Is it possible to quickly eliminate labor shortage in Russian agriculture?

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Abstract. In November 2023, the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture Oksana Lut estimated the shortage of workers in agriculture at 200,0001, obviously implying agricultural organizations. According to Lut, one of the reasons for such a shortage is low salaries: the limited effective demand for products does not allow agricultural organizations to increase the selling price of produce, which limits the wages of agricultural workers. However, the number of people employed in agriculture declines almost everywhere this is a common situation in many countries. On the one hand, this decline is determined by an increase in labor productivity, i.e., a reduction in the number of workers is the desired result; on the other hand, many agricultural enterprises suffer from the lack of needed workers. Therefore, it is necessary to understand why there is a shortage of agricultural workers in Russia, focusing on the details of this situation. Based on the Federal State Statistics Service's data, the author considers this situation, in particular the number of employed in agriculture, main reasons for such a labor shortage in agriculture and national economy in general, possibilities and limitations of the reliance/ dependence on labor migrants (especially from the post-Soviet countries) and on unemployed in the Russian labor market, regional differences in the available workforce, finally providing some recommendations to change the current situation.

Key words: labor shortage, agriculture, agricultural organizations, wages, unemployment, labor migrants, regional differences

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How many people are employed in Russian agriculture, and where does the current labor shortage come from?

In 2022, 4.5 million people were employed in Russian agriculture (average annual number), or 6.3% of the total number of people employed in the national economy², while the average number of workers in agricultural organizations was 1.3 million³. The rate of decline

^{1.} The Ministry of Agriculture estimated labor shortage in agriculture at 200,000. URL: https://tass.ru/ekonomika/19227395.

^{2.} URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/o5-o5_2017-2022.xls.

URL: https://fedstat.ru/indicator/58699. In addition to hired workers, there are also self-employed, including hundreds of thousands of farmers

in the number of people employed in agriculture has slowed since the start of the pandemic (Results.., 2017–2022): in 2017–2020, the number of people employed in agriculture decreased by 138–227 thousand annually, and in 2021–2022 — by 63–25 thousand. There may be doubts about the number of people employed outside agricultural organizations given the low observability of households and farms, but the number of workers in agricultural organizations should be quite accurate due to statistical records and the state monitoring of wages, payroll taxes and pension savings. Thereby, it is not clear where the shortage of 200 thousand people came from in 2023 as since 2020, according to the official data, the number of workers in agricultural organizations has been only 88 thousand 4.

Perhaps, in agriculture, typical practices implied hiring workers not through agricultural organizations or farms but through outstaffing and outsourcing or some shadow ways (bypassing the official rules). Thus, agricultural workers fell into an invisible zone for the Ministry of Agriculture which analyzes farms' reports, focusing on the indicated number of workers. In 2020-2023, the extremely negative events and the depreciation of the ruble determined a decrease in the number of migrants, and suddenly it became clear that, despite a relatively small reduction in the number of workers according to the official records, there is a large labor shortage in agriculture. One might assume that this shortage is the result of a sharp increase in agricultural production, but this is wrong as in 2023 the number of needed workers exceeded an increase in agricultural production: an increase in production in agricultural organizations (in 2022 compared to 2021) was 11.4%; if we compare the 200-thousand shortage of workers with the average number of employees in agricultural organizations, this number will be 15%.

Thus, it can be assumed that the labor shortage in agriculture is the result of the underestimated need in foreign labor migrants. Obviously, there were many such workers in agriculture before the pandemic, but they were not included in farms' reports or the Federal State Statistics Service' surveys, because its "sample consists of households... Those living in boarding schools, nursing homes and other institutions, dormitories, monasteries and other collective living quarters are not taken into account"⁶. Thereby, the number of workers living in dormitories and employed in agricultural organizations, including their processing departments, cannot be estimated. Perhaps, the 200-thousand shortage mentioned by the Ministry of Agriculture shows the number

and millions of landowners who produce food primarily for their families. URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/labour force.

^{4.} URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/labour force.

^{5.} URL: https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/data.do?format=excel.

 $^{6.~}URL:~https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/zQgUqVuf/bd_orsmetod_318737.pdf. \\$

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of workers who did not come/return to Russia or left the country due to the ruble depreciation and other threats of the labor-migrant life.

The spread of outstaffing and outsourcing has an economic explanation. First, the development of large-scale agricultural production, mainly in animal husbandry and processing, determines the need for migrants worldwide as production volumes become disproportionate to the available labor resources. There are no cases in Russia when the decisions on the location of production and its size were based on the ability of local communities to meet the needs of these large industries for workers. This situation was facilitated by the state support for large projects as ensuring an immediate effect in production and improving regional indicators of economic development.

Second, a contract with an external company for providing workers or services (milking, cleaning, etc.) frees agricultural companies from responsibility to the employee and from obligations to the state to legalize foreign workers, pay minimum salaries, taxes and deductions; legislation was changed to make the working migrant increasingly equal to the ordinary worker. Today, staff rental is prohibited, but there are exceptions⁷: workers officially registered in one way or another (outstaffing, outsourcing) do not belong to the agricultural organization staff and receive little money, agricultural organizations do not make social payments for them, which explains why Russian agricultural products are relatively cheap. As some advertisements say, "outstaffing is a high management technology and a special form of labor relations, i.e., this is an official re-registration of workers as staff of another company with which an agreement for outstaffing services was concluded"s. It was a convenient mechanism that became unreliable in the contemporary world.

Another prerequisite for attracting migrants is the seasonal nature of agricultural work. If farms specialize in crop production, local population needs paid work in the winter as high seasonal earnings are followed by low incomes in the off-season period, which makes people look for other jobs to ensure a year-round income. If the Federal State Statistics Ser-

^{7.} URL: https://300.pravo.ru/opinion/212316/#:~:text=%Do%gF%Do%BE%Do%BB%D1%83%D1%87%Do%Bo%Do%B5%D1%82%D1%81%D1%8F%2C%20%D1%87%D1%82%Do%BE%20%Do%Bo%D1%83%D1%82%D1%81%D1%82%D1%81%D1%82%Do%Bo%D0%B8%Do%B8%Do%BD%Do%B3%20%Do%BA%Do%Bo%Do%Bo%Do%BA%20%Do%BE%D1%82%Do%B4%Do%B5%Do%BB%D1%8C%Do%BD%Do%Bo%D1%8F,%Do%B2%D1%8B%D1%88%Do%B5%Do%BE%Do%BF%Do%B8%D1%81%Do%Bo%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BD%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BS%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do%BB%Do

^{8.} URL: https://sales-generator.ru/blog/autstaffing-personala.

vice had developed an adequate statistical monitoring of migrant labor at farms, we would have understood at least the risks of unfavorable conditions, including changes in the ruble exchange rate. The need (vacancies) for foreign labor migrants surprisingly correlates with the ruble exchange rate curve: the stronger the ruble the fewer vacancies, the weaker the ruble the more vacancies, while internal migrants and local workers do not react to the ruble exchange rate. Moreover, an indirect evidence of a reduction in the number of labor migrants in agriculture is the increasing number of foreigners looking for a job: in 2022, this increase was far from pre-pandemic 2019 (Population and Migration., 2022).

It is difficult to find in publications or statistical collections any data on the number of migrant workers in agriculture (Potapova, 2021). Some authors mention 5.5% of those employed in agriculture but without references (Sergienko, Goncharova, 2015), others prefer value judgments without statistical evidence (Kisly, Isaeva, 2023). According to the official statistical data, in 2019, in the structure of employment of foreign labor migrants by industry, the share of those employed in agriculture was 7% (the total number of foreign labor migrants was estimated at 0,5 million (Results.., 2019), and even this small figure seems to be an underestimate). There are different estimates of the need for foreign workers (from tens to hundreds of thousands) again without statistical evidence (Maksimova, Kulistikova, 2020; Batyrov, 2021). The widespread employment of labor migrants is indirectly confirmed by the fact that in 2021 the Russian government adopted a decree to limit the share of foreign workers; however, among all branches of agriculture only vegetable production was mentioned in this decree. According to this decree, the share of foreign workers in vegetable production cannot exceed 50% of personnel. The Astrakhan Region is excluded from the scope of this decree, but it produces about 11% of Russian vegetables as the largest national vegetable producers (the second one is Dagestan). It is unlikely that foreign labor migrants work in Dagestan: the main production is concentrated in family farms, and the region is labor-surplus. Thus, the decree demonstrates both the state concern about the number of migrants and the objective impossibility of doing without them.

In other words, only the Ministry of Agriculture can estimate the number of foreign labor migrants by requesting information from the regions that, in turn, would request it from agricultural organizations and farms. However, even in this case the data would not be accurate due to the agricultural producers' reluctance to provide such sensitive information. At the same time, some indirect indicators show that the import substitution of workforce is extremely relevant for Russian agriculture, given the ruble exchange rate and other risks. If the situation returns to normal, the shortage of 200 thousand people will be eliminated relatively quickly, since some post-Soviet countries still have a surplus of labor. However, it should be kept in mind that there is a growing competition for labor migrants between countries,

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including the non-CIS ones (the decreasing influx of migrants to Russia means finding new channels for labor migration to other countries). It is important for Russia to maintain ties with the post-Soviet labor-surplus countries: on the one hand, there is a need for foreign migrants in Russian agriculture; on the other hand, people in Russia and in these counties still seem to understand each other.

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Unemployed as the potential of the Russian labor market

Despite the declared high need for workforce, many workers leave Russian agriculture by choice or at their managers' request. According to the labor force sample survey in 2022 (Results.., 2017–2022), there are 166 thousand unemployed with experience in agriculture; most of them are of working age and became unemployed by choice or for personal reasons (110 thousand). Since these people were not fired but quit, we need to assess chances of their return, provided that the authorities are ready for non-trivial and region-specific solutions. For instance, if young women quit their jobs to care for children, every village with children should have a home kindergarten/kids club. To stimulate such regional and municipal activities, the government should simplify requirements for such premises and provide subsidies to pay the person who looks after the children (for training and/or a part of the monthly salary).

Among the unemployed with experience in agriculture, there are 56 thousand people who lost their job due to the closure of production or at the employer's initiative. In the first case, there may be objective reasons for losing business: for example, in Dagestan, between the All-Russian Agricultural Census (ARAC) of 2006 and the Agricultural Micro-Census (AMC) of 2021, there was a catastrophic reduction in the number of small peasant farms — from 36.2 to 0.6 thousand (Table 1), which is easy to explain: their products were not included (vegetables) or were excluded (grapes) from food chains; grain production in this territory is not profitable as the income would be "eaten up" by the fixed payment to social funds (about 46 thousand rubles in 2023)¹⁰. Thus, we need to include smallholders in food chains, for instance, by stimulating cooperation between wine/cognac factories and small vegetable processing farms.

^{9.} URL: https://o5.rosstat.gov.ru/folder/200667.

^{10.} URL: https://www.banki.ru/news/daytheme/?id=10975816#:~:text=% D0%94%D0%BB%D1%8F%20%D1%83%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B0%D 1%82%D1%8B%20%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8 0%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85%20%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B%D1%85%20%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2,02%2003000%2011%201000%20160.

Groups	ARAC 2006	ARAC 2016	ARAC 2021	2021 to 2006, in %
<=4	36203	5604	620	2
4.1-10	3374	1136	248	7
11-20	287	294	107	37
21-50	168	325	202	120
51-100	67	230	174	260
Other	555	1111	1002	181
Total	40654	8700	2353	6

In the second case, workers were fired/quit but production continued to operate. One of the reasons is the lack of necessary qualifications: by 2022, the share of imported equipment in Russian agriculture was about 50% (German, 2023), and workers need special qualifications to work on it. Only 36% of unemployed (previously employed in agriculture) have secondary vocational education, 8% — higher education (Results.., 2017–2022); every third rural unemployed (previously employed in agriculture) is a low-skilled worker (in the city — 28%), i.e., every third unemployed cannot be considered a potential personnel reserve due to low qualifications.

According to the Federal State Statistics Service's sample survey, the number of unskilled workers in agriculture decreases faster than the number of skilled workers (Table 2), especially of unskilled female workers. Thus, only a part of low-skilled workers can be returned to work if they agree to undergo training. Villagers with low incomes should be given an opportunity to get the simplest qualification — retraining/training facilities should be located near places of mass settlement, and training should be inexpensive or free, which would allow the retrained to work in the village. This idea fits into the program for the integrated development of Russian rural territories.

Table 2. Changes in the number of workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing depending on qualifications, 2017–2022

Qualification	Employed (over 15 years of age, thousand people)			2021 to 2017, in %		
Qualification	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Qualified	1559	801	758	-14.1	-16.5	-11.3
Unqualified	360	254	106	-16.6	-13.6	-23.1

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Russian territories with the largest number of unemployed with experience in agriculture are Bashkortostan and Kabardino-Balkaria, and these are clearly excess labor resources. In Bashkortostan, from 2017 to 2022, the number of people employed in agriculture decreased by 50%, while the regional share in the national agricultural production — by 0.1%. Given a steady increase in the Russian agricultural production, this means that production in Bashkortostan also grows due to an increase in labor productivity. In Kabardino-Balkaria, a decrease in employment (15%) was accompanied by an increase in production (and in the share of the Russian agricultural production — 0.1%), i.e., formerly employed people are unlikely to find work in agriculture in their region.

Table 3 shows that most regions with the maximum reduction in the number of workers are insignificant in terms of agricultural production volumes, with the exception of Bashkortostan, Orenburg and Penza Regions. In the last two regions, the situation is similar — the reduction in the number of workers in agricultural organizations did not lead to a decrease in production, i.e., these workers stayed in the village without work, which did not affect production. Moreover, the number of vacancies in the Penza Region shows a great need for workers but, apparently, with other qualifications.

Table 3. Regional contributions to the agricultural production and the reduction in the average number of workers $(2017-2022, \text{ in \%}; \text{ regions with the reduction of } 40\% \text{ are compared to } 2017)^{11}$

Regions	Share of regions in the national gross agricultural output, %		Change in the number of workers, 2022–2017/2017, in %	
Russian Federation	100	100	-22	
Jewish Autonomous Region	0.1	0.1	-64	
Magadan Region	0	0	-63	
Khakassia	0.3	0.2	-52	
Novgorod Region	0.5	0.4	-52	
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	0.2	0.1	-51	
Bashkortostan	3.1	3	-50	
Transbaikal Region	0.4	0.3	-48	
Penza Region	1.4	1.9	-43	

^{11.} URL: https://fedstat.ru/indicator/58699, https://fedstat.ru/indicator/43337.

Orenburg Region	2.2	2.2	-43
Khabarovsk Region	0.3	0.2	-41
Kalmykia	0.2	0.3	-40
Murmansk Region	0	0	-40

Territories with the greatest demand for labor have the most developed agriculture: Moscow (10% of jobs in the country), Krasnodar Region (7.6%), Voronezh Region (6.7%), Moscow Region (5.7%), Rostov Region (5%), Belgorod Region (4.7%), and also Stavropol, Lipetsk, Penza and Kursk Regions (according to the Headhunter website). All these regions are so-called 'agroholding territories', with the exception of Moscow, but even here the head offices of agroholdings hire specialists for their regional subsidiaries.

Decreasing attractiveness of agriculture for employment

Russian agriculture has systematically lost its attractiveness for employment: in 2000, 50% of the working-age rural population were employed in agriculture, in 2017 — 19.9%, in 2022 — 18.7%. Moreover, the average annual rate of reduction in the number of employed in agriculture among rural population (1.3%) is higher than the average annual rate of reduction in the rural labor force (0.8%); and a decrease in employment in agriculture is accompanied by an increase in employment in businesses that are located outside the rural settlement (mining, construction, trade, restaurants, finance, etc.): 38% of employed villagers in 2017, 43% — in 2022, i.e., rural residents of working age increasingly prefer non-agricultural employment.

The widely accepted idea that Russians are not inclined to migrate is only partly true as they are not inclined to a radical change of place of residence due to high relocation costs but are quite mobile in case of short-term trips. The migration of rural population is quite widespread (Table 4): villagers are less likely than city dwellers to work in their locality; more than 32% of the employed rural population left their village; 9.3% work far from home.

The situation varies by region: for instance, in Kabardino-Balkaria, 18% of the employed rural population work in other regions, in Bashkortostan — 32%, in Mordovia (with fewer unemployed people with experience in agriculture compared to Bashkortostan) — 39%, not to mention that we do not know how many villagers working for months in other regions participated in the All-Russian Population Census (under the pandemic), i.e., the scale of rural migration is most likely underestimated. The number of internal migrants who leave not only their village but also their region exceeds 200-thousand labor shortage, and this is mostly labor migration and mostly men, even though more unskilled female workers leave agriculture.

Population	Employed (over 15 years of age)	%
Urban and rural population	60,777,212	
Urban population, including those working	46,051,903	100
in their region	43,266,287	94
in their locality	42,365,753	92
other territories (another region, state, etc.)	2,785,616	6
Rural population, including those working	14,725,309	100
in their region	13,351,609	90.7
in their locality	10,005,119	67.9
other territories (another region, state, etc.)	1,373,700	9.3

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According to the official discourse and public discussions, the main goal of the state rural policies should be the same average wage in agriculture as the regional average wage. There are territories that have already reached this goal and even exceeded it, but the average wage in such regions often remains low compared to the national average wage (Table 5). In other regions, the situation is even more complicated (Fig. 1).

Table 5. Regions with wages in agriculture equal or higher than the average regional wage

Regions	In relation to the regional average wage	In relation to the national average wage in agriculture	In relation to the national average wage
Tambov Region	125.2	117.1	75.1
City of Sevastopol	119.7	123	78.9
Orel Region	114	112	71.8
Republic of Mordovia	109.9	105.5	67.7
Belgorod Region	108.5	125.2	80.3
Penza Region	108.2	108.6	69.6
Kursk Region	107.3	119.9	76.9
Lipetsk Region	104.3	117.5	75.3

^{12.} URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020/Tom10 Rabochaya sila.

Bryansk Region	103.1	101.9	65.4
Stavropol Region	102.2	102.7	65.9
Republic of Adygea	101.1	98.4	63.1

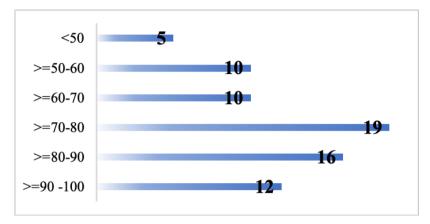


Fig. 1. Number of regions by the ratio of wages in agricultural organizations to wages in the regional economy (in %, intervals)

Thus, excess workers are unlikely to migrate from their regions to work in agriculture and prefer other industries. In agriculture, the output growth exceeded the wage growth only in 2020–2021, while in other years farms had fewer opportunities to increase wages due to the level of productivity (Fig. 2).

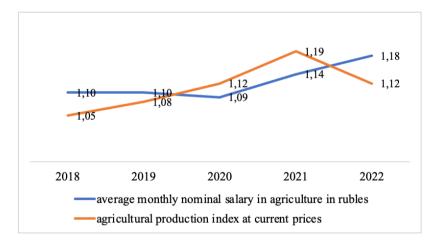
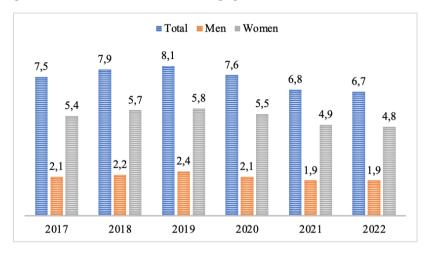


Fig. 2. Output growth and wages in agriculture (in %, compared to the previous year)

The general "framework" of the above-considered problems is the general reduction in workforce (Fig. 3).



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Fig. 3. Workforce (employed + unemployed), in millions

The effect of the 2018 pension reform, which raised the retirement age, disappeared already in 2020, when the labor force began to decline again. Since 2015, fewer children have been born per 1000 rural residents¹³, which means the reduction in rural labor force. When labor supply for the national economy declines, agriculture is at a disadvantage as its labor shortage can be only partially eliminated by increasing the attractiveness of rural life or introducing apprenticeship contracts and agrarian classes. Given the current level and distribution of productive forces in agriculture, there are no internal reserves to eliminate labor shortage, i.e., it will continue to grow, which will negatively affect agricultural production and its diversity. Increasing labor productivity remains the main way for reducing labor shortage for the long term; therefore, measures that limit application of the scientific-technical achievements in agriculture cannot be promising.

To produce cheap products, large agroholdings need cheap workers for seasonal and labor-intensive works in crop production, and such labor migrants will come if the ruble exchange rate rises. The government can compensate for the weakening ruble exchange rate by reducing transaction costs of foreign labor migrants and providing acceptable and safe living conditions if they work in the initial-

Calculated according to the Federal State Statistics Service's data "Fertility, mortality and natural population growth" (2019). URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/12781.

ly chosen agricultural organizations. Russian authorities could take on the costs for identifying locations in need for labor migrants, targeted recruitment with clear wages and normal working and living conditions, protecting migrants from any violence, i.e., would take on that part of costs which migrants previously repaid from their income, which would increase the attractiveness of employment in agriculture with its low salaries. This is the task not only of the Ministry of Agriculture but of many institutions responsible for the state policy and its implementation. And the first necessary step is to assess the extent to which migrants are needed (especially from the post-Soviet space), although the Russian official and media rhetoric emphasizes that the country has necessary resources and can mobilize them.

Thus, there is an obvious need for an adequate monitoring of labor resources. The Federal State Statistics Service should introduce a form for agricultural organizations to record the number of workers hired through outstaffing (in some cases outsourcing) so that the (annual) average can be calculated to make it clear how many foreign labor migrants are needed. To attract seasonal Russian workers, there should be specific job offers with understandable wages and acceptable living conditions even in labor-surplus regions (there are some in Russia) and affordable training in simple specialties, which agroholdings can organize in their regional educational facilities.

Some other recommendations are as follows:

- to locate large livestock complexes according to the rural settlement system; the state should support only those projects that take into account the features of local labor markets;
- to provide state support for small business in organizing all-season activities in order to mitigate seasonal fluctuations in earnings in crop production;
- to reform the secondary vocational education (a network of colleges with a wide range of simple professions, located near rural settlements with high population density; scholarships for students who will work in the village; scholarships for visiting teachers; modern programs and campuses; high-tech equipment) in order to improve the quality of workforce in rural areas and small towns;
- to implement measures for preserving rural self-employment: differentiated fixed payments to social funds for individual entrepreneurs; state support for factories cooperating with (peasant) farms rather than for wine/cognac factories organizing vineyards; simplified requirements and subsidies for entrepreneurs with children if there are no kindergartens (a subsidy of 30–50 thousand rubles per month is a more effective and less expensive measure than transporting children to villages with kindergartens, building and staffing kindergartens);
- to redistribute budget funds in favor of grants for the study of reasons and ways for overcoming the above-mentioned restrictions,

- so that researchers would make recommendations focused on local problems, including in employment;
- to reconsider priorities in the development of industries to ensure both national food security and rural development (for instance, abandon the state support for the export of relatively cheap products and introduce a minimum hourly wage, which would have little impact on food prices but big impact on the attractiveness of agricultural labor, thus, stimulating the use of technologies with increased productivity, which would decrease the unit price of agricultural products).

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Можно ли быстро ликвидировать дефицит рабочей силы в российском сельском хозяйстве?

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Аннотация. В ноябре 2023 года на пленарном заседании Новосибирского агропродовольственного форума первый заместитель российского министра сельского хозяйства Оксана Лут оценила нехватку работников в данной отрасли в 200 тысяч человек 14 , очевидно, подразумевая, прежде всего, крупные сельскохозяйственные организации. По ее мнению, одна из причин такого кадрового дефицита — низкие заработные платы в отрасли: ограниченный платежеспособный спрос на продукцию не позволяет сельскохозяйственным организациям повышать отпускные цены, что и сдерживает рост заработной платы занятых в агропромышленном секторе. Однако численность работников в сельском хозяйстве снижается почти повсеместно — это типичное явление для многих стран. С одной стороны, такое снижение обусловлено ростом производительности труда, и тогда сокращение числа рабочих в агропромышленном комплексе ожидаемый и даже желательный результат технологических нововведений: с другой стороны, многие сельскохозяйственные предприятия страдают от нехватки работников. Соответственно, возникает вопрос: почему в России наблюдается дефицит рабочей силы в сельском хозяйстве. На основе данных Росстата автор обозначает причины сложившейся ситуации, акцентируя внимание на численности занятых в российском сельском хозяйстве, основных факторах дефицита рабочей силы в агропромышленном секторе и народном хозяйстве в целом, возможностях и ограничениях решения этой проблемы за счет трудовой миграции (особенно из постсоветских стран) и безработных на российском рынке труда, региональных различиях по перечисленным показателям и т.д., завершая статью рядом рекомендаций по изменению нынешней ситуации.

Ключевые слова: дефицит рабочей силы, сельское хозяйство, сельскохозяйственные организации, заработная плата, безработица, трудовые мигранты, региональные различия.

^{14.} В Минсельхозе оценили дефицит кадров в сельскохозяйственной отрасли в 200 тысяч человек: из-за низкой оплаты труда нехватка работников наиболее критична, считает первый замминистра сельского хозяйства Оксана Лут. 08.11.2023 // URL: https://tass.ru/ekonomika/19227395.