

Chapter 11

Economic Aspects of Agricultural Public Policy as a Key Factor of Establishing Food Security: Retrospectives of Post-Soviet Russia

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ABSTRACT

In Russia, food security is ensured by sustainable development of domestic agriculture and related industries. Arable lands, the key agricultural resource in Russia, account for about 9% of the world's total. This study investigates changes in public policy related to agricultural lands in post-Soviet period, namely, arguments for land redistribution; privatization that covered over 60% of agricultural lands and resulted in appearance of land shares owned by about 12 million rural citizens barely understanding what to do with their land shares; post-privatization issues and problems concerned with the involvement of agricultural and other lands in economic activity; implementation of public economic policy measures aimed to resolve the above-mentioned issues (transfer of unclaimed land shares to municipalities); current transformation of ownership structure of agricultural lands; specifics of demarcation of un-privatized lands between federal, regional, and local authorities.

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INTRODUCTION

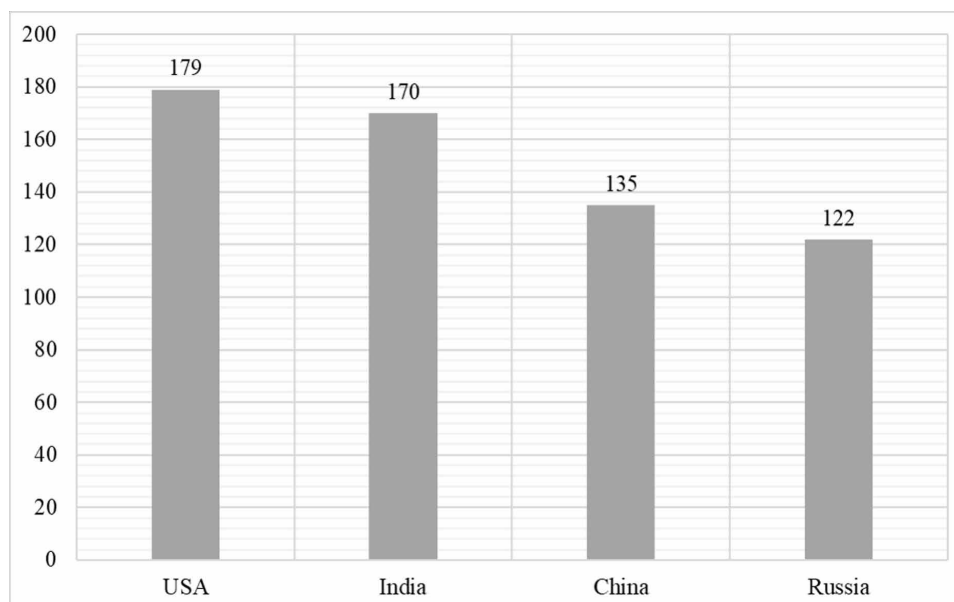
Food security is ensured by sustainable development of domestic agriculture and related industries. In Russia, food security is defined as a share of domestically-produced food in total volume of domestic product turnover (95% for grain and potato, 90% for milk, 85% for meat, and 80% for sugar). The main factors for the implementation of such thresholds are resource potential and institutional environment. Meanwhile, key agricultural resource is agricultural land. The total world's area of agricultural land is about five billion hectares including 1.4 billion hectares of arable lands (Loyko, 2009). In addition, there are about 0.5 billion hectares of lands that are appropriate for agricultural purposes, but their development is limited by severe climate conditions, geographic terrain, and lack of water supply. Meanwhile, rapid growth of population makes food supply a very challenging task. According to Pitsersky (1999), available land resources are enough to provide food for about twelve billion people. As a result, the availability of land is a key factor of food security and competitiveness of domestic farmers in the global market. Russia accounts for about 9% of world's arable land (Figure 1). The economic policy of the country is aimed at the ensurance of food security by the improvement of soil fertility and increase of arable land.

In Russia, allocation of agricultural land is not homogeneous. Most of the land is concentrated in the south-western part of the country (Figure 2), therefore, further analysis is aimed to study the results of state economic policy in agriculture implemented at federal and regional levels.

During the Soviet regime of state land property, all lands were withdrawn from property ownership relations. As a result, there were the references to the definition of real estate in neither economic theory nor legislation. Along with economic and social transformations in post-Soviet Russia, land property rights have been transformed. Today, the monopoly of state land property has been abolished while private and municipal ownership has emerged. Moreover, after a complex process of privatization, land

Figure 1. Top countries in arable land acreage, billion hectares

Source: Loyko (2009); Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography [Rosreestr] (n.d.)



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