

HELEXPO SA
PRESS OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

21st AGROTICA: The largest ever.

The success of the 21st AGROTICA 2006 International Fair for Agricultural Machinery – Equipment – Supplies, organized by HELEXPO at Thessaloniki International Exhibition Centre from February 1 to 5, was characterized by an increased number of visitors as compared to the previous event in 2004 – despite heavy snowfall – by hundreds of business meetings held, either through ExpoPartenariat or privately, as well as numerous commercial and entrepreneurial agreements.

There were 83,181 visitors during this year's event, as compared to 81,715 in 2004, while there was an 81% increase in the number of trade visitors, who numbered 5,694 as compared to 3,141. Greek trade visitors came from the whole of Greece; there was a 60% increase in the number of foreign trade visitors, as compared to 2004; they came from 26 countries, namely: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Germany, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro, Singapore, Spain, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

The 21st AGROTICA was the largest ever and the most successful in the history of the event, comprising, once again, along with its satellite events, an important forum for our agricultural economy, new technical know-how, entrepreneurial initiatives and innovative actions, thus contributing towards the development of an action plan for upgrading quality, developing entrepreneurship and conquering competitiveness of Greek rural regions and the agricultural economy at a national, European and international level.

The 21st AGROTICA was inaugurated by the Minister of Rural Development and Food, Mr. Evangelos Bassiakos, at the packed hall of "I. Vellidis" Congress Centre. Mr. Bassiakos referred to his Ministry's work and made mention of important percentile increases of 33.5% in subsidies and increased funding of 34% by the Greek Agricultural Insurance Organisation (ELGA). The Minister described the development of agricultural produce exports in the ten months from January to October, which presented a 24% increase, as satisfactory, while stressing that the Ministry's priorities

include strengthening agricultural income, improving competitiveness in the agricultural sector and helping farmers remain in rural areas.

The President of HELEXPO SA, Mr. Aristotelis Thomopoulos, referred to the grand scale of this year's event, which, as he stressed, addresses not only the domestic but the international market as well and, particularly, in countries of the Balkans, the Black Sea Zone and the Near and Middle East, which have the privilege of being called HELEXPO Countries. As Mr. Thomopoulos stressed, AGROTICA, the largest Fair in South-Eastern Europe, with new services, new participants, important satellite events and conferences, dynamic marketing, as well as increased scope and expectations, comprises a field for new technical know-how, entrepreneurial initiatives and innovative actions and contributes towards the development of an action plan ultimately aiming at upgrading quality, developing entrepreneurship and achieving competitiveness for our agricultural economy at a national, European and international level.

The inauguration of the 21st AGROTICA took place in the presence of the Minister of Macedonia & Thrace, Mr. Nikos Tsiartsionis, the Deputy Minister of Rural Development & Food, Mr. Alexandros Kondos, the Secretaries General of the Ministry, Mr. Christos Avgoulas and Mr. Konstantinos Skiadas, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Macedonia & Thrace, Mr. Loukas Ananikas, the Secretary General of the Region of Central Macedonia, Mr. Giorgos Tsiotras, the Prefect of Thessaloniki, Mr. Panagiotis Psomiadis, Local Authorities representatives, as well as scientific and academic communities.

It should be noted that the 21st AGROTICA was deployed over the floors of all pavilions and many outdoor areas of the International Exhibition Centre, while expanding, for the first time, to include "I. Vellidis" Congress Centre, where agricultural vehicles were exhibited.

There were 1,246 direct and indirect exhibitors to the Exhibition, as compared to 1,193 in 2004, which included the largest companies in the sector; there was also considerable participation of enterprises with an interest in exports. Of these exhibitors, 559 were Greek, coming from the whole of the country, and 687 came from or represented 32 countries. For the first time in the history of the Exhibition, the European Commission – Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development also participated in AGROTICA. Furthermore, in regard to participation, apart from the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Association of Hellenic Manufacturers of Agricultural Machinery and the Association of Importers – Representatives of Machinery, Public sector agencies, Prefectural Local Authorities, developmental companies, agencies, services, associations, educational foundations and the sector Press also made their presence felt.

It should be noted that the 21st AGROTICA acquired a local aspect through the participation of the country's Prefectures, which promoted their own agricultural production and organized group visits by their regions'

cooperatives to the Exhibition so that they could get informed on recent developments in the agricultural sector.

At this year's AGROTICA, ExpoPartenariat, the prearranged meeting service, operated for the first time, allowing all interested parties to make their business appointments by calling 800 800 40 40 or online, at www.expopartenariat.gr.

This is a new exhibition service provided by HELEXPO in order to promote cooperation schemes between enterprises using the methodology of prearranged meetings – to this effect, HELEXPO has developed an integrated software package that comprises a global patent and was implemented for the first time during AGROTICA.

The 21st AGROTICA was visited by the Deputy Minister of Development, Mr. Giorgos Salangoudis, the Minister of Macedonia & Thrace, Mr. Nikos Tsiartsionis, and a group from PASOK Party, led by the member of its Political Council, in charge of Agricultural Affairs and former Deputy Minister, Mr. Rovertos Spyropoulos and including MPs Thanassis Papageorgiou, Charis Tsiokas and Vassilis Geranidis; the exhibition was also visited by the head of the agricultural sector of New Democracy Party, Mr. Verginis.

Dozens of important and interesting satellite events took place within the framework of the 21st AGROTICA, namely: in cooperation with Hellenic Hydrotechnics Society, on "Water Resources and Agriculture", in cooperation with the Entomological Society of Greece on "Modern Methods for Fighting Pests and Growing Crops", in cooperation with the School of Agriculture of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, on "Modern Technologies in Agricultural Science", and in cooperation with the National Agricultural Research Foundation (ETHIAGE), on "European Actions for the Quality of Agricultural Machinery within the Context of New Requirements".

Furthermore, within the framework of the 21st AGROTICA, an Exhibition of Innovative Products was held at "I. Vellidis" Congress Centre, while the "Greek Agrorama" took place on the first storey of Pavilion 9, aiming at creating hubs of networking and inter-professional cooperation schemes in the agricultural sector. Approximately 60 companies of manufacturers of renowned quality and certified products, processors, craftspersons, artists, cottage industry owners, agro-tourism resort and agro-farm managers participated in "Greek Agrorama". The event aimed at promoting successful practices in rural regions and competition, while offering consumers an opportunity to get acquainted with the rapidly developing agro-tourism market and renowned quality products.

Moreover, during the 21st AGROTICA, an "Agricultural Information Spot" was in operation in order to inform people on technological developments in the

agricultural sector and their correct use – application in practice, as well as investment programmes in the sector of modern agricultural technology.

AWARDS FOR SELECT PARTICIPANTS

The President of HELEXPO, Mr. Aristotelis Thomopoulos, and the Managing Director, Mr. Themis Kartsiotis, presented prizes and awards to outstanding participants at this year's event.

Top creativity prizes were awarded to: NETAFIM HELLAS SA, INFIA HELLAS, DIAMANDOPOULOS EMMANUEL.

Awards were presented to: CRETE PLASTICS AVEE, TRAMOUNDANAS KOSMAS – COSMOS, AGROLA AVEE.

Special organiser's prizes were presented to: PRAPOPOULOS BROS SA, SOULIS AVEE, PIRAEUS BANK, REGION OF EASTERN MACEDONIA – THRACE, PAVLOS KONDELLIS AVEE.