



Alfalfa Brings Success to Farmer in Belarus



Photo: Peter Pitts

Farm owner Vladimir Shapel and Farmer to Farmer volunteer Peter Pitts inspect alfalfa at the Voystom Farms in Belarus.

Vladimir Shapel, owner of Voystom Farms, always knew two things about his professional future - he wanted to work in agriculture and he desired to be his own boss. It was this drive that inspired Vladimir to take advantage of the low-cost purchase of a bankrupt collective farm three years ago. He knew, however, that achieving full capacity would require huge investments of time, resources, and outside help.

Vladimir learned about a USAID-sponsored Farmer to Farmer program administered by The Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs. He hoped that an American specialist could train him in modern techniques of alfalfa production - especially to tackle weaknesses in forage production, reduce livestock losses, and improve profitability. The first volunteer was Peter Pitts, a Wisconsin farmer well-versed in forage production, who provided Vladimir Shapel with assistance in all aspects of alfalfa production including planting, feeding, harvesting, storage, weed control practices and crop rotation to increase alfalfa production levels.

Since the project's beginning a year ago, Voystom has hosted five volunteers and successfully demonstrated progress in the development of a sustainable private farm. Furthermore, Voystom Farm has become a model and learning center for other Belarusian farmers willing to jump at the opportunity of private farming. Vladimir is confident that his relationship with the American volunteers will help his farm and others continue to grow and prosper.

Photo & Caption

