

Rewards for Voting
This woman is buying groceries using coupons that she received for voting. Supermarket chains in Lithuania gave these coupons to citizens who voted in a 2003 election. In that election, Lithuanians voted to join the EU.



18.6 Lithuania: One of Three Baltic States

Three former republics of the Soviet Union—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—are known as the Baltic States. They line the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. Lithuania can look either east or west for political ties. More and more, it looks west.

An Economy Based on Soil and the Sea The fertile soil of Lithuania produces good crops. Farmers grow potatoes, sugar beets, and flax for cloth. Fields of grain cross the central plains. Dairy farms are everywhere, and cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry provide meat and eggs. The Baltic Sea provides a rich source of food as well, with its fishing grounds and fish farms.

Lithuania has limited mineral resources. The Lithuanians mine limestone, gravel, sand, and clay to make cement, glass, and ceramics. But fossil fuels and metals are in short supply.

Lithuania Looks West to Europe Lithuania has a long history of unity, having come together as a nation around 1200. With a strong sense of nationalism, Lithuania was the first republic of the Soviet Union to declare its independence as a nation-state in 1990. Since their independence from Soviet rule, the Lithuanian people have reformed their political system. They have looked toward Europe for their models, and today they have a democratic government with leaders chosen in free and fair elections.

Lithuania has sought to join the European community economically as well. In 2004, Lithuania became a member of the **European Union**, or EU. Chapter 14 explores the EU in detail. Lithuania receives monetary support from the EU to help develop its economy.

Lithuania has also joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. Members of NATO promise to defend each other if attacked by another country. By joining NATO and the EU, Lithuanians hope to create a future of peace and prosperity.

