

Partnership of flexible forms

The Greater Eurasian Partnership is a network of dialogues among the key players in Eurasia, not only among the largest national economies, but also among regional economic associations linked together by a flexible system of international legal norms, transport, logistics, energy, telecommunications and financial infrastructures, joint projects and institutions. This large-scale concept involves the implementation of a number of basic principles that distinguish it from other plans for the unification of Eurasia. Participants of the initiative will create the most comfortable conditions for all participants, providing a variety of flexible forms of connection of individual countries to the partnership. Another distinguishing feature of this project should be the very principle of implementation, in which it will be based on specific agreements between regional integration associations and individual countries. In particular, the planned coupling with the Chinese initiative "One Belt, One Road" can fit very harmoniously into this scheme. The study in question focuses on how the Belarusian side interacts quite effectively with the key partners of the Eurasian space.



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*Peculiarities of the Eurasian Cooperation Dialogue in the Context of
under the conditions of global threats*

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Belarus-China: cooperation prospects identified

In May 2022, the sixth meeting of the Belarus-China Intergovernmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation discussed the status and prospects of bilateral trade and investment cooperation, transport and logistics partnership, as well as the implementation of the joint project - the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone. Recall that at the end of 2021 the volume of mutual trade in goods and services between the two countries came close to six billion dollars, and the share of Belarusian supplies to the Celestial Empire more than doubled. At the same time, "the capacity of Belarusian manufacturers makes it possible to ship nearly \$2 billion worth of Belarusian-made goods to the Chinese market by the end of this year [2022]. This requires a consolidation of the efforts of the parties to maximize the opening of the Chinese market for new Belarusian manufacturers, establish joint trading companies, and develop the largest electronic trading platforms of China"¹.

The Belarusian side suggested deepening trade cooperation in five promising areas. The first one is to expand direct contacts between the business communities of the two countries. The second is to increase the range of products supplied to China from Belarus. The third one is to promote new mechanisms to expand bilateral trade with a focus on the establishment of joint export-import companies and the positioning of Belarusian goods at Chinese electronic trading platforms. Fourth, development of logistics through prompt delivery of cargoes by rail. Fifth, to step up investment cooperation within the framework of existing bilateral projects and work together to create new import-substituting enterprises

¹ Cherviakov: friendly and partnership relations with China are especially important for Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-druzhestvennye-i-partnerskie-otnoshenija-s-kitaem-osobo-znachimy-dlja-belarusi-504062-2022>

"through the development of the Great Stone Industrial Park and deepening interregional cooperation. .²

The results of the first quarter of 2022 attest to the fact that work in the aforementioned areas is going on quite actively. Specifically, the trade turnover between Belarus and China totaled USD 1.2 billion during that period. Belarus has become one of the ten largest suppliers of potash fertilizers, dairy whey, meat products and rapeseed oil to China. Agreements reached during the work of the commission should facilitate the successful implementation of the outlined cooperation avenues. Thus, the Belarusian Ministry of Industry intends to work closely with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce on the import and export of engineering and electronic products. The memorandum signed by the parties "is aimed at strengthening the Belarusian-Chinese partnership in industry."³ . A memorandum on cooperation in the import and export of woodworking products was also signed by Bellesbumprom Concern and the China Wood and Wood Products Circulation Association. The document is aimed at increasing the efficiency of partnership relations, "analysis of mutual trade problems and search for mutually acceptable ways to solve them"⁴ by holding joint exhibitions, fairs, business meetings, exchange of economic, legal, scientific and technical information in all areas of interaction.

In the set of measures to develop the national innovation system in Belarus for 2021-2025, the Chinese-Belarusian industrial park Great Stone has been identified as a platform for the organization of innovative

² Belarus-China trade turnover in the first quarter amounted to \$1.2 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-belarusi-i-kitaja-v-i-kvartale-sostavil-12-mlrd-504056-2022/>

³ Belarus and China Strengthen Industry Partnership [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-ukrepljajut-partnerstvo-v-promyshlennosti-504071-2022/>

⁴ "Bellesbumprom will cooperate with the Chinese wood products export association [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellesbumprom-budet-sotrudnichat-s-kitajskoj-assotsiatsiej-po-eksportu-produktsii-derevoobrabotki-504024-2022>

productions. One of its main tasks for the nearest five years is "to ensure effective activity of its residents, attraction of new ones, active development of innovation activity, startups, cluster cooperation..."⁵ . A record 21 residents in 2021 are a testament to how this task is being handled here. To be more precise, 85 residents were registered here at the end of 2021. By the beginning of 2022, "more than \$718 million had already been invested in the park, with 37 companies producing products, conducting research and development, and providing services. Great Stone's enterprises have created more than 1,700 jobs <...>. Exports have also increased - by almost 17% compared to 2020. Deliveries are made to 20 countries around the world."⁶ . In the last days of 2021, Belarus-based SinRubEnergо LLC became the 85th resident with a research project in the field of creating digital energy facilities and a smart city. "The company will develop integrated automation and dispatching systems"⁷ .

With the arrival of 2022, the industrial park has continued to work actively both to increase the number of residents and the volume of their economic activity. Thus, as of mid-April 2022, 89 residents from 15 countries had "already registered here. The volume of announced investments amounts to \$1.24 billion, of which more than \$750 million have already been invested in the park's development. Residents have created over 1.8 thousand new jobs. In addition, almost half of the companies have commenced operations in the park"⁸ .

⁵ Zalesky, B.L. Industrial Park "Great Stone": new projects bring the future / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVIII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 3.

⁶ Yaroshenko: Great Stone's enterprises supply products to 20 countries worldwide [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/jaroshenko-predpriyatija-velikogo-kamnja-postavljajut-produktsiju-v-20-stran-mira-479114-2022/>

⁷ A new Great Stone resident will build digital energy facilities [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-sozdaniem-tsifrovyh-energoobjektov-477402-2021/>

⁸ Yakimov, P. The Great Stone opens broad opportunities for strengthening cooperation between Belarus and China / P. Yakimov // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL:

The 86th resident of the industrial park in March 2022 was Bel Samoed Cloud Scientific and Technical Company LLC, which "will develop digital financial technologies and mobile payment systems. There are also plans to create an e-commerce centre in Belarus and provide services in this area to Belarusian and Chinese companies"⁹. An important detail: the initiator of this project is one of the largest cloud solution providers in China - Samoed Cloud Technology Group Holdings Limited.

April 2022 was a particularly fruitful year for Great Stone in terms of new resident registrations. Earlier this month, for instance, the 87th resident was Hong Kong-based YuZZYu Science and Technology Company Ltd, whose founder works in product targeting and branding and has branches in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Hangzhou and Wuhan. The new resident "plans to create a digital promotion centre to organise e-commerce using Internet marketing technologies"¹⁰, will cooperate with Belarusian manufacturers to promote their goods in China and intends to provide training on e-commerce organisation.

A little later, the 88th resident, the Belarusian company CUBI RND LLC, registered in the industrial park with an investment project to produce equipment and components for modular construction of smart houses. "The production is based on the innovative Cuby technology, which is the company's own development. It makes it possible to produce high-tech constructions with high environmental characteristics."¹¹. It is expected that

<https://www.belta.by/comments/view/velikij-kamen-otkryvaet-shirokie-vozmozhnosti-dlja-ukreplenija-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-kitaja-8150/>

⁹ A new Great Stone resident will take care of digital technologies and mobile payment systems [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-tsifrovymi-tehnologijami-i-sistemami-mobilnyh-platezhej-490657-2022/>

¹⁰ Great Stone's new resident will take on digital promotion [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-zajmetsja-tsifrovym-prodvizheniem-tovarov-493650-2022/>

¹¹ A new Great Stone resident will start producing equipment for smart homes [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-vypuskat-oborudovanie-dlja-umnyh-domov-495324-2022/>

90 percent of the products produced at Velikiy Kamen by the new resident will be exported.

The 89th resident is another Belarusian company, HomeLand Group LLC, which plans to manufacture in the industrial park multifunctional noise-insulated cabins AeroCapsule with an automated control system based on the Internet of Things - a data transfer concept. Interestingly, this project won second place in the national innovation competition in 2021. The aerocapsules, created using smart technology and equipped with innovative embedded features, "can be widely used in open-air offices, airports, shopping centres, production plants, and allow the creation of optimal conditions for rest and work"¹².

By mid-May 2022, the number of residents had risen to 90, with a reported investment of \$1.24 billion. In May 2022, a new resident of the industrial park was the Chinese company Transport Complex - AF LLC, which will create a transport monitoring centre using IoT technology. At the same time, a letter of intent was signed for Hongjiu Corporation JSC to join the park, which "plans to engage in biotechnology activities in the Great Stone"¹³. Following the results of the first quarter of 2022 in the industrial park managed to provide "growth of indicators of proceeds from the sale of goods - in 1.8 times compared with the first quarter of last year (Br123.4 million), the residents' industrial production - in 1.7 times (Br95.4 million), exports - in 1.4 times (\$22.6 million), investment in fixed assets - in 1.1 times (Br30.4 million)"¹⁴.

¹² A new Great Stone resident will produce innovative aerocapsules [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-innovatsionnye-aerokapsuly-495913-2022/>

¹³ New Great Stone resident to create cross-border transport monitoring centre [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-sozdast-tsentr-monitoringa-transgranichnyh-perevozok-501098-2022/>

¹⁴ The number of Great Stone residents has risen to 90 with a reported investment of \$1.24 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chislo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-vozroslo-do-90-s-zajavlennym-objemom-investitsij-v-124-mlrd-502265-2022/>

An important focus of Great Stone is the creation of sub-parks, understood as the arrival of not just one investor, but a pool of iconic companies led by a separate management company, which opens up broad prospects for large corporations. Cooperation with the Chinese province of Guangdong is particularly good in this regard. As a reminder, "back in January 2017 in its administrative centre, Guangzhou, there was a signing ceremony to establish the China (Guangdong) LED Sub-Park in the Great Stone Industrial Park, as well as five more documents on the intention of specific companies to join this sub-park"¹⁵ . Today, there are already 15 residents operating in this sub-park, specialising in areas such as LED product manufacturing, integrated logistics, electric transport, unmanned systems and R&D. A joint innovation centre established by the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus will soon be added to them, focusing on research and development in industrial and digital technologies, as well as new materials, biotechnologies, and pharmaceuticals. So in this direction, too, we see successful implementation of the plans outlined a few years ago.

Further unlocking the potential of the Great Stone's innovative areas should also be facilitated by the planned cooperation of the Sino-Belarusian Industrial Park with similar preferential economic zones in other countries. In particular, in Cuba and Uzbekistan. Thus, back in January 2021, a memorandum of understanding was signed with Cuba's Mariel Special Development Zone (SDZ), which provides for cooperation "in attracting investments, strengthening ties between the Belarusian and Cuban business communities, as well as providing for information exchange"¹⁶ . Priority

¹⁵ Zalesky, B.L. "Great Stone": perspective development - subparks / B.L. Zalesky // Materials of the XVI International scientific and practical conference "Science and civilization - 2020", 30 January - 07 February, 2020. Economic sciences. : Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 21.

¹⁶ "Great Stone and Cuba's Mariel Special Development Zone will cooperate in attracting investment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij->

areas of the Cuban ZOR, established in November 2013, located 45 kilometres from Havana, where there were more than 60 residents from 21 countries at the end of 2021, include electronics, logistics, pharmaceuticals, energy, as well as the financial and banking sectors. In January 2022, the parties had already started discussing specific areas of cooperation, "in particular in the area of attracting residents and developing interaction with Cuban pharmaceutical companies"¹⁷. Considering that the pharmaceutical sector is currently on the rise in the Great Stone, it is not difficult to assume that concrete results from this collaboration will not be long in coming.

Another interesting example in this context is the Uzbek free economic zones (FEZ) Jizzakh and Syrdarya. In early April 2022, the administration of the Great Stone discussed with their representatives areas of possible cooperation, including "establishing cooperation between residents of the park, free economic zones and enterprises in the field of import and export of component materials, finished products"¹⁸. The parties agreed to sign a memorandum on cooperation that would set forth their aspiration to implement joint projects. That there may well be such projects is evidenced by the specialisation of Uzbek FEZs.

In particular, the Jizzakh FEZ was established in March 2013 in Jizzakh oblast to attract direct investment in the creation of high-tech and innovative industries. And today there are already some interesting examples in this regard. For instance, in March 2020, an agreement was signed here to establish production of Volkswagen light commercial vehicles on the basis of Jizzakh Automobile Plant LLC. The implementation of this project is

[kamen-i-kubinskaja-zona-osobogo-razvitiya-mariel-budut-sotrudnicat-v-privlechenii-investitsij-426316-2021/](https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-nameren-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kubinskimi-farmpredpriyatijami-487548-2022/)

¹⁷ "Great Stone intends to develop cooperation with Cuban pharmaceutical companies [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-nameren-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kubinskimi-farmpredpriyatijami-487548-2022/>

¹⁸ "Great Stone and Uzbekistan's FEZ intend to develop cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-i-sez-uzbekistana-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-493658-2022/>

divided into two phases. In 2020-2021, German cars will be delivered here in completed form for market research and marketing analysis. From 2022, the "full production cycle, which includes welding, painting and assembly processes <...> will begin. Dealer and service networks in every region of Uzbekistan will also be expanded"¹⁹ .

Another interesting example is the Uzbek enterprise ADM Jizzakh, located in the Jizzakh FEZ and producing KIA and Lada models there. In October 2021, it announced that in early 2023 it would start small-scale assembly of these vehicles. A total of "314 parts and components will be produced and a welding and painting shop will be launched"²⁰ . This will make it possible to produce 100 thousand of those models per year, create three thousand new jobs and increase the localization of production to 30 per cent. It seems that such experience may be of great interest to the Belarusian side as well.

As for the Syrdarya FEZ, it was established on the basis of the Djizak FEZ branch in the Syrdarya region in April 2018. One of its main objectives is to ensure comprehensive and efficient use of the production and resource potential of this Uzbek region "based on deep processing of mineral resources, expansion of production of high value-added import-substituting products demanded in foreign markets"²¹ . The following production areas have been identified as priorities for attracting investment and advanced technologies: deep processing, storage and packing of horticultural and other agricultural products, textile, footwear, leather goods, chemical, food, electrical engineering, agricultural machinery, and construction materials

¹⁹ Production of Volkswagen cars in Uzbekistan will start in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/06/26/volkswagen/>

²⁰ KIA and Lada plant in Uzbekistan to increase localisation to 30% in 2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/20211022/zavod-v-uzbekistane-po-vypusku-kia-i-lada-v-2023-godu-povysit-lokalizatsiyu-do-30-21019614.html>

²¹ A new free economic zone is being created in Syr Darya [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://kun.uz/ru/94899784?q=%2Fru%2F94899784>

industry. With the help of the FEZ the export component of the region, where "more than 80 exporting enterprises are already working, supplying abroad more than 50 types of production"²². So the range of joint interests with Great Stone could be very broad here as well. All this shows that the Sino-Belarusian Industrial Park retains its strategic importance as a country-wide growth point for Belarus.

As for interregional cooperation, in the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of All-round and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Relations adopted in September 2022, the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China commended the expansion of deep trade and economic cooperation of Belarusian regions with cities and provinces of the Middle Kingdom. Turning to the task of expanding interregional ties, "which is one of the priorities in the development of Belarusian-Chinese relations,"²³, it is possible to note the successful experience of such Belarusian regions as the Vitebsk, Grodno and Brest regions in 2022.

For example, in October 2022, **the Vitebsk region** and the Chinese **province of Jiangxi** signed an agreement on cooperation in economy, education, health, sports and will establish contacts in trade, science and technology. The parties will interact in a comprehensive manner. For example, there are plans to organize meetings via videoconferencing in which leading enterprises of the Vitebsk Oblast, their developments and technologies, which can be useful and interesting to companies from Jiangxi, will be presented to their Chinese partners. In particular, we are talking about joint projects for the development of agriculture, mechanical engineering as well as science parks and university developments. Note that the two regions,

²² Mirzaev, G. Syrdarya opens doors to investors / G. Mirzaev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://rg.ru/amp/2019/08/29/v-syrdarinskoj-oblasti-uzbekistana-gotovy-k-millionnym-investicijam.html>

²³ Zalessky, B. Time for concrete solutions. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. !00.

Belarus and China, have already held events before: a conference on professional education and training of specialists in engineering and technology, as well as on combating COVID-19. In addition, "container trains regularly run to Nanchang, the city district where the Jiangxi authorities are based, and are formed by a logistics company from Orša, among others. Nanchang and Orsha have partnership ties, and another city in the province, Funzhou, has ties with Polotsk²⁴". The signed agreement appears to help the northern region of Belarus and the Chinese province, located in southeastern China, to reach a new level of relations. In the context of this topic, it is interesting that in September 2022, in the framework of the Year of Regions of Belarus and China, Days of the Vitebsk Region were held in another Chinese province, **Heilongjiang**, where the "potential for cooperation of the twin regions in trade, economic, manufacturing, tourism and investment spheres" was presented²⁵. By the way, more than 30 million people live in this region of China.

And in October 2022, the cities of **Grodno** and **Lanzhou**, the administrative centre of China's Gansu province, also signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly exchanges and cooperation, where the parties envisaged "deepening bilateral interaction, expanding exchanges and cooperation between the regions in trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural, tourist and other spheres. The document also aims at strengthening friendly ties between the residents of the two cities."²⁶. It will be recalled that a memorandum on twinning arrangements between **Gansu province**

²⁴ Pushniakova, A. Trade, science, sport: Vitebsk region signed agreement on cooperation with Chinese Jiangxi / A. Pushniakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL:

<https://www.belta.by/regions/view/torgovlja-nauka-sport-vitebskaja-oblast-podpisala-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-s-kitajskoj-tszjansi-532401-2022>

²⁵ Days of Vitebsk region are held in Chinese province Heilongjiang [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/dni-vitebskoj-oblasti-prohodjat-v-kitajskoj-provintsii-hejluntszjan-525147-2022/>

²⁶ Grodno and China's Lanzhou signed an agreement on the establishment of friendly exchanges [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodno-i-kitajskij-lanchzhou-podpisali-soglashenie-ob-ustanovlenii-druzhestvennyh-obmenov-532444-2022/>

and **Grodno region** was signed in 2007. There have been more than 10 different agreements signed between the regions in 15 years. Especially dynamic is the development of trade and economic cooperation. In April 2022, Gansu and Grodno Region signed the Program of Cooperation for 2022-2023 which is filled with concrete joint projects. It "further elaborated the areas where cooperation is not yet so active <...>. It is agriculture, tourism, technology exchange and traditional Chinese medicine"²⁷ . And Novogrudok District and the Chinese city of Dunhuang from Gansu Province have agreed "to conclude an agreement on the establishment of cooperation"²⁸ . For reference, it should be noted that Grodno Region has also signed an agreement on twinning relations with **Hainan Province**.

And another interesting example: **the Brest Region and Hubei Province**. In May 2022 the parties signed an action plan to develop trade and economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation in 2022-2024 which provides for development of international interregional cooperation in four main areas: mutual trade, investment, medicine and education. In particular, Brest Region manufacturers have been supplying food and wood products to the Chinese province for several years. But the plan is to expand this interaction, including by establishing direct business ties between business entities. Thus, for instance, it is planned to establish investment cooperation between the Brest free economic zone and enterprises of the automotive industry of Hubei province as well as between the Berezovsk Engine Repair Plant and producers of diesel engines in this region of China. The possibility of participation of Chinese investors in the implementation

²⁷ Grodno Region intends to expand cooperation with China's Gansu Province [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-namerena-rasshirjat-sotrudnichestvo-s-kitajskoj-provintsiej-gansu-498323-2022/>

²⁸ Novogrudok District and the Chinese city of Dunhuang intend to conclude an agreement to establish cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novogrudskij-rajon-i-kitajskij-gorod-dunhuan-namereny-zakljuchit-soglashenie-ob-ustanovlenii-495725-2022/>

of projects in Brest region concerning the organization of production of charging units for electric cars, powder and liquid detergents production on the basis of Barkhim, technical re-equipment of Baranovich cotton production association, production of clinker products on the basis of Horyn Construction Materials Plant, development of Gorodnoe glass sand deposit²⁹ will also be studied. As for the medical sphere, the prospects of cooperation between the Brest Oblast and the Hubei Province are linked to the joint production of ultrasound diagnostic equipment and organization of the production of disposable blood transfusion systems and medical solutions. There are also plans to set up a traditional Chinese medicine centre on the basis of the Brest Regional Clinical Hospital, for which purpose the physiotherapeutic building can be reconstructed there.

All of these facts are a good illustration of how multifaceted Belarus-China interaction is now reaching the level of all-round strategic cooperation and all-round partnership as stated in Directive No 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China", signed in December 2021.

²⁹ Brest Region and Hubei Province signed a road map for cooperation for 2022-2024 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brestskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-hubej-podpisali-dorozhnyu-kartu-sotrudnichestva-na-2022-2024-gody-503065-2022/>

Belarus-Indonesia: action plan aims for maximum results

In April 2022, the seventh meeting of the Belarus-Indonesia Joint Commission for Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation was held. The parties discussed topical issues of the bilateral partnership "with a focus on the development of cooperation in the areas of industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, education, tourism, digital economy, and creative industries"³⁰. Recall that the sixth meeting of this commission was held in Jakarta in October 2017. At that time it was agreed "to intensify trade, economic and investment cooperation between the countries, including the prospects for increasing supplies of MAZ, BelAZ and MTZ products to Indonesia"³¹.

Many facts show that the Indonesian market is very promising for the Belarusian side. First, more than 270 million people now live here. Secondly, "Indonesia is an industrial and agricultural country, where more than half of the gross domestic product comes from industry, agriculture and fishing, where the main industries are oil and gas processing, metallurgy, machine building, chemical, food and textile industries"³². And which is very interested in a significant increase in economic cooperation with Belarus, in increasing the supply of potassium chloride, automotive and tractor machinery, and dairy products from our country. In November 2019, at the Belarusian-Indonesian forum held in Minsk, which was attended by more than 30 enterprises and organizations from the two countries, it was noted

³⁰ On the Seventh Session of the Belarus-Indonesia Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ee2bb4e24073dbac.html

³¹ Belarus and Indonesia agree to intensify trade and investment cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-dogovorilis-aktivizirovat-torgovoe-i-investitsionnoe-vzaimodejstvie-271768-2017/>

³² Zaleski, B. Partnership Journalism. Theory and practice / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2013. - C. 69.

that "the government's goal to reach \$1 billion in mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Indonesia is quite realistic for the near future"³³ .

It is true that in 2020 the volume of mutual trade between the countries was only 181 million dollars, which, according to the parties, was not in line with the partnership's existing potential. But already then 25 new items were supplied to the Indonesian market. In 2021 the trade turnover already reached 232.3 million dollars with the share of Belarusian exports exceeding two hundred million dollars. At the same time there was "a more than twofold increase in non-resource exports to Indonesia, including more than fourfold increase in dairy products"³⁴ . So a further increase of Belarusian-Indonesian trade turnover remains a priority area for bilateral cooperation that should be filled with new content. This was the main topic of the seventh session of the Joint committee, which reached the following specific results: adoption of the Action plan on development of key areas of cooperation for 2022-2023; decision to create a working group in the field of agriculture, the first meeting of which will be held during the Belagro-2022 international agricultural exhibition; agreement on holding a joint meeting on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Belarusian-Indonesian diplomatic relations in 2023.

It should be noted that the signed memorandums have complemented the contractual legal base of bilateral relations, which already consists of over 30 documents, in the area that is extremely relevant for the Belarusian side today. The first memorandum signed by the State Committee for Standardization of the Republic of Belarus (Gosstandart) and Indonesian National Agency for Standardization stipulates not only exchange of information and experience, but also implementation of joint activities and

³³ BelCCI: Increasing trade turnover with Indonesia to \$1 billion is a realistic task for the near future [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beltp-uvlichenie-tovarooborota-s-indoneziej-do-1-mlrd-realnaja-zadacha-na-blizhajshuju-perspektivu-368953-2019/>

³⁴ Trade and economic relations with the Republic of Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: http://indonesia.mfa.gov.by/be/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

projects. In particular, the Belarusian side is interested in official dissemination of national Indonesian standards in Belarus. The second document signed by Belarus State Standard and Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs concerns cooperation in the field of quality assurance of halal products and readiness of the Belarusian partners "to demonstrate to their colleagues from Indonesia the halal quality infrastructure created in the country, to confirm the possibility of implementing Indonesian requirements for halal products and conduct necessary conformity assessment procedures in Belarus"³⁵. An important detail: the only halal certification body in our country - BelHalal Ltd. - has already submitted the necessary documents for registration in the Indonesian national halal certification system. And the signed memorandum should officially start the process of its accreditation in this country of Southeast Asia.

Speaking about other areas of the food sector, a number of Belarusian companies have already been accredited as suppliers of dairy products to Indonesia. In particular, "the products of Savushkin Product OJSC, Babushkina krynka OJSC, Verkhnedvinskiy butter and cheese factory OJSC have received the necessary certificates and have already entered the high-capacity Indonesian food market"³⁶. And this is immediately reflected in the results of Belarusian-Indonesian bilateral trade in 2021. The company Bellakt OJSC is ready to "work on the issues of product supplies to Indonesia, as well as expand the product range and work on the supply of baby food"³⁷, as well as Milkavita OJSC, Glubokoe Dairy Factory OJSC

³⁵ Belarus and Indonesia sign memoranda on standardisation and quality assurance [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandumy-v-oblasti-standartizatsii-i-obespechenija-kachestva-497060-2022>

³⁶ Kolesnik, V. Indonesia and Belarus: from potassium chloride and BELAZes to tourism market revival / V. Kolesnik // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/indonezija-i-belarus-ot-hloristogo-kalija-i-belazov-do-ozhivlenija-turisticheskogo-rynka-473916-2021>

³⁷ The third Belarusian-Indonesian video conference on business and trade is devoted to the dairy sector [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://ncmps.by/news/tretya-belorussko-indoneziyskaya-videokonferentsiya-po-voprosam-biznesa-i-torgovli-posvyashchena-mol/>

and some other enterprises that participated in the third Belarusian-Indonesian video conference on business and trade, held in December 2020 and dedicated to promoting export of dairy products from Belarus to Indonesia. Halal product exporters from Belarus should now become growth points in this regard, complementing such traditional positions as potash chloride and dump trucks.

Speaking about other areas of Belarusian-Indonesian cooperation, we would like to remind that in February 2021, the National Marketing Center of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and the Indonesia Trade, Tourism and Investment Club signed a memorandum on cooperation and mutual support in the development of trade and economic relations. The Belarusian side sees its goals in the context of this document as "to activate contracts on a legal basis, exchange information on bilateral export and import supplies, and deepen cooperation between our countries."³⁸ . The development of partnership ties between the regions of the two countries has great potential in this regard. The more so since "interaction has already been established between the Brest region and West Sumatra province, Mogilev region and South Sumatra province, Minsk region and East Kalimantan and East Java provinces as well as the cities of Minsk and Jakarta"³⁹ . With the help of regional branches of chambers of commerce and industry, interaction with such provinces as Central Java, North Sumatra, West Nusa Tenggara, the special district of Yogyakarta, where they see considerable potential for development of trade and economic cooperation, educational and tourist exchanges with Belarusian partners, is also established.

³⁸ Belarus and Indonesia sign memorandum on trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-indonezija-podpisali-memorandum-o-torgovo-ekonomicheskome-sotrudnichestve-426979-2021/>.

³⁹ Kolesnik, V. Indonesia and Belarus: from potassium chloride and BELAZes to tourism market revival / V. Kolesnik // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/indonezija-i-belarus-ot-hloristogo-kalija-i-belazov-do-ozhivlenija-turisticheskogo-rynka-473916-2021>

For example, the Brest Region and the province of West Sumatra announced their intention to establish close contacts back in November 2015. Such areas as "fish farming, processing industry, tourism, healthcare, pharmacy" were named as promising for mutually beneficial cooperation then⁴⁰. Some other Indonesian provinces have been familiar with Belarusian automobile manufacturer's products for a long time. Thus, since 2012, the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan has been successfully operating a batch of nine Belarusian dump trucks with a payload capacity of 45 tonnes. In 2016-2017, the province of South Sumatra received 40 dump trucks with a payload capacity of 110 tonnes for the needs of PT Bukit Asam, the largest state-owned coal mining company. In 2018-2019, seven more 130-tonne dump trucks were shipped to private coal mining company PT Tambang Raya Usaha Tama. And in 2020, "eight more 130-tonne BELAZ-75131 dump trucks started working in a coal mine on Kalimantan"⁴¹, where Belarusian machines with payload capacity from 45 to 130 tons were already in operation. The parties plan to actively continue this collaboration.

A logical continuation of cooperation between the Belarusian and Indonesian regions is developing partnerships in the educational sphere, where cooperation is based on signed agreements: on cooperation - between the Brest State Technical University and the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology; on mutual understanding - between the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy and the Bogor Agricultural Institute; on exchange of students - between the Minsk State Linguistic University and the Grodno State Linguistic University. Over the past few years, the Belarusian State

⁴⁰ Vechorko, S. Brest region establishes cooperation with the Indonesian province of West Sumatra / S. Vechorko // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brestskaja-oblast-nalazhivaet-sotrudnichestvo-s-indonezijskoj-provintsiej-zapadnaja-sumatra-59706-2014/>

⁴¹ Eight BELAZ dump trucks have started work in Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vosem-karjnyh-samosvalov-belaz-pristupili-k-rabote-v-indonezii-387074-2020/>

University, the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics and the Grodno State Medical University have also found partners in this South-East Asian country.

In particular, in November 2020, a memorandum of understanding was signed by BSU and Airlangga University. The parties agreed to organise academic exchanges, implement joint educational and research projects, and exchange research materials. The first step towards implementing these agreements was "participation of BSU lecturers in DECOTA educational programme. It focuses on attracting renowned scientists to give online lectures to Airlangga University students"⁴². And BSU students were offered free tuition for the Sura-Bali Community Immersion Program 2020, which involved studying Indonesian culture and tourism activities in the provinces of East Java and Bali. Note that this university is one of the oldest in Indonesia. It was founded in 1954 in Surabaya. There are 14 faculties: from medical and law, to sea, fishery, nursing and veterinary medicine. Nearly forty thousand students have got higher education. On a side note, the BSU has already had experience of cooperation with Indonesian partners. In particular, since 2016, Unitechprom BSU has been fulfilling a contract to supply medical equipment - spirometers - to Global systech medika from Jakarta.

In 2022, a number of other Belarusian universities signed documents on cooperation with Indonesian partners, which indicates further expansion of these relations. Thus, a cooperation agreement was signed in January 2022 by Minsk State Linguistic University (MSLU) and Veteran National Development University in Yogyakarta, outlining in this document the main directions of cooperation development: "opening of Center of Indonesian

⁴² Memorandum of Understanding signed between BGU and the University of Airlangga [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/memorandum-o-vzaimoponimanii-podpisan-mezhdu-bgu-i-universitetom-airlangga-414083-2020/>

language and culture on the basis of MSLU; opening of Center of Belarusian culture and Russian language on the basis of UNR "Veteran"; teaching Indonesian language on an elective basis in MSLU; teaching Russian language and lecturing about Belarusian culture in UNR "Veteran"; conducting cultural events on the basis of Center of Indonesian language and culture in MSLU"⁴³. Here it is appropriate to add that UNR "Veteran" is one of the state universities in Indonesia. It is a patriotically oriented university actively building up its educational base. It has established the Faculties of Mineral Technology, Industrial Engineering, Agriculture, Economics and Business, and Social and Political Science. The educational institution is active in research and broadcasts its civic position.

Also in January 2022, the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy (BSAA) and Indonesia's Tidar University signed a memorandum of cooperation. And already in March, the first lectures on sustainable agriculture were delivered to Indonesian and Belarusian students, a topic of particular relevance in modern conditions, as "progress in the development of agricultural production inevitably leads to such global problems as climate change, development of soil degradation processes, soil salinization <...> and therefore requires close attention from the entire academic and scientific community".⁴⁴ [14]. In this regard, there was a stated desire on both sides to make cooperation between the BGSAA and Tidar University as useful as possible in solving both local and global problems related to finding ways to mitigate climate change and providing sufficient food for the people of Belarus and Indonesia.

⁴³ Collaboration with Veteran University in Yogyakarta, Republic of Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.mslu.by/news/sotrudnichestvo-s-universitetom-veteran-v-dzhok-yakarte-respublika-indoneziya>

⁴⁴ Noskova, S.A. Indonesia - Belarus: mutual interest / S.A. Noskova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: http://baa.by/news/?ELEMENT_ID=5208

The contest of joint Belarusian-Indonesian projects for the years 2021-2022 that was launched by the State Committee on Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia together with the Indonesian National Agency of Research and Innovation should play an important role in enhancing scientific and technological ties between the two countries. Priority areas of the competition include: "health and medicine (raw materials, including natural ones, for pharmaceuticals; medical equipment, stem cells); emergency management and nature management; machine technologies for industry (energy optimization, food industry, computer modeling in engineering)"⁴⁵.

Additional opportunities for the expansion of cooperation between Belarus and Indonesia are offered by the fact that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and this Southeast Asian country are actively working towards the conclusion of a free trade agreement. The parties signed a memorandum of cooperation in October 2020, thereby confirming the agreement that "this document will contribute to building an effective infrastructure for the development of trade and economic cooperation."⁴⁶ It formed the basis of a working group that focused on issues such as trade facilitation, customs and technical regulations, and the development of financial markets. In mid-April 2022, the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission approved a draft decision on concluding a free trade agreement with Indonesia. The agreement itself is expected to be signed in May 2022 at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. In this regard, Belarus has considerable prospects of supplying cargo, agricultural and

⁴⁵ Contest of joint Belarusian-Indonesian scientific and technical projects for 2021-2022. [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://science.bsuir.by/ru/konkursy-i-granty/konkurs-belorussko-indoneziyskikh-proektov>

⁴⁶ Zalessky, B. Integration as a factor of development. Features of regional cooperation in the post-Soviet space / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 62.

special machinery, X-ray equipment, bleached pulp, laminated plywood to Indonesia at reduced customs duties. For reference, traditional commodity items imported into this country are oil and oil products, telephone sets, wheat, computers and computer units, sugar and chemically pure sucrose. New ones are being added to these today, in keeping with the spirit of the times. For this reason, "certain successes can be achieved by producers of urban electric transport, as a programme to renew the public transport fleet is being implemented in major cities in Indonesia, and Belarusian companies have the opportunity to offer competitive and environmentally friendly goods"⁴⁷ .

All of these facts suggest that in the near future Indonesia may become Belarus' most important partner not only in Southeast Asia, but also in the entire Asia-Pacific region. At least, all prerequisites for that are already in place.

⁴⁷ National Centre for Marketing on the prospects of promotion of Belarusian goods to Indonesia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/natsionalnyj-tsentr-marketinga-o-perspektivah-prodvizhenija-belorusskih-tovarov-v-indoneziju-8163/>.

Belarus-Uzbekistan: goal - a qualitatively new level of cooperation

In April 2022, a Belarusian government delegation paid a visit to Uzbekistan, which resulted in the signing of contracts worth more than USD 25 million. An equally important outcome was that Minsk and Tashkent stated that new points of growth in cooperation had been found. And "the task now is to fill it with new content"⁴⁸ to bring the annual volume of mutual trade up to half a billion dollars.

The beginning of 2022 showed that the two sides are confidently approaching their goal. While in 2021 the trade turnover between Belarus and Uzbekistan increased by nearly 8% and exceeded \$300 million, with a surplus for the Belarusian side of nearly \$190 million, "in January-February 2022 the trade turnover totaled \$53.5 million and increased by 9.9% compared to the same period in 2021."⁴⁹ Trade and investments are expected to increase further, primarily through the implementation of joint cooperation projects.

It should be noted that 103 organizations with Belarusian investments have already been registered in Uzbekistan, as well as representative offices of Avtopromsnabspedition LLC, Softclub LLC, AmantisMed LLC, and Belvitunifarm LLC. One assembly plant of Belarusian equipment with participation of Belarusian capital - JV LLC AMKODOR-AGROTEXMASH was set up there. In particular, "production of loaders has been established at the Tashkent Tractor Plant, which demonstrates the demand for these products in the local and regional market"⁵⁰. In addition,

⁴⁸ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus and Uzbekistan can increase trade and investment, growth points found [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10260>

⁴⁹ Belarus and Uzbekistan intensify the implementation of production and cooperation projects [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-aktivizirujut-realizatsiju-proizvodstvenno-kooperatsionnyh-proektov-495026-2022/>

⁵⁰ Machinery, equipment, scientific and technical developments. What Belarus will present at the exhibition in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL:

cooperation between MAZ and KRANTAS GROUP, MTZ and Uzavtosanoat in the production of motor vehicles and tractors continues. And the Marko company is implementing a joint footwear production project in Uzbekistan. Svetlogorsk plant of welding electrodes is implementing an investment project in this country to produce welding electrodes. For this purpose in Tashkent is created IE LLC "MONOLITH ASIA"⁵¹. And these ties continue to be actively strengthened.

Thus, in April 2022, the official distributor of the Minsk Automobile Plant in this Central Asian country - MAZ-TASHKENT LLC - set up industrial assembly of MAZ vehicles from SKD kits. "The first model was the chassis MAZ-5337. The localization of the assembly plant in Uzbekistan will allow Minsk Automobile Plant to expand its presence in the market of the Central Asian countries and Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the future"⁵². And during the Uzbek-Belarusian business forum held in April in Tashkent, the MAZ distributor "signed a contract with the PE OLIY TEXNIK to purchase 41 MAZ trucks. <...> The contract amount exceeded \$3 million"⁵³.

The Minsk Tractor Plant is also actively increasing its presence in the Uzbek market, having increased its machinery supplies by almost a quarter in the first quarter of 2022. "In total, more than \$10 million worth of machinery was shipped"⁵⁴. It is interesting that during the entire year of

<https://www.belta.by/comments/view/tehnika-oborudovanie-nauchno-tehnicheskie-razrabotki-cto-belarus-prezentuet-na-vystavke-v-tashkente-8158/>

⁵¹ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus-Uzbekistan trade turnover needs to increase to at least \$500 million [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10257>

⁵². Minsk Automobile Plant has set up machinery assembly in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-naladil-sborku-tehniki-v-uzbekistane-496181-2022/>

⁵³ "MAZ-Tashkent has signed a major contract with an Uzbek company to supply 41 vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-tashkent-podpisal-krupnyj-kontrakt-s-uzbekskoj-kompaniej-na-postavku-41-avtomobilja-498224-2022/>

⁵⁴ MTZ increased its machinery deliveries to Uzbekistan by more than 23% in Q1 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-v-i-kvartale-narastil-postavki-tehniki-v-uzbekistan-bolee-chem-na-23-499321-2022/>

2021, \$31 million worth of Belarusian tractors were shipped to the Uzbek partners. And in late April and early May, a sales and service centre for Belarusian agricultural machinery was opened in Tashkent, which combines "a showroom and sales centre, a service centre and production facilities"⁵⁵. The bank's branch is also located here and focuses on providing lending and leasing services. It is noteworthy that the Belarusian side plans to open similar centres in other Uzbek regions.

Belarus-Uzbekistan cooperation in the implementation of joint projects in medicine is also very promising. One of them is Belfarm, a joint venture to produce antibiotics, which has already invested over USD 8 million. In addition, the Belarusian side has offered its partners to set up a joint venture for blood processing. An important detail: "Today the organizations of the Belfarmprom holding have 166 registration certificates for medicines in Uzbekistan. Members of the holding have signed 12 contracts with Uzbek partners for supplies of pharmaceutical products. By the end of 2021 the export of products of the Belfarmprom holding companies to Uzbekistan amounted to \$14 million, in January-February 2022 - \$3 million"⁵⁶.

If we talk about other prospects for cooperation, there are several other areas. One of them concerns electric transport. The fact is that "Tashkent is considering resuming the tram service. The Belarusian side is ready to provide comprehensive solutions with the necessary infrastructure, planning and supply of rolling stock"⁵⁷. If the decision on this matter is made, then the creation of a joint production facility on the Uzbek land will become

⁵⁵ A sales and service centre for Belarusian agricultural machinery has opened in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tsentr-prodazh-i-servisnogo-obslyuzhivaniya-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-otkrylsja-v-tashkente-499290-2022/>

⁵⁶ Belarus and Uzbekistan discuss deepening cooperation in the pharmaceutical industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-uzbekistan-obsuzhdajut-uglublenie-sotrudnichestva-v-farmotrasli-498163-2022/>

⁵⁷ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus-Uzbekistan trade turnover needs to increase to at least \$500 million [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10257>

realistic. The issue of supplying wooden houses from Belarus to Uzbekistan, where "it is a very fashionable trend now <...> , there is very great demand"⁵⁸ , is now under study. There may be good prospects for the Belarusian newsprint factory, which has an assembly line production of such houses.

In the same context, it should be remembered that at the end of April 2022, the parties considered "the possibility of organising supplies of Belarusian peat substrates to the forestry industries of Uzbekistan for further use as a basis for the cultivation of plantation seedlings"⁵⁹ . Given the considerable experience of Belarusian peat companies in this area, and the export of the peat industry of Beltopgaz increased by more than a quarter in 2021, it can be predicted that Uzbekistan will become the 25th country to supply Belarusian peat as early as this year.

Belarusian light industry enterprises, which produce worsted, linen, synthetic and artificial fabrics with various properties, pile fabrics, corsetry and hosiery, see their prospects for increasing supplies of demanded products to the Uzbek market. These are Orsha flax mill, Mogotex and Kamvol, which became participants of the 4th international textile and fashion industry exhibition UzTextileExpo Spring 2022 held in April 2022 in Tashkent. They were joined by another five Belarusian chemical and petrochemical enterprises, which demonstrated to the numerous visitors of the business forum "man-made and chemical fibers for textile production, technical textiles for construction, polymer products, chemicals and fertilizers for agriculture, glass fiber"⁶⁰ . In short, everything that arouses increased interest

⁵⁸ Golovchenko: Belarus is working on supplying wooden houses to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-prorabatyvaet-postavki-v-uzbekistan-derevjannyh-domov-498185-2022/>

⁵⁹ Belarus interested in supplying peat substrates to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-torfjanyh-substratov-v-uzbekistan-499019-2022/>

⁶⁰ Belarusian light industry enterprises present their potential in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-predpriyatija-legkoj-promyshlennosti-prezentujut-svoj-potentsial-v-uzbekistane-498369-2022/>

among the partners from Uzbekistan and could become the basis for new contracts.

Speaking about the participation of Belarusian exporters in foreign exhibitions, it should be noted that in 2021, when participating in exhibitions and forums organized by Belinterexpo, an exhibition company of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, they signed 86 agreements and contracts worth over \$80 million. At the same time, "agreements and contracts worth \$15 million were signed as part of the national expositions"⁶¹. It is important to note that the national expositions organized as part of the Uzbekistan exhibitions - "INNOPROM. The largest industrial week and UzProdExpo/UzAgroExpo.

Speaking about the first of these, it should be noted that the "Great Industrial Week in Uzbekistan", held in April 2021 in Tashkent, was the largest event in this Central Asian country after a break caused by the pandemic. The exhibition then brought together "over 200 companies working in the fields of mechanical engineering, metallurgy, energy, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and medicine from Armenia, Belarus, Germany, Italy, China, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, France, Japan, the Czech Republic, the EAEU and Central Asia"⁶². The Belarusian pavilion included 65 companies and organizations exhibiting engineering, metallurgy, chemical, pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, scientific developments and consumer goods. One of the concrete results of their participation in this exhibition was "signing of a letter of intent to supply chassis and vehicle components for assembling cars to the Uzbek

⁶¹ Domestic enterprises signed contracts worth \$80 million at Belinterexpo forums and exhibitions [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-forumah-i-vystavkah-belinterekspo-otechestvennye-predpriyatija-podpisali-kontrakty-na-80-mln-476100-2021/>

⁶² More than 20 Belarusian enterprises took part in a major industrial exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-20-belorusskih-predpriyatij-prinjali-uchastie-v-krupnoj-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-436286-2021/>

market by the subsidiary of Minsk Automobile Plant in Uzbekistan, MAZ-Tashkent LLC, worth \$10 million. Also a contract for supply of 50 MAZ vehicles totaling \$3 million was concluded with a private Uzbek company"⁶³. It is interesting that in April 2022 the Uzbek exhibition was held under a new name, INNOPROM. Central Asia, and included six thematic sections: mechanical engineering, metallurgy, energy, chemicals, industrial automation, pharmaceuticals and medicine. There was also a plenary session entitled "Central Asia. The Space of Technological Breakthrough" and specialized sessions on infrastructure projects, logistics, financial instruments, and education. Belarusian participation in this business forum was no less representative due to the fact that "Belarusian exports to Uzbekistan have grown sixfold in five years. Machinery from Belarus (tractors and tractor units, trucks), chemical products, foodstuffs, ferrous and nonferrous metals, energy resources, and oil products are in the highest demand. In total, Belarus supplies 360 commodity items of all industries to Uzbekistan"⁶⁴.

As for the UzAgroExpo and UzProdExpo agricultural and food exhibitions, held in Tashkent in November 2021, they are the largest industry business forums in Uzbekistan, which this time brought together 120 companies from 18 countries. The national pavilion of Belarus, where 17 companies exhibited, demonstrated the export capabilities of domestic enterprises in three main areas: food industry; agricultural machinery; and science. The first one included beef in lingonberry sauce, soft cheese made according to the Italian technology from ricotta whey, high-quality coffee produced according to its own patented technology, peanut paste with sea

⁶³ Zalesky, B. The key task is development. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 40-41.

⁶⁴ The Belarusian national pavilion will be represented at the INNOPROM' exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskij-natsionalnyj-paviljon-budet-predstavlen-na-vystavke-innoprom-v-uzbekistane-480872-2022/>

salt, fruit bars made from a mixture of dried prunes, dried apples, oat flakes and syrup; protein milk chocolate with increased protein content; and "Belarusian whisky, an alcoholic blended drink made from artesian water on the basis of national cereals - rye, wheat, barley malt"⁶⁵ . Scientific developments in agro-industrial and food spheres, including technologies for rehabilitation of damaged soils, methods of production of innovative fermented milk drinks, cosmetics, were demonstrated to numerous visitors of the exhibitions by Belarusian State University, Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian-Russian University and Belarusian State University of Food and Chemical Technologies. Minsk Automobile Plant and Lidselmash also brought innovative equipment to the Uzbek capital - a specially designed dump truck MAZ-65012K for the Uzbek market, "with a metal body, which tilts using a hydraulic mechanism, and is designed for transportation of loose materials, including agricultural purposes"⁶⁶ , and new modifications of a cultivator for cotton cultivation - the most popular crop in this Central Asian country. A concrete result of the work at these exhibitions was "an agreement between the official distributor of the Minsk automobile plant in Uzbekistan the company MAZ-Tashkent and the enterprise Nurafshon Maxsus Texnika on the delivery of machinery products to the amount of \$1 million"⁶⁷ . At the Uzbekistan-Belarus agrarian forum, agreements were reached on construction and reconstruction of a dairy complex using Belarusian technologies on Uzbek soil.

⁶⁵ National Pavilion of Belarus presented at exhibitions in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-paviljon-belarusi-predstavlen-na-vystavke-v-tashkente-471340-2021/>

⁶⁶ Minsk Automobile Plant presented a new gas-powered dump truck at an exhibition in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. -2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-predstavil-novyj-gazovyj-samosval-na-vystavke-v-uzbekistane-471501-2021/>

⁶⁷ MAZ has signed a \$1 million contract to supply machinery to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-podpisal-kontrakt-na-postavku-tehniki-v-uzbekistan-na-1-mln-471344-2021/>

Another important area of interaction between the two countries is the intensification of partnership Belarusian-Uzbek regional ties, which are becoming one of the most important areas for the development of cooperation in the current environment. The I Forum of Belarusian and Uzbek Regions, which was held in Minsk in July 2019 and opened up new opportunities for partnership in such areas as industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex and food industry, and brought together "over two hundred representatives of such regions as Andijan, Bukhara, Djizak, Namangan, Samarkand, Khorezm, Fergana and Tashkent regions" from the Uzbek side alone.⁶⁸

On the Belarusian side, one of the active participants in this forum was the Vitebsk Region, whose positive dynamics of trade and economic cooperation with its Uzbek partners has been observed over the past few years. Suffice it to say that in 2019, Uzbekistan joined the list of Vitebsk Region's key partners among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Then the foreign trade turnover between the parties increased by more than a quarter and exceeded nine million dollars. Exports from the Belarusian region "grew by half to \$6.7 million. Food exports amounted to \$0.9 million, or 13.4% of the total. <...> Cheese and dairy products from the Postavy Dairy Plant, Verkhnedvinsk Butter and Cheese Plant, Polotsk Dairy Plant, as well as meat products from the Vitebsk meat processing plant are already familiar to Uzbek consumers and are in good demand with them.⁶⁹ . In addition, baby food, a wide range of vaccines to combat pet diseases and pharmaceuticals were successfully supplied to the Uzbek market from the Vitebsk Region at that time.

⁶⁸ Zalesky, B. Sustainability as a formula for growth. Features of international cooperation based on the innovation component / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 37.

⁶⁹ Tikhonov, A. Belarus-Uzbekistan Agrarian Forum: afterword / A. Tikhonov // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://produkt.by/story/belorusko-uzbekskiy-agrarnyy-forum-posleslovie>

In 2021, the mutual trade volume between Belarus and this Central Asian country exceeded USD 12.5 million, with Vitebsk exports worth almost USD 10 million, which was based on medicines, cattle meat, dried milk and whey, butter, cheese, as well as polyethylene, plastic and fiberglass products and fiber-optic cables. In addition, a joint venture of the Marko leather and footwear holding company has been launched on Uzbek soil. Other manufacturing cooperation projects are on the horizon. In particular, since 2020 the Vitebsk Oblast has been holding talks on opening a joint venture with BelVitunifarm in Uzbekistan, which will initially sell drugs and later will start manufacturing them. A representative office of the Belarusian manufacturer of veterinary drugs was opened in Tashkent in December 2021. And already "financing issues of the project are being worked out in order to reach the sales of drugs in the amount of \$2 million per year"⁷⁰.

Other promising areas of cooperation between enterprises of the region and its Uzbek partners in March 2022 included deliveries of fruit and vegetable and meat and dairy products, as well as cooperation in such segments of the industrial sector as mechanical engineering, energy, chemical and gas industries. A significant role here should be played by the activation of partnership relations between the Vitebsk Region and a number of Uzbek regions, especially Namangan Oblast. The fact is that Vitebsk and Namangan regions signed an agreement on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural areas in July 2019 within the framework of the First Forum of Regions of Belarus and Uzbekistan, which has already been mentioned above. This document should help build mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between enterprises and organizations of the regions, provide "comprehensive support to business structures in the conclusion of

⁷⁰ Pushnyakova, A. Uzbekistan can become a springboard for Vitebsk Oblast enterprises to supply Asia / A. Pushnyakova // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/uzbekistan-mozhet-stat-dlja-predpriyatij-vitebskoj-oblasti-tramplinom-dlja-postavok-v-aziju-491940-2022/>

mutually acceptable contracts for the supply of goods and services. It also deals with joint business seminars, exhibitions and fairs with the participation of representatives of entrepreneurial and business circles"⁷¹ .

The agreement on cooperation between the administrations of free economic zones (FEZ) Vitebsk and Cosonsoy-Pharm, signed at the same time, is also intended to expand possible areas of trade, economic and investment cooperation between the Belarusian and Uzbek regions, which not only creates a basis for sharing experience and promoting partnerships between FEZ residents, but also forms the basis for the parties to pool their capacities in conducting joint activities. Note that Cosonsoy-Pharm was among seven pharmaceutical FEZs established in May 2017 in six Uzbek regions. In addition to it, "Nukus-Pharm appeared then in Karakalpakstan, Zomin-Pharm in Jizzak oblast, <...> Sirdaryo-Pharm in Syrdarya, Boisun-Pharm in Surkhandarya and Bustonlik-Pharm and Parkent-Pharm in Tashkent oblast"⁷² . They are subject to special tax, customs and currency regimes. They all specialise in the development of companies in the pharmaceutical field. Several FEZ "Vitebsk" residents are also engaged in this sphere. That is why "attraction of investments into projects on creation of production of medicines, medical products is one of the most promising directions of cooperation between the administrations of the two FEZs"⁷³ . And there is every reason to believe that this interaction between the Belarusian and Uzbek free economic zones will further strengthen the emerging partnership between the Vitebsk and Namangan regions.

⁷¹ Namangan region will cooperate with Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://nampravda.uz/ekonomika/namanganskaya_oblast_budet_sotrudnichat_s_vitebskom.html

⁷² Seven pharmaceutical FEZs are being established in Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2017/05/05/pharm/>

⁷³ FEZ Vitebsk and Uzbek Cosonsoy-Pharm will develop investment cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-i-uzbekskaja-kosonsoj-farm-budut-razvivat-investitsionoe-sotrudnichestvo-352766-2019/>

The documents that were signed in April 2022 during the visit of the Belarusian governmental delegation to Tashkent can also be used to identify other areas of Belarus-Uzbekistan cooperation that will be intensified in the very near future. Thus, the Ministry of Innovation Development of Uzbekistan signed a memorandum on cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the executive program of scientific, technical and innovation cooperation for 2022-2023 with the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus. Two significant documents have also been signed by the Belarusian Ministry of Agriculture and Food: a memorandum of understanding with the State Committee for Veterinary and Livestock Development of Uzbekistan; a road map for further development of cooperation in agricultural science, education and innovation development for 2022-2023 with the Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan, which, in turn, has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences on further development of science and technology. Finally, an agreement on cooperation in the field of livestock breeding was signed by Belplemzhivodobstvo and the Uzbekchorvanasl agency.

Back in the autumn of 2018, Belarus and Uzbekistan signed an intergovernmental agreement on social and economic cooperation for 2019-2023, which "reflects key agreements at the highest level to develop Belarusian-Uzbek relations and bring them to a qualitatively new level"⁷⁴. As we can see, the parties are fulfilling the tasks set forth in this document very actively and successfully.

⁷⁴ Zalessky, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. A view from Belarus / B. Zalessky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 228.

Belarus - Tajikistan: from commission decisions - to roadmap priorities

Belarus and Tajikistan have traditionally enjoyed close ties, and the countries have been consistently strengthening their mutually beneficial strategic partnership. The Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on trade and economic cooperation, which was established back in 1999, plays a key role in the development of effective Belarus-Tajikistan bilateral cooperation today. The scope of its interests "covers such priority areas as: the supply of engineering products on the basis of new leasing schemes; cooperation in agriculture and energy; participation in joint economic projects; the creation of a network of joint manufacturing enterprises in both countries"⁷⁵ .

In April 2021, Dushanbe hosted the 14th IGC meeting, which addressed topical issues of interaction in industry and production cooperation, agriculture and transport, healthcare and education, investment and information technology. At the same time, an exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus, a Belarus-Tajikistan-Afghanistan business forum, and a TajBelAgro forum were organized in the capital of Tajikistan. All of these events once again demonstrated that "despite the crisis phenomena in the world, Belarusian-Tajik trade and economic cooperation shows a positive and dynamic nature. Since 2016, the mutual trade turnover has grown 5.5 times, reaching \$111.7 million in 2020."⁷⁶ . At the same time, Belarusian exports to the Tajik market have increased more than sixfold over the same period and reached almost \$110 million, while the surplus amounted to \$107.5 million due to deliveries from Belarus of cars, sugar,

⁷⁵ Zalesky, B. Vector of post-Soviet integration. A view from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2019. - C. 211.

⁷⁶ Belarus and Tajikistan need to implement agricultural projects more actively - Kroupko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarusi-i-tadzhikistanu-nuzhno-aktivnee-realizovyvat-proekty-v-selskom-hozjajstve-krupko-435795-2021/>

tractors and tractor trucks, flour, meat offal and fish, paper and cardboard stationery and wood and chipboard.

Among the major joint projects implemented recently is the shipment to Afghanistan of the first batch of Belarusian tractors assembled at JSC "Agrotekhservis" in the Tajik town of Gissar, where it is planned not only to produce modern equipment for the agricultural sector - forage harvesters, attachments, expanding the range of assembled tractors, but also to create over a hundred qualified jobs in view of further development of the project. In this regard, at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission an agreement on expanding the assembly production through the development of tractor semi-trailers PST-9 at the site in Hissar was signed by UKH Bobruiskagromash and Agrotekhservis. "In addition, the companies signed a contract for the supply of the first batch of machine sets, which is planned to be shipped in the second quarter of 2021"⁷⁷. We would like to remind you that with the help of Belarus "there is also a training centre in Gissar for training specialists for effective operation and maintenance of machinery and equipment operating in the fields of Tajikistan"⁷⁸. The contract for the delivery of one hundred Belarusian self-propelled trolleybuses to Dushanbe is in its final stage.

In 2020, Belarusian-Tajik cooperation in agriculture was also developing very dynamically. Suffice it to say that the volume of mutual trade in agricultural and food products between the two former Soviet republics reached almost ten million dollars. An important detail is that "Belarusian food exports to this country grew by 1.4 times and totaled \$9.5

⁷⁷ "Bobruiskagromash will expand assembly production in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bobrujskagromash-rasshirit-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-v-tadzhikistane-436621-2021/>

⁷⁸ Belarus and Tajikistan discuss the development of trade and economic cooperation and industrial cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-obsudili-razvitiie-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-i-promkooperatsiju-436006-2021/>

million <...>. In January 2021, domestic agricultural products and foodstuffs worth \$775 thousand were supplied to Tajikistan (a sevenfold increase compared to the same period of the previous year)."⁷⁹ . And there is every reason to believe that this positive trend will continue in the medium term. The Bellegprom Concern is also exploring opportunities to supply flax to this Central Asian country, which is of keen interest to Tajikistan's business circles. In particular, the IGC discussed "the issue of supplies of Orsha flax processing plant and Kamvol's flax-containing fabrics to the Tajik market"⁸⁰

The exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus, which was held in Dushanbe in 2021, also aims to promote exports from Belarus to Tajikistan by showcasing products of 40 domestic companies from key industries: Agrofood - agriculture and food; TechMach - engineering and technology; Wood - woodworking and furniture products; Health - health care and pharmaceuticals; FMCG - consumer goods. Tajik partners had an opportunity to learn about export opportunities of the Belarusian agro-industrial complex and the prospects of bilateral cooperation in crop and livestock farming at the agricultural forum TajBelAgro, where they discussed not only mutual supply of agricultural products and machinery, but also development of cooperation options. Finally, at the Tajikistan-Belarus-Afghanistan Business Forum, attended by over two hundred enterprises from the three countries, "eight documents were signed on developing partnerships in the areas of industry, education, food and drink supply"⁸¹ ,

⁷⁹ Belarusian agricultural exports to Tajikistan increased by 1.4 times in 2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-belorusskoj-selhozproduksii-v-tadzhikistan-v-2020-godu-vyros-v-14-raza-434869-2021/>

⁸⁰ "Bellegprom is exploring the possibility of supplying flax to Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belleprom-prorabatyvaet-vozmozhnosti-postavok-lna-v-tadzhikistan-435980-2021/>

⁸¹ Belarus, Tajikistan and Afghanistan sign eight documents on partnership development at a business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-tadzhikistan-i-afganistan-podpisali-na-biznes-forume-8-dokumentov-o-razvitii-partnerstva-435998-2021/>

which demonstrates the growing dynamics of partnership also in this trilateral format.

It should be noted that in June 2022, the 15th IGC meeting was held in Minsk, where the parties noted the most significant areas of bilateral cooperation: investment, industry, agriculture, transport, social, cultural, and scientific and technical spheres. As a reminder, "in 2021, trade turnover between Belarus and Tajikistan amounted to over \$126 million and increased by 12.6% compared to 2020, exports - slightly over \$122 million (11.1% growth), imports - \$4 million (increased by 90.5%)"⁸². The two countries are mutually interested in expanding the avenues of cooperation, which may include the development of assembly production of Belarusian lifts organized in Tajikistan, creation of a joint venture to produce carpets, supplies of Belarusian passenger, quarry and construction machinery, as well as Belarusian breeding stock of cattle, increasing food exports, including those certified according to halal standards. For its part, Belarus is interested in importing raw materials for the Belarusian light industry from Tajikistan and continuing cooperation in education, culture and sports.

In this context, it is important that Tajikistan has declared 2022-2026 as the year of industrial development. "During this period, it is planned to ensure an average annual economic development of at least 7% and to double GDP per capita, create more than 500,000 new jobs and reduce the poverty rate to 15%. It was suggested that Belarusian companies should be actively involved in tackling these tasks. In addition, they would like to continue training Tajik specialists in Minsk for various spheres of the economy."⁸³. In

⁸² Belarus and Tajikistan are interested in expanding areas of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-zainterisovany-v-rasshirenii-napravlenij-sotrudnichestva-506166-2022>

⁸³ Pivovar, E. Krutoy declared Belarus' readiness to provide Tajikistan with any kind of machinery / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/krutoj-zajavil-o-gotovnosti-belarusi-obespechit-tadzhikistan-ljubymi-vidami-mashinostroitelnoj-tehniki-523859-2022/>

this regard, the Belarusian side is ready to provide Tajik partners with any types of machinery, primarily quarry and road-building equipment for implementation of infrastructure projects in the mining and power industries of the country. There is an opportunity to substantially increase supplies of new models of Belarusian buses, trucks, woodworking products, petrochemicals and metallurgy to the Tajik market, and to open joint ventures to assemble lifts, household appliances and furniture.

In the agro-industrial sector, Tajikistan is interested in increasing the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery and meat and dairy products. In particular, there is considerable work on the shipment of agricultural equipment from Belarus, which is badly needed by the Tajik agricultural sector. "In 2021, 411 units of tractors of various brands and more than 124 agricultural machines were delivered to Tajikistan"⁸⁴. At the same time, the Tajik side expresses its interest in continuing cooperation in this area. In addition, the Tajik partners plan to expand the range of beef products, dairy products and raw materials. During the 15th IGC meeting, the parties also noted "the potential for growth in supplies of pedigree cattle of Belarusian selection and the possibility of providing Tajik farmers with highly productive, balanced mixed fodder and admixtures"⁸⁵.

Cooperation between the regions of Belarus and Tajikistan is also developing successfully in 2022. In particular, on the agenda is the development of cooperation between the capitals of the two countries in a number of areas, including in technology, production of pharmaceuticals, and education. It should be recalled that in 2019, Minsk implemented a big

⁸⁴ Tajikistan is interested in increasing supplies of Belarusian meat and dairy products and agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tadzhikistan-zainteresovan-v-velichenii-postavok-belorusskoj-mjaso-molochnoj-produktsii-i-506657-2022/>

⁸⁵ Belarus is ready to supply halal products to Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-postavljat-v-tadzhikistan-haljalnuju-produktsiju-506619-2022/>

project to provide Dushanbe with Belkommunmash trolleybuses. And today these vehicles are already decorating the Tajik capital. Another project is being implemented in dairy production - cooperation between the Tajik partners and Minsk Dairy Plant No.1. There are plans to develop cooperation ties and set up a joint production of municipal machinery. As for education, about 600 Tajik students are currently studying in Belarus. For the most part, they choose Minsk and technical universities to study. Many of them study at the Aviation Academy and at different faculties of the Belarusian State University. In addition, there are four joint departments of Belarusian and Tajik universities. So, the two capitals are developing many mechanisms of cooperation. And "in the future, a document will be signed to regulate further development of relations between Minsk and Dushanbe"⁸⁶ .

Another example of interaction between the regions is the Gomel and Khatlon regions, which intend to develop cooperation in agriculture and industry. For example, Gomel specialists are ready to build turnkey farms in the Tajik region. Partners from the Khatlon region have "intentions to purchase mineral fertilizers, timber, cattle, as well as feed for poultry farms"⁸⁷ . Khatlon is a major region of Tajikistan, with some agricultural products accounting for 48 to 78 per cent of the country's total. These are vegetables, early fruits, gourds and citrus fruits.

Another important document was signed by Belarus and Tajikistan in Dushanbe in October 2022 - a roadmap for 2022-2026. In the context of the implementation of this Central Asian country's accelerated industrial development programme, Tajik partners are interested in developing

⁸⁶ Cooperation between Belarus and Tajikistan discussed at the Minsk City Executive Committee [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-tadzhikistana-obsudili-v-mingorispolkome-525441-2022/>

⁸⁷ The Gomel and Khatlon regions intend to develop cooperation in agriculture and industry [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-i-hatlonskaja-oblasti-namereny-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-i-promyshlennosti-507131-2022/>

cooperation with the Belarusian side in the light, food, pharmaceutical, chemical and mining industries. In addition, "the agrarian sector in the sphere of industrial cooperation and interregional cooperation have been identified as priority areas for economic cooperation"⁸⁸ . Furthermore, the two republics have adopted a number of important bilateral documents. These include intergovernmental agreements on a system of mutual trade facilitation and on cooperation in the field of youth policy. The Prosecutor General's Office of Belarus and the Agency for State Financial Control and Anti-Corruption of Tajikistan adopted a document on cooperation in combating corruption. The Ministry of Sports and Tourism of Belarus and the Tourism Development Committee under the Government of Tajikistan agreed to develop cooperation in tourism. The National Centre for Marketing and Price Study of Belarus and the Export Agency under the Government of Tajikistan also signed an agreement on cooperation. The national academies of sciences of the two countries have agreed on training in virology, microbiology, molecular biology, epidemiology, biotechnology and pharmacology. In addition, a "action plan to develop trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation between the Minsk city executive committee and the Dushanbe city executive body for 2023-2024" was approved. Mogilev District has established twinning ties with the Spitamen District of Sughd Region of Tajikistan..."⁸⁹ .

This October, Dushanbe also hosted a Tajik-Belarusian business forum, which was attended by representatives of 73 enterprises from Belarus, and almost fifty of them displayed their products at the Made in Belarus

⁸⁸ Rahmon outlines priority areas for cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/rahmon-oboznachil-prioritetnye-napravlenija-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusju-528619-2022/>

⁸⁹ Belarus and Tajikistan signed a road map for 2022-2026 and several other important documents [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-tadzhikistan-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-na-2022-2026-gody-i-esche-neskolko-vaznyh-dokumentov-528597-2022/>

exhibition. "Almost all sectors of the Belarusian economy were represented at the business forum: machine building, metallurgy, food, woodworking, and light industry. The total amount of contracts signed was about \$46 million. In addition, another \$2 million worth of agreements were secured during online negotiations."⁹⁰ .

In particular, Minsk Tractor Plant has signed contracts with Tajik companies worth 11 million dollars. "For instance, the company Madadi Tursunzoda will be supplied with 170 units of BELARUS tractors worth about \$4 million. A trade agreement has been signed with the company Agrotekhservis for the supply of 320 tractors worth over \$7 million"⁹¹ . It should be mentioned that about 370 Belarusian tractors have been supplied to Tajikistan for the first three quarters of this year. This is an increase of almost 50 percent compared to January-September 2021. For reference: in November 2017, an assembly facility for BELARUS tractors was opened in Gissar, and contracts were signed for the production of seven models.

Another fact: Minsk Automobile Plant will supply 14 units of motor vehicles to the Tajik market for almost 500 thousand dollars. The contract in the framework of the Tajik-Belarusian business forum was signed by MAZ and Obi Zulol CJSC, "the largest producer of bottled water, carbonated drinks and natural juices in Tajikistan. In 2019, MAZ delivered 18 units of machinery to the company, among them road trains and flatbed trucks with trailers" .⁹²

⁹⁰ Tajik-Belarusian Business Forum takes place in Dushanbe [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/fotofakt-tadzhiksko-belorusskij-biznes-forum-prohodit-v-dushanbe-528500-2022/>

⁹¹ MTZ signs \$11 million worth of contracts with Tajik companies [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-zakljuchil-kontrakty-s-kompanijami-iz-tadzhikistana-na-11-mln-528650-2022/>

⁹² MAZ will supply machinery to Tajikistan for almost \$500 thousand. [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-postavit-tehniku-v-tadzhikistan-pochti-na-500-tys-528637-2022/>

Another participant of the Tajik-Belarusian business forum was Concern Belgospischeprom, whose eight enterprises took part in the Made in Belarus exhibition and even signed a number of contracts with Tajik partners to supply sugar, brewing malt and confectionery products. By the way, "Tajikistan ranks first among the concern's trading partners in Central Asia and the Middle East this year in terms of export volume"⁹³.

Representatives of the Bellegprom Concern have explored the possibility of investing in cotton production in Tajikistan as part of a business forum. The heads of the Orsha flax mill and the Baranovichi Production Cotton Association, who visited Dushanbe, held talks about possible imports of cotton yarn and fiber, as the price of cotton yarn has become more affordable for Belarusian producers in Tajikistan in recent years. Note that there are other interests in the light industry cooperation between the two countries. "This [2022] year, the Belarusian company Mogotex supplied its products to Tajikistan for the first time. It exported technical fabrics and the transaction amounted to \$250 thousand. Mogilev Oblast agreed to export to Tajikistan in 2023 as well. <...> Mogotex will supply technical fabrics worth \$300 thousand"⁹⁴.

The Vitebsk Carpets Holding will also be represented in the Tajik market, which with its Tajik partners is setting up a joint production facility in Khujand, Sughd Region. Interestingly, in mid-April 2022, a joint Belarusian-Tajik assembly plant of Mogilevliftmash OJSC, whose partner was Khujandtorgmash LLC, was officially opened in that city. The new workshop for the production of lifts provided jobs for 50 residents of

⁹³ Zhidkov: Tajikistan is one of the key partners for Belgospischeprom in the Central Asian market [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zhidkov-tadzhikistan-odin-iz-kljuчевyh-partnerov-dlja-belgospischeproma-na-tsentralnoaziatskom-rynke-528642-2022/>

⁹⁴ Belarus explores the possibility of investing in cotton production in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-izuchaet-vozmozhnost-investirovaniya-v-proizvodstvo-hlopka-v-tadzhikistane-528489-2022>

Khujand, where "using modern equipment and technology will produce different types of lifts - passenger lifts for high-rise buildings, industrial enterprises, as well as health care facilities"⁹⁵ .

With regard to cooperation in education and science, at the forum of rectors of Belarusian and Tajik universities held in October 2022, the parties saw great potential in the field of innovation, in the implementation of both joint educational programs and in the training of Tajik students at Belarusian universities and institutes. In particular, the Belarusian National Technical University (BNTU) has signed a number of agreements on cooperation with universities in Tajikistan. This applies to the Dangara State University and the Tajik Agrarian University, the Tajik National University and the Technological University of Tajikistan, as well as the Mining and Metallurgy Institute of Tajikistan. The Belarusian and Tajik partners already see a number of joint points for cooperation. "Interaction with the named universities is a new level of access to the Tajik market of educational services. <...> Opening of new horizons of cooperation..."⁹⁶ . As a result, the parties believe that innovative interaction is the key to the creation of new joint ventures on the territory of Tajikistan and Belarus. And as a whole, all these facts "show the growing interest of the two former Soviet republics in fruitful cooperation in a wide variety of areas"⁹⁷ , which are taken to a new level in the form of comprehensive measures of the Belarus-Tajikistan Roadmap 2022-2026.

⁹⁵ Emomali Rahmon took part in the opening of the assembly production of lifts "Mogilevliftmash" in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/emomali-rahmon-prinjal-uchastie-v-otkrytii-sborohnogo-proizvodstva-liftov-mogilevliftmash-v-496483-2022/>

⁹⁶ BNTU and universities in Tajikistan to cooperate in science, education and innovation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bntu-i-vuzy-tadzhikistana-budut-sotrudnicat-v-sfere-nauki-obrazovanija-i-innovatsij-528871-2022>

⁹⁷ Zalesky, B. International relations and media. Peculiarities of multi-vector international cooperation in the period of global challenges / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2016. - C. 129.

Belarus-Kyrgyzstan: priority to accelerate cooperation

The Republic of Belarus has traditionally been interested in the closest partnership with the Kyrgyz Republic, a country in Central Asia that is rich in natural resources and minerals, high potential for the development of agriculture, hydropower and tourism. All the more so because trade and economic cooperation between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan has recently intensified markedly.

Back in May 2013, the Kyrgyz side noted: "I would like the economic relations between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan to develop dynamically. Belarus has a number of goods in which Kyrgyzstan is interested. In turn, we are also ready to supply goods that are of interest to the Belarusian economy."⁹⁸ . In September 2015, at the meeting of the heads of the two governments, focusing on the need to increase mutual trade turnover, the parties agreed that "in addition to trade cooperation, efforts should be focused on the development of industrial cooperation"⁹⁹ . In the first quarter of 2017, the trade turnover between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan increased by one and a half times, reaching \$15.2 million. The Intergovernmental Belarus-Kyrgyzstan Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation, whose sixth and seventh meetings were held in Bishkek in June 2016 and in Minsk in June 2017, played an important role in boosting bilateral cooperation between the countries.

Specifically, at the seventh meeting of the commission, the two sides noted a significant increase in contacts between Belarusian companies and Kyrgyz partners, which only contributes to the expansion in cooperation between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan in the supply of machinery and production

⁹⁸ Kyrgyzstan is interested in developing trade and economic relations with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://www.belvpo.com/ru/26710.html>

⁹⁹ Andrei Kobayakov met with the head of the Government of Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6027>

cooperation, in energy, agriculture, healthcare, education, science, culture, information and tourism, as well as cooperation between the regions and free economic zones of the two countries. This extensive list of areas for Belarus-Kyrgyzstan cooperation also included "training of specialists, improvement of their skills, creation of distribution networks, joint ventures for production of agricultural machinery, supplies of Belarusian lifts to Kyrgyzstan."¹⁰⁰ .

As far as mutual trade is concerned, supplies of Belarusian agricultural products to the Kyrgyz market are clearly in the lead, as evidenced by the following figures: "In 2016, exports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to Kyrgyzstan increased 3.1 times, and in the first quarter of 2017 they increased almost 14 times. The main exports are meat and dairy products"¹⁰¹ . Agreeing to further increase mutual supplies of agricultural products and expand their product range, the parties also decided to consider the possibility of implementing joint projects in livestock and crop farming.

The flagship of Belarus-Kyrgyzstan production cooperation is the tractor assembly plant and the service centre for servicing agricultural machinery from Belarus, which opened in Bishkek in November 2016 on the basis of Avtomash-Radiator LLC. An important detail - "about 90% of radiators for tractors assembled in Minsk are supplied from Kyrgyzstan. The same assembly shop is now used to assemble Gomselmash combines"¹⁰² . In addition, the parties have been actively working on the issue of establishing joint ventures in the light industry, the prerequisite for which was the

¹⁰⁰ On the meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus-Kyrgyzstan Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://kyrgyzstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b7a170b217ff5943.html>

¹⁰¹ Kyrgyzstan is interested in establishing assembly facilities for Belarusian agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/kyrgyzstan-zainterresovan-v-sozdanii-sborochnyh-proizvodstv-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-251058-2017/>

¹⁰² Omuraliev noted a positive trend in the development of relations between Kyrgyzstan and Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/omuraliev-otmetil-pozitivnuju-tendentsiju-v-razvitii-otnoshenij-mezhdu-kyrgyzstanom-i-belarusju-269017-2017/>

actualization of trade relations in this area. In April 2017, the Kyrgyz company Opt-Invest supplied textiles to Belarus for the first time, and in September 2017 it signed a contract with the Belarusian side for the supply of garments as well.

In February 2020, Minsk hosted the ninth meeting of the intergovernmental Belarus-Kyrgyzstan Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation, which addressed pressing issues of development and strengthening of systemic mutually beneficial partnership relations. Minsk and Bishkek saw this meeting of the intergovernmental commission, where the status of the co-chairs had already been raised to the level of deputy prime ministers, as "a new impetus for the development of relations between our countries"¹⁰³. It should be recalled that in 2019, the volume of Belarus-Kyrgyzstan trade amounted to over 105 million dollars with a surplus for the Belarusian side of over 90 million dollars, which was ensured by supplies from Belarus of dairy products, tractors and truck tractors, meat and poultry by-products, medicines, furniture and wood and chipboard. However, according to the parties, the volume of mutual trade between Kyrgyzstan and Belarus does not match the economic potential of the countries. Therefore, at the regular meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission the attention of the parties was focused on the priority areas for cooperation: 1) **increase of mutual trade**; 2) **deepening** of industrial cooperation and creation of joint assembly productions; 3) **expansion of** interregional cooperation.

In terms of **increasing mutual trade**, the Belarusian side made specific proposals to increase supplies of passenger, cargo and municipal vehicles to Kyrgyzstan, which is quite in line with the plans of the Kyrgyz side to upgrade, for example, the fleet of passenger vehicles in Bishkek and

¹⁰³ A meeting of the Belarus-Kyrgyzstan intergovernmental commission will be held in Minsk on 21 February [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zasedanie-belorusko-kyrgyzskoj-mezhpravkomissii-projdet-v-minske-21-fevralja-378085-2020/>

other cities. In addition, in promoting its products on the Kyrgyz market, the Belarusian side continued its practice of actively participating in exhibition events in Kyrgyzstan in 2020. Thus, in April, the exposition of Belarusian exporters was presented for the third time at the FoodExpo international food industry exhibition in Bishkek, where visitors could see products and beverages from Belarus. The focus was on healthy food and Halal-certified products. For the first time, "food additives, casings for meat and sausage products and baby food were presented at the exposition"¹⁰⁴ .

When it comes to **the deepening of production cooperation**, the Kyrgyz side proposed to intensify cooperation in agriculture and agro-industry. The point is, first of all, to establish a joint agro-cluster for milk processing in Kyrgyzstan using Belarusian technologies, as well as to "build dairy complexes with the necessary equipment produced in Belarus and supply pedigree livestock"¹⁰⁵ . An agreement on cooperation in agriculture and food between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation of Kyrgyzstan was signed at a meeting of the Interstate Commission in order to establish these agreements in the legal field. As for industrial cooperation, the plans voiced in Minsk look realistic: "Assembly production of transformers may be set up with the Kozlov Electric Plant in Minsk, lifts with Mogilevliftmash, gas meters with BelOMO"¹⁰⁶ . The seriousness of these intentions of the parties is evidenced, in particular, by the fact of signing an agreement on cooperation between the V.I. Kozlov Minsk Electromechanical Plant and

¹⁰⁴ Nemankova, Y. An exposition of Belarusian producers will be presented at FoodExpo in Bishkek / Y. Nemankova // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekspozitsija-belorusskih-proizvoditelej-budet-predstavlena-na-vystavke-foodexpo-v-bishkeke-378791-2020/>

¹⁰⁵ Kyrgyzstan proposes Belarus to create an agro-cluster for milk processing [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kyrgyzstan-predlagaet-belarusi-sozdat-agroklaster-po-pererabotke-moloka-380586-2020/>

⁹ Uladzimir Kukharev: Belarusian electric buses may appear on Bishkek streets [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/9293>

Maselektrosnab LLC following the meeting of the intergovernmental commission.

Talking about **the expansion of interregional cooperation** between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, the two capitals - Minsk and Bishkek - have been setting the pace so far by signing the agreement on economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation back in 1997, and establishing sworn brotherhood relations in 2008. In the language of figures, this interregional cooperation looks as follows: "The growth rate of trade turnover of Minsk enterprises with Kyrgyzstan in January-June 2017 against the same period of 2016 was 306%, exports of goods - 393.7%, exports of services - 176.1%"¹⁰⁷. Tractors, paving slabs, radiators, air heaters, refrigerators and medicines were supplied to Kyrgyz partners. Dairy products, chipboard, and tools were new exports from Minsk. Cooperation between the two capitals in the field of public transport development may become very promising in the future. After all, Bishkek plans to buy about 400 high-capacity buses. And the Kyrgyz capital's authorities are studying the supplier market. In this case, one can assume that manufacturers of transport equipment in Minsk have good chances of participating in this project. After all, back in 2009, Minsk Belkommunmash supplied 20 trolleybuses to Bishkek and later won a tender for export of another 30 units of electric transport.

At the 9th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission in Minsk, the Gomel Region Executive Committee and the Office of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of Kyrgyzstan in the Chui Region signed an agreement on cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian and cultural spheres. Although this was the first agreement for the Belarusian region with its Kyrgyz partners, the enterprises

¹⁰⁷ Matveeva, N. Bishkek plans to buy equipment from Minsk enterprises to develop public transport / N. Matveeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/bishkek-planiruet-zakupit-u-minskih-predpriyatij-tehniku-dlja-razvitiya-obschestvennogo-transporta-265609-2017/>

of the Homiel Region were already present in the market of the Central Asian country before that. Suffice it to say that in 2019, the region's trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan exceeded ten million dollars. "At that, exports amounted to \$8.5 million. 26 enterprises of the region supplied their goods, including Gomselmash OJSC, Multipak IPUP, MozyrSol OJSC, manufacturers of doors and wallpaper. The promotion of products of the Turovsky Dairy Plant, in particular, soft cheeses, to the Kyrgyz market has begun"¹⁰⁸.

It should be noted that in 2021, the trade turnover between Belarus and Kyrgyzstan amounted to almost one hundred million dollars, including Belarusian exports of over 86 million dollars. The balance was positive in the amount of \$75.4 million. "Last year [2021] the nomenclature of the goods supplied by Belarus consisted of 749 commodity items (by comparison, in 2020 there were 620). In January-June this year, the bilateral trade turnover amounted to \$56.4 million, which is 44.3% more compared to the same period in 2021, including Belarusian exports of \$42.8 million (24.8% growth)."¹⁰⁹. The main Belarusian export commodity items to Kyrgyzstan are fresh or chilled beef, sugar, poultry meat, pharmaceuticals, finished meat products, carpets and other textile products, fiber optic cables, cheese and cottage cheese, diagnostic reagents, and chicken eggs. And there are reasons to believe that Belarusian companies have every chance not only to consolidate and increase their presence in the Kyrgyz market in terms of the products they already supply, but also to expand the list of export items. In particular, Belarusian manufacturers of agricultural, passenger and municipal machinery have prospects of increasing their supplies to Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁰⁸ The Gomel region will develop cooperation with the Chui oblast of Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskij-region-budet-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-chujskoj-oblastju-kyrgyzstana-381123-2020>

¹⁰⁹ NCM told about the prospects of promotion of Belarusian goods and services in Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ntsm-rasskazal-o-perspektivah-prodvizhenija-belorusskih-tovarov-i-uslug-v-kyrgyzstan-519484-2022/>

Another interesting component of export supplies from Belarus to this Central Asian country is medical products. "Belarusian pharmaceutical companies are active in the Kyrgyz market. Thus, in 2021, the volume of exports of medicines to Kyrgyzstan amounted to \$4.3 million"¹¹⁰. In April 2022 Belarusian manufacturers actively participated in the 16th International specialized exhibition of healthcare MedExpo Kyrgyzstan-2022 in Bishkek. Their well-known and proven medicines, as well as novelties that have no analogues on the Kyrgyz market were presented by "Technology and medicine 2030", RUE "Belmedpreparaty", OJSC "Borisov plant of medical preparations", UE "Minskinterkaps", OJSC "Exon", SE "Akadempharm" and NP "Medbiotech" Ltd. In particular, "Ekzon JSC presented a line of VITAX vitamins, haematogen with new flavours (apple, apple with cinnamon, cranberry)"¹¹¹. As a result, the Belarusian companies signed contracts for the supply of products and planned to conduct training seminars among medical representatives on the promotion of medicines in Kyrgyzstan.

In the second half of 2022 - in September - the 10th meeting of the intergovernmental commission was held in the city of Osh, during which it was stated that a promising area for the development of Kyrgyz-Belarusian cooperation is to increase production capacity, capacities to produce products with high added value, as well as the establishment of joint ventures in all industrial sectors. "Currently there are 54 representative offices of entities of the commodity distribution network and distributors of Belarusian enterprises in the country, including the assembly production of tractors of

¹¹⁰ Belarusian enterprises presented their products at the health care exhibition [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-predpriyatija-predstavili-produktsiju-na-vystavke-zdravoohranenija-v-bishkeke-494393-2022/>

¹¹¹ Pharmaceutical enterprises of Belarus plan to expand the range and volume of supply of medicines to Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/farmpredpriyatija-belarusi-planirujut-rasshirit-assortiment-i-objemy-postavok-lekarstv-v-kyrgyzstan-494553-2022/>

the Minsk Tractor Plant Joint Stock Company"¹¹² . The Kyrgyz side is also interested in attracting investment in areas such as information technology, agriculture, and tourism.

In this regard, the Kyrgyz-Belarusian Business Forum was also held in Osh in September 2022, which demonstrated the growing interest of Belarusian businesses in the development of bilateral business contacts with Kyrgyzstan. Representatives of the Belarusian side - the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Belgospisheprom Concern and Belkommunmash Holding - presented to the forum participants the opportunities of interaction with the Belarusian agricultural, food and industrial enterprises. A business contacts exchange was organized at the forum. "Meetings were held between Belarusian and Kyrgyz companies working in the food sector, mechanical engineering, healthcare and agriculture. As a result of the business forum, bilateral contracts totaling \$900 thousand were signed"¹¹³ .

Also held in Osh was the international universal exhibition Yug Expo-2022, where the Belarusian exposition was presented by the Belgospisheprom Concern and its 16 enterprises, which brought together export goods - "confectionery, snacks, instant food, food concentrates, baby food, spirits - haist, tinctures and balsams on Belarusian herbs, distillates, full-service whisky made from Belarusian grain, products of fruits and berries..."¹¹⁴ . World famous Belarusian brands Gomselmash, MTZ and MAZ were represented at the exhibition by their local dealer - OSOO

¹¹² Within the framework of the 10th meeting of the Kyrgyz-Belarusian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, a business forum was held in Osh [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: https://cis.minsk.by/news/24072/v_ramkah_10-go_zasedaniya_mezhpravitelstvennoj_kyrgyzsko-belorusskoj_komissii_po_torgovo-ekonomicheskomu_sotrudnichestvu_v_oshe_sostojalsja_biznes-forum

¹¹³ Contracts worth \$900,000 signed as a result of the Belarusian-Kyrgyz business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kontrakty-na-900-tys-podpisany-po-itogam-belorussko-kyrgyzskogo-biznes-foruma-523912-2022/>

¹¹⁴ 16 enterprises of Belgospisheprom presented their products at the Yug Expo exhibition in Kyrgyzstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/produksiju-na-vystavke-jug-ekspo-v-kyrgyzstane-predstavili-16-predpriyatij-belgospisheproma-523807-2022>

AVTOMASH-RADIATOR. The exhibition participants also included other Belarusian companies: Kozlov Minsk Electrotechnical Plant, one of Europe's largest manufacturers of electrical equipment; leading medical centres - Oncology and Medical Radiology Centre named after N.N. Aleksandrov (ORM) and Cardiology RSPC; and the manufacturer of veterinary pharmaceuticals - Belzovetsnabprom. In particular, educational services in radiology, surgery and ultrasonic diagnostics were offered to the Kyrgyz specialists at the stand of the RSPC MPA. As a result of negotiations between RMRC MPA and Osh State University, "an agreement on cooperation has been prepared to provide for the exchange of experience between the institutions' staff on educational programmes for advanced training and internships; the organisation of conferences, seminars, symposia and roundtables"¹¹⁵.

All these facts confirm that Belarus and Kyrgyzstan intend to realize the potential of bilateral relations in all areas of cooperation and especially to speed up interaction in the economic sphere, including partnerships in industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, transport, as well as in a variety of issues on the cultural, humanitarian and regional agenda.

¹¹⁵ The 6th International Universal Trade Fair "South Expo-2022". [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://omr.by/news/news-main/6-ya-mezhdunarodnaya-universalnaya-vystavka-yarmarka-yug-ekspo-2022>

Belarus-Kazakhstan: the road of friendship and cooperation

Belarus and Kazakhstan signed a treaty on social and economic cooperation until 2026 in November 2017. In this document, the parties outlined the implementation of a qualitatively new stage in bilateral relations. At the end of June 2021, during the visit of the Belarusian government delegation to that Central Asian country, a goal corresponding to this new stage was voiced - "to reach new indicators in mutual trade in goods and services - over \$1bn annually" .¹¹⁶

In February 2022, when summing up the results of the past year, the two sides stated at a high level that the Belarus-Kazakhstan trade turnover exceeded one billion dollars for the first time in history. To be absolutely precise, it "amounted to \$1.092.5 billion and increased by 31.9% compared to the same period of the previous year [2020], exports - \$911.8 million (25% growth). The balance is positive - \$731.1 million"¹¹⁷ . Belarus' deliveries were based on a variety of foodstuffs - fresh or chilled beef, condensed and dried milk and cream, cheese and cottage cheese, sausages and similar meat products, sugar, as well as parts of rolling stock, combine harvesters, furniture and parts thereof. The commodity distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in Kazakhstan includes more than 40 companies, as well as more than 170 entities of the dealer network. There are also a number of joint assembly facilities for Belarusian machinery and equipment.

In October 2022, a high-level working meeting of representatives of the governments of Belarus and Kazakhstan was held in Astana, where the

¹¹⁶ Zalessky, B.L. Aimed at trade and production cooperation / B.L. Zalessky // Materiały XVII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Dynamika naukowych badań - 2021", Volume 6. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 21.

¹¹⁷ Golovchenko: trade turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan exceeded \$1 billion in 2021 for the first time [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-tovarooborot-belarusi-i-kazahstana-v-2021-godu-vpervye-prevysil-1-mlrd-486829-2022/>

parties outlined priorities in industrial cooperation, agro-industry and construction.

In the field of industrial cooperation, there are seven Belarusian companies operating in Kazakhstan, including Gomselmash, Minsk Tractor Plant, and Bobruiskagromash. They are steadily stepping up deliveries of machine sets to that country for the production of machinery. The construction of a workshop for the production of unified cabins with the capacity of 10 thousand pieces per year has been completed in the industrial zone in Kostanai as part of a major project to set up tractor production. "The parties are exploring the possibility of organizing production not only of elements and units of tractor machinery, but also of machine tools, engines for tractor machinery, diesel generators, pump sets, and optical products"¹¹⁸

As for new prospects of cooperation, we are discussing the production of fire-fighting vehicles on the chassis of the Minsk Automobile Plant and Pozhsnab enterprise. This is a new promising niche that needs to be filled with Belarusian equipment. On the whole, "we can increase mutual supplies with Kazakhstan by \$200 million."¹¹⁹ . In this regard, the experience of Minsk Motor Works (MMZ), whose trading house was opened in early 2022 in Kazakhstan and which successfully and with increasing figures sells Belarusian engines, special-purpose machinery and spare parts, is interesting. In this context in October 2022 MMZ took part in the international exhibition KazAgro-2022, which is the largest and most visited in Central Asia. The objective of the Belarusian company at the forum is to "expand business and commercial prospects, opportunities for product

¹¹⁸ Golovchenko: Belarus and Kazakhstan need to move forward with industrial cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarusi-i-kazahstanu-nuzhno-dvigatsja-dalshe-v-oblasti-promkooperatsii-531879-2022/>

¹¹⁹ Snopkov: The basis for cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan is industrial cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/snopkov-bazoj-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-kazahstana-javljaetsja-proizvodstvennaja-kooperatsija-506651-2022/>

promotion, and increase brand awareness"¹²⁰ . With the same purpose, more than 30 Belarusian business entities took part in international trade fairs on mechanical engineering and metalworking, as well as the manufacturing industry, in September 2022 in Astana. The enterprises of the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Education were "represented by collective stands, and the Minsk Tractor Plant and machine-tool enterprises were represented by separate stands"¹²¹ . This shows that new projects in Belarusian-Kazakh industrial cooperation, as they say, are on the way.

In the agricultural sector, the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan has confirmed its interest in building a 1,200-head dairy farm on Kazakhstani land, where "Belarusian technologies, materials, equipment and dairy cattle will be used. Work will start this year and will continue in 2023"¹²² . Work continues on the establishment of production of veterinary drugs in Kazakhstan, both to meet the needs of the domestic market and for prospective exports to third countries. BelVitunifarm will participate in this project on the Belarusian side. In addition, the Kazakh side expressed interest in supplies of Belarusian mixed fodder, premixes, amino acids, as well as in switching to potato seeds of Belarusian selection.

The Belarusian and Kazakh partners are also planning several projects in the construction sector in the near future. "Among them there are symmetrical ones - construction of a Belarusian quarter in Astana and a Kazakh quarter in Minsk. <...> At this stage the plan is to determine the land

¹²⁰ Minsk Motor Plant presented its products at an exhibition in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minskij-motornyj-zavod-predstavil-produktsiju-na-vystavke-v-kazahstane-528774-2022/>

¹²¹ More than 30 Belarusian enterprises participate in industrial exhibitions in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-30-belorusskih-predpriyatij-uchastvujut-v-vystavkah-promyshlennosti-v-kazahstane-525159-2022/>

¹²² Production of veterinary drugs and construction of MTFs. How Belarus and Kazakhstan will cooperate in agribusiness [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/proizvodstvo-vetpreparatov-i-stroitelstvo-mtf-kak-budut-sotrudnicat-belarus-i-kazahstan-v-apk-531987-2022/>

plots and the concept and to involve state-owned developers"¹²³. Another project is joint production of ceramic tiles. There are many minerals in Kazakhstan, so there are plans to set up production involving Belarusian specialists and technology.

Another interesting fact: Belarus and Kazakhstan are also planning to develop cargo transportation by rail. In October 2022, a Belarusian-Kazakh round table was held in Astana, where more than 80 participants, including about 40 Kazakhstani companies from the mining, oil, chemical, gas, metallurgical and agricultural sectors, carriers and transport and logistics companies of the country, as well as representatives of Belarusian timber, woodworking and food processing companies, transport and forwarding companies discussed the prospects of existing projects and current transport and logistics solutions for long-distance transportation. At the same time, "considerable attention was paid to the issues of smooth transit of cargoes from Belarus to Kazakhstan and also to China by transit through Kazakhstan, including those in container trains"¹²⁴.

Interregional cooperation is another important component of Belarusian-Kazakh bilateral cooperation. Recall that "about 30 agreements are in effect between the regions of Belarus and Kazakhstan"¹²⁵. Among the Belarusian participants of this productive interaction is **Minsk region**, the trade turnover of which with Kazakhstan in 2021 increased by 7.5 per cent and amounted to \$190 million. Exports accounted for almost \$180 million, and the growth rate was 107.2 percent. In foreign trade, there was a surplus

¹²³ A Belarusian quarter in Astana, a Kazakh quarter in Minsk. What new projects are discussed in construction [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskij-kvartal-v-astane-kazahstanskij-v-minske-kakie-novye-proekty-obsuzhdajut-v-stroitelstve-531980-2022/>

¹²⁴ Belarus and Kazakhstan plan to develop cargo transportation by rail [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kazahstan-planirujut-razvivat-gruzoperevozki-po-zheleznoj-doroge-530740-2022/>

¹²⁵ Zalesky, B. The goal is sustainable growth. Collection of articles / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 52.

of almost \$170 million. Foreign direct investment from Kazakhstan amounted to more than \$1.2 million, or 137.2 percent compared to 2020.¹²⁶ . Karaganda and Pavlodar regions are among the active Kazakh partners of the Belarusian capital region.

For example, an agreement on cooperation between Minsk Region and **Karaganda Region** was signed back in 1996 and included measures for cooperation in industry, agriculture, healthcare and education. In June 2013, JV KazBelAZ LLP, a joint venture for overhaul of units and assemblies, production of spare parts and manufacturing of machinery of the Belarusian Automobile Plant, started its operation in this Kazakhstani region. "Production is based at the Karaganda Casting and Mechanical Plant (KLMZ), a branch of Kazakhmys Corporation LLP¹²⁷ . This JV became one of the largest in the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development and was included in the Kazakhstan Industrialisation Map for 2010-2014. The first Belarusian dump truck was assembled in Karaganda in August 2013 by "Karaganda automobile engineers who were trained at the Belarusian plant"¹²⁸ . And in October 2021, the parties had already discussed the creation of a joint production of fire-fighting equipment in the Karaganda region. At that time "21 joint ventures were already operating in the Kazakhstani region. Among them is the company for assembly of dump trucks, repair and maintenance of BELAZ machinery"¹²⁹ . Apparently, this interaction can be further expanded, as the

¹²⁶ Turchin discussed with Beisenbayev the development of cooperation between Minsk Region and Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turchin-obsudil-s-beisenbaevym-razvitie-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-minskoj-oblastiju-i-kazahstanom-486296-2022/>

¹²⁷ Potylitsyn, S. Process of regular evolution / S. Potylitsyn // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://kazpravda.kz/n/protsess-zakonomernoy-evolyutsii/>

¹²⁸ Akhmetova, A. Karaganda residents assembled the first Belarusian dump truck / A. Akhmetova // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <https://www.altyn-orda.kz/karagandincy-sobrali-pervyj-belorusskij-samosval/>

¹²⁹ Belarus and Kazakhstan may launch joint production of fire-fighting equipment in the Karaganda Region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. -

region is interested in attracting Belarusian companies and is ready to create favourable conditions for them to "take part in agricultural projects and school construction. Cooperation in the IT sector is also possible"¹³⁰.

As for the **Pavlodar region**, the Minsk region signed an agreement with it on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation in 2009. In 2017, the parties agreed to cooperate in agriculture. The Kazakhs then showed great interest in the Belarusian experience in building dairy complexes. "When they handed over a package of standard projects of agricultural facilities to the Pavlodars, representatives of the Belarusian capital region expressed their readiness not only to advise them on the subject, but also to build dairy and cattle complexes there on mutually beneficial terms."¹³¹. In addition, the free economic zones of the Pavlodar oblast invited interested companies from Minsk Oblast to participate in projects for joint use of the region's subsoil. One of them is an aluminium cluster with involvement of large companies from Germany, Poland, and Turkey. Note that the technique of the Belarusian Automobile Plant is already quite actively used in this area of Kazakhstan. In particular, in February, 2021 on an assembly platform of technological park of Vostochny surface mine of JSC "EEC" of Eurasian group (ERG) has been completed assembling of three dump trucks BelAZ with payload capacity of 130 tons which have joined this coal-mining enterprise. They have joined "seven brothers, which already two years are operated in cyclic-flow overburden sections of the surface mine, deserving at Ekibastuz miners a reputation of

https://primepress.by/news/kompanii/belarus_i_kazakhstan_mogut_zapustit_sovmestnoe_proizvodstvo_pozharnoy_tekhniki_na_territorii_karagan-38483/

¹³⁰ On the visit of the Ambassador of Belarus to the Karaganda region [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://kazakhstan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c25b80e259079cad.html>.

¹³¹ Zalesky, B. Actual media topics of Belarus-Kazakhstan interaction / B. Zalesky // International Journalism-2018: global challenges, regional partnership and media: materials of VII International Scientific and Practical Conference, Minsk, 15 February. 2018 / coauth. B.L. Zalesky ; ed. by T.N. Dasaeva. - Minsk: Publishing Center BSU, 2018. - C. 98.

reliable and highly productive mine cars"¹³² . As we can see, the range of links between the Minsk and Pavlodar regions could still be very wide.

In particular, cooperation with Kazakhstan is among the priority areas for the development of the **Gomel Region's** foreign economic relations. Enterprises of the southeastern region of Belarus have the most serious intentions to develop cooperative ties with Kazakh partners in import substitution, in logistics capabilities. A good example is the joint production of Gomselmash OJSC and AgromashHolding KZ JSC, which has been operating in Kazakhstan since 2007. Today, it is not just an assembly shop, but a real production facility. "During the time of cooperation the plant has supplied the Kazakh market with products worth more than \$ 320 million, sold a total of more than 3.7 thousand units of machinery jointly produced"¹³³ . Products of other enterprises of the Gomel region, including the Belarusian Steel Works and the open joint-stock company Milkavita, are also in demand in Kazakhstan.

The Mogilev region also cooperates closely with this country in Central Asia, which is starting to step up its work in trade and economic cooperation. "In the seven months of this year [2022], the foreign trade turnover between the Mogilev Oblast and Kazakhstan was about \$40 million"¹³⁴ . But there is still plenty of room for the parties to work together. Kazakhstan is one of the most important trade and economic partners for the Belarusian region, ranking second among the Eurasian Economic Union countries in terms of foreign trade turnover in 2021 and the first in the seven

¹³² BELAZ delivers 130-tonne dump trucks to Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-postavil-130-tonnye-samosvaly-v-kazahstan-428544-2021/>

¹³³ Enterprises of the Gomel region intend to develop cooperative ties with Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-namereny-razvivat-kooperatsionnye-svjazi-s-kazahstanom-512360-2022>

¹³⁴ Isachenko at a meeting with Kazakhstan's ambassador: it is time to strengthen work in the trade and economic sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/isachenko-na-vstreche-s-poslom-kazahstana-prishlo-vremja-usilit-rabotu-v-torgovo-ekonomicheskoy-sfere-525098-2022/>

months of 2022. The main export items are cars and car parts, dairy products, poultry, lifts, and railway cars. Mogilev Oblast, in turn, buys equipment, chemical products and various raw materials from Kazakhstan. It should be noted that almost 45 percent of all imports of the region falls on paraxylene, which is used by "Mogilevkhimvolokno". There are also a number of proposals for cooperation with Kazakhstani partners from other enterprises in the Belarusian region, including those from the Mogilev Free Economic Zone.

Grodno Region is also stepping up cooperation with Kazakhstan, having already signed five agreements with Kazakhstani regions. Grodno Region is actively supplying agricultural, processing and woodworking products to its partners. But "the time has come to step up the work and fill these agreements with real projects and agreements that will intensify the relationship between the two countries"¹³⁵.

As for cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan in the field of education, the year 2022 also added new colours to the interaction between the two sides. In particular, Baranovichi State University in October offered cooperation to Shakarim University, which is located in the city of Semey, Abay Oblast. The teaching and research centre in Kazakhstan's north-eastern region has more than seven thousand students in five faculties. The two institutions are interested in "implementing joint educational programmes for students and teachers, academic exchanges and summer and winter schools. There are ideas for research and innovation projects"¹³⁶.

¹³⁵ Ambassador of Kazakhstan at meeting with Karanik: our task is to help businessmen of the two countries find each other [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/posol-kazahstana-na-vstreche-s-karanikom-nasha-zadacha-pomoch-biznesmenam-dvuh-stran-najti-drug-druga-514826-2022/>

¹³⁶ BarGU aims to work closely with a university from Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bargu-natselen-tesno-sotrudnichat-s-universitetom-iz-kazahstana-530948-2022/>

One more thing: in September 2022 a round table "Kazakhstan and Belarus: the Road of Friendship and Cooperation" was held in Minsk, where it was noted that "in 2021 trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Belarus exceeded \$1 billion"¹³⁷ , but there are still considerable reserves for increasing trade turnover: not only industrial cooperation, agro-industrial complex, transport, deepening of interregional cooperation, joint ventures, but also interaction in cultural and humanitarian spheres.

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¹³⁷ Ambassador of Kazakhstan: Belarus is a country to which one always wants to come back [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/posol-kazahstana-belarus-strana-v-kotoruju-vsegda-hochetsja-vozvrascatsja-526048-2022/>

Belarus-Armenia: key area - long-term engagement

In 2023, Belarus and Armenia will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In recent years, there has been a positive trend in mutual trade. Interaction between the two countries in virtually all major vectors of bilateral relations is gradually "gaining momentum. In the current international environment, Minsk and Yerevan are focused on the development of economic relations. Armenia has been and remains the country for Belarus, in its engagement with which the Belarusian side seeks to expand its trade and economic component and is ready to participate in any projects, including in Armenia, that will be of interest to its Armenian partners.

It should be recalled that back in 2018, the Belarusian-Armenian trade turnover had a positive growth trend, increasing by more than 17 percent and exceeding \$50 million. Investment cooperation has become an important element of bilateral cooperation. Suffice it to say that "\$7.6 million of investments were received from Armenia to Belarus in 2018, including \$7.5 million of direct investments. For the first quarter of this [2019], \$3.5 million of foreign direct investments were attracted"¹³⁸. More than 80 entities in the commodity distribution network of Belarusian companies operating on Armenian soil, as well as 57 companies with Armenian capital - 17 joint ventures and 40 foreign ones - operating in Belarus added substantially to this picture of the partnership between Belarus and Armenia. In addition, there are "three enterprises with Belarusian capital operating in Armenia: Armenian-Belarusian Trading House Ar-Be LLC, BelAZ Caucasus Trans

¹³⁸ Armenian President Sarkisian arrives in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/prezident-armenii-sarkisian-pribyl-v-belarus-353322-2019/>

Service LLC and BelAR Trading House CJSC¹³⁹. Nevertheless, according to the parties, "so far there are few joint investment projects, and those that are being worked on are often implemented in a sluggish mode"¹⁴⁰. This is why several years ago Belarus and Armenia raised an urgent question: not just to trade with each other, but to create joint companies so that the business of the two countries would work more actively with each other. And there are such opportunities in many vectors of cooperation.

One of the priority areas of bilateral Belarusian-Armenian cooperation has been agriculture, because the saturation of the market with safe and high-quality food products is a pressing issue for Armenia nowadays. This is why international cooperation in this regard has great prospects. Armenian partners want "to create a platform of food safety, on the basis of which certain agreements with producers from different countries will be implemented"¹⁴¹. And the partnership with the Belarusian side looks very promising in this regard. This is evidenced by the fact that in 2018 agricultural exports from Belarus to Armenia grew by 30 percent at once to \$13 million. The sides considered not only joint actions in food trade, but also expansion of supplies of agricultural and other machinery, strengthening the role of Belarus' trading house in Yerevan, establishment of an Armenian trading house on Belarusian soil, as well as joint ventures and cooperation in cattle breeding as measures to boost trade turnover in the agricultural sector. Realizing that with the growth in trade turnover the next step in the bilateral relations should be to reach a higher level of cooperation, the Belarusian side

¹³⁹ Meeting with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8605>

¹⁴⁰ Myasnikovich suggested that Armenia should intensify investment cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mjasnikovich-predlozhit-armenii-aktivizirovat-investsotrudnichestvo-343419-2019/>

¹⁴¹ Armenia interested in developing cooperation with Belarus in agriculture [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/armenija-zainterosovana-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusju-v-oblasti-selskogo-hozjajstva-353502-2019/>

also proposed to "take part in the renovation of Armenia's passenger vehicles fleet and the lift renovation program"¹⁴² .

Another promising area for the development of Belarusian-Armenian partnership relations is the improvement of transport links between the two former Soviet republics. As you know, there are no direct communications between Belarus and Armenia, but there is an opportunity to create them within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, together with appropriate infrastructure to ensure delivery of goods and transit traffic between the countries. In particular, the parties are considering the possibility to transport Armenian goods to Belarus and in transit through its territory by rail. A promising logistical direction in this regard is the use of the "North-South road under construction, which will connect Georgia with Iran, and the free economic zone in the city of Meghri, where there is a free economic zone. This is a good opportunity to expand the geography of supplies of Belarusian goods"¹⁴³ .

In November 2021 the Belarusian-Armenian Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation held its 15th meeting, at which the parties considered ways to strengthen the positions of Belarusian and Armenian exporters in each other's markets, expand the commodity distribution network, and promote cooperation in agriculture, science, and technology. A characteristic feature of the partnership between the two countries is the fact that trade turnover between them continues to grow annually. "So, while in 2016 it was a little over \$32 million, in 2020 it already exceeded \$82 million. The growth in trade turnover was recorded in the first

¹⁴² Belarus is ready to participate in the renewal of Armenia's passenger vehicle fleet [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-uchastvovat-v-obnovlenii-parka-passazhirskoj-tehniki-armenii-334782-2019/>

¹⁴³ Heads of Transport Departments of Belarus and Armenia outline points of growth in cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/glavy-transportnyh-vedomstv-belarusi-i-armenii-nametili-tochki-rosta-sotrudnichestva-354239-2019/>

nine months of this year [2021] as well, it exceeded \$62 million."¹⁴⁴ . Dairy products, furniture, computers for automatic data processing and medications made up the bulk of Belarusian exports to the Armenian market. This made it possible to reach a surplus in mutual trade exceeding \$32 million in 2020. Another positive trend observed in the relations between the two republics is a further increase in Armenian investments in the Belarusian economy. In the first half of 2021, more than ten million dollars was received.

When discussing the prospects for partnership development at the meeting of the intergovernmental commission, the sides noted that there are significant reserves for increasing the volume of mutual trade. One of them is that "the economic way of trade development by increasing supplies of traditional groups of goods is outdated and it is necessary to enter into cooperation projects"¹⁴⁵ , which will ensure long-term and fruitful cooperation that is less dependent on various market fluctuations. The sides are already making certain practical steps in this direction. For instance, as part of the programme for modernising the lift sector in Yerevan, Mogilevliftmash supplied five hundred sets of lift equipment to Armenia. And the issue of creating a joint assembly production of lifts in the Armenian land is already being worked out. There are great opportunities for Belarusian companies to participate in the implementation of other Armenian government infrastructure and industrial development programmes.

It should be noted that in 2021, the volume of Belarusian-Armenian trade increased again, reaching about \$100 million. This trend continues this

¹⁴⁴ Belarus and Armenia increase trade turnover by 2.5 times in 5 years [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-armenija-za-5-let-uvelichili-tovarooborot-v-25-raza-471337-2021/>

¹⁴⁵ Drozha: Belarus and Armenia have reserves for increasing mutual trade [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/drozha-u-belarusi-i-armenii-est-rezervy-dlja-naraschivanija-vzaimnoj-torgovli-471650-2021/>

year as well. "Thus, in January-June 2022, the trade turnover increased by more than 70% to \$60.3 million."¹⁴⁶ . This applies both to exports to Armenia and imports from Armenia to Belarus. Furthermore, the countries ensured mutual growth in the supply of agricultural and food products, outlined industrial cooperation projects, and maintained a high frequency of air flights on the Minsk-Yerevan-Minsk route.

In October 2022, the 16th meeting of the Belarusian-Armenian Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation was held in Yerevan, where the parties again reached the conclusion that the extensive way of trade development through the increased supply of traditional groups of goods is outdated and that it is necessary to develop cooperation projects that would guarantee long-term cooperation. At the same time, "the key focus of this work should be to strengthen production cooperation links and combine efforts to create joint competitive products that are in demand not only in the domestic and EEU markets, but also in third countries."¹⁴⁷ .

Overall, the signed minutes of the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission include a variety of activities aimed at strengthening and developing cooperation in a number of areas: mutual trade; industry and industrial cooperation; innovation, digital transformation and postal communication; transport and energy; agriculture; science and technology cooperation; education, culture, youth, sports, tourism, health, labor and social protection; environmental protection; interregional cooperation. In particular, "Belarus and Armenia will work out the issue of

¹⁴⁶ Belarus is interested in supplying lumber products to Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-postavkah-piloproduktii-v-armeniju-523446-2022/>

¹⁴⁷ Kulik on trade development with Armenia: cooperation projects are needed [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kulik-o-razvittii-torgovli-s-armeniej-nuzhny-kooperatsionnye-proekty-526560-2022/>

the use of national currencies in settlements.¹⁴⁸ . The parties have agreed to assist Armenian and Belarusian business entities in expanding the commodity distribution network on the territory of both countries. The Armenian side will work on the issue of establishing an "Armenia Trading House" in the territory of Belarus, which will have an exporter/importer status. The partners will also "continue cooperation in mechanization of the Armenian agro-industrial complex, and consider setting up cooperative projects in Armenia. An agro-industrial forum is planned, where products of Belarusian and Armenian manufacturers will be exhibited."¹⁴⁹ . In addition, the Armenian side expressed interest in introducing Belarusian experience in the use of innovative technologies in agriculture.

Speaking about Belarusian-Armenian production cooperation, in October 2022, "Minsk Automobile Plant signed a contract to supply 500 vehicle sets of passenger vehicles to Armenia worth \$73 million <...>. Passenger vehicles assembled in Armenia are intended for deliveries to third countries."¹⁵⁰ . Belarus is also ready for further expansion of cooperation in forestry. Construction and reconstruction of housing in Armenia is currently in full swing. Belarus is ready to supply construction materials, including lumber products, to this South Caucasus country.

The Belarusian side sees another reserve for increasing its trade with Armenian partners in the active use of the trade fairs and exhibitions that take place in that Transcaucasian country. Thus, the high interest of Belarusian manufacturers in the Armenian market was eloquently

¹⁴⁸ Belarus and Armenia are interested in using national currencies for settlements [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-armenija-zainteresovany-v-ispolzovanii-natsionalnyh-valjut-pri-raschetah-526881-2022>

¹⁴⁹ The 16th meeting of the Armenian-Belarusian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held in Yerevan. - 2022. - URL: https://cis.minsk.by/news/24151/v_erevane_sostojalos_16-e_zasedanie_armjano-belorusskoj_mezhpravitelstvennoj_komissii_po_torgovo-ekonomicheskomu_sotrudnichestvu.

¹⁵⁰ Minsk Automobile Plant will supply 500 vehicle sets of passenger vehicles to Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minskij-avtozavod-postavit-500-mashinokomplektov-passazhirskoj-tehniki-v-armeniju-527026-2022>

demonstrated by the Made in Belarus exhibit at the 20th universal regional trade and industrial forum Armenia EXPO, which was held in Yerevan in September 2021. Suffice it to say that 17 enterprises of the Belgospisheprom Concern were among the exhibitors at one of the largest fairs in the Caucasus: "Krasny Pestrovik, Kommunarika, Krasny Mozyryanin, Spartak, KF Slodych, Malorita KOSK, Gamma Vkusa, Mashpischeprod, Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, Slutsk Sugar Refinery, Gorodeisky sugar refinery, Minsk Kristall - managing company of Minsk Kristall Group Holding, Krinita, Minsk Margarine Plant, Lidapischekontsentraty, Belkofs, Interferm. Their presence at this business forum in Yerevan can be explained by the fact that "practically all the products of the Concern's organizations are supplied to Armenia. In January-July 2021, exports to this country amounted to \$640,700 or 215.4% of the same period last year"¹⁵¹ .

Having demonstrated the best examples of their products at the exhibition, Belarusian exporters continue to significantly expand their presence in the Armenian market. A good example in this regard was demonstrated by the Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant, which signed a contract for USD 55,000 to supply skimmed milk powder for ice cream production during the exhibition. "The company has also made arrangements to sign more contracts for the supply of products for the production of ice cream"¹⁵² . The Slutsk Cheese Factory will seriously increase its supplies to the Armenian market, as the latter has demonstrated in Yerevan "Yas Belous" products - cheese, milk powder and butter, which together with cream and cottage cheese prevailed in the export of Belarusian products to Armenia in

¹⁵¹ "Belgospisheprom presented its products at the Armenia Expo exhibition in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospisheprom-predstavil-produktsiju-na-vystavke-armenia-expo-v-erevane-460163-2021/>

¹⁵² Kalinkovichi Dairy Plant signed a \$55,000 contract at the Armenia Expo. [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kalinkovskij-molochnyj-kombinat-na-armenia-expo-zakljuchil-kontrakt-na-55-tys-460231-2021/>.

2020. Belarusian agricultural machinery manufacturers also see good prospects here: Gomselmash, whose two Palesse-branded machines have been operating in the fields of this country since 2020; Grodnoobselkhoztech Holding Management Company, OJSC, which produces tillage, forage and postharvest machinery and milking machines; and Gomel Electromechanical Plant, OJSC, a producer of railway locomotives and rolling stock.

A year later, in September 2022, companies from Belarus again took part in the regional trade and industrial forum Armenia EXPO, where "a wide range of thematic sections were presented: mechanical engineering, petrochemistry, construction, interior design, transport, trucking, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, woodworking, financial services, tourism and recreation"¹⁵³. Exhibitors include over 170 companies, associations, unions and organisations. The participating countries included Armenia, China, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, India, Iran, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Exposition Made in Belarus was also presented. In particular, 12 enterprises of the "Belgospischeprom" concern displayed their products. For instance, a wide range of confectionery products, instant foodstuffs, food concentrates, baby food, alcoholic beverages, sauces and oils, fruit and berry products, including a new line of morses and nectars, jams, jams, mushrooms and other foodstuffs were displayed. It is noteworthy that almost all products of the Concern's organizations are exported to Armenia this year. "During the 7 months of 2022 the export volume has increased by 1.2 times compared to the same period last year, primarily due

¹⁵³ An exposition of Belarus will be presented at the Trade and Industry Forum in Armenia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ekspozitsija-belarusi-budet-predstavlena-na-torgovo-promyshlennom-forume-v-armenii-512548-2022/>

to the increase of supplies of malt, beer, food concentrates, potato products and oil and fat products"¹⁵⁴ .

The potential for cooperation between Belarus and Armenia is still quite extensive today in interregional cooperation as well. In particular, cooperation between the Vitebsk Oblast and Armenian regions is intensifying in all areas, from science to trade and culture. "The commodity turnover of Vitebsk Oblast with Armenia in January-March [2022] exceeded \$1.6 million. The export of goods accounted for almost all of it. Vitebsk Oblast supplies meat and dairy products (it accounts for over 71%), special purpose machines, medicines, carpets and imports fire detectors. There are a total of 8 organisations with Armenian capital operating in Vitebsk region"¹⁵⁵ . It is interesting that Vitebsk region can produce the Armenian medication Narine, a dairy product created by scientists in Armenia in the 60s and very popular in this country. The supplement helps regulate digestive problems. "The preparation has an EEU certificate; it may well be used in the Vitebsk region, if those willing to set up a line at a dairy plant can be found. In Armenia, the product is produced in the form of paste, powder, kefir, tablets. It will be another good article of trade turnover between Armenia and Belarus."¹⁵⁶ . The proposal to master the production of the Armenian sour-milk product used as medicine in Vitebsk region was supported by the Vitebsk authorities. The implementation of such a project will strengthen and expand the range of the plants and make them even more competitive.

¹⁵⁴ "Belgospisheprom" presented its products at the "Armenia EXPO 2022" exhibition in Yerevan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospisheprom-predstavil-svoju-produktsiju-na-vystavke-armenia-expo-2022-v-erevane-524117-2022/>

¹⁵⁵ Trade, Science and Culture: Vitebsk Oblast and Armenia intend to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/torgovlja-nauka-i-kultura-vitebskaja-oblast-i-armenija-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-505369-2022/>

¹⁵⁶ The ambassador of Armenia proposed to develop the production of sour-milk product Narine in the Vitebsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/posol-armenii-predlozhit-osvoit-v-vitebskoj-oblasti-proizvodstvo-kislomolochnogo-produkta-narine-505390-2022/>

Another Belarusian region intends to step up cooperation with partners from Armenia is the Brest region. So far, the trade turnover between the parties is insignificant. "Recently, however, there has been a positive trend: in the first quarter of 2022, it grew by 71 percent, and enterprises in the region increased their export supplies by 50 percent."¹⁵⁷ . The Brest region intends to intensify cooperation with Armenian partners in the production of livestock products, mechanical engineering, woodworking, light industry. Another interesting fact is that a cooperation agreement has been signed between Brest region and Ararat marz for more than 10 years. The pandemic has been a hindrance to maintaining contacts between the regions, but there are already intentions to restore ties.

On the whole, as it was noted at the 16th session of the Intergovernmental Commission, the potential for cooperation between Belarus and Armenia continues to develop: from mutually beneficial trade, economic and innovative cooperation to production and inter-branch cooperation, humanitarian and interregional partnership relations.

¹⁵⁷ Armenia is interested in interregional ties with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/armenija-zainteresovana-v-mezhregionalnyh-svjazjah-s-belarusju-502868-2022/>

Belarus-Azerbaijan: cooperation in a spirit of openness, trust and mutual assistance

Azerbaijan is among those countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, interaction with which is of a strategic nature for the Republic of Belarus. In the course of less than thirty years, and diplomatic relations between the two former Soviet republics were established as early as June 1993, Belarusian-Azerbaijani interaction has formed the traditions of the two peoples, which are based on "openness, trust, friendship and mutual support"¹⁵⁸. Among the significant interstate documents that Minsk and Baku consider as basic are: 1) Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Azerbaijan (2007); 2) Treaty between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Azerbaijan on Social and Economic Cooperation until 2025 (2015).

In 2018, when Belarus and Azerbaijan were celebrating the 25th anniversary of their diplomatic ties, the parties noted a high rate of expansion in all areas, including the trade and economic sphere, where the main priorities were production cooperation, joint projects in science and technology, as well as investment cooperation. This was evidenced, in particular, by the results of 2018, when Belarusian-Azerbaijani trade turnover "amounted to about \$465.3 million and increased threefold compared to 2017"¹⁵⁹. The fact that more than 220 commodity items were supplied to the Azerbaijani market at that time also spoke volumes.

One of the key areas of cooperation between Belarus and Azerbaijan was industrial cooperation, the flagship of which was the Ganja Automobile Plant. The Ganja Automobile Plant was the flagship of this collaboration, and assembly facilities for Belarusian tractors, Gomselmash grain

¹⁵⁸ Belarus-Azerbaijan bilateral relations [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/political/

¹⁵⁹ Igor Lyashenko paid a working visit to Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8786>

harvesters, Minsk Automobile Plant machinery, and Belkommunmash electric buses were set up there. The fact that over 11 thousand tractors, as well as some 3,500 units of automotive and special equipment have been assembled here since 2007 testifies at least to the efficiency of their work. In May 2019, a new assembly line was opened at the Azerbaijani enterprise, "for the first time a KZS-575 Palesse GS575 grain harvester and an E321 electric bus rolled off the assembly line"¹⁶⁰ .

Of particular interest in Ganja was the production of electric buses - public transport for 83 passengers, equipped with 26 seats, air conditioning, an information monitor and a video monitoring system. This technology is beneficial both in terms of minimal environmental impact and energy consumption savings. "It takes only six minutes to fully charge the batteries of an electric bus capable of speeds of up to 60km/h < ...>"¹⁶¹ . The Ganja Automobile Plant is expected to produce up to 40 per cent of spare parts for this environmentally friendly vehicle in the future. In the case of sufficiently high demand, the capacity of the enterprise will enable to produce up to 150 electric buses a year. And projects for the assembly and supply of utility vehicles of Minsk Automobile Plant and medium passenger vehicles were still under development. In addition, in July 2019, in the Turkish city of Kırıkkale, 80 kilometres from Ankara, with the support of the Ganja Automobile Plant, the assembly of Minsk tractors began, so as to produce a hundred vehicles by the end of the year, and two hundred next year. And as a result, "the capacity of the factory will make it possible to assemble up to three thousand tractors a year"¹⁶² . The assistance of the Azerbaijani side in

¹⁶⁰ Azerbaijani President meets Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Lyashenko [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/prezident-azerbajdzhana-vstretilsja-s-vitse-premjerom-belarusi-ljashenko-347392-2019/>

¹⁶¹ Azerbaijan has started producing Belarusian grain harvesters and electric buses [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-azerbajdzhane-pristupili-k-vypusku-belorusskih-zernoborocnyh-kombajnov-i-eklektrobusov-347363-2019/>

¹⁶² Matijewski, M. Assembly production of Belarusian tractors in Turkey should start in July / M. Matijewski // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL:

this matter has made it possible to save about one million dollars only for the construction of one building of the future production in Turkey.

Another important area of Belarusian-Azerbaijani engagement that has gained momentum in the spring of 2019 is the participation of Belarusian exporting companies in Azerbaijan's exhibition events. In May, the exposition of Belarusian manufacturers "Belarus. Taste of Nature" was presented in Baku at the international agricultural exhibition Caspian Agro, which has already "established itself as an important platform to promote Belarusian agricultural interests in the Azerbaijani market"¹⁶³. More than two hundred companies from 25 countries were presenting their traditional products and innovations in various sectors of the agricultural sector, and 25 organizations and enterprises from Belarus were showing their capabilities. Thus, organizations of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus demonstrated innovative equipment for agriculture - energy-efficient harvester for berry harvesting, LED lights and greenhouse irradiators for growing plants in greenhouse farms. The company Belagro Bel offered visitors of the exhibition "a multi-brand portfolio of agricultural machinery produced in Belarus and integrated solutions for processing a wide range of crops"¹⁶⁴.

Even more diverse Belarusian products could be seen at the exhibition in the confectionery, beverages and groceries section. In particular, Red Foodstuffs from Bobruisk attracted attention with such novelties as: zephyr - in the form of rose flower, pomegranate and duchesse flavours; marmalade

<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-tractorov-v-turtsii-dolzno-zarobotat-v-ijule-344079-2019/>

¹⁶³ Belarus is interested in developing cooperation with Azerbaijan in agribusiness and industrial cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-razvivat-s-azerbajdzhanom-sotrudnichestvo-v-apk-i-promkooperatsiju-347429-2019/>.

¹⁶⁴ Belarus presented the largest national exposition at the agricultural exhibition in Baku [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavila-krupnejshuju-natsionalnuju-ekspozitsiju-na-selskohozjajstvvennoj-vystavke-v-baku-347619-2019/>.

- in the form of bottles with tequila, wine and cognac flavours. "Spartak" from Gomel demonstrated chocolate - bitter and milk, as well as white chocolate with almonds and coconut, with hazelnut and biscuit balls, with hazelnut and cereals. The Belarusian exposition in Baku was complemented by children's food, meat and poultry products, as well as products from the Minsk Margarine Plant. The business part of Caspian Agro was also very productive for Belarusian participants. In particular, a cooperation document was signed by Belgospisheprom Concern and Azerbaijan Industrial Corporation, in which the parties agreed to cooperate "in the supply of tobacco products between the Azertabak agro-industrial complex and the Grodno Tobacco Factory, part of Belgospisheprom Concern"¹⁶⁵ , and to share production experience.

Now let's take a look at the results of 2021. They showed that Azerbaijan became one of the main trade and economic partners of Belarus, with which cooperation is developing especially intensively today. This is evidenced by the fact that the Belarusian-Azerbaijani trade turnover in 2021 almost doubled to \$885.5 million. At the same time, "Belarusian exports of goods grew 2.5 times and totaled USD 478.0 million, reaching record levels in the history of bilateral relations"¹⁶⁶ . The main export items from Belarus to Azerbaijan were railway trains, wood-fiber boards, medicines, furniture, timber, electric transformers, as well as beef, butter, cheese and cottage cheese. "A reliable channel has also been established for the purchase of Azerbaijani vegetables and fruits, which have replaced imports from

¹⁶⁵ "Belgospisheprom" and Azerbaijan Industrial Corporation signed a protocol on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belgospisheprom-i-azerbajdzhanskaja-promyshlennaja-korporatsija-podpisali-protokol-o-sotrudnichestve-347723-2019/>

¹⁶⁶ On the results of Belarus-Azerbaijan trade in goods in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/a81fa7c9e40a3b23.html>

unfriendly countries. The Belarusian side is interested in further expansion and diversification of trade and economic cooperation."¹⁶⁷ .

In doing so, the sides paid a lot of attention to the promising area of bilateral cooperation, such as **agriculture and food**. In September 2021, they even held the first meeting of the Belarus-Azerbaijan Working Group on Agriculture and Food Security, at which they "discussed issues of cooperation in crop and livestock production, food security, agricultural education, expansion of trade and economic relations in agriculture..."¹⁶⁸ . Coordination of joint efforts in this area has made it possible to achieve good results in bilateral trade in agricultural commodities and agricultural raw materials, the volume of which has grown by nearly 20 per cent - up to 41.6 million dollars - with Belarus' export share of 35 million dollars by the end of 2021. It is important that these positive trends are still in place. "In January-February 2022, the turnover of food products and agricultural raw materials between Belarus and Azerbaijan amounted to \$5.7 million. Belarusian exports amounted to \$4.6 million."¹⁶⁹ .

Another promising area of Belarusian-Azerbaijani cooperation, where serious positive developments are expected, is **construction**. The fact is that this segment of the economy ranks second in Azerbaijan after the oil sector in terms of public investments. Belarusian companies may also be interested in the fact that there is a very high demand for sawn timber in this country, and there is a simplified tax for companies in the industry. In 2021,

¹⁶⁷ Petrishenko: Belarus is interested in expanding trade and economic cooperation with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/petrishenko-belarus-zainteresovana-v-rashirenii-torgovo-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-526693-2022/>

¹⁶⁸ On the meeting of the Belarus-Azerbaijan Working Group on Agriculture and Food Security [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://azerbaijan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b29ba1099335e43e.html>

¹⁶⁹ Belarus and Azerbaijan increase food and agricultural inputs by almost 20% in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-azerbajdzhan-v-2021-godu-uvelichili-tovarooborot-prodtovarov-i-selhozsyrija-pochti-na-20-496191-2022/>

reinforced concrete and metal structures, equipment and spare parts made up the bulk of Belarusian construction exports to the Azerbaijani market. The following figures illustrate the dynamics of these supplies: "Organizations of the construction complex of Belarus delivered to Azerbaijan more than \$3.5 million worth of products in the first quarter of 2021. This is 2.2 times more compared to the same period in 2020.¹⁷⁰ . Further bilateral cooperation in this area can be judged by some of the Belarusian participants at the 26th International Specialized Exhibition BakuBuild, which was held in October 2021 in the Azerbaijani capital. In particular, the TSP Design Bureau research and production association demonstrated there its own innovative technology for the erection of arch structures for various applications developed by the specialists of Spets Mashinostroenie company, which is part of the TSP Design Bureau. Interestingly, the company has already built 19 industrial buildings in Azerbaijan using this technology.

Belarusian regions also see their own prospects for developing cooperation with Azerbaijani partners. For example, **Grodno Region** is going to actively expand these relations. It should be reminded that in 2021 the export of Grodno Region enterprises to Azerbaijan doubled and reached \$17.4 million. A total of about 40 business entities of all forms of ownership from the Belarusian region delivered goods to this South Caucasus country. At the same time, the Azerbaijani side remains highly interested in importing Belarusian agricultural machinery, woodworking products and foodstuffs. According to the sides, "we have enough promising areas for cooperation. Those are agriculture and machine-building. We will redouble our efforts to develop mutual relations." ¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Belarus' national pavilion to be presented at BakuBuild [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnyj-paviljon-belarusi-budet-predstavlen-na-vystavke-bakubuild-463807-2021/>

¹⁷¹ Grodno region is interested in expanding cooperation with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/grodnenskaja-oblast-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-sotrudnichestva-s-azerbajdzhanom-494171-2022/>

Another interesting example in this context is **the Brest region**, whose trade with Azerbaijan grew by almost half in the first quarter of 2022. For example, "supplies of machines and mechanisms for harvesting and threshing crops have increased 15-fold. Brest residents also export batteries and furniture"¹⁷² . The main export from the Belarusian region is food products, among which dairy products prevail.

Finally, the cities of **Gomel** and **Ganja**, which signed a friendship and cooperation agreement back in November 2013, are active participants in Belarusian-Azerbaijani interregional cooperation. This city of Azerbaijan is known to have a car factory, where Belarusian companies - Minsk Tractor and Automobile Plant, Gomselmash and Belkommunmash - have already set up assembly facilities. The first PALESSE KZS-575 combine harvester was assembled here in 2019. At the same time, the parties noted that "there are many points of contact for further development of relations between the Belarusian and Azerbaijani cities in various industries, cultural, educational and sports spheres"¹⁷³ . So the reserves for the development of cooperation are considerable.

In June 2022, the 12th meeting of the Belarusian-Azerbaijani Intergovernmental Commission was held. The sides mentioned the following promising areas for cooperation: expansion of industrial cooperation, cooperation in mechanical engineering, transport, agriculture, woodworking, healthcare, education, and science. In particular, "it is necessary to fully implement the contract for the supply of unassembled tractors to the Ganja automobile plant, as well as to study economic and technical aspects of a

¹⁷² Azerbaijan is interested in cooperation with Belarusian regions [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/azerbajdzhan-zainteresovan-v-sotrudnichestve-s-regionami-belarusi-499846-2022/>

¹⁷³ Ganja Automobile Plant interested in joint production of combine harvesters with Gomselmash [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gjandzhinskij-avtozavod-zainteresovan-v-sovmestnom-proizvodstve-kombajnov-s-gomselmashem-333783-2019/>

joint project of this plant and MTZ to enter third countries' markets".¹⁷⁴ . It is also necessary to ensure the completion of tests of a combine harvester produced by Gomselmash and modified to meet the technical requirements of the Azerbaijani side, and to agree on supply volumes. Among the proposals is the joint production of electric transport vehicles. The manufacturer of lifts Mogilevliftmash expects to take part in the programs of modernization of lift facilities in the cities of Azerbaijan. Preparatory work will also be completed in the near future to establish a joint production of veterinary drugs on Azerbaijani territory.

In terms of exhibition activities, Belarus presented national expositions at major international exhibitions in Baku in 2022: Caspian Agro agricultural exhibition and InterFood Azerbaijan food industry exhibition, Caspian Oil and Gas exhibition, ADEX defence exhibition, International Exhibition of Medical Innovations. For example, the Belarusian pavilion was represented at the 27th Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition in early June 2022, where Belarusian enterprises Grodno Azot, Mogilevkhimvolokno, Mozyr Oil Refinery, Naftan, Polotsk-Steklovolokno and Seismotekhnika participated. The exposition was notable for its diversity: nitrogen fertilizers, polyamide and polyester yarns, cord fabrics, polymer composites, polyester technical yarns, non-woven fabrics, motor gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, oil bitumen, fuel gases, glass fibers and materials based on them, oilfield and geophysical equipment. "Among the unique products presented at the exhibition is a polyester fiber of the conjugate type for use as a filler in textile products, which is produced by Mogilevkhimvolokno"¹⁷⁵ .

¹⁷⁴ Mechanical engineering, construction, agro-industrial complex. Petrishenko on plans for interaction with Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mashinostroenie-stroitelstvo-apk-petrishenko-o-planah-vzaimodejstvija-s-azerbajdzhanom-505333-2022/>

¹⁷⁵ Belarus presented a pavilion at the oil and gas exhibition in Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavila-paviljon-na-neftegazovoj-vystavke-v-azerbajdzhanom-505359-2022/>

In the transport sector, in August 2022, Belarusian Railways started to deliver cargoes by fast trains from Belarus to Azerbaijan. "This makes it possible to deliver cargoes produced in Belarus to Azerbaijan in the shortest possible time (within a week) and at competitive tariffs <...>. The first three trains loaded with timber products have already departed from Orsha-Zapadnaya station (Belarus) to Absheron station (Azerbaijan)"¹⁷⁶.

Bilateral contacts in the educational sphere are also developing closely. In particular, the Belarusian State University (BSU) is stepping up cooperation with institutions in Azerbaijan. In September 2022 BSU signed a cooperation agreement with Baku State University, which is the oldest and leading higher education institution in this country in the South Caucasus and includes 16 faculties of various profiles, two research institutes and the Confucius Institute. The document prescribes agreements in the field of education and science. "In particular, the parties agreed to implement joint projects in scientific, educational and cultural spheres, to develop a publication partnership, academic scientific and cultural mobility, to exchange information, students, researchers, teachers."¹⁷⁷. The development and implementation of joint research projects, educational programmes, courses and curricula, cooperation in the field of scientific supervision of master and PhD students are also envisaged. It should be noted that BSU is currently collaborating with other Azerbaijani research and educational institutions. An agreement on cooperation and exchange of students with ADA University (Baku) has been in force since 2019. In 2021 BSU International State Environmental Institute named after A.D. Sakharov signed a cooperation agreement with Khazar University (Baku) and an

¹⁷⁶ The Belarusian Railways started to deliver cargoes by fast trains from Belarus to Azerbaijan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bzhd-nachala-postavljat-gruzy-uskorennyimi-poezdami-iz-belarusi-v-azerbajdzhan-517606-2022/>

¹⁷⁷ BSU and Baku State University conclude an agreement on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-i-bakinskij-gosuniversitet-zakljuchilosoglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-525475-2022/>

agreement on scientific and technical cooperation with the Livestock Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan. Two joint projects have been submitted to the contest of joint scientific projects for 2022-2023 announced by the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Azerbaijan: Institute of Nuclear Problems and Institute of Physics of NAS of Azerbaijan; Faculty of Chemistry and Institute of Catalysis and Inorganic Chemistry after academician M. Nagiyev of NAS of Azerbaijan. And there is more: six Azeri students are currently studying at BSU.

So, despite the new geopolitical challenges, the dynamics of Belarusian-Azerbaijani interaction continue to develop at all levels, from industrial cooperation and transport to participation in exhibitions, science and education.

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Belarus: Optimisation as an impetus development of growth points in the regions

The results of 2021 show that residents of six free economic zones (FEZs) operating in Belarus were able to generate up to 70 percent of investments, up to half of exports of goods and a third of industrial production of their regions. This is despite the fact that "at the beginning of 2022, 432 economic entities were registered in free economic zones, projects with investments from more than 30 countries were implemented with a total declared investment of about \$7.5 billion. During 2021, 25 new residents were added to FEZ with a total declared investment of \$441 million, one third of them - with foreign capital (\$401 million)"¹⁷⁸. In December 2021 Belarus approved amendments to the law "On Free Economic Zones" (FEZ) that provided for the transfer of authority to change the boundaries of these preferential land plots from the head of state to the government. The purpose of these innovations is to "reduce the time from the idea to the start of new investment projects in areas that are considered to be growth points in the regions"¹⁷⁹.

Based on this decision, the Belarusian government in April 2022 adjusted the territory of **FEZ Grodnoinvest**, adding areas that represent areas of high demand for investors and excluding areas that are not promising. As a reminder, this FEZ has already changed its contours in 2018. At that time, Svisloch territories were included in its boundaries for the first time, and the industrial parks in Smorgon and Grodno district were expanded. This allowed attracting over one billion dollars of foreign investment into the FEZ since then. This time adjustments have been made

¹⁷⁸ FEZ residents in 2021 generated a fifth of the republic's key indicators [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rezidenty-sez-v-2021-godu-sformirovali-pjatuju-chast-osnovnyh-respublikanskih-pokazatelej-485111-2022/>

¹⁷⁹ Zalesky, B. Time for concrete solutions. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 141.

to the sites located in Grodno, Svisloch and Smorgon districts as well as in the cities of Lida, Novogrudok, Smorgon, Slonim and Grodno, which should "improve conditions for attracting investment to the regions, engage new industrial sites with an investment capacity of up to \$60 million, provide an opportunity for further effective implementation of investment projects of existing FEZ residents worth over \$120 million"¹⁸⁰ .

It should be noted that in 2021 the residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest have already seriously increased both industrial production and export deliveries to near and far abroad countries, as well as attracted a record volume of foreign direct investments. In numbers, it looks like this: the residents' foreign trade turnover has increased by more than 40 percent and exceeded two billion dollars. "The driver of the growth was the export of Belarusian products. Its volume amounted to \$1.4 billion with a growth rate of 146% compared to 2020. The foreign trade surplus amounted to \$721 million, an increase of \$283 million compared to 2020"¹⁸¹ . The geography of supplies is 63 countries. Exports to Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States increased significantly. Russia, Poland and Ukraine remained the key markets. Wood and paper products, furniture, foodstuffs, and agricultural products accounted for the lion's share in the volume of products shipped - more than 70 percent. Producers of optical apparatus, chemical products and metal ware also increased their exports. Underpinning these successful performance of FEZ residents is, of course, their proactive investment policy. In 2021, they were able to attract \$160 million in foreign investment. The key investors were Austria, Cyprus, Poland and the Netherlands. In total, the investment vectors

¹⁸⁰ The government adjusted the boundaries of FEZ Grodnoinvest [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pravitelstvo-skorrektirovalo-granitsy-sez-grodnoinvest-496079-2022/>

¹⁸¹ Exports of FEZ Grodnoinvest grew by 1.5 times in the past year [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-sez-grodnoinvest-za-proshlyj-god-vyros-v-15-raza-494540-2022/>

of FEZs are already 15 countries. Most of the investments were made in production facilities located in the industrial parks in Smorgon, Svisloch and Grodno.

It is also important that four companies engaged in the chemical, metalworking and logistics industries became new residents of FEZ Grodnoinvest in 2021. For example, Portela, a company with Portuguese investment, is implementing a project to build a transport and logistics centre in Grodno District. One more resident, Unis Trade, is busy organizing production of metal structures in Grodno, where "a manufacturing and warehouse complex will be built and modern equipment for the production of various metal structures will be purchased. Production is planned to start by the end of 2022"¹⁸². The company OV-PlastSnab is also planning to produce a wide range of synthetic polymer products at the Aulsa site. Finally, in December 2021, LLC "ServicePromPack Group" was registered with an investment project to establish a high-tech enterprise for the production of a wide range of polyolefin packaging for export and other residents of the FEZ to be implemented in the Grandičiai district. "Production of the first batch of products is planned for the second quarter of 2022. It is planned that 45 jobs will be created."¹⁸³

The positive trend of exports and foreign investments continues here in 2022. In particular, in January-March this year, "more than 70% of products sold from here were exported, an increase of 4 percentage points compared to the 1st quarter of 2021. The geography of exports exceeded 60

¹⁸² Logistics, Chemicals and Metalworking: FEZ Grodnoinvest will add 4 new residents in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/logistika-himija-i-metalloobrabotka-sez-grodnoinvest-v-2021-godu-popolnili-4-novyh-rezidenta-481367-2022/>

¹⁸³ High-tech chemical production will be created by a new resident of FEZ Grodnoinvest [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vysokotehnologichnoe-himproizvodstvo-sozdast-novyj-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-477539-2021/>

countries"¹⁸⁴. As for foreign investment, in the first quarter of 2022, almost \$135 million was received from 12 countries, including the Netherlands, Cyprus, Austria, the UK, Poland and the United Arab Emirates. "The main volume of investments came from companies in the industrial park of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" in Smorgon district, where global manufacturers successfully operate. More than \$16 million has been attracted by the FEZ residents located in Grodno"¹⁸⁵. Speaking of new residents, it should be said that Unionway has already registered here in 2022, which is implementing a project to build a container terminal near the Svisloch railway freight station. This terminal will "specialise in transshipment of containers from 1520 mm gauge to 1435 mm gauge and vice versa depending on the direction of transportation. The modern equipment will make it possible to organize transfer of containers onto road transport and storage of containers both in the open air and inside the warehouses."¹⁸⁶. Investments in the project will amount to more than 23 million US dollars. It will create 70 new jobs. Construction of the first phase of the project will begin as early as 2022, and the terminal will start providing services in 2025. A Memorandum of Intention has also been signed with the Arab company BRIKOIL TRANS-F. Z. E.

The Polish vector of interaction also continues to be relevant for FEZs. This is evidenced by the fact that "in 2021, trade turnover between FEZ residents and Polish companies amounted to more than \$266 million, a 147% increase compared to 2020. Since the period when the FEZ has been

¹⁸⁴ Residents of FEZ "Grodnoinvest" paid over Br61 mln of taxes and other dues in January-March [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-grodnoinvest-za-janvar-mart-uplatili-svyshe-br61-mln-nalogov-i-inyh-sborov-501549-2022/>

¹⁸⁵ In January-March the FEZ "Grodnoinvest" received over \$134 mln of foreign investments [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/v-sez-grodnoinvest-za-janvar-mart-postupilo-bolee-134-mln-inostrannyh-investitsij-501557-2022/>

¹⁸⁶ A new FEZ resident, Grodnoinvest, will build a container terminal in Svisloch [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-grodnoinvest-postroit-v-svislochi-kontejnernyj-terminal-492911-2022/>

operating since 2002, it has attracted \$140 million in investments from Poland¹⁸⁷. Companies with Polish capital are successfully operating here in the building materials industry, wood processing and chemical production. And in April 2022, the Polish FEZ administration signed a cooperation agreement with the Polish company i4-Mobile Sp. z o.o. which will contribute to effective interaction between the parties.

In April 2022, the borders of sectors in **the FEZ "Vitebsk"** were also optimized, reducing its area by approximately 500 hectares by excluding inefficient and unclaimed areas - floodplains, swamps, non-demarcated land, residential development. At the same time this preferential area included new promising land plots for implementation of significant investment projects that would create at least 470 jobs. In particular, 14 hectares of land in Vitebsk was added for a project worth over \$94 million to develop the manufacture of cable and wire products that will create at least 320 jobs. Two more FEZ sites appeared in Orsha and Dokshitsky district. In the first case a local investor plans to develop production of concrete mixes and create about 20 working places. In the second one "it is planned to locate an enterprise for processing low-grade wood and producing wood-fuel pellets. The cost of the project is estimated at about \$30 million, and the investor has calculated the possibility of creating about 50 jobs"¹⁸⁸.

Two more sites are included in the free economic zone in the Polotsk district. One of them will house the production of wood pellets, which will cost about \$30 million. The second one is to house innovative production of cross-linked wooden wall and floor slabs for the construction of housing and

¹⁸⁷ FEZ Grodnoinvest expands cooperation with Polish companies [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-grodnoinvest-rasshirjaet-sotrudnichesvto-s-polskimi-kompanijami-497707-2022/>

¹⁸⁸ Optimisation of the boundaries of the Vitebsk FEZ sectors will attract more than \$200 million in investments [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/optimizatsija-granits-sektorov-sez-vitebsk-pozvolit-privlech-bolee-200-mln-investitsij-496811-2022/>

buildings of various functional purposes, as well as the production of glued laminated timber and fuel pellets with an investment volume of 60 million dollars. In April 2022, "KimaBel" LLC became a new FEZ resident with a wood processing industry modernization project, which includes the renovation of production areas and the introduction of new technological solutions for the production of innovative export-oriented wood products. The new resident, which has been operating in the Polotsk District since 2013 and specializes in the production of beams and boards and the sale of sawdust and chips, "markets of the Middle East, East and South-East Asia are being explored as promising export destinations for products"¹⁸⁹.

Speaking about the new residents of the FEZ, it should be recalled that the first one here in 2022 was BRR Arshie Eco Health LLC, an enterprise with Iranian capital for the production of biodegradable tableware and packaging. "Implementation of the project is aimed at gradual reduction in the use of polymer packaging and its substitution with environmentally safe packaging, which is defined as one of the priorities of social and economic development of Belarus"¹⁹⁰. It is expected that by the end of 2022, the new resident will have solved all design issues of the production site in the Zhurzhevo sector on the outskirts of Vitebsk, and in 2023 will already start construction of the facility, where about 25 new jobs are expected to be created.

All in all, by the end of April, there were already 53 resident companies registered in the FEZ "Vitebsk", which are implementing projects with the participation of investors from 14 countries. And they do it very successfully. For instance, the Polotsk Forestry enterprise managed to triple

¹⁸⁹ A new resident of FEZ "Vitebsk" will create production of innovative wood products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-vitebsk-sozdast-proizvodstvo-innovatsionnyh-izdelij-iz-drevesiny-498382-2022/>

¹⁹⁰ The first resident with Iranian capital is registered in FEZ Vitebsk [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervyj-rezident-s-iranskim-kapitalom-zaregistririvan-v-sez-vitebsk-484100-2022/>

its output in 2021 and the Energokomplekt Production Association, LLC more than tripled its output. Vityaz, OJSC has increased export supplies of its products 2.7 times over the same period. Export of services by Raw Materials-Bel LLC grew by almost 10 times. In this connection, it is impossible not to mention Polymerkonstruktsia Ltd., a renowned manufacturer of water treatment equipment and technologies, which has ensured nearly double growth of production output, the same increase in sales revenue, while the net profit has increased by almost six times. "The enterprise has been active in foreign markets, having more than doubled deliveries to foreign partners"¹⁹¹, and it has also demonstrated high innovative activity, having shipped innovative products worth three million Belarusian rubles to its consumers, which is 23(!) times higher than the same indicator of 2020. All these facts indicate that the FEZ is very serious about achieving high indicators in 2022 as well. This is confirmed by the performance of FEZ residents in the first quarter of this year. Suffice it to say that over these three months the industrial output here has grown by almost a quarter compared to the same period of 2021. Besides, "in January-March the residents attracted about 31 million foreign investments, of which more than \$16 million on a net basis"¹⁹².

The active international activity of FEZs should contribute to maintaining competitive advantages and favourable conditions for doing business. An important step in this direction is the signing in April 2022 of a memorandum of cooperation by the administrations of FEZ "Vitebsk" and the pilot zone of regional trade and economic cooperation "China-SCO", in which the parties have outlined promising areas for cooperation. One of them

¹⁹¹ The best residents of FEZ "Vitebsk" according to the results of 2021 are seven enterprises [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/luchshimi-rezidentami-sez-vitebsk-po-itogam-2021-goda-priznany-sem-predpriyatij-487020-2022/>

¹⁹² Residents of FEZ Vitebsk increased production by a quarter in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-vitebsk-v-pervom-kvartale-narastili-na-chetvert-proizvodstvo-produktsii-496741-2022/>

is "promotion of investment opportunities of FEZ "Vitebsk" and the pilot zone "SCO-China" as promising platforms for international cooperation under the initiative "One Belt, One Road"¹⁹³ . It should be noted that the China-SCO pilot zone in Shandong province, with which the Vitebsk region is linked by a cooperation agreement, appeared in 2018. It is located 40 kilometres from Qingdao in the coastal part of Jiaozhou. Thanks to its connection to the land, sea and air routes of this Chinese region, it represents a new platform for the implementation of trade, economic and innovative cooperation projects between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states and their partners, which includes Belarus, which opens up very attractive prospects for the development of cooperation.

In April 2022, adjustments were also made to the territory of **FEZ Minsk**, where "the unclaimed territories with a total area of 140.01 ha, located in Minsk city and Minsk region, were excluded from the boundaries of this free economic zone. 140.01 hectares, located in Minsk and the Minsk region"¹⁹⁴ . Seven new enterprises with investments not only from Belarus, but also from Russia, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria appeared here in 2021. "Foreign direct investment on a net basis amounted to \$58.1 million. More than a thousand jobs were created at the enterprises of the Minsk free economic zone in 2021"¹⁹⁵ . And exports of goods by FEZ residents to 85 countries grew by almost 40 percent and reached a record \$2 billion. It is noteworthy that registration of new residents will be an active process in 2022. Thus, in January the first resident registered in the FEZ "Minsk" in 2022 became "3D Paperco" Ltd, a company with Chinese investment, which

¹⁹³ FEZ Vitebsk and the China-SCO pilot zone will develop trade and investment cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/sez-vitebsk-i-pilotnaja-zona-kitaj-shos-budut-razvivat-torgovo-investitsionnoe-sotrudnichestvo-499010-2022/>

¹⁹⁴ The boundaries of the Minsk FEZ are adjusted [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/granitsy-sez-minsk-skorrektirovani-496357-2022/>

¹⁹⁵ Exports of goods by Minsk FEZ residents reached a record \$2 billion last year [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/eksport-tovarov-rezidentov-sez-minsk-v-proshlom-godu-dostig-rekordnyh-2-mlrd-486329-2022/>

will implement here the project for the production of environmentally friendly packaging made of cardboard. The new resident will "produce all kinds of disposable cardboard packaging for fast food outlets. The project is oriented both to supply the Belarusian market and to export"¹⁹⁶ .

In **the Brest free economic zone** the first resident registered in 2022 is Soyuz Greenhouse Complex LLC, an enterprise with Belarusian-Polish capital, which was allocated a land plot of about 60 hectares near Brest airport in January this year. "In three years a high-tech greenhouse complex with the capacity of over 30 thousand tons of vegetables a year will appear there, including 18 thousand tons of cucumbers and 13 thousand tons of tomatoes. Annual production volume will be around €33m."¹⁹⁷ . The new resident plans to invest €75 million in the project, and create 450 new jobs. Some 80 per cent of vegetable production is expected to be shipped to the Eurasian Economic Union and other foreign markets. The second resident of this free economic zone was registered in March 2022 - LLC "Dalmio", which will implement an investment project related to production of processing equipment, lines and components for the food industry. In this connection, "the enterprise has acquired unused production areas on the territory of the free economic zone. The new resident intends to invest at least Br1.5 million over three years. The project envisages expanding production, increasing the number of jobs"¹⁹⁸ , as well as increasing exports and solving import substitution tasks.

The Gomel-Raton FEZ is also showing good results in the development of the export component in 2022, with 67 residents registered

¹⁹⁶ The first resident in 2022 registered in FEZ Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/pervogo-v-2022-godu-rezidenta-zaregistrovali-v-sez-minsk-480078-2022/>

¹⁹⁷ A new resident of Brest FEZ will engage in vegetable production [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novyj-rezident-sez-brest-zajmetsja-proizvodstvom-ovoschej-480900-2022/>

¹⁹⁸ New resident registered in FEZ Brest [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/novogo-rezidenta-zaregistrovali-v-sez-brest-490538-2022/>

as of 1 April. In the first three months of this year, they increased their exports by almost 30 percent. To be absolutely precise, here "the share of deliveries outside Belarus amounted to almost 70 percent of the total sales revenues"¹⁹⁹.

All these facts prove once again that even in the current difficult conditions FEZs continue to be an effective tool for accelerated development of Belarusian regions, "where today one can build a successful business"²⁰⁰ and efficiently solve urgent issues of the Belarusian economy. This is the task that every FEZ faces now, not to let the efficiency of its activities decrease. After all, "it is in the preferential zones that the investment, innovation, production and export potential of the country gets concentrated expression in the form of promising business projects"²⁰¹, which, in turn, contribute to the sustainable and dynamic development of the Belarusian state.

¹⁹⁹ The residents of FEZ Gomel-Raton increased exports by almost a third in the first quarter [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/rezidenty-sez-gomel-raton-pochti-na-tret-uvlechili-eksport-v-i-kvartale-495702-2022/>

²⁰⁰ Zalesky, B.L. Amendments to the law as an incentive for investors / B.L. Zalesky // Materiały XVIII Międzynarodowej naukowo-praktycznej konferencji "Kluczowe aspekty naukowej działalności - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 7.

²⁰¹ Cherviakov: it is necessary to preserve competitive advantages and a favourable business climate in FEZs [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-nuzhno-sohranit-konkurentnye-preimuschestva-i-blagoprijatnyj-biznes-klimat-v-sez-495990-2022/>

Belarus: the potential of for foreign trade is huge

The results of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) in 2021 showed that the application of the exchange mechanism increasingly contributes both to the creation of equal and competitive conditions for doing business within the country, and to the improvement of efficient procurement and expansion of markets for Belarusian products. Let us remind you that "as of the end of 2021, over 27.5 thousand business entities from 69 countries have already been registered on the BIE. <...> At the same time, the geography of new participants of trading sessions held here continued to expand steadily at the BUTB"²⁰². In this connection one of the main tasks of the exchange in 2022 is to help domestic enterprises to promote their goods for export. To this end, "special attention should be paid to realising the potential of the exchange platform in the area of foreign trade. First of all it is diversification of export of Belarusian goods with the focus on the People's Republic of China and other Asian countries..."²⁰³. And, it must be said, the BUTB is already taking energetic measures to address the above tasks.

As for China, "in 2021, the Belarusian-Chinese exchange turnover grew three and a half times"²⁰⁴, and at the end of the first quarter of 2022, this country became one of the top three buyers of rapeseed oil at the BUTB, for example. "This was facilitated by the expansion of the pool of Chinese buyers, as well as an increase in the number of transactions made by them.

²⁰² Zalessky, B.L. From expansion of geography to deepening of cooperation / B.L. Zalessky // Materials for XVIII International Scientific Conference, Present Investigations and Development - 2022, 17 - 25 January 2022: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 6.

²⁰³ MART outlines priorities for the development of exchange trading [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mart-oboznachil-prioritety-razvitiya-birzhevoj-torgovli-488282-2022/>

²⁰⁴ Zalessky, B. From trust to cooperation. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 135.

As a result, compared to the same period in 2021, rapeseed oil sales to the PRC increased by 67% in value terms, to \$2.2m." .²⁰⁵

In the first half of 2022, the Belarusian-Chinese exchange turnover exceeded \$40 million, which is one and a half times more than in the same period last year. Since the beginning of the year, 20 new residents have joined the exchange. Now there are almost 90 of them. About half regularly participate in trading and three have brokerage status. "The most demanded commodities from the Chinese were edged softwood lumber and unrefined rapeseed oil. Belarus imported steel products from China, including rolled sheets and seamless steel pipes."²⁰⁶

Another interesting fact: the first deal on the sale of skimmed milk powder to China was concluded at the BUTB in July 2022. "The volume of the pilot batch amounted to 75 tonnes and the amount was \$250 thousand. The purpose of the trial deal is to practically work out the issues of mutual settlements and logistics, which will not only increase the volume of purchases of Belarusian dried milk, but also organize supplies of other dairy products, such as butter, cream, cheese and whey, to the Chinese market in the future"²⁰⁷. So far, Chinese companies have been using the Belarusian exchange platform mainly for the purchase of lumber, which prevented them from fully realizing the potential of exchange trade between the two countries. The expansion of the commodity nomenclature creates additional opportunities to increase the volume of mutual trade, so the first successful experience of exporting dried milk to China via the exchange can be later

²⁰⁵ China is one of the top three buyers of rapeseed oil on the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitaj-voshel-v-trojku-krupnejshih-pokupatelej-rapsovogo-masla-na-butb-493049-2022/>

²⁰⁶ Markina, T. What Belarusian enterprises enter the Chinese market with / T. Markina // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/s-chem-belorusskie-predprijatija-vyhodjat-na-rynok-kitaja-513455-2022>

²⁰⁷ Belarusian dairy products sold to China through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskaja-molochnaja-produktsija-prodana-v-kitaj-chez-butb-512556-2022/>

extrapolated to other dairy products represented on the exchange platform. The plus side is that Chinese consumers have already been convinced of the high quality of Belarusian dairy products by buying them in the over-the-counter market.

In June 2022, the BUTB in China got another international partner - the Xinjiang Asian-European International Trade Center (AEEX), which is the operator of the electronic trading platform Asia Europe Exchange. The goal is to join efforts and jointly promote an increase in trade turnover between Belarus and China. Cooperation in promotion of Belarusian goods to the Chinese market, informing Chinese companies about opportunities for searching business partners in Belarus through the BUTB platform, exchange of analytical and statistical data reflecting the current situation on the commodity markets of the two countries are defined as priority areas of cooperation. As for the commodity items promising for mutual trade, "the most liquid Belarusian commodity is sawn timber, which is in steadily high demand in China, especially in the construction sector. In this case, delivery of goods purchased at the BUTB is possible by rail along the New Silk Road. In addition, to diversify export supplies of Belarusian timber products, the AEEX's network of business contacts in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region is planned to be used"²⁰⁸. Special attention is paid to the prospects of participation of suppliers from China in bidding on the import substitution exchange. In particular, it is expected that the entry of Chinese manufacturers of spare parts and processing equipment will increase the concentration of supply of these products and expand their range, which will have a positive impact on the price level for Belarusian consumers.

²⁰⁸ BUTB and China's AEEX to collaborate on e-commerce [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-kitajskaja-ploschadka-aeex-budut-sotrudnichat-v-sfere-elektronnoj-torgovli-510290-2022/>

And one more fact. In April 2022, China Merchants CHN-BLR Commerce and Logistics Company (CMCB), which is part of China Merchants Group Corporation, signed a memorandum with BTUB that provides for cooperation between the parties in transport and trade logistics. The parties proceed from the premise that a well-developed logistics infrastructure and well-developed transportation links are a basic condition for the functioning of the Belarusian-Chinese exchange commodity market. Therefore, it is only through the synergy of electronic exchange trade technologies and extensive logistics capabilities that the potential of bilateral cooperation can be fully realised.

Since July 2022, the Chinese side has been assisting in attracting suppliers and customers from China to the electronic import substitution platform of the commodity exchange. In order to optimize logistics costs, CMCB together with BUTB will work out alternative routes for delivery of Belarusian goods purchased on the exchange to China using various modes of transport. The promising nature of this direction is also evidenced by the results of the analysis of purchase orders placed on the BUTB import substitution platform. "This is especially characteristic of such categories of goods as electrical equipment, communications equipment, as well as components and materials for industry. So far only a few suppliers of import-substituting products from China are operating on the exchange trading platform, but their number may increase in the near future. This is primarily due to Chinese companies already accredited on the BUTB, but bidding in other product sections"²⁰⁹ . As far as logistics issues are concerned, the delivery of goods from Belarus to China and back is going on as usual.

²⁰⁹ A Chinese company will help bring suppliers and customers to the BUTB import substitution site [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kitajskaja-kompanija-pomozhet-privlech-postavschikov-i-zakazchikov-na-ploschadku-importozameshenija-514280-2022>

Speaking about the implementation of plans to diversify exchange exports by reaching end consumers in the Middle East, it should be noted that, until recently, residents of Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt were the most active on the Belarusian exchange. In February 2022, the United Arab Emirates was added to the list, when the first deal for the sale of lumber products to this Persian Gulf country was made on the BUTB. During the export trade session, a company from Abu Dhabi purchased a trial batch of edged hardwood lumber from a Belarusian woodworking company. The goods were delivered to the destination country by the buyer. BUTB now sees its priority as getting a foothold in the Emirati market, increasing the number of accredited companies and the volume of deliveries. After all, this Middle Eastern country is an international trade and logistics hub. "This means that by supplying their products to Abu Dhabi, Dubai or Sharjah, Belarusian companies automatically gain access to potential buyers from Africa, Southeast Asia and other regions."²¹⁰ .

In March 2022, while participating in the Dubai International Wood & Wood Machinery Show in the UAE, BUTB representatives held a series of fruitful meetings with companies interested in business partnerships. As a result, "a large importer and distributor of timber in the UAE Beston Wood Industries LLC expressed readiness to enter the Belarusian market via the exchange platform and Egyptian producer of furniture boards and door panels Good Wood LLC intends to accredit to the BUTB to purchase softwood lumber and other products of Belarusian woodworking enterprises"²¹¹ . And now BUTB is focusing its efforts both on entering new markets and on expanding its presence in countries whose share of wood

²¹⁰ Belarusian lumber sold to the UAE for the first time through BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskie-pilomaterialy-vpervye-prodany-v-oae-cherez-butb-485480-2022/>

²¹¹ BUTB refocuses lumber exports to the Middle East and North Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-pereorientiruet-eksport-pilomaterialov-v-strany-blizhnego-vostoka-i-severnoj-afriki-491054-2022/>

products imports used to be insignificant. For this reason, apart from China, where lumber supplies have already tripled, Asian countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, which are ready to increase imports of Belarusian lumber products, seem to be very effective. Thus, "during the first three months of 2022, more than half of the last year's total volume has already been sold to Azerbaijan alone"²¹². Let us remind you that by the middle of May 2022 more than 28.5 thousand companies from 70 countries have already been accredited to the BUTB. Now there are "about 5 thousand items of goods traded here, with more than 400 thousand transactions per year"²¹³. And there is every reason to believe that these figures will only increase further in 2022.

Speaking about promotion of BUOTB interests in Central Asia, it should be noted that in March 2022 the Belarusian exchange platform accredited a new broker in Kazakhstan - First-KO LLP, which became the 16th in the network of BUOTB stock brokers representing already 11 countries. It is assumed that the arrival of the broker will increase the number of participants from Kazakhstan, which on March 1, 2022 had already been accredited 85, and will also contribute to the growth of the Belarusian-Kazakh commodity turnover. For reference, in 2021 "the commodity turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan amounted to about \$30 million. The Kazakh market was mainly supplied with meat and dairy products, leather goods and sugar, while Belarusian buyers were mostly interested in coal and rolled steel."²¹⁴. The new broker intends to facilitate the work of

²¹² BUTB expands its export geography: the first deals were made in the UAE and Switzerland [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirjaet-geografiju-eksporta-pervye-sdelki-proveli-oae-i-shvejtsarija-493578-2022/>

²¹³ More than 28,500 companies from 70 countries are accredited to BTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovano-bolee-285-tys-kompanij-iz-70-stran-502289-2022/>

²¹⁴ BUTB has accredited a new broker in Kazakhstan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-akkreditovala-novogo-brokera-v-kazahstane-490807-2022>

Kazakhstani companies in the Belarusian market and focus on the goods for which Belarus is the leader in the post-Soviet space - dairy products, potatoes, tyres and spare parts for special machinery.

Another BUTB partner in Central Asia is Uzbekistan. For reference, it should be noted that as of 1 April 2022, 5,673 foreign entities, including 40 Uzbek ones, were accredited to participate in trading on the Belarusian exchange platform. And in the same April, the first deal on export of chemical industry products to this Central Asian country was made here. Within the trade session, "an Uzbek company purchased 20 tons of polyacrylonitrile fiber on shipment terms from the manufacturer's warehouse. Previously, only goods of agricultural group - primarily meat and meat by-products - were supplied to the Uzbek market through the exchange platform"²¹⁵. Taking into account the fact that synthetic fibers are in stable demand among Uzbek textile producers, there is every reason to believe that the exchange deal will be the first step of Belarusian exporters in expanding the potential of this product line in the Uzbek market. The grounds for this conclusion are seen in the rather high level of development of the Uzbek textile and clothing and knitting industry and the ever-growing demand for high-quality raw materials by local enterprises.

Another interesting step towards expanding the potential for exchange trading with Asian and Middle Eastern countries was taken at BUTB in February 2022, when it registered as a new broker the Belarusian Meat and Dairy Company CJSC, which is an official exporter of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus. This company represents the interests of all Belarusian exporters of meat and dairy products. Joining its efforts with the BUTB can certainly ensure more efficient work of the

²¹⁵ BUTB has expanded the range of goods exported to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-rasshirila-tovarnuju-nomenklaturu-eksporta-v-uzbekistan-494941-2022/>

domestic agricultural organizations in non-CIS markets as well as facilitate expansion of the sales geography. This does not only mean intensive work on the Chinese market. From all indications, other Asian countries and the Middle East region will also be addressed. These are markets with great export potential which <...> have yet to be unlocked together with the stock exchange."²¹⁶ . And there is every reason to believe that in the near future this engagement will be highly effective in increasing Belarusian export to the countries of the Asian continent.

And another topical topic concerning the BUTB is to be considered in this context. The Belarusian side is now looking for new forms of industrial and business development. One such solution in 2022 is import substitution. This process has already involved not only large enterprises, but also private, medium and small businesses. "Import substitution has become the most important task of every import-related enterprise to work ahead of the curve"²¹⁷ . And there are already interesting examples.

In particular, the BUTB has been operating an import substitution platform for more than three months, which has been gaining momentum, proving its effectiveness, and already has about three hundred companies from Central Asia and the Far East, including from the People's Republic of China and the Commonwealth of Independent States. During this time, "since 27 May 2022, 6387 transactions worth Br46.6 million have been made on the BUTB import substitution platform"²¹⁸ . In June-August, the structure of sales of import-substituting products was dominated by products for

²¹⁶ The official exporter of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has become a BUTB broker [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ofitsialnyj-eksporter-minselhozproda-stal-brokerom-butb-482741-2022/>

²¹⁷ Zalesky, B.L. The most important task of every enterprise / B.L. Zalesky // Materialy XVII Miedzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Nauka: teoria i napiska - 2022", Volume 1. Przemysl: Nauka i studia. - C. 15.

²¹⁸ About 300 companies from Central Asia and the Far East work at the BUTB import substitution site [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/okolo-300-kompanij-iz-stran-srednej-azii-i-dalnego-vostoka-rabotajut-na-ploschadke-importozameschenija-521269-2022/>

construction, components and materials for industry, electrical connections and electrical equipment, heating equipment and air conditioning systems, as well as measuring equipment and workwear. "In particular, plastic and rubber products, adhesives, LED lighting and paint products are in particular demand. These product groups account for more than a quarter of the total amount of transactions carried out on the exchange since its launch"²¹⁹. The vast majority of suppliers are domestic small and medium-sized businesses which, thanks to the import substitution service, have gained an additional sales channel and have been able to find new business partners, including among large public sector companies. Also, "now the Belarusian metallurgical plant and Bellesbumprom enterprises are successfully operating on the site"²²⁰. In the second half of August, a new company from China was accredited for bidding on the import substitution site.

Through the import substitution platform, BUTB expects to establish exchange trade also with Pakistan. It is planned to work out the issue of selling sawn wood to the Pakistani market, which is in high demand in the construction and furniture industries, as well as to start exporting petrochemical products, which are already actively purchased on the exchange platform by companies from India. Pakistan is a new market for BUTB, but it has great potential both in terms of sales of Belarusian goods and imports of Pakistani products. To this end, the first brokerage company from Pakistan, AP Sakafat Forever, was accredited at BUTB in July 2022 and has been participating in the export exchange trading of lumber products as a trade visitor since December 2021. "As a professional bidder, it intends

²¹⁹ Construction and industrial products are among the top sellers on the BUTB import substitution platform [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-liderah-prodazh-na-ploschadke-importozameschenija-butb-tovary-dlja-stroitelstva-i-promyshlennosti-520451-2022>

²²⁰ Parkhomchik told which enterprises are working on the BUTB import substitution platform [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-rasskazal-kakie-predprijatija-rabotajut-na-ploschadke-importozameschenija-butb-521262-2022/>

to attract buyers of lumber and agricultural commodities to the exchange platform and to assist Pakistani producers of rice, non-ferrous metals and textiles in finding business partners in Belarus.²²¹ . The new broker may also help Belarus export synthetic fibre, polyethylene, ammonium sulphate, and other chemicals and petrochemicals to Pakistan. The broker company has planned "a turnover of about \$150 million and will try to use all stock exchange instruments to achieve it"²²² . A Pakistani company that manufactures sports equipment has expressed its desire to enter the Belarusian market by placing its products in an electronic catalogue of import-substituting goods. As far as transactions are concerned, at the initial stage, the option of bidding through a broker is being considered.

The Iraqi company Al Seraj Al Mubeen Co, plans to work on the issue of arranging supplies of Belarusian dried milk and beef to Iraq. The firm "specializes in the import and wholesale trade of food products, the demand for which has increased significantly amid the continuing instability in the global food market.²²³ . This has created a need to expand the geography of purchases, and Belarus is seen as one of the most promising markets.

Another country that is very active in the BUTB in terms of commodity destinations with Belarusian partners is Switzerland. Specifically, in the first half of 2022, agricultural products accounted for 95 percent of Belarus' exchange commodity turnover with Switzerland, "which is a net importer of Belarusian goods, because all of the 16 Swiss companies accredited at the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange act exclusively

²²¹ Belarus-Pakistan trade is planned to be established through an import substitution platform [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-planiruet-naladit-torgovlju-belarusi-i-pakistana-cherez-ploschadku-importozameschenija-515035-2022/>

²²² The first broker from Pakistan is accredited to the BUTB [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/na-butb-akkreditovan-pervyj-broker-iz-pakistana-519087-2022/>

²²³ An Iraqi company intends to buy Belarusian dried milk and beef [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/irakskaja-kompanija-namerena-zakupat-belorusskoe-suhoe-moloko-i-govjadinu-515773-2022/>

as buyers in the bidding. Over January-June this year, the value of deals made by Swiss companies on the exchange floor was about \$6 million. Exports of Belarusian rapeseed oil and vet-blue leather accounted for over \$5 million of the total,"²²⁴ . This demonstrates the high demand for Belarusian agro-industrial products on the Swiss market and the considerable potential for deeper cooperation in this area. Not only rapeseed oil, but also other no less liquid products such as milk powder and whey, cattle meat and beet molasses. It remains to add that agricultural products are not the only group of Belarusian goods that are in demand in Switzerland. There are other areas as well.

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