



## H-LEVEL

*In the beginning, vegetable farmer and nowadays, famous poppy farmer.*

### Identification details:

Name: Bálint Pém

Location: Patince, Slovakia

Farm size: 530 ha

Year established: 2000

Main activities: poppy seeds, poppy products, market crops

Web / Facebook / Twitter: <https://kralovstvomaku.sk/>

Bálint Pém can be characterised as an agro-manager who deeply enjoy working in the agricultural sector. This is the reason for his approach to farming. His strengths are toughness and diligence, through which he overcomes all obstacles and take his business to a higher level. He knows that if he wants to move forward, it is necessary to learn constantly. Bálint Pém prime seeks to learn from the best ones and therefore does not hesitate to invest in consultants who can provide him with valuable information.

At adolescence, he knew he wanted to be a farmer, just like his grandparents. His family inherited 7 hectares of agricultural land and a small settlement in Patince, which served as a starting position for his agribusiness. He started to grow vegetables and fruits with his parents, but now he recalls, with a smile, how he regularly traveled to FEM SUA in Nitra by his car with a loaded trailer to sell the grown production to the then existing wholesalers on his way to school. After his studies, he began to specialise in cultivating early potatoes, Chinese cabbage, celery, and so their family farm grew to 15 ha. Over time, primarily due to fluctuations in prices, they decided to expand their acreage and focus on cultivating market crops.

He used the opportunity to submit a project to purchase machinery from SAPARD program. His project was approved, but he did not have money to buy machines. Therefor he accepted the position of the main agronomist at the big farm, and with their assistance he was able to finalise SAPARD project. He held his position in big farm for 5 years, but at the same time, he continued to work hard on the development of his farm, called H-Level (meaning "high level").

Bálint was at the same time one of the main initiators of the foundation of the Association of Young Farmers (ASYF), where he became the first successful leader. After leaving his employment, he is entirely devoted to his farm, which has grown to more than 530 ha. Of this area, the latest 100 hectares are converted to organic farming. In Patince, they initially focused on cultivating market crops. Still, in recent years they have been trying to focus more on non-traditional crops such as mustard, facelia, lantern for seeds, peas and, recently, the poppy seed has become the leader of crop rotation.

As mentioned above, he gained a lot of experience as chairman of ASYF, where he got an opportunity to peek under cover of the work of his young farmer colleagues in the other EU Member States, which is another source of his business inspiration. Positive examples from the Wester Europeare main drivers of farm development. However, he does not forget the traditions and considers cooperation a key. He says that his family farm is unique is tradition, innovation and collaboration.

His own methodology governs the choice of crop representation in crop rotation. As a rule, he monitors the five-year financial results for each crop. The last two crops, which in this period achieved the worst results, are replaced by others. Thus, for example, he has eliminated rape from the sowing process and then corn. In terms of farmer ranking, the most economically stable crop is durum wheat, which gives a standard yield of over 5 t/ha. Poppy is widely diversified by Bálint Pém. Part of the production is grown for the pharmaceutical industry, part for consumption, and is harvested both by machines and hands.

Organic poppy has recently been added to the farm's portfolio. Poppy under the PEMAK brand can be found in the company's online store and distributed to several stores throughout Slovakia. The plan is to expand the range of products made from poppy in the cosmetics industry.

Today, it is possible to buy specialities such as poppy chocolate, all handmade products. For lovers of liquid drinks, poppy wine is available. According to his words, poppy is an unexplored crop with great potential for widespread use. It is currently facing the challenge of growing poppy in the organic farming system as effectively as possible. Bálint Pém also produces and delivers the pea to Hungary, where it is part of the new pig compound feed formulas, showing promising results in up to 10% higher pig additions.

A progressive farmer considers the focus on organic poppy and its finalisation a significant goal for the future.

### Photos:

