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BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The crisis in the Ukrainian countryside and agriculture, which has been going on for years, causes a particular need to find ways to solve it. Balanced development of rural areas can occur mainly due to changes in the rural economy and taking a course to develop the service sector in villages and create new jobs. The condition for improvement is the self-organization of rural territorial communities to find the possibility of using available resources. As for rural areas, there are many ideas, programs, and projects to support ecological and socio-economic growth at the local scale.

The article highlights the social, ecological, and economic aspects that characterize the development of rural areas in recent years and proposes ways of balanced development of rural areas based on the use of modern methods in the interaction of administrative, organizational, and legal support.

The rural areas of Ukraine have powerful natural, human, production, and social potentials that can ensure competitive production, stable economic growth, and a high standard of living for the rural population. Balanced development of rural areas and solving the problems of the rural population are among the main conditions for the democratic development of society and its economic and social well-being. Therefore, it should become a priority direction of the development of our state.

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Introduction.

Historically, a unique social entity has formed in the lands of Ukraine – the Ukrainian village, which reflects not only the nature of agricultural production but also the essence of the lifestyle and activities of the multi-million Ukrainian peasantry. In agriculture, the appropriate material and resource base and socio-economic infrastructure were formed for the provision and development of

social production in many industries and the necessary conditions of life for different strata of the rural population. The place and role of peasants in the social structure of the country's population are determined by the general social code, which consists primarily in providing all residents with high-quality, complete food products, guaranteeing the food security of the state [1, p. 6].

Sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas at the current stage is an urgent requirement of the time, caused by long-term neglect at all management levels regarding the combination of production activities in the industry, the working and living conditions of villagers, and the preservation of the environment in rural areas [2, p. 93].

Comprehensive development of rural areas, aimed at stable development of agricultural production, improvement of working and living conditions of the population, and preservation of the natural environment, was to become a key component in the development of the agrarian sphere of the countries. And the prerequisite for their transfer to the model of sustainable development is the organic unity of the concrete realities of the peasant's life with the natural, social and ecological environment. Because in Ukraine, the rural population makes up more than 30% of the available land, and agricultural land – 70% of the country's land fund, the sustainability of the development of rural areas largely determines the provision of sustainable socio-economic development of the country as a whole. In such conditions, ensuring sustainable socio-economic development of rural communities and territories should be carried out based on a set of key priorities of the economic policy of Ukraine [2, p. 91–92].

Analysis of the last research and publications. Such famous scientists as O. Bulavka, Ya. Hadzalo, N. Patyka, V. Ryiabokon, B. Danylyshyn, S. Dorohuntsov, L. Melnyk, P. Sabluk, V. Yurchyshyn, O. Dovhal, V. Zhuk, M. Mohylova, T. Zinchuk, Yu. Luzan, Yu. Lupenko, M. Malik, N. Petrenko, O. Furdychko, N. Palapa, Z. Smutchak, M. Talavyria, M. Tymoshenko, T. Usiuk, and others made a significant contribution to the study of numerous problems of ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas and finding their solutions.

At the same time, there are such problematic issues that require more detailed study. Despite the significant achievements of scientists, the issue of determining strategic orientations and priority directions for the sustainable development of rural areas does not lose its relevance and requires in-depth research.

Materials and methods. For this study, general scientific and special methods were used: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, and generalization – for reviewing information sources and studying the domestic and foreign experience of the development prospects of rural areas.

The research methodology includes the following methods: statistical analysis and abstract-logical analysis to determine the social, economic, and ecological aspects of the balanced development of rural areas.

Results and discussion. The new paradigm of social development, called «sustainable development» was developed based on the analysis of the causes of the catastrophic degradation of the surrounding natural environment on the biosphere scale and the search for ways to overcome threats to the environment and human health. Sustainable development is defined as a form of interaction between society and nature that ensures the survival of humanity and the preservation of the environment, that current generations meet their own needs without depriving future generations of the opportunity to meet their own needs as well [3].

In [6, p. 27] it is defined: «Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- the concept of «needs», in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and

- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs».

Ukraine declared its desire to implement the principle of sustainable development by joining international program documents in this area at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992), the 19th special session of the UN General Assembly («Rio+5», 1997) and the UN conferences on sustainable development in Johannesburg («Rio+10», 2002) and Rio de Janeiro («Rio+20», 2012). However, the term sustainable development was not established in the Constitution of Ukraine adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1996, which was repeatedly amended [7, p. 23].

The category «balanced development» does not have close synonyms, as it is much broader in content than the definitions «system», «complex», «sustainable», which are often equated with

«balanced» in science. The latter is a more complex concept, different from complex development, which includes a set of certain components (directions) and systemic formation, which includes a set of elements (complex) and the connections and interconnections between them (system). The category «balanced» is understood to mean a set of constituent components, connections and interrelationships between them which are mutually balanced or rationally correlated with each other. Such mutual equilibrium and balance in development imply a quantitative optimal ratio of individual components to each other in a single whole, taking into account the system of connections that allow achieving the highest possible result. It is the understanding under balanced development of ensuring the optimal relationship between individual components of development, and not the balance between them, that distinguishes our proposed definition from the concept of «well-balanced development» [8].

The concept of sustainable development has three components: environmental, economic, and social.

The economic component of the concept of sustainable development involves the optimal use of limited resources and the implementation of environmental – nature-, energy- and material-saving technologies, including the creation of environmentally acceptable products, minimization, processing, and destruction of waste. The essence of the economic component is to ensure the sustainable use of natural capital, i.e., its «not being eaten up». *The social component* is aimed at ensuring the stability of social and cultural systems through fair distribution of benefits not only within one generation, but also between generations. The ecological component is designed to ensure the integrity of biological and physical natural systems through the preservation of self-recovery abilities and dynamic adaptation of such systems to changes. Underestimating any of the components of the concept of sustainable development can lead to negative consequences [4, p. 11–12].

The world community recognized that balanced development «must become a priority issue on the agenda of international cooperation». It is generally recognized that balanced development is a harmonious combination of economic, social and environmental components of development. Only achieving a balance between them will ensure the possibility of moving to such a social development that will not exhaust natural and human resources, and therefore will be able to last for a long time [5].

The development of rural areas is conditioned by the urgent need to get rid of the negative realities accumulated in the agrarian and social spheres in rural areas in general. The prerequisite for their transfer to the model of sustainable development is the organic unity of the concrete realities of the peasant's life with the natural, social and ecological environment [9, p. 6].

In 1999, the Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the Concept of Sustainable Development of Settlements, which is designed for a long-term period (15–20 years). According to Section I «General Provisions» of the Concept: «sustainable development of settlements is the socially, economically and ecologically balanced development of urban and rural settlements aimed at creating their economic potential, a full-fledged living environment for current and future generations based on the rational use of resources (natural, labor, industrial, scientific and technical intelligence, etc.), technological re-equipment and restructuring of enterprises, improvement of social, industrial, transport, communication and information, engineering, ecological infrastructure, improvement of living conditions, recreation and health, preservation and enrichment of biological diversity and cultural heritage» [10].

Deterioration of the demographic situation of rural areas, degradation of the production base and the social sphere of the village, reduction of economic potential due to the withdrawal from agricultural turnover of land, lack of clear strategic goals and priorities in the socio-economic development of the relevant areas, low attractiveness and prospects of life and work in the countryside for young people demand immediate measures to select the necessary directions and tools for ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas [11, p. 13–14].

The concept of reforming local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine, approved by order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 333-r dated 01.04.2014, provides for the observance, in particular, of the principle of sustainable development of territories and as one of the expected results due to the implementation of this document – the formation of an effective territorial system of local self-government bodies and local executive bodies to ensure sustainable social and economic development of the relevant administrative and territorial units [12].

According to the State Strategy for Regional Development until 2020 [13], rural development policy is one of the state's priorities, and most development strategies of Ukrainian regions include the development of rural areas among their strategic goals.

The Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU [14] also provides for the development of rural areas, in particular:

- promotion of mutual understanding of rural development policies;
- exchange of best practices regarding support mechanisms for rural development policy;
- sharing knowledge and best practices on rural development policies to promote the economic well-being of rural communities.

The main problems of the development of rural areas that need to be solved are:

- the low standard of living of the population compared to the average level in Ukraine;
- irrational use of rural resources;
- lack of a system of partnership between the government, business, and the population during the period of institutional transformations [11, p. 14].

The strategic goal of sustainable development of a rural region is to ensure balanced economic, demographic, social, and ecological development of rural territory based on increasing the competitiveness and profitability of agricultural production, diversification of economic activity, and expansion of non-agricultural entrepreneurship in the countryside, protection and rational use of natural, labor and production resources of rural areas, achievement of social standards and living standards for the rural population [9, p. 20].

Achieving this goal involves achieving goals in the main strategic directions corresponding to various vectors of development (Fig. 1).

The main tasks of sustainable development of rural areas are:

- the creation of self-developing economic systems in rural areas based on the formation of the economic turnover of local resources as a result of the development of competitive and ecologically harmonious agriculture, the diversification of agricultural production, increasing the economic activity of the population, the revival of traditional and the development of new industries, the development of modern production and information infrastructure, development of the local industry for the processing of agricultural raw materials, comprehensive development of cooperation in the production, sales, financial and other spheres, strengthening of the market space and relevant production and sales relations;

- development of local self-government for the formation of a socially organized and responsible civil society in the countryside;

- increasing the attractiveness of living in rural areas;

- increasing the competitiveness of rural territories [15, p. 61].

Ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas on the basis of regional economic growth and strengthening state support for the rural economy will slow down the processes of depopulation and stabilize the demographic situation in rural areas, increase the employment rate of able-bodied rural residents, reduce the share of the rural population with incomes below the subsistence minimum, modernize social infrastructure, improve peasants' access to public services, and increase the level of improvement of rural settlements [11, p. 14].

The effective start of the development of rural areas began in early 2015 when the Law of Ukraine «On Voluntary Unification of Territorial Communities» was adopted [16]. Expanding the powers of local communities requires the harmonization of the development of agricultural production and rural territorial communities the interests and initiative of every villager to ensure high efficiency of production and the environment, and on this basis, to improve the quality and safety of life.

The development of rural areas began in 2015 with the adoption of the Law of Ukraine «On Voluntary Unification of Territorial Communities», according to which, as of the beginning of 2021, 1,439 united territorial communities were created, of which 627, or 43.6%, rural communities. In the process of administrative and territorial reform, 26,705 villages became part of the united territorial communities (UTC) (as of January 1, 2021). Of them, 8,870 villages (33.2%) were included in the urban UTC, 9,397 (35.2%) – in the village UTC, 8,438 (31.6%) – in the rural UTC [2, p. 93].

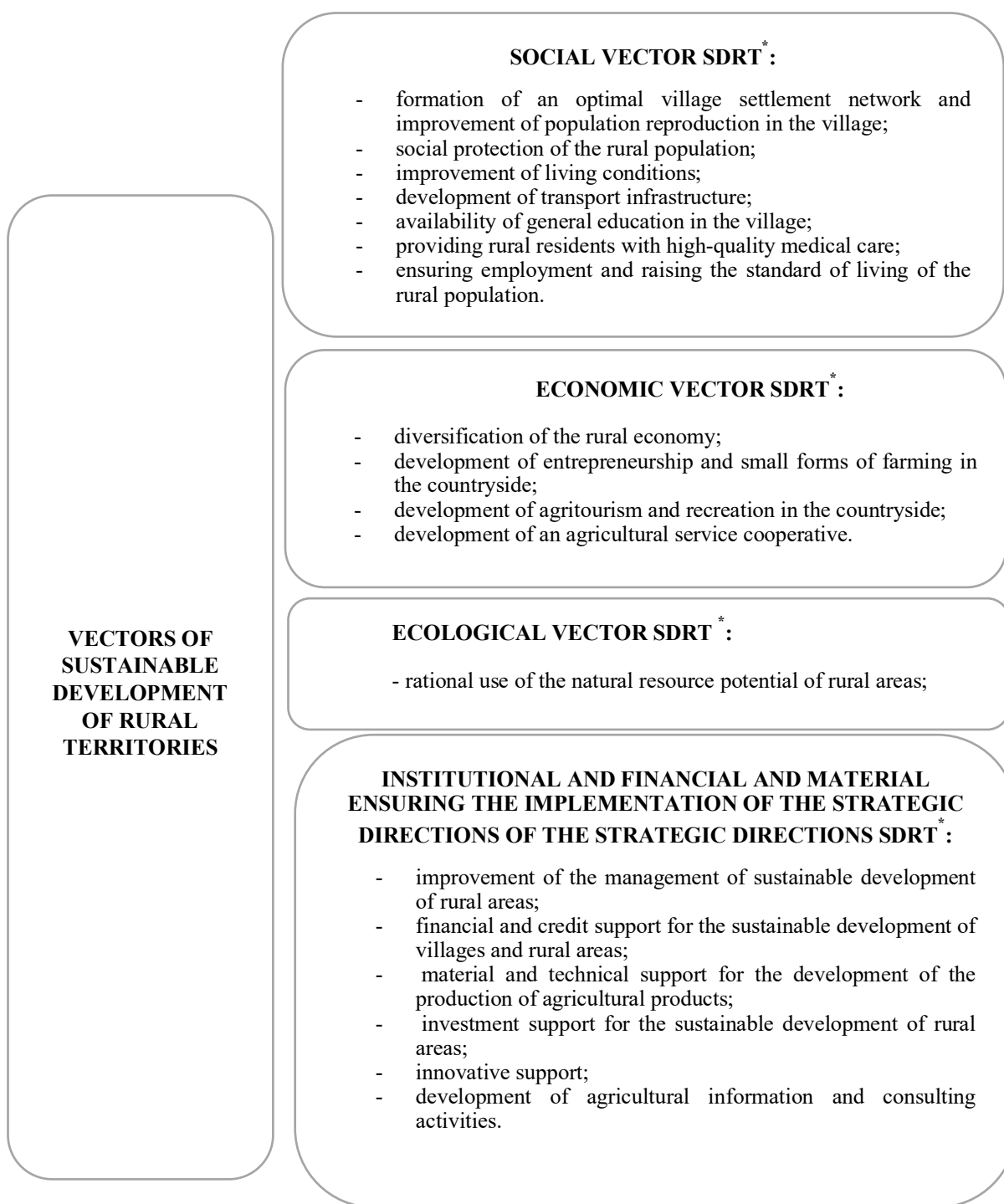


Fig. 1. Vectors of sustainable development of rural territories Source: developed by the authors based on [9, p. 20–21].

Note: SDRT - sustainable development of rural territories.*

Ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas is a complex problem and is possible on the condition that:

- macroeconomic stability and increase in the gross domestic product;
- ensuring economic growth in agriculture;
- development of non-agricultural employment in rural areas;
- achieving socially equal conditions for obtaining income and public benefits in the countryside;

- improvement of access for business entities that conduct entrepreneurial activities in the countryside to the markets of material and technical, credit, information, and other resources;
- the formation of civil society institutions in the village, which ensure the protection of the economic and social interests of various groups of the rural population;
- implementation of programs aimed at improving the ecological situation in rural areas [15, p. 61–62].

Over the past ten years, the Ukrainian village has undergone significant changes as a result of structural economic reforms: restructuring of land and property relations, creation of a legal framework for a market economy through privatization of land and property, and the use of individual, family, and collective labor. During the reforms, primary attention was paid to the development of agricultural production and relevant industrial relations, while issues of the formation and development of the social sphere were neglected. As a result, the social sphere not only did not develop but, on the contrary, declined even more. The reason for this should be considered primarily the reduction of the role of the state in solving the social problems of the village, the transfer of the social sphere from the state budget to the balance of local self-government bodies, which did not have the funds to finance it, and the lack of proper control over the implementation of legislative and normative acts on the social development of the village. The reform of decentralization of power is intend to contribute to the improvement of the social development of the village - the transfer of a significant part of the powers, financial and other resources from central authorities to local self-government bodies [1, p. 7].

Over the years, the Ukrainian village, as well as Ukraine in general, has faced several complex challenges, among which demographic processes stand out.

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, as of January 1, 1990, the total population of Ukraine was 51,838,500, of which 16,969,300 were rural. As of January 1, 2021, this figure was 41,588.4 thousand people, of which 12,628.8 thousand people are rural (Table 1). That is, the data indicate that the total available population of Ukraine during the years of its independence decreased by 10,250.1 thousand people, and the number of rural people – by 4,340.5 thousand people.

Table 1. The population of Ukraine (as of January 1, thousands of people)

Year	Number of existing population			Number of permanent population		
	all	including		all	including	
		urban	rural		men	women
1990	51 838,5	34 869,2	16 969,3	51 556,5	23 826,2	27 730,3
2021*	41 588,4	28 959,6	12 628,8	41 418,7	19 195,4	22 223,3

Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * without taking into account the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

There is a steady trend of population reduction in urban and rural settlements, but at the same time, the specific weight of the urban population is increasing. The rural population dominated the country until the mid-60s of the last century. Starting from the 70s of the 20th century, the urban population began to predominate in the structure of the entire population. During the last decades, the share of the rural population continues to decrease. If in 1990 it was 32.7% of the total population, then at the beginning of 2021 it decreased to 30.4% and is less than a third of the entire population of Ukraine (Fig. 2).

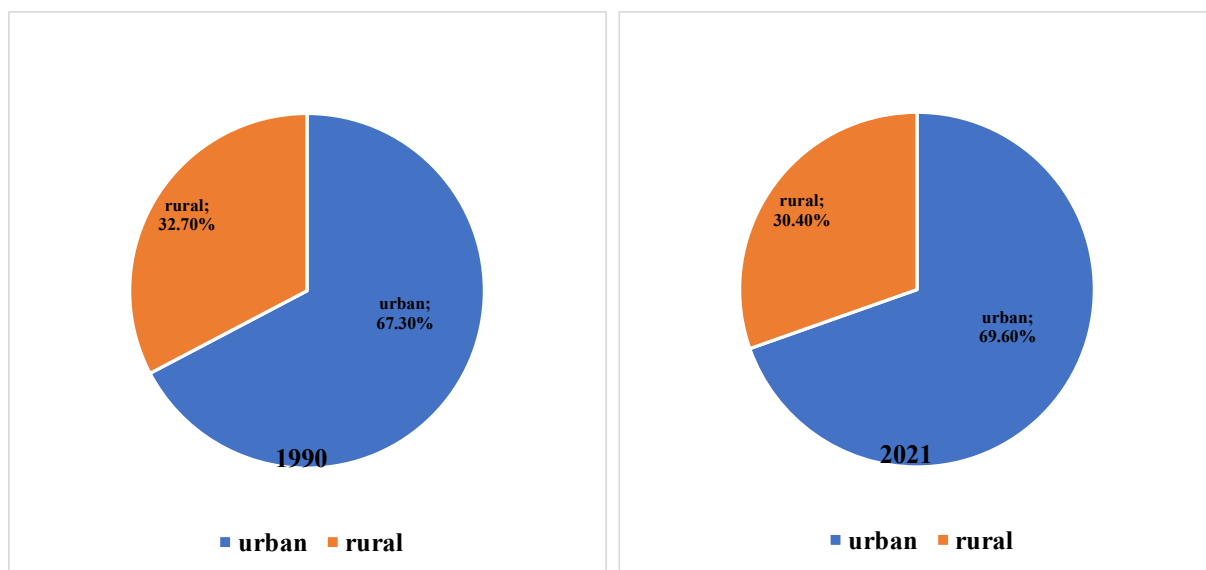


Fig. 2. The ratio of the number of rural and urban population of Ukraine in 1990 and 2021.*
 Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * without taking into account the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

The population is distributed unevenly, which is caused, in particular, by economic and natural factors.

In addition, according to the State Statistics of Ukraine, the number of rural settlements in 2021 decreased by 432 units compared to 1990 (Table 2, Figure 3).

The mass exodus of rural residents leads to a deepening of the negative demographic situation, the degradation of villages takes place over a long period, and an average of 14 rural settlements disappear from the map of Ukraine every year (for the period 1990–2021 – 432) especially small and small villages that die out.

Table 2. The number of rural settlements in Ukraine* (as of January 1, units)

Year	Number of rural settlements
1990	28 804
2021	28 372

Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * according to the data of the official website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

The main factors of the demographic crisis are the excess mortality over the birth rate and population migration from Ukraine.

Throughout all the years of Ukraine’s independence, the death rate generally exceeds the birth rate, population depopulation is taking place, that is, the tendency to stop growing, and therefore, the population declined.

Everywhere in Ukraine, both in urban and rural areas, there is a decrease in the population, not its growth. In recent years some regions have come close to a demographic crisis, and rural areas have suffered the greatest losses. In particular, natural growth in 2021 was the lowest and amounted to 148,096 thousand people (Table 3).

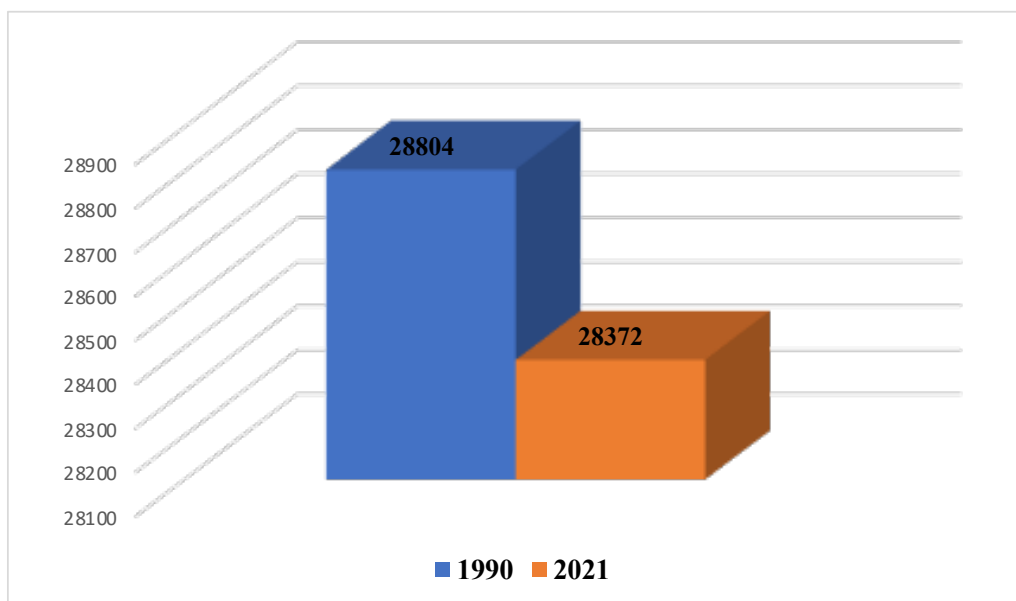


Fig. 3. The number of rural settlements in Ukraine (as of January 1, units)
Source: created by the authors based on data [17].*

Note: * according to the data of the official website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

Table. 3. Birth rate, death rate and natural increase (reduction) of the population in rural areas of Ukraine in 2021, thousands of people

Number of births	including		Number of dead	Natural increase (reduction)
	live births	stillborn		
97 419	96 726	693	244 822	-148 096

Source: created by the authors based on data [18, p. 8, 145].

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in 2021, Chernihiv (28.4), Khmelnytskyi (24.2) and Sumy (23.7) oblasts had the highest total mortality rates in rural areas; the lowest – Volyn (16.6), Rivne (16.2) and Zakarpattia (14.3) regions.

High mortality in regions (primarily in rural areas) is often determined by the inaccessibility and low quality of health care services, the insufficiency of preventive measures to prevent mortality from cardiovascular, oncological and other diseases, and the deterioration of the ecological situation [19].

In the UN analytical reference [20, p. 1, 2] it is said that the population of Ukraine is shrinking at one of the fastest rates in the world and is likely to decrease to 35 million by 2050. The population of Ukraine is one of the fastest aging in Europe, which is a direct consequence of the declining birth rate. More than a fifth of the population is over 60, and this proportion is projected to rise to 36% by 2050. Among the main reasons for the reduction of the population in Ukraine are the following: a low birth rate, a high mortality rate, and a constant growth in the scale of external migration. It is these reasons that destroy the human capital of Ukraine, and therefore the basis for sustainable development.

The reasons for the migration of the rural population to urban settlements can generally be divided into two groups: economic and social. The first group is related to the impossibility of the rural population to participate in economic activities directly in or near the rural settlement. The second group of reasons is related to the population’s dissatisfaction with the amount, level and quality of social infrastructure, services, etc [21, p. 238].

According to [20, p. 2], the population of rural areas in Ukraine is decreasing, which is caused by the migration of young, more educated, and well-off population groups, and this has serious long-term consequences for the economic stability of rural areas and social cohesion.

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine taking into account all migration flows, in 2021 the increase in migration in rural areas of Ukraine amounted to -8,158 people. As for interstate migration, increase in migration amounted to 3,154 persons (Table 4).

Table 4. Migration movement of the rural population of Ukraine in 2021, persons *

	All flows			Including interstate migration		
	The number of arrivals	The number of dropouts	Migratory increase	The number of arrivals	The number of dropouts	Migratory increase
Countryside	136 127	144 285	- 8 158	5 299	2 145	3 154
In general, across Ukraine	476 925	455 664	21 261	41 724	22 587	19 137

Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * without taking into account the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and part of the temporarily occupied territories in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Per 1,000 people of the existing population, the ratio of the number of arrivals was 111.5, dropouts – were 116.4, and migration growth (decrease) – was -4.9. Regarding interstate migration: per 1,000 people of the existing population, the coefficient of the number of arrivals was 4.4, departures – 1.8, migration increase (reduction) – 2.6 (Table 5).

Table 5. General coefficients of the migration movement of the population in rural areas in 2021 *

Per 1,000 people of the existing population					
all flows			interstate migration		
arrivals	dropouts	migration increase, reduction	arrivals	dropouts	migration increase, reduction
111,5	116,4	-4,9	4,4	1,8	2,6

Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * relative indicators were calculated without taking into account relevant data for Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, taking into account all migration flows in 2021 in rural areas of Ukraine, migration growth is observed only in Kyiv (17,117), Volyn (381), and Odesa (73) regions. As for interstate migration, there is an increase everywhere, except for Sumy (-3), Volyn (-5), Zakarpattia (-54), and Rivne (-73) regions.

Even though on average, per capita housing provision in the countryside is somewhat higher than in the city, the housing stock in rural areas is physically and morally outdated, a third of rural houses were built before the 1960s, and more than 47% were built in the 1960s and 1970s, 15% – in the 80s, the rest – from the beginning of the 90s of the last century. The vast majority of rural households are characterized by unsatisfactory quality and low level of comfort of the housing stock. There is no water supply, sewage system, central heating, hot water supply, bath or shower [1, p. 11].

Improvement of the demographic situation in the village, overcoming the depopulation of the rural population, and stopping the degradation of the rural settlement network, according to the author of the article [22, p. 69], are impossible without socio-economic development of rural areas, which requires a combination of efforts of the state, regional and local authorities and self-government, as well as territorial communities. The process of decentralization of power opens up new opportunities for this. Each community on its territory gets the opportunity to directly determine the direction of arranging an optimal living environment; through the decisions of local self-government bodies to independently build the necessary social and industrial infrastructure, based on territorial priorities, own financial capabilities, and specific interests of its residents; create conditions in rural settlements under which people would strive to live and work in the countryside.

Training requires qualitatively new approaches to the field of education, especially in rural areas, and changes must be made starting with pre-school education.

Table 6. Information on pre-school education institutions in rural areas by the end of 2021 *

The number of institutions		They have places, units		Number of children, persons	
all	including in the countryside	all	including in the countryside	all	including in the countryside
14 974	8 966	1 137 605	337 669	1 111 358	264 741

Source: created by the authors based on data [17].

Note: * without taking into account the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and part of the temporarily occupied territories in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The largest number of children in preschool education institutions in rural areas were recorded in such regions as: Kyiv region – 22,356 children, Zakarpattia region – 21,588, Odesa region – 18,398. And the smallest number was in the following regions: Luhansk region – 2,371, Donetsk region – 4,180, Chernihivska – 4329 children [17].

The effectiveness of solving the tasks of preschool education is measured both by quantitative indicators and by the level of provision of professional personnel in the preschool education sector. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, as of the end of 2021, there were 138,772 pedagogical workers in the field of preschool education. Of them, only 35,443 workers work in preschool education institutions in rural areas. This leads to a disparity between rural areas and urban settlements in terms of providing such institutions with pedagogical staff, especially Methodist teachers and practical psychologists. For example, in urban settlements, the number of full-time Methodist teachers is 4,415, while in rural areas – 417. Regarding practical psychologists, there is also an imbalance by type of area: 3,707 people work in urban settlements, and 818 people in rural areas.

During the years of independence, the general network of general secondary education institutions shrank, particularly in rural areas. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for such dynamics is the failure to take into account data on institutions located in the temporarily occupied territories of the Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, as well as Luhansk and Donetsk regions. At the same time, in recent years, as part of decentralization, the network of general secondary education institutions has been optimized, including in rural areas, due to the formation of educational districts and the creation of supporting educational institutions with branches. As a result, this led to a reduction in the number of institutions.

Optimizing schools is an objective process. However, it should be carried out in a balanced manner, taking into account several factors. First, reference schools should be identified in advance, and their material and technical base should be strengthened by creating a modern educational environment. Secondly, to increase the amount of state-targeted subsidies for road infrastructure, the purchase of the necessary number of school buses for transporting children to support schools. In the reform of the educational sphere, the united territorial communities are called to play an active role, in particular in the construction of roads, investment in supporting schools, as subventions will be allocated on the basis of co-financing. All the more so, the legislation allows for UTC to include the

saved funds in the general budget for the next year and to use them for road repairs or to make additional payments to teachers [1, p. 13].

Currently, medical care for the rural population remains problematic. According to the data of the annual report of the World Economic Forum [24], the main regression in Ukraine was recorded in the field of health care – 101st place out of 141 studied states. Despite the initiated medical reform as a component of the decentralization reform and the adoption of some legislative and regulatory acts, rural medicine is in an unsatisfactory state.

The implementation of the medical reform involves the construction of new and repair of existing dispensaries with the appropriate equipment, special transport, and necessary drugs to provide quality care to patients. The load on one primary care physician should be up to 1.5 thousand patients, and the distance from the outpatient clinic should not exceed 5 km. In the Law of Ukraine «On Improving the Availability and Quality of Medical Services in Rural Areas» [25], one of the main areas of health care development is the implementation of telemetric medicine in rural areas, which will provide an opportunity for both the doctor and the patient to receive online consultation from qualified high-level specialists.

In order to solve the urgent problems of the development of social infrastructure in the village, in particular, ensuring the employment of the rural population, it is necessary to preserve the network and personnel potential of cultural institutions of the village to stimulate the development of multidisciplinary cultural, educational and artistic institutions, combining the efforts and resources of the state, local authorities, philanthropists and patrons for creation of an effective model of their financial support [23, p. 85].

The provision of transport services to the rural population is characterized by irregular transport connections, poor-quality organization of bus routes, a low level of improvement of public transport stops, and the unsatisfactory condition of roads of local importance. The accessibility of rural areas, attracting investment resources to improve road and transport infrastructure is a priority for increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of rural areas, preserving the demographic potential [26, p. 441].

The critical state of the demographic situation in the countryside, the depopulation of rural areas of Ukraine, the degradation of the rural settlement network are taking on the characteristics of a problem of a national scale and require the introduction of a complex of effective economic, administrative-legal, educational and propaganda measures, which should include:

- 1) a progressive system of assistance at the birth of children, depending on their number, age, type of family; supporting young families, providing them with preferential long-term loans, preferences regarding the purchase of housing, payment of utility services, etc.;
- 2) improvement of the system of maternity and childhood care, aimed at activating the reproduction of the population and preserving the younger generation in rural settlements, restoring the functioning of the pediatric service in rural areas, strengthening the material and technical base of treatment and preventive institutions;
- 3) preservation and development of the network of general, preschool, and professional education, cultural and communal services; restoration and development of the necessary social infrastructure;
- 4) optimization and development of the labor potential of the rural population through its natural replenishment, creation of new jobs, in particular in the field of rural (green) tourism, proper production, and living conditions;
- 5) conducting constant monitoring of the demographic and migration situation in the regions to determine the priority of problems and measures to solve them to reduce the migration processes, first of all, of rural youth, their consolidation in the village and the agrarian sphere;
- 6) promotion of a healthy lifestyle in the countryside, formation of social and personal motivation to preserve and strengthen health;
- 7) involvement of rural residents in regular physical education and sports activities; constant informing of the population about the principles of rational nutrition; clarification of the harmful effects of injuries, tobacco smoking, and the negative consequences of alcohol consumption, which will contribute to the improvement of the demographic situation in rural areas due to an increase in the birth rate and a decrease in the mortality rate of the rural population, an increase in its life potential due to an increase in the average life expectancy;

8) improvement of qualitative indicators of the development of the rural population: the level of education, intelligence, spirituality, traditions of hard work, good neighborliness, mutual assistance, and other positive features of the mentality of the Ukrainian peasantry [22, p. 68–69].

The development of rural areas is closely related to agriculture, which is the basic industry for rural areas. After all, 41.3 million hectares of agricultural land are concentrated in rural areas. Therefore, increasing the competitiveness and profitability of agricultural production is recognized as a determining condition for ensuring the sustainable development of rural communities and territories [2, p. 97].

Currently, during the implementation of the decentralization reform, when creating communities based on the unification of village or village councils, the possibility of expanding the scope of employment of the rural population has increased. As practice shows, for the initial stages of the operation of the UTC, including in rural areas, the creation of jobs in such areas as the provision of administrative services, medical, educational, social, etc is typical. At the further stages of development and operation of rural self-government organizations, it is advisable to focus attention on attracting both own income and investments for the development of the production sphere and the service sphere, in particular, non-agricultural industry, construction, transport, tourism and recreation, etc. The urgent need for this is the fact that in the event of a reduction or cessation of receiving subventions from the state budget, the financial capacity of some rural UTC for sustainable socio-economic development may significantly decrease, which will lead to a reduction or elimination of existing jobs in the future [27, p. 45].

Under the conditions of strengthening global integration processes, enterprises in the tourism sphere and rural green tourism acquire a special status and meaning. Under the conditions of strengthening global integration processes, enterprises in the tourism sphere and rural green tourism acquire a special status and meaning. On a global scale, rural green tourism is a promising, developed, a highly profitable branch of the economy. Rural green tourism as a type of business activity is important for the development of the economy of our country. Entrepreneurial activity in the field of rural green tourism in Ukraine is gaining more and more development. Determining factors of the development of rural green tourism in Ukraine are: advantageous geographical position; the presence of diverse landscapes; favorable climatic conditions; strong natural and recreational, cultural-historical potential; significant existing potential of land and labor resources. It should be noted that the rural areas of our country have a rich cultural-historical and ethnographic heritage, a significant natural reserve fund, picturesque nature, and food resources [28, p. 4–5].

The development of rural green tourism in the context of modern priorities for the development of rural areas of Ukraine has an important socio-economic significance:

- stimulating the development of peasant farms;
 - activation of local infrastructure development;
 - promoting the sale of surplus agricultural products, increasing the additional income of peasants, and deductions to local budgets;
 - activation of the local labor market, increase in employment;
 - preserving the ethnocultural identity of Ukrainians and all communities of ethnic minorities;
 - the creation of opportunities for a full-fledged meaningful rest of the underprivileged people;
 - positive influence on raising the cultural level and environmental awareness of the villagers
- [28, p. 6–7].

The economic development of rural areas and the formation of favorable conditions for the living of the rural population will be facilitated by:

- increase in employment and income growth of rural residents;
- improvement of the demographic situation in the village;
- raising social standards of living;
- infrastructure development, implementation of new infrastructure facilities;
- development of the sphere of services and maintenance of rural settlements;
- intensification of improvement works and the creation of a road and transport network [29, p. 45].

The current ecological state of the rural settlements of Ukraine is generally characterized as a crisis, which directly affects the economic and social development of the rural area. The main reasons for the deterioration of the environment in rural settlements are the intensive management of rural farms and personal farms, the low quality of environmental education, and the education of the local population.

Since the ecological component of the development of rural areas is directly related to the economic and social situation, it is relevant to constantly monitor the state of the environment in rural areas and carry out a comprehensive assessment, which should be the basis for making management decisions regarding the improvement of the state of environmental security both in the region and of the state in general [30, p. 97].

The intensification of agricultural production and the expansion of agricultural land areas have led to an increase in the amount of waste and its impact on the surrounding natural environment.

Traditionally, agricultural waste in Ukraine is divided into livestock waste, plant waste, and agrochemical waste.

According to the data of statistical observations, in 2019, out of more than 14 million tons of generated agricultural waste, the most massive are:

- waste of plant origin;
- animal excrement, urea, and manure;
- waste of animal origin and mixed food waste.

The problem of greening and restoration of the ecological balance of rural areas requires in-depth study and resolution. And for this, you need to develop several measures that will contribute to this, namely:

- first, to analyze the indicators of socio-economic development of the territory of the village council or UTC;
- secondly, to describe the natural and climatic conditions of the territory;
- thirdly, assess the existing environmental problems;
- fourthly, to develop a concept for solving identified environmental problems;
- fifth, to substantiate the organizational, technical and financial aspects of solving environmental problems of the territory of the UTC or the village council to improve the environmental standards of life of the local territorial community;
- sixth, to determine the socio-ecological-economic effect of the proposed measures. Having determined the directions for solving problems, you can proceed to the development of a program in which you can calculate and display the logarithm of solving the problem of the greening of rural areas [31, p. 56].

Analysis of the experience of implemented projects of sustainable development of rural areas in developed European countries allows them to highlight the main points [15, p. 62]:

- **comprehensiveness** – development projects consider all possible types of economic activity that can increase the incomes of rural residents. Each proposal for increasing employment and income is comprehensively justified from a legal, economic and social point of view. Solving the problem of employment and increasing incomes is coordinated with the solution of other regional problems and the development of the rural area as a whole;

- **openness** – in the development of project measures, interactive (with the participation of the population) planning methods are used; achieved results and problems are comprehensively covered in local mass media, discussed at village meetings, meetings with the population; based on the results of these discussions, it is necessary to make appropriate adjustments in the projects;

- **broad public participation** – in the process of development and implementation of projects, the knowledge, experience and perception of the population about the most effective ways of ensuring employment and income are used as much as possible, the peculiarities of the economic and social behavior of different social groups of the population are taken into account, their interests and intentions are coordinated, joint efforts are consolidated through cooperation, development of local self-government and the activities of public organizations;

- **reliance on local resources** – achieving the goals of sustainable development of rural areas is ensured primarily through the mobilization of local financial, material and technical, social and natural resources, which is of primary importance for the creation of sustainable mechanisms for ensuring employment and incomes. But this does not rule out the use of external sources of resource support for the development of villages.

Conclusions. The rural areas of Ukraine have powerful natural, human, production, and social potentials that can ensure competitive production, stable economic growth, and a high standard of living for the rural population.

The following are among the main priorities of rural development:

- improving the quality of life of the rural population;
- the creation of attractive jobs;
- expansion of access to the Internet as a means of communication;
- increasing the level of income and employment in the countryside;
- improvement of living conditions;
- modernization of transport, engineering, information, and communal infrastructure of rural areas;
- improvement of the improvement of rural areas;
- focus on sustainable development;
- improvement of the investment climate of rural areas [32, p. 43].

The rural settlements of the country should be considered as a whole system in general and not just its individual elements. This approach makes it possible to achieve balanced development, overcome inter-branch, intra-, and inter-regional disparities, and integrate rural and urban subsystems of society on equal terms [21, p. 246].

Balanced development of rural areas and solving the problems of the rural population are among the main conditions for the democratic development of society, and its economic and social well-being. Therefore, it should become a priority direction of the development of our state.

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