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Assessment of the Slovak and Latvian Agriculture from the Point of Plant Production

Agriculture as one of major industries of the national economy is closely connected with the development of the whole country, especially rural regions and food production. Therefore it should be viewed as an important factor of rural development and economic stability of the whole country. The main aim of article is to compare the position of plant production and agriculture in two EU countries: Slovakia and Latvia. Realization of the mentioned objective required the research within the period of the years 2009-2010. We used basic organizational and economic relations and numeric calculations while analyzing and forming the theoretical and practical solutions. According to crop production between Slovakia and Latvia outlines some similarities, the situation was reversed and crops production for most commodities has fallen, particularly in case of cereals, but some separate crops have the various tend. For example in Slovakia case crop production rise of legumes and sugar beet, parallel in Latvia case crop production increase rapidly of buckwheat and rape. In consequence it draws differences in crop production priorities which depends from a large number of different circumstances between two described countries.

Introduction

Agriculture is the biggest user of land as well as the factor determining the quality of the rural landscape and environment. The development of the sector accelerates year-by-year, yet the contribution of agriculture to the gross domestic product is decreasing against the background of more rapidly growing value added of other sectors.¹

Country international trade plays an important role in economy, not only the state can make a profit on exports of goods to foreign countries, but also the import of goods which the state itself can not produce because the lack of resources or whether there are circumstances which impede the efficient production. Imports of goods is the oldest form of marketing out there yet so far, because it gives people the opportunity to purchase a wider range of goods from other states.²

International trade help countries obtain only benefit, it is especially important for small countries, where domestic markets are not sufficiently wide to develop a powerful production. The country specializing in a particular production, where they have an advantage, so the production cost is lower than it would if all the countries should produce locally.

The main aim of article is to compare the position of plant production and agriculture in two EU countries: Slovakia and Latvia. The papers deals key economic

¹ Source: Organization International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), available: <http://www.icar2010.lv/en/id15.php>

² Source: Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, available: <http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/eu/Prioritates/ja-par-ES/zinojums/#3-4>

indicators to demonstrate the similarities and differences between these countries. Consequently in the future it serve to founding in the estimation of prospects in a collaboration.

Material and Methods

Realization of the mentioned objective required the research within the period of the years 2009-2010. While getting the primary data, we considered the data from the secondary information databases of the Eurostat, the Slovak Ministry of Agriculture /MPSR/, the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture. We used basic organizational and economic relations and numeric calculations while analyzing and forming the theoretical and practical solutions.

Results and Discussion

Agriculture plays a comparatively significant role in the maintenance of economic and social equilibrium.

Agriculture and forestry as the main forms of land use are important because they determine the rural economy "health" and a rural landscape. Although agriculture today is not so much the role of the rural economy in the past, it nevertheless provides a valuable contribution to its growth and sustainable environmental development. EU agriculture is not one-dimensional, as many might think. In fact, farmers perform many different functions, from food and fiber production to rural areas management, nature conservation and tourism. It therefore seems that agriculture has multiple functions.

- In Europe is a modern and competitive agricultural sector, which occupies a leading position in world markets as a major exporter as well as the world's largest food importer, mainly from developing countries;

- It is a sustainable, efficient farming sector, which uses safe, clean, environmentally friendly production methods, supplying the consumer meets the requirements of quality products;

- The EU's agricultural sector is the rural local communities, reflecting its rich tradition and diversity, it is not only to produce food, but also to ensure that the fields continue to exist as a living and working space, and as a destination for tourists;

- Europe's agricultural policy at EU level the national government and implemented by Member States. It includes support farmers' incomes, in parallel to promote market demand for adequate high-quality production and encouraging farmers to develop environmentally friendly ways to sideline.³

Despite being a relatively small country on the Baltic Sea, Latvia has a rich history in agriculture and food processing. With a population that was largely rural until 100 years ago, the Latvian people evolved a cuisine designed to be nutritious, tasty and well-suited to the lives of people who spent most of their time outdoors.⁴

³ Source: Preiļi National Gymnasium research website, available: http://www.pvg.edu.lv/datori/konkursi/2011_web/Egils_Ivdris/lauksaimnieciba_egils_ivdris_salas_psk/lk_politika_es_un_atvija.htm

⁴ Source: Organization International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), available: <http://www.icar2010.lv/en/id15.php>

In spite of earlier fears, Slovakia's economic situation has improved rapidly in the years after the separation of Czech Republic and Slovak Republic in 1993. In the following years the Slovak Republic has made good progress as far as macroeconomic stabilisation and economic growth are concerned.⁵

Slovakia has been one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Taxation, healthcare, pensions, and social welfare reforms helped the nation to join the European Union in 2004 and to adopt the euro in 2009.⁶

Situation in agriculture and rural area

Table 1 shows comparison of the main indicator gross domestic product in agriculture in the Slovak Republic and in Latvia.

Table 1
Gross domestic product in agriculture comparing Slovakia and Latvia (2010)

	Slovakia in 2010*		Latvia in 2010**	
GDP In EUR (current prices):				
Million EUR	65 905.5	0.5% of EU-27	17 970.3	0.1% of EU-27
GDP per capita	12 137		8 026	
In PPS:				
Million PPS	99 406.1		28 023.0	
GDP per capita	18.307	75 (EU-27 = 100)	12 516	51 (EU-27 = 100)
Real GDP growth rate (% change on previous year)	4.0%	1.8% in EU-27	-0.3%	1.8% in EU-27
Gross value added				
Agriculture, hunting and fishing (% of total GVA)	3.8%	1.7% in EU-27	4.1%	1.7% in EU-27

*Source: Agricultural Policy Perspectives, Member States factsheets – May 2011, Slovakia, available: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/ms_factsheets/2011/sk_en.pdf

**Source: Agricultural Policy Perspectives, Member States factsheets – May 2011, Latvia, available: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/ms_factsheets/2011/lv_en.pdf

Comparison of these two countries shows that GDP in current prices is very different and Slovakia take significantly higher share in EU context than Latvia, it is 0.5% of EU-27 but in Latvia only 0.1% of EU-27. Position in GDP per capita is more for 4 111 units or approximately 34% higher in Slovakia than in Latvia.

Employment

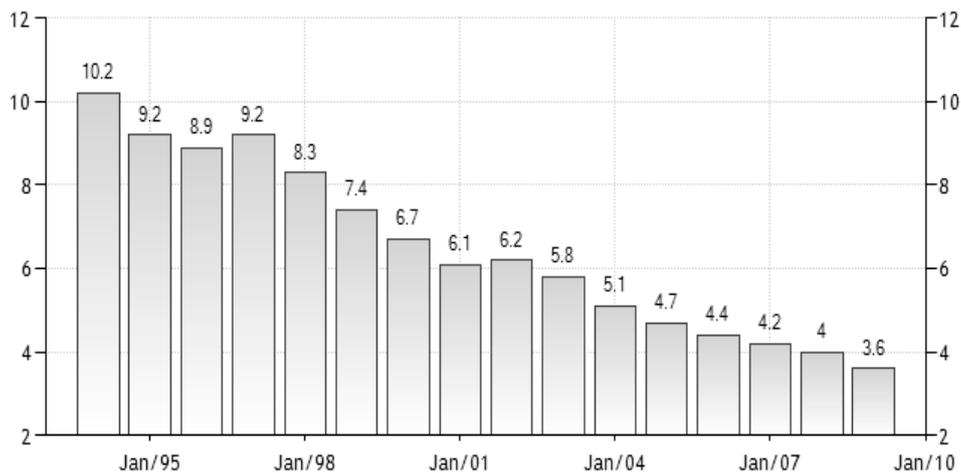
The Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Slovakia was 3.60 in 2009, according to a World Bank report, published in 2010. The Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Slovakia was reported at 4.00 in 2008. (Chart 1) Similar trend but on other side bigger share of total employment is in Latvia case. The Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Latvia was 8.70 in 2009, according to a World Bank report, published in 2010. The Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Latvia was reported at 7.90 in 2008 (Chart 2).

⁵ Source: The homepage of the European Commission. „Agricultural Situation and Perspectives in the Central and Eastern European Countries”, available: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/peco/slovakia/summary/sum_en.htm

⁶ Source: <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/slovakia/agriculture-value-added-annual-percent-growth-wb-data.html>

Chart 1

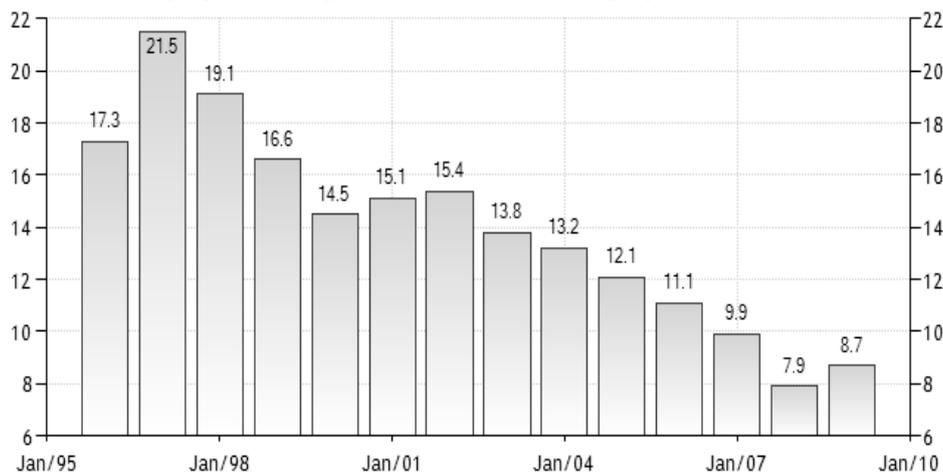
Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Slovakia



Source: TradingEconomics.com

Chart 2

Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Latvia



Source: TradingEconomics.com

Structure of agricultural land and land market

In Slovakia at 2010 farmland acreage was 1,945,386 ha, compared to 2009 decreased by 10 617 ha. The decrease was mainly due to decrease in area of permanent

grassland about 13 180 ha and permanent crops decrease of 465 ha. Arable land increased by 3 021 ha and in other areas, including home gardens, about 5 ha.⁷

In 2009 difference between two countries was huge. Utilised agricultural land in Slovakia makes 1 930 348 ha, which is for 419 964 ha less than in Latvia. Arable land is 1 351 779 ha, but meadows and pastures 523 609 ha.

According to the land survey of the State Land Service of Latvia as at January 2009, in the total land area in all the districts of Latvia broken down by target groups of real estate use, the target group of real estate use “Agricultural land” constitutes 2 350 312.2 ha of agricultural land (AL) (Table 2), including arable land 1 709 980.2 ha or 72,7%, orchards 24 819.6 ha or 1,1%, meadows 213 144.7 ha or 9.1% and pastures 402 382.3 ha or 17.1% .⁸

Table 2
Total land area and its distribution by use (thsd hectares) in 2009

Indicator	Slovakia 2009*	Latvia 2009**
Utilised agricultural land	1 930 348	2 350 312
Of that: arable land	1 351 779	1 709 980
meadows and pastures	523 609	615 527

*Source: Report on Agriculture and Food in the Slovak Republic 2011, available:

www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID

**Source: Agriculture annual report (Latvia 2011) available:

<http://www.zm.gov.lv/index.php?sadala=739&id=12778>

In this case the total land area differs considerably, but remains equal structure of land use. Approximately 70 % of utilised agricultural land compile arable land, some 25 % compare meadows and pastures and others makes 5 % (for example: orchards, permanent crops).

Crop production

In 2009, crops were sown in Slovakia on almost the same are of arable land than in 2008 following a change in the structure of area sown with crops. When comparing the total sown area for the year 2009/2008 in the year 2009 there has been increase in sown area of 2.5 thousand ha. When comparing the sown area for the year 2009/2008 without fallow land and not sown area a decline represents 303.02 hectares, which is 0.02%. The sown areas were reduced in the group of potatoes (17.6%), feeding crops (21.5%), grain legumes (7,1%), annual feed crops (4.9%), cereals (3.7%).

The situation was affected by the high supply of cereals in the previous year, the low demand for cereals, decline in livestock number and low purchase prices. While in the previous year the sown area of sugar beet was reduced, in 2009 growers responded to the situation with adverse developments in the prices of other agricultural commodities on the EU market by increasing the sown areas of sugar beet (46.3%). Continued increase in the areas of oilseeds (8.4%), sunflower (11.7%), rape (2.5%), but also poppy (5.8%). The sown area of lasting more yaers fodder on arable land has

⁷ Source: Report on Agriculture and Food in the Slovak Republic 2011, available: www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID

⁸ Source: Agriculture annual report (Latvia 2009), available: <http://www.zm.gov.lv/index.php?sadala=739&id=12778>

increased (7.3%) and sown area of red clover (4.6%) has decreased. An increase was recorded in the total area sown with annual fodder, green maize and silage (5.6%).

The increase in sown area for oilseeds significantly influences their multipurpose use, their market character, advance purchasing system, continuing global economic prosperity, manufacture of alternative energy sources, the technical breakthrough in animal feed, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and in connection with this the continuing demand in the European and world market. The decrease in sown area of sugar beet in previous years as well as the draft of Act on narcotic drugs, which has created better conditions for large-scale poppy cultivation helped to increase sown area of poppy.

In 2009, given the continued downward trend of production of potatoes, potatoes were supported under the Rural Development measures. In spite of these measures, the sown area for potatoes has decreased. Tendency of decrease in sown area for legumes has continued in 2009. At present, when the dynamics of cost increases is ahead of the dynamics of price increases, the economics of production is the most important in the cultivation of legumes. The continued decrease in number of livestock in 2009 registered the decline in sown area of feeding crops and annual fodder.

In Slovakia the structure of the sowing has changed notably in favor of oilseeds (0.9%) and sugar beet (0.1%). By reducing the sown area of cereals, their share in the total sowing decreased (3.3%), of which barley (4.2%) and wheat (2.0%). The proportion of annual fodder is the same like in previous 2009 year. The proportion of legumes has increased slightly. The share of red clover, vegetables and feeding crops has not changed (Table 3).

In Latvia 2010th the significant change in the volume structure in favor of spring crops in early spring due to continuing drought have died approximately 43% of the winter crop area, and fields were parsed with spring wheat, barley and rape. If the 2010 winter crops of the total grain area accounted for 53% this year, they constitute only about 32% of the total cereal area. Sown areas of cereals in 2010 was 535,700 hectares, an increase of 5,100 hectares or 0.9% less than in 2009. In 2011 projected cereal sown area is 516,600 hectares.⁹

By contrast, as shown by the Rural Advisory and Training Center data, 2010 year with the potatoes cultivated 31,500 hectares sown last year was 30,100 hectares. In 2009 potatoes were planted on 30,000 hectares, while in 2008 - 37 800 hectares.¹⁰

The structure of the sowing in 2010 comparing with 2009 has decreased slightly (0.1%). The increasing is in proportion of wheat (1.0%) and oil rape (0.9%).

⁹ Source: Diena - Morning newspaper with topical attachments. „Cereal crop harvested Throughout the Latvian, Aspen winter crop by early October” [LETA. 2011th On the 26th September 18:40] article available: <http://www.diena.lv/latvija/zinas/graudaugu-raza-novakta-visa-latvija-ziemajus-apses-lidz-oktobra-sakumam-13905592>

¹⁰ Source: Latvian news portal – Bizness DELFI. „In this year Latvian cereal harvest will be 10-15% lower than last year” [BNS | 27. July 2011 17:34] article available: <http://bizness.delfi.lv/lauksaimnieciba/duklavs-graudaugu-raza-sogad-latvija-bus-par-1015-zemaka-neka-pern.d?id=39811061>

Table 3

Structure of sown areas for main crops at arable land, % (in Slovakia and in Latvia)

Crop	Slovakia*			Latvia**		
	2009	2010	Changes 2010/2009	2009	2010***	Changes 2010/2009
Cereals, total	57,5	54,2	-3,3	31,1	31,0	-0,1
of that: wheat	28,5	26,5	-2,0	16,5	17,5	1,0
barley	14,7	10,5	-4,2	5,4	5,3	-0,1
maize	10,4	13,6	3,2	-	-	-
Industrial sugar beet	1,2	1,3	0,1	-	-	-
Potatoes	0,9	0,9	0,0	1,7	1,7	0,0
Oilseeds, total	20,3	21,2	0,9	-	-	-
of that: oil rape	12,6	12,8	0,2	5,4	6,3	0,9
sunflower	6,3	6,7	0,4	-	-	-
Legumes	0,8	1,0	0,2	-	-	-
Feeding crops	0,1	0,1	0,0	-	-	-
Consumer vegetables	0,6	1,0	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,0

* Source: Report on agriculture and food sector in the Slovak republic 2009 (green report)

** Source: The baltic course – international magazin for decision makers, available: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics/?doc=37406>

***Provisional data

In Slovakia from the point of view of total production (Table 4 and table 5), unlike the previous year, the situation was reversed and crops production for most commodities has fallen. The most significant decrease recorded the production of wine grapes (49.8%), barley (46.5%), potatoes (41.7%), wheat (22.9%), sunflower (19.7%) and oil rape (16.6%). The harvest of potatoes was mainly influenced, as in the previous year, by the decrease in harvested area. Their decline was significantly offset by the average yield per hectare, which was due to favorable weather conditions for potatoes the highest since 2004. The lower production of wine grapes was registered due to a decrease in both indicators harvested area and yield.

Production has increased only in case of legumes (13.4%) and sugar beet (8.8%).

Latvia in 2010 comparing to 2009 the biggest decrease, according to Table 6 from the point of view of total production is recorded the production of rye (57.2%), oats (28.8%), triticale (35.1%) and barley (22.8%). In 2010 areas of potatoes comprised 16.1 thsd ha, and it is 8% less than in 2009.

In 2010 – 151 thsd tons of vegetables were grown (including vegetables in greenhouses), and it is 31.5 thsd tons or 17.3% less than a year before. Areas of open field vegetables have diminished to 8.1 thsd ha or by 2.0%. Severe weather conditions have made impact on the total production of the open field vegetables – it has decreased by 31.6 thsd tons or by 18.5%, if compared to 2009. The average yield of vegetables has decreased from 207 cnt in 2009 to 172 cnt in 2010.

Production has increased significantly in case of buckwheat (13.4%) due to higher yield per hectare (40%) and a little restrained rise of rape (9.3%).

Table 4

Harvested area and yields of major crops (Slovakia)

Crop	Harvest area thousand (ha)		Index	Yields (t/ha)		Index
	2009	2010	2010/2009	2009	2010	2010/2009
Cereals, total	768,7	683,3	88,9	4,33	3,74	86,4
of that: wheat	379,2	342,1	90,2	4,06	3,46	85,2
barley	195,8	133	67,9	3,45	2,72	78,8
maize	144,2	166,6	115,5	6,85	5,53	80,7
Industrial sugar beet	16	17,9	112,4	56,34	54,52	96,8
Potatoes	11,6	11,0	94,6	18,60	11,45	61,6
Oilseeds, total	267,7	267	99,7	2,23	1,88	84,3
of that: oil rape	166,5	164,0	98,5	2,32	1,97	84,9
sunflower	82,9	82,9	99,9	2,26	1,81	80,1
Legumes	11,6	9,3	80,2	1,62	1,47	90,7
Feeding crops	0,9	0,9	100,9	36,29	23,62	65,1
Fruits, total	5,7	5,4	94,7	8,20	7,46	91,0
of that: apples	2,7	2,7	100	8,18	12,75	155,9
peaches	0,7	0,7	100	4,80	2,91	60,6
Consumer vegetables	28,5	30,6	107,2	10,93	9,30	85,1
of that: tomatoes	2,9	2,7	93,1	17,76	13,49	76,0
Cabbage	4,1	4,1	100,0	12,12	11,33	93,5
Wine grapes	9,2	8	86,7	4,53	2,61	57,6

Source: Report on Agriculture and Food in the Slovak Republic 2011, available: www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID

Table 5

Production of major crops (Slovakia)

In thousands tons

Crops	2009	2010	Index 2010/2009
Cereals, total	3 330.0	2 554.2	76.7
Of that: wheat	1 537.9	1 185.3	77.1
barley	675.5	361.4	53.5
maize	988.1	921.3	93.2
Industrial sugar beet	898.8	977.7	108.8
Potatoes	216.1	125.9	58.3
Oil rape	386.7	322.5	83.4
Sunflower	187.2	150.3	80.3
Legumes	15.5	17.0	113.4
Fruits	46.3	40.5	87.5
Vegetables*	312.1	284.4	91.1
Wine grapes	41.8	21.0	50.2

*vegetables including estimates for household gardens

Source: Report on Agriculture and Food in the Slovak Republic 2011, available: www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID

Table 6**Total crop production and average yield (Latvia).**

Crop	Total production, thsd t		Index	Average yield (t/ha)		Index
	2009	2010	2010/2009	2009	2010	2010/2009
Cereals, total	1663.1	1416.8	85.2	3.8	2.64	69.5
of that: wheat	1036.4	973	93.9	3.54	3.23	91.2
barley	238.3	184.0	77.2	6.81	5.93	87.1
rye	162.2	69.4	42.8	2.75	2.03	73.8
triticale	33.3	25.0	75.1	2.55	2.19	85.9
oats	141.4	100.6	71.2	2.33	1.59	68.2
buckwheat	4.8	5.5	113.4	0.48	0.67	140.0
Rape	204.7	223.6	109.3	2.19	2.04	93.2
Potatoes	525.4	484.3	92.2	17.5	16.1	92.0
Vegetables	182.5	151.0	82.7	20.7	17.2	83.1

Source: The Baltic course – international magazine for decision makers, available: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics/?doc=37406>

Latvian agricultural crops in 2010 the total sown area, according to preliminary data, decreased by 16.2 thousand hectares, or 1.5% compared to 2009, and was 1095.8 thousand hectares.¹¹

According to crop production between Slovakia and Latvia outlines some similarities, the situation was reversed and crops production for most commodities has fallen, particularly in case of cereals, but some separate crops have the various trend. For example in Slovakia case crop production rise of legumes and sugar beet, parallel in Latvia case crop production increase rapidly of buckwheat and rape. In consequence it draws differences in crop production priorities which depends from a large number of different circumstances between two described countries. The differences like technology, environment and climate, the price of resources and raw materials.

Conclusion

- Agriculture as one of major industries of the national economy is closely connected with the development of the whole country, especially rural regions and food production.
- Slovakia has been one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Taxation, healthcare, pensions, and social welfare reforms helped the nation to join the European Union in 2004 and to adopt the euro in 2009.
- Comparison of these two countries shows that GDP in current prices is very different and Slovakia take significantly bigger share in EU context than Latvia.
- Compared with the previous year, the total number of agricultural employed in Latvian and Slovakian continues to decline.
- The total land area differs considerably, but remains equal structure of land use. Approximately 70 % of utilised agricultural land compile arable land, some 25 % compare meadows and pastures and others makes 5 %.

¹¹ Source: Latvian news portal – Bizness DELFI. „In this year Latvian cereal harvest will be 10-15% lower than last year” [BNS | 27. July 2011 17:34] article available: <http://bizness.delfi.lv/lauksaimnieciba/duklavsgraudaugu-raza-sogad-latvija-bus-par-1015-zemaka-neka-pern.d?id=39811061>

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Summary

Agriculture as one of major industries of the national economy is closely connected with the development of the whole country, especially rural regions and food production. Therefore it should be viewed as an important factor of rural development and economic stability of the whole country. The main aim of article is to compare the position of plant production and agriculture in two EU countries: Slovakia and Latvia. Realization of the mentioned objective required the research within the period of the years 2009-2010. We used basic organizational and economic relations and numeric calculations while analyzing and forming the theoretical and practical solutions. According to crop production between Slovakia and Latvia outlines some similarities, the situation was reversed and crops production for most commodities has fallen, particularly in case of cereals, but some separate crops have the various tend. For example in Slovakia case crop production rise of legumes and sugar beet, parallel in Latvia case crop production increase rapidly of buckwheat and rape. In consequence it draws differences in crop production priorities which depends from a large number of different circumstances between two described countries.

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