

Modern personal subsidiary plots of villagers and townspeople: *historical dynamics, functions, spatial differences*

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Abstract

The article deals with the economic, geographical and sociological analysis of personal subsidiary plots of rural residents and citizens in modern post-reform Russia. The authors consider the specifics of individual household plots of rural residents, analyze the reasons for the rise of such establishments, and then decrease in their number. The features and distribution of homestead farms of urban dwellers, who own countryside homes (dacha), in connection with the processes of urbanization and partial de-urbanization are also investigated. An assessment of the contribution of personal subsidiary plots to the total volume of agricultural products is given.

The question of a formal or informal status of personal subsidiary plots, as well as their role in the social and economic life of rural and rural-urban dwellers, is raised. It is proved that an individual subsidiary plot in rural areas performs both a usual function of food production for own consumption (meeting up to 30–40% of the need for vegetables and fruits; at plots with poultry and small cattle — up to 60 – 70% of meat and dairy product needs), and plays a socio-communicative function of maintaining reciprocal family relations, and also solves recreational tasks. It is emphasized that the production, distribution, consumption and sales of products from the personal subsidiary plots are usually carried out within the framework of informal economic relations and that statistics are poorly capable of taking them into account.

Keywords

personal (individual) subsidiary plot, rural population, depopulation, urbanization, recreation, dacha, homestead farms, reciprocity, rural-urban continuum

JEL Codes: O13, O18, P25, P32, Z13

Introduction

Small family-owned subsidiary and low-income farms existed for many thousands of years — they were present in the East, in the West, under feudalism, under capitalism, under socialism. In many societies, they constituted and continue to form the invisible basis of the lives of millions not only rural but also urban families, making an important contribution to the livelihoods and reproduction of the labour force. Small volumes of production, focus on own consumption and insignificant marketability made this object unattractive for economists, but significant for sociologists, demographers, anthropologists, economic and social scientists and socio-economic geographers.

The article deals with the issues, which are essential to comprehend this half-shadow aspect of social life in Russia. What are the features of modern private household plots in rural areas of Russia? How many farms are there, how they are arranged, how much do they produce, what is their contribution to food production in different regions of Russia, how is the product distributed and consumed? What role does one's own subsidiary farms have in the lives of indigenous rural people and their relatives in the cities?. What is the role of townspeople residing in the countryside in the summer?

In the 1990s, the share of individual farms in the production of commercial agricultural products increased from 25 per cent in Soviet times to 50 per cent, and in some regions to 70-80 per cent¹. This was caused by the crisis of agricultural enterprises, especially in the Non-Chernozem region, and also due to inflation and influx of migrants. However, in 2000-2010 the economy began to gradually emerge from the crisis, and agriculture has by then reached a pre-reform volume of gross output. But in 2016 individual subsidiary plots of the population of Russia produced 77% of potatoes, 67% of vegetables, 22% of meat and 45% of milk and dairy products. At the same time, the vast majority of these farms were aimed not at commodity production, but at partial self-provision of products.

In this connection, a number of questions arises. Why does our population, $\frac{3}{4}$ of which are urban, continue to cultivate land and self-provide in food? Why in all our history of landlords, collective farms and without them the population worked as if double: at work, and then for themselves on one's small plot of land at home or at one's summer cottage? Why, when in the 1990s, the population was given the opportunity to organize commercial private agriculture, only a small part of the rural population used it, and the vast majority preferred employed labour in combination with their own subsidiary farming? Why did the reforms aimed at moving forward, in fact put the rural community back to the expansion of the traditional, archaically organized economy?

In scientific sociological, social-economic and geographical research of Russian scientists a lot of attention has recently been devoted to household plots (Mukhanova et al. 2013; Kalugina 2003; Fadeeva 2015; Toshchenko 2016; Nefedova and Pallot 2006; Nefedova 2013, 2018; Toshchenko 2016). Answers to the questions posed require a systematic analysis of market and non-market economic, as well as institutional relations, including in rural areas, spatial differentiation of the state of agriculture and, more generally, of the employment of population. Historical roots, i.e. dependence of many phenomena on previous development, is also important. Individual subsidiary farms is only part of the complex socio-economic

¹ This percentage may be overestimated. While in Soviet times enterprises sought to improve their reporting, in the 1990-2000s both large enterprises and farmers, in order to avoid taxes in every possible way, reduced the volume of production.

body of Russia. But this inconspicuous part nourishes the resources of the entire body. On the other hand, the role of household plots and subsidiary farms varies greatly in the space of Russia, depending on the degree of urbanization of the regions, depopulation of the rural population, its age, migration patterns, and ethnic composition. It is relationships in rural areas, as the most conservative sector of our society, that show whether the reforms are far advanced, whether they have a chance of success and how their results differ in various regions of the country.

Calculations and quantitative estimates were based on the Rosstat data, materials of the All-Russian agricultural censuses of 2006 and 2016, population censuses, as well as economic-sociology research conducted by the authors in a number of key regions of Russia, including the periphery of the Kostroma region within the framework of the Ugory project².

From the pre-revolutionary peasant economy to the modern personal subsidiary farms. Private subsidiary farming as part of the informal economy

Throughout the history of mankind, small and medium family-owned peasant farms, united in large or small communities, formed the economic basis of all known pre-capitalist socio-economic patterns. Within these farms a life-supporting product needed for the reproduction of the labour force was created, and a certain proportion of the “excess” or “surplus” product was produced, appropriated by personal (feudal lords, magnarists, etc.) or corporate private owners (including officials in the framework of the “Asian mode of production”). Before capitalism ultimately set market relations, there were various forms of not only economic, but personal dependence of peasants on complete or supreme owners of the land. The peasant community, which unites peasant households, functioned as a complex system of socio-economic, organizational and legal relations covering land use, allocation of resources, joint labor, mutual assistance, exchange of services, mutual insurance, etc. (Semenov 2002).

With the transition to a market economy, modernizing non-marketable peasant farms tend to be converted into marketable / commercial farms. Links between farms are weakening, group family ownership of land is replaced by individual full private possession. The focus on self-provision of products is superseded by capitalist motivation of sale and profit. This happened in all European countries in the transition from feudalism to classical capitalism. However, in the countries of “dependent”, “peripheral” capitalism, the process of transformation of pre-market and non-market economic relations in rural areas was significantly slowed down and had its own specifics.

In Russia, the abolition of serfdom and then Stolypin land reform accelerated the development of capitalism. The disintegration of the rural peasant community, the economic differentiation of the peasantry, the growth of the number of smaller-land and landless peasantry began. The importance of community relations and equalization principles between peasant yards has declined sharply. However, the self-sufficiency function of family agriculture continued to be very important.

The rapid growth of cities and industrial production in Russia in the late XIX and early XX centuries gave rise not only to the usual rural-to-urban migration but also to a peculiar

² The Ugory project: www.ugory.ru, [The Potential of the Middle North, 2014; Between the home and... home, 2016]

socio – economic phenomenon – “seasonality”, or “seasonal work”, that is, temporary trips of rural residents to work in the city with return to the village. (Ryndzjunsky 1983; Moiseenko 2017; Smurova 2008, etc.). The seasonal workers maintained a strong social and economic connection with the village where parents, relatives, wives and children continued to live: food was sent from the village to the city to support seasonal workers, while money needed to pay taxes, purchase equipment, repair and construction, etc. was returned from the city to the village).

In Russia in the late XIX and early XX century historically formed a peculiar informal rural-urban social and economic “continuum”, which represents strong reciprocal (in Karl Polanyi’s terms) links and channels of intra-family redistribution of resources between rural and urban parts of families. Elements of this socio-economic “continuum”, the center of which were small family rural subsidiary farms, were preserved in Soviet times, and then updated in the post-Soviet period.

At the beginning of the twentieth century small farms produced 88% of grain. Despite the fact that in the period of collectivization the commercial private economy was fully destroyed, the Soviet agricultural sector combined collective farms and small non-commercial private subsidiary plots, which remained an important tool for the survival of the rural population. There was a specific economic system – bipolar evolutionism [Redfield 1973: p. 140-142; Mukhanova et al. 2013: p. 39], in which the elements characteristic for different stages of development were doing at the same time.

Ideas about the duality of any economy, especially in developing countries, about the impossibility of functioning of “normal” market institutions there without the shadow sector of small household farms, began to develop in Europe in the second half of the XX century (Lewis 1953; Geertz 1963; Hart 1973). It was the informal sector, which allowed people to earn and survive under imperfect legal and economic institutions, that often served as the basis for maintaining social and political stability. The informal economy was most extensively described by James Scott (2005), who demonstrated that formal institutions can work only if they are informally corrected by existing socioeconomic practice.

This was confirmed in the USSR, although its institutions were far from market ones. Working at collective farms and state farms, rural residents largely survived at the due to farming in their personal subsidiary plots (PSP). In 1940, with only 4% of the land officially used by private farms, they produced two-thirds of meat and milk. This was possible due to close interaction between the formal and informal sectors (Nefedova 2013: p. 115-148). At the end of the Soviet period and in the 1990s their symbiosis in agriculture was evident. Collective farms (Soviet kolkhoz) and other agricultural enterprises could not pay salaries for months, but gave grain, hay, straw to workers instead; workers bred cattle and poultry in the private economy, including for sale, and made a living of it³. Of course, in these conditions workers stole anything they could at the enterprises.

Formal and informal employment, including in rural areas, is very difficult to divide, they can be considered not as dichotomy, but as continuum poles (Sukhova et al 2013; Barsukova 2016; Nikolaeva 2017, etc.). People officially working at enterprises can have solid subsidiary shadow agricultural production; not all officially registered farmers report, conducting semi-shadow or shadow economy. [Nefedova 2013: pp. 117-124].

³ Employment in the household was not taken into account by the statistics at all until 1999. In 1999-2000, they began to be classified as economically inactive and since 2001 as employed, although to a large extent such employment is aimed at self-provision of family members and closest relatives.

Economic reasons for the existence of the post-Soviet personal subsidiary plots

The general trend of modernization of the rural economy and reduction of employment under the new post-Soviet competitive conditions was inevitable. It is known that during the Soviet period in many industries there was artificially increased employment, and at very low labour productivity enterprises experienced a shortage of workers.

In the post-Soviet period, employment in agriculture and forestry, especially in large and medium-sized enterprises, declined much more rapidly than in the economy as a whole (Figure 1). In addition to the crisis and the closure of a number of enterprises in the 1990s, at the stage of recovery of agriculture, this was due to many reasons. The emergence of agricultural holdings with increased mechanization of production led to a decrease in employment with production growth. The expansion of crop production because of profitability of grain exports and the reduction of the most labour-intensive livestock sector, especially dairy, also released a significant number of workers. In addition, some agricultural holdings attracted specialists from the city (even if they were available in the countryside), and also used foreign workers. With agricultural monofunctionality and the absence of other places of employment, this revealed rural overpopulation in many districts and intensified urbanization. But even the presence of vacancies in traditional agrarian industries did not attract workers, as wages in agriculture fell from 100% of the average Russian level to 15% in the 1990s, and in the 2000s rose up to 50% of the average level with significant seasonality of work and earnings (Nefedova et al. 2016: 97).

In recent years, only 22 per cent of the rural population were employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, including 7 per cent in crop production and 13 per cent in animal husbandry combined with crop production. Most of the villagers (from a quarter to a half or more) work in the budgetary area (Averkiewa 2016). No indicators are able to accurately estimate the level of real unemployment in rural areas. On one hand, a large part of the unemployed are not registered in the employment service, and on the other hand, there is widespread shadow employment in rural areas or seasonal work in cities even of villagers from economically prosperous areas. The employment situation has worsened in recent years with the campaign of consolidation of settlements and the reduction of budget jobs in rural administrations, schools, hospitals, paramedical and obstetric units, clubs. In these circumstances, personal subsidiary farming is an important source of the food and income of the rural population.

The role of personal subsidiary plots and their geography

The growth of the share of PSP in the early 1990s was mainly associated with the crisis of large and medium-sized agricultural enterprises and the decline in their share in food production. Absolute growth of indicators of production in households between 1990 and 1992 were in fact the result of inflation and shortage of food, especially in cities. Statistics even recorded a short-term outflow of the population from them “to soil”. Since then, the role of small farms gradually decreases, although they continue to produce 21% of meat, 44% of milk and dairy products and 66%

The symbiosis of subsidiary plots with enterprises persisted both in the 1990s and in the early 2000s. If employees were not paid their wages for a long time, the enterprise gave

them grain, feed for cattle and hay as payment for work and land shares, and also provided veterinary services, allowed using machinery for ploughing private vegetable gardens, etc.

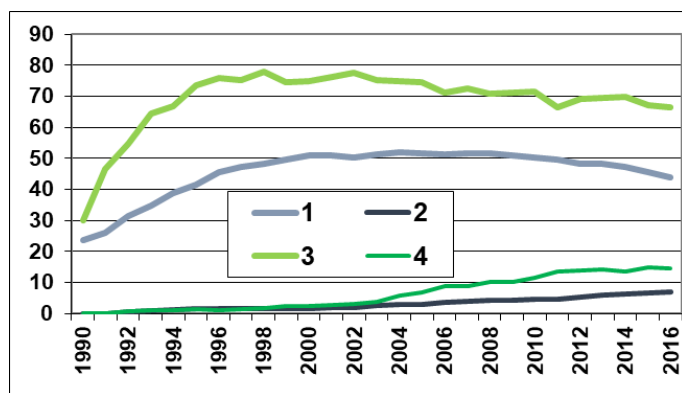


Figure 1. Change in the share of personal subsidiary plots (PSP) and farmer's households (FH) in the production of milk and vegetables from 1990 to 2016 (%). Source: Rosstat data
1 – production of milk in personal subsidiary plots, 2 – production of milk by farmers, 3 – production of vegetables in personal subsidiary plots, 4 – production of vegetables by farmers

(Nefedova and Pallot 2006). Collective farm fodder enabled feeding of livestock and poultry, while technical assistance and often additional plots of land provided by the village administration or enterprise enabled to grow potatoes and vegetables. The share of cattle in PSP was especially high — 43% of the total livestock. At the same time, partial sale of milk, eggs, meat, young animals and vegetables gave a significant addition to the meager incomes.

The cattle stock and milk and meat production at PSPs is larger not in the regions where the production of collective farms has disappeared or sharply reduced and there is an urgent need to strengthen self-sufficiency of the population, i.e., in the non-Chernozem region, but in the southern regions, especially in the grain zone, where agricultural enterprises are preserved (Fig. 2). The same is true to the pigs stock (Fig. 3), if (with the spread of agricultural holdings) the administration does not prohibit to keep pigs at the PSPs for fear of spread of animal diseases. To a large extent, the gravitation of livestock PSPs to the grain zone with the largest and most successful enterprises is partly due to their assistance to the PSPs, referred to above (Fig. 4). An exception is the Krasnodar Krai, which is characterized by the acute struggle for land while reducing pastures. The land is also much more valued in the flat territories of the southern republics and in the suburbs with high population density [Nefedova 2013]. In the North Caucasus republics and in some regions of the Volga region and Siberia, including those with an increased proportion of ethnically non-Russian population, the stock of cattle and sheep in the post-Soviet period increased even, which is largely related to the preservation of national traditions and large areas of pastures.

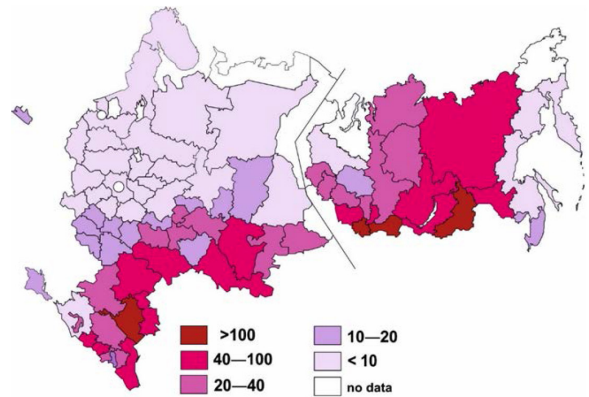


Figure 2. Cattle stock in personal subsidiary plots of the population, per 100 villagers over 15 years, as of 1.01.2017. Source: Rosstat data

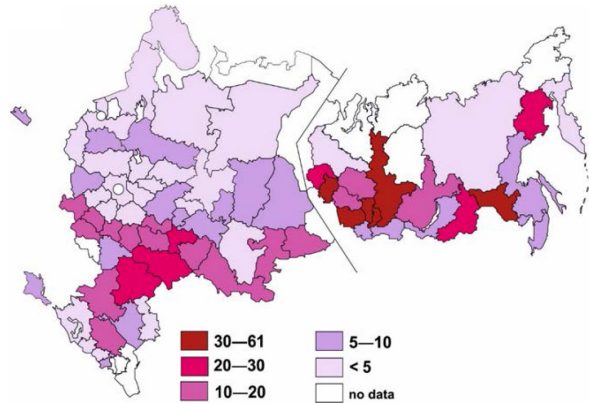


Figure 3. Pigs stock in personal subsidiary plots of the population, per 100 villagers older than 15 years, as of 1.01.2017. Source: Rosstat data

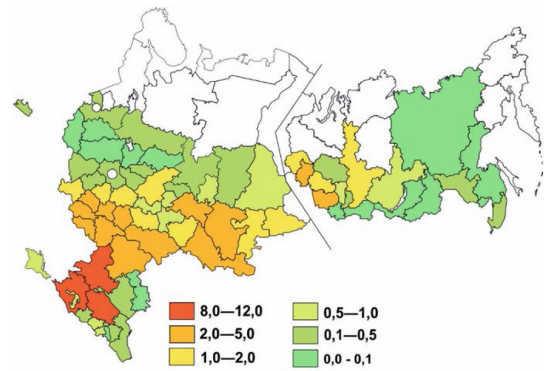


Figure 4. Share of regions of Russia in total production of grain crops in %, on average for 2014–2017. Source: Rosstat data

In the non-Chernozem regions, recession of many agricultural enterprises, a decrease in employment, and an objective need for self-supply in food is accompanied by the crisis of PSPs. It can be explained by long-lasting depopulation and demographic factors (Nefedova 2018). Typical here are: small villages (Fig. 5), where population is rapidly reducing, a large proportion of the older population with a predominance of older women compared to men, and continuing out-migration to cities, especially of youth (Mkrtchyan 2018). Lack of labour motivation stimulates emergence of social pathologies and alcoholism, which results in increased mortality from external causes (Denisenko and Nikolaeva 2014, 2015).

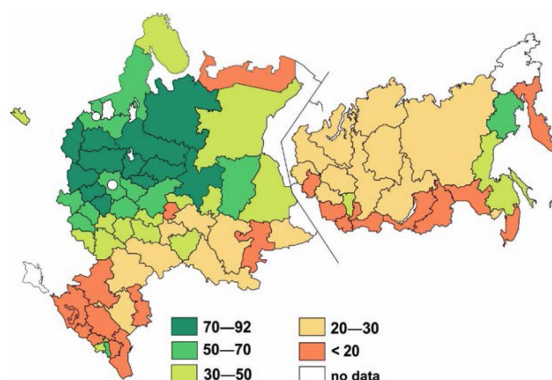


Figure 5. Share of small settlements with population less than 50 people in regions, %, according to the All-Russian Population Census, 2010

Even the increasing area of natural pastures on abandoned and agricultural lands overgrown with grass and shrub does not stimulate involvement of the population in private livestock farming. Much of the former collective farm land remains abandoned. The latest agricultural census showed a significant proportion of unused land in the Non-Chernozem region, including land shares (Uzun 2017), which were partially transferred to the villagers (Fig. 6). This is especially true for the regions remote from Moscow in the north-east (Vologda, Kirov, Kostroma regions), as well as in the extreme west (Pskov, Smolensk).

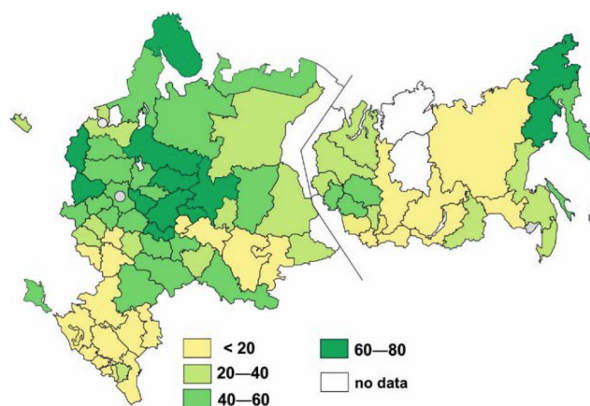


Figure 6. Share of unused land in the private subsidiary plots (based on the materials of the All-Russian agricultural census, 2016)

Depopulation of the rural areas is especially typical for peripheral municipal areas in almost all regions (please refer to Nikita Mkrtchyan's article in this issue). But the strongest outflow of young and active population was observed on the periphery of non-Chernozem regions. Long-term loss of human capital is reflected by the differences in rural population density in the suburbs and periphery of non-Chernozem regions, which reach 5 to 10 times (Fig. 7).

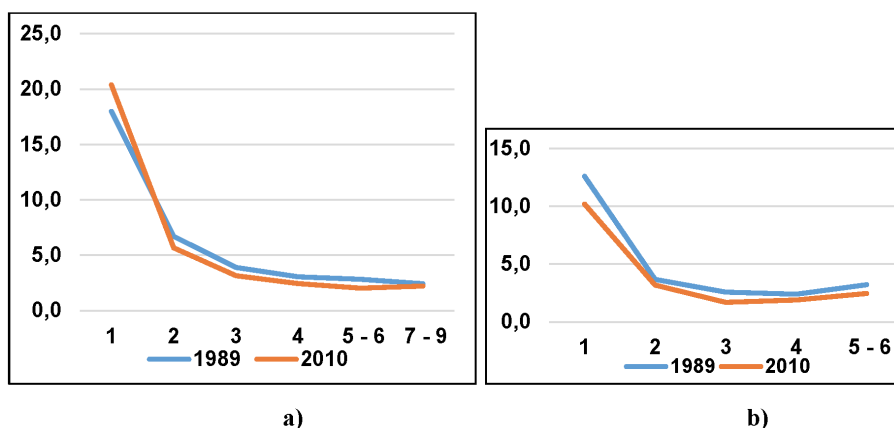


Figure 7. Density of the rural population in the municipal districts of Kostroma (a) and Vologda (b) regions classified by remoteness from the regional center, people per square km. According to the 1989 and 2010 censuses.

Note: 1,2,3,... 9 — classification of the location of municipal units in relation to the regional center, where 1 is the closest neighbourhood and 9 is the most remote location

Labour potential in peripheral municipal areas is most depleted, and people there use their subsidiary plots to provide themselves mainly with potatoes and vegetables, often with the help of family members who earlier moved to cities and come back for agricultural work several times a year. Part of the production is often sent to relatives in cities. Surveys conducted on the periphery of the Kostroma region showed that over 80% of households greatly reduced production in the post-Soviet years, and even in relatively large villages, only 2-3 cows remained (The Potential... 2014: 62).

If we generalize the motivations of agricultural activity of the population of Russia as a whole, it turns out that the most sustainable are two types of PSPs. The first type is private farms with increased marketability, especially specialized ones. Most often they are located in southern regions or near cities. Their owners are, in fact, informal farmers, and it is often their main job. The second type is absolutely non-commercial farms with minimal self-sufficiency. Their owners have traditionally become accustomed to using the land for their own feeding (Nefedova and Pallot 2006), even when they have little strength left. Both statistics and surveys confirm that in recent years the average-size PSPs experienced the fastest decline in production (Mukhanova et al. 2013: 195-199).

Hopes for the leading role of the Western-type farms in Russia did not come true. Their relatively small number (137 thousand farms in 2016 with almost 18 million households) can be explained by a fundamentally different strategy and motivation. Kalugina (2003) notes among farmers "the desire for independence, self-sufficiency in economic affairs, the

possibility of implementing their own plans, career aspirations”, which distinguishes them from the households of the population seeking simply to survive or to slightly improve their economic situation. In the ethnic Russian regions, farms are mainly engaged in crop production, though competing with agricultural holdings for land becomes increasingly difficult for them. More than two-thirds of farmers’ land is occupied by the most profitable crops and sunflower. In the ethnic republics, farms are associated with animal husbandry.

The vast majority of rural dwellers were still not ready for economic risks, they prefer to remain within the traditional PSP, though, in some areas it can be partly marketable. The degree of marketability, in addition to human capital, can also be associated with tradition. For example, villages around Lake Nero in the Yaroslavl region, located near Moscow, have been characterized by high-value vegetable farming on sapropel soils with supplies to cities since the XVI century. And still, despite the very strong depopulation, the remains of the rural population and even summer residents, who come there from cities for the summer period, continue to be engaged in market gardening. This is seen by anyone passing on the highway towards Rostov and Yaroslavl, along which sellers of onions and other vegetables gather in dense rows. Such areas can be found in different regions, but they are more common in the south and in the suburbs of big cities.

The reasons for economic passivity of rural residents is usually explained by the lack of start capital to transfer from an “archaistic” economy aimed at self-supply, to a commercial one with modern organization and technologies. Indeed, banks prefer to lend to large agricultural production – agro-holdings, collective farms, large and already “promoted” farms. However, there are also psychological reasons for orientation on self-supply and fear to take risk. K. Humphrey sees the reason in the fact that they still do not feel themselves as independent economic units due to the long patronage relationship of agricultural workers with the structures “above them”: the community, collective farm, state (Humphrey 2010: 195).

Personal subsidiary plots of contemporary rural residents are often compared with pre-revolutionary peasant farms in terms of small size, low level of technologies, orientation towards production for domestic consumption, collective family labour. However, it is rarely mentioned that under the conditions of the nowadays market economy it is more difficult for small family farms to survive than for traditional peasant farms: there is no peasant community with its inherent norms of redistribution and mutual assistance (labour assistance, food aid, etc.). In Russia, in fact, the demographic transition to the family pattern with few children has been completed, consequently, the family labour force is usually limited. Within the market economy it is impossible to maintain a completely non-monetary and non-commercial production — electricity, taxes, communications, feed, veterinary services, and minimum agricultural machinery have monetary costs. It is no coincidence that work at collective farms and its help are valued. And where such work is no longer available — pensioners’ small but stable monetary income is of value.

Nowadays, households in rural areas are forced to look for additional sources of monetary income, either in the form of assistance from urban relatives, or in the form of sale of part of their production or some forest products, or in combining external work (including seasonal work in the city) with the conduct of personal subsidiary farming. In many regions of the European part of Russia 10-25% of the rural population of working age work seasonably in Moscow and Moscow region in a mode of two weeks or a month at work and just as long at home, which allows them to conduct a personal subsidiary economy as well [Nefedova et al. 2016: 83-283].

Rural plots of urban residents

Not only rural residents, but also urban dwellers have agricultural concerns. The number of plots in different types of countryside associations of urban residents is about 12.8 million, and together with plots under individual housing construction and land belonging to those urban residents who left the countryside associations it is over 18 million [All-Russian agricultural census 2016]. This is even slightly more than the number of farms of rural residents (17.6 million). Urban residents' plots are usually smaller, but they are used more intensively: 91% of summer residents are engaged in agriculture in horticultural associations. Agricultural use is less common among country house owner communities, but still high – 70% of owners (*ibid.*). Rural residents use 79% of plots for agriculture. The location and size of the nearest city play a significant role. For example, in the Moscow and Leningrad regions the share of crops and perennials on sites is small (Fig. 8), unlike the southern regions, where countryside plots are used much more intensively. Thus, starting from the Central Chernozem region and further to the south and east, the role of self-sufficiency, for both peasants and rural residents, is much higher. At the same time in horticultural associations of urban residents the share of land under crops and perennials is higher, while in private farms the share of hayfields and pastures is usually higher.

The vast majority of plots owners in the garden associations visit their plots, usually located in proximity to the city, on weekends and in the spring-summer-autumn months. Many citizens have relatives (parents) in the village, whom they also visit as going to their country house, helping them in their household. Since the 1970s, the wave of citizens buying houses in empty villages has been expanding, including remote from the city (300–700 km). Such houses are also used mainly in summer as country houses (*dacha*). But those citizens who have an opportunity to live outside the city relatively long — pensioners, people with long vacations — also conduct subsidiary agriculture. Life at two houses — in the city and in the country — is very typical for Russia (Ilyin and Pokrovsky 2016; Nefedova et al. 2016).

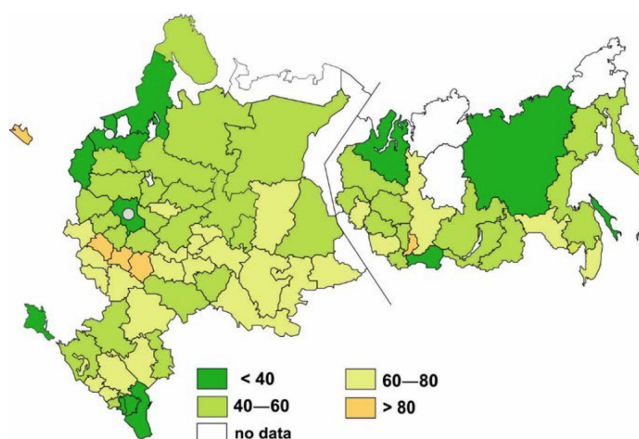


Figure 8. Land under crops in garden associations of urban residents, % (based on the materials of the All-Russian agricultural census, 2016)

Cases of relocation of urban residents to the countryside and establishment of a subsidiary farm are still rare, and their motives differ. If the citizens who decide to move to the village were born or raised in the countryside, and they, for example, have parents or relatives in the village, the reason is the need to organize personal care for the weakened elderly parents and maintenance of the family household (though successful children in the city increasingly transport their sick old parents to urban apartments). After the death of the parents, the motive for preserving and maintaining rural family property increases (a wooden house in a village requires constant maintenance and repair, as opposed to an urban apartment), as well as “return to one’s roots”, preservation of family memory of deceased parents. As a rule, pensioners return to the village from the city (please refer to Nikita Mkrtchyan’s article in this issue), although there are many cases of temporary return during economic crises or personal failures of adult family members.

Another group of re-settlers to the village are citizens who have no deep or even any roots in the countryside. In the 1990s among such re-settlers there were many families with many children, hoping to somehow feed themselves by means of their own garden and farm in the first post-Soviet famine years. Some of the settlers took root and stayed in rural areas, without losing contact with the city through relatives, leaving behind or renting their urban apartment.

Since the 2000s, the number of “ideological” migrants — seeking to live in ecologically clean areas and grow environmentally friendly products, looking for alternatives to the city and capitalism formats of co-living (“eco-settlements”) — increased. However, as a rule, it is quite difficult for them to fit into local rural life because of a more active life position and creative approach, including that to agriculture (Pokrovsky and Nefedova 2014:162)

For retired urban residents the meaningful motives to re-settle to the village are not only the desire to work on soil and live a quiet non-urban life, but also to leave their urban living space for children and grandchildren, and to organize recreational opportunities for them in the village. In their rural subsidised plots, vegetables, fruits and flowers are grown not only for food, but also for aesthetic needs; poultry and small cattle (goats, sheep) are bred increasing for the eco-friendliness of food, self-realization and socialization of grandchildren, rather than for feeding. The economic sustainability of subsidiary farms of urban and semi-urban dwellers largely depends on the financial support and labour contribution of younger family members living and working in the city; the sale of surplus product, if any, is unsystematic.

Both private subsidiary plots of urban residents who have close relatives in the village or who move to the countryside for a long period of time, and households of villagers who have seasonal workers employed in the city among family-members, are characterized by close rural-urban relationships and constant monetary and non-monetary (labour, food, services) transfers from city to village and from village to city. This kind of “distributed” dislocated households makes it possible to speak of the emergence of a socio-economic “continuum” of rural-urban social and economic interactions.

Conclusions

Personal subsidiary farms can be seen as a link between the population and the economy. Their spatial distribution largely reflects demographic and economic characteristics of different regions over Russia. For the majority of the rural population, they play an important

social and economic role, ensuring the production of food for their own family consumption and for the reproduction of the labour force. Marketability of PSPs is small; the farm-type development of agriculture is successful only in the South of Russia, while in the country as a whole there is a clear trend of decreasing the average size of subsidiary farms and increasing the number of small family PSPs. The key factor for the success of subsidiary farms is the human capital, which is closely associated with the degree of depopulation in the rural areas as well as the ethnic factor. Also, the condition of large agricultural enterprises, which support the PSPs, is of importance, especially in grain regions. Therefore, the spatial differences in specialization and marketability of the PSPs are very large.

Low incomes of almost all categories of rural workers, the “excess” of labour in agriculture, which emerged in the 1990s, and high unemployment in rural areas, attach particular importance to PSPs as a condition for the survival of the population and a factor of stabilization of the socio-economic situation. Such forms of adaptation of the rural population, as seasonal work and personal subsidiary farms, significantly inhibit the urbanization processes in the country.

The government is planning to equate private subsidiary plots with entrepreneurship, with consequent requirements for registration as individual entrepreneurs, purchasing a patent, and payment of taxes.⁴ This may lead to a further reduction in the volume of agricultural production at PSPs, a decrease in their marketability, and reducing the number of medium-sized farms. It is also possible to predict an increase in the scale of rural-to-urban migration for seasonal work with further re-settlement of some seasonal rural workers to cities, since the purchase of patents, registration as individual entrepreneurs, purchase of cash registers, payment of taxes, and other business attributes will require considerable monetary costs and loss of time and effort for registration and reporting. It is necessary not to dismiss the fact that the majority of the rural population today has relatively low organizational and legal culture, poor computer skills, lack of experience in accounting and tax reporting, as well as a general lack of confidence in any innovations from above and administrative pressure.

The commodity orientation of PSPs in Russia is relatively weak. The motivation for agricultural activities of the population, not only rural but also urban, has been shown to be dual. It is only partly related to the desire to improve their standard of life. The attractiveness of property as such, as well as traditions and social relays, is still important. However, the combination of economic and non-economic factors largely depends on the geographical position and significantly changes against the dynamics of income of the population and the social and economic situation.

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⁴ Draft Law FL N 483530-7 “On Amendments to Articles 346.43 and 346.45 of Part Two of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation” (in the part on extending the list of the types of entrepreneurship, in relation to which the patent tax system may be applied).

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