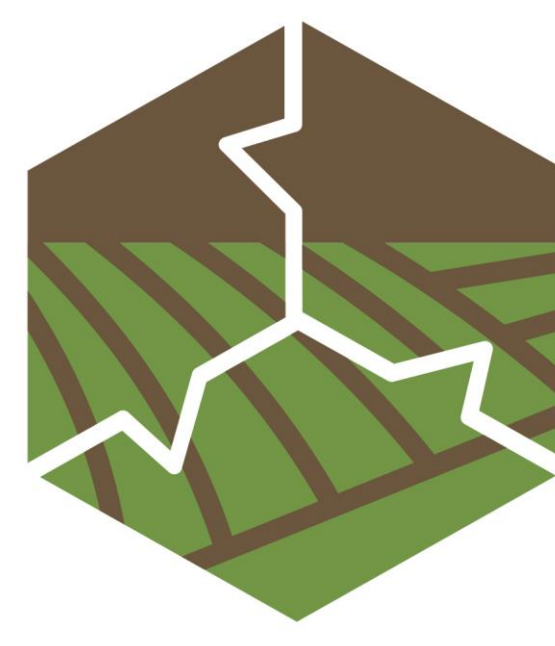


AGRIDEMO



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# Country Report for LATVIA: Development and characteristics of agricultural demonstrations

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**BSC** | BALTIC STUDIES CENTRE

## Topics of demonstration

- Sectoral coverage:**
  - arable (combinable and root) crops
  - fodder crops
  - open field vegetables
  - fruit trees and shrubs
  - animal husbandry – beef and dairy cattle
- Systems of agricultural production:**
  - conventional
  - integrated
  - biological
- Topics:**
  - crop protection
  - biodiversity and nature management
  - conservation agriculture
  - new crops and varieties
  - animal health and nutrition
- Scope:**
  - predominance of single technologies over whole farm approaches
  - yet often contextualised in wider settings and farming practices
- Sustainability dimensions:**
  - economic – strong
  - environmental – growing
  - social – underrepresented

## Providers and purpose of demonstration

- Organisers:**
  - public research organisations (institutes)
  - advisory organisations
  - non-governmental organisations
  - producers' cooperatives
- Sites:**
  - research farms/plots
  - commercial farms
    - networks of demo farms
- Main purpose:**
  - provision of educational and training opportunities
  - information gathering and sharing

## History

- Turn of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - abolishment of serfdom
  - rise in the literacy level
  - initial self-organisation of farmers into unions
- Early 20<sup>th</sup> century (especially 1930s)
  - role of agricultural production in the economic development of the country
  - wider application of research-based solutions
  - establishment of several sites for field trials
- Socialist regime (1940-1990)
  - collective farms
  - large-scale agricultural exhibitions
  - farmer competitions
- Renewed activity under market economy
  - new public and private entities
  - emerging sectors
  - introduction of designated public funding schemes



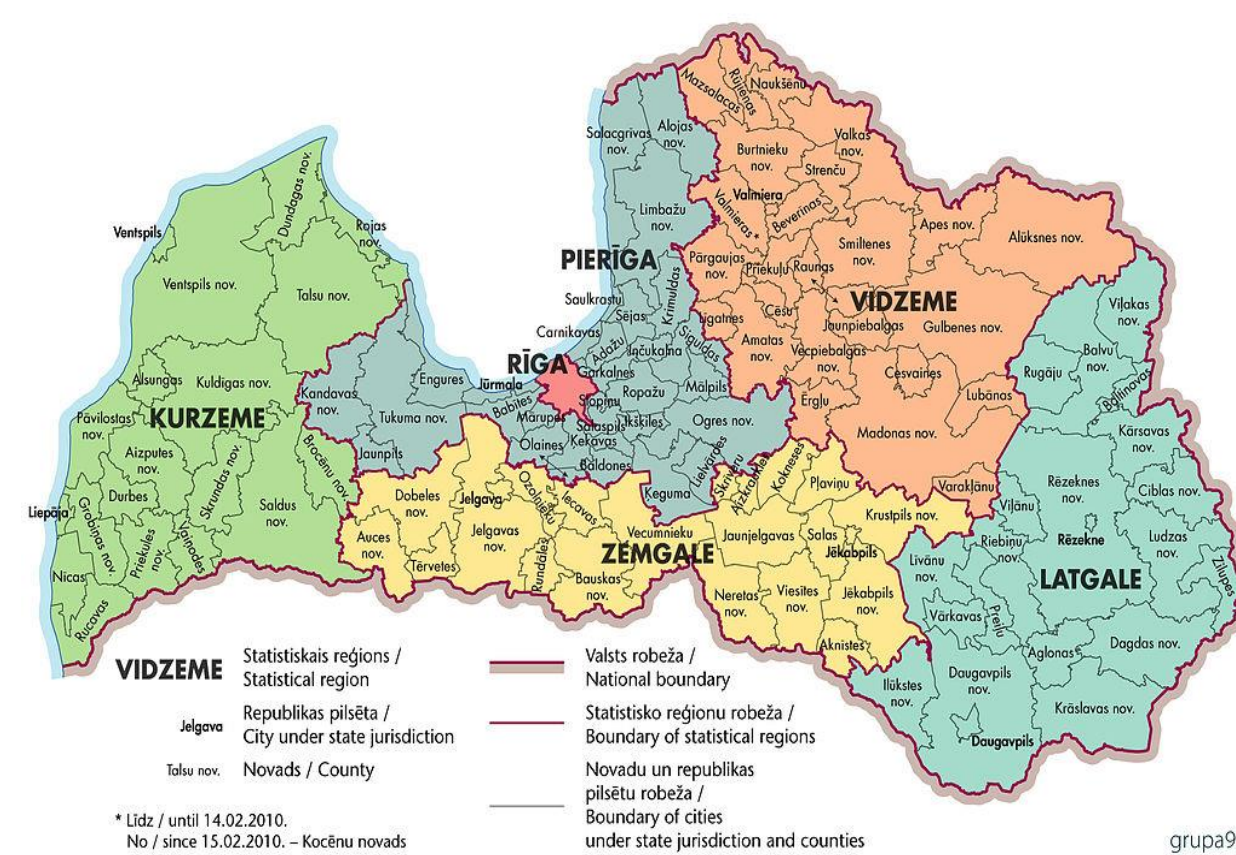
## Types of Demonstrations

- Publicly organised demonstration events:**
  - Rural/Farm days (also Berry day, Spring/Autumn day, Tractor day)
  - organised at least once or twice a year by each organisation
  - a mixed format of an indoor lecture/seminar and a field walk
- Presence of smaller scale, more **informal formats** of learning:
  - annual mutual farm visits by cooperative members
  - interest groups (up to five farms) assisted by local advisors
- Differentiation between **field trials and demonstrations:**
  - field trials for research and/or study purposes
  - specialised educational farms for training agricultural specialists



## Access

- Regional coverage**
  - demonstration activities taking place in all regions of Latvia
  - target audience – national
  - imbalances in the relative distribution of demos in the peripheral areas towards the border of Latvia in Vidzeme and Latgale
  - distance between the most distant points not exceeding 550 km
  - accessibility limited by poor road quality and low income levels



- Age and gender**
  - higher share of female researchers and advisors involved in demonstrations
  - sector-specific biases among demo visitors – e.g. more female attendants in the dairy sector, more male attendants in beef and sheep production
  - demonstrations tend to be attended by younger and middle-aged farmers

## Other Issues

- Increasing number of **project-based activities** lasting for fixed periods of two to three years
- Funding** for demonstration activities coming from both national and international sources
- Presence of educational/demonstration farms that focus on **lay visitors** (schoolchildren, adult tourists, families)

## Distinguishing Characteristics

- Predominance of research-based demonstrations
- Commercial farms increasingly attracted as hosts of demonstrations
- Development of networks of demonstration farms
- A mix of regular demos at research sites and short-term / project-based involvement of commercial farms
- Growing frequency of various public demonstration events
- High interest from visitors
- Importance of informal modes of peer-to-peer learning as complementary to public demo formats



The PLAID project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727388 (PLAID). The AgriDemo project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 728061