expertise, crop production is doomed to failure. The team of Viola helps us to ensure sustainability, intensity and growth of our production. This is the raw material base, the foundation for the development of our livestock sector.

Stoyan Zhelyazkov: In buffalo breeding we have also achieved a high degree of sustainability, thanks to the highly professional presence of veterinarians and zootechnicians. The perspective is clear; we are now forming the team for our new goal – production of dairy products under the MURRA 2002 brand.

- ***Do you receive support from your families, the public, the state?***

Stoyan Zhelyazkov: Our families stand firmly behind us. And I can proudly state that our children will inherit and continue the business. As far as society is concerned, my conviction that we are virtuosos in the art of envying each other remains indisputable!

Yordan Koichev: The topic of agricultural policy is very deep, and this is a reason to fear the possibility of sinking... In fact, I personally do not think that it makes sense to worry about what may happen. This, I admit, is one of my favourite principles.

- ***And what cannot happen, Mr. Koichev?***

The question suggests various speculations, such as, for example, what I would ask the Minister of Agriculture, who has taken the wrong way and has turned into the office (I deliberately do not mention the trendy word “office”) of MURRA 2002? If by some chance I really stand in front of the Minister of Agriculture, I will not miss the opportunity to ask him why subsidization based on EU funds is carried out so irregularly. It has become a tradition for payments to be delayed, especially in livestock breeding. This imbalance leads to great tension, disrupts plans and preliminary intentions.

Of course, I will not miss asking the Minister why, after 10 years of EU membership, Bulgaria still does not have a national agricultural strategy with a horizon of 5, 10, 15, 20 years? You will say – the free market is that general motivator for every personal strategy and ambition in agriculture. And to some extent you are right. But the state cannot fold its arms and watch from the sidelines as agriculture drifts with the current. Agriculture is a key industry for shaping the standard of living of a nation. And the state has its responsibilities, its political conduct, will and commitments to regulate the processes in this vital sector.

- ***What is your most difficult choice?***

Stoyan Zhelyazkov: The most logical decision – to close the cycle of our production, i.e. to build a dairy products plant – turned out to be a great challenge for us, the most difficult decision in our practice so far.

- ***Why?***

Yordan Koichev: Because we have the ambition for this to be a super modern technological achievement. We will produce products of exceptionally high quality, which requires precision, high professional capacity and competences.

- ***What would make you happiest?***

Yordan Koichev: On a personal level – to successfully finalize our current project, where we will create high-class products under the MURRA 2002 brand.

On a broader level, we would like to witness more wisdom, foresight and rationality in the future national agricultural policy, because such a policy will sooner or later be defined. Today Bulgaria exports the greater part of its grain harvest. And we are definitely proud of this achievement. Yet in fact this is no reason for showing off. Can you imagine what enormous added value would be generated if this large-scale raw material resource were to be “run through” livestock breeding! A country like Serbia is performing this “trick” very successfully; why should we not be able to do the same?

Profile: Yordan Koichev has a higher engineering education and has worked for many years in the education system. Stoyan Zhelyazkov graduated from an agricultural technical school and has a long record of service in a TKZS (Agricultural Production Cooperative).

As we have already informed you, in four consecutive issues of the journal "Plant Protection" we are publishing interviews with agricultural producers, clients of Viola AE, the trading company for pesticides, fertilizers and seeds, based in Sliven. In the past three issues we printed the conversations with Nedelcho Popov, chairman of the agricultural cooperative "Tundzha 94" in the village of Panicherevo, Stara Zagora Region, Hristo Stoynov, vine grower and licensed wine producer from the village of Lozenets, Yambol Region, and Dimo Dimov, a farmer from the town of Sungurlare, Burgas Region. In issue 6/2018 expect the interview with Eng. Yordan Koichev and Stoyan Zhelyazkov, managers of the company MURRA 2002 in the village of Lozenets, Straldzha Municipality, Yambol Region.

These materials are not of an advertising nature. The aim is to show what the people who are part of the agricultural community in Bulgaria think.