

## Rural Labor: An Analysis of the Prospects for Employment of Youth in the Agricultural Sector

Irina CHEKHOVSKIKH\*

*Saint Petersburg State University of Veterinary Medicine, Saint Petersburg, Russia*

**\*Corresponding author:**

Irina CHEKHOVSKIKH, Saint Petersburg State University of Veterinary Medicine, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

**ABSTRACT**

Many industrially developed countries of the world today experience a significant shortage of labor resources in the agricultural sector. The issue of retaining young people in the countryside and attracting them to agriculture is especially acute. This article considers and analyzes the experience of a number of countries, such as the USA, the Netherlands, Australia, Georgia, Italy, France, Great Britain, and studies their methods and measures aimed at retaining rural youth in the agricultural sector, as well as attracting young workers and specialists to work in the agricultural sector. Of particular interest is a comparative analysis of this issue in Russia and Serbia, as well as in other republics of former Yugoslavia. The outflow of young people from rural areas leads to a number of negative consequences: the volume of agricultural production in both livestock and crop production decreases, with small and medium-sized agricultural businesses suffering first and foremost; instead of accumulating global experience, local agricultural traditions are destroyed; villages and towns become deserted and degenerating, and the cultural continuity of generations is disrupted. All these factors prove to us the importance and necessity of studying the stated topic in order to find solutions and methods that will mitigate and, if possible, resolve the problem of retaining and attracting young people to agriculture.

**Keywords:** Rural Labor, Youth Employment, Agriculture.

**Received:** April 20, 2026;

**Accepted:** April 28, 2026;

**Published:** May 05, 2026

### Introduction

Currently, the Russian agro-industrial complex is facing an acute problem of the shortage of human and labor resources. This situation has been stable for a number of years, but at the present moment it has become significantly worse, which is connected with the transition of the Russian economy to a war footing, tougher economic sanctions, an intensified transition to import substitution and the accelerated growth and development of agricultural holdings caused by it. The militarization of economies, both on a global scale and on a Russian scale in particular, ensures the flow of capital and the latest digital technologies into the military-industrial complex, which, in turn, impoverishes the agro-industrial

complex, exacerbating the already pressing problem of a shortage of labor and modern agricultural technologies, which continues the trend of declining labor productivity and agricultural production volumes. For example, in 2024, the area under potato cultivation was significantly reduced because in 2023, Russian farmers harvested a huge crop, and due to ill-considered economic policy, they were forced to sell it at prices below prime cost, as a result of which they suffered serious losses [1]. Paradox: a large potato harvest led to losses for agricultural producers, especially small and medium-sized businesses. As a result, in 2025, Russians will see a price increase for potatoes of up to 60% [2]. Since the beginning of 2025, Russia has had to make massive purchases

**Citation:** Irina CHEKHOVSKIKH (2026) Rural Labor: An Analysis of the Prospects for Employment of Youth in the Agricultural Sector. *J Envir Sci Plant Res* 2: 1-4.

---

of potatoes from other countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, China, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko even called on his compatriots to unite and switch exclusively to growing potatoes in order to feed Russians as well [3]. At least using the example of potato production, its shortage and high prices on the Russian food market, we can state systemic problems with the regulation of the agricultural product market, its production and sale. An integral part of agricultural production processes is labor productivity, which, in turn, depends on the availability of the necessary and sufficient number of workers and modern innovative technologies, taking into account the compliance of the qualifications of agricultural personnel with such technologies. But, once again, the agricultural sector's struggle to attract workers is complicated by its reduced competitiveness in the ability to maintain a decent level of wages compared to other sectors of the economy, such as the military-industrial complex, trade, and construction.

An important source of attracting personnel to the agricultural sector is young people and young specialists. In the case of successful employment of young people in agriculture, several important tasks are solved at once: firstly, the problem of unemployment among young people is alleviated; secondly, sustainability in guaranteeing the necessary level of labor productivity is ensured, simultaneously with its growth; thirdly, young people in rural areas contribute to the innovative development of agriculture, the use of modern agricultural and related technologies, due to the easier learning and adaptability of young workers; fourthly, through the work of young people, the achievements of globalized science and technology are successfully combined with traditional cultural and national characteristics of agriculture in all its areas, which ensures both global and local labor and cultural continuity.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the reasons that demotivate modern youth to work in the agricultural sector, as well as to find solutions to help attract young specialists to agriculture. This analysis is comparative in nature, as it identifies the causes of youth demotivation in a number of countries indicated above and below in the text of this article, and options for solutions designed to attract young people to agriculture are also considered in comparison of various experiences in these countries.

## Materials and Methods

In the process of creating this article, an analysis of open data sources presented on the Internet was conducted. Here, a search was made for materials providing information on the current state of agriculture in the countries under study, as well as on the degree of participation of young people in agricultural work. For a more accurate analysis, data from legislative and legal acts were used also. These legislative acts concern, first of all, the management of migration flows in the Russian Federation, especially innovations related to the restriction of admission of labor migrants from the Central Asian republics. Attention to changes in Russian migration legislation is due to the fact that it was labor migrants who for many years filled jobs in livestock and crop production. The author also used available statistical data characterizing quantitative indicators of the efficiency of agricultural production in the described countries, as well as the level of unemployment and labor shortages, especially in the agricultural sector and among

young people. In addition to quantitative research methods, the author also used qualitative ones, namely the method of participant observation. This became possible thanks to the author's constant work with young people – students at agricultural universities – as well as visiting livestock farms and conferences for excursion purposes. During such visits and her work, the author was able to talk to young people, focusing on their readiness or unwillingness to work in agriculture, finding out under what conditions they could still go into the agricultural sector. The researcher also had the opportunity to talk with representatives of older generations working in the livestock industry, discussing the problems of attracting young people to it. Finally, during the course of her research, the author reviewed existing research papers that were relevant to the topic under study, both Russian and foreign.

## Results and Discussion

For almost the entire first quarter of the 21st century, the problem of personnel shortage in Russian agriculture was relatively successfully solved by attracting labor migrants, especially from the post-Soviet republics of Central (Middle) Asia, but in 2024, Russian migration policy was tightened, and on February 5, 2025, new, stricter rules for labor migrants came into force [4]. Although large companies in the agricultural sector of the economy have begun to attract labor migrants from “far abroad” countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and North Korea, this does not significantly solve the problem of personnel shortages in Russian agriculture. In parallel with the current processes in the area of migration policy, as well as employment policy, the need to attract young people to work has once again become acute in the agricultural sector of the economy.

It should be noted that this need is relevant not only for Russian agriculture. The problem of youth employment in rural areas exists in many countries of the world, both developed and developing. For example, a study of youth employment in rural US found high unemployment in this population [5]. The problem of youth outflow from rural areas has also been studied in the Netherlands. Researchers associate this problem with a threat to economic development and the reputation of rural areas [6]. In Georgia, there is a widespread reluctance among young people to live in villages and towns, which is why there is an influx of young people into large cities, especially the capital, Tbilisi [7].

The Republic of Serbia is also experiencing problems in agriculture due to the ongoing exodus of young people from rural areas. According to the Republican Institute of Statistics, approximately 27,000 people, mostly young and educated, leave Serbia every year. The Serbian government, just like Russia earlier, has turned to the possibilities of attracting labor migrants; in particular, in July 2025, negotiations were held between Serbia and the Republic of Ghana on an agreement on labor mobility. Young unemployed Ghanaians are set to be given the green light to migrate to Serbia to fill agricultural jobs, with plans to issue 100,000 work visas [8].

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, young people are also losing interest in agriculture. Young people are leaving villages and moving to urban centers, which is leading to a labor shortage in agriculture. The introduction of modern technologies into agricultural practices

---

requires the active participation of young people, since it is young specialists who more easily receive the appropriate education and adapt to innovations more quickly. Their outflow from rural areas becomes a serious obstacle to the implementation of innovations and sustainable development of rural communities [9].

In Croatia, despite a fairly high level of development of agriculture in general, there is a fairly high level of unemployment among young people: 15.9%. Moreover, this figure is considered a record low; it was reached in April 2025 and remained so in the summer. The average youth unemployment rate in Croatia between 2000 and 2025 was 30.07%, reaching its maximum in April 2013: 50.1% [10]. The decline in youth unemployment in 2024-2025 coincided with a significant increase in agricultural GDP in 2024: it reached a historical maximum of EUR 762 million in the third quarter of 2024, and in the second quarter of 2025, Croatia's agricultural GDP amounted to EUR 360 million [11].

In Slovenia, the unemployment rate reached its historical minimum since statistics began in 1991: in June 2025, it was 4.3%. At the same time, the youth unemployment rate for the same period was 10.2% [12]. This is lower than in Croatia, but quite high compared to the overall unemployment rate in the country. Slovenia's GDP from agriculture reached EUR 168.1 million in the second quarter of 2025. From 1996 to 2025, the GDP from agriculture here averaged EUR 170.99 million [13].

In Montenegro, researchers have noted extreme demographic unevenness, which leads to uneven development in individual regions of the country. Thus, the aging population and the outflow of young people from the northern region of Montenegro, which is very favorable for the development of agriculture, especially livestock farming, seriously limit agricultural production. The central region of Montenegro also experiences problems with productive agriculture, despite the fact that it is characterized by extensive agricultural production. However, the unfavorable demographic situation is hindering the development of the agricultural sector in this region. The most economically developed region is the south of Montenegro, which faces the Adriatic Sea. The main streams of labor migrants flock here, including Montenegrins from the northern and central regions of the country, and tourism is actively developing, including international tourism [14].

Over the years, industrially developed countries have accumulated interesting experience in youth employment in general, and in rural areas in particular. For example, in Australia, the government subsidizes those entrepreneurs who provide young people with the opportunity to intern at their enterprises for six months, while paying the minimum wage. In Italy, companies that employ young people part-time or contract young people for vocational training receive social security tax breaks. In the UK, there is a government program to provide vocational training to young people under 18 years of age who have already left school and are unemployed. In France, companies provide internships for young people from 16 to 21 years old at their own expense, if these young people have not completed their school education due to any circumstances, in order to compensate for the education, they did not receive and to acquire a working specialty. Such enterprises receive government

subsidies. In Spain, companies that employ or train young people also receive tax breaks under social security [6].

In Russia, measures are also being taken to ensure the influx of young specialists into agriculture. Thus, according to the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Rural Territories of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation dated February 2, 2015, No. 151-r, its important tasks are 1) providing young qualified personnel for the agro-industrial complex and the rural economy as a whole, and 2) creating conditions for self-realization of youth in rural areas, as well as opportunities for realizing the creative potential of youth [15]. In order to implement the adopted Strategy, a number of agricultural regions of Russia have developed and approved programs for attracting young specialists to the countryside, expressed in cash payments. 26 subjects of the Russian Federation, namely, Vladimir, Ivanovo, Kaluga, Kostroma, Ryazan, Smolensk, Tver, Yaroslavl, Leningrad, Novgorod, Pskov, Ulyanovsk, Orenburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov, Samara, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Sakhalin, Amur regions, Perm, Krasnoyarsk, Kamchatka territories, the Republics of Mordovia, Bashkortostan, Sakha (Yakutia) adopted regional regulations establishing the procedure and amounts of payments to young qualified specialists with secondary and higher vocational education. Payments vary from region to region; the range is from 100,000 to 1,000,000 rubles. The procedures and conditions for payments also vary – they can be made one-time, or based on the results of the first, second and third years, or monthly, in the form of a salary supplement. The terms for working off these payments can be set from two to five years, depending on the region.

As we have already seen, Serbia is solving the problem of the outflow of its youth from rural areas by attracting foreign labor migrants, including from Africa [8]. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the FAO Digital Villages initiative on digitalization of agriculture is active. This initiative aims to make farmers' work easier, attract young people to the agricultural sector, bring the tourism sector and agriculture closer together - so that farmers can supply their products to tourist centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina - and finally, bring local agricultural practices closer to EU standards. To date, this initiative has covered the village Mokro in the Pale municipality and the rural community Brežani-Tršće in the Kakanj municipality [16]. In Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia, as well as in all other countries, solving demographic and labor problems related to the agricultural sector, the main trend is also the participation of governments or intergovernmental organizations [14]. It is recognized that without government incentives and decision-making at the governmental or supra-governmental level, it is impossible to attract investment and people, including young people, to agriculture. In the considered countries of the Balkan region, an important aspect in solving the analyzed problems is seen as the rapprochement of agriculture with the tourism sector, which should increase the attractiveness of agricultural labor and business for young people.

## Conclusion

As for Russia, despite the efforts and measures taken, work in agriculture remains unattractive to young people due to its physical hardship and non-competitive remuneration, as well as

due to difficult working conditions (in all their spectrum). If we analyze the size of social payments intended for young qualified specialists, then, taking into account the existing low average salaries in the regions - and for young specialists they are even lower than average - often in the absence of decent housing, poorly developed infrastructure in rural areas, fairly heavy physical labor, and the current high inflation - we can see that these “lifting” payments often do not fulfill their attractive function. Young people assess the risks of working in agriculture, compare them with the expected benefits and come to the conclusion that the risks and costs are significantly higher than the possible reward. Older generations working in government services in the agricultural sector complain that they have nothing to attract young specialists with low salaries, lack of housing, difficulties in receiving social benefits, transport and logistics problems - all this discourages young candidates from finding employment in rural areas [17]. All other things being equal, young people choose to work in the city, preferably in a large city, where there are more employment opportunities, higher salaries, better working conditions, and easier work. The latter conclusion, however, applies to all the countries considered, including the republics of the former Yugoslavia. In this sense, the motivation of young professionals is the same everywhere.

To summarize our analysis of the current problems of personnel shortage in agriculture in the considered countries and the prospects for solving them by attracting young people, we can state that a successful solution to the studied issue can only be a comprehensive approach, including their production training, participation of authorized federal and regional government bodies in financing the improvement of rural infrastructure, and state balancing of wage levels between different sectors of the economy with the improvement of working conditions in agriculture, and indexation of these wages taking into account inflation, and the establishment of a system of regular additional payments and bonuses for qualified young specialists for work in the agricultural sector of the economy, as the experience of industrially developed countries tells us.

## References

1. Telegram channel: Product Media - Food retail / food producers / agriculture -<https://t.me/producttoday/4829>. May 22, 2025. At 21:28.
2. Telegram channel: Product Media - Food retail / food producers / agriculture - <https://t.me/producttoday/5101>. June 24, 2025. At 12:15.
3. Telegram channel: Product Media - Food retail / food producers / agriculture -<https://t.me/producttoday/4828>. May 22, 2025. At 20:41.
4. Ministry of National Policy and Religious Affairs of the Republic of Dagestan: official website. -Republic of Dagestan. -From February 5, 2025, new legislative norms for labor migrants will come into force in Russia. - URL: <https://minnacrd.ru/press/89850>.
5. Pashkevich OA (2021) Formation and development of forms of employment of labor resources in agriculture of the USA. Bulletin of the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/stanovlenie-i-razvitie-form-zanyatosti-trudovyh-resursov-v-selskom-hozyaystve-ssha>.
6. Polukhina MG (2019) Measures of state stimulation of employment of young specialists in the countryside. Bulletin of Technosphere Safety and Rural Development. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mery-gosudarstvennogo-stimulirovaniya-trudoustroystva-molodyh-spetsialistov-na-sele>.
7. Mkrtychyan G (2024) There is nothing holding the youth in the village. J News. <https://jnews.ge/129167/>.
8. Old Serbs and Young Ghanaians: Serbia Issues 100,000 Work Permits to Foreigners. July 21, 2025. Montana. VREME <https://vreme.com/ru/vesti/stari-srbi-i-mladi-ganaci-srbija-izdaje-100-000-radnih-dozvola-za-strance/>.
9. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Digital Villages Initiative in Europe and Central Asia. Brežani-Tršće. <https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/europe/digital-villages/brezani-trsce-rural-community/en>.
10. Youth Unemployment Rate in Croatia. Data 2000-2025. Trading Economics. <https://ru.tradingeconomics.com/croatia/youth-unemployment-rate>.
11. Croatian GDP from Agriculture. Data 1995-2025. Trading Economics. <https://ru.tradingeconomics.com/croatia/gdp-from-agriculture>.
12. Unemployment rate in Slovenia. Data 1991-2025. Trading Economics. <https://ru.tradingeconomics.com/slovenia/unemployment-rate>.
13. Slovenia's GDP from Agriculture. Data 1996-2025. Trading Economics. <https://ru.tradingeconomics.com/slovenia/gdp-from-agriculture>.
14. Šarović Rade (2020) Migration movements in Montenegro (current issues and trends). Statistics in strategic development of Russia. Collection of scientific papers. Irkutsk 2020. C. 133-137.
15. Panchenko OL (2024) Information review on the topic: “Measures of state support for young specialists in the agro-industrial complex”. Materials prepared as of January 20, 2024. O. L. Panchenko. - Text: electronic. Ministry of Agriculture. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fmcx.gov>.
16. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Digital Villages Initiative in Europe and Central Asia. DVI in Bosnia and Hercegovina. <https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/europe/dvi-countries/dvi-in-bosnia-and-hercegovina/en>.
17. Chekhovskikh IA (2025) Peculiarities of attracting young specialists to the agricultural sector of the economy. In collection: Priority areas for improving the efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural sector. Proceedings of the international scientific conference dedicated to the 105th anniversary of the Tatar Research Institute of Agriculture of the Kazan Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. (Kazan, July 10-11, 2025). St. Petersburg, publishing house “Scientia” 489-491.