

## **Latvian and Estonian agricultural universities – a longterm mutually supportive co-operation**

**M. Klaassen, A. Luik**  
Estonian University of Life Sciences

Co-operation between the universities was started in the 60-ies of the previous century when the Estonian University of Life Sciences was called the Estonian Academy of Agriculture. At that time networking in different fields was started and is still going on. Meetings of academic and research staff are regular in veterinary medicine, civil engineering, forestry, field crop sciences, plant protection, agricultural economy and landscape architecture. For several years the leading initiator of meetings in veterinary medicine was Hiljar Pärn from the Estonian side. In 2004 an agreement was made between the universities for the intensification of joint research in milk production technology. In the framework of the agreement several meetings have been held. At present Arvo Leola and Vambola Veinla from Estonia and Juris Priekulis from Latvia are jointly preparing a textbook in grazing technology.

Different research projects have been carried out by both universities as partners. For example a project funded by the Swedish Institute (within New Visby Programme), "*Farm animal reproduction – reducing infectious diseases and preserving local genetic resources*", was carried out during the years 2001-2003 by the Estonian Agricultural University (Toomas Tiirats) and the Latvian University of Agriculture (Vita Antane). An integrated farming project for application of funding from the Baltic Sea Region programme is being prepared.

Organizing international scientific conferences in different fields jointly with our Lithuanian colleagues is also very common. Regular conferences take place in plant protection, forestry, civil engineering and rural economy – for example the annual conference *Economic science for rural development*. Every second year the Baltic conference in plant protection is carried out. Always the members of both universities belong to the organizing committees. Also joint publishing (together with Lithuanian colleagues) of the peer-reviewed scientific journals *Agronomy Research and Baltic Forestry* is very important.

In the training activities a good network between the universities has been developed by BOVA system, where both universities participate. This network is facilitating closer contacts between the partner universities and increasing the quality of postgraduate research training. Coordination of the activities between the partner universities is enriching the variety of special training courses and remarkably increasing the e-learning activities, also it is improving dissemination of high quality knowledge and experience in our region. In different topics several 4-5 days active courses for up to 20 postgraduate students from the member institutions are organised every year. Every course will include a module of distance learning, which will serve as a basis for the development of specific distance learning programs made available for students of member institutions via internet. In every course the professors from both universities are lecturing. With joint efforts of the lecturers of both universities the international master level course BIOLANDMAN has been prepared. At present a joint application is given for the project: *Supporting landscape architecture students labour market in Estonia and Latvia*.

Often the professors of both universities are opponents in PhD theses defences in the partner university. Just in June 2009 professor Kaspars Vartukapteinis and professor Gints Birzieties were opponents for a PhD thesis by Kalvi Tamme from Estonia.

It is possible to conclude that the co-operation between the Latvian University of Agriculture and the Estonian University of Life Sciences has strengthened research as well as training in both universities and this process should be continued.