Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian State as a Strategic Task and its Legal Support

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Abstract: Systemic economic, environmental and social problems of rural areas in modern world make the issue of public policy for their sustainable development particularly topical. The socio-economic development of the Russian Federation, increased volumes of agricultural output, growing efficiency of the agricultural sector, full employment of the rural population and improving its living conditions, as well as achieving efficient land use require proper legal support. The main strategic planning documents regulating aspects of sustainable development of rural areas are represented by three groups of political and legal acts regarding their: 1) agricultural development, 2) sustainable development, 3) spatial development. Most research articles cover one of these aspects of facilitating the development of rural areas. The sources demonstrate the lack of comprehensive legal studies covering the issues of sustainable development of rural areas. The present article provides a comprehensive analysis of the legal regulation of facilitating sustainable development of rural areas in each of the aspects mentioned. The methods of comparative analysis and legal hermeneutics applied made it possible to reveal contradictions and gaps in the strategic planning documents. This precludes the possibility of specifying a single conceptual model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas. The authors have considered the internal and external sides of the model of legal regulation, outlined the legal approaches to its formation in modern geopolitical, economic and social conditions. The article identifies the problems of legal support for sustainable development of rural areas and considers ways to solve them.
Keywords: rural areas; sustainable development; strategic planning; organic agriculture; rural tourism

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I. Introduction

Implemented in the early 1990s, land and agrarian reforms caused destructive changes in the economic, environmental and social conditions of rural areas. A high level of unemployment, rural exodus, low incomes, destruction of residential, road and engineering infrastructures can characterize the current state of rural areas.

It was until 2006 that strategic planning of social development of the village was carried out. The national project “Development of the agro-industrial complex” has been implemented since 2006 and has been transformed since 2008 into the State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food Markets. Within its framework, the development of rural areas from the standpoint of economic, environmental and social indicators has been revealing closer connection with agricultural production, rural tourism and other economic activities in the countryside. Since 2019, the development of rural areas has been considered in the context of their spatial development. Conceptual changes in state policy in the field of sustainable development of rural areas make it relevant to specify the model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas in modern geopolitical and geo-economic conditions. Thus, the purpose of the present article is to specify a conceptual model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas.
The novelty is based on elaborating an academically defined conceptual model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas, as well as consideration of its internal and external sides. This makes it possible to form a legislative basis for a consistent and comprehensive state policy in the field of rural development, taking into account the balance of public and private interests. The study undertaken is an academic contribution to the development of agrarian law and economic branches in terms of theoretical analysis of political and legal regulations determining state policy in the field of sustainable development of rural areas, aimed at solving the socio-economic problems of the Russian state. The article also provides important applications in prospective use of the research outcomes in the work of state bodies of legislative and executive authorities of the Russian Federation and the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

II. Prior Research Studies

Russian legal literature addressing the subject of legal support for sustainable development of rural areas includes works by S.A. Bogolyubov, L.A. Bitkova, G.E. Bystrov, G.A. Volkov, B.A. Voronin, E.A. Galinovskaya, S.A. Lipsky and E.L. Minina. Meanwhile, the state program for the integrated development of rural areas adopted in 2019 necessitates the study of the legal support for sustainable development of rural areas from the standpoint of comparative analysis of strategic planning documents regulating the development of agriculture and ensuring food security, sustainable development of rural areas, and spatial development of rural areas in order to specify a conceptual model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas. To specify a conceptual model of legal regulation for ensuring sustainable development of rural areas, certain scientific and methodological approaches published in foreign literature should be taken into account (Baldanov, Kiminami and Furuzawa, 2019; Chetvertakov and Chetvertakova, 2018; Kondolskaya, Vasilieva and Parsova, 2019; Kuzminov, Gokhberg, Thurner and Khabirova, 2018; Litvinenko, Solovykh, Smirnova, Kiyanova and Mironova, 2019; Loginova and Strokov, 2019).
III. Discussion

Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 204 dated 07.05.2018 outlines national goals and strategic objectives aimed at the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation, increasing its population, improving the standard of living of its citizens, providing comfortable conditions for their living. With regard to rural areas, these objectives may become achievable through an enforcement mechanism for ensuring their sustainable development. Determination of the institutional and conceptual foundations for sustainable development of rural areas is an issue of relevance in the current period of development of the Russian state.

The goals of sustainable development of rural areas are achievable only on a systematic basis and through proper legal support. The relevant sources note that the set of essential features and characteristics of external and internal legal impact on the behavior of participants in public relations through interrelated legal means, methods and approaches aimed at effectively achieving goals and implementing tasks is a model of legal regulation of public relations (Voronina, 2016). It should be noted that the model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas can be viewed both internally and externally.

The inner side of the model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas is represented by the concept of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas. It includes a set of essential features and characteristics of legal impact on both internal and external relations ensuring agricultural production and sustainable development of rural areas. These relations are generally aimed at the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation, increasing the volume of agricultural production, as well as the efficiency of agriculture, achieving full employment of the rural population and improving its living standards, and rational use of land.

The set of political, legal and regulatory legal acts aimed at sustainable development of rural areas constitutes the outer side of the

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1 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 204 dated 07.05.2018 “On national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024” (2018), Russian newspaper, 5.
model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas. The implementation of the abovementioned concept of sustainable development of rural areas is carried out through state policy. One of the directions of the latter is the legal regulation of public relations to ensure sustainable development of rural areas.

Currently, existing legal acts use the term “sustainable development of rural areas”. Before, until 2006, the concept of “social development of the countryside,” which was narrower in content, was used instead. It was an evolutionary way that made the state come to the understanding of the need for the development of rural areas from the standpoint of their sustainability. Although, when determining the state environmental policy, since the beginning of the 1990s, the term “sustainable development” has already been established in Russian legislation.

Initially, the main direction of the agrarian reform and state agrarian policy of the post-perestroika period implied the social development of rural areas. The RSFSR Law No 438-1 dated 21.12.1990 “On the social development of the countryside” stipulated that the social development of the countryside could be achieved by means of economic, legal and social policy of the state (Article 1). It undermined that the drivers of the social development of the village would be the reorganization of collective enterprises (collective and state farms), the privatization of agricultural lands, new forms of management (in particular, farms, agricultural holdings, etc.), and the land market. However, the practice of agrarian and land transformations has later shown, their consequences can be characterized as negative. Most notably, small forms of farming could not ensure food security; other consequences included failure to use of significant areas of agricultural land, the lack of a system for processing and marketing agricultural products, high rates of unemployment in rural areas, low income of rural population, weak social infrastructure.

In encyclopedic sources, stability is defined as the ability to maintain the current state in the presence of external influences. On the one hand, the use of the term “sustainable development” in relation to rural areas is rather controversial, since the current state of rural areas has not yet reached such a level that would be reasonable to define it at least as satisfactory. Inference should be drawn that, when
planning measures for further development of rural areas, the state, still provides, at least, the necessary means of maintaining the level of social development of the countryside already achieved. Nevertheless, this state is considered by many economists as unsatisfactory (Bondarenko, 2019). The strategic planning documents also mention the systemic economic, social and environmental problems of rural areas (section II “Current state and development trends of rural areas” of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No 151-p dated 02.02.2015). On the other hand, the term “sustainable development of rural areas” predetermines an integrated approach to the development of rural areas. Therefore, at present, sustainable development of rural areas is a combination of economic, environmental and social factors ensuring an appropriate lifestyle for rural citizens. Consequently, the legal support for sustainable development of rural areas should be carried out in these spheres.

According to Art. 4 of the Federal Law “On the Development of Agriculture” the sustainable development of rural areas means their stable socio-economic development, an increase in agricultural production, an increase in the efficiency of agriculture, the achievement of full employment of the rural population and an increase in their standard of living, and rational use of land.

The development of rural areas is connected with both the production of agricultural products and the implementation of other types of economic activities.

Sustainable development of rural areas is part of the state agrarian policy and is achieved through measures to improve the demographic situation and provide employment of the rural population, create new jobs, reduce poverty in the rural population; development of social infrastructure and engineering of the village; improvement of housing conditions of the rural population, support of integrated compact development and improvement of rural settlements; increasing the prestige of agricultural labor; development of local self-government and civil society institutions; preservation and improvement of traditional agricultural landscapes. Consequently, sustainable development of rural areas is conditioned, primarily, by the development of agricultural production.
Strategic planning documents regulating the development of agriculture are aimed at increasing the efficiency of agriculture and the contribution of rural areas to the socio-economic development of the country. The achievement of these goals is meant to be carried out by taking into account the development of rural areas as a single complex with its historically formed territories. Also, it will require using various forms of government support, collaboration among the state, local authorities, business and the rural population in order to ensure sustainable development of rural areas; expanding and deepening ties between rural areas and cities based on agro-industrial integration and cooperation; development of local self-government, civil society institutions, all forms of cooperation as the fundamental principles for the implementation of state policy for sustainable development of rural areas. However, the Federal Law “On the Development of Agriculture”, which provides the definition of the state agrarian policy, does not stipulate for economic cooperation of agricultural producers. Nor is it indicated as a direction for ensuring sustainable development of rural areas in the State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food. It leads us to assume that these documents need to be adjusted in terms of the principles and directions of state agrarian policy, and agricultural cooperation should be recognized as an object of state influence, including legal regulation.

Economic and climate-related risks of agricultural activities predetermine the need for government support. At the same time, the practice of providing budgetary assistance proves that it is being provided to large agricultural commodity producers. It results in their founders receiving added value while the income of their employees demonstrates no increase (Shagayda and Uzun, 2019). Hence, it obviously follows that the prospective social effect of the development of rural areas proposed by the strategic planning documents is not being achieved. N.I. Shagayda and V.Ya. Uzun quite rightly suppose that it is necessary to provide state assistance not to large, but to small forms of management. While agreeing with this position, nevertheless, we have to note that of all small forms of management, it is agricultural cooperatives that are most integrated into the mechanism of sustainable
development of rural areas. Agricultural production cooperatives do so through the creation of new jobs, distribution of cooperative payments in proportion to labor participation, maintenance of social infrastructure (housing, boiler houses, roads, etc.). Agricultural consumer cooperatives do so by combining the organizational and economic resources of their founders — agricultural organizations, farms, individuals leading private household plots, as well as by reducing costs and risks in the processing and marketing of agricultural products. Therefore, the need to develop rural cooperation is stated in the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 204 dated 07.05.2018 “On national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2024.”

Sustainable development of rural areas is impossible without the rational use of land, and primarily, agricultural land. One of the current problems here is their non-use for their intended purpose.

In the 1990s, 11.8 million workers of former collective and state farms became the owners of 115.9 million hectares of agricultural land (FTP “Development of land reform in the Russian Federation for 1999–2002”). Then, land privatization failed to meet the reform expectations (Rumyantsev and Konopleva, 2016). The overwhelming majority of citizens owning land shares do not have either the intention or the ability to cultivate agricultural lands. Agricultural organizations own only 5% of the land. The rest of the land used in agricultural production is leased by them, which leads to an increase in the cost of agricultural products.

At some point, it was proposed to adopt a federal law on streamlining property relations that arose during the privatization of agricultural land (Volkov, 2006). This draft law provided that “if the owner of the land share has made a decision to dispose of the land share independently, then the certificate of ownership of the land share issued after performing this action cannot have legal force, since the right to the land share at that moment passed to another owner” (Galinovskaya, 2006), that is, to a legal entity.

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2 Report on the state and use of agricultural land in the Russian Federation in 2017, 2019, FGBNU “Rosinformagrotech”, Moscow. P. 26.
The state used an alternative means, namely, through the conversion of non-demanded land shares into municipal ownership (Art. 12.1 of the Federal Law No 101-FZ dated 24.07.2002 “On the turnover of agricultural land”). Despite the fact that this article was introduced by the Federal Law No 435-FZ dated 29.12.2010 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in terms of improving the turnover of agricultural land” and entered into force on July 1, 2011, the situation has not improved. Therefore, the President of the Russian Federation in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation for 2016 drew attention to this problem.

From our point of view, the current federal land legislation is subject to certain conceptual changes. In particular, it is necessary to provide at the federal level for the provision of agricultural land to agricultural organizations on a preferential or non-reimbursable basis.

There is a positive experience regarding the provision of agricultural land to the ownership of farms on a preferential basis. The laws of the majority of constituent entities in the Russian Federation regulating the turnover of agricultural land provide for such a mechanism for granting land plots from state and municipal ownership to the private ownership of farms. Specifically, in 2011, the Law of the Vologda Region No 976-OZ dated 19.12.2003 “On the turnover of agricultural land in the Vologda Region” was supplemented by Article 6 (1). It is stipulated that agricultural land plots, considered as farm-owned agricultural land for the implementation of the activities of these farms on the basis of the right of permanent (unlimited) use or the right of inherited life possession, or provided to the specified persons on the basis of the right of permanent (unlimited) use or the right of inherited life possession and reregistered by them for the right to lease, are provided on a non-reimbursable basis to the specified persons in the event that several conditions are present in the aggregate. These conditions include the absence during the entire period of use of land plots of any established facts of non-use for their intended purpose or use in violation of land legislation. Besides, these conditions may take place when within the income received from the sale of goods (works, services) of farms, the share of income from the sale of agricultural products produced by them makes at least 70 %; or the obligation to pay taxes, fees, insurance
premiums, penalties and tax sanctions to the budgets of all levels is properly fulfilled.

Article 10 of Federal Law No 101-FZ dated 24.07.2002 “On the turnover of agricultural land” states that the procedure for providing agricultural land to individuals and legal entities is specified by the Land Code of the Russian Federation (Chapter 5.1) as well as by the laws of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Hereby, the federal government delegated the solution of this issue to the subjects of the Russian Federation. Certain subjects of the Russian Federation have found an opportunity to provide land plots from agricultural land on a non-reimbursable basis. In particular, on April 1, 2019, the Law of the Vologda Region No 4476-OZ dated 28.12.2018 “On the specifics of providing land plots from the fund for the redistribution of agricultural land in the Vologda Region” (hereinafter referred to as the Law on the Vologda Hectare) entered into force.

When developing the draft Law on the Vologda hectare, the federal experience was taken into account — Federal Law No 119-FZ dated 05.01.2016 “On the specifics of providing citizens with land plots in state or municipal ownership and located on the territories of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation that are part of the Far Eastern Federal District, and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” (hereinafter referred to as the Law on the Far Eastern Hectare). At the same time, the Law on the Vologda hectare, in our opinion, offers a more competent legal solution to the land issue.

In contrast to the parties involved in legal relations for the provision of a Far Eastern hectare in the Vologda Oblast, not only citizens, but also persons running a farm and agricultural organizations have the right to a land plot. The area of the land plot provided is from 2.5 to 100 hectares. Property rights to land plots are also different. The Far Eastern hectare is granted on the right of use on non-reimbursable basis, while the Vologda hectare implies ownership.

The goals of the legal regulation of relations on the provision of the Vologda hectare indicated in the Law on the Vologda hectare include the involvement of agricultural land in circulation, the creation of conditions for the development of municipalities, taking into account the need for planning and organizing the rational use of land, developing
the economy, improving the organization of territories on the basis of territorial planning documents, as well as creating conditions for attracting citizens for agricultural production.

All land plots are to be provided from the land redistribution fund. Land plots must be state property of the Vologda Oblast, municipal property or state property, the right to which is not delimited, and be included in the state information system (hereinafter referred to as GIS).

The right to receive a land plot belongs to citizens of the Russian Federation residing in the territory of the Vologda region, or agricultural organizations carrying out agricultural activities in the territory of the region.

The maximum sizes of land plots depend on the purpose of the permitted use: 2.5 hectares for personal subsidiary farming, 10 hectares for citizens for other purposes, up to 100 hectares for legal entities. The minimum size of land plots is the same and is 1 hectare.

The procedure of providing a land plot is carried out in several stages. The first stage is an appeal of a citizen or legal entity through GIS about the choice of a land plot. The second stage is making an application for preliminary approval of the provision of a land plot through the portal of public services. The third stage is the implementation of cadastral works and cadastral registration of the land plot. The fourth stage is making an application for the provision of a land plot. The fifth stage is the decision-making on the provision of a land plot and registration of private property rights.

As the practice of implementing the Law on the Vologda hectare shows, on the first day of its operation, more than 230 applications for the provision of land plots with a total area of 1.5 thousand hectares were submitted. This proves that this legal mechanism is not only legal, but also in demand by individuals and legal entities.

The problem is that the legislation of a great number of subjects of the Russian Federation does not mention such a legal approach to the provision of land plots from agricultural land to the ownership of citizens and legal entities. This position is explained by the fact that the alienation of land plots from state and municipal property is viewed as a means of replenishment of the corresponding budget, which seems
undeniable. On the other hand, government agrarian policy direction is aimed at the production of greater volumes of agricultural products, allowing not only to ensure food security in Russia, but also to export agricultural products. Increasing the export of agricultural products is one of the national goals outlined by the President of the Russian Federation in the decree No 204 dated 07.05.2018 “On national goals and strategic objectives for the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024” (paragraph 14). By 2024, the volume of agricultural exports should reach $ 45 billion per year. Therefore, the state should provide for the grounds for the free provision of land plots to agricultural organizations, without shifting the solution of this issue to the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Art. 10 of the Federal Law “On the turnover of agricultural land” requires making appropriate changes by defining the grounds, conditions and procedure for the free provision of land plots into the ownership of legal entities, i.e. producers of agricultural products. The state sees a certain incentive in the development of rural areas, both from the standpoint of economic and environmental factors, in organic agriculture.

According to the concept of sustainable development and building a “green” economy, organic agriculture is a sustainable model of agricultural production. Its main principle is “production and circulation of organic products without damage to human health and without environmental destruction” (Voronin, 2013). In November 2017, the International Committee for the Development of Organic Agriculture (IFOAM) came to a decision to move to a new stage in the development of Organic 3.0. Now the focus of organic agriculture must be on overcoming problems such as minimizing the negative effects of climate change, preserving biodiversity, and hunger reduction (Zanilov, Melenteva and Nakaryakov, 2021).

The sources note that “the development of organic agriculture in our country creates a so-called ‘vicious circle of advantages’, including that for rural residents — due to the growth of household income, increasing self-employment, development of cooperation, social infrastructure, etc.” (Polushkina, 2016).

In the concept of sustainable development and building a so-called “green economy” being implemented in the international space,
it is organic agriculture that is recognized as a sustainable model of agricultural production. As noted, “the main principle of organic agriculture is the production and circulation of organic products without causing harm to human health and without environmental destruction; the main function is to improve public health by producing high-quality and biologically safe products, reducing environmental pollution and improving the control system safety of agricultural raw materials and food products” (Burak, 2014).

In the Russian Federation, the creation of a legal framework began with the adoption of a number of national standards (GOSTs) regulating the production, storage and transportation of organic products, their voluntary certification and labeling. Nevertheless, since these norms were of a framework nature, the issue of the development and adoption of the Federal Law regulating organic agriculture became relevant (Voronina, 2019). The comparative analysis conducted led to the conclusion that 87 foreign countries have a law rather than subordinate legislation. Meanwhile, two legal approaches can be distinguished — in some countries it is the law on organic agriculture, while other countries use the law on organic products (Voronina, 2019).

On 3 August 2018, the Federal Law “On Organic Products and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation” (hereinafter referred to as the Law on Organic Products) was adopted. This Act is a hybrid of organic farming and organic production laws. Its positive aspect is the expansion of the conceptual apparatus of agrarian law and legislation. It provides definitions for organic agriculture and organic products. It is noted that these definitions make it possible to assess “the risks that bona fide manufacturers have in connection with the characteristics of such high-quality products, which make a positive impact on human health, and the conditions of production, which contribute to improving the environment and solving a number of social problems” (Mikhaylov, 2019). At the same time, unscrupulous producers may have an intention to unreasonably position their agricultural products as organic ones. Therefore, one of the tasks of legal regulation is to create legal mechanisms aimed at suppressing unfair competition and deceiving consumers. This may be achieved through the entry of information about the manufacturer of organic
products and the products themselves in a special register, as well as by labeling of organic products. Similar mechanisms are envisaged by almost all foreign countries.

The analysis of the law advances arguments for the framework nature of the legal regulation of organic agriculture. In particular, there are no government support measures. Federal Law No 264-FZ dated 26.12.2006 “On the Development of Agriculture” does not contain specific regulations on supporting organic producers. State aid is provided to the latter on an equal basis with other producers. The sources note that this approach is erroneous (Avarskiy and Taran, 2018). Agreeing with this position, we believe that the Law on the Development of Agriculture should be structured: measures for state support for organic producers should be separated into its separate articles. Another reason for this to be done is that European and other foreign markets are interested in the export of organic products. It is impossible to imagine the intensive development of organic production in Russia without government support.

It should be mentioned that strategic planning documents lack a uniform approach to defining the place and role of organic agriculture in the development of rural areas. In the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas until 2030, it is noted that organic agriculture makes it possible to put into circulation a significant part of the cultivated area, provide employment for the rural population, increase the export of agricultural products, and ensure food security. The Concept for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 makes no mention of organic agriculture. We come to the conclusion that it is necessary to bring the strategic planning documents for the development of rural areas in correspondence with the conceptual documents for the development of agriculture and the Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly for 2019. Additionally, a form of “green” agriculture ensuring sustainable development of rural areas is the production of environmentally friendly agricultural products.

In the Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation for 2019, it is noted that it is necessary “to create a protected brand of domestic clean, ‘green’
products,” which should “deserve high quality guarantees both in the domestic and foreign markets.” Unlike organic products, agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics are products and raw materials whose quality and consumer characteristics comply with the requirements of the current legislation on agricultural products with improved characteristics.

This position is reflected in the Bill No 1087686-7 “On agricultural products, raw materials and food with improved characteristics” (hereinafter — the Bill) elaborated by the Ministry of Agriculture of Russia. The bill was originally referred to as the draft federal law “On agricultural products, raw materials and food with improved environmental characteristics and on amendments to the Federal law ‘On the development of agriculture’”. The key definition it contained was that of “improved environmental characteristics” as indicators of the quality and safety of agricultural products, raw materials and food, taking into account environmental factors defined by the standards in the field of circulation of agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics. This form of the project was met ambiguously by the professional community. The Union of Organic Agriculture of Russia mentioned the following shortcomings in the draft law: no criteria for ecologically clean products to meet international requirements; non-compliance of environmentally friendly products with international environmental standards based on the ISO 14000 system of standards; no certification mechanism recognized on the territory of foreign countries, excessive bureaucratization of the law, etc. According to farmers, collisions and gaps in the bill prevent Russian environmentally friendly products from entering foreign markets and taking a leading position there. Hence, the professional community raised the issue of the need to adjust the title and content of the bill in accordance with the national experience of foreign countries and international documents. In this regard, the title of the bill and its content have also been adjusted.

A comparative analysis of the two bills leads us to the following conclusions. The first one concerns the change in the name of the

3 Available at: https://soz.bio/?s=сельскохозяйственная+продукция+с+улучшенными+характеристикой [Accessed 20.05.2021].
bill. The word “ecological” was removed from the title of the draft law regarding the characteristics of agricultural products, raw materials and food produced in accordance with the requirements stipulated by the draft law. Secondly, the requirements for products with improved characteristics have been changed. Earlier, the document mentioned requirements for agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics, such as the separation of manufacturing products with improved environmental characteristics from other agricultural products; the use of pesticides and agrochemicals with improved environmental characteristics; a ban on the use of cloning and methods of genetic engineering, genetically modified and transgenic organisms; a ban on the use of ionizing radiation and ultraviolet rays; the use of food additives, flavors and flavor enhancers; separate storage and transportation of agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics from other agricultural products; a ban on the use of packaging and containers that can lead to contamination of agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics. The current law now mentions only the following requirements for the production of agricultural products with improved characteristics: separation of the production of products with improved environmental characteristics from other agricultural products; a ban on the use of cloning and methods of genetic engineering, genetically modified and transgenic organisms; ban on the use of ionizing radiation; separate storage, transportation of agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics from other agricultural products; a ban on the use of packaging and containers that may cause contamination of agricultural products with improved environmental characteristics. Moreover, there appeared such requirements as the use of only agricultural raw materials with improved characteristics in the production of agricultural products with improved characteristics; application of technologies to meet environmental, sanitary-epidemiological and veterinary requirements; use of recyclable and biodegradable containers and packaging. In our opinion, these changes made it easier for Russian agricultural products with improved characteristics to enter foreign markets, but it is unlikely that they may contribute to the greening of agriculture, since the Bill does not contain any fundamental differences from other
agricultural activities for the production of agricultural products with common characteristics. In addition, excluding norms aimed at separate state support for producers of agricultural products with improved characteristics from the draft law should be viewed unfavorably: now the draft law stipulates that state support for manufacturers of products with improved characteristics should be provided on an equal basis with other agricultural producers. In our opinion, the manufacturing of agricultural products with improved characteristics is expensive, so government support should be provided on a separate basis. Otherwise, we will not be able to make the production of such products sustainable and ensure the growth of exports of just such kind of products.

Furthermore, an integral part of the legal regulation of the production and turnover of agricultural products with improved characteristics are GOSTs adopted during 2019 (6 GOSTs in total). In particular, these GOSTs use the term “agricultural products with improved environmental performance.” Therefore, in case the law is adopted in a prepared version after entering into legal force, these standards are most likely to be renamed and their content to be changed.

Modern agricultural activities are closely connected with the use of digital technologies. Unfortunately, our country ranks only 15th in the digitalization of agriculture. The Russian President’s Decree No 204 dated 07.05.2018 “On national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation in the period until 2024” provides for the accelerated introduction of digital technologies in the economy, as well as in the social sphere. The digitalization of agriculture will facilitate the growth of productivity and safety, it will also improve conditions for agricultural labor, improve the quality of agricultural products, and create job opportunities in industries related to agriculture (Skvortsov, Skvortsova, Sandu and Iovlev, 2018).

The issues of digitalization of the agro-industrial complex are of priority importance, since it is the level of development of agriculture that food security and state sovereignty depend on (Popova, 2018). The main document of strategic planning for building the digital economy in all its sectors is the National Program “Digital Economy of the Russian Federation,” the passport of which was approved on June 4, 2019. Its part regarding the regulatory issue of the digital economy notes that it is
necessary “to create a system of legal regulation of the digital economy based on a flexible approach in each area, as well as the introduction of civil turnover based on digital technologies” (clause 4.1 of the National Program “Digital Economy of the Russian Federation”). Therefore, in the field of agriculture, the definition of digitalization directions should function as the direction of the state agricultural policy.

Specific features of agricultural activities (in particular, seasonal nature, dependence on natural and climatic conditions, etc.) also determine the special characteristics of the agricultural digitalization model. Strategically, digitalization should be aimed at ensuring food security, therefore, the Doctrine of Food Security until 2030 provides that the national interests are to improve the quality of life of Russian citizens through adequate food supply, provide the population with high-quality and safe food products, sustainable development and modernization of agriculture and fisheries and infrastructure of the domestic market, the creation of a highly productive sector developing on the basis of modern technologies. The State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food Markets (hereinafter referred to as the Program) indicates the need to adopt a departmental program “Digital Agriculture” (Voronina, 2020) aimed primarily at introducing digital technologies in order to achieve a technological breakthrough in the agro-industrial complex by reduplicating labor productivity in 2024.

Since 2019, our country has been implementing a departmental project “Digital Agriculture” is being implemented in our country. Its main objective is to build a digital agriculture based on modern methods of agricultural production using digital technologies, which allow to increase labor productivity and at the same time reduce production costs. This requires the creation and further development of a national platform for digital public administration of agriculture “Digital Agriculture,” the “Agro-Solutions” module, and the sectoral electronic educational environment “Land of Knowledge” (Voronina, 2020). However, one of the main conditions to regulate that is meant to be proper legal support. The analysis of the current political, legal and regulatory legal acts in the field of agriculture, forestry and fisheries
leads us to the conclusion about a certain unsystematic legal regulation of the digitalization of agriculture.

The Federal Law No 264-FZ dated 29.12.2006 “On the Development of Agriculture” fails to mention digitalization among either its goals, objectives, or directions of the state agricultural policy. The law contains a polysystem-mediated legal regulation of digitalization, specifically the one that is made through state support for certain sectors of agriculture (crop production, animal husbandry, etc.), and state support for sustainable development of rural areas. It seems reasonable to conclude that an objective need for amendments to the Law regulating the directions of digitalization of agriculture has already been revealed (Voronina and Shnorr, 2019).

International experience clearly demonstrates that digitalization of agriculture can be performed in the following areas: digital farming; center of excellence in the field of digitalization of agriculture; rural infrastructure development; collection of geodata, meteorological and data on the means of production (Zadvorneva, 2018). Similar areas of digitalization of agriculture should also become available in Russia. Specifically, it may be focused on digital farming. Generally, it includes the definition of agricultural land boundaries using satellite navigation systems, fertilization, digital mapping and yield planning, crop monitoring, soil sampling in a coordinate system, remote sensing, the use of unmanned agricultural equipment, etc. However, digitalization in agriculture is restricted by the lack of strategic land management planning and a proper inventory of agricultural land.

One of the areas which applies digital technologies in agriculture is tillage. The implementation of digital technologies in the field of tillage “makes it possible to improve the operation of arable units by stabilizing the position of the frame, changing the width of the plow body, the speed of agricultural implements, and the use of support-drive wheels” (Lobachevskiy, Starovoytov, Akhalaya and Tsench, 2019). In crop production, digital technologies are used to protect agricultural plants. These include digital diagnostics, digital phytosanitary monitoring, computer decision support systems, and robotic plant protection systems (Nemenushchaya, 2019).
When introducing digital technologies into certain types of agricultural activities, information resources, knowledge and technology banks formed by agricultural sub-sectors, objects, and by constituent entities of the Russian Federation are of paramount importance. These should definitely be open and timely updated.

Digitalization should also be aimed at ensuring the traceability of agricultural products, stimulating access to digital open platforms, implementing online trading platforms and systems for promoting agricultural products (Yurina, 2018), conducting electronic trading, creating portals to provide land plots, etc.

The financial burden for the introduction of digital technologies is vested in agricultural producers. Taking this into account, government support is definitely required. Providing this support necessitates the creation in a digital format of a unified model of industry data in the agro-industrial complex for the provision of state support. Though, neither the Law nor the Program provides for specific measures of state support for agricultural producers implementing digital technologies. In economically developed countries (such as Canada, Turkey, Australia, Germany, USA) this kind of support is currently provided. This leads us to the conclusion that the current legislation should be supplemented with appropriate measures of state support (Voronina, 2021).

The digitalization of agricultural production is inseparably associated with the digital development of rural areas. The Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017–2030, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 203 dated 09.05.2017 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy), provides that “since 2014, rural settlements have been connected to the network in Russia.” Therefore, their digitalization can be considered as the most important condition for ensuring sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, the Strategy provides that the use of information technology in agricultural organizations requires the development of a set of measures that should provide competitive advantages to organizations in the RF, ensure production efficiency, increase labor productivity and be correlated with state policy in the field of agricultural development.
Obviously, not all documents of goal-setting in the field of sustainable development of rural areas directly entail the use of digital technologies. The Strategy for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 does not contain such regulation.

The state sees the economic and social effect in the development of organic agriculture in parallel with rural tourism (Litvinenko, Solovykh, Smirnova, Kiyanova, and Mironova, 2019). Exploring the prospects for the development of rural tourism, L.A. Bitkova mentions that rural tourism is not just a branch of the tourism industry, but it also performs important socio-economic functions to create attractive jobs, including those for rural youth and women; to arrange rural areas; to provide the integrated use of natural and cultural potential of rural areas. At the same time, the fundamental regulatory legal act in the field of tourism, Federal Law No 132-FZ dated 24.11.1996 “On the Basics of Tourist Activity in the Russian Federation”, does not provide for either the concept of rural tourism or measures of its state support. There are no normative principles for regulating rural tourism mentioned in the Federal Law “On the Development of Agriculture”. The only federal law that contains a reference to rural tourism is the Federal Law No 209-FZ dated 24.07.2007 “On the development of small and medium-sized businesses in the Russian Federation,” Article 15 of which provides for the creation of centers for the development of rural tourism.

Meanwhile, strategically the state sees a certain incentive for the development of rural areas by means of rural tourism. The Strategy for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No 151-r dated 02.02.2015, notes that in order to develop rural tourism, it is necessary to create special agritourism clusters; conducting educational events for owners of rural guest houses, representatives of farms, individual entrepreneurs, rural residents involved in organizing and providing tourist services in rural areas; media coverage of leading practices and most successful rural tourism development projects. It is hardly possible to accept these provisions as conceptual. Even the terminology in the field of rural tourism has not been properly defined: in one section of the Strategy, the term
“rural tourism” is used, while the other one provides a different term with the same meaning, “agritourism”. With regard to state support for rural tourism, the State Program for the Development of Agriculture and Regulation of the Markets of Agricultural Products, Raw Materials and Food, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No 717 dated 14.07.2012, provides for the only measure — partial reimbursement of the expenses of paying interest on loans and borrowings related to the development of rural tourism areas, including local industries and national crafts, rural (agricultural) trade, household and social and cultural services for the rural population, harvesting and processing of wild plants and medicinal plants. There are no other measures for state support of rural tourism. Relying solely on the rural population itself is inadequate, considering the low level of its income. Therefore, the development of rural tourism can be associated with the activities of agricultural producers. Still, since rural tourism also pursues a social effect, i.e. the creation of jobs and the development of social infrastructure, it is necessary to aggregate resources and share risks between public and private partners in the form of a public-private and municipal-private partnership mechanism. Strategic planning documents both in the field of agriculture and sustainable development of rural areas do not contain such provisions, therefore, they must be supplemented with appropriate norms. Thus, the strategic planning of the development of rural areas until recently has been carried out exclusively according to the sectoral principle.

Gradually, the development of rural areas began to be considered in the context of their spatial development. This is due to the approval by the Government of the Russian Federation on May 31, 2019 of the State Program of the Russian Federation for the Integrated Development of Rural Areas. This program was established following the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin to the Government of the Russian Federation (minutes of instructions No. Pr-2014 dated 31.10.2018 (subparagraph “a” of paragraph 1).

The main goals of the state program for the integrated development of rural areas were to improve the quality of life and the level of well-being of the rural population; maintaining a balanced settlement system, including various types of settlements, taking into account
regional specific features (Lut, 2019). Therefore, the first direction of the implementation of the State Program is the development of promising areas of economic growth, where investment projects are currently being implemented or will be implemented, both of various sectoral focus, and all spheres of entrepreneurship. It is planned that the state program for the comprehensive development of rural areas will be implemented not only on the territories agricultural production predominates, but also in areas revealing considerable potential for the development of all sectors of the economy.

Another direction is the development of territories, primarily regional centers, to meet a certain standard. When developing the state program for the integrated development of rural areas, the basis was the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2025, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No 207-r dated 13.02.2019.

The spatial development strategy envisages improving the living conditions of residents of rural settlements, reducing the housing stock unsuitable for habitation, increasing the level of improvement of rural settlements, providing communal infrastructure; increasing transport accessibility of rural areas; increasing the competitiveness of the economy of rural areas, promoting the development of land reclamation facilities, involving unused lands in agricultural circulation, supporting measures aimed at preserving and increasing the fertility of agricultural lands, restoring forests and aquatic biological resources; promoting rural tourism.

**IV. Conclusion**

The results of the conducted analysis of strategic planning and legal support for sustainable development of rural areas demonstrate a certain shift in the concept of state policy regarding the development of rural areas, from the sectoral one to the spatial one. At the same time, it is necessary to take into consideration a combination of sectoral and spatial components of sustainable development of rural areas. This actualizes the issue of bringing the strategic planning documents of both sectoral and spatial development of rural areas in correspondence
with each other. Only a systematic and comprehensive legal approach makes it possible to form a multi-level system of strategic planning, interconnected in terms of goals, directions, activities and timing of their implementation, as well as an effective model of legal regulation of sustainable development of rural areas, ensuring its proper legal support.

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