

# YOUNG SPECIALISTS EMPLOYMENT AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*The paper deals with the problems of employment of young in-demand specialists in rural areas. The development of rural areas is one of the priorities of our time, as there is a noticeable decrease in the number of both the rural population and those employed in public agricultural production. The need to attract young specialists to rural areas is becoming a task of national importance. The employment of young specialists is an important factor in the sustainable development of rural areas, since without young highly qualified personnel it is impossible to develop and bring to a new level the social infrastructure of rural areas and high-tech agriculture. As part of the study of this problem, we conducted a comparative analysis of the level of employment in urban and rural areas. A set of measures is proposed to improve economic, social and migration policy in rural areas in order to attract and retain in-demand specialists.*

**Keywords:** young specialists, employment, rural areas, rural unemployment, living standards of the rural population

## I. Introduction

Agriculture in the 21st century is an area of great opportunities. Stable growth of the rural economy contributes to the development of all regions of the country, therefore, solving issues of socio-economic development of rural areas are fundamental to the stable and sustainable development of any country. The agro-industrial complex is one of the priority sectors of the Russian economy. Today the task is to provide agricultural enterprises with the necessary number of competent, qualified personnel capable of organizing high yielding and efficient production. Recently, the land area has more than doubled. Labor productivity has increased due to the use of modern agricultural machinery. At the same time, staffing shortage have been and remain one of the key issues. And although our enterprise is not currently experiencing a large labor shortage, there is no personnel reserve in the farm business [1].

Modern agro-industrial complex is a high-tech industry that requires specialists of new generation. A modern stock-farmer is a highly qualified specialist who knows how to work with special computer programs, analyze data and make competent decisions based on them.

Today, the rural labor market is characterized by a shortage of young specialists in many sectors. The problem is relevant because as the demand for young specialists grows, competition between companies for their selection also increases.

If rural economy degrades, then rural areas do not develop.

## II. Methods

In the course of writing this scientific work, we used the researches of Russian economists who made a great contribution to the science on the topic under consideration, as well as articles in periodicals and Internet resources.

Such methods as monographic, comparative and logical analysis, SWOT-analysis were used in the article.

The data of the Federal State Statistics Service and regulations were used as factual and analytical material.

### III. Results

The state is taking all measures to support the development of the agro-industrial complex. In 2024 state support for the agro-industrial complex will amount to 558 billion rubles. Since the beginning of the main State program for agricultural development in 2013, more than 3.5 trillion rubles has been allocated to it. Landholders and processors have access to a wide range of support measures available to both large companies and small businesses, which has a positive effect on production output. Alongside with this, 68 billion rubles is envisaged for the comprehensive program for the development of rural areas and 40.7 billion rubles for the land reclamation program. Depending on climatic conditions differentiation of state support for agriculture in different regions of Russia will be preserved. Such differentiation already exists, preferences are provided for various regions, including the Far East, the North Caucasus, the Arctic zone and new territories.

Non-prestigious, low-paid work, mainly its greater part, is hard manual labor; life “without basic amenities” far from the city is the old Soviet stereotype about agriculture, formed by more than one generation, which has led to a paradoxical situation: the high-tech and modern sector of the agro-industrial complex, which is constantly modernizing and developing, introducing IT and other advanced technologies, experiences a constant shortage of personnel today. Decent work is increasingly recognized as an indispensable factor in sustainable development, capable of lifting an individual, his family and community out of poverty. Poverty is a predominantly rural phenomenon. The ILO estimates that in developing countries, more than 80 percent of the poor live in rural areas. In 2012, the rate of extreme poverty in rural areas was four times higher than in urban areas.

The state is interested in the development of the agro-industrial complex, because today this industry is the main source of export revenues. In 2023, the supply of agricultural products abroad in monetary terms amounted to 43.5 billion dollars, including grain exports - 16.5 billion dollars, which is a record value. And the higher the income the country receives from the agricultural sector, the more funds can be directed to the development of rural areas. Attention is also paid to the development of agricultural cooperatives, access to markets is expanded, and assistance is provided in organizing wholesale and retail trade. And the State program “Integrated development of rural areas” helps in this matter. During the period 2020-2025 the state will allocate almost 2.3 trillion rubles to improve the living and working conditions of rural population [2]. Trillions of rubles will be spent on all this. One way or another, the changes should affect 37 million people.

The main goal of State programs is to ensure sustainable development of rural areas. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to:

- conduct a detailed assessment of the real needs for rural development; improve the legal base for providing state support and ensuring the protection of interests,
- develop and more actively implement mechanisms for grant support for rural youth,
- attract investments for the creation and development of non-agricultural enterprises and social infrastructure in villages,
- develop public-private partnerships between local residents, agribusiness, civil society institutions and government agencies;

Rural areas across the Russian Federation are struggling to retain and attract young people for a variety of reasons. The twin demographic trends of youth outflow and population aging

make it increasingly important for rural cities to implement youth retention and attraction strategies.

The share of the rural population in the constituent entities of the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD) exceeds the Russian average indices, in some republics it is twice as high. Thus, as on January 1, 2023, in all seven constituent entities of the Russian Federation that are part of the NCFD, the actual value of the index of “Share of rural population in the total population of the Russian Federation” exceeds the Russian average index (25.1%)”, the report says. It is noted that in the Republic of Dagestan the share of rural population is 54.8%, in the Republic of Ingushetia – 45.2%, in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic – 48.2%, in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic – 58.6%, in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania – 36.8% (see Table 1), in the Chechen Republic – 61.9%, in Stavropol Territory – 39.3% [3].

**Table 1:** *Population of North Ossetia by municipal districts and towns*

Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Ardonskiy MD	31 705	31 796	31 830	31 755	31 825
Digorskiy MD	18 372	18 356	18 265	18 283	18 341
Irafskiy MD	15 314	15 221	15 160	15 107	15 007
Kirovskiy MD	27 411	27 457	27 406	27 407	27 377
Mozdokskiy MD	87 164	88 018	88 123	88 222	87 718
Pravoberezhnyi MD	57 205	57 125	57 088	57 115	57 388
Prigorodnyi MD	104 103	103 531	103 132	102 285	101 655
Vladikavkaz (town)	325 410		323 998	322 481	321 106

\*MD – municipal district

The state is developing strategies to attract and retain young people, assessing not only federal, but also regional factors. Over two years, almost 340 million rubles have been issued as part of a regional project to support farmers and develop rural cooperation in North Ossetia. The Cabinet of Ministers has made amendments to the rules for granting subsidies. The support was provided to 150 farms and cooperatives for the period of 2022-2023. Thus, farmers get an opportunity to expand their production; the volume of local products that reach the shelves increases and, accordingly, food security increases. Another issue is the development of the agro-industrial complex. This year, 215 million rubles have been allocated for the activities of the national project to support farmers and develop rural cooperation. This is 85 million rubles more than last year. In terms of the volume of allocated funds, North Ossetia-Alania is among the leaders in the country. Nevertheless, there are still a lot of drawbacks in the NCFD, i.e. a lot of manual labor, where you have to deal with animals and crops, working hours, which do not coincide with the working period, work greatly depending on natural factors, and, in addition, the problems of a low level of social and communal infrastructure. So, in August 2023 LLC Agro-Industrial Holding “Master-Prime, Beryozka” required a combine operator with a salary of 20 000 rubles, and with irregular working hours. In 2023, almost 900 thousand tons of grain crops were harvested in North Ossetia. Livestock breeding indicators are very good, both in dairy, poultry and cattle meat. Modern infrastructure and a qualitatively new living environment are being created: new schools, kindergartens, cultural centers, and communal networks.

However, as practice shows, rural areas use available human resources, equipment and technologies only by 50 percent. The remaining 50 percent is the key starting platform and at the same time a problematic growth zone for all Russian agglomerations. Weak economic infrastructure, outdated agricultural equipment and lack of modern technologies hinder the

development of agricultural production. But perhaps the biggest problem is the shortage of personnel. Labor resources are moving to other industries, where earnings are higher. Moreover, young people, whose labor is especially needed in the village, are leaving for the cities first of all. The low level of incomes is confirmed by official statistics. According to Federal State Statistics Service, in the first quarter of 2024, the average accrued salary in agriculture amounted to 55.6 thousand rubles, while, for example, in the mining industry - 150.3 thousand rubles, in the processing industry - 150.3 thousand rubles, and in the agricultural sector - 150.3 thousand rubles.

Nowadays, one of the main factors constraining the innovative development of the economy, including agricultural production, is the shortage of personnel in the labor market. Now, it is necessary to focus on training a sufficient number of personnel in demand in agriculture, possessing modern competencies and skills for their effective use. Along with the general shortage in the industry, there is an increasingly acute shortage of highly qualified personnel, which is a consequence of the widening gap between the quality of their training and the ever-increasing qualification demands of the business community. For example, some of the most in-demand specialists in the NCFD are veterinary specialists – veterinarians and veterinary paramedics, livestock specialists. Among the working specialties there are vacancies for tractor operators and drivers, and machine milking operators. On average, about 12-15% of the positions of specialists and working professions of the agro-industrial complex remain vacant. For example, the first enterprise in North Ossetia-Alania with a full cycle of milk production and processing, which has its own raw materials, feed base and a milk processing plant for the production of natural dairy products with the brand “Master-Prime, Beryozka” in the village of Khataldon, Alagir district, the following employees were needed: an agronomist (with a salary of 20 000 rubles); veterinarian (with a salary of 20 000 rubles); stock-farmer (with a salary of 15 000 rubles); engineer (livestock engineer - breeder) - salary based on the results of the interview; combine operator (with a salary of 20 000 rubles); tractor operator (mechanizer) (with a salary of 20 000 rubles). Modern agriculture is a high-tech production employing highly qualified people.

According to the results of 2020–2022, about 65 thousand workplaces were created through the activities of the State program and additional investment projects [10]. Workplaces in rural areas are also being created as part of the State program for the development of the agro-industrial complex. The creation of a modern farm will ensure crop rotation and increase the yield of our main crop, i.e. soybeans, and will also help to create additional workplaces. Subsidies are provided for the development of family farms, agri-tourism, and cooperative farming. Due to these measures, more than 4 thousand new farms were created, more than 42 thousand farmers were involved in cooperative farming, and more than 10 thousand workplaces were already created in 2023 [3].

In the Nizhny Novgorod region, measures to support the agro-industrial complex and grant programs for farmers have been developed. Various government support measures were provided for agricultural enterprises: subsidies are provided for manufactured products (milk, meat, potatoes, grain, vegetables), subsidies for the purchase of machinery and equipment. There are also programs for favourable credit facilities. Grant programs “Agri-tourism”, “Family Farm”, “Agri-startup” have been developed for farm business. In total, in 2024, the budget provides 6.1 billion rubles to support the agricultural industry and the development of rural areas, of which 4.2 billion are funds from the regional budget, 1.9 billion are federal subsidies. As part of the “Integrated development of rural areas” program, social payments are provided for rural workers to improve housing conditions. The program also provides for the construction of housing, which the employee signs up under a rental agreement. In this case, housing construction is 80 percent financed from the federal and regional budgets, 20 percent comes from the employer and the municipality. This year under the program 22 houses are being built for rural workers and their families. In addition, within the framework of the regional law on the development of human

resources, a payment of one million rubles is provided for young specialists to improve housing conditions.

The following Agricultural Support Programs are in effect in the Russian Federation:

**Zemsky (country) teacher** is a program that allows young specialists to receive one-time financial support. To attract qualified personnel to villages, the State offers incentive payments for various specialists. Teachers can participate in the Zemsky Teacher program, i.e. an annual competition whose winners are employed in rural schools for 5 years and receive 1 million rubles (or 2 million in the Far East).

According to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation despite the record number of program participants, the need for teaching staff in villages is still high – there are not enough teachers of mathematics, Russian language, foreign languages and some other subjects.

**Zemsky Doctor** is a Program to improve housing conditions for doctors under 50 years old, moving to rural areas. The program “Zemsky Doctor” operates for medical workers. Doctors who move to work in a village or small town receive a million rubles, and paramedics, midwives and nurses receive 500 thousand rubles each. In hard-to-reach areas, payments increase to 1.5 and 0.75 million, respectively, and in the Far North and Far East they reach 2 and 1 million rubles, correspondingly.

Data from the Accounts Chamber show that in some regions “zemsky doctors” work only for a short time and then quit. This reduces the effectiveness of the program. The auditors recommended strengthening control over compliance with the terms of labor contracts by participating doctors.

Besides, regions often attract specialists to agriculture through their own programs. Thus, in the Krasnoyarsk Territory, young workers of agricultural complexes can receive a million rubles in two stages – 500 thousand immediately and another 500 in three years (Resolution of the Krasnoyarsk Territory Government No. 198-p).

**Rural mortgage** is aimed at receiving a preferential loan from 0.1% to 3% for the purchase or construction of housing worth up to 3 million rubles. The maximum loan amount is 6 million rubles for one borrower and 12 million for couples. The initial contribution is 20% of the cost of housing for one borrower and 40% for couples. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, 16 banks including Rosselkhozbank and Sberbank participated in the program at the end of 2023.

**The program of allocation of land plots** for specialists needed by the village. Teachers, doctors, veterinarians and other necessary personnel can receive land for free use, and after 5 years of work, register it as property. Requirements for the area and location of plots are established by local authorities.

Another housing program is the Family Farm. For example, in the Novosibirsk Region it involves the creation of farm businesses on the basis of preferential land plots. The participant must be a peasant or farm business with 2 or more family members. The number of cattle should not exceed 400 heads, goats/sheep not more than 500 heads of broodstock.

**Transport and tax benefits.** The benefits associated with owning transport and agriculture are also important. Thus, owners of cars registered in rural areas pay less for a CMTPL insurance policy due to a lower territory coefficient (TC). This is explained by lower traffic intensity in villages.

Besides, citizens who run private subsidiary farms are completely exempt from paying transport tax on agricultural machinery – tractors, combines, milk tankers, etc. To receive the benefit, you need to submit an application to the tax office and an extract from the household book about the farming of private subsidiary farms.

Subsidies are also provided for self-employed farmers, i.e. reimbursement of part of the costs of seeds, feed, veterinary services, etc. The amount of subsidy rates varies from region to region. For example, in the Tyumen region there is a subsidy of 2.15 rubles for each kilogram of milk sold and 3 000 rubles per ton of vegetables and potatoes sold. To receive it, you need to be registered as self-employed and pay self-employment tax.

**Labor guarantees and benefits for housing and utilities services.** In addition to financial support measures, other benefits are available in rural areas. For example, women working in villages are entitled to a 36-hour work week instead of 40 hours. For exceeding this norm, the employer is obliged to pay extra as overtime.

In addition, once a month, rural women workers can take an additional paid day off at their discretion (Article 262 of the Labor Code of the Russian Federation). It is enough to obtain it by oral or written request of a female employee.

**Increased pensions for rural residents.** Finally, for those who have worked in agriculture for a long time, a considerable supplementary pension is provided. Non-working pensioners with over 30 years of experience in agricultural production receive a monthly increase of 25% to the fixed insurance pension payment. In 2024 this amounts to 2033.72 rubles.

So, attracting qualified personnel to the region's agriculture is an urgent and main task for the near future. Employers play an important role in staff retention. First of all, they should be interested in retaining specialists, creating favorable conditions for their work and rest, and providing them with decent wages and comfortable housing. To attract highly qualified workers, the Department of agricultural, together with the personnel services of agricultural organizations, currently visit rural schools, hold career guidance meetings, talk about job prospects, and inform about the possibility of concluding contracts for targeted training [3].

The issue of increasing the legal literacy of rural residents is urgent. It is necessary to create educational projects, for example, "Farmer's School", where it will be possible to become acquainted with legal aspects of farming, to improve financial literacy, to create a business model for a future business, to learn the basics of marketing as well as to get acquainted with the latest agricultural technologies and crops.

All young specialists are provided with social benefits stipulated by legislation (incentive payments, housing in the first place). Creating decent working conditions is only part of the work being done. It is important to know in what conditions young professionals live, to help organize their leisure time, to show an active citizenship, and to attract them to a healthy lifestyle. Then a number of issues related to retention of human resources in rural areas and many others will be resolved more easily. These issues are closely monitored by the government agencies. Monitoring of compliance with legislation in relation to young professionals and workers is carried out regarding the provision of vacations, compliance with work and rest regimes, compensation. If the approach is right, rural businesses can successfully attract and hire the best specialists.

Many agro-industrial complexes pay for staff training at universities and colleges, as well as training on advanced training courses in the central regions of our country [4].

Within the framework of the national project "Science and Universities", scientific and educational centers with an agricultural profile are created as functional units to ensure the scientific and technological transfer of the results of intellectual activity, youth laboratories that are engaged in research in the field of agricultural sciences are formed. Thus, the Far East State Agrarian University and the agricultural enterprise Dimskoye are currently working on a project aimed at creating a new Amur cattle breed adapted to local conditions. North Caucasus Federal University is expanding scientific projects related to the agro-industrial complex. For example, these are "smart greenhouses" for growing vegetables using robots. Such robotic assistants can plant, care for plants, and deliver crops to the warehouse. A robotic tomato grower with a pattern recognition system has already been created. It is able to determine the maturity of tomatoes and the need for their timely harvesting. In one medium-sized greenhouse, from 30 to 60 mechanical agrobots can work. In addition, NCFU scientists also work on the creation of organic fertilizers from low-value agricultural waste in collaboration with colleagues from other countries – Turkey, Iran and Uzbekistan [5]. In the food industry, healthy food products enriched with micro- and macroelements are being developed. One of the largest projects is the joint implementation with the Stavropol milk-processing plant of the first lactose (milk sugar) technology in Russia. This project is being implemented to replace the import of functional dairy ingredients for the medical,

children's and veterinary industries. Modern digital solutions allow to significantly increase the economic indicators of agricultural areas. For example, Earth remote sensing data from space had already been successfully applied to identify possible risks and forecast crops. Major Russian agro-industrial enterprises are actively using solutions based on Internet of Things (IoT) and big data technologies. They enable farmers to obtain real-time information on temperature, humidity, soil condition and soils from each individual plot of land.

It is necessary to further develop the educational process from a model that primarily implements an educational function to a model that implements educational, research and technological functions [6].

It is also important to consider subjective factors that may not have been considered by previous generations, such as the ability to maintain a work-life balance, access to arts, culture, social and recreational opportunities, and fostering a sense of belonging to a place. If a business is focused only on making as much money as possible, without paying attention to social issues and without solving the problems of the territory in which it operates, sooner or later people will start to leave this territory. Besides work, young people need comfortable housing conditions, which in rural areas should be the same as in the city. In addition, employees of agricultural enterprises should be provided with health resort treatment, which could be obtained at the expense of the employer.

However, this problem can be solved in different ways:

- organization of a leisure center;
- creation of youth clubs;
- opening of sports and art clubs.

The social sphere at any time is the most susceptible to changes in the economic situation in the country [6].

Our study focused on young people (136 people from the villages of Elkhotovo and Zamankul) aged 23 to 30 years. The survey was used to collect data for subsequent assessment of the factors that youth face when deciding to stay or leave a particular village.

Thus:

- 1) 42% of participants expressed their desire to stay in their villages
- 2) 58% of young respondents named "work" as the main reason that they are going to leave
- 3) 61% noted Moscow and Krasnodar when asked where exactly those young people intended to migrate
- 4) respondents indicated the following reasons why they do not leave: "there are opportunities for professional growth", "family circumstances", "like the village"

Our research also showed the following values that would attract young people to rural communities:

1. Stable employment,
2. Work-life balance,
3. Digital information on the availability of culture/sports and recreational opportunities.

Our study results support the literature by indicating that youth's sense of belonging and perceptions of their home community may play an important role in their decision to stay or return to rural areas. The importance of "birthplace" (small homeland) is crucial when developing strategies for retaining and attracting young people [7].

Agricultural regions often have a reputation for being isolated and behind the times. In fact, many rural areas are home to businesses that are at the forefront of innovation. However, these businesses often find it difficult to attract and retain talent. This is partly due to the perception that job opportunities are limited in rural areas.

Businesses in rural areas need to offer higher wages and benefits than their urban counterparts to attract and retain young employees. There are also fewer job opportunities in rural areas, so workers are more likely to leave a company if they don't feel they are being paid a decent salary. To compete for talent, businesses in rural areas must offer wages and benefits at least at the

level of urban areas [8]. In today's economy, it is more important than ever that businesses provide opportunities for career growth and development. By doing so, rural businesses can gain a competitive advantage.

Finally, businesses in rural communities need to focus on creating a positive working environment. This can be achieved by making sure the physical working environment is clean and comfortable and the company culture is the one that values teamwork, respect and communication. By creating a positive working environment, businesses in rural communities can ensure that they are able to attract and retain young workers.

Today, rural regions offer a unique set of challenges and business opportunities. By creating an environment that meets employee needs, businesses can increase their chances for attracting and retaining top specialists [9].

Most studies have shown that employees who feel stuck in an unpromising job are much more likely to leave their current position. Moreover, employees who don't feel like they're learning and growing are more likely to become disengaged and unproductive. On the other hand, employees who feel they have opportunities for career growth and development are more likely to be loyal and productive. Therefore, businesses need to provide opportunities for career growth and development. By doing this, companies will be able to retain their best employees and attract new talent.

Nowadays, there are all prospects for rural areas to become modern, comfortable, economically developed and promising ones. These are villages where the population has a job with decent pay, a school and a kindergarten, housing, and where social, sports and cultural life is supported. It is a village you will never leave.

#### IV. Discussion

In modern Russia, the employment picture is rapidly changing (entrepreneurship, remote work, etc.) Combined with the abilities of the younger generation as a tech-savvy cohort concerned with work-life balance, it is rural areas that can meet the needs of these young professionals in creating dynamic, prosperous places for both work and life:

- Provide quality vocational education and training and practical skills. Access to the labor market should be ensured through advanced training of employees and managers in vocational training and advanced training centers in agriculture.
- Promote the introduction of learning concepts divided into modules, with a focus on learners, as well as improved teaching methods (such as hybrid or e-learning models) and the creation of enterprises in agriculture (so-called agricultural enterprise) [8].

Thus, the importance of the agricultural sector as a potential source of employment is emphasized and various initiatives and reforms are encouraged to address this problem. It is important to highlight the need for targeted measures such as skills development, vocational training and economic empowerment of youth, as well as measures to stimulate workplace creation and promote sustainable development. Finally, there is a need for a holistic approach to solving the problem of rural unemployment, which combines both federal and regional efforts to stimulate inclusive growth and improve the well-being of rural communities.

Breaking away from the traditional employee-employer relationship by expanding employment opportunities, where remote work, self-employment and participation in new employment sectors offer rural areas more opportunities to attract potential residents. The importance of highlighting the balance between quality of life and employment can expand opportunities for young people considering making rural communities their home for the long term [10].

However, public services, transport and information and communication capabilities are still underdeveloped in rural areas. Employment is a decisive factor for young people to move, but it is not enough to maintain sustainable development of the territories in the long term. While cities are



becoming increasingly inaccessible due to the high cost of living, rural areas provide an opportunity to realize one's own creative and business ideas.

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