

## U.S. Volunteer Helps Farmer Increase Production

Alexey Maksimov, Russian owner of Akademicheskaya Company, needed new ideas on how to expand profitability in an environment that constricted his freedom. Located close to an urban area and the Izhevsk Agricultural University, city zoning would not permit expansion of his swine farm. Yet how could he realize increased profitability with such zoning restrictions?

Having good relations with animal husbandry professors at the neighboring university, he turned to them for advice. They recommended that he participate in the USAID's Farmer to Farmer program administered by ACDI/VOCA which had successfully worked with the University in the past.

Dr. John Carlson, an expert in animal husbandry for over twenty-five years from Iowa, traveled to the Udmurtia Republic in Russia to help the Akademicheskaya Company. His job was to work with Maksimov in reinvigorating his production company's operations. Carlson had volunteered on more than fifteen assignments with the Farmer to Farmer Russia program.

Dr. Carlson probed the business's problem from many angles. He learned that Izhevsk is a center for competing feed mills and Maksimov had good relations with University professors who sometimes used the pig farm for research. Carlson did not let the zoning restrictions bog him down, but rather saw new opportunities to better use the advantages that this urban farm had to grow its profitability.



Photo: Oleg Kuznetsov

John Carlson with Alexey Maksimov, owner of Akademicheskaya Company, and a private farmer at "Kolchin" farm.

USAID's Farmer to Farmer program sends U.S. volunteers to countries such as Russia to provide assistance to farmers, farm groups, agricultural education institutions, and agribusinesses. One of the program's key target sectors is livestock and poultry. The Russia program is working to support the livestock industry through proper herd management, disease control, optimal feed programs, reduction of birth mortality rates, and special techniques for raising beef cattle.

Dr. Carlson developed a plan for remodeling the Akademicheskaya Company's existing swine production facilities, as well as make it more profitable. First, he helped implement a new feeding system and pig house with insulation and ventilation, as well as built a new swine reproduction facility. After reviewing the farm's operation and discussing issues with farm managers, Dr. Carlson suggested improving ventilation, health care practices, feed rations, and finally, using new business operation strategies.

Next, Dr. Carlson proposed a plan that would attract the feed companies to use the Akademicheskaya Company as a testing site - conveniently close to the city - for developing new feed mixes. Carlson pointed out that Maksimov could expand the use of graduate students as labor since they could gain experience and carry out small projects. The combination of a feed testing service, certifiable by the regional Agricultural Academy, plus additional free labor would directly contribute to the bottom line.

**"John Carlson convinced me that new business plans must start with hard-headed economic calculations and he opened our eyes to resources that we had not seen."**

**- Alexey Maksimov, company owner**

Within a year, the company showed a 15% greater piglet production rate. The better nutrition and ventilation had increased animal health and decreased piglet mortality rates. Since this farm's main source of income was piglet sales, the production increase was a significant gain. The knowledge from Dr. Carlson will not be limited to just one business, but will affect the Academy's animal husbandry department since the professors will include lessons learned from Dr. Carlson in their lectures.