

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves attended the awards ceremony of the 'Farmer of the Year 2014' competition today, recognising the best farmers in Estonia and personally congratulating the title winner, Vändra OÜ director Ilmar Teevet.

In his address to the farmers, President Ilves said that the current state of agriculture and the rural economy in Estonia is very promising, but also complex.

In the view of the Head of State, Estonia has become one of the most efficient and competitive agricultural countries in Europe – thanks not only to investments and European support, but especially to the skills and work of local farmers themselves.

"We had good weather this year, and the harvests were some of the best we've ever seen," President Ilves said. "As I recently discovered from Minister of Agriculture Ivari Padar, never before, in the time since the chronicles of Henry of Livonia, has 1.2 million tonnes of grain been harvested from Estonia's fields."

The Head of State said he was pleased to see that it is not only the personal preferences of consumers that are being taken into account by contemporary producers, but also health and quality. "That's precisely the direction we should be going in," he said. "Our producers see how natural foodstuffs are as a key sales argument – and not only at the market or in an ecostore, but in supermarkets, too."

At the same time, the Head of State remarked that 2014 would also be remembered in agricultural terms for the unexpected drop in prices on the global market as well as for war and plague.

"Here I refer to our Ukrainian brothers' battle for freedom, democracy and territorial integrity, as well as the global trade war with Russia, which affects us directly," President Ilves explained. "The embargo on imports of agricultural produce and foodstuffs established by Russia is impacting on Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania the most."

Ilmar Teevet, director of Vändra OÜ in the municipality of the same name in Pärnu County, has constructed a series of barn complexes in recent years and increased the company's annual milking volume to more than 11 tonnes per animal. The company keeps 1400 head of dairy cattle and 1200 head of young cattle. It employs 62 people.

The 'Farmer of the Year' competition is organised by the Maaleht newspaper and the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce. This year's title was the 14th to be awarded. In addition to taking home the title, Teevet will be returning to Pärnu County with a copy of the historical statue known as Külvaja or The Sower.

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