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The Prestige of Farmer Occupations Perceived By Russian Youth: The Case of Altai Krai

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Abstract

All agricultural regions in Russia are facing an out-migration of youth, possibly also due to generally negative attitudes towards work in agriculture and the opinion that the agricultural sector is not prestigious enough. Migration represents a significant outflow of human capital from the agriculturally important areas causing a chronic shortage of workers at most of the farms. Government, as well as private institutions, try to re-engage young people in agricultural activities, but they are often targeting mainly economic incentives in their programs. The role of the overall low prestige of agricultural occupations, a multidimensional indicator involving economic as well as non-economic dimensions, is often neglected in policies as well as in research. The diploma thesis was focused on the prestige of farmer occupations as perceived by 350 young students in Altai Krai, the Russian largest agricultural region, and factors influencing their prestige perception. The following farmer professions were involved in the study: Farm manager, Private farmer, Small-holder farmer. The mean prestige of the involved farmer professions was perceived rather low, compared to other occupations. By running four multiple linear regression models (M1 – Small-holder farmer, M2 – Private farmer, M3 – Farm manager, M4 – Mean prestige of farmer occupations), factors influencing the prestige level of the agriculture-related occupations were identified. Attitudes towards work in agriculture revealed the strongest effect on the prestige level of farmer professions, of which the variable agriculture is an ‘Exciting work’ was the best predictor for all models. The opinion that agriculture is exciting influenced prestige level even stronger than the opinion that agriculture is ‘Low-income work’, although this predictor was found important too. Besides, the prestige level of all farmer professions was negatively influenced by the opinion that agriculture is a ‘Men work’, which was a surprising finding. Based on these results, in order to strengthen the prestige level of agriculture, the government could use information campaigns to show the exciting aspects of the work in agriculture and support the women in the agricultural jobs.

Keywords: Agriculture, labour shortage, occupational prestige, youths’ career preferences