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Chapter 1

**HISTORY, PROSPECTS, AND SCENARIOS
FOR SMALLHOLDERS IN RUSSIA**

Stephen K. Wegren*

Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, US

ABSTRACT

For many decades during the Soviet period smallholders, defined as household gardeners (*lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*), played an indispensable role in food production and improving regional food security. In the 1990s, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* emerged as a survival strategy for nearly all households during the economic collapse. Since 2000, however, economic recovery, the emergence of a stratum of strong commercialized mega-farms, and the development of national and regional supermarket chains raise questions about the societal role for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in Russian society. This chapter examines state policy, smallholder resilience, and role in society for the Soviet period, the early post-Soviet period, and the contemporary period. The final section speculates on the future for Russia's smallholders by considering three scenarios: (1) disappearance; (2) morphing into food sovereignty; and (3) continuation of the status quo. The chapter concludes

* Corresponding Author's E-mail: swegren@smu.edu.

that the status quo is most likely. The irony of smallholders' situation is that they were discriminated against by the state during the Soviet period because they represented market capitalism. In the post-Soviet period, it is capitalism and market forces that have facilitated the decline of smallholders.

Keywords: Russia, agriculture, smallholders, food sovereignty, food security

INTRODUCTION

Smallholders throughout the world play an important economic role, with their food production estimated at 70%-80% of world supply (Graeub, et al. 2016; Lowder, Scoet and Raney, 2016). In most countries, smallholders are numerically dominant but use a small percentage of agricultural land. Individual or household plots are quite small, often less than a hectare or two. Previous research has explored how smallholders around the world face common problems (Hazell, Poulton, Wiggins, and Dorward, 2010). Today, Russia's smallholders, the subject of this chapter, face many of the same problems that confront smallholders in other countries: access to credit; how to increase integration with food processors; how to enter the supply chains of the commercial food market; access to inputs; labor supply issues; and a host of other obstacles. Yet, Russia's smallholders also face unique challenges that this chapter illuminate.

Smallholders in Russia have a long tradition and have played an important economic role over time. One cannot imagine the Soviet agricultural system without also thinking of the "private plot" sector that played a crucial role in national food supply. During much of the post-war period in the Soviet Union, a main agrarian problem was how to feed the urban population, owing to the shortcomings in the Soviet planned economy and the food distribution system. The nature of this particular Soviet agrarian problem (in addition to others), defined a specific role for smallholders. Smallholders' role changed in the post-Soviet period and has

changed yet again in recent years as the food system has transformed into a modern system with retail chains and supermarkets that offer consumers one-stop shopping.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the history of smallholders in Russia (*lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*) and their present-day prospects. My analysis is divided into four main sections: The Soviet Period, The Early Post-Soviet Period, The Contemporary Period, and The Future. The first three sections are structured to analyze state policy, resilience, and role in society. The Future section examines three scenarios for Russia's smallholders going forward.

The chapter develops several broad arguments. The first argument is that the economic importance of Russia's smallholders has changed significantly in the past 50-60 years, going through cycles of decrease then increase in food production. Smallholders' fortunes stem from the economic environment and state policy, and those too have changed over time from discriminatory for most of the Soviet period to embracing smallholders in the 1990s. Since 2000, smallholders have faced a neutral state but in recent years that condition appears to be changing as the politics of markets exert influence.

The second broad argument is that as a consequence of smallholders' change in economic importance, smallholders' role in society has likewise transformed from subsidiary food production to a survival strategy to economic activity that is increasingly less necessary and less relevant to the average urban consumer. The smallholder continues to have importance in other ways, to rural life, to village interactions, and to rural culture.

The third argument is that going forward, the "liberal" scenario for the evolution of smallholders is unlikely due to Russia's political system and an absence of the underlying prerequisites such as a vibrant civil society. Absent an economic shock to the system similar to collapse in the 1990s, the most likely future scenario for Russia's smallholders is continued drift toward economic marginalization. Smallholders are unlikely to fare well in Russia's competitive economic environment in which mega-farms and agribusinesses are dominant.

THE RUSSIAN SMALLHOLDER

My analysis of Russia's smallholders is confined to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, which is loosely translated as "personal subsidiary farming." In the Soviet period, this form of production was often referred to as a private plot, which was something of a misnomer because the land was not privately owned but it did convey the fact that food production was outside of state planning. There was a debate during the Soviet period whether *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* constituted private property or subsidiary agriculture within the socialist system (Wadekin, 1973, 1-9). In any event, the designation "private" referred to food production, not land ownership. Contemporary shorthand versions refer to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* as household gardens or less frequently kitchen gardens.

The important point is that smallholder agricultural activity has historically represented a subsidiary source of income in Russia, not the primary livelihood of a rural dweller or rural household. In the Soviet period, the operation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* as the primary source of income was outlawed. Further, in the Soviet period the household plot was supposed to be a subsidiary source of food, one that was secondary to state food stores and rural cooperatives, but in reality the plot was often households' main source of food. Medvedev indicates that even as late as the 1980s rural households derived more than one-half of their food from their own production, and for certain products such as meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, and fruit the percentage was about 90 percent (Medvedev 1987, 365). During the 1940s and into the 1960s, the percentage of food derived from own production was much higher than one-half.

Today, a very small percentage of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators derive all of their income from such production (Uzun and Saraikin, 2012). Of course, the actual level of income derived from household food production differs based on different factors such as region, profession, size of household, and labor capital (O'Brien and Patsiorkovsky, 2006; Pallot and Nefedova, 2007; Wegren, 2014). Most households continue to use their food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe*

khoziaistvo for self-consumption. According to one Russian academic, just 16% of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators sell their production in one or another, but the degree to which that is true depends upon different variables (Zhevora, 2017, 21).

Although there are other forms of smallholding in Russia such as dacha plots (Rusanov, 2019), *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is the most economically important and the most widely practiced. Russia's 2016 agricultural census found more than 13 million plots specifically devoted to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, the vast majority of which are located in rural areas.¹ *Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* consists of a small plot of land typically located around a rural dwelling, called *priusadebnyi uchastok*. During the Soviet era, collective farm families also had access to a small plot designated from the farm for grazing rights away from the dwelling. In urban areas, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* consisted of use rights away from apartments; in the post-Soviet period additional land is leased from the municipal government.

Household gardening does not occupy much of Russia's agricultural land. Russia's 2016 agricultural census found that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* used only 1.6% of agricultural land (Rosstat, 2018b, 66), with an average plot size of .8 hectares in rural areas and .3 hectares in urban locales (Rosstat, 2016a). In 2019, according to official estimates, 28% of the ruble value of Russia's agricultural production came from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, consisting of unprocessed vegetables and potatoes, milk, eggs, honey, and meat (Rosstat, 2020). The ruble value of food output from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* has experienced a linear decline since 2004.

THE SOVIET PERIOD

Before analyzing state policy and other variables concerning smallholders during the Soviet period, it is useful to say a few words about

¹ The total number of land plots numbered over 17 million if other types of smallholder uses are included.

the origins of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Prior to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Russia's agrarian structure consisted of peasants owning about two-thirds of land in European Russia. In 1916 peasants accounted for 90% of total sown land which of course varied by region (Volin, 1970, 110). During the run up to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, large gentry estates were seized by spontaneous peasant uprisings that distributed land among themselves (Keep, 1976, 200-216). In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, private ownership of land was abolished and all land from landlords' estates, the church, and the state was nationalized, but smallholdings of peasants and Cossacks were exempt (Carr, 1952, 35). From confiscated land, about 86% of confiscated land was distributed to peasants and the average size of a peasant plot increased (Carr, 1952, 47). In mid-1918, however, as policies of War Communism were introduced, the Bolsheviks unleashed class warfare in the countryside by turning poor peasants against rich peasants (the so-called kulaks), through the creation of committees of poor peasants. War Communism witnessed the seizure of grain and land from kulaks and peasants who had purchased land from estates prior to 1917. Not only were land purchases and sales prohibited, so too was land leasing, and use rights were given only to those workers who tilled the land (Volin, 1979, 129). A few years later, as the disastrous policies of War Communism became unsustainable, the Soviet regime backtracked and the 1922 Land Code strengthened state ownership and prohibitions on the sale and purchase of land, but it allowed land leasing, thereby permitting individual farms to exist (Danilov, 1988, 94). Private ownership of land remained illegal, however, and all land continued to belong to the state. During the New Economic Policy of the 1920s (NEP) the percentage of agricultural land used by individual farms increased; by 1927 individual peasants were using over 98% of sown agricultural land (Nove, 1969, 106).

Stalin's collectivization of agriculture starting in 1929 and extending into the 1930s ended land leasing and transformed Russia's agrarian structure. Stalin created a system of state and collective farms controlled by the Communist party. He attacked peasants' individual farms so that their numbers dwindled before completely disappearing in the 1940s.

Thus, during the 1930s the binary agrarian structure of the 1920s—a robust individual farming sector and a smaller socialized farm sector—gave way to the dominance of socialized farms. By 1935, more than 94% of crop land was collectivized (Nove, 1969, 174). As peasants were driven into collective farms, the majority of their wages were paid in-kind, usually grain and fodder for animals. It would not be until the 1960s that state policy monetized collective farm wages and even then there was considerable variance from farm to farm and region to region.

The discussion below reviews state policy under the four consequential post-Lenin General Secretaries: Josef Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Mikhail Gorbachev, eschewing the interregnum leaderships of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. As is frequently noted, the position of party leaders was often ambivalent about *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* because it was seen as a vestige of capitalism, a type of production to be eventually eliminated as economic conditions permitted. But those conditions never materialized and thus the regime was forced to tolerate this form of smallholding out of economic necessity. That said, state policy varied over time in the intensity of its animosity toward smallholders until the Gorbachev era when attitudes changed.

State Policy in the 1930s

During the 1930s, Stalin's regime wanted to extract resources from agriculture to aid industrialization. For this reason, the state requisitioned ever higher percentages of food produced by collective farms, which meant that there was less food (mostly grain) to distribute as wages to collective farm workers. The regime did not want to completely starve the peasantry because burgeoning cities had to be fed. Therefore, in 1933 rural collective farm workers were given the right to conduct subsidiary agriculture in their spare time. The operation of subsidiary household plots, or *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, for collective farm employees was formally legalized in the Collective Farm Charter of 1935, a concession to the need to allow rural dwellers to feed themselves and to compensate for the acute

famine in rural Ukraine during 1932-1933 (Applebaum, 2017). Successive Collective Farm Charters in 1969 and 1988 specified the rights and responsibilities of collective farmers and defined the rules for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

Over time, land use rights for subsidiary agricultural production were expanded to include state farm employees, farm service personnel, urban residents, industrial workers, and other workers (Wadekin, 1973, 20-42; Hedlund, 1989, 28-31). On the whole, however, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was a rural phenomenon and virtually every collective farm household cultivated a plot. In the late 1980s, for example, 98% of collective farm households and 79% of workers' and employees' households operated *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* (Goskomstat SSSR, 1989, 3). The size of the household plot was not equal everywhere and depended on the region and employment status, among other variables, but generally was limited to less than .5 hectares for collective farm households after 1969. Thus, for much of the Soviet period, the operation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was a recognition of reality but also an incentive to remain employed on a collective farm. Departure from the farm meant the loss of the household plot. From the mid-1930s, therefore, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* became part of Russia's agrarian system. That said, the role of smallholding in the socialist agrarian structure remained contested and its economic importance varied.

State Policy during World War II and After

The terrible destruction suffered by the Soviet Union during WWII and the loss of agricultural resources—men, land, animals, machinery—led the Communist party to shift its strategy. Instead of relying on the state for food deliveries to the population, emphasis was placed on local food sources which relieved pressure on the transport of food via rail, which instead had to be used to move men and material to fight the war. Bread remained the only foodstuff that was centrally supplied by the state (Moskoff, 1990, 94). The shift in state strategy included relaxation of

restrictions on subsidiary farming by state enterprises, which were allowed to create subsidiary farms, and by households. Local food autonomy was articulated as official policy as early as July 1941 (Moskoff, 1990, 96). A 1939 government resolution that had placed strict size limitations on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* stopped being enforced, and subsidiary agricultural production spread onto former collective farm land in order to increase food supplies. As a consequence, food production from subsidiary agriculture provided more monetary and non-monetary income for peasant households. Income (monetary and non-monetary) from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* per collective farm household in 1940 constituted almost 54% of their total income, and wages from work on the collective farm only 11%. By 1946, income from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* constituted 65% of household income, with wages from a collective farm just 2% (Verbitskaia, 1992, 142). In a very real sense, therefore, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* provided a lifeline for collective farm families. In addition, subsidiary agricultural production by households not only fed the rural population but also generated food to feed urban residents and people who had been evacuated from western regions as state supply chains were disrupted during the Nazis' advance.

The post-war period witnessed a renewed crackdown on smallholders. A September 1946 decree made clear that postwar agrarian policy was based on the restoration of socialized agriculture. The 1946 decree called for the enforcement of the previous 1939 resolution, which meant that land that had been used for subsidiary agricultural production during the war was returned to collective farms. Accordingly, more than 14 million acres of land were transferred from subsidiary agriculture back to collective farms, although a relatively small portion was returned from individuals (Volin, 1970, 303). Moreover, in 1948, a tax in-kind was introduced on production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, similar to state food procurements from socialized farms. Stalin's last attack on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and collective farm markets came in his book on economic policy, published in 1952 as *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. In this short book, Stalin called for the elimination of the *kolkhoz* market where household gardeners sold some of their production,

which meant that, if enacted, rural households would have no legal outlet to sell their surplus produce (Stalin, 1952, 63-71). Stalin died before this idea came to fruition.

State Policy under Khrushchev

Whereas Stalin made concessions to smallholders who engaged in *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* only during the war period, First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev understood that household subsidiary agricultural production was linked to existing economic conditions. Although Khrushchev was committed to expanding and strengthening socialized agriculture, those conditions did not yet allow the elimination of household subsidiary agriculture. Khrushchev's approach to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was dichotomous. During the first few years of his rule, Khrushchev pursued different strategies to increase food production in the socialized sector—increasing procurement prices and increasing land under cultivation through the Virgin Lands project (McCauley, 1976). He also incentivized production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* by easing some of the restrictions. For example, a 1957 decree (effective January 1958) ended compulsory food deliveries for urban and rural *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and some household debt was written off (Wadekin, 1973, 232).

From December 1958, however, Khrushchev restricted *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, evidenced through a direct attack on privately owned livestock which Hedlund calls the “nerve” of smallholders (Hedlund, 1989, 20). Khrushchev wanted to decrease state dependence on meat raised by households, and he made clear that he preferred most of the growth in livestock herds to occur in the socialized sphere. In a December 1958 speech, Khrushchev claimed that privately livestock owned was a serious constraint on the development of socialized agriculture, and he advocated farm employee households to sell their livestock to the farm where they worked. Although the sale of animals was to be voluntary, it took on the urgency of a political campaign so that sales were often

compulsory, a fact that subsequently led Khrushchev to urge restraint by local officials in early 1959 (Wadekin, 1973, 282).

In addition, during 1959 more restrictions were enacted. *Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators were prohibited from purchasing food such as bread to use as animal feed; and farm sales of feed grain and concentrates to plot holders were discontinued. In addition, payments-in-kind to collective farmers, which had consisted mainly of grain for fodder, were also reduced (Hedlund, 1989, 21). Fodder and grazing rights were restricted. These measures meant that it became very difficult for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators to feed their livestock. The impact of these restrictions on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is indicated by official data showing that in just one year, from 1959 to 1960, the number of privately-owned cattle declined by about four million head; the number of hogs decreased by 1.6 million; and sown area contracted by about one-half million hectares (Hedlund, 1989, 21).

In 1963, Khrushchev's attack on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* continued but more damage was done due to a severe drought. The poor harvest led to feed shortages and forced large-scale slaughter of animals in the socialized sector (Hedlund, 1989, 23). The smallholder sector also suffered as hog and sheep numbers declined significantly due to feed shortages. Smallholders' stock of pigs fell by three million and the number of sheep declined by 3.3 million by 1964. The decline in smallholders' livestock holdings affected their earnings. Earnings from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* fell from 62% of collective farm workers' household income in 1958 to 57% in 1963, and continued to decline thereafter (Bronson and Krueger, 1971, 223). Overall, when the Khrushchev period ended in 1964, his legacy was one of significant restrictions on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

State Policy under Brezhnev

The next Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, was no less committed to advancing the socialized farm sector than was Khrushchev. Brezhnev

increased investment into state and collective farms, raised procurement prices, and expanded farm mechanization and the use of chemical fertilizers (Hahn, 1972, 168-88). As a result, during 1965-1980, the number of tractors rose by 1.5 times, the number of grain combines rose by 1.4 times, the number of trucks rose by 1.7 times, the application of fertilizer per 100 hectares increased by 2.9 times, and the consumption of electricity grew by 8.9 times (Naukhatskii, 2003, 34). Importantly, Brezhnev improved wages for collective farm workers and also monetized those wages. For the first time internal passports were distributed to collective farm workers so that they could move within the USSR. The monetization of income and internal passports may be interpreted as ways to undermine *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. If collective farmers earned more and were paid in actual money, their incentive to operate a household garden would decrease; and the ability to move meant that at least in theory they could move to urban areas and in doing so would give up their rural *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Those aspects have a degree of validity. But the biggest impact on smallholders was that Brezhnev faced a much more unfavorable economic environment. Whereas Khrushchev faced only one poor harvest in 1963 that forced the Soviet Union to import grain from the West, Brezhnev faced repeated crop failures: in the early 1970s, in the mid-1970s, and in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s. Those repeated crop failures, along with an economic slowdown that turned to stagnation, clashed with state promises for improved food supplies to the growing urban population. In response, Brezhnev eased some restrictions on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

Immediately following the resignation of Khrushchev, in November 1964 the tax on livestock owned by urban dwellers was repealed, which had been in existence since 1956. The model charter adopted at the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers in late November 1969 devoted Section 10 to personal plot farming. According to the Model Statutes, a household plot could extend to .50 hectares, including land occupied by buildings, or up to .20 hectares on irrigated land. In some regions, plot sizes up to one hectare were allowed. The 1969 charter also reiterated the

right of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators to raise cattle, poultry, and bees (Zaitsev, 1969, 18).

The impetus given to smallholders in the late Brezhnev period exemplifies both critical economic conditions and Brezhnev's pragmatism. In 1977, a resolution by the Central Committee provided for loans to buy young livestock and to expand the production and sale of tools to operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. In January 1981, a resolution by the Central Committee stipulated that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators who signed contracts with state or collective farms for the sale of their production were to be given improved access to feed and fodder supplies. In addition, if the plot operator sold his livestock to a collective farm, it could then use that production to count toward its own plan fulfillment (Wegren, 1998, 42). The January 1981 resolution also rescinded numerical restrictions on animals that could be raised by a household. However, the removal of this restriction applied only if livestock were raised under contract with a state enterprise in which case the purchase price was regulated by the state.

A follow-on Central Committee resolution was adopted in February 1981 that allowed for land to be converted to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* from "the state land supply, state forest fund, industrial, transport and other non-agricultural enterprises and organizations, and also unused land of collective farms, state farms, and other agricultural enterprises" (cited in Wegren, 1998, 42). The effects of Brezhnev's measures were not overly impressive but did result in a short-term increase in household animals (see Table 1).

Despite the modest measures adopted under Brezhnev that were intended to stimulate smallholders' production, it is important to note that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* remained heavily regulated. Smallholders' plots were regulated in size; the number of animals was restricted unless raised under contract with a farm; and plot operators were prohibited from owning horses which could be used for plowing (Wegren, 1998, 43). There was no restriction, however, on state farm workers or other citizens owning horses.

State Policy under Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev inherited a smallholder sector that was in long-term decline. Broadly speaking, the Soviet agricultural sector was in crisis for a variety of policy reasons, from a lack of leadership, poor harvests and rising grain imports, and stagnating food production that affected levels of consumption (Hedlund, 1984). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review fully Gorbachev's agrarian reform strategy but suffice it to say that his policies were more conservative than liberal. Among his main reformist thrusts, one detects innate caution. Many of his "reforms" had been tried before: revitalizing the non-black earth zone; raising procurement prices; the implementation of a *prodnalog*, or food tax; and the use of links (*zvena*) in production (Wadekin, 1987). Even one of his "progressive" reforms, increasing farm autonomy, suffered from bureaucratic pushback which eventually undermined the original intent. Essentially, Gorbachev tried to modify farm behavior by creating new incentives but fundamentally did not depart from the state and collective farm structure; and he retained production quotas and state procurements from farms although at a reduced level.

To the end of Gorbachev's rule, he allowed only land leasing for collective farm workers—a return to the days of NEP in the 1920s—and he favored peasant farms based on leased land, not private ownership of land at the federal level. In 1990 regional legislation in the RSFSR surpassed what national land laws allowed (Brooks, 1990). At the federal level, agrarian reform under Gorbachev never went as far as the Hungarians in 1968 and he refused to embrace systemic change of the agricultural sector. The Russian Republic, in contrast, adopted much more radical reform policies that embraced private ownership and a departure from socialized farming, which is discussed in a separate section.

Gorbachev's predilection for conservative reform was seen as well in his policy toward the operation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. As early as 1987, the Politburo called for increasing food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* on state farms and collective farms (Wegren, 1998, 44). At first glance, Gorbachev's approach to *lichnoe podsobnoe*

khoziaistvo appears to be a liberal reform—deregulating the “private” sector and reducing restrictions on it—but in fact his policy was conservative in that it did not change or threaten to change the agrarian structure that continued the dominance of state and collective farms. Further, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* remained based on land use rights, not private ownership of land. In other words, “property rights,” were insecure and continued to depend upon farm employment. Inasmuch as *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operated *within* the socialist agrarian system prior to Gorbachev, it continued to do so during his tenure. In essence, policy reform toward *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was a relatively easy and inexpensive way to increase food supply in the countryside with trickle down effects to urban areas.

Despite innate conservatism, Gorbachev receives credit for removing several important restrictions. In the Collective Farm Charter adopted in March 1988, a more favorable attitude was reflected in section 9 devoted to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. For the first time, point 57 referred to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* as “a component part of socialist agricultural production” (Primernyi Ustav, 1988). Further, points 58 and 59 of the Charter reaffirmed the right of collective farm members to use their land for agricultural purposes; they could own the house which sits on the land plot and own animals and machinery used for agricultural purposes; the size of the plot and number of animals allowed would be determined by a general meeting of the collective farm; the farm would be allowed to sell animals and machinery for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* production, or they may be leased by contract; and the parent farm was allowed to provide various forms of assistance to households in terms of plowing, providing fertilizer, seed, animal feed, or making veterinary services available (point 61). Conspicuously absent in the statute was a restriction on the permitted number of livestock and poultry, which in the 1969 Charter had been explicit (Hedlund, 1989, 29). In May 1988, Article 37 of the USSR Law on Cooperation was adopted, and this law codified the right of collective farms to provide assistance to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*; and for plot operators to sign contracts for the sale of their production to collective farms, consumer cooperatives, and other enterprises (Zakon

SSSR, 1988). Thus, essentially, from 1988 onwards, factors inherent to production on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* were decentralized and no longer regulated by the federal government or the Communist party.

By the time of the important March 1989 plenum on agricultural reform, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* had gained equal stature with other forms of farming, at least rhetorically, indicated by reference to household plots as part of the “multiplicity” of legal forms of farming in the USSR. Acknowledging *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* as a component part of the agrarian structure and including household plots in the multiplicity of farming options was merely a recognition of reality and did not require additional state expenditures. In that sense, it was less than a radical reform. When Gorbachev’s tenure came to an end in December 1991, and along with it the Soviet planned economy, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* enjoyed unprecedented legitimacy. It was also a jumping off point for analysts who argued that private agriculture and small family farms were the future of Russian agriculture.

Resilience

As indicated in the previous section, until the very last years of Soviet rule *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* did not have a secure status in the Soviet agrarian system. To survive, smallholders had to be resilient. If we wanted to place a label on smallholders’ resilience, they were *moderately resilient* during the 1940-1990 period. This section measures resilience during the Soviet period in three ways: (1) through weapons of the weak; (2) through land use; (3) and through food output.

Soviet leaders’ frequent discriminatory policies against *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* were combined with collective farm behavior that ranged from mild harassment to illegal action. But it is important to note also the existence of a symbiotic relationship between farms and collective farm workers. The strength of the symbiotic relationship varied from farm to farm, by farm manager or director, and by the resources of the farm itself. Essentially, this relationship meant that collective farms provided

various kinds of assistance such as plowing; sale of fodder; providing agricultural tools and small equipment that can be used on household plots of land; the sale of small animals; allowing household animals to graze in common meadows; purchases of household surplus production, usually of perishables such as milk; and assistance with transportation of produce to urban markets (Wadekin, 1973, 181-246).

In addition to this informal symbiotic relationship, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators took matters into their own hands by using so-called weapons of the weak, a phrase coined by James Scott to indicate how peasants engage in low-intensity resistance against regime discrimination (Scott, 1985). Weapons of the weak are actions that are difficult to quantify so are best known anecdotally. In the Soviet context, weapons of the weak refer to ways to increase production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* by engaging in illegal behavior. Examples include stealing time by working on the plot instead of for the farm; stealing inputs such as fodder; stealing construction materials to be used for animal shelters; or expanding the plot size onto farm land beyond the limits allowed in the Collective Farm Charter.

A second indicator of resilience is the amount of land legally registered for use in *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. As we saw above, income from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* declined over time as farm wages accounted for more of household income. Animal holdings on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* also declined for several decades. But despite regime discrimination and regulations, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* did not disappear and millions of Soviet households engaged in subsidiary food production. For the USSR as a whole, Hedlund estimates that almost 47 million families, equal to more than 160 million people and more than one-half of the Soviet population, had access to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in the early 1980s (Hedlund, 1989, 32). Moreover, plot operators were highly sensitive to state policy. When the policy environment turned against *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, operators reacted rationally and curtailed livestock and land. But when the policy environment improved, private producers responded favorably by

expanding land and animals, a dynamic that is illustrated with reference to the Russian Republic (see Table 1).

The third measure of resilience is households' capacity for food production. Table 1 shows that despite frequent regime discrimination over time, the household sector still raised many millions of cattle, pigs, goats and sheep, which served as an important source of animal husbandry production.

**Table 1. Households' Land and Animals
in the Russian Republic, 1940-1989**

	1940	1965	1970	1975	1979	1982	1983	1984	1986	1989
Sown land (million hectares)	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.4
Cattle (million)	13.6	13.8	11.3	10.6	9.7	9.5	9.8	9.6	9.3	9.5
Pigs (million)	5.2	7.7	6.6	5.3	6.0	5.8	6.7	5.7	5.5	6.2
Sheep (million)	21.0	17.2	17.4	13.2	13.1	12.4	12.9	12.7	12.5	13.0
Goats (million)	3.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.4

Sources: Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie RSFSR, 1976, 134, 147-48; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie RSFSR, 1982, 142, 154; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie RSFSR, 1983, 90, 101; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie RSFSR, 1985, 142, 156; Goskomstat RSFSR, 1987, 161, 175; Goskomstat RSFSR, 1990, 448, 496.

The ruble value of household production declined over time as the socialized sector increased its food production. Even accounting for long-term decline, in 1986 *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* produced one-quarter of total meat supply in the RSFSR. Included in that aggregate number was 15% of the republic's beef and veal; 32% of its pork; 30% of its poultry; 45% of its lamb (Goskomstat RSFSR, 1987, 179). *Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* also accounted for the production of 23% of milk and 22% of eggs in the republic. Household plots also produced about 55% of the republic's potatoes and 25% of its vegetables (Goskomstat RSFSR, 1987, 157). Households sold small quantities of their production to the state, but that misses the point because that was not their main role. Thus, resilience is seen by the fact that even after decades of attempts to reduce output from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, into the 1980s this sector remained indispensable as a source of food for the rural population.

Role in Society

As reflected in the comments above, the role of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was to serve as a subsidiary source of food, primarily for collective farm workers' households and the rural population in general. The important point is that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* had a role and it was accepted by the Soviet leadership, although begrudgingly at times. Thus, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* had a place in the Soviet agrarian system, especially after 1965. The rhetoric of the late Gorbachev period, which equated the importance of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* with socialized farming, misses the point: subsidiary household agriculture was intended to be and always would be subsidiary to socialized farms. Under Soviet ideology, state and collective farms would always be preferred and the main source of food for the urban population.

THE EARLY POST-SOVIET PERIOD

With the end of Soviet communism, the ideological source of antipathy to the private smallholder sector disappeared. Replacing Soviet-era hostility toward *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was an embrace of capitalism, markets, and private property. Official attitudes toward *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* began to fundamentally change, aided by economic conditions. The "early" post-Soviet period is defined as the decade of the 1990s.

State Policy

I start with two broad comments. The first is that during the 1990s, unlike the Soviet period, there is no identifiable, coherent state policy toward *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. During the Soviet period, state policy was often antagonistic toward the private household sector. But at least there was an identifiable policy. The importance of having a policy

versus not having a policy is that if there is a policy, at least there is a basis from which to adopt corrective measures.

The second comment is that implicit “policy” in the 1990s toward *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was a byproduct of the general liberalization in economic policy, marked by deregulation of the economy, privatization, and creation of a new system of property rights. The 1990-1994 period in particular was characterized by a series of laws, decrees, and other legislative acts to legalize private ownership of land, which are discussed in detail elsewhere (Wegren, 2009). The larger point is that legislation is not in and of itself policy, but legal acts reflected a new approach to land ownership and to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Because land legislation was complex and has been discussed elsewhere, my purpose here is merely to provide a brief recap.

Land legislation in the Russian republic under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin was more radical than Gorbachev’s USSR. A RSFSR law in November 1990 “On Land Reform” legalized the right of private ownership for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in the republic at a time that Gorbachev only permitted land leasing for the nation. As part of land privatization and destatization of farms, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* benefitted. The April 1991 RSFSR Land Code codified the private ownership of land for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* (Article 7), although restrictions on the sale of land remained; and it allowed the receipt of free land from state distribution for subsidiary agricultural use up to established norms (Kodeks RSFSR, 1991). Article 36 of the 1991 Land Code gave the right to regulate the size of land plots used for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* to rural, village, and city legislatures.

Not only did Yeltsin’s government embrace private ownership of land, it also tried to break up state and collective farms, at least for a short time during winter 1991 to March 1992. Yeltsin’s December 1991 Decree on “Urgent Measures for the Implementation of Land Reform in the RSFSR” transferred almost 18 million hectares of agricultural land from state ownership to regional and municipal governments, who in turn could disperse land to private citizens for use in *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. As a result, not only did the number of registered *lichnoe podsobnoe*

khoziaistvo plots immediately increase, so too did their average size. In Russia's 1993 Constitution, Articles 9 and 36 permitted the private ownership of land for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and other smallholder agriculture, with rights to dispose of the land as the owner desires. Thus, the regulation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* passed from the federal level to regional and municipal governments. Several municipalities adopted regulations that allowed plots for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* up to one hectare (Buzdalov and Krylatykh, 2000, 58-60). The era of de-regulated *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* began.

Resilience

Smallholders' resilience was high during the 1990s as evidenced by several indicators. First, household production potential improved, driven by an increase in the total amount of agricultural land used and the amount of arable land used in *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Total land use rose from 2.9 million hectares in 1990 to 5.3 million hectares in 1995; and arable land used by *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* grew from 2.3 million hectares to 3.4 million hectares (Goskomstat, 1999, 17). In addition, the number of household animals experienced a short-term spike. The number of cattle rose from just under 9.8 million head in 1990 to about 12 million head by 1993 before drifting downward for the rest of the decade to 9.9 million in 1999. The number of pigs likewise rose from 7 million in 1990 to just under 8 million during 1992-1994 before declining to 6.9 million in 1997 and ending the decade at 7.3 million (Goskomstat, 1999, 31-32).

A second indicator of resilience was an increase in food output in absolute volume and relative to other food producers. In the five-year period 1990-1995, beef production rose from 573 thousand tons to 1.1 million tons; milk production increased from 13.2 million tons to 16.2 million tons; and honey production grew from 32 thousand tons to over 48 thousand tons (Goskomstat, 1999, 34). Importantly, compared to the 1990-1991 period, the percentage of production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* that was sold decreased immediately in 1992 and stayed

depressed for the rest of the decade, a reflection that rural households saw their production as a source of food security and survival strategy. Smallholders' production of plant products also rose in the first half of the 1990s. During 1990-1995, potato production on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* increased 76%, fruits and berry production rose 43%, and vegetable production grew by more than 2.6 times (Goskomstat, 1999, 30). These production increases did not just happen on their own, they were the result of increased intensity of effort by plot holders, measured by more time per day and week spent on food growing and by a higher participation rate across age and profession.

Table 2. Household Food Production as a Percentage of Total Production, 1990-1998

	1990	1995	1997	1998
Potatoes	66	90	91	91
Vegetables	30	73	76	80
Fruits and Berries	51	77	80	87
Beef and veal	13	41	49	52
Pork	34	64	70	70
Lamb	42	72	78	82
Milk	24	41	47	48
Eggs	22	30	30	30
Honey	69	84	87	88

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Source: Goskomstat, 1999, 19.

Rising production meant that the percentage of food production coming from smallholders rose steadily throughout the 1990s (in ruble value). In 1990, the ruble value of production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* accounted for 26% of total food production (24% for plant products and 28% for animal husbandry). The relative contribution from households rose as the decade progressed: to 48% of total production in 1995, 51% in 1997; and over 57% in 1998, when households accounted for 61% of the value of plant production and 54% of the value of animal husbandry (Goskomstat, 1999, 24). These relative increases were due to higher volumes of output from households as well as a decrease in output

from state and collective farms. Production of several commodities from smallholders increased during the decade as shown in Table 2.

A third indicator of smallholder resilience in the 1990s was adaptive behavior to the new economic, legal, and financial environment. Unique longitudinal household survey data revealed that within the smallholder sector resilience was multidimensional and varied according to several independent variables: demographic structure of the household, age and gender of respondents, profession, and household labor potential. These (and other) independent variables impacted several dependent variables in the economic realm such as land holdings and expansion; land use; food production and food sales; the creation of household enterprise and revenue from it; and total household income (O'Brien, Patsiorkovsky, and Dershem, 2000; O'Brien and Patsiorkovsky, 2006; O'Brien, Patsiorkovsky and Wegren, 2008; Patsiorkovsky, 2009; Wegren, 2009; Wegren, 2014). Smallholder households that had favorable capital—human, financial, labor, land, and production—were able to benefit from economic opportunities and increase their income and well-being. Advantaged households also had higher community involvement and larger social networks. The net effect of heterogeneous responses to market-based institutions was an increase in stratification between adaptive and non-adaptive households that affected the incidence and depth of poverty, and mental health and satisfaction with life (Wegren, O'Brien, and Patsiorkovsky, 2003; O'Brien, Patsiorkovsky, and Wegren, 2004; and O'Brien, Patsiorkovsky, and Wegren, 2010). The importance of smallholder adaptation during the 1990s was that it put to rest arguments that Soviet socialism had made rural dwellers lazy, bound to collectivism, and opposed to private property and enterprise.

Role in Society

The combination of Russia's collapsing economy in the 1990s and increased importance of food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* meant that its societal role changed. Smallholders' role in

society transitioned from being subsidiary production that supplemented the family diet in the 1970s and 1980s to a survival strategy for most rural households and many urban ones during the 1990s. Most rural households simply tried to maintain their standard of living, while a minority attempted to raise it. Different survival strategies were attempted by the majority. As many large farms went bankrupt or reduced their workforce, one strategy, alluded to above, was to increase the importance of food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in terms of self-consumption and increased food sales. Households grew more food and some sold more food as a way to compensate for lost income from unemployment or to augment income in the face of high inflation. A second strategy was to increase *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* production *and* to take a second job, often non-agricultural (Kalugina, 2000, 124). A third strategy was to increase illegal behavior, which in the economic environment at the time was justified in the minds of many farm employees (Kalugina, 2000, 127). This meant, for example, pilfering various inputs from the farm to be used on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. There is evidence that this behavior was tolerated by some farm managers as a form of paternalism toward farm employees and as a strategy to lessen employees' dissatisfaction with economic conditions on the farm.

The larger point is that during the 1990s *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* came to be viewed not merely as subsidiary food production but as a mainstream economic activity that was essential to survival. The changed role for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* reflected both more liberal policies and rational responses to a period of economic desperation for most households. Food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was able to compensate in part for the precipitous decline in production from former state and collective farms. In this regard, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was a system-stabilizer and probably helped to prevent mass urban unrest.

THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

The contemporary period starts in 2000 and continues to 2020. The backdrop to the contemporary period is the rebound in Russia's agricultural sector, led by large farm enterprises. The main storyline is the recovery in the large farm sector, which increased its contribution from 45% of output in 2000 to over 58% in 2019; and the ruble value of production from farm enterprises grew from R335 billion in 2000 to over R3.4 trillion in 2019 in nominal rubles (Rosstat, 2020, 354). Particularly important within the large farm sector is the rise of agrohholdings (Rylko, Khramova, Uzun, and Jolly, 2008). Agrohholdings are vertically integrated companies that engage in agricultural and non-agricultural activity. The largest agrohholdings have land holdings of hundreds of thousands of hectares (Uzun and Shagaida, 2020, 429). These farms represent big capital—they earn tens of billions of rubles each year, and they have preferential access to state subsidies and credit. In 2016, agrohholdings, which represent a small percentage of Russia's 27,000 farm enterprises of all sizes, employed 41% of all workers in agriculture, accounted for almost 54% of all farm earnings, and received 56% of all profits among agricultural enterprises (Uzun and Shagaida, 2020, 427). Those numbers improved after 2016 as Russia experienced a string of large grain harvests during 2017-2020. Moreover, in 21 of Russia's regions, agrohholdings accounted for 25%-50% of food production, and in eight regions they produced more than 50% of the ruble value of output (Uzun and Shagaida, 2020, 428). In virtually every way, agrohholdings have become economic behemoths, and their activity is not confined to food production. They also are involved in storage, processing, and transportation. Importantly, many agrohholdings have also entered the food retail business, whereby their own production is sold under private label brands. Although agrohholdings and *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* are not direct competitors, agrohholdings' control over market share for many commodities represent an obstacle for household gardeners who may want to expand commercial activity.

In addition to the rise of agrohholdings, the private farm sector also began to make larger contributions to national food supply for grain, sugar

beet, sunflower seed, and vegetables. Whereas in 2000 private farmers accounted for 3% of the ruble value of agricultural production, in 2019 their contribution had increased to nearly 14% of food output (Rosstat, 2020, 355). A sizable percentage of private farms are less than 20 hectares, and some are very small, less than 5 hectares and these may compete with *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. I discuss state policy in the contemporary period in the next section.

State Policy

At the turn of the century, output from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* accounted for more than one-half of the ruble value of food output, more than farm enterprises (see Figure 1). That is not to say that households were feeding the nation—food imports were on the rise—and household production was unprocessed and unlikely to appear on retail store shelves, but there is no doubt that household production was economically significant. That said, when Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in his own right in March 2000, he wanted to stabilize the agricultural sector and help it rebound from the lows of the 1990s. Analysis of Putin’s early initiatives toward the agricultural sector appears elsewhere (Wegren, 2002), so here the focus is on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and the household sector.

Just as Putin was interested in rebuilding state strength and re-concentrating political power in Moscow, Minister of Agriculture Aleksei Gordeev (1999-2009) saw large farm enterprises as the key to Russia’s agricultural rebound. In February 2001 at a conference near Moscow, Gordeev stated that the government supported diversity in farming based on different organizational and legal forms. But he also revealed his priorities by discussing trends in the developed world where the future of agriculture is based on large agricultural enterprises and vertical integration in the agroindustrial complex (Gordeev, 2001, 8). He and other speakers made clear that large farms were the “locomotive” for agrarian development, through which cooperative and integrative processes should

be channeled. When the state’s agrarian strategy to 2010 was revealed a few months later, it was heavy on help to large farms—debt write off, subsidized access to farm equipment, a new credit system and agricultural bank, and other measures that were intended for large farms (Wegren, 2002). The implication was that state policy would not discriminate against *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, but smallholders were not seen as the basis for agricultural recovery or the future of a revitalized, globally competitive agricultural sector.

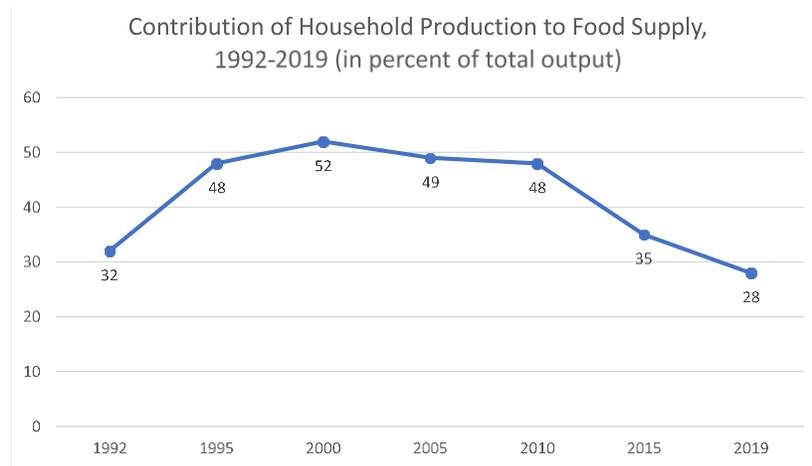


Figure 1. Contribution of Household Production to Food Supply (based on ruble value).

The government’s wager on large farm enterprises in the early 2000s meant that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* had secondary importance. Nonetheless, household subsidiary agriculture received attention from the federal government in two ways. First, the 2003 federal law “On Lichnoe Podsobnoe Khoziaistvo,” established boundaries for state regulation of household agricultural production. The law is relatively short by Russian standards, only 11 articles. The original 2003 law was amended in 2008, 2011, 2016, and 2018. The 2018 version includes the following main points of importance:

- *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is non-commercial activity encompassing the production and processing of agricultural products;
- food that is produced or processed belongs to the operator of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*;
- land plots for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* may be located around a dwelling or located within the borders of a population point, in other words, land located away from the dwelling;
- the maximum size of a land plot for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was established at .5 hectares. Local governments could change the permitted size of a land plot but not by more than five times, or to 2.5 hectares for privately owned land; if the land plot is leased or belongs to the state or municipal government, then the maximum size restriction does not apply;
- state and local organs of government are not permitted to interfere in the operation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*;
- the operator has the right to own the animals, equipment, buildings and structures, the personal dwelling, and other production inputs for the operation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*; no restrictions on the number of animals were established in the law;
- an operator of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is eligible to receive a state pension; and
- the state is responsible for providing infrastructure; creating legal, ecological, and social conditions that stimulate production; and providing access to pedigree animals and artificial insemination services in order to increase the quality and quantity of output from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

Overall, the law codifies a reduction in state intervention in the activities of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and draws clear boundaries that restrict state interference. In establishing that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is non-commercial activity, the law recognizes that household food production is primarily for self-consumption. Law is not policy, but

law defines the parameters for policy, and it is clear that the intent is not to discriminate against production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

A second way that the federal government affected *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* came a few years later with the adoption of the “national projects” in late 2005 which included agriculture as one of the state priorities. The national project in agriculture ran during 2006-2007 and included a program relevant to smallholders called “*sel'skoe podvor'e*” (literally translated as “rural land around the dwelling”). This program had several components but the most important concerned state-subsidized loans to smallholders. Operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* could choose between a two-year loan to be used for acquiring fuel; spare parts for machinery; materials to repair animal sheds; acquire seed and feed; pay for electricity; and a number of other permitted uses. The second choice was a subsidized loan for five years to purchase small equipment and machinery for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*; to purchase equipment for raising animals and processing food; to purchase animals; to construct or modernize buildings for animals; or to get connected to natural gas lines. The two-year loan was capped at R300,000 and the five-year loan at R700,000.

The national project in agriculture expired at the end of 2007, replaced by the state program for the development of agriculture that ran 2008-2012. As Russia's agricultural recovery progressed, federal support was directed first and foremost to large farm enterprises, and secondarily to private farms whose production of certain commodities was increasing rapidly. Smallholders had access to state-subsidized credit under the umbrella of state support for “small forms of farming” which includes *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and private farms; in essence smallholders compete with private farmers for financial resources and available evidence suggests that private farmers have priority. That said, some regional governments continued their own program for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. In the Republic of Bashkortostan, for example, in 2009 operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* received R281 million in regional support, which included R118 million for subsidized credit. For 2010, the republican government provided R200 million in financial

support to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* (Mazin, 2010, 3). But targeted subsidized credit and loans from the federal government to smallholders disappeared.

Today, smallholders who operate *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and who have privatized their plot are able to use it as collateral for a loan. The 2004 the federal law on land mortgaging deferred to regional and local governments to define the plot size below which mortgaging was not allowed, so there was no general guideline for the nation as a whole. The real criteria for land mortgaging come from banks. Using Rossel'khozbank, the state-owned agricultural bank, as an example, in 2020 owners of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* were able to mortgage their plot for a loan that extended for three months, two years, or five years. The minimum loan offered by the bank is R30,000 and the maximum is R1 million. In September 2020, the interest rate for a loan up to R300,000 for 12 months or less is 10.5% and for 12-60 months 12%. The interest rate for a loan of R300,000 or more that extended 12-60 months is 12%. The two-year loan could be used for acquiring fuel, mineral fertilizer and pesticides, obtaining young animals, pay for electricity, purchase seed, buy gardening tools, and other uses. A five-year loan may be used purchase agricultural equipment such as small tractors, various implements for a tractor, watering equipment, and equipment for animals and processing agricultural products. A borrower must be at least 23 years old and not older than 75, have Russian citizenship, and be permanently registered. In addition, income other than from household gardening must be documented to ensure ability to repay (Kredit, 2020).

That said, although owners of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* have the theoretical right to mortgage their privately-owned land, there are real-life obstacles. One obstacle is that a dwelling is usually situated on the land, and thus in the case of non-repayment of a loan it is very difficult to seize the land that was used as collateral. For this reason, banks are often not interested in mortgaging land used for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. If a land plot is not occupied by a dwelling the loan process is easier. A second obstacle concerns documentation. In the 1990s, operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* received the equivalent of a deed called a

svidetel'stva to prove privatization and ownership of the land plot. But since 1998, that documentation was no longer sufficient as the basis for a mortgage or land transaction. An owner would need to hire a third party to cadaster the land and then to register the land plot with the local authorities. This process was both costly and complicated. Without the post-1998 documentation, a land plot could not be used for collateral (Shagaida, 2020). Thus, the theoretical possibility to mortgage *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* land exists but is difficult.

The larger point is that in the contemporary period the federal government has withdrawn from regulation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* activity and after 2007 no longer was in the business of providing directed financial assistance to smallholders. The regulation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* rested on regional and local governments, some of whom did enact restrictive rules on household animals in order to combat swine fever and bird flu. Owners of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* now turn to financial markets for a loan instead of government backed credit. And the private sector also is involved, helping operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* integrate with farm enterprises. Skilled specialists from farm enterprises offer advice on marketing and production, meeting market demand, and optimizing social infrastructure. One Russian academic, using Vladimir oblast as an example, argues that the success of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* often depends on experts' assistance so that household production is more attractive to processing enterprises and consumer cooperatives (Zhukov, 2013, 55).

In retrospect, the government's bet on large farm enterprises was the correct move. Gordeev believed that a nation of 146 million people cannot be fed by small, manually operated plots of land. The wager on large farms paid off in that within 20 years Russia's agricultural sector had transformed into the leading wheat exporter in the world, thereby returning it to its historical (pre-Soviet) role, which despite abject poverty among the majority of peasants, accounted for 30% of the world's grain exports during 1909-1913 (Volin, 1970, 110). Smallholders account for less than 1 percent of Russia's grain production, so their role in the rise has not been

significant. Similar to the Soviet era, smallholders are of secondary importance, although for different reasons.

In the past few years there are signs that de-regulation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is being chipped away. Some regions have considered requiring households to register their animals with local authorities. Other regional governments began to place limitations on the number of animals that could be raised by households over concerns about unsanitary conditions and the spread of disease from household livestock to animals raised on agrohholdings. In the most extreme case, in 2018 the regional government in Kaliningrad oblast banned the raising of pigs on household plots due to concerns over swine fever, leading to a 99% reduction in the number of pigs raised by households (Kvedomosti.ru., 2019a). Thus, the motivation for re-regulation has been economic, not ideological. At the federal level, in October 2019 the committee for agro-food policy within the Federation Council recommended that the 2003 law on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* be amended to establish a maximum number of animals, poultry, and bees that may be kept by households (Kvedomosti.ru, 2019b). Starting in 2021, new veterinary rules replace 2016 rules. The new rules regulate where animals (in particular pigs) may and may not be raised and prohibits wild animals on pig farms. The rules establish that quarantine zones must be at least 200 meters from where pigs are housed (Utverzhdny novye, 2020).

Resilience

A discussion of smallholder resilience during the contemporary period must take account of two contradictory trends and therefore the overall assessment about resilience is mixed. On the positive side—suggesting high resilience—is unequivocal evidence that some rural households adapted their economic activity to the new institution framework and took advantage of new opportunity, particularly after 2000 when economic conditions began to improve. Households with advantages in human capital and labor capital benefited the most by expanding food output from

lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo, leasing additional land and increasing the size of total land holdings (although overall land plots remained very small), obtaining more animals, selling more food, engaging in family commercial business, and enjoying higher total income (O'Brien and Patsiorkovsky, 2006; Wegren, 2014). Household adaptation signifies resilience by being able to move beyond the survival and coping strategies that typified the 1990s.

Table 3. Trends number of registered plots by federal district

Region	2006	2016	Net change in registered plots
Russia	13.80 million	13.71 million	-900 thousand
Central	3.66 million	3.48 million	-148 thousand
Northwest	965 thousand	973 thousand	+8 thousand
South*	1.63 million	1.69 million	+60 thousand
Volga	3.58 million	3.52 million	-60 thousand
Urals	594 thousand	613 thousand	+19 thousand
Siberian	1.99 million	2.00 million	+1 thousand
Far East	381 thousand	379 thousand	-2 thousand

*Note: the composition of the South Federal District changed from 2006 to 2016. I have used only the same regions that appear in both years even though that is not full representation for 2006. Further, the 2016 composition includes Crimea which was not part of the Russian Federation in 2006.

Sources: Rosstat, 2008; Rosstat, 2018a.

In addition, despite the decline in the rural population from 39.4 million in January 2000 to 37.3 million at the end of 2018 (Rosstat, 2019, 18-19), the number of registered *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* remained basically stable from the 2006 agricultural census to the 2016 census: 13.8 million in 2006 and 13.7 million in 2016 (these numbers are for personal subsidiary agriculture only and do not include plots for housing construction, dacha plots, and other small plots of land for small-scale agriculture). On a regional basis, from 2006 to 2016 the number of registered *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* increased in Northwest Federal District; South Federal District; Urals Federal District; Siberian Federal District; and decreased in the Central Federal District; Volga Federal District; and Far East Federal District (Rosstat, 2008, 96-99; Rosstat,

2018a, 70-73). The data for each federal district in Russia are shown in Table 3.

On the negative side, one indicator is the growth rate in the value of production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, which has lagged that of large farms and private farms. Since 2000, the annual index of production from households did not exceed that of farm enterprises (Rosstat, 2020, 355). As a consequence, the relative contribution by *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* to the ruble value of national food output reached its peak in the early 2000s and then declined through 2019 (see Figure 1).

Production trends reflect the inherent limits of small plots of land, exacerbated by a lack of access to credit and dependence on manual labor. For example, in 2004 in the Republic of Bashkortostan (a strong agricultural region), 80% of plots used for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* were .30 hectares or smaller, and less than 1% were larger than .5 hectares. More than a decade later with adaptation to a new economic environment, the average plot size for rural *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in the Republic of Bashkortostan rose to 1.3 hectares, but in other strong agricultural regions, rural plot sizes remained very small according to the 2016 agricultural census: Krasnodar krai, .2 hectares; Stavropol krai and Republic of Tatarstan, .3 hectares; Belgorod and Voronezh oblasts, .4 hectares; and Rostov oblast, .7 hectares (Rosstat, 2016, 37-38). Small plot sizes are found in regions that are not so favorable to agricultural production as well. In Vladimir oblast, located north of Moscow, 78% of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* plots were less than .25 hectares in 2012 (Zhukov, 2013, 51). Small plots impart inherent limits on production capacity, making it impossible to grow grain or raise cows which require a minimum of two to three hectares for grazing (Davletbaeva, 2004, 23).

A second indicator is the lack of coordination between household production and retail food markets is absent and there is a lack of social infrastructure that would help smallholders (Zvolinskii et al., 2018). In that regard, de-regulation of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, in effect, led to neglect, so that smallholders experience difficulty with transportation, food processing, and selling their production, aspects that could be improved with more state assistance. The general absence of state support for

smallholders means that they miss out on potentially lucrative market niches, for example, the sale of organic fruits and vegetables (Zvolinskii et al., 2018). The fact is that despite an ability to earn more income from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, for most households it remained a subsidiary activity, secondary to other employment whether it be agricultural or non-agricultural. According to one team of Russian academics, less than 1% of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is used as the main source of household income (Uzun and Saraikin, 2012, 46). Furthermore, owners of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* face other obstacles such as acquiring animal feed, and a decline in multifaceted assistance from farm enterprises that had been provided in Soviet era (Iliashevich, 2006, 31). For these and other reasons, rural dwellers are interested in joining service cooperatives that provide access to needed inputs, services, and credit (Iliashevich, 2006, 32). Unfortunately, credit, service, and production cooperatives in Russia often operate poorly (Golovina and Nilsson, 2011; Lerman and Sedik, 2014).

Thus, during the twenty years of the contemporary period, smallholder resilience has been mixed: some smallholders profited, the economic condition of other smallholders stayed essentially unchanged, and some fell behind. As a sector, however, the important point is that the inherent limitations of smallholding agriculture which were somewhat obscured during the Soviet period became pronounced in a market economy in which other food producers did not share those limitations. Production from large farm enterprises, led by agroholdings, stabilized, recovered, and then emerged dominant. The smallholder sector as a consequence declined in importance, a topic that is discussed further in the next section.

Role in Society

After 2000, production trends from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* changed in two ways. First, as noted above, smallholder food production trended downward, declining from more than one-half of the ruble value of output in 2000 to less than 30% in 2020. Second, smallholder production

transitioned from being a core survival strategy that prevented mass hunger back to secondary importance; and in recent years it transitioned yet again to marginalization for most urban households and even rural households with favorable human capital (Lokshin and Yemtsov, 2004; O'Brien and Patsiorkovsky, 2006; Wegren, 2014).

The change in the societal role for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* was due to secular events that were not directly related to household production but impacted output nonetheless. The first of these events was economic recovery in Russia that led to a substantial rise in real per capita income. Robust economic growth averaged over 7 percent per annum during 2000-2008. The rise in income was not merely an urban phenomenon, rural dwellers saw their disposable income rise as well. In the fourth quarter of 2001, rural per capita disposable income averaged about R1,360 a month (monetary and non-monetary income), which rose to R8,033 per month in the fourth quarter of 2008 (Goskomstat, 2001, 77; Goskomstat, 2009, 88). For rural dwellers, higher disposable income meant more freedom to buy food rather than grow food. Following the financial crisis 2008-2009, national real per capita incomes grew only 1% annually from 2010-2019, a large drop off from before but one that did not translate to a significant decline in demand for food (although certain cohorts of consumers economized by buying cheaper products and shopping at discount stores).

The rise in per capita income led to a rebound in demand for food after 2000, indicated by a rise in per capita consumption. Demand for animal husbandry began to rise again. Importantly, the greatest increase in demand was for processed food, whereas most smallholder production that is not self-consumed goes unprocessed. Further, food imports began to rise substantially, which was important because imported food in the early 2000s was superior in packaging, value, and quality. In 2000, the value of Russia's food imports was \$7.3 billion, which rose to a high of \$43.2 billion in 2013.² The upshot is that food imports ultimately replaced

² The deterioration in relations with the West over Crimea in 2014 led to Western sanctions and Russia's countersanctions in the form of a food embargo, with food imports dropping to \$25.1 billion in 2016 before slowly rising thereafter.

consumers' purchases from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* at urban farmers' markets.

Rising per capita income fueled a rebound in domestic food production, a trend that accelerated after 2004. The ruble value of food production from all producers increased from R742 billion in 2000 to R5.9 trillion in 2019 (nominal ruble value). Similarly, the nominal ruble value of food output from large farm enterprises experienced healthy growth, rising from R336 billion in 2000 to 3.43 trillion in 2019 (Rosstat, 2020, 354).³

As incomes rose, consumer expectations changed as they preferred to buy processed and packaged meats and other products at supermarkets. The contemporary urban shopper increasingly does not need to go to farmers' markets for food products as during the 1990s. Instead, everything can be purchased at a supermarket, and food retail chains, both domestic and foreign, proliferated after 2010. In 2017, the city of Moscow alone had a total of 14,500 food stores of different types, including 1,825 supermarkets and over 3,000 specialized food stores. Throughout Russia, at the end of 2017 there were 22,473 hypermarkets and supermarkets, and 272,717 mini-markets (Wegren, Nikulin, and Trotsuk, 2021, 100). That number is constantly changing as retail chains open new stores. Even during the 2020 pandemic, retail food stores saw their profits skyrocket. According to Forbes, among the 200 largest private companies in Russia, the food retailer X5 ranked third with earnings of R1.73 trillion in 2019; in fourth place was Magnit, with earnings of R1.36 trillion in 2019 (DairyNews.ru, 2020). Magnit had a profit of R13.8 billion in the first half of 2020, up 265% over the same period in 2019. Magnit has 472 supermarkets in Russia. Nationally, gross earnings were up 9.3% at hypermarkets and almost 13% at supermarkets.

For a variety of reasons, therefore, the societal role of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* changed in ways that made food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* less necessary to urban food security, while remaining important for rural food security. That said, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* still has multiple useful roles to play. First, as already noted,

³ During the same time period, the nominal ruble value of production from smallholders rose from R383 billion in 2000 to R1.66 trillion in 2019.

food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is integral to social interaction and exchange in villages. That situation is an enduring feature of rural life and is unlikely to change anytime soon. Second, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* transfers tradition and rural culture from generation to generation, and is part of everyday rural life (Agafonov, 2012). Third, production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* provides food security for lower income households in the event of high inflation, economic crisis, or food shortages. Potatoes in particular are a main crop from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, from which 80% of national output is produced (Zhevora, 2017, 23). Potatoes are also a key source of subsistence for low-income households. According to Russian official statistics, 69% of rural households grow their own potatoes for consumption; 51% of the lowest income households (bottom 20% of urban and rural) grow their potatoes; and 88% of the lowest income households eat potatoes daily (Rosstat, 2016b, 8, 10, 13). Despite an increase in nominal disposable income that allows consumers more freedom to shop at stores, food production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* supports food security on a local basis (Sadykov, 2015). This condition is also unlikely to change. Finally, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*, “absorbs” some of the displaced labor in rural areas as farms reduce their workforce or close altogether, and this is particularly true in regions that are distant from the large cities in European Russia where alternative employment is more easily found (Popova, 2011). In that way, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* plays a role in rural development by providing employment and income opportunity.

THE FUTURE

Previous sections surveyed state policy, resilience, and smallholders’ role in society from the 1930s to 2020. I now turn to the future, and this section speculates on scenarios for smallholders in rural Russia. The timeframe for the future is defined as the next 10-15 years. I analyze three scenarios, starting with the least likely and proceeding to the most likely.

Disappearance

The first scenario is for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* to disappear. One type of disappearance is associated with villages and rural settlements ceasing to exist, usually because of out-migration or population decline due to age and death. The formal number of villages has declined over time, and often a village may exist only on paper with few if any actual residents, and this occurrence is frequent in northern regions. Further, Russia's rural population declined by about 5% during 2000-2018 (Rosstat, 2019). It is projected to decrease another 12% to 32.9 million by the end of 2035 according to the medium variant (Rosstat, 2017). A second type of disappearance is due to the collapse of a parent farm where villagers may have worked. In this case, sometimes villagers remain and become an association of household gardeners even after the farm has closed. A third type of disappearance occurs when operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* convert their land to a private farm or non-agricultural enterprise.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* would disappear completely and as long as there are rural dwellers there will be household gardening. Even if the rural population were to decline to 10 million by 2036, they still would engage in *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Thus, the disappearance scenario is the least likely outcome in my opinion. There are several reasons why complete disappearance is unlikely.

The first reason why complete disappearance is unlikely is that there is an historical attachment to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* for recreation and relaxation. The historical attachment also invokes tradition as a barrier to complete disappearance. Part of the historical attachment can be seen indirectly by the fact that Russia continues to have a high percentage of its total population residing in rural areas compared to other developed nations. In 2019, Russia had 25% of its population living in rural areas.⁴ In

⁴ I acknowledge a debate over what "rural" means but I do not allocate space to the debate here. Further, I note that the term "rural population" is subject to manipulation due to

that same year, among G7 countries, the USA, France, Canada, were below 20%; Japan was below 10%; and Germany and the UK were slightly above 20%. Only Italy at 29% of its population living in rural areas was higher than Russia, and Italy's total population is less than one-half the size of Russia's. Russians reside in rural areas for myriad reasons, one of which is lifestyle and access to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*. Further, there is a contemporary secular trend identified as "re-peasantization" in which urbanites take up at least partial year residence in rural or peri-urban locations to grow food. Mamonova (2013) argues that a good portion of re-peasantization is engaged in dacha plot production. Further, food production from dachas reflects cultural rituals and is an important coping mechanism (Round et al., 2010). Some re-peasantization also extends to *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*.

A second reason why disappearance is unlikely is that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is an integral part of village culture, specifically social interactions and economic exchange among village members. Paxson characterizes the social infrastructure of a village based upon "svoi," which literally means "one's own" and pertains to family, friends, or co-villagers (Paxson, 2005, 53). Paxson describes the *svoi* system as one in which status in the village is obtained by being an agent of redistribution; by giving more than one receives; by engaging in informal exchanges that are not exploitative and that encourage economic homogeneity in the community (Paxson, 2005, 67-73). Informal exchanges in the village are non-monetary and usually involve production from the household garden. Thus, *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is central to informal exchange in villages that in turn imparts status and defines social relations with other villagers.

A third reason why disappearance is unlikely is that literal disappearance would have to entail the mass disenfranchisement of rural residents from their dwelling and land surrounding the dwelling. Most household garden plots are located around a rural dwelling, in effect attached to the dwelling, so it is not clear how *lichnoe podsobnoe*

administrative reclassification changes. Finally, "rural" does not necessarily mean engaged in agricultural employment.

khoziaistvo could disappear without the household disappearing as well. A bank or agroholding would have to take over all of the village land, something that surely would spark resistance and likely involve lawsuits and intervention by local government. Visser and his colleagues argue that land grabbing is an ongoing problem in rural Russia, although they do not provide concrete data to quantify its extent or regional manifestations (Visser, et al., 2012). Land grabbing is more likely to occur with private farmers who have viable farms rather than smallholders with a fraction of a hectare of land. The bottom line is that mass disenfranchisement of millions of people from their home and land is inherently destabilizing, something that the state has little interest in and would likely intervene.

A fourth reason why disappearance is unlikely is that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is a safety net and has been a source of household food security for decades. Households and individuals would have to voluntarily and consciously decide to give up their food security, a source of food that protects them from inflation, economic downturns, and unemployment. A villager who gave up his household garden is not only endangering his food security, he is also affecting social interaction, building social networks, and strengthening community ties.

Food Sovereignty

The second least likely scenario for smallholders' future is food sovereignty. Explicit attempts to apply the concept of food sovereignty to Russia are made by Spoor et al. (2013) and Visser et al. (2015), who argue that food sovereignty may be a viable path for smallholders' development in Russia. In contrast, Bernstein argues that food sovereignty does not constitute a food system and is characterized by utopian goals (Bernstein, 2014). Spoor and Visser base their argument on "quiet" food sovereignty, which means that organization and resistance, two key ingredients in the original *La Via Campesina* movement, are absent or undetectable. They dismiss the need for organization even though *La Via Campesina* was a formal organization that attempted to unite with other formal international

organizations. From the beginning, *La Via Campesina* represented smallholder resistance to ecological destruction and political and economic oppression from agribusiness and the industrial agricultural system. To remove organization and resistance from the equation is change the entire concept of food sovereignty. Based on their revised definition, Spoor and Visser argue that food sovereignty is found in contemporary Russia.

For Spoor and Visser, the primary behavioral evidence of quiet food sovereignty is small-scale production on *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* and other smallholder production. If we accept the idea that food sovereignty is primarily defined by smallholder production based on manual labor and sustainable practices without regard to resistance, movement, or organization, it means that food sovereignty exists *anywhere and everywhere in the world by almost any smallholder engaged in agricultural production*, thereby making the term virtually unusable as an analytical concept. If we apply a higher standard of intellectual discourse, moving beyond “quiet,” it becomes clear that the notion of quiet food sovereignty and its applicability to Russia is flawed as the points below demonstrate.

- Problem of organization. *La Via Campesina* started as a grassroots, bottom-up movement that rejected: (1) industrial agriculture and the ecological destruction that it brings; (2) the domination of food markets by agribusiness; and (3) the alienation of agricultural workers from the land on which they work (Schanbacher, 2010, 53-76; Bernstein, 2014; Clapp, 2020, 205-210). Although original food sovereignty started as a peasant movement, Spoor’s and Visser’s quiet food sovereignty dismisses social movements in Russia as ineffectual, a position that turns the original conception of food sovereignty on its head and is counterfactual. Social movements and protest movements in Russia do exist: protest movements express their opinion, they mobilize for change, and they even enjoy success as long as those efforts are not directed at regime change or are overtly anti-government. Mobilization over local economic issues is acceptable (Evans, 2019).

Moreover, there are many formal agriculture-related organizations that exist at the national level that are periodically critical of government policy while remaining loyal to the regime. These organizations are able to express their views without being repressed. Non-state organizations such as commodity-specific unions exist today that represent producers' interests on subsidies and trade issues (the Meat Union, Milk Union, Pork Union, and many others). These organizations have a corporatist relationship with the Kremlin. There is also a national organization for organic farming, which also has a corporatist relationship with the government. It is not, therefore, a given that a national-level organization representing rural interests will be suppressed. There is no inherent reason why a food sovereignty movement, if it actually existed, could not enter into a corporatist arrangement with the government similar to other agrarian interest groups.

- Problem of measurement. A fundamental tenet of social science is that something must be measurable for proof of existence. The quiet food sovereignty argument points to smallholders using traditional production techniques as its primary behavioral evidence. The fact is, however, that smallholder production based on manual labor and sustainable agricultural practices has existed for at least the last 100 years in Russia, in other words, *prior* to the advent of industrial agriculture. The question is how can food sovereignty in contemporary Russia be measured if the primary behavior that identifies it has existed during an era that *predates* the capitalist food regime and domination of international markets by global agribusiness? In short, the quiet food sovereignty hypothesis implies that food sovereignty existed *before* the causal events (industrialization of agriculture and the rise of agribusiness) that gave rise to the food sovereignty movement, a position that is illogical.
- Problem of commercialization. Food sovereignty holds that the mode of production should be non-commercialized, and broadly speaking we have noted that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* is non-

commercial activity. At the same time, the vast majority of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* operators sell at least a portion of their production (Uzun and Saraikin, 2012). There is regional variance of course, but in some regions the level of sales approach or exceed 50% (Pallot and Nefedova, 2007). Moreover, the most successful households with the highest standard of living (and higher labor capital) are more commercialized (Wegren, 2014). Households with a lower level of commercialization are more likely to be below the poverty line. In Russia, the younger cohorts who remain in the countryside prefer more commercialization over subsistence farming. For this reason, Agarwal maintains that ‘critical questions [arise] about the realistic nature of the food sovereignty vision’ (2014, 1265). The commercialization of some production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* raises the question of whether Spoor and Visser acknowledge division and divergent pathways for their quiet food sovereignty in Russia.

- Problem of local control. The concept of food sovereignty holds that smallholders should control their own production, which implies control over their land and production capital. Importantly, land and production capital continue to be regulated even in the post-Soviet period. Hence another condition that demonstrates the inapplicability of food sovereignty. In the contemporary period, households do not fully “control” their land and animals, if we mean that households are free to decide the size of land holdings and number of animals. Federal legislation from 2003 allows regional governments to establish maximum size limits on land for *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* (Wegren, 2004). If a land plot exceeds regional norms, either excess land must be sold or the operator is supposed to register as a private farm which is a commercial operation that is subject to taxation for food sales. Russia’s Ministry of Agriculture supports limits on the number of animals a household may raise, and several regional governments established such limits.

- Problem of present-day reality. Russia's agricultural rebound since 2000 has been driven by state programs and policies accompanied by financial assistance to agroholdings and other large industrial agricultural enterprises. There is no state program for food sovereignty; the political leadership does not discuss food sovereignty; and regional governments have not adopted policies that support food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is not identified as a policy issue. For these reasons, to search for non-existent food sovereignty misses the main directions of actual agrarian policies. An analytical prism that focuses on food sovereignty renders analysts unable to interpret actual policies that Russia's policymakers discuss frequently: food security, import substitution, the food embargo, expansion of food exports, land reclamation, re-mechanization of farms, digitalization of agriculture, and the development of high-yield seed and animals.
- Problem of the future. Food sovereignty is a not pathway for future development in Russia because smallholder food production has been in long-term decline since 2004 in both volume and as a percentage of total output; this decline continued through 2019 (the latest data available). The idea that food sovereignty is a pathway to future development is problematic for two other reasons. First, because the overwhelming evidence points to Russia's agrarian future based on industrial agriculture; and second, a revitalization in the smallholder sector requires changes that are opposite of food sovereignty, for example, more mechanization, better access to supply chains and higher levels of commercialization.

The rebound in Russian agriculture since 2004 has been due to increased production by large farms and particularly agroholdings. The federal government and regional governments are pouring money into agroholdings and vertical and horizontal supply chains associated with them. The payoff for this strategy from the state's standpoint is that Russia has become an annual first or second ranking in wheat exports in the world

since 2014 and is moving toward becoming a significant meat exporter. In this context, it is important to bear in mind the power aspirations of Russian leaders, who clearly are proud that Russia has emerged as a major grain exporter to more than 135 nations in the world. Food sovereignty plays no role in that rise. Agricultural prowess provides Russian policymakers with leverage to use food as an instrument of foreign policy (Wegren and Nikulin, 2019). Food sovereignty plays no role in that leverage. Thus, food sovereignty does not exist in Russia, quiet or otherwise, and remains an ideal-type food system that is unlikely to be realized on a national scale in Russia.

Continuation of Status Quo

The continuation of the status quo is the most likely scenario for smallholders' future because it is the most realistic. If this hypothesis is correct, there are several meanings for Russia's smallholders. First, continuation means that the smallholder sector will remain economically heterogeneous and stratified, with some households having larger land holdings and more animals; and some households will develop small-scale business from their *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* while other households continue to use their food production as a supplementary source of food or for basic subsistence. Heterogeneity will continue to have a regional dimension. *Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* in remote regions of Russia far north or far east, where natural conditions make industrial agriculture and private farming difficult, is likely to be more important to rural household food security than in European Russia where rural households have more options to obtain food.

A second meaning is that it would not be surprising if the economic contribution of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* to national food output continued to decrease. It also would not be surprising to see the ruble value of agricultural production from private farms surpass households within a decade. In the last decade, the ruble value of output from private farms increased from 7% of total production in 2010 to 14% in 2019 (Rosstat,

2020, 355). Private farms produce significant quantities of grain, sunflower seed, and sugar beet, all of which are processed into high value products. Not only do private farms produce commodities that are processed into high value products, they are able to take advantage of global price spikes. At the beginning of September 2020, for example, Russian sunflower oil reached a five-year high of \$815-\$835 per ton but increased to \$940 by mid-September 2020 and some experts forecast that the price could exceed \$1,000 a ton (Kulistikova and Maksimova, 2020). In 2019, private farmers produced 35% of the nation's sunflower seed by volume (Rosstat, 2020, 356).

A final meaning of the continuation of the status quo is that the gap between the food products that *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* produce and what present-day consumers prefer to buy will continue to widen. Contemporary consumers like the convenience of one-stop shopping in supermarkets. They appreciate being able to choose among attractively packaged products: prepared and frozen foods that can be taken home to warm up. They enjoy shopping in clean, modern stores. Consumers develop store and brand loyalty, which brings a form of psychological food security. Thus, retailers within supply chains are not highly motivated to increase linkages to smallholders.

CONCLUSION

The prospects for smallholders in Russia are inherently linked to the broader question of the trajectory of its agricultural sector. It is becoming increasingly clear that big capital is winning over small capital in Russia, a trend that is true in many regions of the world (Bernstein, 2010; Clapp, 2020). Big capital is winning in production, distribution, supply chains, processing, and retailing. While large farm enterprises, agrohholdings, and private farms are modernizing and adding to their productive capital (land, machines, and animals), households' land plot sizes are limited by law; there is momentum to enact limitations on the number of animals raised by households over sanitary concerns; and *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*

remains based on manual labor. Further, agroholdings and private farms have preferential access to state-subsidized credit, operators of *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* do not. In short, the key ingredients to food production—land, animals, financial capital—are distinctly skewed against smallholders.

The domination of big capital in Russia is supported by the state that benefits from a globally competitive agroholding sector which earns foreign revenue from exports and brings prestige to the country. Needless to say, production from *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* does not earn revenue from food exports and does not contribute to the international prestige of Russia's agricultural sector. As other producers in the agri-food system modernize, it is hard to escape the notion that smallholders are being left behind. While *lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* will continue to exist in rural Russia, its heyday has passed and its economic importance is likely to continue to decline. The irony of smallholders' situation is that they were discriminated against by the state during the Soviet period because they represented capitalism and operated on market principles. In the post-Soviet period, it is capitalism and the forces of the market that have facilitated the decline of smallholders.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH*Stephen K. Wegren***Affiliation:** Southern Methodist University**Education:** PhD Columbia University**Research and Professional Experience:**

- Assistant Professor of Political Science, Southern Methodist University, Fall 1991-Spring 1997.
- Associate Professor of Political Science, Southern Methodist University, Fall 1997-Spring 2005.
- Professor of Political Science, Southern Methodist University, Fall 2005-present.

Professional Appointments:

- Distinguished University Professor, Southern Methodist University, January 2020-present
- Director, International and Area Studies, Southern Methodist University, Fall 2006-present.

Honors:

- Magna Cum Laude, University of Oregon
- Phi Beta Kappa

Publications from the Last 3 Years:

Books:

- 1) Stephen K. Wegren and Frode Nilssen, eds., *Russia's Role in the Contemporary International Agri-Food Trade System*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming in 2021.
- 2) Stephen K. Wegren with Alexander Nikulin and Irina Trotsuk, *Russia's Food Revolution: The Transformation of the Food System*. London and New York: Routledge Publishers, 2021. 231 pp.
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