

SOCIAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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D. A. Shapovalov, A. A. Fomin

The article deals with the legal and social aspects of sustainable development of rural areas in the Russian Federation. The materials and recommendations of the parliamentary hearings of the state Duma Committee on agrarian issues were used in the preparation. Rural areas have extensive natural, demographic, economic, historical and cultural potential. There is a need to ensure that the objectives of state support for agricultural development and sustainable rural development are in line with the expected results of the implementation of the relevant measures and the mechanisms for their implementation, including the provision of the necessary level of funding.

Keywords: *sustainable development of rural areas, farmland, state program, modernization of the agricultural sector*

The current state of rural areas in the Russian Federation and the characteristics of their development.

About 37.9 million people live in rural areas, which is more than 26% of the population of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the agricultural sector employs about 4.8 million people (6.7% of all employed in the economy). More than 4% of gross value added is generated in agriculture, hunting and forestry. More than a third of the country's economic sectors are connected with the agricultural sector.

Rural areas have extensive natural, demographic, economic, historical and cultural potential. The sustainable development of rural areas should be understood as the creation of conditions for ensuring a stable improvement in the quality and standard of living of the rural population on the basis of the advantages of rural lifestyles in order to preserve the social and economic potential of rural areas and ensure their national functions – production, demographic, labor, spatial and communication. Economically stable and socially developed rural areas are the guarantor of preserving the historical and cultural foundations of the identity of the peoples of Russia, maintaining social control and territorial independence, so their development should become a priority vector of state policy in the field of national security.

However, at the moment the development of rural areas in the Russian Federation is uneven. Despite the positive dynamics of development of the agro-industrial complex in recent years, increasing socio-economic gap between the city and the village, the level and quality of life of the rural population as a whole significantly lag behind the standard of living of urban residents, remain relevant infrastructure constraints, difficult access to the services of social organizations, information technology, modern means of mass communications, which does not allow to finally overcome the degradation processes in rural areas..

In Russia, over the past decades, the main way of development of rural areas, regardless of their agricultural potential, was reduced to a narrow sectoral approach, which was characterized by the preservation of the «functional purity» of the village and the prevention of the development of other industries, except agriculture. The lack of a differentiated approach to the development of rural areas, the blurring of differences between «rural» and «agricultural» territories, led to the formation of a predominantly agricultural sector of the rural economy, often irrational allocation of productive forces, underdevelopment of social infrastructure and other serious problems. Therefore, the rural area as an object of state policy requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account both the territorial aspect and the totality of social relations, including economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental and other indicators. The way out of degradation is a comprehensive diversification of the rural economy, support for farming and alternative forms of employment and self-employment, including the development of industrial and processing industries, crafts and rural tourism, rural cooperation, the organization and removal of administrative barriers to the sale of products through markets, facilitating access to natural, including land, material, financial and information resources, support for the activities of consulting centers and the development of infrastructure that allows people to receive a decent income.

In order to form a unified state policy for rural territories, increase of efficiency of financial and organizational support of measures aimed at employment growth, level and quality of life of the rural population, developed and approved by order of the Government of the Russian Federation from February 2, 2015 No. 151-R long-term Strategy of sustainable development of rural territories of the Russian Federation for the period until 2030 (hereinafter – the Strategy).

Today, the state program for the development of agriculture and regulation of markets for agricultural products, raw materials and food for 2013-2020 (hereinafter also – the State Program) and its constituent Federal target program «Sustainable development of rural areas for 2014-2017 and for the period up to 2020» (hereinafter also – Federal target program), as well as other state programs of the Russian Federation in the fields of education, health, culture and tourism, physical culture and sports, housing and utilities, social support, transport, communications, economic development, employment, environmental protection, environmental management, forestry.

Labour resources in rural areas, employment and income of rural population.

Agriculture in most administrative regions is still the main area of employment of rural residents, while it is characterized by a low level of productivity in the industry (according to various estimates, 8-10 times lower than in the most developed countries), the growth of which is constrained not only by investment and technological factors, but also by the underdevelopment in rural areas of alternative activities designed to concentrate the surplus labor released from agricultural production.

At the same time, the standard of living of the working rural population as a whole remains extremely low, the gap between the city and the village in terms of income is increasing. Wages in agriculture in recent years has been on average almost 2 times lower than the average in the economy (in 2016, the average monthly wage of agricultural workers amounted to 21.4 thousand rubles, or 58.4% of the average wage in the country's economy). At the same time, the State program for the development of agriculture and regulation of markets for agricultural products, raw materials and food for 2013-2020 provides for bringing the ratio of wages in agriculture and the average for the country's economy to only 55 %, which does not contribute to the elimination of existing imbalances and does not correspond to the concept of introducing a single «standard of well-being».

Scientific and personnel support.

The most urgent task today is to address the issues of scientific and personnel support of the rural economy and social sphere.

Agriculture and the agro-industrial complex are experiencing an acute shortage of qualified personnel. Since 1990, the output of workers and employees of agricultural professions has decreased by more than 2.5 times, and the number of educational institutions of primary vocational education has decreased by more than 4 times.

According to the departmental accounting of the Ministry of agriculture of Russia, the shortage of certified specialists in the industry is more than 38 thousand people (16%), and the shortage of workers with vocational education - more than 310 thousand people (29%).

The system of higher agricultural education includes 54 universities, including 31 agricultural universities, 22 agricultural academies and one agricultural Institute. Educational institutions of the Ministry of agriculture also implement programs of additional professional education. This drew the attention of the problem of reducing the quality of educational activities of higher educational institutions of agricultural profile, detected by the Federal Education and Science Supervision Agency (Rosobrnadzor).

It does not take into account that agricultural education and applied agricultural science have pronounced features: the educational process requires the acquisition and use of complex laboratory equipment, equipment and technologies, the maintenance of land plots on which agricultural land, buildings, structures, facilities of pilot production and training units of branch universities, educational facilities. Their activities related to maintaining and enhancing the fertility of farmland experienced, the implementation of breeding and seed production activities, nursery development, establishing of perennial plantings of intensive type, breeding work requires significant additional costs.

It should be noted that in the system of higher agricultural education and additional agricultural education there is no compulsory course on sustainable development of rural areas.

As for the scientific support of the agro-industrial complex, it should be noted that the number of state and non-profit organizations engaged in scientific research since 1990 has decreased from two to one and a half thousand, and the number of researchers has decreased by almost a third.

Agricultural science has been seriously weakened and funding for basic research has been significantly reduced. Scientific departments, a number of research institutes and experimental stations were liquidated.

In view of the above, the application of best international practices and the introduction of the best agricultural technologies, conservation, support and development of agricultural science should be one of the most important areas of state agricultural policy.

Environmental management and environmental protection in rural areas.

Russia has a large land potential in rural areas, but for more than 20 years the area of productive and environmentally friendly land has been steadily declining.

In practice, agricultural production in the Russian Federation is carried out not only on agricultural lands, but also on the lands of other categories (including the lands of settlements, forest lands, lands of defense and security, etc.).

With this in mind, the priority of land protection in the composition of lands of any category as an essential component of the environment and the means of production in agriculture and forestry before using land as real estate is one of the basic principles of land legislation.

The need to improve natural resource management systems in the Russian Federation is becoming increasingly urgent due to inadequate use of agricultural land, forest, water and other natural resources, reduction of biodiversity, environmental degradation and, as a result, deterioration of public health.

Climate change increases the damage caused by natural disasters. In particular, during floods, large areas of rural areas are exposed to mechanical, chemical and biological pollution. Forest fires cause enormous environmental and socio-economic damage. Landfills and landfills have a negative impact on the environment. There is an acute issue of disposal of household waste removed from urban areas, as landfills for the latter are often located in rural areas.

The problems in the sphere of preservation and reproduction of land fertility remain acute. On a large area there are various negative processes-intensive development of erosion, waterlogging, salinization, acidification, desertification, flooding, overgrowing of agricultural lands with low-value forest plantations, as well as weeds and quarantine plants, which leads to land degradation, loss of fertility of agricultural lands and their withdrawal from economic circulation.

Unfortunately, the growth of water scarcity in the vast territories of our country, reduction of species diversity of flora and fauna, land degradation, accumulation in soil and water of a number of particularly persistent and dangerous pollutants of the natural environment are associated with the development of agriculture.

Even 50 years ago it was believed that the main violators of the natural balance are industry and transport, and the possible harmful impact of agriculture on the environment was underestimated. The deterioration of the quality of the earth is an alarming and intractable phenomenon. The above-mentioned degradation processes not only permanently remove the land from agricultural circulation, but also disrupt long-term environmental relations, change the

water balance, contribute to desertification, and on a large scale and in the future – lead to partial climate change.

The agro-industrial complex in modern conditions, continues to be the main polluter of the land and other elements of the environment: wastes and wastewaters of cattle-breeding complexes, farms and integrated poultry farms, use of agricultural chemicals and pesticides manufacturing, the weakening of the industrial and technological discipline, the difficulty of monitoring in agricultural facilities scattered over wide areas, – all this leads to the fact that the state of land and the environment in general in rural areas remains unsatisfactory, a number of regions have signs of emergency environmental situation or ecological disaster.

In this regard, the search for innovative, science-based methods and technologies in agriculture, including soil quality management, comes to the fore along with the development of traditional institutions for the maintenance and reproduction of land.

Recently in the world practice such concepts as «smart agriculture», «organic» and «precise» agriculture come to the fore.

Unfortunately, in Russia the practical use of these methods is still of a point nature.

The most important tool for the rational use and protection of land and other natural resources, which are of particular importance for rural areas, is a set of measures for land management. Unfortunately, at present, the potential of land use planning is undeservedly ignored by both public authorities and economic entities.

In this regard, it seems appropriate to prepare a new version of the Federal law «on land management», which should address the following issues:

- classification of land management by goals and objects, depending on the availability of public and private interests in land management procedures;
- establishment of the procedure of land management, including improvement of procedures of state supervision in the field of land management and examination of land management documentation;
- development of mechanisms of interdepartmental cooperation at the Federal, regional and local levels during land management;
- defined rules and cases of land management on a land that is in federal ownership;
- harmonization of land legislation and other regulatory legal acts regulating land management and cadastral activities with international law in the field of land management, as well as with forest, water, urban planning, and other branches of legislation.

Development of the agricultural sector and diversification of the rural economy.

Prospects and forecast of development of rural areas are largely determined by the state of agro-industrial production, primarily agriculture.

The priorities of the state policy in the sphere of the agro-industrial complex are determined by the State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food for 2013–2020, which provides for the integrated development of the agro-industrial complex taking into account Russia's accession to the WTO.

At the same time, it is important to understand that, despite the successes that the industry has shown in recent years, a number of unsolved problems have remained. At present, the current macroeconomic indicators do not contribute to the increase in the level of profitability of agricultural producers. The sanctions that some states have imposed since 2014 on Russia affect the agricultural economy, mainly through the increase in the cost of loans, and, consequently, the current and investment activities. The situation is aggravated by the accumulated problems of technical and technological lag, the low level of profitability of agricultural producers, the weak competitiveness of domestic products.

Under these conditions, state support for the accelerated development of the agro-industrial complex should be based on the following principles:

the mechanisms of its rendering should be transparent, predictable, stable (the State Program has been substantively adjusted three times in 4 years);

it is necessary to achieve consistency between the goals of state support and the mechanisms for their implementation, including the volume of funding; one of the main principles of state support should be its systematic and integrated nature;

the cost of state support of the agro-industrial complex is significantly lesser than the level allowed by the WTO, it is advisable to increase the amount of funding to at least the allowed level; at the same time, it is necessary to expand the use of measures that do not have a distorting effect on trade, for example, to develop untied support for the industry, implement programs of domestic food aid to the population, provide support to regions that are unfavorable to agricultural production, develop rural social infrastructure, etc.;

it is necessary to increase the validity and economic efficiency of the most popular mechanisms and directions of state support (the mechanism of unrelated state support, support for milk producers, the mechanism of financial recovery, the mechanism of state guarantees, etc.).

In ensuring sustainable development of rural areas, small farms play a significant role in the production of agricultural products, food supply, formation of supply in the food market and require not so much quantitative growth as qualitative changes and effective functioning.

In addition, small farms play a key role in ensuring social stability in rural areas. Currently, they are one of the main sources of income of the rural population, food supply and one of the spheres of labor.

The development of small farms in the agro-industrial complex, while maintaining state support, promotes self-employment of the rural population and self-sufficiency in their basic food.

The most stable, promising form of entrepreneurship in rural areas are farms, primarily family-type.

In general, over the past 10 years, the growth rate of production in farms is 2.3 times higher than in the industry as a whole.

In Russia, hundreds of thousands of peasant families are ready to develop their farmsteads, and with proper state support, the total number of family farms can be increased to 500,000 by 2020. This will allow to increase the volume of domestic food production, to make significant progress in solving the problem of import substitution, to ensure the growth of incomes of the rural population and to significantly improve the social situation in the village.

One of the topical issues of legislative support for the activities of peasant (farmer) farms today is the harmonization with the Civil code of the Russian Federation of the Federal law «on peasant (farmer) economy».

An equally important issue is the solution of the land issues: ensuring access to land of peasant (farmer) farms, the limitation of the farmland area, which is owned by one person; the necessity of disclosing the legal entities of information on the ultimate beneficial owners – the owners of the land and other.

It should also be noted that at present a multi-level system of agricultural cooperatives has been formed in rural areas, including cooperatives of the first, second and third levels, specialized associations (unions) of agricultural cooperatives, audit unions of agricultural cooperatives, self-regulating organizations of audit unions of agricultural cooperatives. Cooperation in general is a mass, democratic movement that contributes to the development of socio-economic infrastructure of the village, improving the standard of living of the rural population. Consumer and agricultural cooperation are a way of effective adaptation of agricultural producers and the population employed in agriculture to the modern competitive market economy on the basis of Association of property and work of citizens (production cooperatives), and on the basis of Association by independent agricultural producers of separate economic functions (consumer cooperatives).

The analysis of problems of development of agricultural cooperation in the Russian Federation for the last twenty years causes the following main directions of improvement of cooperative policy: modification of the current legislation on agricultural cooperation, strengthening of financial support of cooperation, improvement of control on observance of cooperative rules and principles, improvement of organizational, information and methodical maintenance of cooperative movement.

The development of non-agricultural activities is an important source of employment and income of the rural population, the importance of which has always been significant due to the seasonality of agricultural labor and the inability to provide intensive year-round employment of the rural population in agricultural production. In the future, the role of non-agricultural activities will further increase as the share of agriculture in the rural economy declines.

The main directions of development of non-agricultural activities are: wood harvesting and woodworking, production of building materials and construction; crafts; household and socio-cultural services to the population; harvesting and processing of wild fruits and berries, medicinal plants and other natural raw materials; rural tourism; trade.

In particular, in order to diversify the rural economy on the basis of resource conservation, greater attention should be paid to the use of non-timber forests by the rural population. This processing, and collection of food and non-timber forest products, and Northern reindeer herding, beekeeping, and hunting, and the use of recreational potential of forests.

In the Russian forests grow hundreds of species of food forest resources and medicinal plants. Operating reserves are 7.4 million tons, and biological reserves are practically non-exhaustible - 13.4 million tons. At the same time, these reserves are used insufficiently: forest berries - 3-5% of operational reserves; pine nuts - up to 8%, mushrooms - about 15%. At the same time, their annual turnover is estimated at more than 4 billion rubles. Economically, they are no less attractive; at the same time, their operation is sparing with respect to forest ecosystems. If we increase the share of the use of food forest resources from an insignificant 1.5% (in total) to 10-15%, this will make a significant contribution to the rural economy and get a breakthrough tool for ensuring food security.

For backward and depressed regions that have preserved cultural and natural potentials, rural tourism is often the only direction of rural development. The share of rural tourism in Russia is still small and today, according to the data of Russian Federal Agency for Tourism, is 1.5–2%. It is important at the state level to formulate the directions of development of rural tourism, focused on the needs of the rural population, to support comprehensive rural tourism projects that have a multiplicative effect on the development of the whole territory. To create

legal conditions for the development of rural tourism, it is necessary to develop and amend the Federal Law «On the Basics of Tourism Activities in the Russian Federation» in order to specifically regulate rural and agrarian tourism.

Improving program-oriented approaches for the sustainable development of rural areas.

Funding for the development of social infrastructure in rural areas is fragmented within the framework of various Federal and regional target programs. Of course, the measures implemented with the help of state and Federal targeted programs have made it possible to make significant progress in solving social problems of the village, an important achievement was the implementation of projects of complex compact development in rural areas with accelerated development of agriculture.

But in General, according to the all-Russian and regional programs and projects, financial resources are directed to the needs of the village on a residual basis, and under the programs of sustainable development of rural areas, funds are concentrated on solving certain problems of social infrastructure, although in subsequent years it is planned to increase the pace of integrated development of rural municipalities.

In most of the policy documents, the main goal is to achieve certain target indicators, the consideration of which in dynamics does not allow to trace changes in the level of provision of the population with socially significant objects and services. Thus, the target indicators of programs for the integrated development of social infrastructure in rural areas should reflect the degree of fulfilment of the social standards of availability of villagers to social infrastructure and to take account of regional characteristics that allow us to analyze the dynamics of the level of compliance with social norms and to evaluate the effectiveness of management decisions.

The reduction in the volume of state support for the activities of the subprogram in 2018-2020 will not allow to ensure the pace of development of housing, social and engineering infrastructure of the village, the network of roads necessary to ensure a stable increase in the quality and standard of living of the rural population.

Early completion of the program and its integration into the State Program will require changes in regional and municipal government programs. Given the limited timeframe for the preparation of the regulatory framework, the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are at risk of disrupting the implementation of the subprogramme's activities and solving the tasks set in the framework.

In 2019–2020, there may be a risk of including the activities of the subprogramme in the relevant state programs, which will make it impossible to effectively coordinate state policy

measures for the development of rural territories and will not provide comprehensive planning for rural settlements with social and engineering infrastructure and roads.

In addition, in order to expand the scope of activities envisaged by the Federal target program, the current provision on the implementation of the program's activities should be reviewed only in those localities where investment projects in the field of agriculture are implemented. This requirement turns it into a tool to support investment projects, rather than solving the accumulated social problems of the village.

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About the authors:

Shapovalov Dmitry Anatolyevich, doctor of technical sciences, professor, pro-rector for research and innovation, professor department of soil science, ecology and environmental sciences of the State University of Land Use Planning, Moscow, **ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8268-911X>**, shapoval_ecology@mail.ru

Fomin Alexander Anatolyevich, professor of the State University of Land Use Planning, Moscow, ORCID ID orcid.org/0000-0002-3881-8348, agrodar@mail.ru