

V. N. Lazhentsev, V. V. Terentyev

**PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL POLICY PRIORITIES  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TERRITORIES**  
(on the Republic Komi example)

*This paper deals with the concept of term «sustainable development» of rural areas. Social problems of rural development of the republic of Komi are identified. An intra-rural typology creation is performed. An increasing differentiation in the development of rural areas is concluded. Rural settlements in the republic*

*are characterized by low population density and a rare network of settlements. Low level and quality of rural life (low rural incomes, poor living conditions and high unemployment) and better living conditions in urban areas adversely affect migration processes of the village. Characteristic features of modern rural labour market are: inconsistency of supply and demand of labour in vocational and qualification angle, seasonality of production and temporary nature of the proposed work, low wages, low competitiveness of the youth labour market, high level of registered unemployment and even higher — of unregistered.*

*Analytical material allowed the authors to determine the direction of social policy for sustainable development of rural areas according to the conditions of the North.*

**Keywords:** rural territories, a demographic situation, employment, incomes, a social infrastructure, social policy priorities

In 2008, the concept of sustainable development in rural areas of the Russian Federation until 2020 was elaborated, it was approved by a governmental Decree of November 30, 2010, №2136r [4]. A key problem to be solved by this concept is demographic. Poor state of rural society is seen in a number of factors: reduction in the number of inhabitants, disbalanced age and sex structure, poor health, loss of commitment to the native land, unemployment and poverty etc. The problem, according to the development plan of the concept, should be regarded comprehensively, that is in alignment with various functions of villages and towns including ecological, recreational, ethnic, cultural and spiritual.

The starting point for this concept are such positions: 402.6 million hectares (23.6%) of the territory of Russia are agricultural land and a quarter of the world's fresh water plus 23% of the wood resources are concentrated here; rural population is 38 million people (27% of the total population), including 23.7 million able-bodied people. But, at the same time: available monetary resources on average per household member in 2007 amounted to 5 871 rubles per month (57% of the rate of urban households); poverty is a mass phenomenon in rural areas, there are more than 40% of the poor population. As to the basic social stratum of the countryside — peasants, it is upright and convincingly described as an abased class [2].

The issues of rural development in national studies were considered in details in 1970–1980 under the guidance of T. I. Zaslavskaya, Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, at Novosibirsk economic-sociological school: studies of socio-territorial structure and the complex socio-economic development of villages were conducted. In this case they used a programmatic approach to systemic problems of rural life. It was stressed that the rural areas «cover all the many small agricultural and

agro-industrial settlements, regardless of their level of development and structure of the production sphere. The boundaries of rural areas were fixed by administrative division of the country; they are quite distinct in nature and are more stable than the boundaries of the village» [8, 15]. We should pay attention to the geographic definition of rural areas: «The whole inhabited territory of the countries and areas outside of urban areas, with its natural and human-transformed (anthropogenic) landscapes, population and human settlements (which are classified as rural)» [3, 273].

According to N. V. Chepurnykh, A. L. Novoselov and A. V. Merzlova, countryside is a territorial or spatial notion, not depending on how land is used, in which state is its economic development and the degree of dominance of any economic sector. However, it is divided by administrative boundaries of subjects of the federation, municipalities or village administrations [12, 18]. Indeed, at the junction of administrative boundaries it becomes not only rural but also takes the form of so-called hinterland, thereby enhancing its ecological function.

Sustainable development of rural areas is a new direction of social and economic policy; it emerged in the last decade. In many countries of the modern world, in particular of the EU, it is seen not only in the narrow sense — through economic growth, but through a series of functionally similar concepts of sustainability: «sustainable development», «dynamic development», «socio-economic progress» etc. [11, 80]. The functional approach is characteristic to the Russian authors too.

Thus, according to the opinion of A. Merzlov, under sustainable development of rural territory we should understand a stable agricultural community and ensuring the fulfillment of the economic functions to them (food production, agricultural raw materials and other non-agricultural goods and serv-

ices), as well as public goods (preservation of rural life and rural culture, provision of recreational services, social control over the territory, preservation of historically mastered landscapes); expanded reproduction of population growth in the level and quality of life and maintaining the ecological balance in the biosphere [7, 18]. Approximately the same sustainable development of rural areas is interpreted by V.M. Bautin and V.V. Kozlov — life changes and human activities on the basis of a balanced solution of socio-economic problems, problems of a favorable environment preservation and natural resources of rural areas in order to meet the needs of present and future generations [1, 65]; or, for example, A.V. Petrikov — sustainable development of rural society, stimulating the growth performance of the rural economy, improving living standards of rural population, maintaining the ecological balance, preserving and enhancing the landscape in rural areas [9, 93].

In the same conceptual policy documents, the production side is emphasized increasingly. The Federal Law «On the development of agriculture» № 264-FZ of December 22, 2006 announces: «Under sustainable development of rural areas one should understand stable socio-economic development, increased agricultural production, improvement of the efficiency of agriculture, achievement of full employment and rural populations' improvement of life standards, plus efficient use of land». In the abovementioned concepts, «sustainable development of rural areas» refers to stable socio-economic development of rural areas, increasing agricultural and fishery products, improving the efficiency of agriculture and fishery industry, achievement of full employment of the rural population and improvement of life standards as well as rational use of land. In our view, the disadvantage of these formulations is the limit of scope of the rural area to mainly agricultural and fishery production. The concepts of «rural» and «agriculture» are different scientific categories. An example of the Komi Republic has shown that rural development cannot be viewed only from the perspective of a sectoral agricultural approach. In rural areas, forestry is well developed, just like many other types of farms.

We should note that the original conception project had a different formulation, without the excessive production pragmatism. «Under sustainable development of rural areas one should understand the development of the village, where the growth, diversification and improving the rural economy,

population stabilization and longer life, full and productive employment of labour forces, increasing the level and quality of life in rural areas, sustainable use and reproduction of their natural resources should be provided» [5, 9].

### **Rural areas in the Komi Republic**

The Komi Republic has 418.3 thousand hectares of agricultural land, 30.2 million hectares of forest land, and 3.1 billion cubic meters of the total stock of wood. The republic has 16.7% of all soft wood stocks of European Russia. The allowable cut is 33.2 million cubic meters. We should also note saturation of mineral resources plus availability of natural and cultural monuments of the population. The share of agriculture accounts for 24% of the total population. The republic has 720 villages.

Most parts of the republic climate is temperate continental with long winters and short cool summers and all the other characteristics peculiar to the sub-Arctic and temperate climate. Rural life is more often associated with bioclimatic potential, which is 0.08 points in the Arctic zone to 1.68 in the zone of southern taiga (Russian average — 1.9 points). The zone of tundra vegetation accounts for about 5% of the area, the forest-tundra — 6%, the taiga — 89%.

The level of natural data usage depends on the political and social conditions, and now also on market conditions. For example, the number of reindeer is currently 84 thousand, and in 1950 — 211 thousand units; in 1980 the country harvested 22 million cubic meters of wood per year, and in the current period — 6-7 million cubic meters.

Pricing policy is such that per employed person in agriculture and forestry accounts for 3 times less than the GRP in the whole country, 14 times less than in the industries of mining, and 5 times — compared with operations with real estate. If such discrimination in 2009 compared with 1990 production of agricultural products decreased by 34.8%, employment in agriculture by — 2 times, the proportion of local production in consumption of meat and meat products declined over the period between 1990 and 2009 from 43 to 25%, milk and dairy products — from 42 to 28%, eggs — from 100 to 68%. Investments into fixed capital of agriculture in total investments into the economy declined during the period of 1990–2010 from 6 to 0.2%, the area in all categories of farms decreased from 100 to 40 thousand hectares, cattle — from 173 to 39 thousand animals, including cows — from 71 to 18, pigs — from 136 to 25, deer — from 124 to

81 thousand. Park of agricultural tractors declined from 6778 to 971 units. Up to 40% of farms are unprofitable. The price disparity is one of the major causes of underdevelopment in forestry, including logging. Overcoming the crisis in these sectors is an important factor in stabilizing the socio-economic situation in rural areas.

The intraregional rural typologization was carried out basing on a detailed analysis of a specific set of indicators and the subsequent grouping of objects using the generalized method; it showed that areas of low socio-economic development are: Troitsko-Pechora, Ust-Kulom, Izhma, Koygorodsky and Udora areas, areas with an average level: Knyazhpogost, Kortkerossky, Sysolsk, Ust-Tsilma areas, areas with relatively higher levels of socio-economic development: Syktyvdinsk, Ust-Vym and Priluzsky areas. Differentiation in the development of rural areas increases.

### Demographic situation

Over the years 1990–2010, the rural population, despite the administrative-territorial transformation of urban communities into rural, reduced by 75.6 thousand people, or by 24.9%. Among the rural administrative-territorial entities, the greatest decline over this period occurred in Troitsko-Pechora (41.8%), Knyazhpogost (36.3%), Ust-Vym (28.1%), Koigorodsk (25.6%) and Ust-Kulom (24.7%) areas. Rural population is shrinking faster than the urban; its numbers at the beginning of 2010 totaled 228 thousand people and only in the last decade due to migration and the excess of deaths over births decreased by 12%, while reducing the city by 9%.

The age and sex structure of the rural population is changing. In 1990 rural areas were dominated by men, in 2010 — by women.

The proportion of people below working age was 28.9 in 1989, in 2009 — 18.2%, of working age, respectively — 57.2 and 64.4%, over working age — 13.9 and 17.3%.

From 1990 to 2009, the total birth rate increased only in five rural provinces: in Kortkeros — from 13.9 to 16.1, in Priluzsky — from 14.5 to 15.3%, in Syktyvdinsk — from 12.6 to 14.3, in Ust-Vym — from 12.7 to 13.6 and in Ust-Kulom — from 13.9 to 17.6%, with growth in the country — from 14.4 to 14; 8. It declined in other areas.

An adverse effect on the mode of reproduction of the rural population has increased mortality. Throughout the historical development of the rural population, mortality rates were higher than

in urban areas. The overall mortality rate in rural areas for 1990–2009 years increased from 9.5 to 17.1%, while in the urban population — from 6.8 to 11.4%. A significant increase in overall mortality rates for 1990–2009 years occurred in the Troitsko-Pechora region (247%), in Koygorodsk — (189%), Ust-Kulom — (193%) and in Izhma — (191%). Increased mortality in rural areas is mainly due to lower standard of medical care compared to the city, an increased alcohol addiction, and high levels of deaths from accidents plus suicides.

Low level and quality of rural life (low incomes, poor living conditions, high unemployment) and better living conditions in urban areas adversely affect migration processes of the village. Only in 2007–2009 7.5 thousand people dropped out from rural areas. Two-thirds of the resettled members are young people who usually goes to cities to find employment, professional training, and after finding a joy they stay in the city. Depopulation of rural areas leads to the decay of the economic circulation of farmland.

The rural settlement in the republic is characterized by low population density, sparsely inhabitation and a rare network of settlements. A significant reduction in the average density of population for 1990–2009 decreased from 3.0 to 2.3 people and the rural population — from 1.3 to 1.0 people per 1 sq. km. The lowest population density in rural areas — 0.3 pers. — is in Ust-Tsilma district, Troitsko-Pechora region — 0.4 pers., in Udora area — 0.6 pers; the highest in the region Syktyvdinsk — 3.3 pers. per 1 sq. km.

### Human resources

The migration reduces not only the population amount but also the quality of the workforce in rural areas. In 2008, the number of resettled persons from rural areas with higher, incomplete higher and secondary professional education exceeded the arrived people with the same level of education by 1.7 times, including a higher or incomplete higher education — vy 2 times, secondary vocational — by 1.5 times. Even worse is the situation in the outlying areas. For example, from Ust-Tsilma resettled 108 people with higher, incomplete higher and secondary professional education, and arrived just 28; in Izhma, respectively, 96 and 50 people, in Ust-Kulom — 151 and 78 people, in Troitsko-Pechora region — 203 and 107 people.

The Laboratory of Agricultural Economics, Institute for Socio-Economic and Energy Problems

of the North Komi Science Centre conducted a survey in February-March 2007 among full-time students who have completed their studies in the Syktyvkar Forestry Institute in the fields of «Economics and management at the enterprises of agriculture», «Mechanization of agriculture» and «Electrification and automation of agriculture».

The survey results show that only a quarter of all respondents plan to work in agri-industrial enterprises, and only one of seventeen in agriculture. The response to the question «Where do you want to work after graduation?» given by 92% of respondents was «in the city», and only 8% — «in rural areas».

The village is characterized by the worst educational potential. Thus, according to 2002 census, 1 000 people in the rural population aged 15 and older, 60 people had post-graduate and higher education, and in the city — 143 people. An incomplete higher education, respectively, 10 and 28, while average 234 and 342 people; primary education — 215 and 144 people; not having any basic general education — 15 and 5 people, of them 8 and 3 people are illiterate.

#### **Income of the rural population**

In 2009, the per capita cash income of rural population was 2.1 times lower than city level. There is a significant differentiation of per capita income level for the municipalities. Thus, according to per capita income, differences between municipalities in 2007 were 4.7 times, in 2008 — 4.2 times, in 2009 — 3.6 times.

In the IV quarter of 2009, the ratio of per capita income per month and subsistence minimum in the Komi Republic was 3.86 times. On the branch position, most prevalent is poverty among the employed in agriculture and forestry, on the geographical position — in peripheral rural areas. Wages in agriculture, hunting and forestry in 2009 were 56% of the average level.

We should note the high level of differentiation in the value of wages. In 2009, the average monthly nominal wage of workers in agricultural organizations in Syktyvda district was 20.7 thousand rubles, in Knyazhpogost in and in Ust-Vym — only 4.5 thousand rubles, in Udora — 6,3 thousand rubles, in Kortkeros — 7.0 thousand rubles. The gap is explained by the fact that Syktyvdinsk district is located around Syktyvkar city, while others are merely peripheral with the low concentration of production. In 2009, the average nominal monthly wage average

in the economy of the Republic amounted to 23.7 thousand rubles, agricultural workers — 12.6, including tractor-drivers — 9.2, milking operators — 10.0, reindeer workers — 7.4 and poultry workers — 22.3, professionals — 16.8 thousand rubles. For comparison, we note that in 1989 gross income in the rural family was 82.5% compared to urban families, the average total income of rural residents to the level of citizens — 72.4%, and average monthly wages of agricultural workers to the average for the national economy were more than 80%. At present time, at low wages and income in rural areas, the reproduction of labour power is not provided.

#### **Employment problems**

Characteristic features of modern rural labour market are: misfit in demand and supply of offered labour jobs according to the professional-qualification structure of the unemployed, seasonality of production in agriculture and forestry industries and temporary nature of the proposed jobs, low level of wages in sectors of the rural economy and delays in its payouts, low competitiveness in the labour market, youth, women and people in special need of social protection, lack of adaptability of the education system to labour market requirements in terms of demand for labour in the vocational-qualification section; underdeveloped market infrastructure, high level of registered unemployment and even higher — of unregistered, a large proportion of rural low-income jobs.

The economically active agricultural population of the republic in 2009 was 121.9 thousand people, or 53.5% of its total population. Among them, 99.9 thousand people (82%) were employed in the sectors of the national economy and 22 thousand people (18%) had no job but actively sought for it and, in accordance with the methodology, were listed as unemployed. In the public employment service by the end of 2009 there were 7.7 thousand people as the unemployed. The level of recorded intergrable unemployment at the countryside was 2.0 times higher than the national average level and 2.8 times for major cities.

If earlier, before the reform period, the rural territory of the republic was traditionally treated as labour-insufficient, at the present time there is a low demand for labour. The volume of production dropped significantly, and its material-technical base is almost absent, plus there are no funds to pay wages — the financial sources of this business are almost completely destroyed.

In the republic, the number of workers employed in agriculture in 1990–2009 decreased more than twice. During this period, over 22.6 thousand people left agricultural enterprises. In the structure of laid-off employees the largest share have breeders and machine operators, i.e. qualified staff. Much of the remaining people out of work started again at their private farms, which saved the villagers from the final degradation. Income from private farms can only make ends meet and are insufficient to overcome the problem of poverty.

The rural population is weakly focused on entrepreneurial activity. The main reasons are lack of funds, increased foreign competitiveness and shortage of skilled workers.

### Social infrastructure

During the years of reforms the situation in the social sphere of the village has worsened. Only during 1990–2009, the number of preschool institutions has decreased by 247 (43%), educational and cultural institutions — by 111 (30%), cultural facilities and leisure — by 102 (23%).

In 2009 compared to 1995 the number of hospitals in rural areas decreased by 31 units (45%), of them beds — by 1544 (60%). The gap between urban and rural areas in terms of availability of hospital beds is 2.5 times, doctors per 10 000 population — more than 3 times, nurses — 2 times.

The gap between the level of retail sales per capita between urban and rural is almost 3 times. In the years of market reforms the gap has increased in domestic services both in rural and urban population.

The social infrastructure development of the village has stopped. If in the pre-reform years (1981–1990) the average per year amount in the villages of newly built real estate was 115 thousand square meters of housing, then in 2000–2009 this figure decreased to 43 thousand square meters, or 63%. Government support through the federal budget in 2009 and 2010 towards improving the living conditions of rural population, including housing for young families, young professionals and for the implementation of the subprogram «Development of individual housing construction», the target of the Republican program «Housing for 2008–2012» has been reduced. In 2008 — the first half of 2011 the living conditions of only 218 families residing in rural areas and 164 young families and young professionals, representing 54 and 52% of the indicators in the subroutine, improved. Individual housing is 74% of the total housing stock and is characterized

by low quality and lack of internal improvement. In the villages the gasification process is extremely slow. Gas supply is available at only 25% of floor space. There is an acute problem of rural drinking water, the central water supply of the population accounts for only 22% of needs.

In 2008, the inter-regional differences in maximum and minimum rates per capita in the sphere of consumer services accounted for 2.7 times, in trade — 3 times, in provision of housing per a rural resident — 1.4 times, the provision of urban amenities — housing stock water supply — by 6 times, provision of central heating — by 5.7 times, provision of sewerage — by 9 times, density of public roads with hard surface — by 15 times.

Thus, the village of Komi Republic is experiencing protracted crises, which manifestations are worsening of demographic situation, poverty, unemployment and reduced social infrastructure. In recent years, there has been only barely noticeable positive changes in demographics (increased birth rate), housing construction, and construction of educational institutions (in 2011 in the villages of the country it was planned to build 5 new schools and kindergartens), construction of health facilities and sports complexes. The relative gap of financial well-being of villagers and townspeople began to decline. But there are no radical shifts in the social reconstruction of the village yet.

It is obvious that without equalization of incomes of villagers and the townspeople, rehabilitation and development of agricultural and forestry production — the most valued sectors of the economy of the village, increasing investments into housing, social facilities, engineering and transport infrastructure, the level and quality of village life will not increase.

### Directions of social policy

To increase the income of the rural citizens in terms of market relations, a number of measures should be taken:

— Development of rural territories through economic growth of agriculture and forestry, rural industry, coupled with the development of alternative employment in ancillary industries, trade, services and in the small entrepreneurship;

— Increasing public respect to the agricultural labour, establishing of fair payment for this type of labour, which should not be lower than the average in the economy;

— Increasing the size of government support for financing of agriculture sphere from 2 to 5–7%

of the expenditure part of the national budget and the size of direct budgetary support for agricultural prices up to 70–80% of the total amount of state agricultural support. This is a necessary condition for improving wages and, therefore, for stimulating productivity;

- Ensuring access of farmers to the objects of retail trade, opening of shops for agricultural enterprises and cooperatives;

- Technical and technological modernization and strengthening material-technical base of agriculture. The provision of soft loans on long-term affordable percentage or even free to purchase machinery and equipment, and, in some cases, special-purpose financing for the construction of modern dairy farms;

- Alignment of regional socio-economic differences due to the introduction of higher dimensions of state-level rural manufacturers working in adverse natural and economic conditions;

- Increasing the minimum wage to the state subsistence minimum, quarterly indexation of wages and pensions to keep pace with inflation;

- Organization of support to the most poor in the form of food tickets;

- Compensation for the children from low-income families with preschool children in the absence of childcare facilities within the expenditures for these purposes in the municipal pre-school education and to subsidize the free accommodation of children in day care centers, to provide rural students with textbooks and free meals in the places of learning.

The process of state regulation of employment and labour market in rural areas in the market conditions are expressed in the following main points:

- Consistency of economic and social objectives of rural development, agriculture and forestry sectors of the economy;

- Business development and job creation by improving the financial-credit and tax policies;

- Stimulation of the priority directions of scientific-technical progress;

- Promotion of professional training, accelerated training of employees who may be dismissed;

- Legislative quota of jobs for the most poorly protected persons in the labour market;

- Regulation of part-time and flexible forms of employment;

- Creation of favorable conditions for development of non-agricultural areas, including ancillary industries and crafts;

- Organization of seasonal work;

- Support for self-employment, development of various forms of economic initiative and entrepreneurship of the population, stimulation of the development of self-employment activities: home-employment, fixed-term contracts, part-time employment, secondary employment, reduced working hours etc.;

- Promotion of job creation on the basis of state order in the rural districts with high unemployment — Izhma, Ust-Tsilma, Ust-Kulom, Troitsko-Pechora;

- Intra-labour movement at the district and national levels, including using the rotational team method;

- Development of such types of alternative activities as harvesting and processing of wild berries and mushrooms, medicinal plants;

- Development of rural consumer cooperatives, trade and catering, services, procurement and processing of agricultural products;

- Development of push-pull migration in terms of available good road transport links with rural communities, regional centers and cities;

- Organization and financing of public works, which objects at the village could be accomplishment of rural settlements.

State policy in the field of development of social and physical infrastructure of rural areas is focused on increasing access to social, cultural, trade and consumer services through the development of road communications, stationary, mobile and remote forms of service.

The basis of improvement of living conditions is built on the following directions:

- Increase of the financial resources of local authorities;

- Simplification of procedures for granting land plots for individual housing, cancellation of the auction system for obtaining land for the citizens living in rural areas and in need of better housing, a free one-time allocation of land plots. The costs of land-surveying should be offset from the central budget in appropriate amounts. Forest land for individual housing construction should be transferred into the ownership of municipalities. Taking into account the large gap in wages and incomes of urban and rural residents, as well as taking into account the nature of free privatization of housing in urban areas, it is expedient to provide one-time free single parts of the forest to the villagers for individual housing construction;

— Financial assistance from the state. Citizens, young families and young professionals in the rural areas should be provided with long-term housing loans for the purchase or construction of housing at a reduced interest rate (3%) for up to 20–25 years, based on market value and social norm of housing. At the birth of children, a part of the debt for the fiscal mortgages should be written off. Families should be allowed to repay the monthly payment of duty with agricultural products produced in their yard;

— Organization of the new modern housing in the countryside at the expense of federal, state and local budgets and specialized construction companies to provide its population in the long-term lease with an option to repurchase;

— Increasing the share of extra investments, stimulating the investment activity of employers (businesses) in residential construction;

— Formation of rural social housing and free offering of public housing to needy citizens on the basis of the contract of employment;

— Provision to rural residents living in individual houses interest-free loans for home improvement engineering, its reconstruction and modernization, expansion of the rural population living in dilapidated or requiring emergency repair housing, to the fund of assistance to reforming housing and communal services, acting in accordance with the Federal Law of 21.07.2007 №185;

— Expansion of the cooperative real estate development;

— At closing and relocation of settlements — to provide public subsidies for housing to citizens or to provide new housing in other settlements.

Development of rural education seeks to ensure accessibility and quality improvement through the implementation of the following activities:

— Significant improvement of technical equipment of rural schools, including sports facilities and equipment, computers and other technical means;

— Development of continuous vocational training system based on information technologies, principles of accessibility, flexibility and multi-variant of all forms of education, continuity of early childhood education, rural secondary schools, vocational schools, technical schools, colleges, universities, institutes for retraining and skills development;

— Preservation of free primary general, basic general, secondary (complete) general education and vocational education, as well as — on a competitive basis — free secondary vocational education,

higher professional and postgraduate education in the state and municipal educational institutions, if this type of education is provided to the citizen for the first time;

— Reconstruction and development of the network of preschool institutions and small schools such as «kindergarten — school», placement of basic schools in typical buildings with a full range of engineering equipment and facilities, with completed computerization, development and education with sufficient training and staffing of educational processes;

— Location of educational institutions, taking into account demographics and public opinion and transferring children to the organizations using special buses to primary schools within 10–15 minutes, and to primary and secondary schools within a 30 minute transport accessibility;

— Construction and reconstruction of school playgrounds and sports facilities sites;

— In secondary (complete) general education — improving the quality of education in accordance with the interests, aptitudes, abilities and health status of children, usage of variance of education. Restoration and development of vocational guidance and training of students working with the expansion of spheres of employment in rural areas and the development of a mixed economy is also of high importance;

— In primary and secondary vocational education — adaptation of education to work in conditions of market relations and training of qualified personnel in accordance with the situation in the agricultural labour market;

— Training of rural educators, grant support for graduate students to work in rural schools;

— Formation of a social support system for students in higher and secondary education, depending on income level of their families, providing students with interest-free long-term loans of up to 10 years, free hostel, travel privileges to the place of study and back;

— State control over the level and quality of education.

The central focus of rural health care and basic tasks of governmental social policy for ensuring constitutional guarantees to protect public health are to ensure universal access to free qualified primary, emergency and special health care.

To improve the cultural services of the rural population, the state should focus on the following objectives:

— Preservation and development of national culture, increasing the creative potential of the villagers;

— Creation of settlements in the centers of modern, technically equipped socio-cultural complexes, which include clubs, libraries, children's schools of art, theater areas and various other clubs and sports clubs;

— Organization of mobile libraries, cinemas, concert brigades to serve people in remote sparsely populated settlements;

— All-round development of cultural ties between urban and rural areas;

— Strengthening the material-technical base of institutions and personnel of cultural organizations;

— Opening of a special channel for villagers at the national radio and television.

To improve the trade service, it is important to enhance the role of consumer cooperatives and the private sector in the provision of food to the organization of mobile forms of traffic in small settlements, trade on pre-orders for home delivery, fairs and with neighboring cities and their trade institutions.

In the area of improving consumer services of the rural population, it is necessary to take measures to restore and develop an integrated system of public services, basic manufacturing facilities in regional centers including home consumer services, carrying out repairs to household appliances, electronic equipment, chemical cleaning of clothes and laundry, repair and sewing of clothes and shoes, repair and construction of housing for individual orders of the population, to set up their offices and shops in large cities. In small towns, a system of taking orders for household services or shops in the administrations of rural settlements should be organized. It is advisable to restore and improve the range and shape of the mobile and stationary maintenance service enterprises and to increase the volume of services.

The mechanism for implementing social policies for sustainable development of rural areas:

— Legal support (development of the National law «On stable sustainable development of rural territories»);

— Organizational support (development of national programs for sustainable development of rural areas);

— Financial security (federal budget, budget of the Republic, local budgets, extrabudgetary funds including the subjects of economic resources in rural areas and rural population);

— Scientific and human resources provision (expansion and deepening of scientific studies and training in the field of sustainable development in rural territories);

— Information provision and monitoring (objects of statistical observation shall be both rural areas and rural population as a whole and in the context of administrative areas; once in every five years — and settlements too).

Organizing role in the development and implementation of state policy in the direction of sustainable development in rural areas of the republic should be assigned to all ministries and agencies associated with rural areas, but the Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of Komi should coordinate this process.

### **New phenomena of rural life**

In our country, the public opinion is formed in such way that agricultural subsidies are considered a kind of alms from the hands of the state to the peasants. This is not the case. So many human and economic resources were squeezed out of the village, that the existing subsidies, subventions and other forms of financial aid are nothing more than a very sluggish return of historic debt. Not even historical, but only the arithmetic approach to the current budgetary allocations reflects economic injustice. For example, subsidies to housing and communal services of cities and towns are many times greater than all public investments into agriculture. If the housing system of cities needs budgetary support, the same should be addressed to the housing of villages [6].

We should note that public financial resources are directed at present to a greater extent on the development of animal farming. It is also assigned to large agribusiness complexes, which are often of urban residency. The same applies to poultry farms. Greenhouse production of tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and flowers is also moving away from rural areas, keeping closer to the city.

A counter-movement is the expansion of rural citizens. Cottage and chalet villages in many areas, including the district of Syktyvkar, already exceed the countryside and villages by the amount of settlers. The latter is also being developed for villas and ancestral estate. But if the classical northern village (rural village) was a common (community), so the above innovations have no social cohesion. Their resources are not consolidated enough to seriously address the issues of transport, energy fa-

cilities, information technology and environmental protection. This problem should be addressed to the municipalities.

More complex conditions have the rural periphery, which is more distant from the cities. It is less competitive, has increased social and economic costs in connection with the «activity» of speculators, visiting dealers and criminal collusion on prices, has no well-developed infrastructure etc. Not only economics, but also everyday experience suggests at least a partial solution of the problems of the periphery through the restoration of the rural consumer cooperatives and opening of own storage bases and vegetable shops. As shown by detailed

potential studies of peripheral municipalities of the Komi Republic carried out under the direction of Ph.D. T. E. Dmitrieva, activation of their lives is to some extent connected with the mushroom and berry economy, tourism, low energy and river management [10].

If we take into account the economic and geographical thesis that the future of local life is determined by the laws of the formation of territorial people communities, and rural areas should be viewed from this perspective, we have to consider not only economic but also social, cultural, ethnic and environmental aspects of life activity.

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### Information about the authors

**Lazhentsev Vitaliy Nikolaevich** (Syktyvkar) — corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Geography, adviser of the Russian Academy of Sciences, main research scientist of the Laboratory for methodology of territorial planning at the Institute for socio-economic and energy problems of the North Komi, Scientific center of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (167982 the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar, GSP-2, Kommunisticheskaya st. 26; tel.: +7 (8212) 24-53-98).

**Terent'ev Vitaliy Vasil'evich** (Syktyvkar) — Ph.D. in Economics, leading research scientist of the Laboratory for methodology of territorial planning at the Institute for socio-economic and energy problems of the North Komi, Scientific center of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (167982 the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar, GSP-2, Kommunisticheskaya st. 26; tel.: +7 (8212) 24-53-98).