

Interviews with Lithuanian stakeholders (food SME). Roundtrip performed by student assistant Dalius Kaselis, University of Copenhagen

August 8th a meeting with two small businesses of Telšiai county –“Kontėna” and “Šatrijos Legend” - took place at the Telšiai County Business Incubator. August 9th, a meeting with “Rūta” in Šiauliai took the place. The main purpose of the meetings is to get to know these three small and medium-sized enterprises better and to establish a closer dialogue between the project and the companies. An important part of the meetings was to find out how companies generally perceive innovation, what innovations they apply to their businesses, and where the potential and limitations of the companies lie.

Initially, the companies were introduced to the SBFOODINNO project's activities, goals and ideas. All companies were also invited to the “Food Innovation in Lithuania - Toolbox” seminar for food sector companies, which will take place on September 19th, at Kaunas University of Technology.

In Telšiai, the conversation started with Sandra Repšienė, the head of “Kontėna”, who told about the company's history and activities, and introduced the production. The company was established in 2011, but since 2009 it has been a family business producing authentic Lithuanian and especially Samogitian food products such as casserole, authentic homemade Žarėnai kvass (not made from malt, but bread) or carrot candy. Most of the company's products have national heritage certificates, and word-of-mouth recipes are highly sought after by today's customers. During the meeting, much attention was paid to the application of innovative solutions in the company - S. Repšienė mentioned that cooperation with scientists, consultations on equipment, packaging technologies would be very welcome and interesting. This would help the company to innovate more.



Sandra Riepšienė, Head of “Kontėna” presents the production from her business



*Moments from a meeting with
S.Riepšiene at the Telšiai County
Business Incubator*

Later we continued our interview with Gabriele Mekioniene, head of “Šatrija Legend”. This small enterprise is located in Luokė, a small town in Telšiai district municipality, 21 km southeast of Telšiai. The company was established in 2016 with a project for self-employment; the main activity of the company - catering services during various holidays or events. According to G. Mekionienė, innovation is “something new, untested on a regional or Lithuanian scale. It can be both a product and a technology or service. Our company focuses on innovation in the area of naturalness and making food available to all foods, raw, vegetarian, vegan.”



*Moments from a meeting with
G.Mekionien at the Telšiai County
Business Incubator*

We would like to thank Jolanta Norvaišienė, Director of Telšiai County Business Incubator, who wholeheartedly helped organize meetings with small businesses.

In the city center of Šiauliai, chocolate factory “Rūta” is located, where we met the director of this candy factory Rolandas Pridotkus, head of innovation Rūta Gilaitienė and production director Rimantas Gluodas. “Rūta” is one of the few companies established in Tsarist times in Lithuania. The confectionery company now employs over 240 people. There is no shortage of innovative solutions both in recipes and production technologies. Nowadays, the company focuses on the completely innovative “Greenz” candy as a response to changing needs as people begin to live healthier lives, pay more attention to what they choose, what they consume and how they live. “Greenz” products also represent a change in the range - they have no added sugar, only pure natural materials, so the company turns to naturalness. Sweets are enriched with pea protein and are highly nutritious. SBFOODINNO project also focuses on the popularization and potential of plant proteins.

Moreover, “Rūta” hosts the only chocolate museum in Lithuania, which not only boasts “Ruta's” candy factory, but also attracts huge tourist flows from more than 70 countries. This innovative museum undoubtedly contributes to the promotion of Lithuanian business and Lithuanian chocolate.



Moments from the meeting at the chocolate museum of “Rūta”

Through its activities, meetings, events, contacts, dissemination of knowledge, the SBFOODINNO project seeks to promote the potential of small and medium-sized businesses to innovate and to respond to market needs and global trends in innovation field.