



PAPER ID: 11A14E



## PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS OF RUSSIAN AGRICULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 10 March 2020  
Received in revised form 22  
May 2020  
Accepted 03 July 2020  
Available online 05 August  
2020

#### Keywords:

Agricultural sociology;  
Rural sociology;  
Environmental culture;  
Nutrition sociology;  
Family farming; Opinion  
survey; Focus group;  
Agricultural trend areas

### ABSTRACT

The article presents the study results of the current state in Russia of such a special sociological theory as agricultural sociology with a focus on the emerging agricultural sociology in Russia of the XXI century. This research identifies the main trends and problems of modern agricultural sociology in Russia.

The research method is a complex research strategy that includes theoretical methods, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research. The theoretical methods used include a systematic approach, comparative-historical analysis, and a hypothetical-deductive method. In order to study the trends of modern agricultural sociology in Russia, the authors conducted a sociological study in the universities of Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, in the fall of 2018, using such quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research as document analysis, written (questionnaire) survey of respondents, and organization of respondents work in a focus group.

**Disciplinary:** Agriculture and Rural Sociology, Rural Development.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the basis of the life of any society, as the agricultural sector provides food security of the country and the reproduction of a healthy population as the main social and cultural resource of any society. Of all the sciences that study various aspects of agricultural production, management of the agro-industrial complex and social processes in the agricultural sector, a special place is occupied by such a special sociological theory as agricultural sociology.

Agricultural sociology in Russia experienced a dramatic history in the XX century. In contrast to industrial sociology, the development of agricultural sociology in the 30s of the last century was artificially interrupted, and scientists (N.D. Kondratiev (2009), etc.) were repressed. In this connection, there is still some lag in the study of agricultural problems in Russian sociology from

other countries. Agricultural sociology in Russia today is at the stage of formation, accumulation of facts, development of methodological approaches to the analysis of agriculture as a multidimensional social organism.

The scientific novelty of the study of the development of agricultural sociology in Russia is determined by the fact that there is no systematic approach to understanding this special sociological theory in the scientific literature. The subject field and functions of agricultural sociology, its main directions, and cross-cutting problems have not been sufficiently studied.

The object of the research is the emerging agricultural sociology in Russia of the XXI century.

The subject of the research is the subject field and functions of agrarian sociology.

The purpose of the study is to identify trends and problems in the development of modern agricultural sociology in Russia.

## 2 LITERATURE

The importance of studying the problems included in the subject field of agricultural sociology is recognized by scientists all over the world. Among the International sociological associations and unions created in the twentieth century, Rural Sociological Society (RSS) is an American Association of rural sociology, established in 1937 as a section of the American sociological society. The Association's mission is to promote rural sociology to improve the quality of rural life, communities, and the environment.

For the exchange of research data and effective scientific communication in RSS, the journal “Sociologia Ruralis” (“rural sociology”) was created, which brings together the international sociological community, politicians and specialists engaged in the analysis of agricultural problems at the national and global levels, which aims to develop sociological theory and agricultural sociology on the basis of intersubject links and cross-cultural studies of globalist transformations of rural territories (Blaginina et al., 2019).

“Sociologia Ruralis” covers social and scientific research on rural areas and related issues with an emphasis on social, political and cultural aspects of rural development, discusses projects for the rational use of natural resources, environmental protection, concepts and programs for the development of food security, and prospects for changing the living conditions of rural areas. Michael Carolan (2020) highlights the main problems of rural sociology abroad: human ecology, food security, natural resource management, environmental costs, and challenges of consumer society in an article with the program title “the Revival of rural sociology: involvement, acceptance, and influence for an indefinite time”.

Among the key recent studies on the sociology of nutrition that we relied on in our study, we note the following: a comparative analysis of food consumers of different age groups, implemented in three markets-in the United States, Great Britain and Germany, conducted by scientists at Texas Tech University and Heisenheim University (Ghvanidze, 2016); a study of factors affecting the purchase of environmentally friendly products undertaken in 2014 in Lithuania by scientists from Vilnius University (Kavaleuski & Ubersite, 2014); description of the decision-making model for choosing environmentally friendly products (Chen et al., 2018) and others (e.g., Wided (2010)).

In the study of farming as a special social group as a trend in agricultural sociology, we took into account the results of a study by Canadian scientists of the social structure of a modern family farm, which interviewed 36 farmers in Canada using expert interviews and determined the place of family

farming in food policy (Kelly et al., 2019). The study of family farming in Cuba allowed us to identify the factors that dictate the urgent need to develop family farming in this country on the basis of agroecological practices (Rodriguez et al., 2018). The significance of the researchers' work is to develop theoretical and practical recommendations for the optimal functioning of peasant (farm) farms in modern conditions.

In carrying out the study, the study of continuity and traditions in family farming, conducted at University of Palmas (Brazil) (de Lima & Yukikleya, 2018), and the study of the ecological consciousness of the young generation in the universities of Yekaterinburg (Russia) (Tikhomirova et al., 2018), became important for us.

The study of trends in modern agricultural sociology in Russia is based on the theoretical heritage of N.I. Vavilov and other researchers (Blaginin et al., 2019).

Research on agricultural sociology in Russia today is mostly point-based and local. The Novosibirsk school of sociologists, under the leadership of T.I. Zaslavskaya (2010), was engaged in migration of rural population. Others also worked in this direction.

An interesting issue is the time budget and rural lifestyle. V. Patrushev (2010) and others collected empirical material on this issue.

M. Sidorova (2010) and others are engaged in studying the material well-being and living standards of the rural population.

Scientific interest in the context of the study of social well-being and social mood of farmers is represented by works performed by T.A. Zaslavskaya, and others (Babashkin, 2015).

Of particular importance for the study of farming as a social community was the idea of A.V. Chayanov (2010) that the family-labor peasant economy is the main socio-economic and organizational-legal form of agricultural development in Russia. Chayanov (2010) considered the family-labor peasant economy as a special socio-economic and cultural way of life: "the family-labor peasant economy is a natural economy at its core, its goal is to meet the needs of members of the peasant family, and not to extract maximum profit. The needs of family members and their number determine the volume of agricultural production" (Zhuravleva et al., 2018).

Problems of development of peasant farms in certain regions and countries are considered in the works of S. I. Gryadov (2010) and others. The researchers identify the main directions and conceptual approaches for the development of small-scale farming in rural areas in various regions of Russia, including peasant (farm) farms (Wided, 2010). Some aspects of farming as a social group are considered in modern agricultural sociology: the works of Artemov (2010) and others. However, issues of farming are traditionally studied in Russian agricultural sociology in the context of other problems of the rural population and rural territories (Trubilin et al., 2018).

Thus, the analysis of the literature shows that not enough attention is paid to systematic research of trends in agricultural sociology in Russia.

### 3 STUDY DETAILS

To study the trends in agricultural sociology in modern Russia, a comprehensive research strategy was chosen that includes both theoretical and empirical methods of sociological research. The theoretical methods used include a systematic approach, comparative-historical analysis, and a hypothetical-deductive method. In order to study the trends of modern agricultural sociology in

Russia, the authors conducted a sociological study in universities in the fall of 2018. Yekaterinburg using such quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research as document analysis, written (questionnaire) survey of respondents, and organization of respondents' work in a focus group (Vershinin, 2018). A quantitative research method was used: a written (questionnaire) survey of students of the Ural state agrarian University.

To select respondents, a multi-stage selection was conducted for the University, a group of specialties, and study groups. As a result, the number of respondents included students studying in specialties that train specialists for agriculture, as well as for the production and processing of food products, quality management, commodity science and examination of food and non-food products, for technology and organization of public catering, as well as accounting and auditing at enterprises of the agro-industrial complex. The selected specialties allow us to consider the interviewed students as representatives of the expert group within the youth audience.

According to their socio-demographic characteristics, the 240 respondents were distributed as follows: men made up 70%; women 30%. By age and training programs, the respondents were divided into the following subgroups: 16-18 years old (students of the agricultural College) 15.8%; 19-23 years (students enrolled in undergraduate programs) 58.3%; 24-30 years (students enrolled in master's programs) 25.9%.

At the second stage of the study of trends in modern agricultural sociology in Russia, the method of qualitative sociological research was applied – a focus group was organized with undergraduate students of the Ural state agrarian University. the focus group Method was used to clarify the contradictory attitude of respondents to family farming revealed during the first stage of the study.

The main purpose of the study was to find the priority areas of agricultural sociology in Russia.

Agricultural sociology is an integrative branch of sociological knowledge that studies problems and trends in the development of agriculture and rural areas, as well as socio-cultural characteristics of agricultural communities and the main subjects of agricultural production. Due to the multi-dimensionality and specificity of agricultural production, this special sociological theory cannot but rely on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the achievements of a number of sub-sociological theories and branches of scientific knowledge and, first of all, rural sociology, nutrition sociology, family sociology, educational sociology, peasant studies, agricultural philosophy, digital economy, cultural studies, history, social ecology, crop production, animal husbandry, and a number of other areas of social science and agricultural science.

The subject of modern agricultural sociology, in our opinion, are: subjects of agricultural production-peasants (farmers) as a special social community; social relations that exist in the village (village) as a special type of settlement; features and culture of agricultural labor and the specifics of traditional rural communities; structural and stratification processes of rural territories; agricultural policy and its consequences; environmental safety of agriculture and food; human ecology; rural marketing and logistics; nutrition as a social and cultural phenomenon and process; the history of agricultural sociology.

Among the functions of agricultural sociology, the main ones are theoretical and methodological (related to the development of conceptual approaches to the analysis of the essence and consequences of agricultural policy and the state's ability to preserve the peasantry as a special social group of society); prognostic (implemented through forecasting the consequences of certain administrative decisions in the agricultural sphere); social engineering (design of technologies for effective

agricultural production and models of "farming" of the remaining representatives of the peasantry as a social community).

The core of agricultural sociology as an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge is, in our opinion, rural sociology (or as it is often called – rural sociology). The subject field of rural sociology (or rural sociology) includes the study of patterns and trends in the development of rural areas, social relations, problems of work and life, rural culture, behavior and mentality of the peasantry, which are determined by the working conditions and the nature of the production activities of the main subjects of agricultural production. Such a broad problem reduces the need to distinguish from agricultural sociology such a direction as the sociology of the peasantry, at least in our country.

It is obvious that the development of rural areas can not be considered without understanding the essence and directions of the state's agricultural policy in certain periods of national history. An example that confirms this statement is the fact that only in the XX century, the Russian village was repeatedly subjected to reform and severe socio-economic transformations that led to the process of "raskrestyanivaniya" the bulk of agricultural producers. However, the most common term in Russian sociology is rural sociology, which, in our opinion, is not quite correct, since it is only a part (though Central) of agricultural sociology.

This position, in our opinion, is related to the social significance of the village for Russia as a territory where the majority of the population lives and is engaged in agricultural production, as well as to contrast the social processes taking place in the city and the countryside. If the share of rural residents is decreasing worldwide due to the intensification and technologization of the agricultural sector, in our country, due to the delay in innovative equipment of the agricultural sector of the economy and other social reasons, the share of the rural population remains residual high in comparison with international trends occurring in developed countries (Staroverov, 2010). We consider the second reason to be the emerging nature of rural sociology, which is at the stage of institutionalization and entry into the world community of agricultural sociologists.

The name and projects of scientists included in the work of research committees operating in the period between sociological congresses held under the auspices of the International sociological Association are a trend for understanding the current trends in the development of a special sociological theory.

One of the 55 permanent research committees is the "Sociology of agriculture and nutrition" ("Agricultural Sociology and Nutrition Sociology"), and the most discussed issues are environmental design in agriculture and innovation in the field of nutrition. Food security is linked by scientists to the entire agricultural chain, technological and social innovations: from Agroecology, organic agriculture and bio-agriculture to food consumption culture and environmental education of young people as an innovative group of society.

In the modern sense, nutrition sociology studies the complex of social problems and social relations in the process of production, distribution, exchange and consumption of food products and factors that affect their quality. Nutrition sociology is a special sociological theory that is based on the theory, methodology, research principles, and problems of agricultural sociology, and is an integral part of it.

"Foodstudies" or research in the field of food has become traditional for European and American sociologists, while in domestic science, the first steps are being taken in this direction, and



the sociology of nutrition as an integral part of agricultural sociology is still at the stage of formation and institutionalization.

### **3.1 MODERN AGRICULTURAL SOCIOLOGY IN RUSSIA**

Let's briefly focus on the trend research areas of modern agricultural sociology in Russia:

#### **3.1.1 SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE AND CONSUMER CULTURE**

Such studies have been conducted since the beginning of the XXI century. The formation of ecological culture as a certain level of development of ecological consciousness and ecological behavior is well studied in foreign and domestic sociology. But the influence of environmental awareness on the behavior of different consumer groups and their food choices is a new topic for our agricultural sociology.

The analysis of the data obtained in the course of the study conducted by the authors allowed us to draw a conclusion about the contradictory environmental patterns of behavior and ambivalence of the environmental consciousness of students (Zhuravleva et al., 2019), which affects their attitudes regarding the purchase of environmentally friendly food. In the course of the study, we identified gaps in the cognitive, axiological, and activity levels of the respondents environmental behavior.

#### **3.1.2 SOCIOLOGY OF NUTRITION**

The study of nutrition as a social, cultural and environmental phenomenon is another popular research area of our time. Food consumption is determined by the culture and practice of food production, that is, it is included in the unified social process of agricultural production, distribution and consumption of food. Thus, the sociology of nutrition is inseparable from agricultural sociology, being integrated into its subject field. With the world's rapidly growing population, agriculture and the food industry are the most important areas that ensure food and food security on a global scale.

Research on this trend direction of modern agricultural sociology in our country is just beginning. Note that this emerging field of agricultural sociology is most open to interdisciplinary influences. In this regard, an interesting study on the organization of the food market of agricultural organic products in the Ural region, conducted by Ruschitskaya et al. (2018). to develop scientifically-based recommendations on the organization of the food market of agricultural organic products and state regulation of socio-economic relations that are formed in the process of its formation and development.

Despite the fact that the study of Ruschitskaya (2018) was conducted on Economics, it contains aspects related to the sociology of nutrition, for example, identifying the dynamics and main trends in the development of the food market of agricultural organic products in the Sverdlovsk region. O. A. Ruschitskaya (2018) conducted a sociological study of consumer preferences (expectations) in the domestic food market of agricultural organic products, and also developed a detailed socio-economic and psychological portrait of consumers of organic food products (Astratova et al., 2016). The author suggests forming the internal market of organic food products based on consumer preferences (expectations).

#### **3.1.3 SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF FARMING AS A SPECIAL SOCIAL GROUP**

Among the most relevant areas of agricultural sociology is the study of farming as a subject of production of environmentally friendly products for the population, the design of alternative food networks, agrologistics and agromarketing that reduce the distance between producers and

consumers.

In the situation of continuing economic sanctions and import substitution of agricultural products, as well as setting the task of creating high-tech export-oriented enterprises, sociological studies of problems and prospects for the development of small forms of agricultural production, which include farms, are becoming relevant.

Based on the ideas of A.V. Chayanov (2010), and others, we consider family farmers as representatives of the peasantry who use the labor of family members and work primarily to meet their own consumer needs, selling surplus food products. Based on the principles of bio-agriculture and moral Economics, family farmers are an alternative to large holdings and farmers-entrepreneurs who are primarily focused on profit and are less concerned about environmental cleanliness and the quality of products produced.

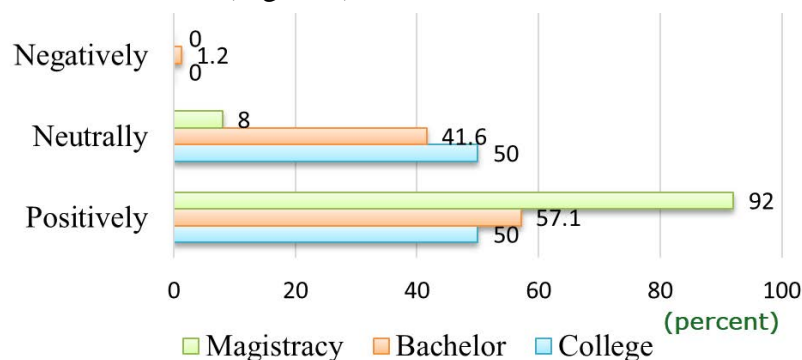
Despite numerous publications on this issue, we believe that modern agricultural sociology does not pay enough attention to the comprehensive study of farming as a special social group associated with the qualitative development of rural areas and the transition to new environmental standards for land use. The conditions of effective formation and dynamics of development of this group, culture, motives, values and problems of farm labor and life, potential and factors of development of this social group of society require in-depth further research. Therefore, the study of farming as a social group today requires interdisciplinary analysis by sociologists, economists, philosophers, and lawyers.

One of the first steps in this direction is the study of a group of teachers of the Institute of Economics, Finance and management of the Ural state University on agricultural sociology, which was briefly described in this article, started in the fall of 2018. The purpose of this study was to study the attitude of young people to family farming, as well as to identify problems and prospects for the development of family farming as a special social group (Zhuravleva et al., 2019).

#### 4 OPINION RESULTS

Analysis of the results of the study showed that the majority of young people who participated in the study have a positive attitude to family farming.

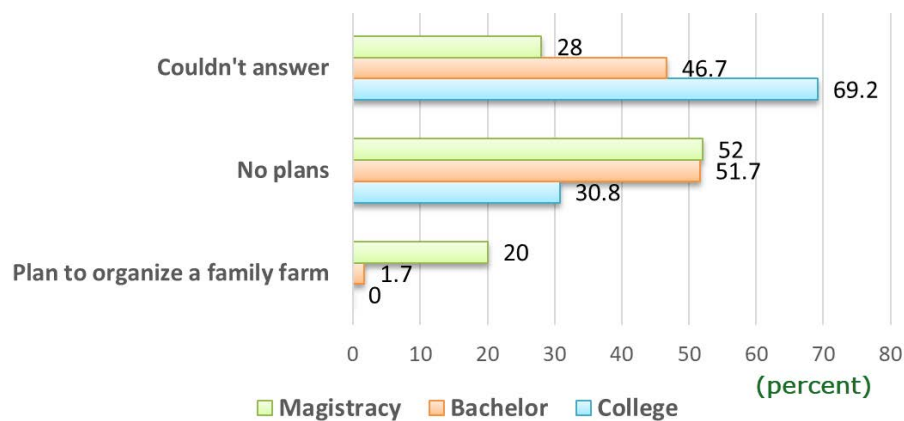
To the question: "How do you feel about people who are engaged in family farming?" the responses were distributed as follows (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Attitude to family farming depending on the level of education

At the same time, the study revealed a contradictory attitude of respondents to family farming, which was manifested in the fact that, despite a positive and partly neutral assessment, the majority of

respondents themselves do not want to engage in family farming under any circumstances (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Respondents' plans for organizing a family farm

Students of the 16-18 age group (college students) do not plan to organize their own farm at all, first of all, of course, because of their young age. Of this group of students, 30.8% directly gave a negative answer to the question, and 69.2% of respondents found it difficult to answer.

Only 1.7% of students in the 19-23 age group (undergraduate students) plan to organize a family farm in the future; 51.7% of respondents in this age group gave a negative answer to the question and 46.7% of respondents found it difficult to answer.

Students' responses age group 24-30 years (master's students) was as follows: you plan in the future to organize family farming 20% of respondents have no plan 52%, undecided 28% of respondents.

Analysis of the results of the study allowed us to identify patterns in the responses of respondents. First, the vast majority of respondents (78.2%) either do not plan to organize their own family farm, or find it difficult to answer. Secondly, the number of positive and negative answers to the question of organizing your own farm increases with age and increasing the level of education. Third, about half of the respondents of all age groups gave a definitely negative response to the organization of their own family farm in the future. In our opinion, such a number of negative and uncertain answers to the question of organizing your own farm is associated with the reasons already identified with the help of the focus group, as well as with a number of objective problems in the development of family farming in Russia.

One of the research tasks was to identify the range of respondents' opinions about the problems of farm labor. In General, we obtained the following results for the array (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Respondents' opinion on the problems of farm labor (respondents could give multi-answers).

Rank	Problems of farm labor	Respondents (%)
1	Weak state support for farm labor	34,4
2	Insufficiently developed social infrastructure of rural settlements	28,1
3	High economic risks of farm labor	21,3
4	The problem of selling manufactured products	18,1
5	Prevalence of heavy physical labor	14,5
6	Difficulties in obtaining preferential loans	12,2
7	Low profitability of production of environmentally friendly products	11,8
8	Lack of innovative technologies	8,6
9	High competition	6,3



## 5 DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results obtained during the study allowed us to identify two groups of problems in the development of farming, according to the estimates of young people. Solving these problems will attract a significant number of young people to work on farms, including setting up their own family farm.

### 5.1 LOSS OF TRADITIONS OF FAMILY FARMING

The first group of problems is the loss of traditions of family farming as a way of life and the related underestimation of farm labor and farming as a social community by the state, which is reflected in the insufficient development of the social infrastructure of rural settlements.

### 5.2 LACK OF FARMING TECHNOLOGY

The second group of problems – lack of technologization of farms and the prevalence of heavy physical labor, difficulty in obtaining preferential loans, low profitability of environmentally friendly products, which causes problems marketing of products amid falling purchasing power of the population.

### 5.3 SOLUTIONS TO REVIVAL OF FAMILY FARMING

#### 5.3.1 EDUCATION AND DIALOGUE

It seems that the educational and cultural space of the agrarian University can be used as a testing ground for choosing appropriate solutions to the problems of family farming highlighted by young people. The revival of family farming traditions will be facilitated by the organization of conferences and round tables with the participation of family farmers, exhibitions with environmentally friendly and organic farm products, and the organization of students' practical training in advanced family farms; inviting farmers to meet with students, or perhaps to conduct small special courses, and participating farmers as experts in the "Novice farmer" student business project competition. Also, as recommendations, the authors suggest conducting longitudinal studies that will further clarify the subject and object of agricultural sociology, on the one hand, and study the transformation of the population's attitude to farm labor in connection with the introduction of digital technologies. Analysis of changes over a long period will allow us to make recommendations on changes to the state policy of supporting small and medium-sized businesses in agriculture. In addition, the development of research on nutrition sociology as a field of agricultural sociology will allow the state to adjust the consumer basket and form sound recommendations for agricultural producers to meet consumer demand.

#### 5.3.2 DIGITAL AGRICULTURE

The second group of problems of family farming will promote the introduction of digital technologies in the educational process of the agricultural University: introduction in the curricula of the bachelor's or master's discipline of "Digital agriculture", the creation of faculty and students, and the use in educational process of digital farms. Graduates of an agricultural University, who will eventually implement digital technologies in agricultural production, including family farms, must have digital thinking and digital competencies that are being laid down today. Reforming the training process based on surveys of employers and students will not only correct the educational process, but also reduce the cost of adapting young professionals, increase the efficiency of the use of

technologies used in agriculture. This is the first aspect. The second aspect is related to the analysis of applied technologies in agriculture with manufacturers' requests for new technologies and devices. This will change the direction of research in the development of new agricultural machines and software, as well as conduct consulting activities for manufacturers to modernize production due to the emergence of new technologies.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Agricultural sociology as an intersectoral branch of scientific knowledge serves as a methodology for understanding the problems of modern agriculture and its mission related to ensuring food security, health and well-being of the population.

Trend research areas of agrarian sociology in the XXI century are the following:

1. Sociological studies of environmental culture and consumer culture. This is due to the fact that ecological culture is a systematic activity aimed at preserving natural resources, the natural and social environment, and the human being as a biosocial being a result, an ecological lifestyle is formed as a model of ethical behavior of a person who takes responsibility for choosing their own behavior in relation to the natural and social environment.

2. Nutrition sociology as a fairly new area of research in Russia. Food consumption is associated with the risks of eating low-quality food, which reduces the quality of life and affects the deterioration of people's health. The study of nutrition practices of young people as an innovative group is a priority area of nutrition sociology as an integral part of agricultural sociology.

3. Sociological studies of farming as a special social group. Family farming is a cross-cutting issue of agricultural sociology. As a unique subject of organic agro-economics, family farmers perform simultaneously environmental, social and economic functions. The study of this social group of our society is the most promising and in demand.

Based on the data of the conducted sociological research, we can draw a conclusion about the low attractiveness of farm labor in the estimates of young people. The analysis of the results obtained during the study allowed us to identify two groups of problems in the development of farming. Solving these problems will help attract young people to organize their own family farm. Thus, the trends of modern agricultural sociology in our country are currently being formed and are waiting for research by the joint efforts of sociologists, economists, lawyers, philosophers and representatives of agricultural sciences.

## 7 AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Information can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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**Note:** The original version of this article has been reviewed, accepted, and presented at the International Scientific and Practical Conference "From Inertia to Development: Scientific and Innovative Support for Agriculture" (IDSISA2020) at the Ural State Agrarian University, Ural, Russia, during 19-20 February 2020.