

Former Gothenburg resident working, living in Ukraine

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Chandler Mazour is Monsanto technology development lead for Ukraine, Russia.

As events have unfolded in Ukraine and Russia, the former manager of the Monsanto Learning Center in Gothenburg has been working for Monsanto in Ukraine.

Actually, Chandler Mazour is the technology development lead for both Ukraine and Russia.

He started his new job in mid-January.

Although Mazour declined to talk about the politics between Ukraine and Russia, he was open to sharing about his new job that entails bringing new hybrids to market, marketing and selling them.

“We also teach our customers the best way to use them,” he said.

Based out of Kiev, Ukraine, Mazour works with teams to accomplish these objectives.

Monsanto has been in Ukraine for several years but recently brought a focus to the country.

In fact, he said the company is becoming more integrated throughout Eastern Europe and also has a presence in the Middle East and Africa.

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Business in these areas is growing rapidly, he said, because of the demand for global food production.

Arable land in Ukraine and Russia is being converted into food production but it might not be efficient, Mazour said.

“It may be 75 bushels to the acre today and we can work with them so they can learn how to produce 150 bushels,” he explained. “Ag companies, like Monsanto, are going to invest in that and provide farmers resources to improve output.”

The chance for Mazour to work in Eastern Europe came about last August.

“Ten months ago, I could have never have predicted this,” he said. “It’s such an opportunity to work with farmers in Ukraine and Russia and live and work in a wonderful country.”

Mazour said the new position has been good and described his colleagues as “amazing,” noting that the people he works with are Ukrainians and Russians who mostly make up the 150 Monsanto employees in the country.

“There are three of us expatriates here,” he said.

The most surprising aspect of his job, Mazour said, is the eagerness of Ukrainian farmers to learn new agricultural technologies and partner with Monsanto.



Corn is the largest crop grown in Ukraine and oil-seed rape (from a plant of the cabbage family

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that is the same as canola oil in Canada) is second.

Mazour said the Ukrainian growing season in the northern part of the country is similar to conditions in North Dakota and Minnesota while southern Ukraine is like spring, summer and fall in Kansas and Missouri.

His biggest challenge, he said, is being separated from his wife and children, who plan to move to Ukraine in early June.

When Mazour first flew into Kiev, he noticed 20- to 30-story apartment buildings and said he had a sense of being in a young country 25 years removed from Soviet control.

Having traveled throughout the world, he said Kiev felt different.

“The architecture, the smells, the sites. All good but different,” Mazour said. “It’s a wonderful city.”

Language has been a bit of a problem but Mazour said the Russian lessons he’s taking are helpful.

“I have started to put together signs and menus and I know how to say ‘sandwich,’ ” he said.

Mazour described the people of Kiev as kind, warm and welcoming and much like the people 50 years ago in the United States.

“So many people have invited me to their houses,” he said. “It feels like Thanksgiving with Grandpa and Grandma. They are so gracious and amazing.”

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Borsch is the most prominent food in the country which Mazour described as a beet-based soup that may include meat, potatoes or beef tongue.

“Seafood is good here and the chicken tastes better than in the United States,” he said. “Beef tartar (ground beef that can be mixed with other ingredients) is also quite popular.”

Drinking vodka when meeting people for business is common, Mazour said.

In addition to Ukraine, Mazour’s work in Eastern Europe has taken him to Belgrade, Yugoslavia; Moscow and Voronezh, Russia; Istanbul, Turkey; and Budapest, Hungary. He will fly to Barcelona, Spain, in April.

So far, his most interesting experience happened in Vienna, Austria, when he attended Mass in a magnificent cathedral named St. Stephan’s.

During his grade school years near Lawrence, Mazour went to a school and church named St. Stephen’s.

“It was quite a feeling sitting in a cathedral in Vienna with the same name as the church and school I went to as a kid,” he said.

Mazour lives in an apartment which is a kilometer away from Kiev’s Independence Square where violent protests ended in February.

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