

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROLE OF PERSONAL SUBSIDIARY PLOTS IN MODERN RURAL RUSSIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyze main trends in the development of private plots in the rural area being one of the main heterogeneous forms of the Russian rural economy. The information base of the study consists of the official statistics of the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) of the Russian Federation, the results of a sociological study conducted by the authors in 1993-2016 according to a uniform methodology in different regions (Siberia, the Urals, the Volga region, Altai Region, Republic of Bashkortostan). The study of the role of private plots is actualized in real social adaptation of the Russian peasantry and is aimed at identifying the features of the formation of new ways to ensure sustainable development of rural settlements within the framework of interaction of various social and economic entities. It is concluded that private plots are still the most important structural element of the diversification of rural household income strategies, adaptation factor to the changing socio-economic conditions. At the same time its significance is greatly reduced in a stable socio-economic development.

Key words: *private plots, rural population, adaptation, employment, income diversification*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Russian countryside the rise of sector of population's personal subsidiary plots caused by the crisis conditions, follows after reforms of the 1990s, when it has become a leading area of application of labor resources of the villagers and the means to adapt to the changing conditions of life, ensuring household food and funds necessary for the survival of rural families. Besides the fact that this form of very agricultural production is a complex object of study, because of the close intertwining of social and economic characteristics (that allows you to talk about the personal subsidiary plot as a special socioeconomic form), we should recognize the importance of households in the stable development of rural society. The economy of households in the Russian rural areas is a particular form of agricultural production, a significant market for food and agricultural raw materials on a national scale, fitting into one of the important elements in the structure of a diversified rural economy. The state, through the adoption of the Federal Law "On agricultural development" (2006) confirmed the reality of this situation, recognizing citizens, the leading private subsidiary farming as one of the categories of agricultural producers. Given the role of this phenomenon, which is impossible in the village regarded as something of secondary importance producers. Given the role of this phenomenon, which is impossible in the village regarded as something of secondary importance ("subsidiary"), often the concept of "private households" is seems more appropriate.

The Russian science has numerous attempts to give an objective description of smallholdings sector of population's personal subsidiary plots, it's economic and social importance of the institutional form, and to determine the prospects for its development. The classical works created by A.V. Chayanov, M.I. Tugan-Baranovskii, N.P. Makarov et al., provides a framework for understanding the socio-economic processes that predetermine the logic of the development of modern forms of population's personal subsidiary plots. The modern studies of social and economic potential of population's personal subsidiary plots are primarily concentrated on economic and social aspects of their operation. Researchers show different, sometimes opposing, assessment of smallholders. There was three points

of view about the effectiveness of agricultural production in households and their socio-economic importance.

According to the first point of view, large-scale production efficiency even in a crisis situation is much higher than personal subsidiary plots. The state support for smallholders leads to the collapse of large farms on private farms, a sharp drop in the efficiency of all agricultural production and the destruction of its material and technical base (Kopach 1998, 2000). The representatives of the opposite point of view believe that households in this situation are the strongest and most effective part of the agro-industrial complex because it can quickly respond to market changes and legislation (Shmelev 1996, 2002). In a third approach, even recognizing the shortcomings of low productivity of smallholders as well as the inability to be an agrarian major alternative form, it notes that the private sector is more sustainable and more durable (Buzdalov 1997; Uzun 2005). The latest research of Russian sector of smallholders is significantly increased, the supporters of the second and the third lines of the selected contact, due to the concentration of attention on the theory of multi-functional rural areas, to which the interest is due to the prevailing socio-demographic and economic situation in the country (Kalugina & Fadeeva 2009; Bondarenko 2005; Paciorkovskij 2007).

The sector of population's personal subsidiary plots analyzed in the context of modern social and economic practices and social dynamics of Russia, appear to us as a phenomenon, combining specific patterns of economic behavior and life strategies bringing together modern economic approach with realities of classic pre-revolutionary era of peasantry. Being a specific social-economic structure, the development of which is caused by a combination of modern challenges and traditional labour, social and economic attitudes of Russian rural population, personal subsidiary plots have the following characteristics that separate them from other forms of agricultural enterprises.

First, the economy of households is predominantly consumer-natural character, since they produce agricultural products with a low coefficient of merchantability, used mainly for the reproduction of rural families to meet the personal needs of the family (household). Sale of part the products on the market in fact, is forced, as in the sale of the surplus does not come often, and necessary for the reproduction of the family and the farm product due to the need for funds to meet those or other vital family functions. That is the money income, as a rule, is not used for productive and for consumer purposes. The special nature of such an economy is reflected in the low that defines smallholders as a form of non-entrepreneurial activity in the production and processing of agricultural products.

Second, an important characteristic of modern part-time farms of the rural population, after a non-entrepreneurial type of production is the fact that they express a kind of family labor organization. The personal subsidiary plot housekeeping and agricultural production is a complex process of a family livelihood. Thus, the labor relations of family members merged with the social roles and domestic farm is not differentiated (not separated) from the productive economy.

The third characteristic feature of population's personal subsidiary plots in the Russian agrarian system is the closeness, "symbiotic" due to "large-scale farms", i.e., the former collective farms, that formally passed the process of market restructuring, but continues to perform certain social functions. In the early years of reform, the interaction of large-scale farms and plots of population were mostly unequal (whereby such interaction is often defined as "parasitic symbiosis"). For the sustainable development of the rural economy it is important to have genuine access to the resources of high-tech production, providing small-scale farm by technics equipment, supporting as much as social infrastructure and providing some aid. Resources of large-scale farms are available for use by network of households on the basis preferential use of as well as in the form of direct assignment (from the informal "aid" to outright theft). This allows researchers to characterize such enterprises as "consensual, mixed communal-economic institute" (Paciorkovskij 2007). These specific features form our understanding of the sector of personal subsidiary farms of the population as a special agrarian structure of Russia.

Introducing itself as a spontaneously created mechanism of adaptation, the personal subsidiary plots of the population have the following social functions: self-sufficiency of the rural population with food, self-employment of people who lost their jobs due to agrarian reforms preventing them from

pauperization; preservation of rural settlement network, and others, that do not allow them to be impoverished; preservation of the rural settlement network, and others. The given theoretical framework gives an opportunity:

- to identify regional and local specifics of population's personal subsidiary plots depending on the natural-geographic and socio-cultural conditions;
- to characterize the model of interaction between the "neo-peasant" and other economic structures in mixed agrarian system of Russia;
- to analyze the degree of effectiveness of strategies of socio-economic activity of rural households in terms of their role in ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work is the result of theoretical generalizations and interpretations based on the years of experience of monitoring studies of social processes in the rural regions of Russia, conducted over the last 20 years. The data obtained during 17 complex sociological studies (in which more than 3,000 villagers were surveyed) conducted by the authors in 1994-2016 using the same methodology in 360 rural settlements in Western Siberia, the Altai, Republic of Bashkortostan, the Volga region.

In these sociological researches the dominated method was the quantitative analysis of the social and economic dynamics of rural communities, supplemented by an analysis of statistics and methodology of qualitative research. The quantitative research methodology was based on the position of the methodology according to which rural households leading personal subsidiary plots is a system of relations between individuals and social action (as well as any other social site). A systematic approach is applied for its analysis, considering four subsystems (societal community, the maintenance of institutional patterns, political and economic systems), their functionality and interconnection. The comprehensive studies are based on the analysis including the following blocks:

- socio-economic unit, including issues related to the income of the rural population, property relations, the state of the labor market and forms of employment, the dominant economic activities, etc.;
- socio-demographic unit;
- socio-structural unit, including issues of social organization and relationships of the rural community.

Mass public opinions surveys was carried out based on a two-stage sampling. In the first localities who had to survey phase were selected. For each of these settlements the desired number of sub-samples based on official data on the population was determined. Then, in each of the settlements respondents were selected based on the routing model sample. The sample size was based on the quota principle and was representative of the quota of the total population of each settlement.

In addition to our own results of sociological expeditions, the data of state statistics were also used. The main sources of information about the number of rural residents, self-employed in personal subsidiary plots, are one-time surveys on employment of population (held in Russia since 1992), Census (conducted in 2002 and 2010) and Agricultural Census (conducted in 2006). In this list, National Population Census is the most comprehensive data in effect almost 100% coverage of the population. Survey on Employment, owing to its regularity (since 1999 they are held quarterly, and from 2010 – monthly), allows monitoring dynamics of the labor market.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accessing for the data of Statistical Bulletin "Labor Force Survey" shows that in 2017 year 8.9 mln. of 17,8 mln. of rural population was engaged in the production of agricultural goods in their subsistence farms (that are attributable to the economically active population aged 15-72 years). That is 50% of adult villagers, anyway, are engaged in the conduct of household's farms (Rosstat 2018).

The analysis of the dynamics of private plots has shown that the main trend of the beginning of the 21st century was a gradual decline in the employment of the rural population in private plots. This dynamic stopped in 2015 with the growth in employment which continued in 2016 (Table 1). This growth was a response to the crisis phenomena in the Russian economy, a reduction in real incomes of the population. A sharp decline in the number of rural population employed in private plots in 2017 (primarily among those who produced goods for sale) attests to the successful adaptation of a significant part of the rural population to the new economic conditions. In the second half of 2017 it was confirmed by the significantly improved estimates of the financial situation, which reached record levels in a number of items (Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation 2018).

Table 1. The structure of employment and marketability in personal subsidiary plots, 2005-2017

Year	Rural population employed in household plots, thousand	People employed only in household plots, %	Personal subsidiary plot-keepers have other gainful employment, %	Personal subsidiary plot-keepers sells its production on market, %	Personal subsidiary plot-keepers producing goods for their own consumption, %
2005	14711	49,6	50,4	25,2	74,8
2006	13263	48,8	51,2	27,1	72,9
2007	13201	48,4	51,6	26,5	73,5
2008	12995	46,9	53,1	22,3	77,7
2009	10808	47,2	52,8	23,2	76,8
2010	9811	46,9	53,1	22,5	77,5
2011	9550	48,4	51,6	24	76
2012	9517	47,4	52,6	24,2	75,8
2013	8722	48,7	51,3	25,8	74,2
2014	8716	47,8	52,2	25,2	74,8
2015	9261	48,4	51,6	23,1	76,9
2016	10101	47,7	52,3	22,7	77,3
2017	8904	50,7	49,3	14,0	86,0

Source: Calculated by authors according to annual statistical collections 'Population Survey on Employment Issues', 2006-2015, 'Labor Force Survey', 2016-2017, stat. bulletin (Rosstat 2015. 2018)

Census in 2010 have allowed to assess the extent of employment in the private subsistence farms: for 10.3 mln. villagers private farming is a source of livelihood, including 1.4 mln. people (13% of all employed in the personal subsidiary plots) for whom it was the only source of income. Private farming as the main source indicated 1.8 million people (5% of all rural residents) (Rosstat 2011). Similar results were obtained in the analysis of the materials of the Federal Statistical Observation "Socio-

demographic Survey (microcensus of the population) 2015". Almost 26% of the rural population aged 15-72 consider private plots to be a source of income (541 thousand people were interviewed). For 12% of respondents employed in private plots and for 3% of all respondents it is the only source of income, the main source of income – for 16% and 4% of respondents respectively (Rosstat 2016). Such minor figures show, firstly, that the personal subsidiary plot as a separate source of livelihood is clearly insufficient for the sustenance of a peasant family - doing one-time farms survive difficult. And secondly, as important for the subsistence of rural families this source is close to other sources (in particular, employment, dependency and old-age pension).

The difference between the prevalence of subsidiary farm, which is for almost 30% of rural people is a source of livelihood, and its importance (personal subsidiary plot is a major source of income for only 5% of the population) get us closer to a real assessment of the significance of population's personal subsidiary plots for livelihood of rural households. Obviously, that mass employment of the rural inhabitants in household's farms make this activity an important survival strategy and we can suggest that the personal subsidiary plot plays an important role in the welfare of the rural family (as a source of monetary income and of food). One of the common myths about personal subsidiary plots was the allegation, according to which in the village all is "natural": "life in the village allows you to fully provide itself with the necessary food". The idea of population's personal subsidiary plots as a mechanism of self-reliance of rural households is perhaps the central element of the ideology of self-development of the Russian village. Without going into the theoretical nuances of the concept of self-sufficiency, popular in the context of the development of rural communities in the West, we try considering how keeping of personal subsidiary plots promotes self-reliance of rural households and, more specifically, how great is the contribution of personal subsidiary plots in the well-being of Russian rural families.

The contribution of private farms in the well-being can be assessed in terms of contribution to income (as a source of funds) and in terms of contribution to the intake (as a source of food consumed directly in the household). As we have shown above, subsistence farming is not important as a source of funds. Although private subsistence farming is the predominant form of activity of rural households in all regions of Russia and about 90% of rural households work in their plots, in the commodity economy, only a small number of products produced in this sector was registered. The vast majority of household products assigned in the natural form, is consumed by the household (Table 2).

Table 2. The forms of assignment of population's personal subsidiary plots production, %

Assignment form	2001	2005	2007	2011	2016
Realization by purchasing organizations	5	5	0	4	4
Realization by private buyers	31	42	30	30	12
Self-realization	1	2	13	8	16
Consumption in the household	80	91	80	87	95

Source: The data of sociological surveys conducted by the authors in 2001-2016.

According to our long-term studies, the market gets only 15-20% of production of private farms. Traditionally a low level of marketability and natural character of the products make population's personal subsidiary plots a minor source of funds. The expert analysis of the structure of monetary incomes of the villagers confirms the trend of decrease in personal subsidiary plots activity and increase the value of wage income while reducing income from the sale of population's personal subsidiary plots products (Table 3).

Table 3. Structure of monetary income of household (expert evaluation), %

Salary			
The share of household budget	2001	2007	2016
Up to one third	82	38	28
Two-thirds	16	43	38
More than two-thirds	2	19	33
The median	22	43	50
Sale of personal subsidiary plots production			
The share of household budget	2001	2007	2016
Up to one third	11	16	45
Two-thirds	45	48	42
More than two-thirds	43	36	14
The median	60	57	40

Source: The data of sociological surveys conducted by the authors in 2001-2016.

It should be noted that the value of private subsistence farms in past 10 years has been steadily declining. Thus, the share of natural personal subsidiary plots products in the cost of food has decline from 31% in 2005 to 18% in 2016, and in general available resources from 17 to 5% (Table 4). Thus, household farming does not lead to rural family self-sufficiency. Budget of modern rural families depends on personal subsidiary plots lees than 10%.

Table 4. The share of population's personal subsidiary plots in contribution to the consumption of rural families, %

Year	In total available resources	In expenditure on food
2005	16	31
2007	12	27
2009	11	24
2011	9	22
2013	6	21
2015	5	18
2016	5	18

Source: Calculated by authors according to data of the statistical bulletin 'Income, Expenses and Consumption of Households: The Results of Random Analysis of the Budgets of the Households' 2005-2016, (Rosstat, Income ...2017)

We can assume that "neo-peasant" sector of population's personal subsidiary plots, which was formed under the conditions of the transformation crisis and being adaptive form, in our days, in terms of stabilization, must either disappear or be transformed. The data of state statistics and our surveys for 2009-2016 confirm this assumption.

In the past 15 years, the share of private plots in the production of basic agricultural products has been steadily declining (Table 5).

Table 5. Production of basic agricultural products by types of enterprises
(in percentage of production total amount)

Indicator	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016
Agricultural enterprises								
Potatoes	34,6	33,9	9,2	7,5	8,4	10,5	13,8	13,6
Vegetables	67,2	69,9	25,3	22,9	18,7	17,1	17,9	18,9
Fruits and berries	53,7	49,5	22,5	15,7	20,7	15,0	21,6	23,7
Livestock (slaughter weight)	70,2	75,2	49,9	40,2	46,2	60,6	74,5	75,9
Milk	73,1	76,2	57,1	47,3	45,1	44,9	47,8	49,0
Household (population's personal subsidiary plots LPH) enterprises								
Potatoes	65,4	66,1	89,9	91,2	88,8	84,0	77,6	77,9
Vegetables	32,8	30,1	73,4	74,7	74,4	71,5	67,0	66,5
Fruits and berries	46,3	50,5	77,4	84,1	78,4	82,8	76,3	74,4
Livestock (slaughter weight)	29,8	24,8	48,6	58,0	51,4	36,5	22,6	21,2
Milk	26,9	23,8	41,4	50,9	51,8	50,4	45,6	43,9
Peasant (farm) enterprises								
Potatoes	-	0,0	0,9	1,3	2,8	5,5	8,6	8,5
Vegetables	-	0,0	1,3	2,4	6,9	11,4	15,1	14,6
Fruits and berries	-	-	0,1	0,2	0,9	2,2	2,1	1,9
Livestock (slaughter weight)	-	0,01	1,5	1,8	2,4	2,9	2,9	2,9
Milk	-	-	1,5	1,8	3,1	4,7	6,6	7,1

Source: Calculated by authors according to data of Russian Statistical Yearbook. 2010. 2017 (Rosstat 2010, 2017)

The decline in the value of households in the production of these goods was largely offset by the increased role of large agricultural enterprises, as well as peasant farming (since the early 2000s, there has been a strong increase in all indicators).

The trend of modernization of the modern Russian village life is confirmed by the survey data that captures public perception about the prospects of agribusiness development in the institutional and organizational aspects (Fig. 2). The population, local power and business elite – they are aware of the need to strengthen the structure of agricultural enterprises. The proportion of respondents linking the prospects for rural development with large institutional forms was 63% in the Novosibirsk region, 42% in the Saratov region and 54% in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Despite the importance of this socio-economic form for the survival of the village, respondents almost do not associate their hopes for the future with the private plots.

The comparative analysis of local and sub-regional development types of population's personal subsidiary plots, which is based on an evaluation of internal and external resources of adaptation of rural communities, has shown that the most important are the climatic conditions and resource factors,

manifested in the presence of land suitable for agricultural production. The study of social potential of households also found out that the most important factor of households is the availability of labor (demographic) resources, unclaimed in other sectors of the economy. In modern conditions, high level of unemployment in rural areas serves a basic condition for the development of population's personal subsidiary plots and the increasing importance of their functional task, which is expressed in the reduction of unemployment through self-employment. So, it makes possible to call population's personal subsidiary plots a specific flexible mechanism of rural labor market regulation.

The results of the comparative analysis showed that the role of small-scale way of population's personal subsidiary plots is varied greatly depending on the external and internal factors, and it performs an important social function - from full compensation lack of formal employment to support functions of increase of income level of the villagers and ensure they're by food. The most important fact is that the data of our analysis demonstrate the ability to self-development of agriculture, in reliance on the community's own resources, without significant external support. Even though the study throughout recorded decline in the socio-economic potential of population's personal subsidiary plots (associated with the reduction of external resources, changes in gender-age structure of the rural population and critical shifts of attitudes that determine labor motivation of the villagers), we noted the increasing marketability of population's personal subsidiary plots in some rural areas, which is accompanied by positive dynamics of population welfare. However, it should be understood, that such a scenario, based on the strength of social and economic self-organization, is not a universal script, because it requires only a fortunate coincidence of a number of factors (availability of land, demographic and labor markets, etc.).

4. CONCLUSION

Developing as a response to the crisis consequences of transformation in the social and economic sphere of the Russian village, the sector of population's personal subsidiary plots developed in a special socio-economic way, combining in its functioning modern and traditional practices, innovative and "neo-peasant" patterns of labor and economic motivation. In our study, we started from the hypothesis that this way matches to the reactive-passive type of adaptation, acting as a mechanism of balance of social and economic components of transformation, that type of socio-economic structures performs the function of reproduction of social resources in the rural areas of Russia. Among the social functions performed by the structures formed in the process of adaptation to the reform of rural society, it should be called: self-reliance and self-employment of villagers, losing their job in the course of restructuring of the agricultural sector, prevention for impoverishment of the rural population, the preservation of rural settlement network, etc. The specificity of personal subsidiary plots is defined as the economic, technological environment of the peasant economy (substantive nature, family labor organization) and the specific factors of the social order, determining the types of economic incentives (reciprocal, redistributive), as well as the importance of informal practices and social networks for rural households.

According to statistics and sociological research, the most important role of the farm sector was at the beginning of 2000s. Then, as the non-entrepreneurial smallholders' way is a form of adaptation to crisis, its importance in a post-conflict transformation stabilizing Russian society is greatly reduced. The essence of the next transformation of the sector is in its transformation from socioeconomic way to an additional structure, having a supplementary value.

The new tendencies in development of the agrarian sector of Russia are characterized by the institutional and socially-structural transformations caused by the processes of introduction in economy of village of innovative economic way, presented by vertically integrated market structures (agroholdings), and also by changes of strategy of social and economic villagers' behavior (firstly shown in reduction of activity of peasants in private plots). Further development of a situation in this direction leads to a new stage of transformation of economic, social and even settling structures of the rural society, and the most anticipated one for the social and economic dynamics is a decline of the role and the potential of sector of population's personal subsidiary plots. It is possible to predict that

the population's personal subsidiary plots sector will retain their importance for the economic and social life of the village for a long time. Today subsistence farming is the most common source of livelihood in rural areas, but it is far from basic. Speaking in the structure of income of rural families as one of the main structural elements of the same order, salaries and pensions, household plots are rather additional, secondary source of livelihood. For the rural population activities in personal subsidiary plots seem to be additional in relation to other forms of employment of their members and to other sources of income.

From an economic point of view, population's personal subsidiary plots are an auxiliary and economically inefficient form of employment. In this case a scale of activity in private plots is important, that makes us assume that the reason for this is not economic. Population's personal subsidiary plots are not only a survival strategy or a national sport, which captured the entire population. The sector of population's personal subsidiary becomes one of the main structural elements of strategy of diversification of income of rural households, containing traditional patterns of Russian rural population. A huge amount of labor resources, concentrated in householdings farms, makes them a flexible mechanism of regulation of the rural labor market, capacity and flexibility of which allows it to involve human resource from other areas.

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