



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Simplification of agricultural policy; organic farms and home producers – key factors in farmers' competitiveness improvement**

Riga, February 6, 2015 – From Wednesday, February 4 to Friday, February 6, an informal meeting of Directors for EU Rural Development were held in Jurmala. Such meeting is held twice a year by each Presidency of EU Council.

During this event, held in Jurmala by Latvia's Presidency, there were three urgent topics discussed: the development of organic agriculture within the Common Agricultural Policy and short-supply chains, as an opportunity for home producers, as well as CAP simplification possibilities. The topics have been chosen in compliance with one of the priorities declared by Latvia's Presidency: the competitive EU as the basis for growth and improvement of living quality.

Organic agriculture is a sustainable agricultural production, as farmers not only apply organic methods in their production thus producing wholesome products, but also reduce man-made pollution and impact on the environment. The development of organic agriculture in Latvia and in all other EU Member States is facilitating the development of competitiveness. During the meeting, the discussions on organic agriculture became very lively. Member States shared their opinions, regarding a more targeted use of the support available for organic farmers, how to facilitate cooperation in the sector and more successful ways of promoting the produce on the market by enhancing its recognizability.

The competitiveness of agricultural produce is also facilitated by short-supply chains, as the development opportunity for home producers. Supporting home producers in order to activate entrepreneurship and to promote their produce on the market, at the same time helps creation of conditions for improvement of living quality for rural population. Every Member State had its own experience in organization of the short-supply chain, which they readily shared. Many of the solutions as to how to develop a direct trade in a rural territory were not only interesting but also innovative.

Speaking about simplification of CAP, Member States came to the conclusion that although during CAP reform there were attempts made to significantly reduce the administrative burden, still considerable improvements are needed and this issues will have to be actively addressed both in short-term and in long-term, paying a particular attention, for example, to simplification of controls and support eligibility conditions.

“This meeting is always a unique opportunity to meet representatives of all the 28 Member States of the European Union who, in each capital, are directly responsible for building up of policies incorporated into the Rural Development Programs. It is important for us, from the point of view of information collection, and now, while Latvia holds Presidency of the EU Council, of course, to demonstrate what Latvia has accomplished in rural areas both with the support for rural development and without it – by own hands and opportunities,” emphasized Aivars Lapiņš, sectoral counselor.

During the meeting, Directors and Deputy Directors for Rural Development from EU Member States, Deputy Director-General for Agriculture with the delegation as well as Marco Schluter, Director of the EU group of the International Organic Agriculture Federation visited farms – “Buku audzētava”, Ltd. (Deer farm) and bakery “Lāči”.

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