

Publicēts LLU portālā: <https://www.llu.lv/en/article/2021-09-30/the-first-students-are-enrolled-in-sustainable-agriculture-and-forestry-study>



## The first students are enrolled in sustainable agriculture and forestry study programs



In September 2021, the first students who chose to obtain higher education in the bachelor's study programs "Sustainable Agriculture" and "Sustainable Forestry" started their studies at LLU. Both programs are licensed last year and are implemented in English only. Although the programs are primarily intended for foreign students, Latvian students can also study in them.

Environmentally friendly agriculture as a motivation for studies

Nino Panculaia from Georgia has started her studies in the sustainable agriculture program of the Faculty of Agriculture this autumn. She previously obtained a bachelor's degree in Georgian Philology and a master's degree in Education Administration, and decided to focus on agriculture.

"When the COVID-19 pandemic began, I left the capital to live in a village and was actively engaged in organic farming without any chemicals. I read the literature as much as possible and listened to the experience of organic farmers. There is no water in the village, and in conditions of water shortage and proximity to nature, I tried to get the maximum result from my garden. This process was a test for me to make sure that my desire and ability could match each other. I aimed to strike a balance in all of this and used the experience as a strong argument in favour of my decision. Fortunately, as expected, I got the result and decided to study this area at a scientific level. I wanted to know how to create an environment in which there is less damage to the environment, and actions carried out in the environment, in turn, can be eco-friendly," says the student.

Her choice in favour of Latvia and LLU was determined by several factors. One of them is the possibility to obtain an internationally recognized higher education diploma, but other circumstances were no less important. Nino admits that she has carefully researched information about the country before and concluded that Latvia is a safe place not only for local but also for international students. Latvia has a high peace index, characterized by a low crime rate, a stable political situation and a very low probability of natural disasters. In addition, the state's attitude towards nature is important to the student. The fact that Latvia is the fourth most forested country in Europe and almost half of all the country's forests are covered with pine trees left a very positive impression on her.

The student believes that coming to LLU is her greatest success: "It is very responsible for me to be the first and only student in the new program of such a great university. Each subsequent lecture is full of challenges. When I think about my past and the situation I meet here, I consider being very lucky. Even in the best of dreams, I could not have imagined that I would be given "private lectures" and I would be able to get a perfect education in all directions than I expected. In addition, my program director and dean did everything they could to make the process very comfortable for me. I will remember their kindness, welcome, and greeting for the rest of my life".

Forestry studies as a start to an international career

Normunds Zuševics lives in Latvia and speaks Latvian, but has started his studies at the Faculty of Forestry in the international program "Sustainable Forestry". He currently lives in Zemgale, Īle Parish, where his family roots can also be found, but he was once born and has spent most of his life in Riga. Normunds received his secondary education at the Riga 2nd Gymnasium and behind his studies he also studied at the Riga Graduate School of Law.

There are several reasons for his motivation to study forestry, and some of them can be traced back to his childhood.

"I am the owner of a small forest and I want to afforest other areas as well, so there is a great desire to acquire in-depth knowledge in this area. At one time, his father was involved in forestry and the lumber industry, which aroused interest in this sector as a child. Currently, I live in a forest-surrounded property in Īle Parish and I want to understand forestry practices not only from an economic perspective, but also to gain knowledge about the diversity of forest ecosystems and the structure of different habitats. My goal is to manage in a way that causes as little damage as possible to their natural development," says the student.

Although the Faculty of Forestry traditionally offers students studies in Latvian, Normunds has chosen to acquire knowledge of the forest industry in English, which he is fluent in. He believes that they will provide greater opportunities and readiness to continue studies elsewhere in Europe, as well as to work internationally in this field.

Combined local knowledge and international experience

Although LLU has accumulated a significant knowledge and research base, until now studies in agriculture and forestry were not available to foreign students. This changed in 2019, when the implementation of the project “Consolidation of LLU study programs and development of new programs” (8.2.1.0/18/A/007) financed by the European Social Fund was started and the development of new study programs began.

The study programs “Sustainable Agriculture” and “Sustainable Forestry” have been prepared by university lecturers in various faculties of LLU. Their offer will promote the export of Latvian higher education abroad and testify to the international competitiveness of the university. University cooperation partners, experts from Latvian research institutes and foreign universities have also participated in the development of the programs, which allows them to combine strong academic knowledge with international experience.

The aim of the project “Consolidation of LLU study programs and development of new programs” is to reduce the fragmentation of LLU study programs and to create four new study programs in the languages of the European Union, strengthening the sharing of resources. Its total funding is EUR 396 114.66, of which EUR 336 697.46 is from the European Social Fund.

In total, LLU, as one of the leading universities of life sciences and technology in the Baltic States, currently implements 59 active programs in Latvian, of which 15 programs are also offered in English.

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