

1 archive box containing administrative documents of the Pala Dairy Cooperative from the 1930s–1940s

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History

Cooperatives, including economic ones, played a significant role in Estonia's economic and social life, particularly from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. During the latter half of the 19th century, the process of purchasing farms into private ownership gained momentum, and cooperative initiatives allowed farmers to organise their activities more effectively. Economic cooperatives contributed to the development of national consciousness and taught the value of working together.

Estonia's first dairy cooperative was founded in 1893, and by the first half of the 20th century, hundreds of such cooperatives existed, bringing together thousands of farmers. The Central Association of Dairy Cooperatives "Estonia" was established in 1911 and renamed "Võiekспорт" ("Butter Export") in 1936. Between 1930 and 1940, the National Union of Dairy Cooperatives was active in Estonia.

Dairy cooperatives were dissolved during the Soviet occupation in the course of collectivization, and the dairy industries were nationalized. Although the archives of local dairy cooperatives are very incomplete, they describe not only the local economic situation but also the operation of the community and its leaders.

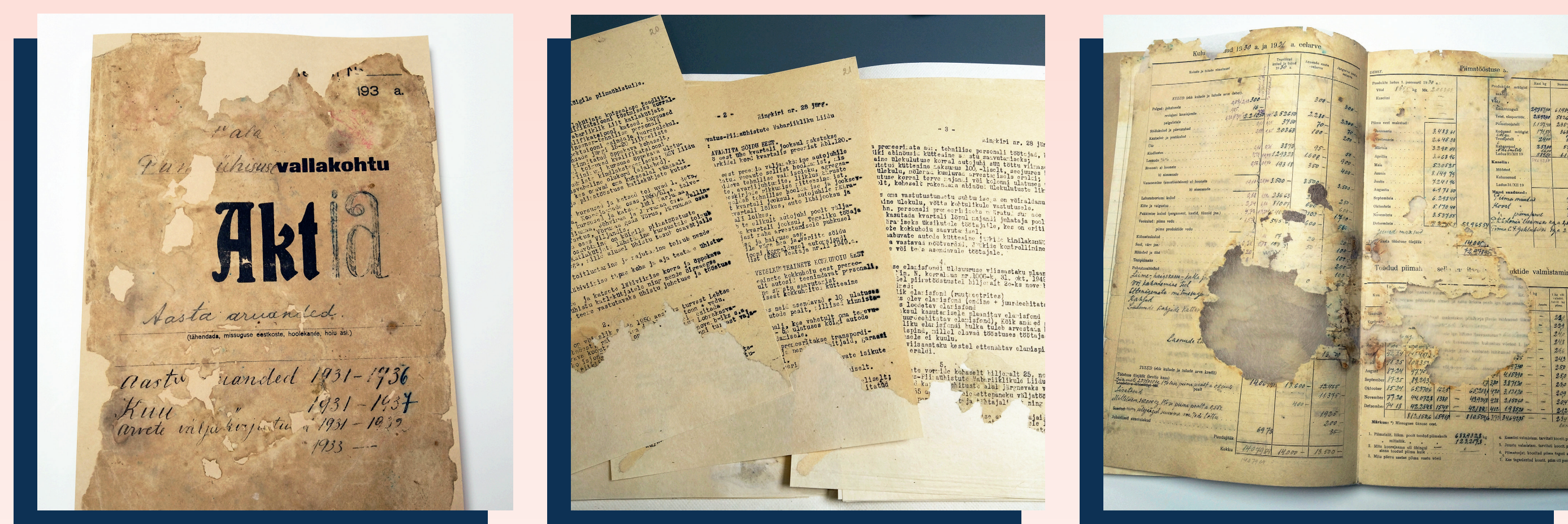
Reaching the archive

The documents were handed over to the National Archives by a private individual from the Pala area. The record was found in the attic of a local farm and reached the archive in very poor condition. The main damage is caused by mold. The moisture-damaged paper is extremely fragile in places and has suffered significant losses; in some areas, the sheets were stuck together. Very dusty, deformed, and with edges gnawed by mice.

The acceptance report was drawn up on 27 January 2022, and the report states: "1 archive box containing administrative documents of the Pala Dairy Cooperative from the 1930s–1940s. The precise composition of the archival materials will be determined during arrangement after conservation."

In the same year, the record underwent gamma irradiation with an absorption dose in P00 ranging from 10.5 kGy to 18.2 kGy.

After conservation



Historical references

Meinhard Karelson. Cooperative dairy production in Estonia (until 1944): the Estonian Dairy Museum was established. *Agraarteadus* (2001) No 4, pp. 260–269. https://agrt.emu.ee/pdf/chronicle/2001_4_karelson2.pdf
Gristel Ramler, National Archives of Estonia, Tallinn Acquisition Department, Private Archives and Reference Collection

Before conservation



Conservation

Initially, during the process of disentangling one large pile of badly damaged papers, it became clear that it consisted of six separate document folders and bindings. There are 368 pages in total.

- All the pages were dry-cleaned of dust, fly specks, mouse droppings, and mould under the local exhaust above the worktable, using a rubber sponge, a brush, a scalpel, and a low-suction vacuum cleaner.
- Corroded metal and paper fragments were removed from the stapled bindings.
- The sewn bindings were taken apart. To create bifolia, strips had been used as the spine of the binding, and these had been glued to join the pages in such a way that, in some places, the text had been glued under the strip. All strip attachments were removed.
- Pages damaged by mould and stuck together had to be separated from one another millimetre by millimetre with a scalpel. In some places, however, the paper had been so severely eaten away by the fungus that it was not possible to save the text.
- Pages where the paper had become fragile due to mould and had extensive losses were lined on both sides with thin Japanese tissue (RK 0), using 3% methyl cellulose as the adhesive.
- The surviving parts of the binding board covers, along with their information, were backed onto new board of appropriate thickness and tone.
- Pages with mouse-gnawed edges, which had sharp and deep indentations, were filled with Japanese paper of suitable thickness and tone (M4 mitsumate 37 g). Pages whose edges had been gnawed in a shallow or curved manner did not require filling.
- All deformed pages, those with tears and repairs, as well as the lined pages, were humidified and flattened between felts and then dried between blotting papers in a hand press.

Summary

The conserved pages will not be rebound into their bindings, because after the archivist describes the record and adds it to the ERA.4000 – Agricultural Cooperatives collection, the record will also be digitised, as it has mould damage. This record will be accessible to researchers only in digital form.