

## Research Article

# Ways of Improving the Economic Mechanism for the Social Development of Rural Settlements of Mountainous Areas

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## **ABSTRACT.**

The paper deals with the problems of social development of rural settlements in the mountainous territories of the republics of the North Caucasus.

It is substantiated that modern social policy is formed under the influence of many complex systemic factors that are associated with the cardinal transformation of the economic and social structure of rural territorial settlements, the increasing role of environmental and innovation components, increasing requirements for food quality and environmental protection. The need to take into account these factors determines a new content of social policy for the development of rural areas.

**Key words:** economic crisis, depressive mountainous areas, territorial asymmetry of rural settlements, economic mechanism, alignment, sustainable socio-economic development.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The socio-economic problems of the regions of the Russian Federation, burdened by sanctions from Western countries and the US, have become much more sensitive, which is reflected, among other things, by the uneven socio-economic indicators of the economies of the subjects of the Russian Federation.

The current socio-economic situation of the North Caucasus republics does not correspond to the declared plans and promises of the Russian Government. For the depressed republics, the common feature is the unevenness of the structural links in the regional socio-economic system, which increases the social and economic territorial and sectoral asymmetry that carries the real threat of acute crises in the social

and economic life of Russia. All this requires the development of an effective mechanism for the social development of rural settlements in mountainous areas.

## **Methodology of research**

The object of the study is the problems of equalization and balance of regional socio-economic systems on the basis of the development of a mechanism for sustainable social development of depressed rural settlements in mountainous areas. Various methods of economic research have been applied: comparative and logical analysis, functional and systemic approach, correlation and regression analysis.

### Results of the study

In the course of the study, we found that the problems of sustainable development have a pronounced territorial character; they spread to the national regional and municipal levels. In recent years, the center of research of economists from different countries has become the balance of socioeconomic systems, in addition to their sustainability. The uneven development of the territories of the Russian Federation is partly caused by their geographical location and natural and climatic conditions. So to speak, this is objective factors. At the same time, today these factors do not come to the forefront, but factors concerning the development of transport infrastructure, and formation of market relations in the regional economic system, etc. [2, 5].

Proceeding from the fact that the state support of social infrastructure in rural settlements is aimed at its preservation and development, and is formed not only from the federal but also from regional budgets, the leadership of the depressed republics of the North Caucasus in recent years has been carrying out various activities, including directly with visiting all areas, especially mountainous areas [3, 7, 9]. Particular emphasis is placed on creating conditions for stable financing of social infrastructure, which is an important and starting point in this situation. To solve this problem, there are different mechanisms, including:

- Fixation of the minimum amounts of federal, regional and local budgets intended for the needs of education, health, recreation, culture, etc.;
- Application of targeted taxes on financing of social infrastructure branches.

There are many proposals of a populist nature, calling for new additional taxes. However, it is practically impossible to introduce additional taxes in the prevailing pre-crisis situation accompanied by a budget deficit of all levels.

Moreover, after all, the existing established cost standards set out for each region the guaranteed total funding for the social infrastructure [1, 4, 8].

In our opinion, it is right to develop the system of indirect financing of the social infrastructure

through greater differentiation of the tax policy being implemented (for example, extending tax benefits for non-profit organizations, etc.).

One of the means for expanding the sources of income generation in rural areas is the diversification of the rural economy. This approach forces entrepreneurs to go beyond the core business and focus on creating multi-profile production. We believe that this form of organization is the most important and successful part of the modern economy of rural areas, because it exerts maximum influence on the division of labor system, competition, and production efficiency. The socio-economic effectiveness of diversification of production in rural areas is that it allows much more use of all types of resources taking into account the natural and climatic features of the territory, increase the incomes of villagers, reduce the risks of loss of profit under adverse economic conditions, in particular, weather conditions, ensuring participation in the intersectoral competition [6, 11]. Diversification of production expands the possibilities of villagers to engage in alternative employment.

In our opinion, in the republics of the North Caucasus where conditions of land shortage dominate, it should be necessary to adhere to the ecosocial development with the preservation of traditional multipurpose peasant holdings of mountain people, taking into account the national and regional specifics of the territory.

It is necessary to form a unified national strategy for socio-economic development of mountainous areas aimed at increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, preserving the environment and the natural landscape and improving the quality of life of the villagers.

In our view, the core of this strategy should be the policy and mechanisms for attracting young people to rural labor, for without this, rural settlements of mountainous areas will not have a future.

One of the factors in the implementation of this strategy may be, in our opinion, support for the production of local products (such as animal breeds, various species of vegetables, etc.) that are more adapted to specific weather and climatic conditions and mountain landscape

features. Local production, thanks to painstaking and hard physical labor, had acclimatized there over many centuries and for this reason it needs less external intervention than others. Many types of local products are more resistant than crops and species from other territories; they also play a key role in preserving biodiversity, traditions of mountain peoples, food culture, etc. One of the types of rural activities diversification in the mountainous areas of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic is the development of agro-tourism: there are already several agro-tourism centers in the villages of Zaragizh, Babugent, Nizhniy Chegem, Bulungu, Tegenekli. Agro-tourism for the inhabitants of these villages is not an additional, but the main source of income, allowing the entire household to maintain.

We are convinced that, in the conditions of the agrarian sector crisis and the degradation of rural areas, agro-tourism should become one of the components from the socio-economic development program of the region and facilitate the transfer of a part of the villagers from the production sphere to the services sector, because there is an excellent base for it in the mountainous territories of the republic: waterfalls, beautiful landscapes, ecological gastronomy, as well as unlimited opportunities to participate in the production of various food products. Agro-tourism also allows the effective use of mostly non-expensive resources, and first of all, a complex of the entire historical, natural and socio-cultural heritage; it forms a certain microeconomic effect due to investments in the improvement of existing assets (houses, homestead lands, farm buildings, etc.), which ultimately increases their market value and improves the quality of life. In the municipal authorities of the Cherek, Elbrus and Chegem districts, agro-tourism is already seen as the most important systemic point of growth of local populations and, consequently, as a factor in the sustainable development of mountainous areas.

In a number of high-mountainous settlements, Verkhnyaya Balkaria, Bulungu, Lechinkai, and others, small enterprises have been built for deep processing of agricultural raw materials on the basis of wasteless

technology. In Kashkhatau, a network of enterprises for processing milk, processing and utilization of wastes from slaughtering birds, cattle, food by-products; production of a wide range of fresh and frozen food products of high quality have been built.

In accordance with the Federal target program "Development of domestic and incoming tourism in the Russian Federation (2011-2018)", a group of regional tourist and recreational clusters is planned to be established in the South of Russia, including southern clusters "Kezenoy-Am" in Chechnya, "Zaragizh" in Kabardino-Balkaria, "All-season tourist center" in Ingushetia and "Gate of Lago-Naki" in Adygea, and others.

Thus, in accordance with the plan for the creation of the auto-tourist cluster "Zaragizh", more than 700 million rubles from the federal budget have been allocated, and also more than 7 hectares of land have been presented in a picturesque area where an ethnographic village, a restaurant, a health-improving complex, and an artificial pond with beaches and the possibility of fishing will be built.

To ensure the transport accessibility of the cluster in 2015, the construction of the highway connecting the Lower and Upper Blue Lakes will be completed, a part of the road will be reconstructed along the route VolnyAul-Hasanya-Gerpegez, necessary work was done for a normal access to the thermal spring in the rural settlement of Aushiger. In 2017, in accordance with the cluster project, construction works will be carried out for building of treatment facilities and the laying of utilities, as well as bank protection works on the river Zhemtala.

It is necessary to create conditions for openness, publicity of financing the social infrastructure facilities, managing them in the process of agreeing and approving the local budget. Of course, this is associated with the need for a specific objective justification of the relevant articles of budget expenditures and lobbying the positions of these industries for obtaining budgetary funds.

In our opinion, it is also necessary to modify the principles and priorities of state financing of social infrastructure branches.

In municipal entities of mountainous areas, it is necessary to pass to the functional and targeted principle of building social programs. Such an approach will help to neutralize the possibility of "sputtering" the funds sent and in fact to produce functional financing for social infrastructure facilities on the basis of targeted programs.

In 2014 in Kabardino-Balkaria, municipal programs were developed for all rural mountainous areas. In particular, on November 24, 2014, for the Elbrus district the municipal program "Sustainable Development of Rural Areas of the Elbrus Municipal District in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic for 2015 - 2017 and for the period until 2020" was approved.

The purpose of the Program is to create comfortable living conditions in the rural area of the Elbrus region; activating the participation of citizens living in rural areas; and formation of a positive attitude towards rural areas and rural way of life.

The program will contribute to the stable social and economic development of the rural areas of the Elbrus municipal district, to the achievement of employment of rural population, and to raising its standard of living.

The main tasks are: to increase the level of integrated development of rural areas by social and engineering infrastructure facilities, cultural and leisure institutions and plate structures for sport facilities.

In accordance with the Program approved, there were allocated 264,700.00 thousand rubles for the mountainous area, including: 145585.00 thousand rubles - funds from the federal budget; 84625,00 thousand rubles - funds from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic; 26470,00 thousand rubles - funds from local budgets of rural settlements of the Elbrus municipal district; 8020,00 thousand rubles - off-budget funds.

Of the total funding of the Program until 2020, it is envisaged to use for development in rural areas of:

- Network of sports facilities with plate structure, funds in the amount of 34,500.00 thousand rubles, including: from the federal budget - 18,975.00 thousand rubles, from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic - 12,075.00 thousand rubles, from local budgets of rural settlements of the Elbrus municipal district - 3450.00 thousand rubles;
- Networks of cultural and leisure facilities in the amount of 150,000.00 thousand rubles, including: from the federal budget - 82,500.00 thousand rubles, from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic - 52,500.00 thousand rubles, from local budgets of rural settlements of Elbrus municipal district - 15,000.00 thousand rubles;
- For reconstruction of water supply systems with a length of 31.5 km, funds in the amount of 66,100.00 thousand rubles, including: from the federal budget - 36,355.00 thousand rubles, from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic - 16,525.00 thousand rubles, from local budgets of rural settlements of the Elbrus municipal district - 6610.00 thousand rubles, from off-budget sources - 6610.0 thousand rubles;
- Reconstruction and construction of gas pipelines with a length of 6.5 km in the amount of 14,100.00 thousand rubles, including: from the federal budget - 7755.00 thousand rubles, from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic - 3525.00 thousand rubles, from local budgets of rural settlements of the Elbrus municipal district - 1410.00 thousand rubles, from extrabudgetary sources - 1410.0 thousand rubles.

The implementation of the Program provides for putting into operation of 13,296 thousand square meters of sports facilities with plate structure; 750 places of cultural and leisure institutions, commissioning of local water pipelines with a length of 31.5 km, and gas pipelines with a length of 6.5 km [10].

The solution of problems on creation of conditions for sustainable development of rural areas assumes activation of human potential of the people living in these territories, formation of an institution for social activity and mobility of the population.

We believe that this program was to be supplemented with activities on:

1. Preservation of youth in the countryside;
2. Development of livestock breeding based on the restoration of breeding business and the effective use of the potential of the mountain pastures in the Elbrus region;
3. Stimulating the development of small forms of businesses (expansion in the Elbrus region of a network of agricultural consumer cooperatives, organization of enterprises for deep processing of poultry and livestock);
4. Development of intensive gardening and ecological vegetable production;
5. Technical equipment and re-equipment of agricultural producers, technological modernization of food and processing industries;
6. Improvement of financial and credit mechanisms;
7. Regulation of the agro-food market;
8. Innovative, information-consulting and staffing support for economic complexes.

The implementation of municipal programs for the development of rural areas involves improvement of the living conditions for the population of each locality. In particular, for each municipality, five to ten different events (such as the construction of roads, water pipes, the reconstruction of schools, cultural centers, hospitals, bath and laundry facilities, etc.) were scheduled and approved for execution.

Currently, a number of activities in this area are realized through the implementation of municipal targeted programs in the mountainous areas of the republic. For example, in the Chegem district, special emphasis is being placed on the implementation of the national project "Education" for 2015-2018, in the Elbrus region much attention is paid to the target program for demographic development for 2015-2020; and in the Cherek region for 2015-2018 the program development of preschool education dominates.

In the regions, work was intensified to introduce mechanisms for the competitive placement of state orders in the field of art and culture. For 2015-2016, it is planned to raise additional funds through targeted loans distributed among

residents of the districts, as well as economic entities located in municipal districts.

All this can be organized on the basis of the following principles of building an effective regional policy in the field of financing the social infrastructure facilities:

1. It is necessary to achieve a clear delineation of the functional responsibilities between the federal, regional and local budgets, and carefully calculate their capabilities and reserves.
2. Formation of the target tax base of local government bodies, impossibility of its use by higher levels of state management.
3. Control in order to contain the outstripping growth of social expenditures over the growth rate of the republican economic system.
4. Social control over the implementation of social expenditures and the achievement of the set social and economic results.

The process of elaborating special requirements for the development of social infrastructure branches should be associated with the improvement of the regional budget policy, which includes a number of aspects:

- a) In the education system - to preserve and develop preschool institutions and make them accessible to the rural population, to improve the quality of education, to form a new progressive material and technical base;
- b) In the field of healthcare - to increase the accessibility and quality of health services for residents of mountain villages; to strengthen the preventive focus of protecting the health of the population, first of all, women in childbirth; to form a highly qualified personnel potential, to organize specialized and social control over the protection of children's health, to equip first aid and obstetric centers and other medical institutions with the necessary modern diagnostics and medical equipment;
- c) In the field of culture and art - to find funds from local budgets for additional payment to local cultural workers; take measures to ensure the participation of villagers in public and cultural life, to resume various creative circles, to ensure the safety of objects of historical and cultural heritage;
- d) In the field of social protection of the population - to organize social control over the

implementation of state social guarantees, to improve mechanisms for the implementation of compulsory and voluntary social insurance, to organize targeted assistance to low-income citizens;

e) In the field of communication and information systems - to increase the number of television programs available for receiving in the mountainous areas, expand the number of telephone and cellular networks, and to introduce high-quality information services.

There are the following measures among the priority directions of sustainable development of rural areas in mountain regions:

-To improve the level of development of social infrastructure and the level of engineering development of rural settlements;

-To improve the living conditions of the rural population through the provision of grants;

-To increase the amount of employment and incomes of the rural population through the development of traditional agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

It is necessary to develop a set of measures aimed at increasing the attractiveness of living and employment status in rural areas, including:

-Improvement of the living conditions of the rural population;

-Increasing the level and quality of engineering development of rural settlements;

-Development of the social infrastructure in rural areas and improvement of the cultural and recreational conditions of the rural population, including the development of leisure for youth;

-Increase of accessibility and quality of primary health care, development of physical culture and sports;

-Increase of accessibility and quality of education in rural areas; create conditions for attracting and securing qualified teachers, including young specialists, in the countryside.

Measures to stimulate social development should be implemented as a result of co-financing from the federal and republican budgets, as well as attraction of extra-budgetary sources.

In order to ensure the participation of subjects of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (economic entities, local administrations, non-profit

organizations) in competitions for grants provided from the federal budget for the implementation of socially and economically significant regional projects (programs) and sustainable development of rural areas, the republican budget of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic provides 93 million rubles for implementation of the Program.

It is also planned to subsidize interest rates on loans attracted by citizens who keep personal subsidiary plots, peasant farms and participate in agricultural consumer cooperatives to develop alternative employment (development of public catering, agrarian tourism, sports, etc.).

The natural and climatic conditions of Kabardino-Balkaria, the situation in Russian and republican markets determine the prospects for the development in the republic of industrial processing of meat, milk, production of canned fruits and vegetables and bottling of mineral water.

The purpose of the measures for the development of the food and processing industry is to increase output by attracting investments, creating high-tech and competitive production and achieving on this basis dynamic economic growth, and increasing the number of employed in the industry.

The following is planned for the solution of the set tasks in the processing industry of the agro-industrial complex of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic:

a) Construction in 2015 - 2017 in the Maisky municipal district of a new cannery which is a subsidiary of "Agro+" LLC with a capacity of 135 millions of standard cans;

-Equipping of the company with new equipment made in Italy for the production of canned green peas, beans, and sugar corn, put up in tin cans;

-Attraction and development of investments in the amount of 2,100 million rubles;

-Creation of 100 new jobs;

b) Construction in 2017 in the territory of OJSC Terekalmaz of a new canning plant with an annual capacity of 6 millions of standard cans:

-Attraction and development of investments in the amount of 120.0 million rubles;

-Creation of 68 new jobs;

-Achievement of the designed capacity by the enterprise in 2018.

It is planned to modernize the production of JSC "Urukhn Canning Plant", LLC "Cannery "Lesken", "Tersky Cannery", and "Nalchik Canning Plant" with attraction of investments for the amount of 200 million rubles.

The solution of the set tasks will bring the annual production of canned fruits and vegetables in 2018 to 230 million standard cans (162 percent to the level of 2014).

Due to the implementation of the project for the construction of a new milk processing shop in "Nalchik Dairy plant" LLC and the production of a wide range of whole milk products in modern packaging, the volume of processing by the enterprise of milk supplied from the inhabitants of rural settlements will increase threefold and amount to 300 tons.

There are practically no large enterprises for industrial meat processing in the republic. As a result, in 2010 only 3.9 thousand tons of meat (in live weight) were processed in the industry out of 47,700 tons of livestock and poultry meat in live weight in the republic (Nalchik meat processing plant in the early 1990s processed 35 thousand tons a year).

Today, more than 95 percent of sausages and semi-finished meat products sold in the meat market of the republic are supplied from other regions. This problem will be solved by the construction at LLC "Kabbalkagroleasing" of a new meat processing plant focused on ensuring the needs of the republic's population in quality meat products. The construction of the meat-packing plant was started in 2014. At the end of 2017, the enterprise is expected to reach its full capacity to process 100 cattle per day.

Poultry and poultry meat processing intensively develop in the republic. In addition to successfully operating LLC Veles-Agro, OJSC Agrogroup Baksansky Broiler plans to begin in 2018 construction of a meat-packing plant for deep processing of 32 thousand tons a year of poultry meat and a shop for the production of meat and bone meal. The project cost is 368 million rubles. This will bring the annual volume of meat processing in live weight to

201,000 in 2018, up to 50,000 tons, which is 12.5 times higher than in 2006.

One of the main directions for development of the food industry in the mountainous territories of the republic is the production of mineral and drinking water.

In the territory of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic there are more than 100 springs with a unique composition of mineral and drinking waters.

Bottling of mineral waters is mastered and dynamically developed in JSC "Khabazsky" (the village of Khabazin Zolsky district) and "Shkhelda" (in Elbrus district) which plan in the future to increase production capacity in several times.

The projected annual volume of mineral and drinking water bottling in 2017 will be 170 million half liters (175 percent to the level of 2007).

In accordance with the changes introduced into the federal legislation regulating the production and turnover of ethyl alcohol and alcoholic products, since 2010, technological equipment has been functioning in the alcohol industry of the regional agro-industrial complex at distilleries in rural areas of the republic, where the waste of alcohol production (barda) is completely processed into dry concentrated fodder (village Sarmakovo, OJSC "Sarmakovsky distillery", village Altud, village Chernaya Rechka, etc.)

LLC "Alkasar" builds a new plant to fully process 400 tons of post-alcohol barda per day with the release of 20 tons of fodder yeast. LLC "MoyaStolitsa" in 2018 plans to commission a new plant with imported equipment for the complete processing of barda to dry fodder yeast with the output 300 tons of the finished product per day.

Dry concentrated fodders obtained during the processing of barda, successfully replace forage grains, significantly reducing the cost of feeding farm animals and, accordingly, reducing the cost of production.

The total output of alcohol barda with the maximum utilization of capacities of 12 alcohol plants in the republic is 6800 cubic meters per day. Processing this amount will yield about 743

tons of dry concentrated fodders, providing 116 thousand cattles with a daily requirement for concentrated feed.

The installation of this equipment at the distilleries in the republic will allow fulfilling all environmental requirements for alcohol production, and will also provide a source of additional profit. The volume of investments will make 415 million rubles. 180 - 200 new jobs will be created in rural areas where these plants are located.

To implement measures on development of the food and processing industry for the period from 2015 to 2018, it is necessary to find investment in the amount of 5563.4 million rubles, including:

- Own funds of business entities - 1255.8 million rubles;
- Credits of commercial banks - 4552.6 million rubles;
- Other sources of financing - 75.0 million rubles (subsidies for reimbursement of bank rates);
- Granting from the republican budget of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic in the amount of 81 million rubles for reimbursement of a part of expenses on loans attracted.

At the same time, about 2 thousand new jobs will be created. The level of the average monthly salary will increase to 13 thousand rubles, it is planned to increase production volumes at a level of 5% annually, which will increase the production of food and processing industry in 2018 to 20 billion rubles, which is 4.5 times more than in 2010.

An important factor contributing to the implementation of the above activities will be the use in the agrarian-oriented region of effective mechanisms and instruments of state stimulation of investment activities in the agro-industrial complex, especially in the food and processing industries, including:

- Subsidizing of % rates of investment loans;
- Granting tax holidays at the initial stages of investment projects.

We propose the following measures to expand the sources of income for the rural population of mountainous areas:

1. Diversification of the economic activity of the rural economy through the creation of

multifunctional production in the sphere of agricultural entrepreneurship, consumer cooperation, peasant farms and personal subsidiary plots;

2. Development in rural areas of non-traditional mountainous areas, and activities, primarily agro-tourism, eco-tourism, rural hotel business, revival of the national crafts of mountaineers;
3. Attracting young people to rural work due to new jobs in the social sphere, at the infrastructure facilities of the agro-industrial complex, and agro-tourism;
4. Increase in the effectiveness of self-employment and expanding the forms and methods of household employment in private subsidiary farming, especially in high-mountainous areas which are difficult to access.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is substantiated that without serious state support in mountainous areas, municipal entities will not be able to fully participate in the ongoing necessary socio-economic reforms aimed at meeting the living needs of the villagers residing on their territory.

Based on the analysis and assessment of the socio-economic development potential of rural areas in the mountainous regions of the North Caucasus Federal District, indicators of the sustainability of the socio-economic development of rural settlements in a typical North Caucasus region have been identified using the example of a typical republic, the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic.

The need for strengthening the regulatory role of the Russian state in national policy by means of indicative planning, forecasting and programming based on the improvement of the system of scientifically grounded indicators and indicators is evident.

We are convinced that the implementation of our proposals to overcome the critical situation in the sphere of social development of rural settlements in mountainous areas will allow us to implement a set of interrelated measures to create an institutional environment for the innovative development of the social infrastructure of rural settlements in mountainous areas, and ultimately, to

consolidate the youth without which these territories do not have a future.

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