

Deddens Agro: The organic transition is a living choice

Background



Photo: Viktor Shcherbachuk (Deddens Agro)

Agriculture is having to quickly adapt to increasing consumer demand for organic produce. Deddens Agro is a Ukrainian-German company that has quickly responded to the increasing consumer demand for organic produce. The company started in 2008 with conventional agriculture and made the switch to organic in 2014, dedicating 2'600 hectares out of their 3'500-hectare farm to organic produce. Soy makes up 40% of Deddens Agro's organic crops, with wheat the second most-planted crop.

The company also produces organic

flax, sunflower, and buckwheat. Their choice of crops is driven by demand and restrictions in proper crop rotation to ensure a good yield.

The switch to organic agriculture was made by owner Martin Ritter along with German partners, after seeing the potential to produce high-quality organic products, thanks to their modern machinery and experienced staff. Due to Martin's 20 years of experience in organic farming, the company easily transitioned into organic agriculture without external consultation. They went through the Ukrainian certification body Organic Standard to comply with the standards for both the domestic and EU markets. After getting the organic certificate from Organic Standard, the company has never lost it and is making every effort to keep hold of it.

Challenges

Despite the knowledge and expertise at hand, Deddens Agro still faced challenges while switching to organic. The process took more than two years due to the time required to certify fields and teach employees of the new methods. The company recognizes the ease of expanding when the demand for organic products is increasing, but lack of free land presents a real problem. Despite the strong demand and the company's financial capabilities, Deddens Agro has issues finding more land for its production, due to suitable land already taken by other enterprises. The company is continuously looking for appropriate areas for its future expansion.

Deddens Agro appreciates an open door policy with buyers. They encourage partners and buyers to visit the facilities in order to present traceability, accountability, and to improve cooperation. Deddens Agro works to meet the requirements of all their clients, in order to build long-term international partnerships that can increase organic exports into the growing market. Viktor Shcherbachuk, the director of the company, values the relationship between the seller

and the buyer, and highlights the importance of professionalism, regardless of the relationship at personal level.

The company was able to establish good relationships with relevant authorities, both at the local and state level. The authorities value the job creation that the company brings to the community, and respects the well-intended activities. However, there are very few efforts being made to promote organic production from the state. The transparency and diligence of the company is recognized by authorities and Deddens Agro strives to comply with all legal requirements, ensuring a smooth process on both sides.

The way ahead

Looking forward, Deddens Agro's plan for the future contains an expansion in land area, and an increase in new strategic partners. The company believes that organic farming means more than sustainably taking care of land and plants. It requires a thoughtful and knowledgeable presence, with a respectful attitude towards people while creating sustainable jobs for local rural residents to build trust and understanding in the community.

The company recognizes that when the above is achieved, it attracts potential buyers for long lasting collaborations. Deddens Agro identifies its strengths, as well as its inability to control climate change related weather events that can have great impacts on the harvest. If the weather is favorable, a good harvest and profit are within reach for Deddens Agro.