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An international forum was held at the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University from October 5 to 6, 2023, dedicated to the development of higher education in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, meeting the demands of the agricultural and other relevant industries. The forum was organized within the framework of the *AgroDev project “Improving higher education aimed at supporting industries, ensuring sustainable production of quality agricultural products”* with the financial support of the European Union ERASMUS + Programme. The AgroDev project is implemented by an international consortium including 8 organizations from the European Union and Central Asia, led by the Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies.

The main purpose of the forum was to demonstrate and discuss the results of the project reached over the almost three years, exchange experience and opinions on activities and conditions to further improve the quality and compliance of higher education with the needs of the food industry in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Barriers and prerequisites for improving the competencies of teaching staff and the level of knowledge and skills of graduates were also discussed. Opportunities for more active cooperation between the academic and scientific communities of Central Asia and the European Union in the field of smart and digital solutions and advanced agricultural methods were additionally considered.

The forum was attended by 89 people representing the involved partners, involved universities’ academic staff and students, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, industry associations and representatives of business communities (manufacturers, processors, and exporters agricultural products).

During the forum, invited experts from Uzbekistan, Poland, Austria and Hungary gave presentations, participants discussed knowledge development and transfer issues, and a student poster competition was organized. 12 students from four participating universities of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan had the opportunity to prepare and present student posters covering the areas such as encouraging agricultural producers to implement quality and food safety standards; food security in ensuring the economic security of the country; development and production of innovative products, e.g. bio-chamomile jam, and other. To evaluate student posters, a special jury was organized, which assessed the relevance and practical significance for the agricultural industry, content, and other aspects. The best posters were selected and their authors received awards. Though the new food quality related laboratory was established earlier this year with support of the AgroDev project, official opening was organised within the Forum.

The AgroDev project is developed and implemented to create preconditions for preparation of qualified specialists, being able to ensure quality and food safety of agricultural products thus increasing food export potential, as well to provide regional consumers with high-quality and safe food products. Particular attention is paid to the sustainable and long-term training of qualified personnel/specialists in higher education institutions capable of fulfilling assigned tasks and promoting favorable policies for the sustainable production of quality agricultural products in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.





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