



**RURALITY
CRISIS IN
ARMENIA**

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ARMENIA**

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An abstract line art graphic composed of several thick, grey lines. The lines form a complex, geometric shape that resembles a stylized profile of a person's head and neck, or perhaps a modern architectural structure. The lines are interconnected, creating various angles and shapes. The overall impression is that of a minimalist, graphic design element.

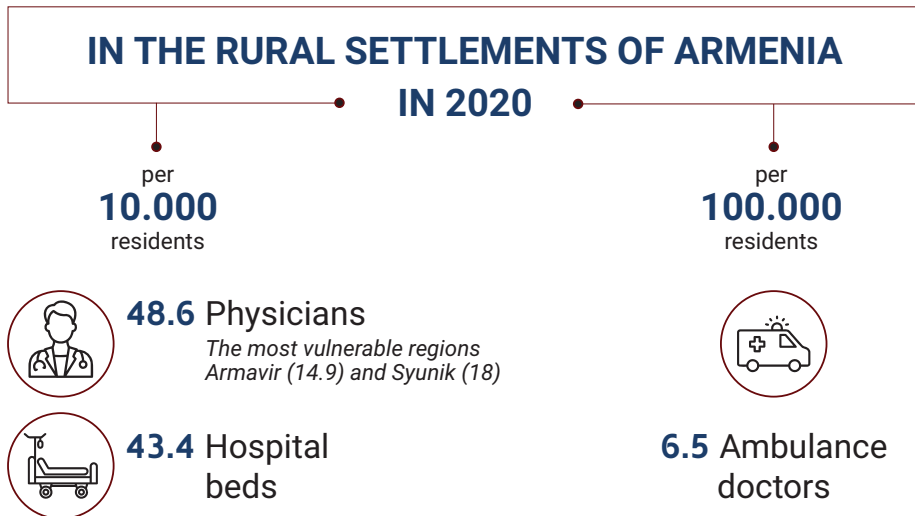
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently, more than one-third of the Armenian population lives in urban settlements. However, in recent years this number has tended to decline. Despite the serious challenges rural settlements face, social and political discourse lacks discussion on the rationale and importance of identifying the issues, opportunities, and specificities of rural life.

Ambiguous terminology used by post-soviet legal regulations, official statistics, as well as texts of local and international institutions, have caused confusion by using parallel use of words such as *villagers*, *farmers*, *landowners*, *farming households*, *economic operators*, and several other mutually overlapping names/labels.

Note that individuals engaged in agriculture and families living in rural communities are mostly self-employed, are not party to formal legal relations, regulations, and policies, and do not enjoy social securities offered by the State as prescribed by the Labor Code.

There are big risks in the social security of the rural population.



In the context of consolidation of communities, current plans are that every settlement with more than 5,000 residents shall have only one social worker.

The contemporary rurality crisis in Armenia is essentially driven by the lack of attractiveness of farming, low returns, high risk, lack of social security mechanisms for

those employed in farming, mistrust in Local Self-Government (LSG) authorities, and weak cooperation.

The aim of this research is to diagnose the rurality crisis in Armenia and outline solutions to existing problems by considering the rurality at levels of communal synergies, historical arrangements, business management and living, as well as geographic and symbolic structures. To address the research problems proposed, *methods of secondary data and desk review, standards, narratives, and experts' interviews* were used in line with the research design. This research was conducted from June to October 2021.

Studies and assessments regarding the agricultural sector in Armenia revealed that agriculture has a key role in the social and economic development context. However, there are multiple issues:

- Due to small and fragmented land, lack of information, knowledge, and resources, absence of state-of-art technologies, machinery, essential infrastructure, a limited number of agricultural processing companies, limited and irregular supplies of agri-food, and informality, volumes of agricultural output remain small, and the level of self-sufficiency of food is low.
- Armenia's agriculture is characterized by scarcity and inefficient use of land and water resources. The cause of environmental problems is the unsustainable practices in the field of plant breeding and animal husbandry. Due to climate change, Armenian agriculture is becoming more vulnerable. The agricultural sector is characterized by a disconnect between research, policy, and agricultural practices, as well as a lack of an agrarian advisory system. Most public investments are targeted through banks and private companies to establish several dozen medium-sized to large farms and equip them with modern agricultural technologies.
- Farmers and their families with limited capacities and resources are mostly left out of support programs while investments of up to several hundred billion in Armenian money: Armenian Dram (AMD), are made annually in rural settlements through state and international projects. They do not contribute to poverty reduction and the tackling of food security issues.
- Effective laws on agriculture do not exist. Proper agriculture laws need to focus on establishing legal regulations and social protection mechanisms for farmers or farms, as well as comprehensive regulation of relations among various play-

ers in the agri-food sector, and implementation of sustainable and inclusive policy in rural settlements.

Institutional issues are accompanied by social-economic and cultural issues of rural settlements. Surveys among the rural population reveal that approximately half of the Armenian rural population are using agricultural land for crop farming. Moreover, the better off the villagers, the more such lands will be used for crop farming. While the rural population is mainly able to cover the necessary expenses related to gardens and residential land plots, it is more challenging to cover the expenses related to open land plots and greenhouses.

Perspectives regarding the volumes of agricultural output are not good either. While the volume of agricultural produce from crop production has remained unchanged in the last 1 to 2 years for approximately half of the residents, every 3rd household has reduced their volume. At the same time, almost half of stockbreeders have challenges with selling livestock produce.

The main channel for selling agricultural produce is direct selling to buyers and/or resellers on-site and in nearby markets. Regarding storage capacities, most farmers do not have them. Such a situation poses unpredictable losses, as the products will depreciate if sales are delayed, and other problems can also occur. More than half of respondents who were engaged in cattle breeding provide animal slaughtering services, and most of them are essentially slaughtering on their premises without special sanitary and hygiene conditions that require additional expenditures. Despite the risk and potential adverse impacts posed by the conditions of slaughter, most respondents were satisfied with the facilities available for animal slaughter.

Only one-tenth of the rural population has written contracts for selling agricultural output, which, other conditions being equal, increases uncertainty and risk of corresponding activities. Farmers mostly do not have stable, legal safeguards for their activities.

An important note on the perspective and general opinion of farming is that it is viewed as positive. Most of the rural population are satisfied with the volume of sales of their agriproduct. As a usual consensus, modern Armenian farmers still don't know what to do with the land and other potential agricultural assets. Having

lost to the pseudo-liberal competition, farmers mostly require the nationalization of agricultural resources. The rural population is mostly in favor of increasing the share of state ownership in agriculture. The public order of a partonomic state, seemingly left in the past, articulated by a strong, essentially governmental authority to tackle the particular issue of social equity in the first place, comes into play. As one could expect, the poorer and/or older the farmer, the more inclined he or she would be to request strong community leaders able to make autonomous decisions. The poorer and/or less educated the farmer, the more inclined he or she would be to request an increased share of state ownership in agriculture.

In terms of living conditions, currently, the average rural resident in Armenia has low income. Almost every tenth, by subjective perception, is extremely poor, and half of them only have enough money to afford food and pay utilities. Their main source of household income is from farming and welfare benefits/pensions. Additionally, the housing of rural settlements is old and deteriorated. Approximately half of the rural population needs urgent renovation of their houses. In rural settlements of Armenia, water supplies are not modernized and have problematic heating systems. Around half of the rural population heat their homes with wood furnaces, which directly suggests eradication of already scarce forest areas with multiple short-term and long-term implications.

Rural populations commonly confide in local rather than central government authorities. High public trust and mutually beneficial social relations are still maintained in the villages. While social networks are the best illustration of mutual assistance and support in daily activities, such as construction and repair, land cultivation, and animal husbandry, it is extended family and relatives that often come to help when needed, while the level of support by friends is low. Villagers socially relate themselves more to residents of their own village, rather than to residents of Yerevan who live far away. Noteworthy is the relative class positioning of villagers: poor villagers surprisingly see themselves as closer socially to the rich, rather than to another poor "like him." More than half of the latter see those richer (rather than poorer) than themselves in the status of their husband/wife.

Armenian villages are characterized by low civic activity. In the last year, the prevailing majority of villagers have never participated in protests and/or demonstrations, meetings with politicians, and other meetings with their community leader(s), and/or discussions. Noteworthy is the fact that villagers consider the community con-

solidation and significant changes taking place in that context as administrative and political processes as independent of themselves, where the main role player is the politically capable ruling authority distanced from the villager. This pattern of civic engagement is completely different in the case of local informal events. Most villagers participate in parties and festivities organized by their extended family members or relatives, as well as neighbors. More than half of them may visit their neighbors or co-villagers without any reason. Moreover, the higher the average monthly income of a household, the more frequent their participation in parties and festivities will be, suggesting the correlation between the so-called social poverty (weak social inclusion) and material, monetary poverty.

Currently, villages are reproducing the clan-dynasty and family-centered relations where even village friends have extremely limited access. Moreover, in the context of growing individualization under the impact of external macro-drivers, the villager is alone, or in the best case – with his or her family, facing the challenges.

The villagers' emotional and partly cognitive dependence with the village is stronger, the so-called pragmatic association is secondary. Moreover, pragmatic association was higher among farmers and the men. Despite negative indicators, most villagers do not intend to leave their settlement for permanent residency; villagers have positive ideas about the future of the village and the well-being of their own family. It is mostly young men who intend to leave the village for good or for temporary/labor purposes. One of the main motivations to leave for permanent residency is the hard social-economic conditions, lack of employment, and future in the village.

Findings of the survey outline the symptoms of the rurality crisis, noting deep disruptions of industrial-economic structures, processes, the unattainability of efficient realization, extremely problematic reproduction patterns in the perspective of the social structure of rurality, extensive social polarization, impossibility to overcome the monetary poverty on their own, and the normative crisis of existence inherent to the rural community as such. Currently, the average Armenian villager is the carrier, reproducer, and consumer of frequently opposite, polarized worldviews, ideology, norm-setting grounds, values, behavior, cognitive processes, and mutually exclusive attributes of social existence. The multi-dimensional identity of the modern-day villager, the cornerstone of rurality - is in crisis. In the context of overcoming the rurality crisis, supportive social policies designed and based on clear diagnosis are crucial.

An abstract line drawing in grey, consisting of several interconnected shapes. On the left, there is a vertical line that branches into a horizontal line and a curved line. To the right of this, there is a series of horizontal and vertical lines forming a stepped, staircase-like structure. A diagonal line extends from the top left towards the center. The overall impression is that of a technical or architectural sketch.

INTRODUCTION



PROBLEM DEFINITION

In the post-soviet period, Armenia underwent serious social, political, and economic shocks with tangible impact on all spheres of life. At this time, these problems seem to be particularly acute in rural communities: the village and rural life are not attractive, thereby leading to the weakening of the villagers' networks (Hague & Jenkins, 2005; Kay et al., 2012), the transformation of the social structure of the village and the crisis of rural identity (Вермишян, 2013; А. Е Мкртчян et al., 2014; Gabrielyan, 2001; Mkrтчян, 2016).

Currently, more than 36% (1.07 million people) of the Armenian population lives in rural settlements, but in recent years the rural population has been decreasing. This was particularly apparent from 2014 to 2019 when the population in villages decreased by 3% (30.8 thousand), (Draft Agriculture Development Strategy 2020-2030 by the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, 2019).

Despite rural challenges, contemporary social and political discourse lacks the relevance and importance of identifying rural life, its specificities, problems, and opportunities. This is suggested by the ambiguous terminology used by post-soviet legal regulations, official statistics, as well as texts of local and international institutions, which have caused confusion by utilizing parallel use of words such as villagers, farmers, landowners, farming households, economic operators, and several other mutually overlapping names/labels. However, according to Gabrielyan (2012), in state policy documents they are, as a rule, identified as individual farms or business operators. Such a construct is ineffective and does not reflect the social-demographic, cultural, operational, and surprisingly, even the qualitative diversity of activities. The key to understanding the weakness of state policy is the reasoned diversification of farm enterprises, farmers, agricultural activities, and carriers of corresponding relations. Special attention should also be given to the youth and young families, who will become the basis for future change and rehabilitation of the rural environment (Gabrielyan, 2012).

Governmental and non-governmental projects target agribusiness operators in rural communities by applying various criteria and standards to characterize the activities of the same groups. However, individuals involved in agriculture and families residing in rural communities are mostly self-employed, are not party to

such formal legal relations and regulations, or policies, and do not have the social safeguards offered by the State as envisaged by the Labour Code. In most cases, even following the enlargement of communities, the social infrastructures available in rural communities were not accessible.

Providing decent jobs to those engaged in agriculture is enshrined in the Armenian social and political agenda, therefore it is crucial to prioritize desk reviews of concepts and strategies focusing on the improvement of their living conditions.

The present crisis of rurality is essentially driven by the lack of attractiveness of agricultural activity, low profitability, high level of risk, absence of social security mechanisms for those engaged in agriculture, lack of trust in LSG authorities, and weak collaboration networks. It implies even higher risk in the process of consolidation of rural settlements, where the feedback of the rural population, as well as the most important problems of rural identity, are not properly accounted for. In the meantime, the fact that the municipal authority is distanced from the rural population because of the consolidation of rural settlements. also implies a risk, while creating social and cultural challenges in the relations among residents of consolidated villages. On the other hand, in the context of reproduction of rurality, the most significant and tangible capital is the land.

The economic relevance of land is primary, however, its social and, particularly, cultural value, meaning creation potential is no less important. The essence and content of the rural family, communal life, daily culture, and role/status constructs are revealed in the relation with the land. The understanding of villager (rural family) and village (community) interactions, other conditions being equal, is possible through the identification of “villager-land” objective and symbolic relations (Vermishyan, 2012, p. 8).

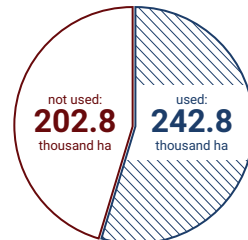
In Armenia
in 2018

45.5%

of arable land
was not used



Overall land 445.6
thousand hectares



Agricultural lands are not cultivated for multiple reasons: non-availability of irrigation water or inadequate water supply, lack of access to agricultural machinery, low level of soil fertility, no land user or landowner, low profitability, insufficiency of essential working capital, etc. (Draft Agriculture Development Strategy for 2020-2030 by the Ministry of Economy, 2019). These issues are also relevant to consolidated communities dealing with unequal distribution of resources when most of them are in the settlement which are municipality centers. Because of this, stable accessibility and affordability of services are disrupted for all settlements. The idea of merging the villages with large towns also gives room for concern in the consolidation process. As a result of urban authorities' unawareness of rurality problems, complications in social, cultural, and economic activities, governance efficiency loss, and further deterioration of the situation may result.

The purpose of this survey is to diagnose the rurality crisis in Armenia and outline the solutions to existing problems. To achieve that goal, economic, ecological, social, legal, administrative, and political contexts characterizing the present state of rurality should be in place, namely:

- Discover the rural constructs of social distance in the context of social-economic transformation
- Cover the role of social networks and social trust in the rural routine
- Depending on the degree of involvement in the agricultural sector, discover the rural population's association and social inclusion forms
- Study the social-economic practices framed in the context of agricultural activity

THEORETICAL SCOPE OF SURVEY

To design the survey and achieve its objective, the term “rurality” should be clearly defined, and the rurality crisis should be made measurable. Rurality is, in the first place, the characteristic of the village, and rural settlement. In literature one may find both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of rurality (Cox, 1995, p. 1). Often it is defined as the proximity of the settlement to the urban center(s), (Haynes & Bentham, 1982; Williams & Lloyd, 1990), according to the number and/or density of the population (Carstairs & Morris, 1990), according to social qualities (Phillimore & Reading, 1992), and/or according to subjective self/evaluation (Ritchie et al., 1981).

According to the simplest and at the same time comprehensible definition, “rurality” is the daily location-driven routine of people with common historical origin and/or heritage, living in a rural settlement known administratively and culturally (Chigbu, 2013, p. 815).

According to this approach, three measures of rurality can be distinguished:

1. *Community networks formed in the village and their historical arrangements.*
2. *Forms of human life activity and business.*
3. *Locality with its geographical and symbolic intersects.*

These measures derive from the sociological definition of the village, according to which such phenomenon is comprehensible in the context of *soil-community-family* (Vermishyan, 2012, p. 8). On the one hand, the land is significant capital, stands out, and qualifies as rural or agricultural in its forms of relationship with the land. On the other hand, the family and intracommunity relations are built on a combination of close personalized relations typical of traditional society, with norms of mutual understanding and protection, kinship and social relations based on common locality in contrast to the opposite pole, the city, characterized by impersonal relations, material values, labor and consumption norms, as well as class networks (Tönnies & Harris, 2001).

This representation is the theoretical definition of the village as settlement and rurality as quality of life. Although from sociological and anthropological perspectives it is the essence of the village, empiric approaches should be built by viewing the village in the context of the direct influence of social changes. In the last two hundred years, these societies have been inherently industrial and/or urban – cities are symbols of wellbeing, and the standards of urban life are standard (Delanty & Isin, 2003, 313). The social-economic and cultural transformations happening in recent centuries “distorted” the traditional model of the village and/or rurality. In the context of urbanization and/or rural-urban migration flows and changes in the values and norms, permanent problems of rurality come into play as a crisis.

This occurs when continuously expected rural life and contemporary competitive structures are conflicting with each other, and the rural population, in their turn, lose several characteristics of efficient rural life, i.e. rural activities, intra-community relations, and traditional role structures. In the meantime, the land is not acknowledged anymore as the cornerstone of *rural being*. In this context rurality crisis and/

or transformations of rural forms are diagnosable through studies of rural life quality, agricultural practices, social inclusion and exclusion in the villages, migration, and problems of association to the location.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To address the above research problems, qualitative and quantitative methods of research were employed:

First, to assess the present stance of rurality in Armenia, understand the economic, environmental, social-legal, and administrative-political contexts, the following was done:

- **Desk review** - secondary analysis of statistical data, sectoral studies about the rural settlements and agricultural activity

- **Expert interviews** with representatives of public, private sectors, academy, and practitioners (total of 7 interviews).

To identify subjective opinions on social-economic conditions of villagers, and the rural environment, social inclusion of villagers, and the problems of social and agricultural activity and/or engagement, standardized and narrative interviews were conducted.

- **Standardized interviews**

A representative quantitative survey was conducted through use of the method of formalized interview with the rural population of Armenia (number of observations was 400, confidence level: 95%, confidence interval: 5%).

To conduct a large-scale quantitative survey through a standardized questionnaire, cluster sampling was used. Internally heterogeneous clusters of equal size were randomly chosen from the cumulative distribution of the rural settlements of the Republic of Armenia enabling identification of the number of proportionate clusters of the rural population in the effective sample.

The final research unit participating in the survey of rural settlements – the household, was selected through random walking selection. The starting point of the route was the local polling station.

The selection of the interview respondent in specific households was done within that family from among the adult family members living in the house, based on the method of the closest birthday. In its turn, in certain households, the key informant who was better informed about the household was selected as the interview respondent.

- 30.2% of respondents were male, and 69.8% were female.
- The respondents' age distribution was: up to 35-year-olds: 27.8%, 36–55-year-olds: 9%, 56 and above: 35.3%.
- 7.3% of respondents had incomplete secondary level education, 48.5%: secondary education, 25.3%: vocational, and 18.9%: tertiary education.
- 58.8% of respondents were jobless, 15.6%: formal paid workers, 46%: informal workers, 19.7%: self-employed, and 1.3%: entrepreneurs/owners.
- According to the financial situation of the households, 9.6% of respondents indicated that they were able to afford only food, 43.8%: afford food and utilities, 34.5%: afford food, utilities, and clothes, 8.5%: afford non-essential items, and 3.6%: afford expensive items such as a car and even a summer vacation.
- 47.8% of owners surveyed use other land(s) in addition to the residential land for crop cultivation.
- 46% of villagers were involved in animal husbandry (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Social-demographic profile of rural respondents

Disaggregation of respondents	(%)
<i>By gender N=371</i>	
Male	30.2
Female	69.8
<i>By age N=371</i>	
below 35	27.8
36-55	36.9
56 and above	35.3
<i>By educational background N=371</i>	
Incomplete secondary education	7.3
Secondary education	48.5
Vocational	25.3
Tertiary	18.9
<i>By employment N=371</i>	
Jobless	58.8
Formal paid employee (has been employed within at least 7 days before the survey)	15.6

Informal paid employee (has been employed within at least 7 days before the survey)	4.6
---	-----

Self-employed (works for himself)	19.7
-----------------------------------	------

Entrepreneur/owner (with involvement of employees)	1.3
--	-----

By social-economic status of the household N=371

The money is enough to buy only food	9.6
--------------------------------------	-----

The money is enough to buy food and pay for utilities	43.8
---	------

The money is enough to buy food, utilities and clothes	34.5
--	------

The money is enough to buy non-essential items	8.5
--	-----

The money is enough to buy expensive items and cars	1.4
---	-----

The money is enough to buy expensive items and car, to afford summer vacation	2.2
---	-----

By land farming activity N=371

Active	47.8
--------	------

Passive	52.2
---------	------

By cattle breeding activity N=371

Active	46.0
--------	------

Passive	54.0
---------	------

• ***Narrative interviews***

Regarding unique cases deriving from the goal of the survey, the following were observed:

1. Households engaged in land cultivation and/or animal husbandry
2. Households that suspended agricultural activities
3. Economically successful farming cases.

For the first two cases, 12 households were selected, and narrative interviews were conducted with the heads of the households, identifying the experiences of that household and detailing the ideological and cultural practices of farming activities and/or termination of such activities in Armenia.

In the third case, founder-managers of 4 farms were selected to identify the social and economic practices of successful farming in Armenia based on their practices.

Limitations of the Survey

- Given the security aspects, some borderline rural communities were left out of the sample
- Given the limitations of face-to-face communication during the Covid-19 pandemic, some narrative (video-)interviews were held online via teleconferencing
- It should be noted that the demographic parameters of actual respondents deviated from the official statistics. Namely, the gender-based proportion is deviated by more than 10%, the youth is less represented than the elder generation. The lack of inclusion of male representatives in the total number of observations could be interpreted through several factors:
 - Due to domestic and cross-border migration works, the male population was missing especially in the rural settlements. We (researchers) assume that the complete demographic structure of households would have repeated the demographic picture of rural settlements in Armenia.
 - It is mainly middle-aged women of the family that most often participate in interviews as key informants. One may assume that the latter was more informed of the problems that are important for the survey. In addition, men are less willing to communicate that thinking that having a break from their routine on a less important note is a female thing, and not appropriate for a busy male.


° In rural communities, the interviewers sometimes visited the households when there were only women at home. It was difficult, sometimes impossible to organize a second visit in remote areas, that's why the priority was given to the content of the information.

Despite these presented limitations, survey outcomes are most descriptive of existing issues characteristic of rural settlements of Armenia and provide a diagnosis of the rurality crisis.



PART 1

PRESENT CONTEXT OF RURALITY



According to various estimations, there are around 340,000 rural households or landowners, who are engaged in agricultural activities mostly as small producers (Avetisyan et. al, 2017). Owners of agricultural land have, on average, 1.0-1.3 hectares of land. Rural farms with such small and distanced land plots are predominantly operating informally. These farmers (producers of agri-food), due to a lack of information, knowledge, and resources, are not able to get appropriate prices for their produce. In addition, the scarcity of agri-processing companies and lack of markets for small farms is a challenge. In most cases, agri-processing companies are engaged in primary production, for example, dairy processing.

Agricultural produce suffers great losses in the logistic/transportation segment of the value chain due to a lack of state-of-art machinery, equipment, warehouses, and refrigeration. In the meantime, producers do not provide regular supplies of high-quality products to retailers and producers. Low and irregular supply of primary agri-food, in turn, hinders the development of the food processing industry and export market. Local markets with informal operators throughout the agricultural value chain and with inadequate infrastructure (e.g. warehouses) are not conducive to investments in productivity and quality. As a result, the volumes of local production remain small and the level of sufficiency of food remains low.

Due to the 44-day Artsakh war and COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the situation with farm businesses, agricultural value chains, markets, and prices have deteriorated. According to official data, in 2019 around 40 thousand tons of wheat and legumes were imported from Artsakh to Armenia*. Due to the 44-day war in 2020-2021, it was impossible to ensure such volumes of import. At the same time, due to the loss of arable land, the issue of fodder sufficiency has become critical, especially with those settlements which have now become part of the borderline in Gegharkunik and Syunik regions. People there are now deprived of the opportunity to use grasslands, pastures, and orchards (Human Rights Defender, 2021). In such a situation, the role of the village and agriculture has become more important in the context of food security of the country.

* According to official data (Decision on approving the state aid scheme to boost production of spring grain, legume and fodder crops in the Republic of Armenia, 2021), in 2019 the cultivated lands of grains and legumes in Artsakh amounted to 74.4 thousand ha. Due to war, the area of arable land sharply decreased.

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Around 36% of the Armenian population lives in rural settlements. According to ArmStat data, in 2020, 21.8% of the employed were engaged in agriculture. In terms of the total labor force, this indicator is above 30%, as it includes only formal employment. While the labor force engaged in agriculture comprises an almost equal number of women and men (in 2018, 48% were women and 52% men), (Women and men of Armenia, 2019), women are more involved in informal agricultural jobs and are most vulnerable in terms of security.

The Armenian labor market is commonly marked by vertical and horizontal segregation, leading to a gender-based pay gap. In 2018 the average pay for females in Armenia amounted to around 64.7% of pay for males, or the gender-based pay gap was 35.3%. Women's share in informal agricultural employment is 82.1% compared to informal male employment of 60.8% (Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Armenia, 2017). Women are mostly involved in hoeing, harvesting, yield sorting, and packaging, which do not require special skills. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) "Gender, agriculture and rural development in Armenia, 2017" report, women in Armenia face multiple hurdles to get access to agricultural know-how and information, as well as support services and training. Due to low levels of access to technology and inputs, stereotypes, and issues with land titles, women rarely lead a farm business or make crucial decisions about farm production.

While there is no gender-segregated data about ownership of farms or land, 33% of rural households are headed by women (Women and Men of Armenia, 2019), mostly because of the migration of men. Additionally, rural women working informally on the farm do not receive any compensation stipulated by the Labour Code, such as sick leave or childcare benefits, as these women are considered either self-employed or inactive. Two-thirds of females employed in rural communities do not receive cash income when self-employed (Summary of findings of „Armenia's Gender Barometer" report, 2015). Meanwhile, in 2020 children's enrolment in preschools was only 24.3% (from among 0-5 year-olds), of which 28.6% in urban, and 16.2% in rural settlements (Activities of Preschools, 2020).

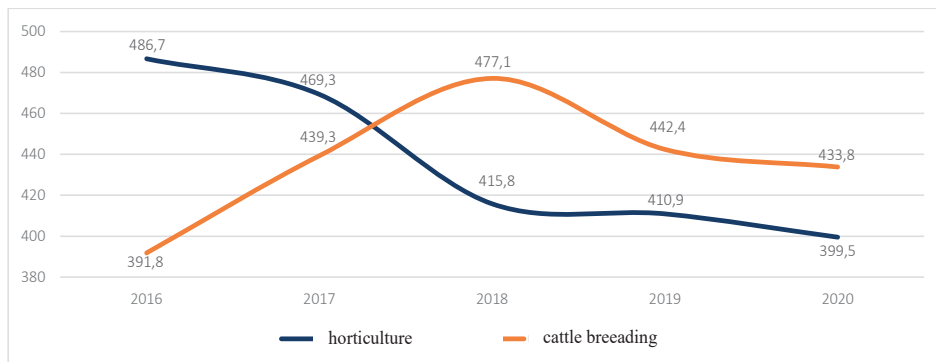
The institution of social worker is still developing within Armenia. In the context of consolidation of communities, it is prescribed that every municipality with more than 5,000 residents should have one social worker (Core Diagnostic of the Social

Protection System in Armenia, 2020). As to welfare benefits, in 2020, the average welfare benefit per family in Armenia was AMD 31,350. Moreover, the average age pension, disability pension, and lost breadwinner pension was AMD 26,634.40 (Number of Beneficiaries of Welfare Pension, and Average Amounts of Pension, 2020). Accessibility of health services and infrastructure for rural populations is also concerning. In 2020, the number of physicians per 10,000 people was 48.6. In Armavir and Syunik provinces the share of physicians was the lowest with only 14.9 and 18, accordingly, per 10,000 people. Additionally, the share of hospital beds per 10,000 people was 43.4. The number of emergency medical care stations in 2020 was 69 units, moreover the number of emergency medical doctors was 6.5 per 10,000 people (Health System, Morbidity and Medical Care, 2020).

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the context of social-economic development of Armenia. In 2020, the share of agricultural production was around 13.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the foreign trade balance, the contribution of agriculture is 18 percent in import and 28 percent in export (Armenia in Figures: Key Social-Economic Indicators, 2021).

In 2020, the gross agricultural output was AMD 833.3 billion, with 52.1% comprised of cattle breeding, and 47.9% comprised of plant breeding or crop production. Since 2018, there has been a decline in gross output in both cattle breeding and plant breeding (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. (Agriculture, 2021)
Gross agricultural output by years (billion AMD)



Meat, dairy, and egg, as well as wheat and legume, fruit & berry, and grape production, are significant in the structure of agricultural output (See Table 2).

Table 2. (Agriculture, 2021)
The structure of several agricultural products in 2016-2020

<i>(1000 tons)</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Grains and legumes (net weight)	604.2	302.5	337.7	198.7	246.1
Fruit and berries	242.6	361.6	343.4	290.6	274.3
Grapes	178.8	210	179.7	217.5	283.2
Meat (slaughtered weight)	106.1	109	108.2	107.3	107.7
Milk	754.2	758.2	697.7	667.9	654.3
Egg, million units	694.6	683	726.8	720.6	754.6
Wool (physical weight), t.	1 641	1 385	1 032	981	1 048

Main animal farming products produced in Armenia include beef, pork, poultry, dairy products, eggs, and fish (see Figure 3). Around 60% of meat and 95% of milk production come from cattle. Around 170,000 rural households are involved in animal breeding in Armenia. Moreover, animal husbandry is developed in Gegharkunik, Aragatsotn, Shirak, and Lori provinces. As of January 1, 2021, the number of large cattle was around 613,413 units. According to official data (Food Security and Poverty, 2021), compared to 2020 this figure increased by 34,157, as due to the 44-day Artsakh war, a number of cattle breeders moved their animals to Gegharkunik, and then to other provinces of Armenia.

In total, in 2021 the number of sheep and goats in Armenia increased by around 8.3% compared to 2020. Sheep farming is developed, especially in Armavir, Gegharkunik, and Syunik provinces. As of January 1, 2021, 48% of all sheep and goats were bred in said provinces (Food Security and Poverty, 2021). In contrast to cattle breeding

and sheep farming, in 2021 the pig population has declined by more than 23,000 compared to the previous year, most likely due to the reduced availability of fodder.

Thanks to the use of modern technologies and mechanization, poultry husbandry is a well-developed cattle breeding subsector in Armenia. Approximately 8,000 tons of poultry and more than 700 million eggs are produced annually. Moreover, around 40% of produced eggs are produced by large poultry farms, such as “Araks Poultry Farm” OJSC, “Lusakert Pedigree Poultry Farm” OJSC, and “Arzni Pedigree Poultry Farm” OJSC. Along with poultry husbandry, fish farming is also advancing in Armenia.




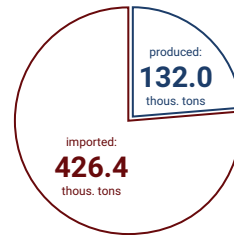
Fish farms are essentially concentrated in Ararat and Armavir provinces. Due to the lack of sustainable technologies and water-efficient equipment, they create multiple environmental problems, as production is based on fresh groundwaters through one transit system. Plant production in Armenia essentially includes wheat, legumes, fruit, berries, grapes (wine and table grapes), vegetables, potatoes, and tobacco (see Table 2).

Grain and legume crops produced in Armenia include wheat, corn, barley, oats, peas, beans, lentils, etc. The most commonly produced grain is wheat, with 132 thousand tons produced in 2020. According to ArmStat, such level of production was 3.23% lower than imports of wheat (426.4 thousand tons), the level of wheat self-sufficiency in 2020 totaled 24.4%, which is concerning in terms of food security.

In Armenia in 2020,
the level of wheat
self-sufficiency totaled

24.4%

 Overall land 558,4
thousand hectares



The Republic of Armenia (RA) Law “On Food Security” adopted in 2002 (Law on Ensuring Food Security, 2002) establishes the use of food stock in the state reserve, including accumulation of wheat and efficient use of such reserves. Based on the required and essential levels of the balance of foodstuff production, surveillance of the food market is the responsibility of the Government.

Meanwhile, in 2020, in the context of reforms of the legal framework on the development of the physical reserve system, the RA Law “On Material Reserve” (2020) was adopted to regulate the relations pertaining to the formation, appropriation, storing, use, replenishment, and upgrade of the physical reserves. The nomenclature of strategic reserves includes inter alia sustainable stock of imported wheat and imported raw materials essential for its production, the schedule of accumulation and the procedure of registration whereof is defined by the Government. Moreover, the minimum imports of wheat last year, which is subject to the requirement of formation of the strategic reserves, was set at 4000 tons/year (RA Government decision, 2020). However, to promote domestic production of strategic reserves of wheat the legal framework and practical steps are not prioritized. Whereas investments in inputs for replenishment of wheat stock through import may trigger agricultural development and productivity in the country.

In general, the volumes of production of both grain and legume crops and yield have gradually dropped since 2016. As an example, while 21,000 tons of corn (for grain) were produced in 2016, only 6,500 tons were produced in 2020. In the case of whole grain, the figures were, correspondingly, 19,300 and 7,000 tons (i.e., a decline by around 12,300 tons). Declining dynamics were observed in fodder production as well: in 2020 the drop in production of grass and green fodder, and fodder crops doubled compared to 2016 (e.g., sugar beet for animal fodder). Such decline directly affects the development of animal husbandry in Armenia.

In contrast to grain, the production of perennial crops (fruit and berries) is predominantly organized in irrigable settings (more than 80%). Fruit orchards and berry fields are mostly located in Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor, and Aragatsotn provinces (Marz). Approximately 70,000 rural households are engaged in fruit farming, most of them (90%) organized on land plots below one hectare. Apricot, peach, plum, cherry, apple, pear, pomegranate, walnut, and others are the main fruits produced in Armenia. In recent years the area of fruit orchards and berry fields, and the generated yield essentially increased in Armenia. In 2016, compared to 2020, the area of fruit and berry plantations increased by 3,300 hectares, and the volume of yield produced by 31.7 tons (see Table 3). However, exports of fruit and berries have declined in the last three years by 7,400 tons fewer exports in 2018 compared to 2020. Compared to fruit and vegetables, exports of grapes increased by around 66% during the same years, amounting to 25,500 tons in 2020. The majority of vineyards (around 75%) are occupied by technical sorts of grapes for wine and cognac production.

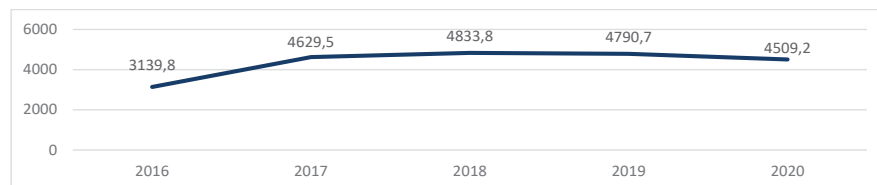
Wine and cognac production also play an important role in the total Armenian exports of foodstuff. Figure 2 suggests that wine and cognac exports were positively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019-2020.

Figure 2.

Volume of export of Cognac 2016-2020 (*Food Security and Poverty, 2021*)



Volume of export of Wine 2016-2020



In Armenia, main crop products include vegetables (tomato, cucumber, carrot, onion, garlic, cabbage, etc.), vegetable crops (watermelon, melon), and potatoes.

Table 3. Cultivated Land, Yield Producing Capacity and Gross Yield of Crop Vegetables in 2016-2020 (*Food Security and Poverty, 2021*)

	Cultivated land (thousand ha)					Yield producing capacity (c./ha)					Gross yield (thousand tons)				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Vegetables	30,2	28,3	21,7	20,6	21,3	301,8	286,3	258,6	265,0	280,8	968,6	861,0	628,2	621,6	692,8
Melon crops	7,3	6,8	4,6	4,3	4,0	325,1	316,8	276,3	300,6	317,1	236,1	215,8	126,8	128,0	126,6
Potato	28,9	25,3	22,1	20,5	20,5	209,8	214,9	187,3	199,2	212,8	606,3	547,4	415,1	404,1	437,2

Data from Table 3 suggest that in 2016-2019 the cultivated land and gross yield of vegetable crops declined from 2016 to 2019, while 2020 saw some positive dynamics of these indicators and yield capacity. In the case of melon crops, the descending trend of cultivated land and gross yield was sharper – compared to 2016, the two indicators dropped more than 1.8 times. This was driven mostly by the problem of availability of irrigation water and market accessibility. In general, the indicators of cultivated land and gross yield for potatoes also declined during the same years. Moreover, potato yield indicators were unstable in various years (average of 20.5 tons/ha), particularly because of access to quality seeds, as well as plant protection and fertilizers. In 2020, 73% of potato growing area was in Gegharkunik, Shirak, and Lori provinces.

Technical crops produced in Armenia include tobacco, with a reduced volume of production over the past five years: 700 tons in 2020 compared to 1,100 tons in 2016. Limited volumes of sunflower and sugar beet are also produced from among technical crops.

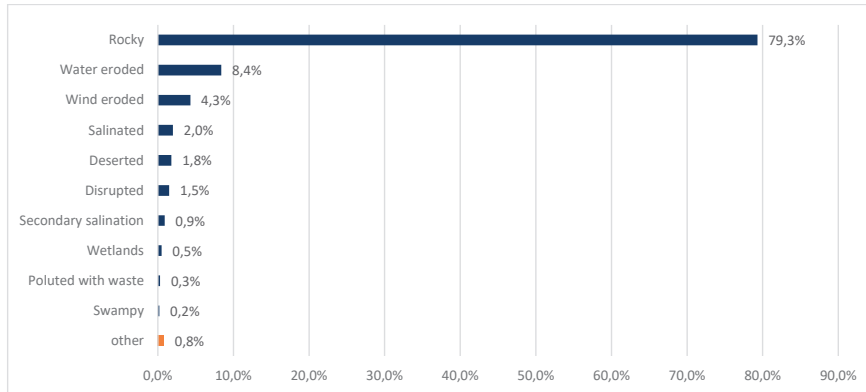
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Armenia's agriculture is characterized by scarcity along with inefficient use of land and water resources. Agriculture is more vulnerable, especially in the context of climate change (Assessment of Vulnerability of Agriculture to Climate Change and Adaptation to Climate Change in Armenia: Legal and Institutional Framework, 2020). In addition, environmental problems are caused by unsustainable plant growing and livestock raising practices, improper crop rotation, plant protection, fertilization and irrigation, unregulated rotation of pastures and grasslands, logging caused soil erosion, pollution, and deforestation. As a result, the soil changes its chemical and physical properties leading to further soil erosion, reduction of quantities of organic substances and nutrients, and higher soil erosion. It is the excessive use of low-quality chemicals and fertilizers polluting the soil that adversely affects the quality of the soil. Improper pasture management and overgrazing of farm animals also lead to soil erosion and deforestation. According to the data of the Statistical Committee of Armenia, in 2020 more than 160 hectares of agricultural land needed amelioration (Environment and Natural Resources in the Republic of Armenia in 2020, 2021).

Figure 3 suggests that multiple environmental agents could possibly affect soil deterioration, e.g., erosion caused by water and wind, salination, hyperhydration, desertification, pollution by stone and waste, etc. It is assumed that now around 50.9% of the territory of Armenia undergoes deforestation, and around 25.4% is at risk of desertification (Strategy Against Deforestation and its National Action Plan for Armenia, 2015). It is also projected that the process of desertification may accelerate under the impact of climate change (Assessment of Vulnerability of Agriculture to Climate Change and Adaptation to Climate Change in Armenia: Legal and Institutional Framework, 2020).

Figure 3.

Lands in need of amelioration according to qualitative parameters (2020)



(Environment and Natural Resources in the Republic of Armenia in 2020, 2021)

Due to improper irrigation and imperfect drainage, soil salination is a big issue, especially in the Ararat valley. Out of a total of 81,000 hectares of irrigable land, the area of salinized lands is around 24,000 hectares. Such lands can be used for agricultural purposes only after chemical melioration of the soil. Incorrect use of grasslands and pastures, overload of individual fields due to agricultural machinery, disruption of tillage and sowing processes, the poor state of irrigation networks, lack of crop rotation, unilateral fertilization, logging, and several other factors led to soil erosion. Cultivation of agricultural plants on such lands causes a reduction of yield capacity and deterioration of qualitative properties of yield.

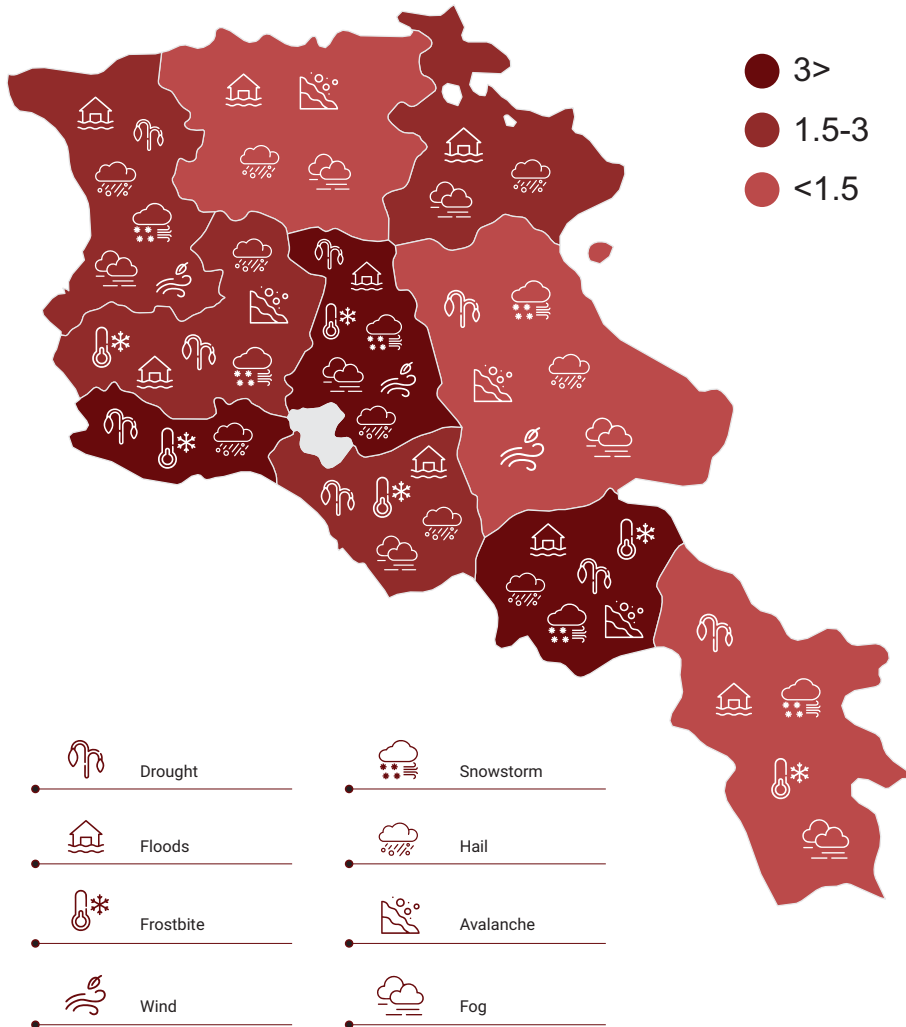
Enhanced infrastructures and mining activities and dumping of chemical waste cause land and soil pollution. It is aggravated by the lack of public understanding of the importance of soil and water conservation.

Due to infrastructure deterioration and inefficient use of irrigation water, more than half of irrigation water is lost in the irrigation network and doesn't reach the field; the next half is used inefficiently by rural households. According to ArmStat data (Water Use and Removal, 2021), in 2020 the share of transit losses was 23.1% of the water intake. In total, in 2020, water intake for agricultural purposes (including fish farming and forestry) amounted to more than 83.6% of total water intake in the country, while drinking water and industrial water use amounted to 7.6% and 8.8%, correspondingly. Fish breeding also affects the efficiency of water use, as it

required large quantities of fresh groundwater resources. In the meantime, in Ararat valley, where most of the fish farms are located, the water is not treated and is used only once, thereby consuming large quantities of fresh groundwater resources.

It is estimated that in the context of climate change, reduced water availability and increased temperature, as well as outbreaks of diseases and pests, will lead to a reduction in the yield capacity of crops. In the meantime, climate change is already posing multiple challenges to animal health, and economic viability of rural communities in Armenia, as well as globally (Fourth National Climate Assessment, 2017). As a rule, the impacts of climate change on agriculture in Armenia will lead to a significant drop in productivity, stronger negative impact by pests, and diseases, loss of agricultural resources caused by deforestation, soil erosion and degradation, and challenges to food security (Assessment of Vulnerability of Agriculture to Climate Change and Adaptation to Climate Change in Armenia: Legal and Institutional Framework, 2020, 8-9). The vulnerability of agriculture towards climate change in the provinces of Armenia is provided in the Map.

Vulnerability of Provinces (Marz) of Armenia to Hazards*



* Source: Hydrometeorological and Monitoring Service of the MoE RA (see "Vulnerability of agricultural sector to climate change in Armenia and evaluation of the climate change adaptability: Legal and institutional framework, 2020, 9).

Projections indicate that the impact of climate change on agriculture in Armenia will lead to:

- An estimated 24% decline in productivity of irrigable lands
- 4 to 10% reduction of the total area of pastures and their productivity by 2030,
- 7 to 10% reduction in grass yield capacity, which will lead to reductions in the volume of fodder production
- Deterioration (degradation) of agricultural lands, intensive deterioration of natural pastures
- Extreme weather accompanied by storms, severe winds, and heavy rains, which will harm the crops and yield capacity reducing it by 8 to 14% by 2030
- Additional need for irrigation water, which will amount to around 202 million m³,
- Increase of negative impact of plant and animal diseases and pests
- Food security issues (Assessment of Vulnerability of Agriculture to Climate Change and Adaptation to Climate Change in Armenia: Legal and Institutional Framework, 2020, p. 8-9).

SOCIAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

According to 2021 data, 68.8% of available land is agricultural land, moreover, only 7.6% of it is irrigable (Soil Balance, 2021). Arable lands are 21.7% of agricultural lands. According to data from the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, around 50% of available arable lands are not used (About 10 percent of villagers should engage in agriculture: the Minister prioritized creation of non-agricultural jobs in villages, 2021). One of the reasons behind uncultivated or inefficient land utilization is fragmentation. To address this, the Government Program for 2019-2023 (RA Government Program, 2019) states: “The Government finds it impermissible that 1/3 of agricultural land is left uncultivated. The Government is taking active measures to ensure purposeful use of unused agricultural lands. Incentives and mechanisms will be designed to achieve that goal” (p. 49). In the meantime, measures ensuring the implementation of the program aim to ensure roughly 80% purposeful use of arable lands as a result of land consolidation, merging, and enlargement of fragmented lands.

It is essentially rural families and households that are engaged in farming. The present stance on rurality is driven by several economic, social, legal, and environmental factors. Fragmented lands, worn-out irrigation networks and infrastructures or

lack thereof, monocultures, and inefficient management of cultivated lands and pastures, land degradation, and a number of other problems led to the deterioration of living conditions of the rural population and have forced many out of villages and farming. Due to migration from rural settlements and therefore the absence of landowners, many agricultural lands are now abandoned. Some of these lands have lost their primary function due to multiple years of lying waste, for instance, arable lands have turned into pastures.

The process of consolidation and enlargement of such lands is driven by multiple challenges, given the fact that the landowners have continuously failed to pay the land tax, and have cumulated debts.

One of the reasons for reduced productivity is the lack of knowledge and skills among farmers. The disconnect between research, policy, and agricultural practice directly affects the ability to organize and efficiently manage competitive and sustainable farming industry. There is a lack of information and knowledge among the players involved in all segments of agricultural value chains, and farming technologies and methods. In this situation, the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, responsible for the coordination of the agricultural sector, is designing concepts to shift to a digital advisory system and has been continuously cutting down positions of agriculturalist-advisors in the agricultural advisory, innovation, and monitoring departments of provincial administrations (Marzpetaran). For example, as a result of streamlining of the department in Tavush Marz, the agriculturalist-advisor is providing services to around 2337 individuals residing in rural areas.

Such capacities of advisory services and the knowledge of agriculturalist-adviser that are not updated regularly is not adequate to ensure the development of the agricultural sector. In the streamlining process, coordinators of the agricultural sector plan to transfer the advisory functions to the banks or those companies through which financial resources are pumped into the agricultural sector. There is the possibility of conflicts of interests, as such companies, in order to increase their output, may offer the farmers methods and technologies that are unsustainable for human health and the environment (for instance, to use fertilizers and chemicals beyond the standard to increase the yield).

The 2020-2030 Strategy for the main sectors ensuring the economic development in the agricultural sector of Armenia, adopted by RA Government Decree No

1886-L on December 19, 2019, defines: “During coming ten years have happy and prosperous rural population living in harmony with the environment, high-quality and competitive SMEs producing agricultural output” (p. 3).

According to the RA Ministry of Economy, in 2020 the volume of investments within the scope of state aid schemes for agriculture amounted to AMD 101 billion (State Aid Schemes for Agriculture, Annual Report, 2020). Such funds were spent to subsidize agricultural loans, develop cattle breeding, build, or rehabilitate small and medium “smart” barns, irrigation grids, hail protection nets, develop sheep/goat farming, and implementation of other state aid schemes. The report on the progress and outputs of implementation of Government programs in 2020 (2021) summarizes the efficiency of investments made in the agricultural sector (see Table 4).

Table 4. Outputs of investment in the agricultural sector made in 2020 within the framework of state aid schemes

In 2020, within the scope of the program subsidizing the interest on loans to the agricultural sector, around 37 thousand units of loans were provided in the amount of approximately 63 billion AMD.

Within the scope of the state aid scheme for financial leasing of agri-food equipment, in 2020, 186 leasing applications for 131 beneficiaries were approved in the amount of AMD 5.9 billion to buy 377 units of equipment.

Within the framework of the program to subsidize the interest rates of loans provided to the agri-processing sector to buy agricultural raw materials, 181 applications from 91 beneficiaries were approved in the amount of approximately 22.3 billion AMD, and more than 16,000 harvest purchase contracts were concluded with the farms within the project.

Within the scope of piloting the implementation of the agricultural insurance system, insurance companies sold more than 1500 insurance policies for 2300 hectares of land. In 2020, insurance companies have provided 300 insurance indemnities in the amount of around 150 million AMD for insured accidents.

Public investments through banks and private companies are targeted essentially to forming several dozens of medium-sized and large farmers and (re)-equipping them with modern farming technologies. As a result, less capacitated and resourced farmers and their families are left out of such programs.

Several projects financed by partner countries, associations, and organizations are also focusing on the development of rural areas and agriculture. One of these groups includes the European Union (EU) Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia Project, officially launched in 2020, focused on supporting balanced and harmonious development, especially in the northern regions of Armenia. 9.7 million out of a total of 11.7 million-euro project budget is provided by the EU and 2 million by the Austrian Development Agency responsible for implementation. The Armenian counterpart of the project is the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Around 2.6 million euros appropriated by the EU in 2021 will be directed to the development of rural areas in the southern regions of Armenia, especially in Syunik (Armenia: Remarks by Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi at the Press Point with Acting Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, 2021). This financial assistance in the next five years aims at promoting investments and contribution to the development of the economy, including agriculture.

While investments amounting to several hundred billion drams are made annually in the rural areas through state and international programs, they do not contribute to poverty reduction or solutions to food security issues. In 2020, the poverty level in Armenia was estimated at 27%, which is 0.6 percentage points higher than the 2019 figure (26.4%) (Armenia Poverty Snapshot in 2009-2020, 2021). Moreover, in rural settlements the poverty is at 34.8%, including 1.2% extreme poverty (extreme poverty in urban settlements is 0.4%, and in Yerevan – 0.2%). In 2020, 48.4% and 51.4% of the population were poor in Shirak and Aragatsotn provinces, respectively. According to the UN World Food Programme estimate for December 2021, more than half of households in Armenia (56.4%) have problems with food security, including 21.4% who are suffering with food insecurity (RA Law on Agricultural Cooperatives, 2015).

Mechanisms of cooperation and exchange of experience between farm economies are also weak. The RA Law on Agricultural Cooperatives adopted in 2015 (RA Law

on Agricultural Cooperatives, 2015) stipulates that “the goal of the cooperative is to achieve, through cooperation, rational use of available resources, catering of material and other needs of members, implementation of new initiatives and enhancement of efficiency of operations” (Article 4). The Government Program 2019-2023 (RA Government Program, 2019) aims to support the development of agriculture and create basic preconditions for strengthening the cooperatives. However, the actions specified in the Government Programs and the state aid schemes offered by the Ministry of Economy for agriculture do not prescribe specific mechanisms of financial assistance to the cooperatives, in addition to benefit instruments.

In general, the agricultural sector of Armenia is regulated by a number of laws and legal acts (see Table 5).

Table 5.
Legislative framework governing the agricultural sector in Armenia

Codes and laws

Land Code

Tax Code

Water Code

Law on National Water Program

Law on Seeds

Law on Flora

Law on Local Self-Government

Law on Organic Agriculture

Law on Beekeeping

Law on Use of Agricultural Hardware

Law on Phytosanitary

Law on Ensuring Food Security

Law on Foodstuff Safety

Law on State Surveillance over Foodstuff Safety

Law on Veterinary Medicine

Law on Agricultural Census in Armenia

Law on Veterinary Drugs

Law on Agricultural Cooperatives

Law on Hydro-Meteorological (HM) Activities

Strategies and Programs

Agriculture Development Strategy for 2020-2030

Strategic Program for Long-term Development of Armenia in 2014-2025

Government Program 2019-2023

Strategy against Deforestation in Armenia and National Action Plan

Program to neutralize the negative consequences of COVID-19 (subprograms)

Government Decisions

N 685; May 8, 2003; On approving the procedure of using the water systems for irrigation, pasture watering, soil washing and desalination, and other agricultural purposes

N 1692-N; November 18, 2004; Technical Regulation on the Requirements for Mineral Fertilizers

N 92-N; January 25, 2005; On approving the procedure for assessment of impact on soil resources caused by business activities

N 276-N; February 19, 2009; On approving the procedure of implementation of land monitoring

N 1477; October 28, 2010; The procedure of using the pastures and grasslands located on state and community owned lands

N 389-N; April 14, 2011; On the Rules of Using the Pastures and Grasslands

N 1582-N; November 10, 2011; Regarding the Framework of Assessing the Damage Individuals and Legal Persons Caused by Emergencies

N 15; April 13, 2017; On Approving the Concept on Preventing Damages to Agriculture Caused by Natural Hazards

N 6; May 16, 2019; Regarding the Actions for Implementation of 2019-2023 Activity Program Policies, Guides, etc.

Policy against Brucellosis in Farm Animals

Pasture Monitoring Guide

Farm Animal Immunization Program (FAIP)

Emergency Guideline and Procedures of Inter-Agency Cooperation

In addition to the above-given legislation, Armenia is a member of several international institutions and a number of conventions and treaties directly or indirectly linked to agriculture (Table 6).

Table 6.
International arrangements and institutions related to agricultural sector of Armenia

Year of accession or ratification	Year of accession or ratification
International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)	2006
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	1993
Kyoto Protocol on Reducing or Stabilising Greenhouse Gas Emissions	2002
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer	1999
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal	1999
Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	2003
Paris Agreement on Combating Climate Change	2017
International Institutions	
World Health Organizations	1992
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	1993
World Trade Organization	2003
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	2015
Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and EU (CEPA)	2021

The Agricultural sector in Armenia is regulated by several laws and legal acts, as well as international treaties and conventions; however, the legislation still misses the Law on Agriculture focusing on comprehensive regulation of relations among multiple actors in the agri-food system and the development of stable and inclusive policy for rural settlements. In addition, farmers or farm economies are described by several terms (such as landowner, farmer, villager, primary producer, farm economy, etc.) in the laws and legal acts, without specifying their legal (and social) status.

The Law on Agriculture and its respective Code should specify the legal regulations pertaining to farmers or farm economies. Such regulations shall become an important ground to build the mechanisms for social protection of farmers which is missing in the existing legislation.

THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATION

The process of community consolidation is, in fact, the crucial part of administrative and territorial reforms in Armenia. Administrative and territorial reforms in Armenia are implemented due to several problems in the field, particularly, territorial, and administrative fragmentation, low performance of local self-government authorities, limited resources (human, financial and other), low availability and low quality of services at the local level, limited opportunities for local development, and limited opportunities for decentralization.

The process of community enlargement was completed in 2021 with 79 communities (including 72 – consolidated) created out of the former 915. The average number of communities in a consolidation is 12.4. As of January 11th, 2021, the average population in communities was 6,979 (exclusive of Yerevan – 4678), while the average population in consolidated communities is 12,184 (Territorial Administrative Reforms, Enlarged Communities, 2022).

Main objectives of community enlargement are:

- Strengthening local capacities, broadening the chances of tackling their own problems with their own resources
- Improving the quality and increasing the quantity of public services in communities
- Identifying the competitive advantages of communities and implementing projects contributing to their realization,
- Creating real preconditions for economic development and life quality improvement in communities (Frequently Asked Questions about Territorial Administrative Reforms in Armenia, 2022, 1-3).

Along with this, it should be noted that community enlargement encompasses certain risks, in particular, the following:

- Heads of municipalities are mostly selected by the center (Administrative Territorial Reforms, Enlarged Communities, 2022)
- Decentralization reforms are implemented in a deteriorating social and economic situation, and poverty (Household's integrated living conditions survey anonymized microdata database (by Households), 2005)
- The efficiency of community enlargement is affected by the weak institutional and professional capacities of LSGs (Local self-government in Armenia, 2018, 120)

On the other hand, the distance between the settlement and respective consolidated municipality is defined in regulations, but with loopholes. For example, one of the consolidation criteria included in the Concept on Enlargement of Communities and Formation of Inter-community Units is that the distance of community settlements from the municipal center should not be more than 20 km (Concept on Enlargement of Communities and Formation of Inter-community Units, 2011), but there were various deviations from the designed scenarios (RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, 2022). It is aggravated by the combined use of grouping and circular methods without any changes in the management structure.

The number of settlements in an enlarged municipality may also entail several problems, as consolidation of a big number of communities at a time becomes a hindrance to further division, and in such cases, a lot of financial resources are needed to show changes to the population. On the other hand, according to experts' observations, from the perspective of service delivery, small settlements are a burden for large ones.

Note that two types of communities are formed as a result of enlargement – “rural-urban” and “rural-rural”. This risk related to the first scenario is that urban authorities may not be aware of the villagers' problems especially in the communities with a big number of consolidated settlements. In the case of the second scenario of consolidation, for instance, risks occur regarding the issue of consolidation of lands/pastures.

It should be noted, however, that community enlargement implies decentralization of powers with new powers transferred to LSGs, thereby enhancing the efficiency of local self-government and the quality and availability of municipal services delivered to the population. In the meantime, there is a shift to the model of the proportionate election of LSGs. Innovative solutions are planned for the communities focusing on effective governance and public participation in local self-governance.



PART 2.

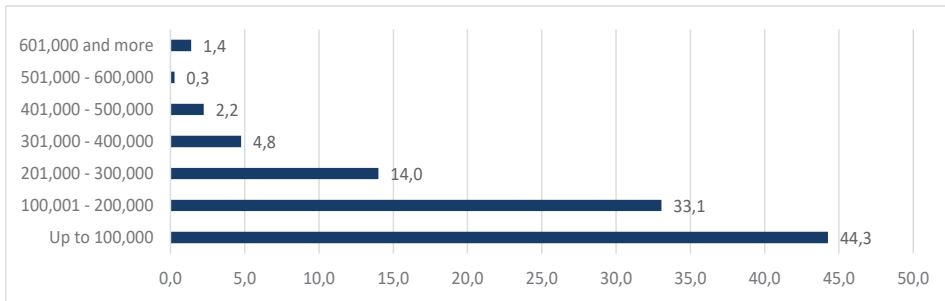
THE VILLAGE AND VILLAGER NOWADAYS

LIVING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURES

Key findings

Studies of rurality crisis, along with macro indicators, prioritize identification of villagers' living conditions, lifestyle, and subjective perceptions of wellbeing. Standardized interviews with villagers resulted in the following general picture. 91.3% of households included in the sample population, had an average monthly income of up to AMD 300,000, including 45% - up to AMD 100,000, 33% - AMD 101,000-200,000, and 14% - AMD 201,000 – 300,000 (See Figure 4).

Figure 4.
Average monthly household income (including all sources of income)

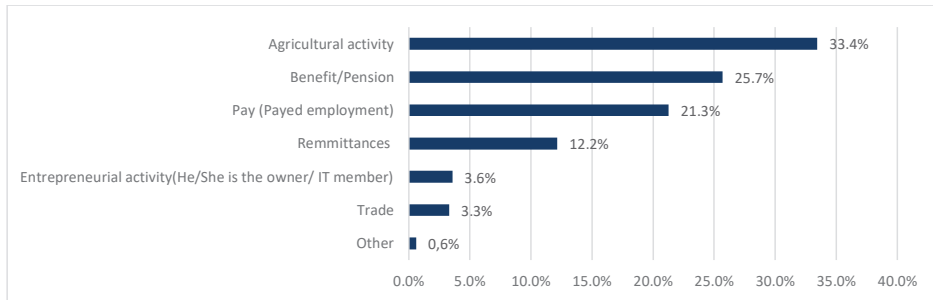


Moreover, the main sources of income for rural households surveyed predominantly included income from agricultural activities (33.4%), welfare benefits and/or age pension (25.7%) and pay or paid employment (21.3%). The main income for more than every 10th family are remittances. Income for almost 7% of rural families is from entrepreneurship and trade. This is most likely due villagers clearly differentiating the given activity and does not somehow identify it with farming.

We (researchers) assume that the latter is not necessarily an end in itself, has explicit direct relevance to trade, often includes elements of entrepreneurship (maybe formal), such as rational organization, planning, lending, investments, innovations, etc. (see the details in Figure 5).

Figure 5.

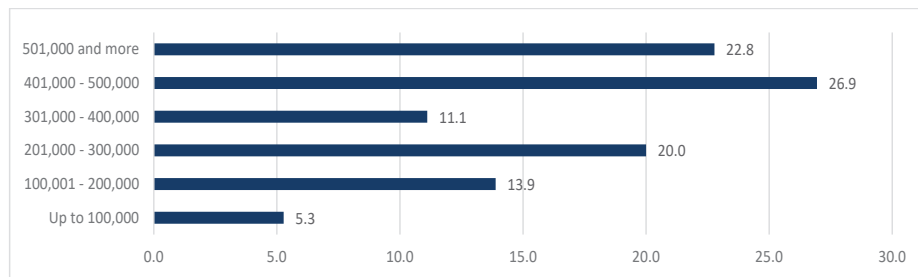
Which are the main financial sources of your household?



Interestingly, 26.9% of respondents indicated that to live a decent life households should have an average monthly income of AMD 401,000-500,000, and 22.8% - AMD 501,000 and higher. 50.35% of the rural population is content with up to AMD 400,000 family income to live a decent life. Every fifth household expects an income of AMD 201,000-300,000. Nearly every seventh family is content with AMD 101,000 -200,000 monthly income. In the meantime, only 5.3% of respondents indicated that they need on average up to AMD 100,000 monthly to live a decent life (See Figure 6).

Figure 6.

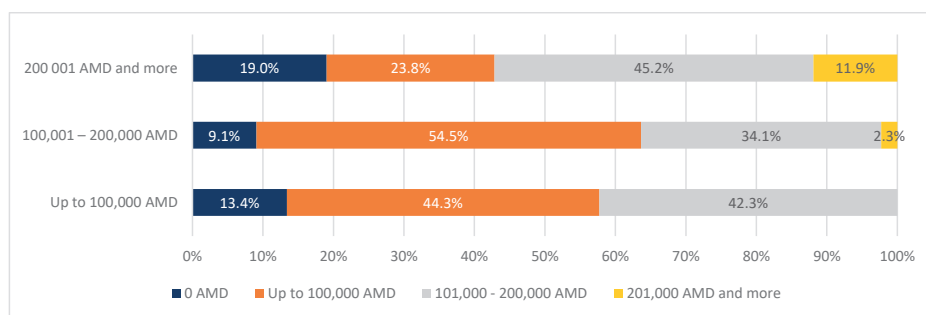
In your opinion how much should be the average monthly income of the household to live a decent life? (N=360)



Note that the gap between the expected and actual income of households is AMD 270,000. The expected income is not different from actual income for 13.4% of households, with up to 100,000 AMD income, 9.1% of households with 101,000 – 200,000 AMD income, and 19% of households with AMD 201,000 and higher income. Moreover, parallel to the increase of actual income, the gap between

expected and actual income also increases ($X^2=20.226$, $p<0.01$, Cramer's $V=.235$, $CI=99\%$) (see Figure 7). Such statistical correlation is most likely driven by the consumption profile of prosperous, well-off families with more extensive expectations and broader social activities. To put it differently, at some levels of prosperity, deprivation shows itself more vividly than in the lower social strata. This is suggested by the social pattern whereby representatives of lower social strata are hardly participating in labor migration. Prosperity is balanced at an optimal level of half-hungry survival.

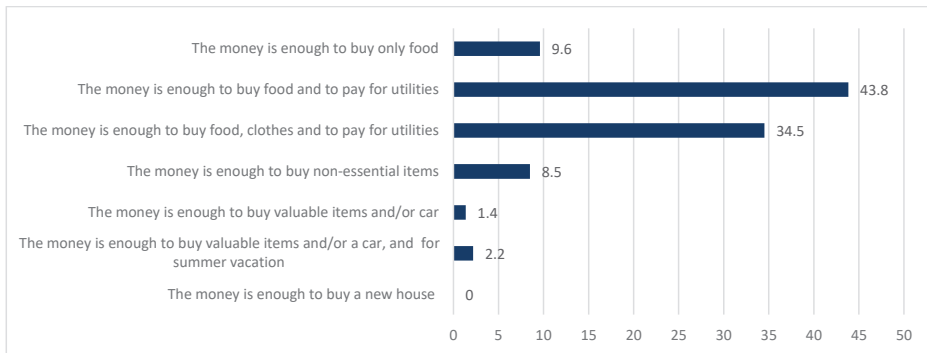
Figure 7.
Gap between expected and actual income according to households



Nearly every tenth of the households surveyed are extremely impoverished according to subjective perception. In 9.6% of cases, the money is enough to buy only food. Of course, the qualitative difference between urban and rural poverty should also be noted, as villagers have some level of subsistence, and are party to exchange.

They have access to minimum resources needed for survival – cheap jobs, manure, timber. For nearly half of them (43.8%) the money is sufficient to buy only food and pay for the utilities. For 34.5% - they can also afford to buy clothes. Only in 3.6% of cases were households' income enough to also make purchases of valuable items (see Figure 8).

Figure 8.
Financial status of the household (N=365)

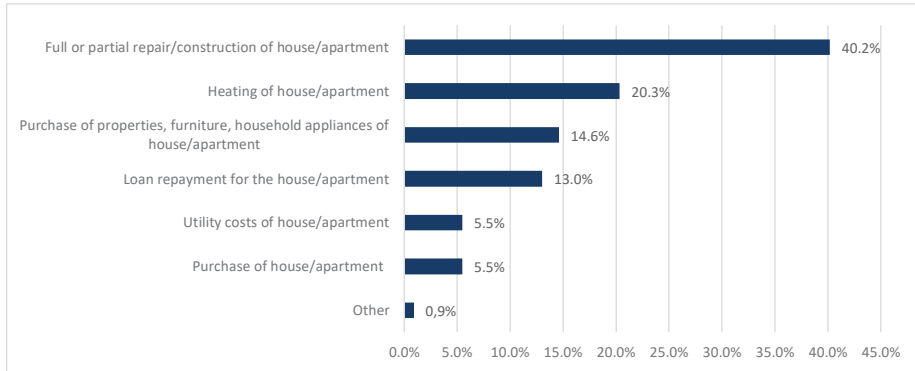


Here, too, the correlation between subjective opinion about the household's well-being and the size of expected income is to some extent apparent. According to Kruskal-Wallis statistical test, it is significant ($H=19.595$, $p<0.001$, $CI=99\%$) – the higher the level of a household's wellbeing, the more money is needed to lead a decent life. Interestingly, nearly every fourth respondent (23.5%), whose income is enough to afford only food, finds that up to 200,000 AMD monthly income for the household is enough to live a decent life.

The houses in rural settlements are old and deteriorated. 40.2% of villagers need urgent renovation of their house/apartment. Nearly a fifth (20.3%) of household has a problem with heating the house/apartment, for 14.6% it is urgent to purchase furniture and/or appliances, and for 13% - to repay a loan. Utility payments and costs are extremely problematic for 5.5% (see the details in Figure 9).

Figure 9.

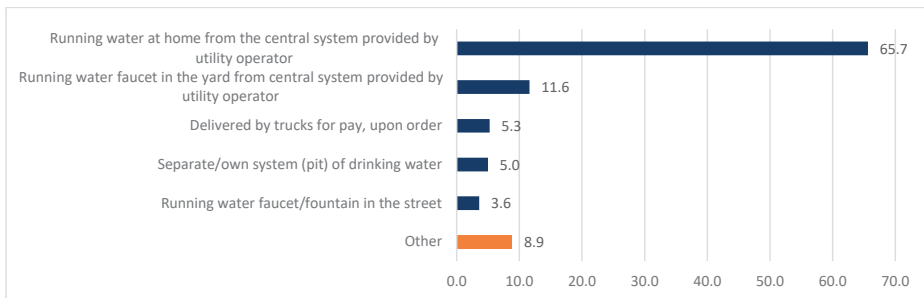
What are the most important apartment related issues requiring urgent solutions



Water supplies in the rural settlements of Armenia have not been continuously upgraded. The main source of drinking water for most households surveyed (65.7%) is the running water of the central network, and for 11.6% - the faucet for the running water from the central network installed in the yard (see the details in Figure 10).

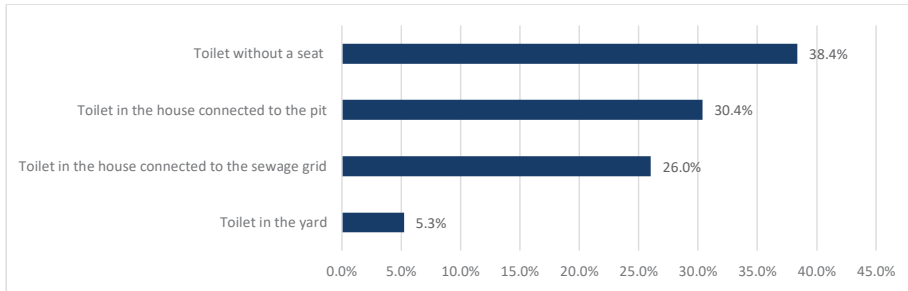
Figure 10.

Which is the main source of water for your household N=361



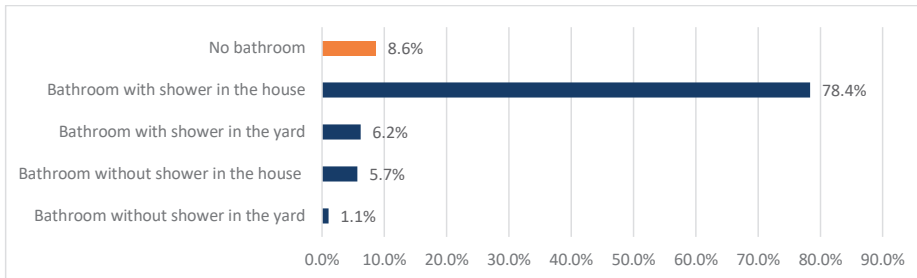
In the meantime, as shown in Figure 11, 38.4% of respondents use toilets without a seat installed in their yard or residential land. 30% of respondents have a toilet connected to the pit, and 26% have a toilet in the house or apartment connected to the central sewage grid (see the details in Figure 11).

Figure 11.
Description of the toilet in the house



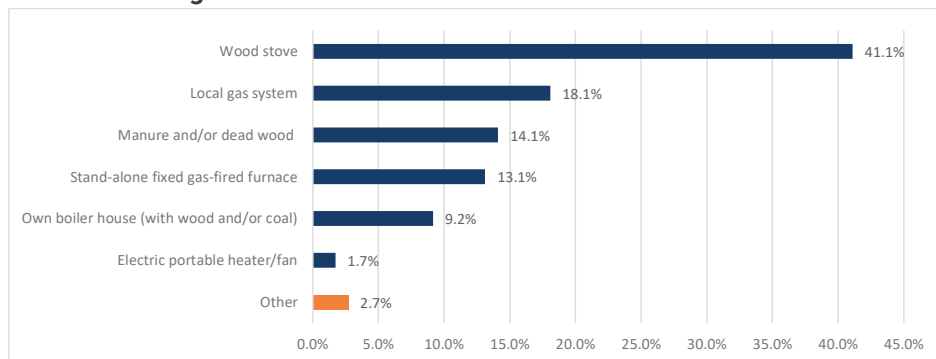
Note that 8.6% of respondents expressed that they did not have a bathroom in the house or apartment, and 78.4% have a bathroom equipped with a shower (see the details in Figure 12).

Figure 12.
Description of the bathroom in the house



Heating is also problematic in the rural settlements of Armenia. 41.1% of surveyed households heat their house or apartment with a wood furnace, which implies the elimination of already scarce forest areas with short- and long-term consequences. Only 18.1% of villagers heat their apartment/house with gas. The fact that 14.1% of the rural population heat their house or apartment with manure or harvested dead wood suggests financial insecurity and poverty of the rural population. 13.1% of the rural population use a static gas stove for heating, which again suggests a lack of total, expensive gasification of the apartment (see the details in Figure 13).

Figure 13.
Mode of heating the house



This data directly points towards poverty and a lack of well-being. Households with lower levels of well-being heat their houses mainly with a wood furnace ($X^2=11,152$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.175$) and manure or harvested dead wood ($X^2=13,690$, $p=0.018$, Cramer's $V=0.194$, $CI=95\%$) (see Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14.
Distribution of households with wood-based heating according to subjective perceptions of well-being

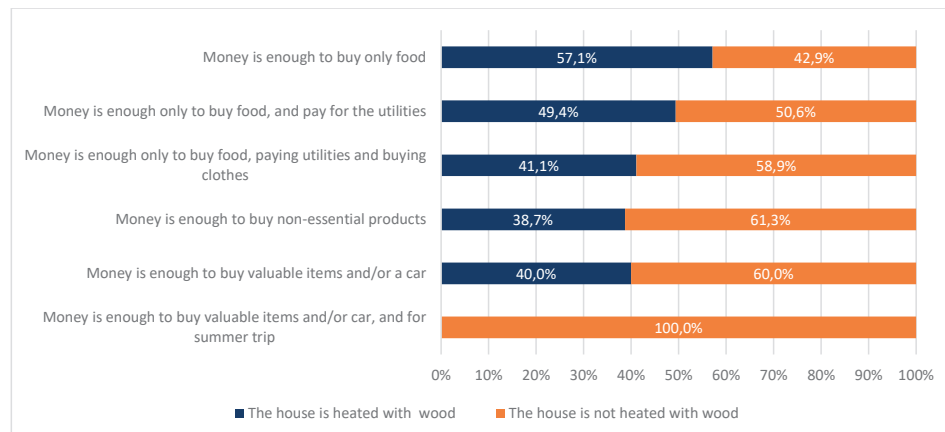
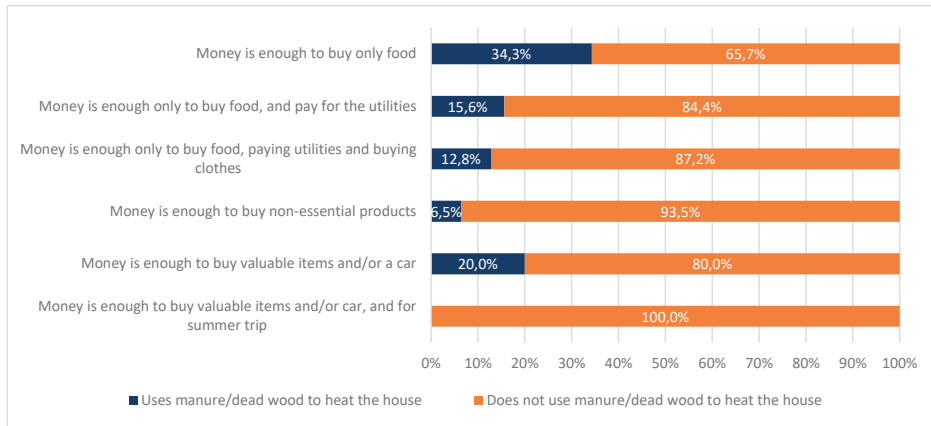


Figure 15.

Distribution of households with manure/wood-based heating according to subjective perceptions of well-being



In the context of the existence and attractiveness of the rural population, organization of rural population's life, their social and economic integration, and connection with the locality it is important to understand the attitude of the rural population towards rural infrastructure and services.

The rural population, as a rule, acknowledges the quality of rural infrastructure and services provided. Correspondingly, 67% and 22.5% of the rural population think that the efficiency of gas supply is very high. Only 10% of the rural population has negative attitudes towards gas supply.

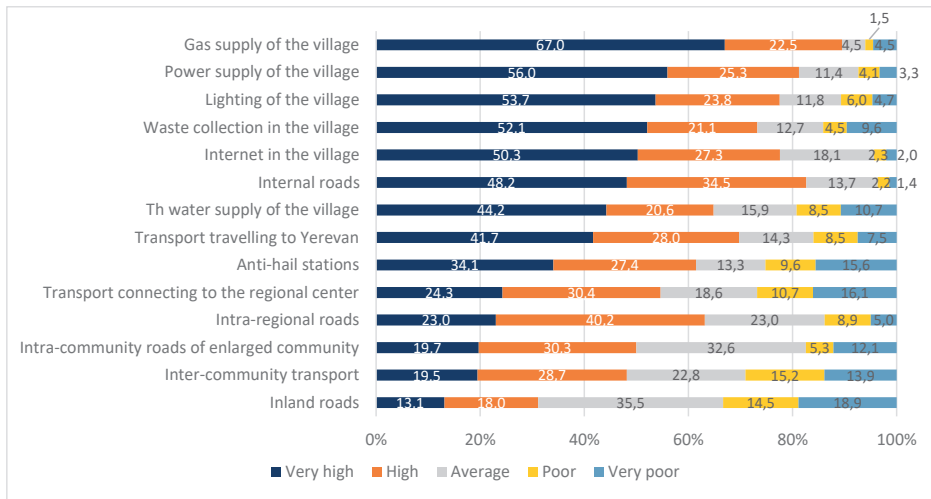
81.3% of respondents find that the efficiency of power supply to rural settlements is high. Indeed, big achievements are observed in street lighting of villages, with nearly 80% of residents being happy with it, but there is also some dissatisfaction (10.7%). In general, the waste collection was rated positively, 72.2% of residents are satisfied with it. However, waste collection is problematic for nearly 15% of respondents.

Survey data suggest positive views regarding coverage, accessibility, and quality of internet in Armenia, and specifically in the rural settlements. Thus, the majority of the population is generally happy with the internet (77.6%), 18.1% of respondents rate the quality of internet as average. Unfortunately, such achievements cannot

be extended to the rural water supply. Although a majority of the rural population, 64.8%, are satisfied, 35.2% of the population has some sort of water related problem. Hail protection stations also raise discontent with 38.5% of the population.

Another important note is that transportation to Yerevan and regional centers mostly received positive feedback, 69.7% and 54.7% accordingly. However, intercommunity transport received lower feedback, with 51.9% of potential passengers being unsatisfied. The quality of local roads, too, according to the rural population is lower than the quality of republican and/or regional roads (see the details in Figure 16).

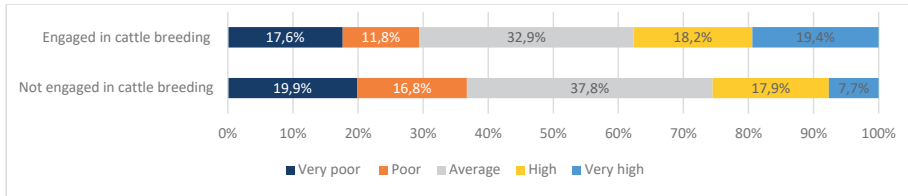
Figure 16.
Villagers' evaluation of the quality of rural infrastructure and/or services delivered



Intracommunity roads are problematic for most respondents, around 70%, of which 20% find that they are extremely bad (see Figure 17). This situation is similar to other intracommunity roads. There is a surprisingly low statistical correlation between the quality of intracommunity roads and the share of those engaged in animal husbandry, according to which the poorer the quality of roads the lower the number of cattle breeders ($X^2=12.061$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.182$, $CI=95\%$).

Figure 17.

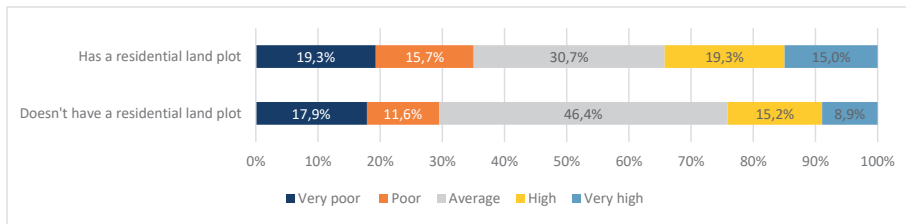
The quality of internal roads of village according to villagers



Similarly, village roads receive more negative feedback from the rural population, who do not have any other land besides their residential land plot (see Figure 18).

Figure 18.

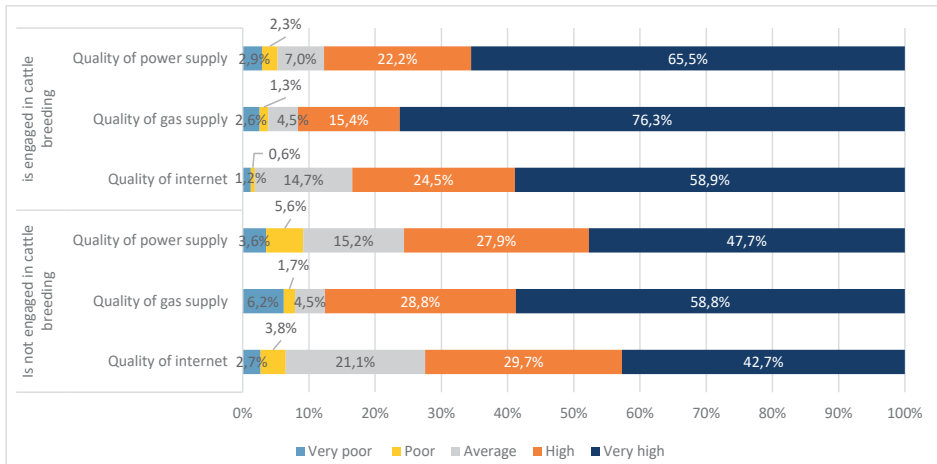
The quality of the internal roads of village according to evaluation of farmers ($X^2=9.298$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.159$, $CI=95\%$)



On the other hand, the representatives of households involved in animal husbandry are, as a rule, more inclined to think highly of the main rural infrastructure, including power supply ($X^2=14.229$, $p<0.01$, Cramer's $V=0.197$), gas supply ($X^2=12.990$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.198$, $CI=95\%$) and internet ($X^2=12.034$, $p<0.05$, Cramer's $V=0.186$, $CI=95\%$) (see Figure 19).

Figure 19.

Evaluation of the quality of rural infrastructure depending on villager’s involvement in animal farming practices



Discussion

Results of the survey outline living conditions typical for the current Armenian rural environment, often indicate substandard living conditions. The panorama of information obtained presents severe poverty spread and the establishment of a culture of poverty, where actual minimum improvement of living conditions is perceived as a compact solution to fundamental problems. Moreover, direct and indirect poverty are indicative of their persistence and even potential of intensification (for example, lack of access to renewable, effective, and less harmful heating).

In the meantime, poverty, lesser well-being, and a lack of effective perspectives have structural bases. Infrastructures of vital need are futile and ineffective. An individual villager will not be able to address their improvement. This then develops into personal reasons for feelings of failure, social rejection, and leaving the village. The sustainability of poverty is indirectly expressed in villagers’ subjective low self-esteem. When comparing with the contemporary city and urban life, manifestations of relative deprivation are frequent.

The negative aspect of the village is manifested by heroizing the fact of living in the village; living in the village requires personal heroism. Additionally, compari-

sons are made not only between the city and village but also across generations.

I would like our villagers to be heroized, as every day these people face such problems as poor roads, lack of gas, lack of water, lack of new jobs. It is very difficult, especially for the youth.

40-year-old male, Lori

Perhaps, the only visible thing that I do for the village is that I live in the village. ... No matter how much you love the village, the village is good, but living in the village is more difficult than living in a city. As a brother, I would like for my sisters to have an easier life.

40-year-old male, Tavush

Younger people already know what will happen – they will leave that dirty work, and find a quiet, a lighter job for them in the city, and will go there to work; it is more advantageous for them, rather than being in dirt and filth; everybody seeks going to the city. The younger ones say... villager's work is a dirty one.

65-year-old female, Lori

Compared to the city, the presentation of rural life as a positive experience is mainly in the ecological context, meaning the intact surroundings of nature.

... it is not like city, it is natural, clean. The scent of mountains, the freshness when you pass by streams. In the city, there is a lot of transport; the village is clean...

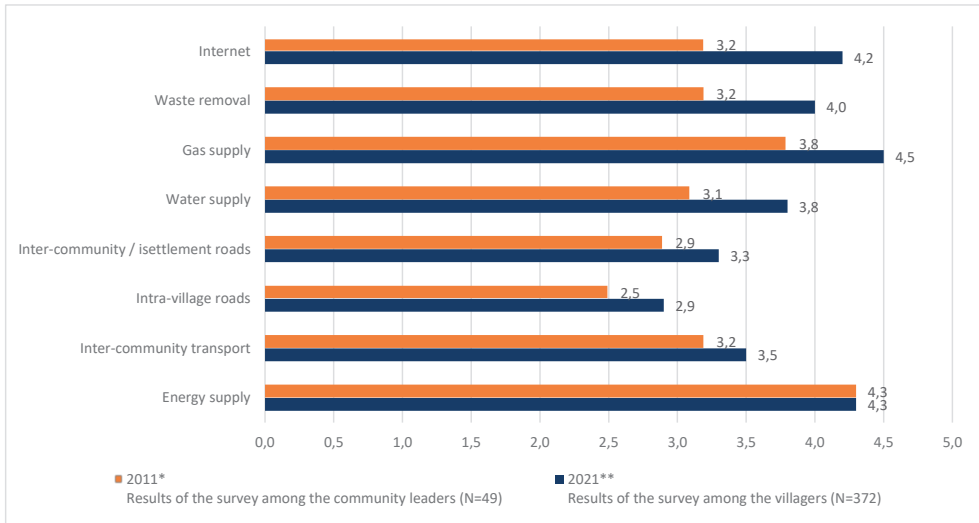
60-year-old female, Syunik

We may assume that the mythology of natural, environmental cleanliness conceals a comparative moral intactness, the main compensation for the heroic struggle, the ultimate sophistication of the struggle. Despite non-desirable social-economic conditions, the above-stated comparative data indicates some positive changes, especially in terms of infrastructure development. Based on the results of the survey⁸ conducted among the heads of the RA rural communities in 2011, we

may compare, with some limitations^{***}, the change in the quality of village infrastructures over the last decade. As can be seen, the maximum improvement has been achieved in internet infrastructure. There are also achievements in garbage collection, gas supply, and the water supply sectors. Strangely, satisfaction with power supply has also reached the same level (see Figure 20).

Figure 20.

Average evaluation of rural social-economic infrastructure according to 2011 and 2021 survey results



* In 2011, the Laboratory of Applied Sociology of the Faculty of Sociology of the YSU, conducted a standardized interview among the heads of the RA rural communities (N=49). Heads of communities were selected from among all the marzes of the RA (Ararat (N=4), Armavir (N=4), Shirak (N=4), Lori (N=5), Tavush (N=7), Gegharkunik (N=4), Aragatsotn (N=4), Kotayk (N=8), Vayots Dzor (N=3), Syunik (N=6)) (including representatives from 12 border and 37 non-border communities, representatives from 9 communities included in the list of the RA poor communities and 40 communities that are not included in that list).

** In one case, the results of the survey express evaluations of the rural population, and in the other case the evaluations of the heads of rural communities as a generalized character of the rural population. However, in both cases, we deal with subjective representational evaluations, where the quality of infrastructure has been evaluated on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 - the highest one.

The rural population also addressed these changes during qualitative interviews.

I may say that our road has been reconstructed, and it seems to give life to the village. Previously, they would avoid coming to our village; no car would pass by this area, as the road was in a terrible condition. The roads have been reconstructed for already 4-5 years.

65-year-old male, Kotayk

Perception of infrastructures, mostly the roads, reiterates the traditional, applicable mythology regarding the latter. It is not a technical matter of only connection and communication. Yet in the 21st century, the road has once again given life to the dead. Note that here we deal with the key to social optimism assuming multi-sectoral, voluminous consequences. In village residents' perceptions regarding a prosperous life, as a source of the latter, the very agricultural forms of work and/or employment, are defeated and seen as inferior to other production-industrial entrepreneurship. Agriculture is strangely far from an effective commercial-economic undertaking; it is a way of living, an imperative without any precondition and even an inevitable barrier to a humane way of living. Particularly, to enhance the level of wellbeing in the village, the rural population specifically attaches importance to the establishment and/or operation of non-agricultural entrepreneurship.

There is no future in the agriculture; if you don't have an income on the side, it is impossible to be able to live, solely relying on soil.

50-year-old female, Ararat

Even in a village that is far from the city, the city continues to be an aspirational, relatively disorientating beacon. The villager requires the industrialization of the village. Even their dreams are embodied in the archaic terminology of the first industrial revolution.

What can be done for your village? Some manufacturing plants should be set up for it to develop, so that the villagers work, so that there are workplaces. Otherwise, how the village would develop...?

50-year-old female, Ararat

Conventionally speaking, we witnessed the paradox of the villager. The winning

villager wins the village, benefits from the city, and the losing villager is still the slave of the land – the basis of his/her essence.

The torments and efforts are not worth the income. I should say that, when the villager left the land and became a city dweller, only then did he/she somehow understand that he/she was able to live.

65-year-old male, Armavir

In his/her relationships with the city, the villager reproduces classic, industrial patterns of their own comparative stance. He/she is the key to the existence of industrial production, the city, the urban resident. He/she requires restoration of his/her key role and, only thereafter – the agriculture sustainability.

My dream is to have a cannery in our village.

35-year-old male, Armavir

The villager assumes his/her stable, prospective existence only “with the city”, “for the city”, “in the city”, and finally – “like the city.” This is seen by the fact that, besides social-economic infrastructures, the rural population attaches importance to the restoration and development of the older cultural infrastructures that were previously taken from the city, which made the villager a developed person-citizen. The above paradox requires much more than just an ordinary children’s group or a rural club, but rather entire cinemas and theatres, the availability of which is indicative of the cultural level. This then loosens the symbolic burden on the farmer and finally attaches him/her to an already developed village. In addition to the effective organization of everyday living, the villager requires local education – kindergartens, schools, cultural halls, but also a local cultural elite that would thereby cover his/her undesirable low profile. Strangely, for many centuries, enlightenment has been a lifesaving ring for the villager.

What else had an impact on our mindset? ... we had a puppet theatre in the city, the director of which was a villager. He decided to transfer the puppet theatre into our village. And he was an illuminator for us. He used to be in a continuous contact with the youth of the village and would explain what is dependent on the young people.

40-year-old male, Lori

Now there are good buildings, music schools, etc. in the village, these are reconstructed; previously they were demolished or not available; there is a kindergarten, a bit reconstructed; and they reconstructed it.

65-year-old female, Lori

Today, there is neither a cultural center, nor a kindergarten in the village. Now they are about to arrange, once we had a kindergarten here. They closed it because of lack of children.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

Note that "La revanche de Dieux" (Huntington, 1993), being rather advanced in 1990s, gradually yields its leading positions. In the same 21st century, the classic enlightenment that has not yet exhausted itself, fights against clergy.

For what do they build a church in this poor country, where people starve? For the one who builds it, so that his/her name is never forgotten? It would be better if he/she builds a cultural centre, cinema, theatre, so that our children feel better...

35-year-old male, Armavir

With the secular culture, the villager opposes not only the clerical power, the relevant symbolisms, but also urban authorities.

Little attention was attached to the culture; now the rural municipality is at that cultural center, where they would also do sports at one time. I remember with longing how interesting it was at that time - there was a movie camera; they would always bring a movie, concerts, plays. In 90s everything collapsed.

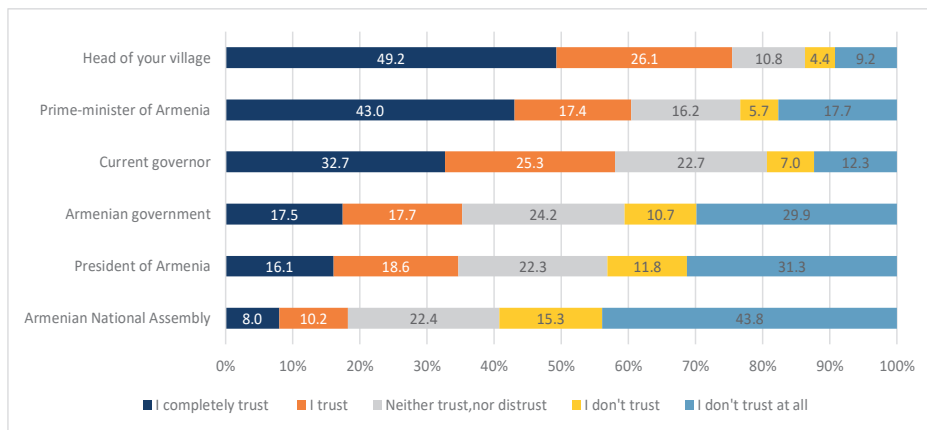
65-year-old male, Kotayk

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

Key findings

Joining the village, being a part thereof assumes a high level of social inclusion, i.e., social trust and community participation. Thus, village residents have more trust in the local authorities (75.3% trust in full or in part), particularly, the head of communities, rather than the governmental authorities. In the second place is the RA Prime Minister, whom 60.4% of villagers trust to some extent; we can say for sure that this relates not necessarily to the position, but rather the personality. Regarding governmental institutions, the villagers have a minimum trust in the RA Government (40.6%) and the RA President (43.1%), whose secondary role and conventional nature are incomprehensible for the villagers. Huge mistrust is appropriated to the National Assembly (59.1%) (see Figure 21).

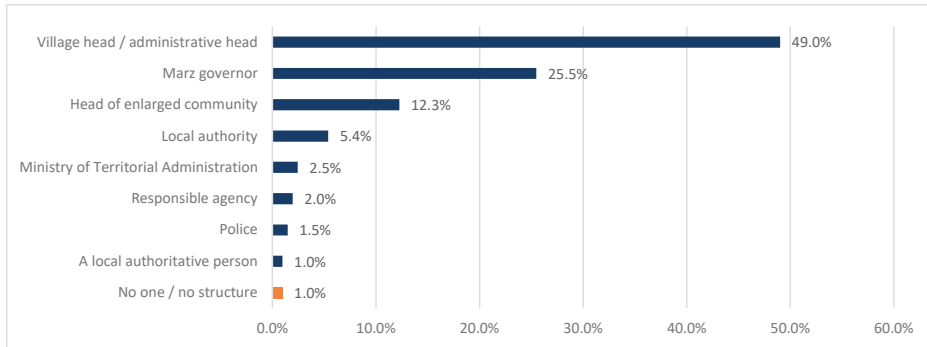
Figure 21.
How much do you trust?



Everyday relationships are indicative of the stated relative positioning. Almost half (49%) of the rural population will apply to the head of the community or the administrative head (in case of consolidated communities) for the issues of the rural level, and one-fourth (25.5%) – to the head of regional administration. In the meantime, 12.3% are ready to apply to the head of the consolidated community (see Figure 22).

Figure 22.

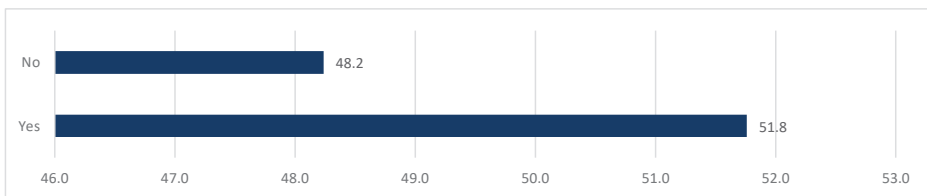
Whom would you apply regarding issues at local level (N=204)



High social trust and mutually beneficial social relationships are seen, given the fact that more than half of the rural population (51.8%) will appeal to his/her co-villager to borrow money in case of need (see Figure 23). Unfortunately, the survey methodology did not allow for the identification of the legitimacy, prehistory, or conditions of that process.

Figure 23.

Would you ask your co-villager, when needed, to lend you money? N=369

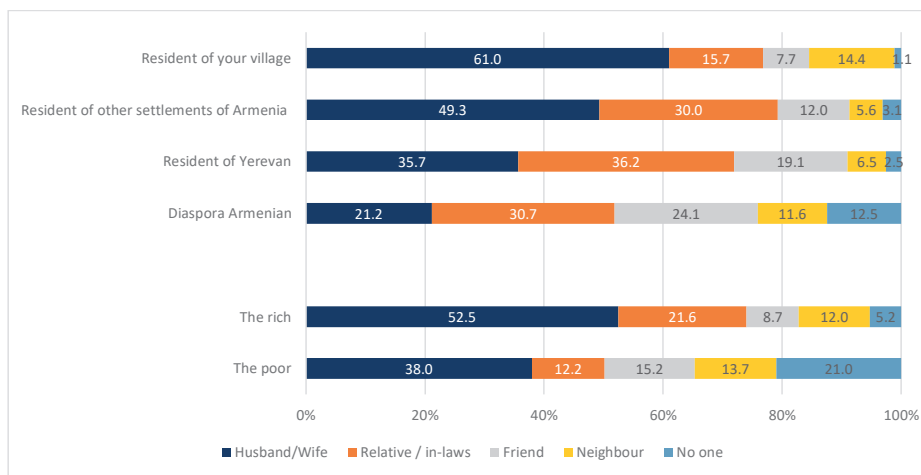


A key indicator of mutual inclusion in the village, joining the rural community and relations is the social distance of the rural population from local and not only local representatives of concrete and abstract social categories. Figure 24 shows the social distance of the RA rural population from the population of their own village and other settlements of the RA, from Yerevanians, Diaspora Armenians, the rich, and the poor. Villagers consider themselves closer to the residents of their own village, considering them, in 61% of cases, in the status of the closest family member – spouse. Note that only 35.7% of villagers consider Yerevanians in the same status.

The comparative class positioning of villagers is interesting: strangely, the poor

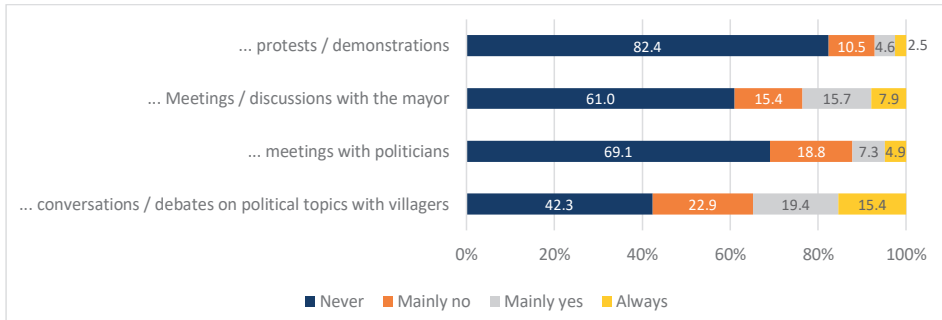
villager is socially closer to the rich, rather than someone seemingly “like him/her.” 52.5% of the latter sees the rich in the status of their own spouse, unlike the poor, the probability of which to find themselves in this status is only 38%. Further explanations require additional targeted surveys. One may only assume that friendship with the rich is an opportunity for upward social movement. Additionally, 21% of villagers do not want to have any social ties with the poor (for more details, see Figure 24).

Figure 24.
In what maximum status village residents can have a contact with representatives of the stated category?



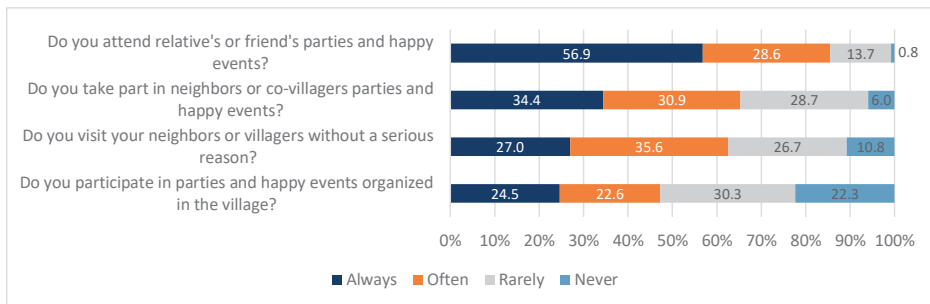
Civil passiveness is typical for the village. Particularly, 82.4% of the interviewed rural population has never participated in protest acts and/or demonstrations over the last year, 69.1% have not participated in meetings with politicians, and 61% in meetings and/or discussions with their head of the community. The social range of public communications is narrow, traditional, most probably based on class and non-formal. More frequently, villagers participate in informal talks and/or debates on political topics with their co-villagers (for more details, see Figure 25).

Figure 25.
Have you participated over the past year in...?



Regarding informal events at a local level, most village residents participate in parties and other happy events organized by relatives or friends (56.9% always attend and 28.6% often), For events organized by neighbors (34.4% always and 30.9% often). More than half of them (62.6%) can visit, as a guest, to neighbors or co-villagers. Some villagers are more passive in participating in village occasions and happy events (22.3% never participates in such events) (for more details, see Figure 26).

Figure 26.
Frequency of villagers' social contacts



There is a significant statistical linkage between the average monthly income of village residents' households and the frequency of participation in parties or happy events; the higher the average monthly household income, the more frequent is their participation in parties or happy events, which is indicative of the linkage of so-called social poverty (poor social inclusion) and material, monetary poverty. It is this very tandem that, all other things being equal, ensures the vitality of the

poverty trap, continuity of endless poverty from generation to generation (see Table 7).

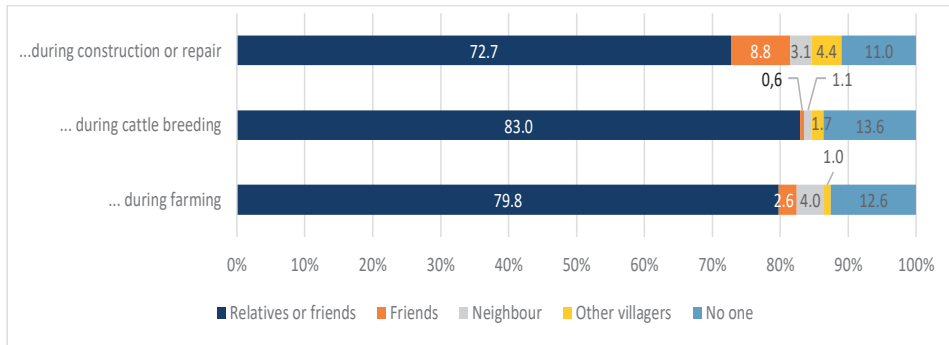
Table 7.

		Do you participate in parties or happy events of relatives or friends?	Do you participate in parties or happy events of neighbors or co-villagers?
Average monthly household income	Spearman rho	0.110	0.106
	p	0.037	0.046
	N	357	357

Social ties characterize, in the best possible way, mutual assistance and support. In everyday practices of the village, such as construction and repair, farming, and livestock breeding, relatives and friends most frequently assist when needed. Note that, while friends help during construction and repair in 8.8% of cases, they rarely help in the case of farming and livestock breeding (for more details, see Figure 27).

Today as well, the village reproduces tribal, family-centered relationships, where even village friends have fairly limited access. Thereby, in conditions of intensified individualization under the effect of external macro-factors, the villager is alone in facing problems, at best perhaps only with their own family. These observations identify a village that still preserves fragmental, only poor formal interactions, a mutually alienated village, and any reform assuming restoration of a traditional community in a short run is perhaps impossible. This is an obvious example of a rurality crisis at the microlevel.

Figure 27.
Who are mainly helping you...?



Discussion

As described by the survey results, village residents mostly trust their local authorities, but trust in governmental authorities is low. Historical dynamics needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand villagers’ current perceptions of big government. Villagers compare life under the former soviet system to present realities; they are no longer naïve and so they are less trusting towards the government.

In the past, people were very naïve, they were quiet and would believe that everything would be great, smooth, there would not be any talk, neither any argument, acting like a submissive daughter-in-law.

Female, 65-year-old, Aragatsotn

This is an important consideration in the context of the discussion of the agricultural crisis. While under the classic definition “villager connects any type of accident of nature with the name of God, and the events in the public life with the King”, as he/she “... is the slave of the nature and master...”* this was the ideal type of rural resident, the observation regarding ideological and rural life cultural transformations records the regular impact of city and urban life on the current village and rural resident (Vermishyan, 2012). He/she is not as naïve as before.

Continuing the discussion on trust, note that villagers’ own viewpoints, especially with respect to the authorities, particularly the local ones, are personalized by rural

* Referring to Gleb Uspensky, as written by David Ananun (Ananun, 1915, 3).

population, leading it to the scope of informal relationships. From this perspective, especially the head of village is specified as a central actor. Note that the personal (not official, bureaucratic) qualities of the head of the village, being strong and capable, is often considered as a key to success for both the village and the villager.

Our head of village does very-very good things for this village. For each resident... he is a cool guy, and manages things with enthusiasm... The head of village says – I am there for my villager. Whatever is needed, I can help my villager. There are garbage cans in the village ... everything. Streetlights, asphalt... This man tries to do.

Male, 65-year-old, Armavir

The former head of community as well ... did very good things for the community. He had set up the gas pipeline; today the community is fully provided with water, and during his tenure in office, our chapel was built. The gas pipeline was set up from Shorja with great difficulties. He set up 7 km of water pipeline, changed this internal network. He did great things. And the heads of neighbouring villages fail to make such efforts; therefore, the village suffers.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

In the context of the rural population, social inclusion, social trust, and reproduction, the key concept of the “we-they” divide has become a classic notion in sociological studies. This means:

- *Differences between “new-comers” and locals or natives*

Issues concerning internal group divisions in the village are apparent; however, class, and social-economic differences are secondary. Historical, genealogical, “sub-ethnic” specificities are dominant. Those who have been part of the village earlier in chronological terms have a status of native in the village; the rest are “new-comers.” The tension, antipathy, and obvious conflicts between the groups were especially marked both in the first half of the 20th century and in the 1990s concerning villages that were resettled during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war. People reacted with discrimination, created opposing identity groups, and external dissociation from others.

We came to (name of the city), took an area of two hectares. My father says – we lived for 4.5 years, but the residents of [name of the city] ill-treated us, they would say that these people are Turks, foreigners, as they would call the new-comers; they said that we are foreigners, and they are natives....then we moved here, and here all have been new-comers; this was a Turkish village, then Armenians have driven the Turks away; we have come here to live.

75-year-old male, Aragatsotn

Well, we have come here from Artsvashen in 1988; thereafter, the rest arrived [he means the Armenians being displaced from Baku] ... Naturally, there have been fights from village to village, mainly with Baku and Dashkesan people and our local Armenians – the Armenians from Armenia. But now we have accommodated. Their traditions, differences have been adapted to ours.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

- Differences between urban residents and the locals

The next wide, multi-factor, i.e. economic, social, and cultural differentiation is that between the village and the city, as expected. Villagers say that Yerevanians have more **“opportunities”**, **“their life is easier than that of villagers.”** Note that the Yerevanian is considered as one who **“looks down on the village resident”** and **“labels.”** Unlike Yerevanians and other urban residents, village residents are considered more **“honest,” “humane,” hardworking,” and “patriotic.”** An opposing, complex arch is created within the villager, according to which, the Yerevanian is the opponent in this specific conflict.

The villager suffers a lot, but the Yerevanian does not suffer that much, it is very seldom that they suffer; no one suffers as much as the villager.

50-year-old female, Ararat

The Yerevan people have not seen this war, have not seen our way of living, living in cellars for many days, digging trenches. They have not seen that bitterness.

60-year-old female, Syunik

Inherent moral advantage and cleanliness specifically supplement the natural intactness of the rural settlement: “dirty Yerevan,” “dirty Yerevanian,” – “clean village,” “clean villager.”

We are cleaner than the Yerevanian; the children in our village, when compared, are much better, given their behaviour, their manner of speaking, their conduct ...

65-year-old male, Kotayk

He/she thinks that he/she is better than we; what for? What is your advantage? Or are you more educated, more well-read than we? we are villagers.... any urban resident looks at us with contempt.

35-year-old male, Armavir

Another paradox identifying the crisis of rurality is that the villager confirms his/her being with an opposing identity, proves his/her existence in the conflict with the Yerevanian, Yerevan.

Why be a villager? They say. Yet this is that villager that cultivates all the things that they receive and eat. They can't make such expression. I find it wrong, and I feel insulted. If I hear it, I intervene.

65-year-old female, Kotayk

... let's say that the villager, in everything, when one is in trouble, the neighbor would help, but in the city, they would not help; will they help in the city? They won't. They will shut the door in your face; but in the village they know each other, don't they? They help, inquire about, this is the way.

65-year-old female, Lori

The "Village-Yerevan" differentiation is less in the villages that are close to the capital, where no specific differences are seen between city and village residents. Broader line of cooperation, mutual recognition, cultural acquaintance works.

What is a city dweller? City dweller is the same as our people... look, we have a neighbor; they are from Yerevan and have a summer house here; in no way they are different from us.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

• *Differences between the residents of other settlement*

Here it is also hard to speak about compact homogeneity and solidarity. In comparisons with other rural settlements (especially, the neighboring ones), villagers' own qualitative and moral advantages vs. "them" – the residents of other villages – are more emphasized.

In our village, there is such an old narrative; they say – our villagers' pants are worn out around the knees, because they work so much, and as to the people of the neighboring village, who are not hardworking, the parts of their pants around the buttocks are worn out, as they are sitting too much.

40-year-old male, Tavush

People of our village are much better... they have good temper, are hospitable, are not rude. They are better, humane, as compared to those [meaning the residents of the neighboring villages]. Our people are great, quiet, and are not quarrelsome.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

Focusing on the nature of social ties in the village, rural populations' stories record negative changes in community life and social ties, especially in the post-soviet period. Community and group solidarity in the past are emphasized, as well as the positive cooperation through pleasure vs. "trouble" and other opportunities for the cooperation. Generally, the nostalgic narratives contain careless solidarity. As presented above, trouble, work, and debt create narrower family groups.

At those days people were coming, it was interesting; after six o'clock following the work, we all were running to the playing-field, volleyball court, basketball court, the youth of the whole village would wait until the farm work was finished to go all together to swim.

35-year-old male, Armavir

Here as well, strangely, the comparison is made with the somehow mythologized, definitely homogenized soviet past. The huge post-soviet period lasting for already three decades is left out. Despite the latter's heterogeneity, for the time being it has been perceived as a "compact present."

Collective functions of the household through divisions of appropriate work, and possibly also the collective work responsibility is projected on the traditional tribal relationships. In today's individualistic way of living, actual behaviour is accompanied by the warm recollection of collectivism. Elders especially expect a collective heroism and collective awarding.

At that time, grape harvesting would take place, an event in connection thereto would occur; it seemed that a big event was going to take place from September 1 of each year. During the events we had a happy time; then we baked gata to be handed to the daughter-in-law. All the girls that were coming to dance were supposed to get the gatas. Gatas were dancing around... Say it was a wedding, I remember that everybody was going to bring the bride; were bringing, enjoying during the occasions, and doesn't matter whether it was a neighbor, relative, just everyone. Then it was evening time; in the evening it would occur in the place of the wedding, and everybody wishing to go, would go to enjoy it; now no one does such thing.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

More is expected from a neighbor than from the one living nearby depending on the circumstances.

The contact, interpersonal contact does not exist; now we are neighbors, but the previous contact does not exist.

60-year-old female, Syunik

The rurality crisis, accordingly, the lack of attractiveness of the rural life is expressed by the actual loss of active relationships, pleasure, and fun.

I remember with longing the evening-time noise, when all children would get out on the street to play. Now there are dance groups, but it is not as in the past; then the life used to be sort of lively.

65-year-old male, Gegharkunik

Under such conditions, one might think that the villager is more inclined to emigration. It would be possible to optimize their life, its separate vital practices with a limited set of variables, where the personal (narrow family) well-being is a priority. It is not beneficial for the villager to turn their gaze towards an absent, ungrateful community.

The low level of mutual assistance and support in both agricultural and everyday practices, as recorded through the quantitative data, is described, in the best possible manner, in the qualitative data as well.

Except for farming, there are not cases of helping each other; they do not help each other. You have to take care of yourself; nobody else will.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

Previous community, intra-village relationships are intensely monetized, commercialized, and optimized with variables to ensure direct economic well-being. More than ever, the community is just the reproducer, bearer of very narrow conflict relations for optimal exchange.

Now everyone is preoccupied with their own worries. I have applied for help; there have been cases when someone would help... there were people standing in the village without doing anything; when loading the hay, you appeal to them, and they do not give a hand. You now have to approach and give them money, each loader gets 3000 AMD for one route.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

Extreme situations and events within the village that result in intensive emotional reactions have a significant solidarity potential. Here mutual assistance and social support mechanisms work.

Last year the child of our neighbor was killed in the yard; the whole village got together, made contributions, and built a memorial in the park so that they remember the child. Because he died for all of us.

65-year-old female, Kotayk

Say, one person needs a surgery; the village collects money to give a help to that person; they may go from one house to another, say - help us as much as you can afford. They collect money, make a list, and give to the villagers.

50-year-old female, Ararat

Notwithstanding that the social ties are weakened, and the social distance is expanded, the village residents consider social solidarity a value. Rural populations believe that significant internal conflicts do not occur in the village. As expected,

more obvious conflicts mainly have an economic basis and are manifested in the very context of agricultural practices, such as irregular agricultural activity, damaging a mowed land, irregular use of irrigation water, stealing hay, and greasing the big cattle. The villager occupies, protects, and fights just for material resources and the societal potential. Usually, such conflicts are of a moderate nature and are mainly settled on the interpersonal level.

Arguments occur regarding water, land. For example, why did your water pass by the corner of this stream? Why did you drive your car into this area?

50-year-old female, Ararat

They fight for grass, fight for land. They mow the hay one instead of others, steal.

65-year-old female, Lori

Privatizing agricultural resources, particularly the land, and using them for their own well-being encounters problems due to former understandings, according to which the land was common, ownerless. Yet now, entrepreneurial logic creates conflict. People no longer act by common “collective” logic. The activity of one person contradicts the other’s undertaking. Villages are the witnessing new, multifactor, multidirectional conflicts.

It is for already two years that we try to explain that we earn income from land, and they should not move the cows back and forth for grazing on our lands... It is a long-standing practice of the people; they leave the cattle, which passes through the land of another person, and because of that, arguments arise.

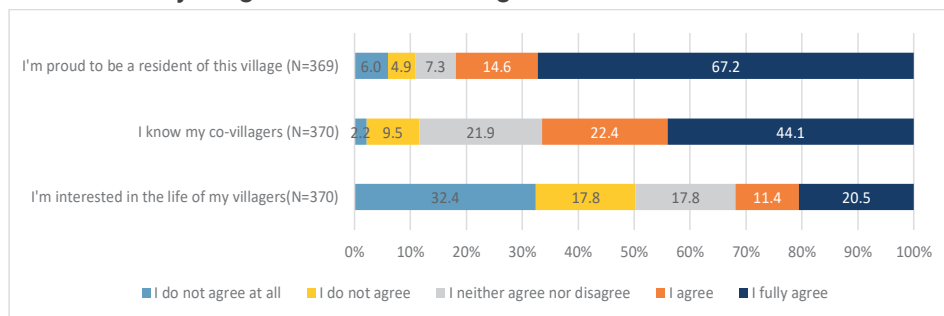
40-year-old male, Lori

ATTACHMENT TO A PLACE AND MIGRATION

Key findings

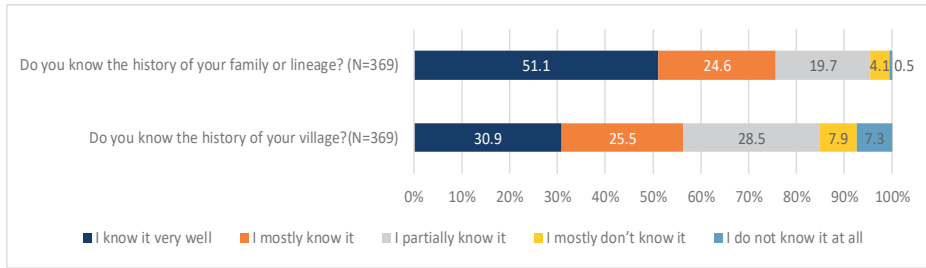
In the context of diagnosing the rurality crisis, understanding the rural population's identification with their village ("place identity") and indices characterizing recognition, emotional, and pragmatic attachment are central. The data presented in Figure 28 are very typical, and according to these data, the rural population's emotional and partially cognitive attachment to the village is stronger, whereas the pragmatic attachment is secondary. Particularly, 81.8% of village residents stated that he/she is proud of being the resident of his/her village; 66.5% of these residents knows his/her co-villagers, and only 31.9% are interested in the life of the villagers. 32.4% of village residents shows some social isolation and are not interested at all in the rural life and village events.

Figure 28.
How much do you agree with the following statements?



From the perspective of being attached to the village, it is important to recognize villagers' knowledge of family vs. village history. The history of one's own village is well known to only 30.9% of village residents. Here as well, the primary basis of group identity is the family. This is illustrated in that over half of villagers surveyed stated that they knew the history of their family or lineage very well (51.1%) (see Figure 29).

Figure 29.



Some indices of place identity and/or attachment to the place are in a significant statistical relation for the representatives of households being involved in farming practice and/or having cultivated a plot of land, in addition to the residential plot, as compared to households involved in cattle breeding activities (see Table 9). Particularly, the representatives of households involved in farming practices and/or having cultivated land plots in addition to the residential plots, are more often interested in rural events. Additionally, these villagers are, if possible, ready to spend money to improve the village and consider their life and future attached to the village, as compared to villagers who are not involved in farming practices.

Table 8.

The results of Mann-Whitney U Statistical Test	Has a land plot, in addition to the residential plot	
I am interested in everything that happens in my village	U	17,691
	p	0.000
	N	370
My life is attached to this village	U	16,555
	p	0.007
	N	369

My future is attached to this village	U	16,027
	p	0.009
	N	364
When possible, I am ready to spend money for improvement of the village	U	16,116
	p	0.041
		368

In some, rather narrow limits, the land itself, successes in the farming sector are the attaching means of the Armenian village resident to the village. Moreover, attachment to the place is in a significant statistical linkage with sex and age of village residents. In general, attachment to the village is stronger among males and representatives of the senior generation, and lesser among women and the youth (see Table 09).

- While age is more correlated with the emotional and pragmatic attachment to the village and is not correlated with the pragmatic attachment, sex is connected also with the pragmatic attachment. Men, more than women, are ready to allot time and, when possible, spend money for improvement of the village.
- On the other hand, if older village residents attach their life to the village, then the attachment is not correlated with sex.

Table 9.

		Sex	Age
I know the history of my family/dynasty	Spearman rho	-0.192	0.257
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	369	369

I know the history of our village	Spearman rho	-0.236	0.229
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	368	368
I know my co-villagers	Spearman rho	-0.289	0.338
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	369	369
I am proud of being the resident of this village	Spearman rho	-0.196	0.164
	p	0.001	0.014
		368	368
I am interested in the life of my co-villagers	Spearman rho	-0.341	0.352
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	369	369
I am interested in everything that takes place in our village	Spearman rho	-0.355	
	p	0.000	
		369	
My life is attached to this village	Spearman rho		0.251
	p		0.000
	N		368

My future is attached to this village	Spearman rho	-0.183	0.363
	p	0.005	0.000
	N	363	363
I am ready to allot time for improvement of the village	Spearman rho	-0.2370	
	p	0.000	
	N	367	
When possible, I am ready to spend money for improvement of the village	Spearman rho	-0.229	
	p	0.000	
	N	367	

To characterize the rurality crisis, it is important to understand the mutual agreement of being attached to the place along with the village residents' intentions to abandon the village. Perhaps emigration from the village is one of the most obvious social trends, with emigration from the village to the city (particularly, to Yerevan). Temporary or permanent migration from the village to a foreign country has distorted the everyday structure(s), gender and age balance, and most importantly, effective agricultural activities of the village today.

Nevertheless, the majority of the village residents interviewed, 61.5%, stated that he/she does not have any intention to leave his/her settlement to reside permanently in another place. 70.6% of the villagers have no intention to leave the village for purposes of temporary employment in the upcoming year (for more details, see Figures 30 and 31).

Figure 30.

Do you have an intention to leave your place of residence in the next 1-2 years for permanent residence? (N=364)

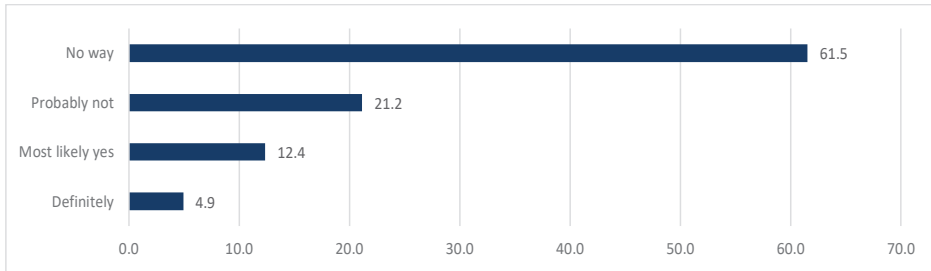
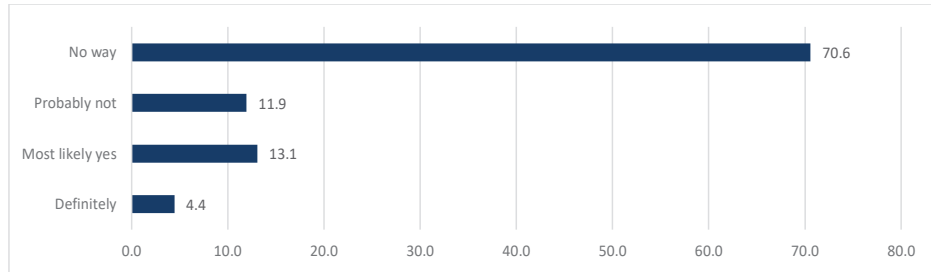


Figure 31.

Are you planning to leave your place of residence for the next 1 year to earn money/work (non-permanent residence)?: (N=360)



The migration intentions of village residents have a significant statistical linkage with sex, age, and indices of attachment to the place (their village), (see Table 10). Particularly,

- Mainly the youth have the intention to leave the village for permanent residence in another place.
- The intention of leaving the village for permanent residence in another place is explicitly correlated with cognitive, emotional, and pragmatic indices of attachment to the place: the stronger the sense of attachment to the place, the weaker the inclination to permanently leave the village.
- Mainly males and the youth intended to leave the village to seek employment on a non-permanent basis.
- The intention of leaving the village, on a non-permanent basis, for the purpose of work is correlated only with the attachment of one's life and the future to the village. The more the village resident attaches their own life and future to the village,

the weaker the inclination of abandoning the village in the future, even temporarily, for the purpose of working or earning money.

Tabel 10.

		Do you have an intention of leaving your settlement in the next 1-2 years to have a permanent residence in another place?	Do you have an intention of leaving your settlement in the next 1 year to earn money/work (not for permanent residence)
Respondent's sex	Spearman rho		0.166
	p		0.002
	N		359
Respondent's age	Spearman rho	0.165	0.176
	p	0.002	0.001
	N	363	359
I know my co-villagers	Spearman rho	0.128	
	p	0.015	
	N	363	
I am proud for being a resident of this village	Spearman rho	0.210	
	p	0.000	
	N	362	

My life is attached to this village	Spearman rho	0.276	0.214
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	362	358
My future is attached to this village	Spearman rho	0.380	0.253
	p	0.000	0.000
	N	357	354
The future of the children of this village is attached to this village	Spearman rho	0.216	
	p	0.000	
	N	343	
I am ready to allot time for improvement of the village	Spearman rho	0.140	
	p	0.008	
	N	361	
When possible, I am ready to spend money for improvement of the village	Spearman rho	0.142	
	p	0.007	
	N	361	

Note that the intention of abandoning the village on a permanent basis is contingent on the villager's age. As the villager gets older, the intention to leave the village on a permanent basis declines (N=363, Spearman rho=0.248, $p < 0.001$) (for the distribution by sex and age, see Figure 32).

Figure 32.

Do you intend to leave your settlement in the next 1-2 years for permanent residence?

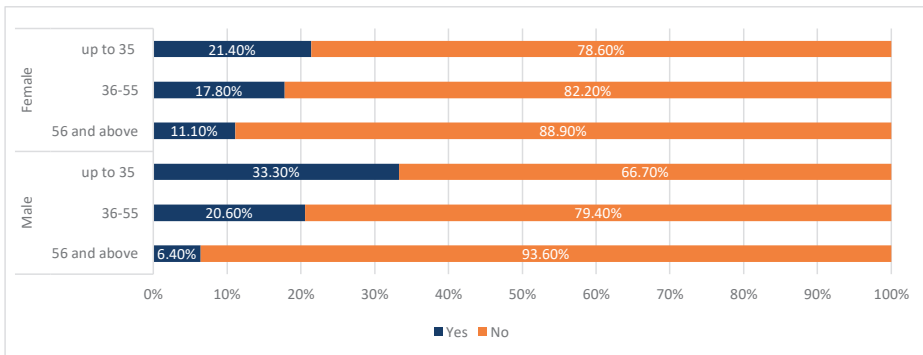
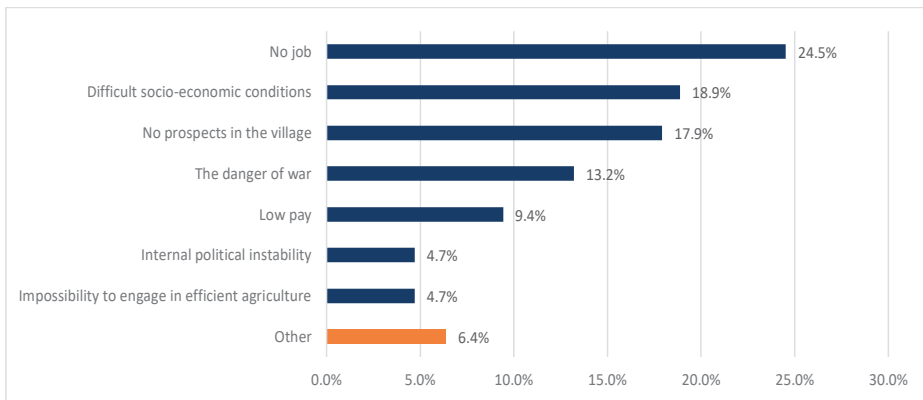


Figure 33.

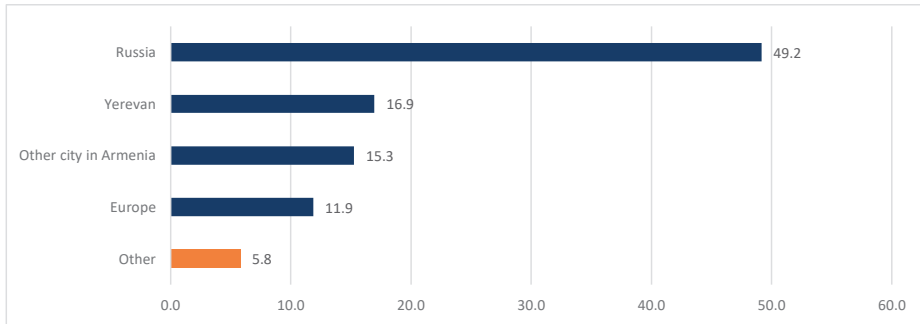
What are the main reasons of your wish to leave your settlement on a permanent basis? (N=106)



Note that almost half of those having an intention of abandoning the village (49.2%) are traditionally getting prepared to leave for Russia. 16.9% plan to move to Yerevan, the capital city, and 15.3% plan to leave to another city in Armenia (See Figure 34).

Figure 34.

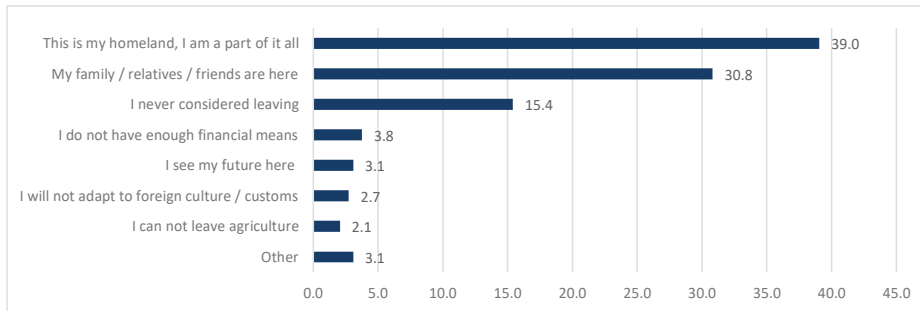
Where do you intend to leave for permanent residence? (N=59)



The main reasons for not leaving the village are rather interesting as well. 39% of the respondents think that the village is their motherland and that they are part of it. For 30.8% of respondents, their families, relatives, and friends are within the village, so they do not want to leave them (see Figure 35). At the same time, orientation towards a positive, desirable future is expressed as their reason for not leaving by only a very small number of villagers (3.1%).

Figure 35.

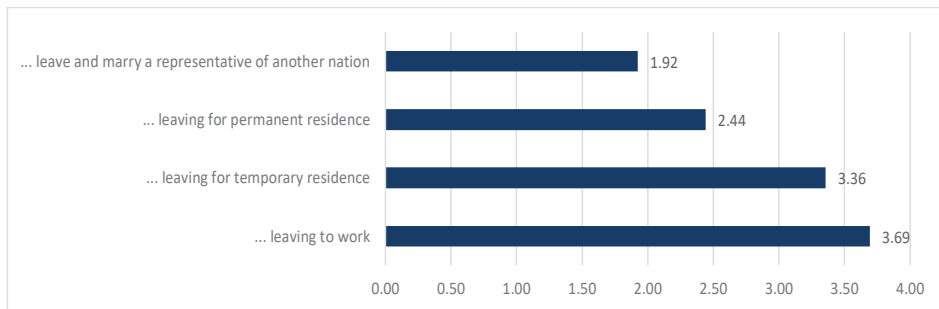
Why don't you want to leave this place? (N=292)



Rural populations mostly justify the migration with an intention of working and/or temporary residence. One thing that is not particularly justified by villagers regarding migration is marriage to someone from another nation (see Figure 36). The villager will see himself as capable in the transnational context. Migration is acceptable; it is a praiseworthy measure ensuring the well-being of one's own family and the community, unless the national identity is preserved in the distance through passive social relations.

Figure 36.

**To what extent it is acceptable for you that your co-villagers...?
(the average value of evaluation on scale of 1-5 is presented)**



Discussion

Strong emotional attachment to the village is expressed, at best, also in the villagers' stories. They mainly build the "we" image showing legends, historical and/or geographical significance and specificities, through which the smaller motherland is seen in a positive light.

... in our village, there is the tomb of historical Armenian kings; tourists come and look at it; you know what? They should remember that our Armenian kings are buried here, and that our history is here; it is buried here. We have an ancient history; they have written about the village in newspaper...

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

The history of our village has begun about 500 years ago, when 7 brothers came from Artsakh; there was a big tree in the center of the village; that is like the Eiffel Tower for Paris; the same way that tree has been for our village.

40-year-old male, Lori

Being ancient has continuously been the key to the village and the present existence of today's villagers. Symbolisms and embodiments of its long-term existence are the most constant examples with the Church as the most irrefutable evidence of this.

... this village is a very old one; as we have a church from the 5th century, then it has been since then, but they have dug these side areas, and people have found graves of both Muslims and Christians.

65-year-old male, Kotayk

According to the qualitative data, in the context of the identity of the village, cultural elements, such as symbols, values, customs and traditions, characterizing and/or characteristic to the rural population's place, are clearly emphasized. Lack of trouble, games, and fun are central. The traditional image of the woman is reproduced: the person responsible for the existence of hearth – happiness, is older woman – the mother. Traditionality is reproduced from generation to generation through every woman.

The habit is that, here we always had festivities, joys, hospitalities; this is continued by the mom; our door is always open for everyone.

30-year-old male, Kotayk

Older women are the main bearers and transmitters of public wisdom and unifying sacredness.

... for example, my conduct completely comes from my mom. Let's say, someone who loves relatives, friends, is sociable; I continue her traditions.

50-year-old female, Ararat

... well, our, that is my grandma's house. She has a small wooden monastery – saint, and this way my grandma taught the Lord's Prayer and, thus the traditions taught by her are preserved.

35-year-old male, Armavir

Meals, and let's say everything that is traditional for us are preserved by us; our traditions; I don't know. In terms of the daughter-in-law conduct and respect and honor towards relatives, in terms of everything. Look, to this day I bake lavash.

65-year-old female, Kotayk

In the context of perceiving the rurality crisis, the key findings reflect the interconnectivity of village residents' attachment to the place and an inclination to migrate. As the quantitative data show, inclination to migrate is particularly connected

with age; note that with aging, emotional attachment of villagers expands and an underlining value toward rurality is attached. Additionally, there are other limiting factors regarding migration decisions.

- *Value interpretation*

... I don't know, the land and the water make you stay, your home makes you stay, your motherland makes you stay.... I was born here; I will stay here...

75-year-old female, Aragatsotn

It is good in the village; if they give me a million [dollars] I will not wish to go and live in the city ... now we are in this condition, but there are many people, who does not have such opportunity, such conditions even in the city.

70-year-old male, Aragatsotn

- *Functional interpretation*

Once I was thinking about leaving, but I had an old father, and could not leave him and go, and now I am aged and cannot go.

75-year-old male, Gegharkunik

I can't, as I am already aged, I can't; let's say one builds a house that way, you can't; but they are young, they will go; at least I will stay so that I could send some of the village stuff to them.

65-year-old female, Lori

In regard to young people, villagers see their future "out of the village" mainly in one of the cities of the RA, in rare cases – also abroad. Motivations for moving from the village are related to the lack of prospects in the village, and a lack of a future for young people in the rural life which would resemble an urban life.

It is not the child's fault; if he comes here, what is he going to do? Say, he is a graduate of the Institute of Physical Culture, comes to a small village, from day to day there are lesser pupils; what is he supposed to do here?

60-year-old female, Syunik

Recent events have also cause some villagers to consider migrating away from the rural life. The risk of a resumption of a war on Armenian boards is particularly emphasized. In that context, rural populations are ready to leave the village or at least take the children to another settlement.

I won't be against, if my children wish to go; I just want to rescue them, want to rescue them from the claws of the Turks; otherwise, dear lady, we are living here amicably; therefore, I don't want my child to go, fall.

65-year-old female, Lori

No way I want to go away from here... perhaps there is one case that will force me to leave and go, if there is a war, so that we must go, whether we wish it or not...

40-year-old male, Tavush

THE PERSPECTIVE OF RURALITY

Key findings

When talking about the developmental perspectives of the rural communities of the RA, the concept of reforms of the RA administrative territories should be considered, according to which in 2021 the community unity/consolidation process was officially completed. In the expert community, this process has been subjected to a lot of criticism, but it is important to understand the approaches and viewpoints of the rural population.

The rural population's indifference and alienation to this process are visible. Particularly, 34.5% of village residents have expressed indifference and avoided appreciating or concerning themselves with the process of community consolidation. There is also a significant indifference in the selection of the name of the consolidated community (33.6%). In general, viewpoints regarding whether the process of community consolidation is right or wrong have been distributed equally: 33.8% consider that the consolidation was/is a right process and 31.7% consider it wrong (see Figures 37 and 38).

Figure 37.

Was the community consolidation process a right one? (N=145)

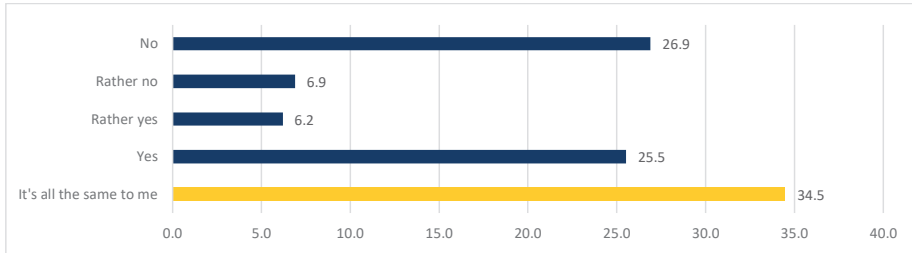
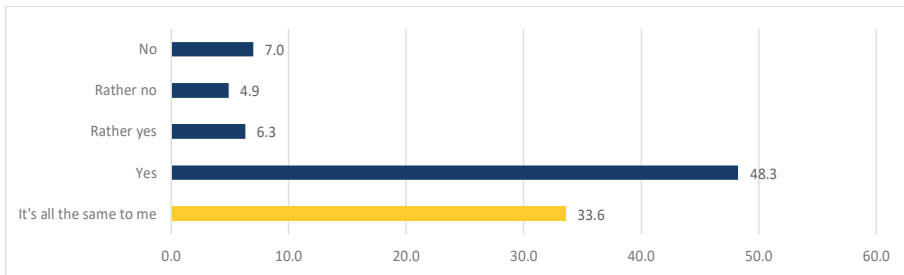


Figure 38.

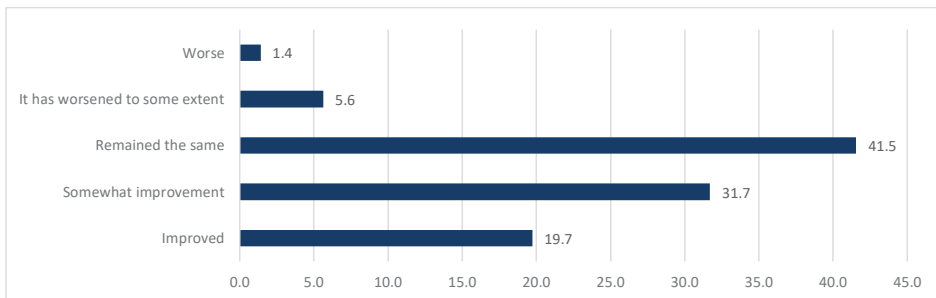
Is the name of the consolidated community a right one? (N=143)



Despite such indifference and passive estimates, the majority estimate further changes to be positive (51.4%), while 41.5% of the population see no change (see Figure 39).

Figure 39.

How is the state of your community generally changed after the consolidation? (N=142)



The consolidation process and changes occurring in the context thereof are considered by village residents as administrative-political processes that occur beyond their control and where the main actor is the mighty political authority that is far from the villager. 47.2% of villagers think that local authorities are responsible for changes, and 25% think that the country's government is responsible for that. 16.7% of the respondents see the role of an ordinary villager in the improvement of the situation (see Figure 40). In contrast, 73.8% of village residents stated that they did not have any practical contribution in this process (see Figure 41).

Figure 40.

Who essentially contributed to these changes? (N=72)

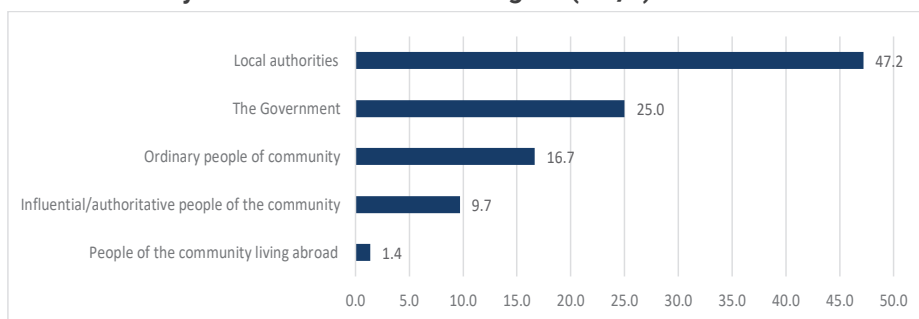
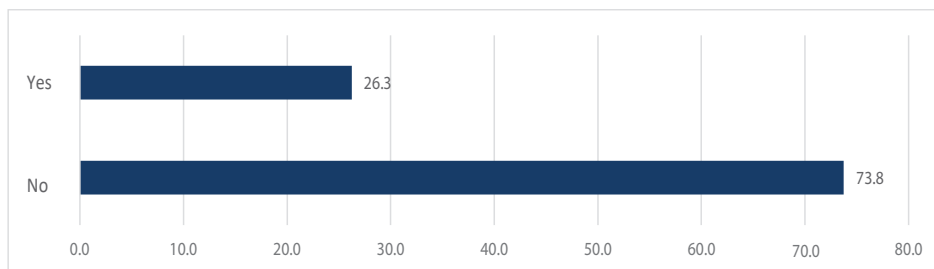


Figure 41.

Have you personally had any contribution in that process (in terms of your time, money, organizational efforts, etc.) (N=80)

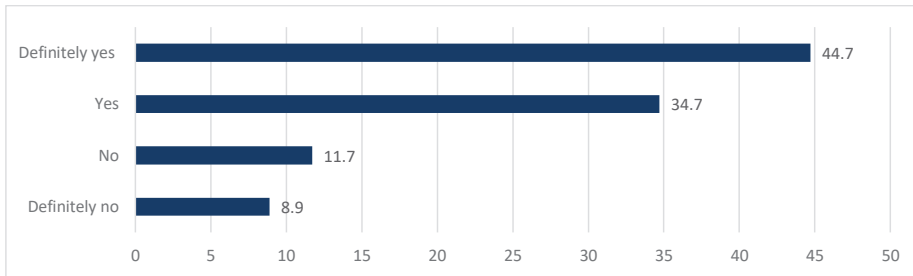


Continuing the discussion on the perspectives of the village, it is important to observe the subjective understandings of villagers regarding the village and particularly their future in the village. In general, villagers emphasize optimistic trends.

Mainly, the village has positive perspectives for 79.4% of the local population (see Figure 42).

Figure 42.

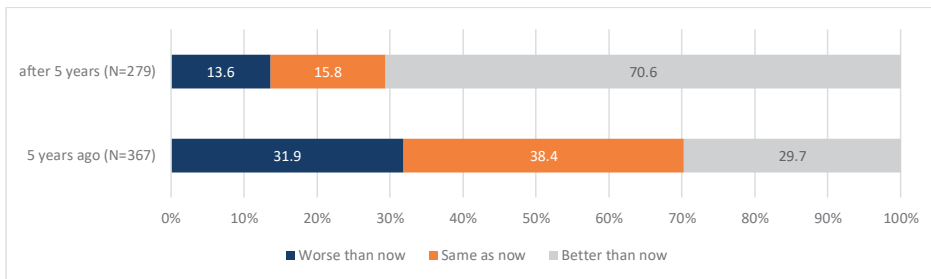
Does your village have any development perspectives? (N=291)



The majority (70.6%) consider that the economic well-being of their own family will improve in 5 years, while 15.8% of villagers do not expect any change. 13.6% have pessimistic attitudes towards the future. 29.7% of interviewed village residents think that the well-being of their own family was better 5 years ago, as compared to the present; 38.4% does not see any change and 31.9% think that economic well-being was worse in the past than it is now (see Figure 43).

Figure 43.

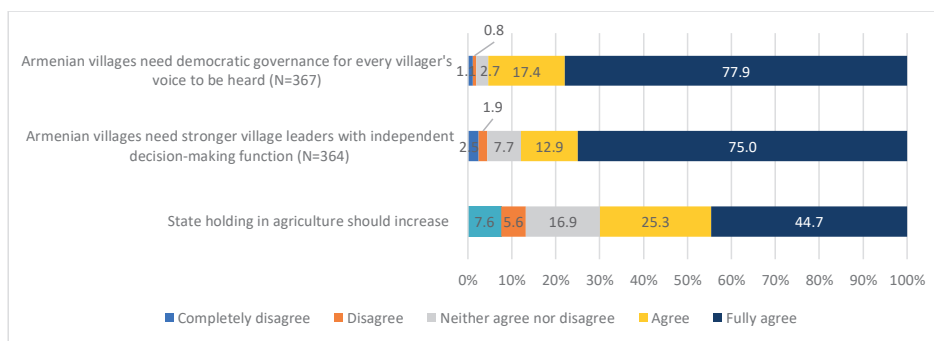
Evaluate the economic well-being of your family



The survey revealed an extreme contradiction in the rural population's political position with respect to state governance. The large majority is for democratic and independent self-government/government. 95.3% of the respondents think that there should be a democratic governance in the village, so that each villager's voice is heard. In the meantime, today's villager reproduces the demand for a strong paternalism; he/she re-vests own responsibility to the traditionally strong party. Currently, 87.9% of Armenian villagers believe that there is need for stronger village leaders with an independent decision making function. One can assume that

villagers view democracy as a contemporary, unfortunately futile, incomprehensible sign, and has not yet acquired a functional, efficiently applicable use within the village. For the time being, today's villager does not know what to do with the land and other potential agricultural assets. Being defeated by the pseudo-liberal competition, he/she requires nationalization of agricultural resources. Most of the rural population are for expanding state ownership in the agriculture (see Figure 44). Villagers perceive that public order will obviously come from a strong person, who is definitely a statesman, the father-state that seems to be left in the past, who will, in the first place, tackle the very problem of social justice.

Figure 44.
How would you agree to the following statements?



The village residents' understandings about having heads of villages with capabilities of taking independent decisions and expanding state property in agriculture have a significant statistical linkage to age, education, and well-being of the respondents (see Table 11). Particularly:

- As expected, the poorer the villager, the more he/she is inclined to demand strong heads of villages, with capabilities of taking independent decisions
- The older the villager, the more he/she is inclined to demand strong heads of villages, with capabilities of taking independent decisions
- The poorer the villager, the more he/she is inclined to demand that state property is expanded in agriculture
- The less educated is the villager, the more he/she is inclined to demand that state property is expanded in agriculture

Table 11.

		Nowadays Armenian villages should have strong heads of villages with capabilities of taking independent decisions	In Armenia, state property should be expanded in agriculture
Age	Spearman rho	0.113	
	p	0.031	
	N	363	
Educational level	Spearman rho		-0.137
	p		0.010
			354
Level of well-being	Spearman rho	-0.113	-0.134
	p	0.033	0.012
	N	358	350

Discussion

Despite generally optimistic quantitative data on the future of the village, the discussions with village residents suggest that no unambiguity is available here. During the discussions, mainly negative assessments regarding the future of the village were stressed. Pessimistic future developments of the village are mainly connected with:

- *Vacating and depopulating the village*

The problem of the village is that a small number of people live there, this is an aging village. People grew older, now they are old people and are not able to physically preserve the village.

40-year-old male, Tavush

As of today, young people are mainly leaving. Part of them is going to work abroad, they do not stay in the village; there is nothing available in the village for them to do.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

Soon, in March, when it gets warmer, no one will stay here. No one can blame them; what are they supposed to do? There is no future; I wouldn't like the children stay here and suffer.

60-year-old female, Syunik

- *The war in 2020 and the risk of an outbreak of a new war*

At this point, the population is being relocated, it is a very sad situation. As of September 1, perhaps about fifteen-twenty pupils have been relocated from the village, which is very sad; if this continues, no one will stay in the village.

60-year-old female, Syunik

In terms of the village population, there are less people, half of them went; children died; the elders are left.

65-year-old female, Lori

• *The loss of attractiveness of agricultural activity*

... Now the young people do not seek to deal with land; in very rare cases they breed cattle; therefore, this is the difference; staying in the village does not have any perspective.

40-year-old male, Lori

... the new generation goes, becomes programmer, they will neither come to breed cow, nor will cultivate the land... what will happen to the village? it will be completely ruined... for example, I can keep cattle, but programmer will not come here to keep cattle.

75-year-old female, Aragatsotn

The attractiveness of rural activity and its way of living in general, does not exist for itself. Diverse, effective, more perspective opportunities of compelling alternative employment, status emerge. In this set, the following are specified: working abroad, professional-vocational (not agricultural) works, other professional work outside the village, trade and, finally, profitable, strangely non-agricultural entrepreneurship/business.

Migration, the activity of working abroad is vested within a huge potential of self-reproduction. Rural settlements that have vast experience with this form a so-called emigration culture, which is a specific context not only merely for migration and relevant economic activity. Even the transition (growth) ritual that is well-known in social anthropology is held with the first experience of working abroad, rather than inclusion in agriculture.

For already 30-40 years, after this independence, our village is famous for a great number of people going abroad to work. In our region, we are well-known as a village of migrant workers; this is the case.

40-year-old male, Tavush

Moreover, job availability or its absence has a small relation to agricultural work. The creation of new and more jobs within the village is a curtail imperative.

They should set up some manufacturing plants, so that it would develop, villagers would work, so that there is a workplace. Otherwise, how the village is supposed to develop?

50-year-old female, Ararat

Women, as well as girls of the village work. They are cleaners, kitchen maids. In fact, there is job. Jobs for electrician, worker. There are people who do this work.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

If people have a job in Yerevan, they work in that direction, live, protect their families, and if not – they are engaged in livestock breeding, farming. But over the recent 7-8 years they have already given that up. They understood that there is no income, and gains are tiny.

65-year-old female, Armavir

Future perspectives of the village assumes that development and improvement will all come through urbanization. Villagers feel that neutralizing and moderating the difference between the city and the village will result in progress for the village. Land and especially cattle, being a substantive component of the village, contradict the latter's desirable existence.

We should eventually reach a level, where village is not only a place for livestock breeding and farming. Village is a region, where people can be engaged in high technology, I don't know, IT sector, various branches of art, promote, say, the development of the state. I think how nice it would have been, if let's say, the embassy of one country would be in our village.

40-year-old male, Tavush

As we emphasized in the "Key findings" section, most of the rural population are for increasing the state property in agriculture. This approach is outlined also in the qualitative data.

We were thinking of somehow requesting the state to restore the Soviet system. This means that, while the gravity water meets the needs of villagers for 3 months and it does not for 2 months, then they would supply that through a pump.

40-year-old male, Lori

When talking about expanding involvement and the role of the state in agriculture, often prioritizing the Soviet model, the rural population generally speaks about state guarantees and support, rather than an obligation in respect to the state, recalling that aspect of the Soviet experience with a negative connotation.

Why should I go and work for another person, getting kopeks in the collective farm? Here everything stays with me. I think, no one wants to go and work for someone else, if he/she can cultivate the same thing.

50-year-old female, Ararat

At that time of the communists, no one had the right to go and work elsewhere; if you are a villager, a resident, you should have to go and mow hay, gather apple; you should have done that and then could go to do your own works; otherwise, you could not, didn't have the right.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

... During the Soviet period, the conditions and laws were different. Thus, if a village resident would express a wish of going to the city, to get higher income ... would have, they wouldn't be shown or wouldn't be allowed; now this is mine, it is my own right whether I will keep my cattle or not; nobody can tell me anything, what I am supposed to do or not.

65-year-old male, Armavir

Today, in the context of considering the perspectives of the RA rural settlements, one should consider the RA administrative-territorial reforms and its community consolidation processes. Viewpoints of the rural population in regard to the consolidation process are not explicit. Generalizing more common understandings, the following outlines the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities, and risks of the community consolidation process, according to the rural population.

- *Advantages*

The rural population considers village infrastructure development as the main positive aspect of consolidation.

They began to carry out garbage removal in an organized manner; they brought and placed garbage cans. Previously we would put the garbage in sacks outside on a particular day; the machine of our village municipality would come with its worker to collect and take it away. The lighting was improved, they brought and installed good LED lights.

65-year-old male, Kotayk

- *Disadvantages*

In most cases, complaints have related to principles of administrative-political division and newly formed inter-settlement relationships. Particularly.

Delimitation as one problem:

At that time, when we were one community, he [representative of another settlement] would not have a right to enter our community and make use of it. He had his area, we had ours. And now the Turk is from one side, and the community is from another side.

60-year-old female, Syunik

Besides, they emphasize the tensions between prosperous and non-prosperous settlements that have found themselves in the same consolidated community.

Now at this point, the resident of [name of the border village] village, takes his cattle to keep in our village. I ask why you are bringing them? The Turks are already close; we do not have space for us. He says, isn't this one territory, isn't this one village? The population of that [name of the border village] village causes enough harm to us. This community, that has been changed – how many years this is the case – it is already for around five years, they haven't made any investment in our village, everything goes to the community of [name of the border village] village.

60-year-old female, Syunik

Villagers complain of sharp reductions in the of the number of administrative workers and the loss of aspirational, decent jobs.

They completely reduced the number of employees in the village municipality; a staff of 3 is remained; the head of our community would have 15 persons for this small village. Truly, this many staff were not needed at all for the village; we had salary, but it was not normal, not always we would get that; there have been cases when we would receive the salary once every 2-3 months. But, anyway, people were working.

65-year-old male, Kotayk

Once there were many employees in the community, but after consolidation they were reduced; a staff of 3 is left.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

- *Villagers are concerned about new risks, effective opportunity management*

In consolidated communities, settlements mainly compete for representation in the government units of the community. According to village residents, opportunities and the risk for the given settlement that the consolidation process will provide depends on the level of representation.

We should try that our representative be there, such a person who is able to take care of our village... the head of community, who is elected, will do something for the benefit of his village; the other communities will not do much. One should have an elected person from own community, so that he could maintain the community.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

If you fail to personally elect the administrative head, the responsibility is lost. If you have elected him, he has obligations; you also feel obligated for electing him. Let's assume that he has done something wrong or has not done it in a proper way, you feel guilty; or he does something good, you say to yourself – I have elected him, it is good and good for him. In this respect the linkage is missing, as if it is another person there, you are nothing, you are not electing.

40-year-old male, Tavush



PART 3.

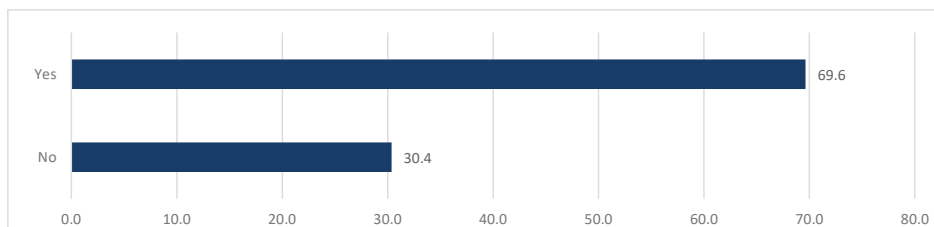
AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY

FORMS AND PRACTICES OF AGRICULTURAL INVOLVEMENT

Farming

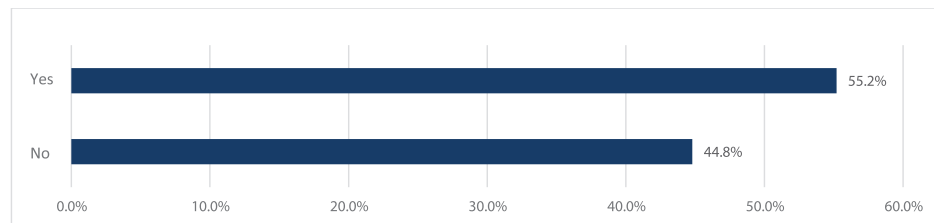
69.6% of the rural population has other agricultural land in addition to the residential land plot (see Figure 45).

Figure 45.
Has any other agricultural land in addition to the residential land plot ? (N=372)



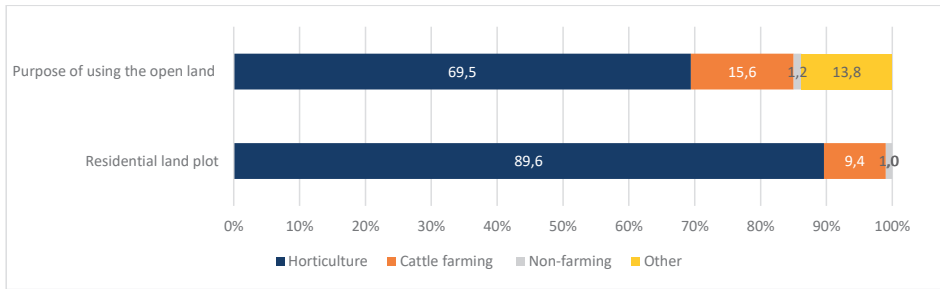
Note that just over half of this group (55.2%) uses it for farming purposes (see Figure 46). A significant statistical linkage has been revealed between purposeful use of similar land plots and the prosperity of households. The more prosperous the villager, the more he/she uses land plots for farming purposes ($X^2=4,936$, $p<0.026$, Cramer's $V=0.116$, $CI=95$).

Figure 46.
In addition to the residential land plot, uses other land plot/s for farming purposes (N=259)



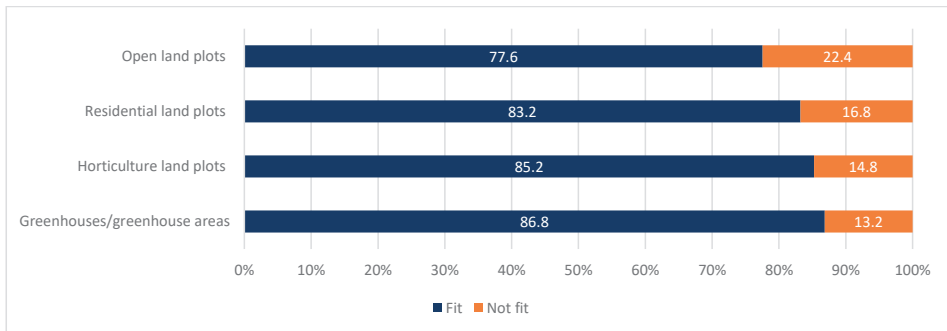
89.6% of villagers use their residential land plots for farming/ horticultural purposes. 69.5% of villagers use open land plots for that purpose, while 15.6% of village residents use open land plots for cattle breeding purposes (see Figure 47).

Figure 47.
Main purpose of use



Most of the villagers (77.6%) stated that their open land plots are good for agricultural activities. The condition of territories serving other potential agricultural purposes is in a better shape. Villages rated their greenhouses as good for agriculture in 86.8% of cases; horticultural land plots 85.2% and residential land plots fit for farming at 83.2% (see Figure 48).

Figure 48.
How fit are your land plots for farming?

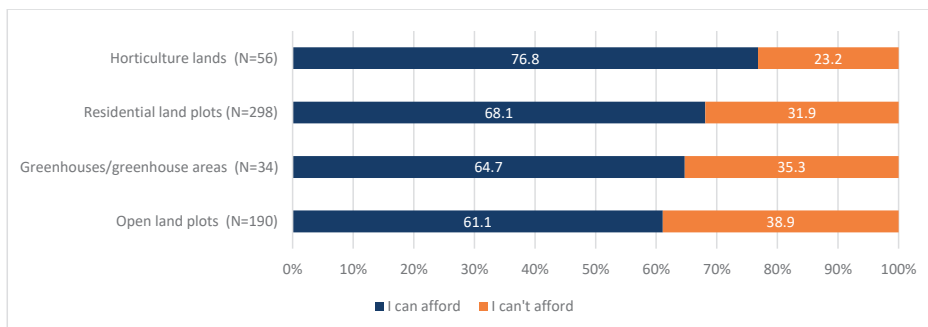


Costs associated with agricultural were reported in a positive light. 76.8% of the rural population reported to be able to meet the costs relating to orchards and 68.1% to the costs relating to residential land plots. Villagers have more difficulties in meeting the expenses connected with open land plots and greenhouses.

In 38.9% expressed that they cannot meet the costs relating to open land plots and 35.3% cannot meet the costs for greenhouses (for more details, see Figure 49).

Figure 49.

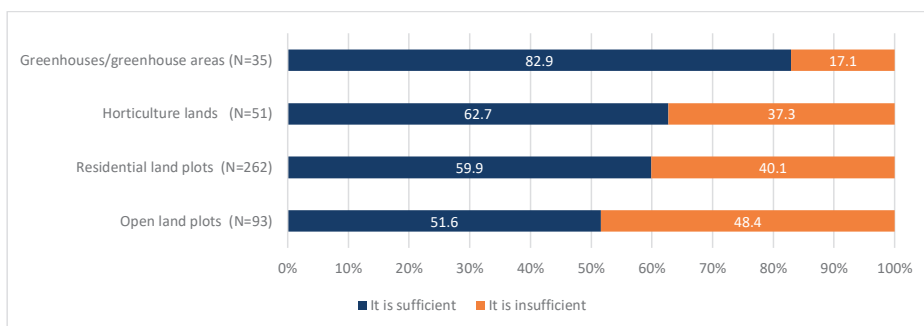
Can you afford the expenses related to your land plots?



As to satisfaction with irrigation water volumes, the situation in this regard is more problematic. Owners of open land plots are more dissatisfied with irrigation water volumes. Water is not sufficient for almost half (48.4%) of villagers engaged in open farming. The situation relating to residential land plots is also unsatisfactory. Water is not satisfactory for 40.1% of those engaged in such activity. The issue is somehow better in case of orchards: water is not satisfactory for only 37.3% of cases. Those engaged in green house businesses almost do not have any problem regarding the volumes of irrigation water with 82.9% of cases expressing that it is sufficient (for more details, see Figure 50).

Figure 50.

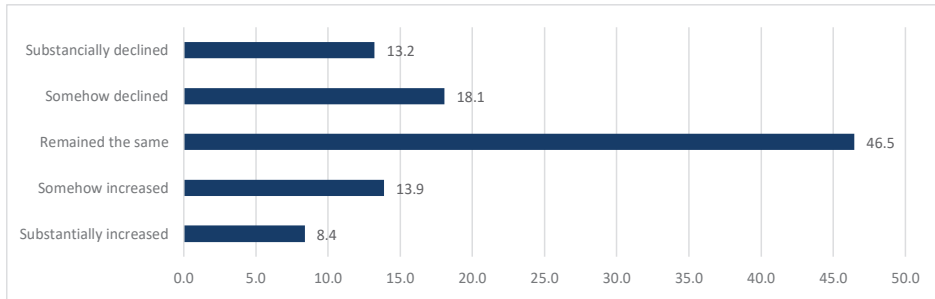
Is the volume of irrigation water sufficient to water your land plot/s?



The picture does not look good regarding the volumes of agricultural production. For 46.5% of the villagers, the volume of agricultural output from farming has not changed over the last 1 to 2 years. Every 3rd farm (31.3%) has reduced their output volume (see Figure 51).

Figure 51.

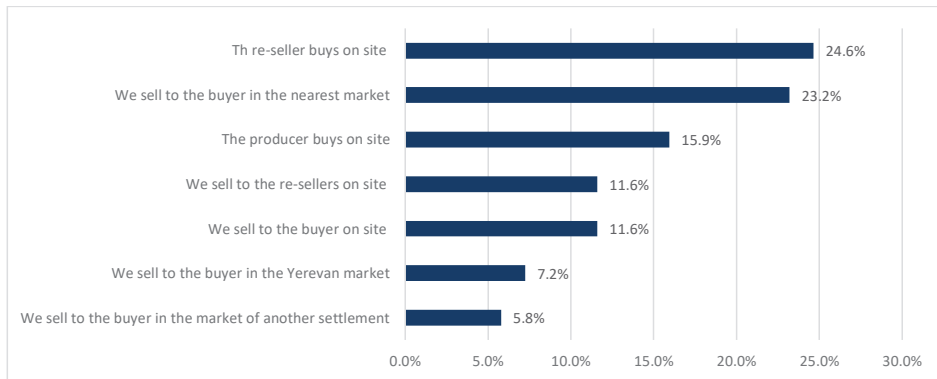
In general, how has the agricultural output changed in the last 2 years? (N=310)



The main channels for product realization (selling) from farming and/or horticulture are on-site sales to intermediate sellers and/or resellers (24.6%), sale in nearby markets (23.2%) and on-site sales to other producer (15.9%) (for more details, see Figure 52).

Figure 52.

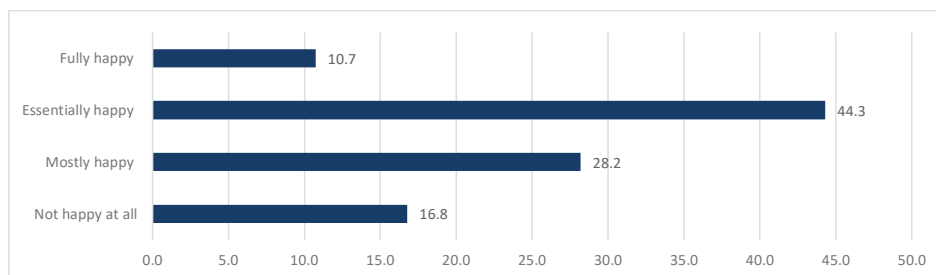
How do you mainly realize the product from farming and/or horticulture?



Regardless of some of these negative assessments, the overall level of villagers' satisfaction with agriculture is a positive. Most of the rural population (55%) are satisfied with the sales volumes of products from farming and/or horticulture (see Figure 53).

Figure 53.

Are you happy with sales volumes of the product from farming/horticulture? (N=149)



Only 12.1% of the interviewed village residents have contracts for realization (selling) of the product received from farming and/or horticulture. This low percentage enhances uncertainty and risk in farming (see Figure 54). The village farmer has very low fixed legal guarantees for his/her activity. As to storing facilities for agricultural products, 64.9% of agronomists (farmers) do not have them (see Figure 55). This situation poses the threat of unpredictable losses for the majority of villagers, where, in the event of delayed sales or other problems, the crop will become rotten and/or be depreciated.

Figure 54.

Do you have a contract on realization of the product from farming and/or horticulture? (N=149)

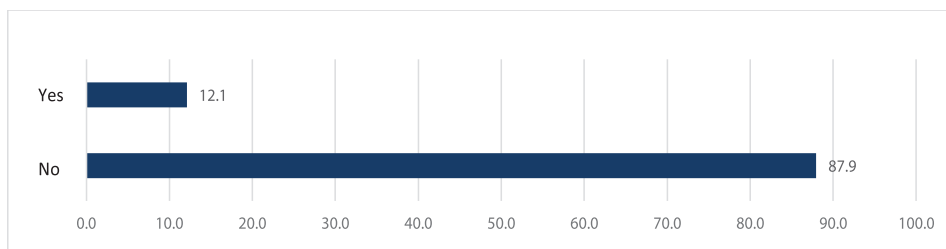
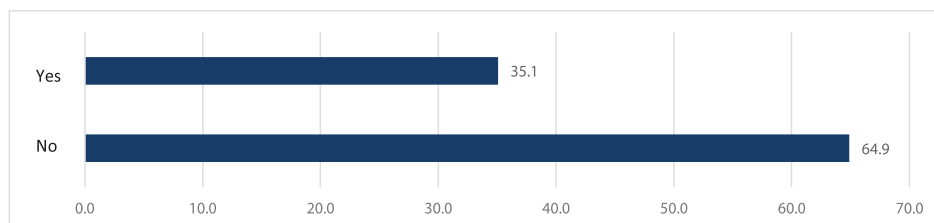


Figure 55.

Do you have an opportunity of storing the agricultural product from farming and/or horticulture? (N=322)



To Summarize, the rural population are, in general, satisfied with farming and/or horticulture activities (52.4%). Additionally, they are satisfied with sales volumes of the product received from farming and/or horticulture (55%) (see Figures 56 and 57). In contrast to these positive aspects, almost half of the villagers are dissatisfied with the rurality and have various problems. Dissatisfaction and satisfaction are confirmed by material, financial losses and lack of sufficient, expected achievements.

The longer there is an absence of perspectives for solutions, the deeper the negative consequences such as alienation of the villager from the village and rurality. This is proven by the following survey results: the higher the level of village residents' subjective well-being, the more they are satisfied with farming and/or horticulture (N=309, Spearman rho=0,256, $p < 0.001$, CI=99%).

Figure 56.

Are you happy with farming and/or horticulture activities? (N=309)

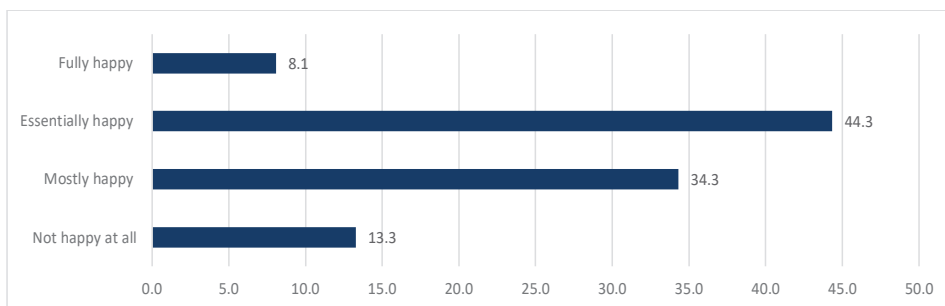
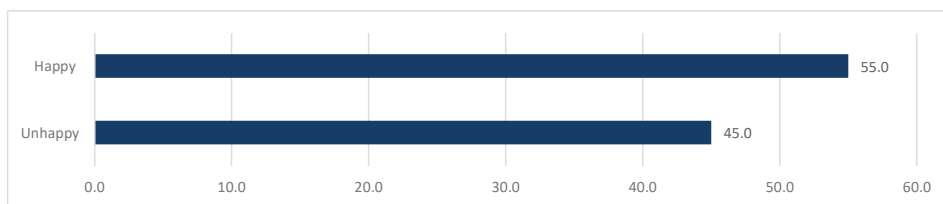


Figure 57.

Are you happy with the sales volume of the products from farming and / or horticulture?(N=149)

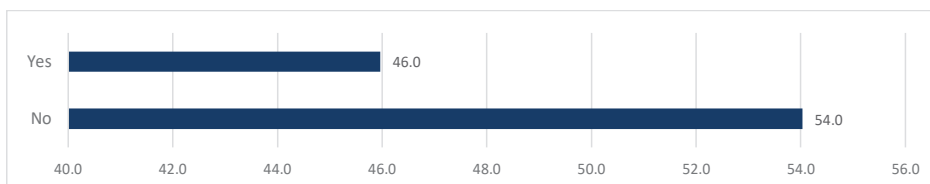


Cattle Breeding

The survey results also describe the practices of village residents' engagement in livestock breeding, as well as their motivations and perspectives. Only 46% of interviewed village residents are engaged in livestock breeding (see Figure 58). Specifically, households having 3 or more children are more often engaged in the process of livestock breeding (the results of Mann-Whitney U Statistical Test: $U=19,219$, $p=0.019$, $N=369$). To interpret this interesting pattern, additional targeted surveys are needed.

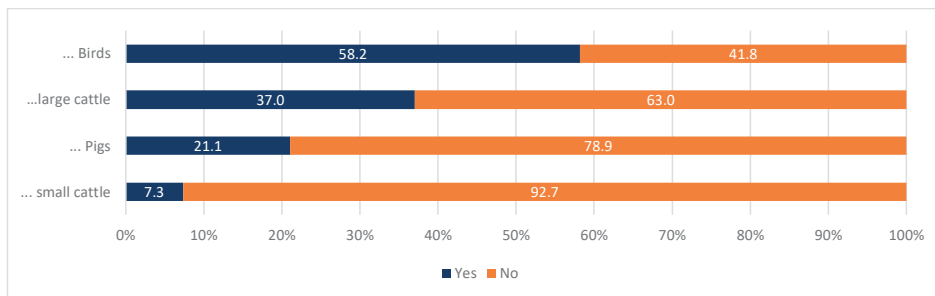
Figure 58.

Is engaged in cattle breeding(N=372)



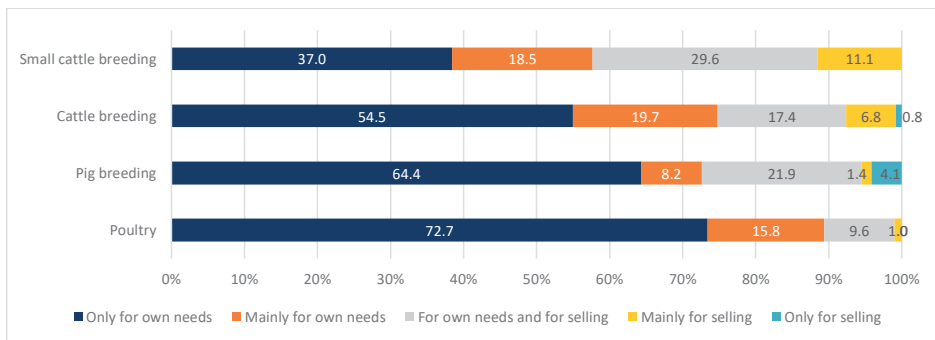
Survey results indicate that 58.2% of interviewed village residents' households keep bird/birds., 37% have big cattle, 21.1% pigs, and 7.3% have small cattle (see Figure 59).

Figure 59.
Do you keep ?... (N=360)



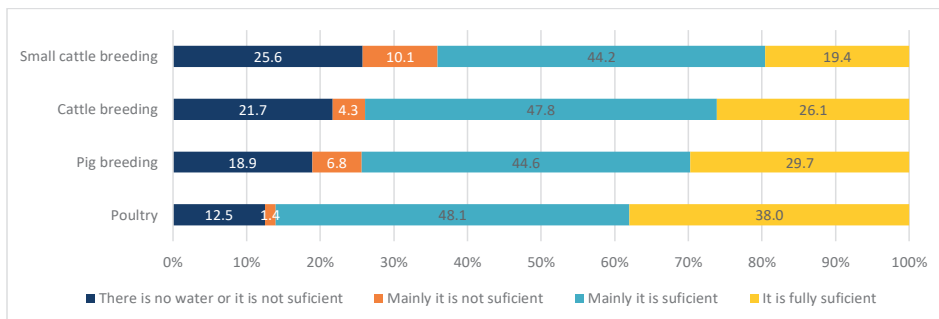
Village residents mostly use the product from livestock breeding for their own needs. More voluminous sale/realization takes place in the case of small cattle breeding with 54.5% of the product sold. 73.2% of villagers engaged in pig breeding, 74.2% in big cattle breeding, and 88.5% in poultry breeding, keep the product for their own needs (see Figure 60).

Figure 60.
For what purpose do you mainly use the product?



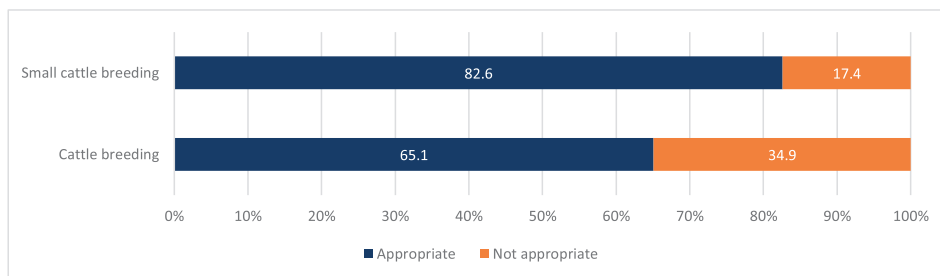
Regarding the water supply for animals, villagers expressed that it is mostly satisfactory. Yet water is unsatisfactory for 35.7% of villagers engaged in big cattle breeding. In case of small cattle breeding, which is mostly a source of income and not a means of everyday living, 25.6% expressed that there is no water or it is not sufficient (for more details, see Figure 61).

Figure 61.
Availability of water in the place of feeding



65.1% of villagers engaged in big cattle breeding and 82.6% engaged in small cattle breeding think that pastures are efficient for livestock breeding (see Figure 62).

Figure 62.
Pasture suitability for efficient livestock



In 59.3% of cases, the product from livestock breeding is realized (sold). In the rest of the 40.7% of cases, the main channels for realization are an on-site sale to direct buyers and/or resellers (67.3%) and sale in the nearby market (11.8%) (for more details, see Figure 63 and Figure 64).

Figure 63.

Are livestock products sold?

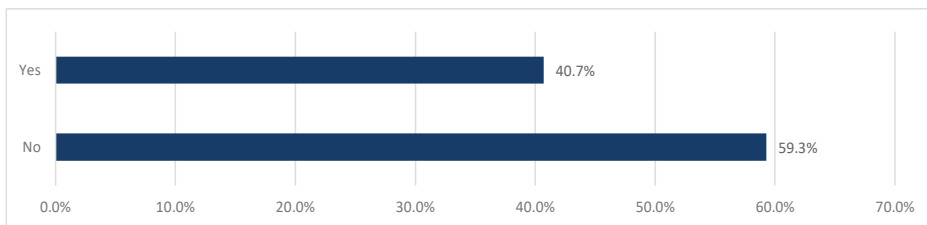
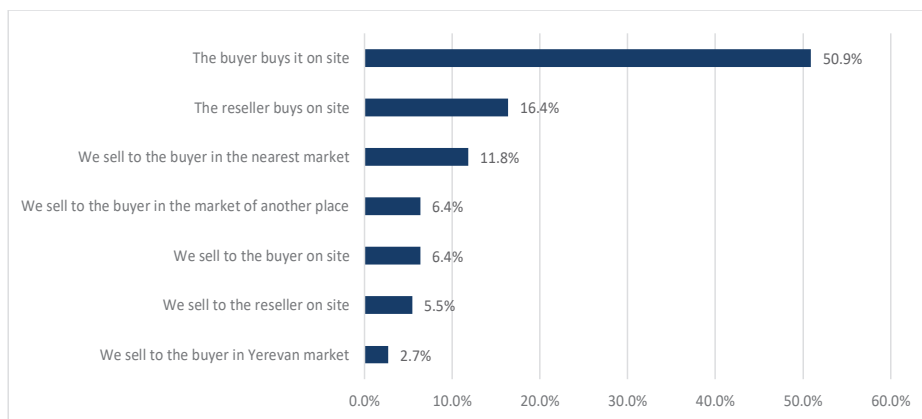


Figure 64.

How do you sell the live-stock products?



This situation principally revolves around the problems connected with farming production. Only 10.5% of interviewed village residents have contract on the sale of their products, which, as shown, poses huge risks and uncertainty (see Figure 50). The situation is particularly problematic in terms of effective storing of this type of perishable product, which is not available for 83.7% of this group (see Figure 65 and Figure 66).

Figure 65.

Do you have a contract for sale of livestock products? (N=76)

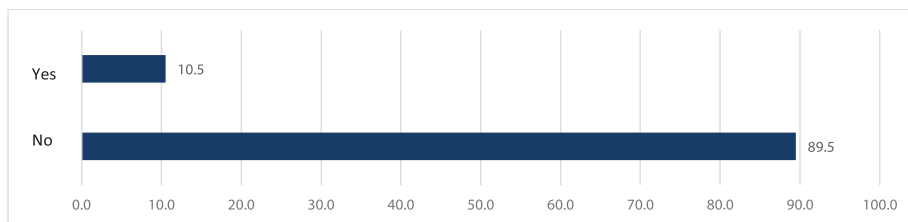
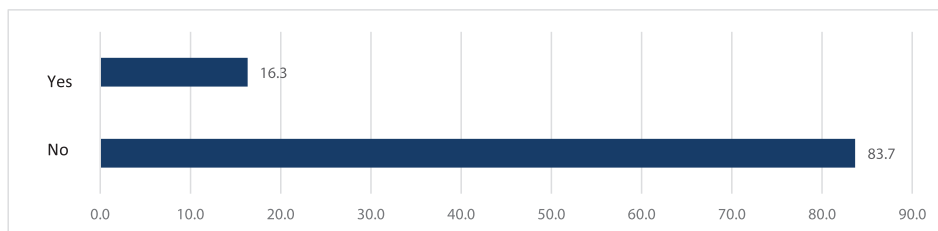


Figure 66.

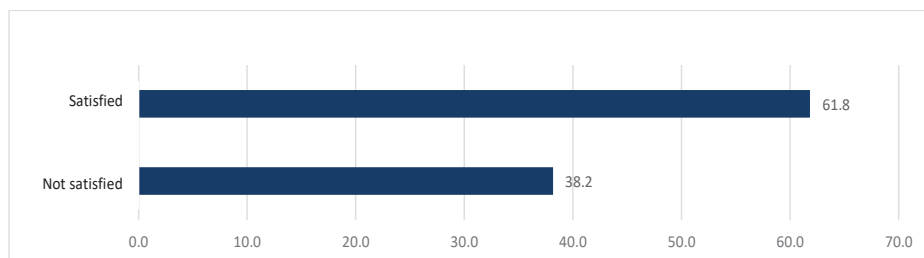
Do you have the facilities to properly store livestock products? (N=239)



Most village residents (61.8%) are satisfied with sales volumes of the product received from livestock breeding. While almost 40% of cattle breeders are not satisfied with sales volumes of livestock products, low levels of cattle breeding product realization will lead to intensified losses and can lead to village breeders giving up on this agricultural sphere (see Figure 67).

Figure 67.

Are you satisfied with the sales volume of livestock products? (N=76)



More than half of the respondents engaged in cattle breeding (55%) carries out cattle slaughtering (see Figure 68); note that a large majority (90.7%) carries out this cattle slaughtering mainly on their own area (territory) without costly, special, additional sanitary-hygienic conditions (see Figure 69).

Figure 68.

Do you carry out animal slaughtering? (N=238)

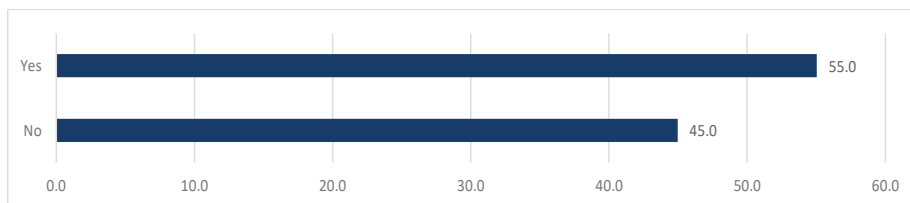
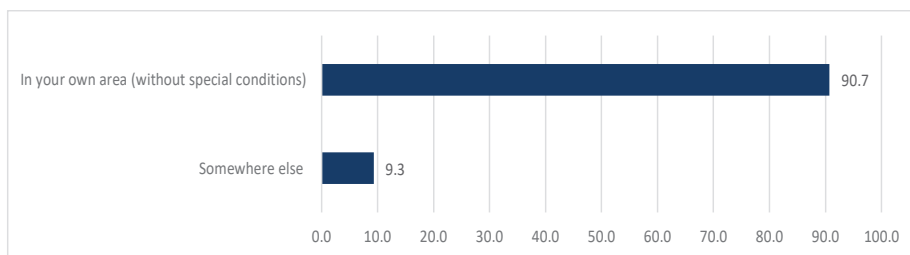


Figure 69.

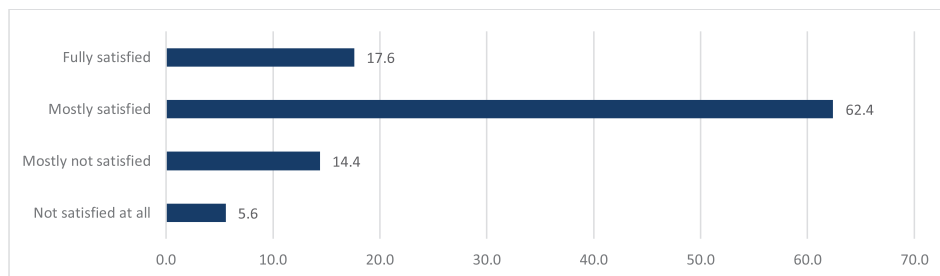
Where do you mainly do the salughtering? N=129



Despite the riskiness of slaughtering conditions and the risk of potential negative consequences, the majority of the respondents (80%) are satisfied with animal slaughter facilities (see Figure 70).

Figure 70.

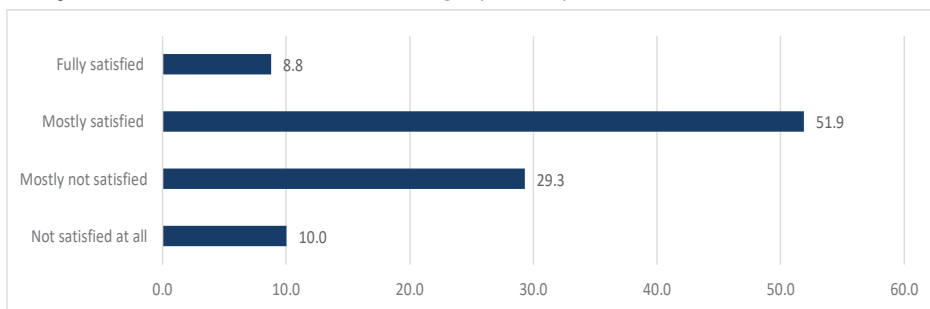
Are you satisfied with animal slaughtering facilities? (N=125)



In general, the majority of village residents engaged in livestock breeding (60.7%) and are satisfied with cattle breeding activities. Yet, cattle breeding is problematic for almost 40% who state that they are mostly not satisfied or not satisfied at all with animal farming (see Figure 71).

Figure 71.

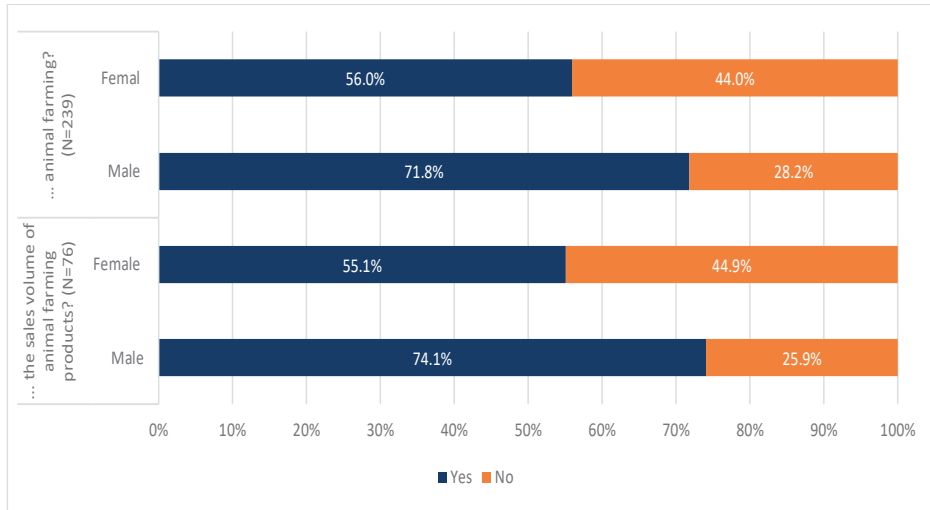
Are you satisfied with animal farming? (N=239)



Note that unlike male representatives, female are less satisfied with both the volumes of sale of products from cattle breeding and the livestock breeding activity (see Figure 72).

Figure 72.

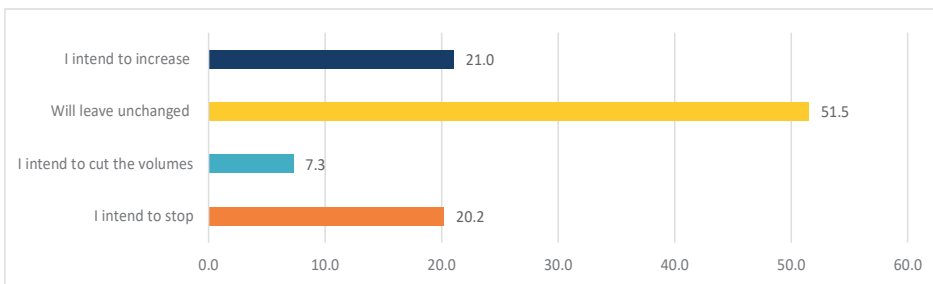
Are you satisfied with ...



Only 21% of cattle breeders intend to expand their cattle breeding volumes. Taking into account the complications and problems in cattle breeding, it is a predictable conclusion that more than half of the cattle breeders (51.5%) do not plan any changes to their production volume. Unfortunately, 20.2% of breeders intend to cease their cattle breeding activity (see Figure 74). The higher the educational level of the interviewed cattle breeders, the more they are inclined to ceasing and/or reducing cattle breeding volumes (Spearman rho=0.148, p<0.024, CI=95%, N=232).

Figure 73.

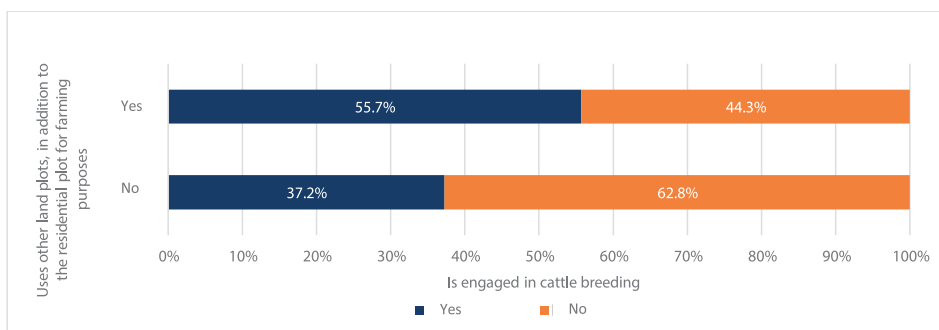
Rural population's intentions about engaging in animal husbandry (N=233)



BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS TO AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

This survey has revealed that villagers' involvement in agricultural practices depends on different characteristics such as sex, age, and educational level. Interestingly, in most cases, village residents are either actively involved in farming and livestock breeding or excluded from both forms of agriculture (see Figure 74).

Figure 74.
Mutual agreement in farming and cattle breeding activities (N=372)

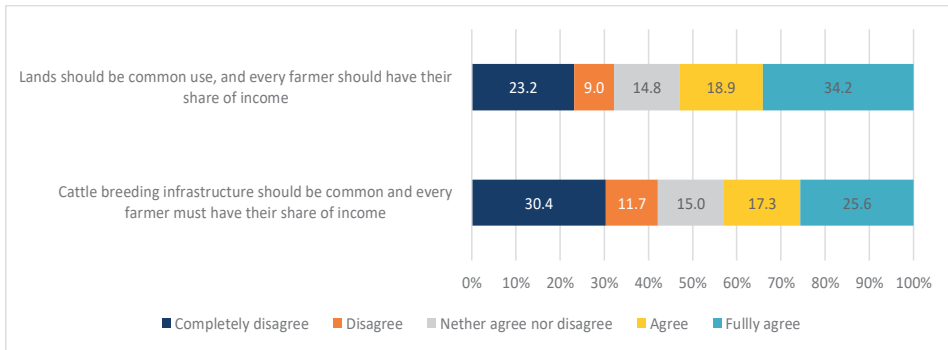


A pattern has been identified regarding the potential collectivization of villagers' agricultural resources. More than half of the respondents (53.1%) agreed with the statement "Lands should be common use, and every farmer should have their share of income." At the same time, only 42.9% of villagers support a similar statement relating to cattle breeding.

The assumption is that these positions are based particularly on the former practice of collectivization of lands and the memories of these processes, leaving off or forgetting about costs in the event of availability of common lands, lesser losses, conflicts, and tensions (see Figure 75).

Figure 75.

To what extent do you agree with each of the statements concerning agriculture, as presented below?



These viewpoints are contingent on household income. Parallel to income growth, the tendency of being in favor of the common use of village land plots ($X^2=16.890$, $p<0.031$, Cramer's $V=0.219$, $CI=95\%$) and cattle breeding infrastructures ($X^2=20.083$, $p<0.010$, Cramer's $V=0.241$, $CI=99\%$) wanes. The poor villager is much more for collectivization. Interestingly, villagers not being engaged in cattle breeding are for collectivization of the cattle ($X^2=15.086$, $p<0.005$, Cramer's $V=0.205$, $CI=99\%$).

Figure 76.

Lands should be of common use

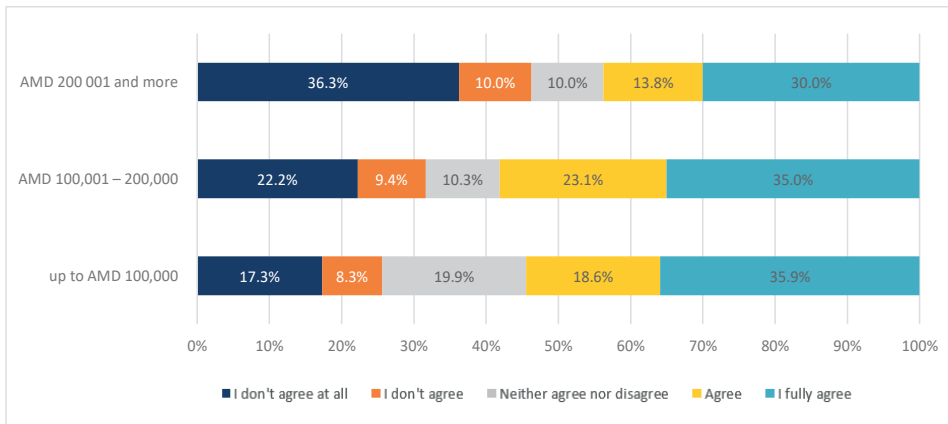
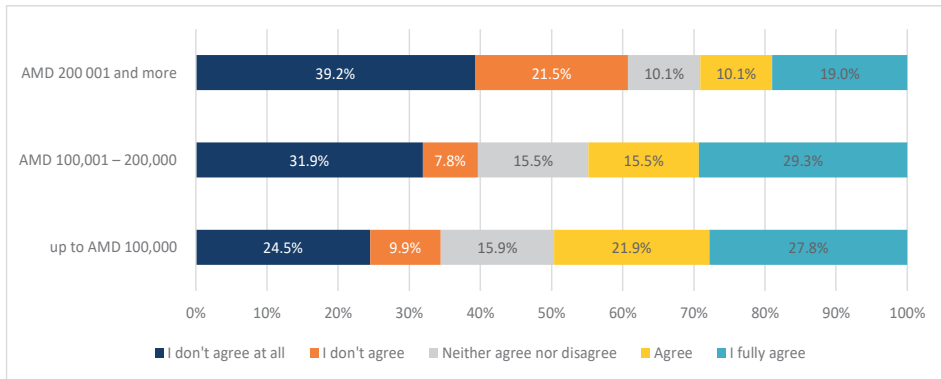


Figure 77.

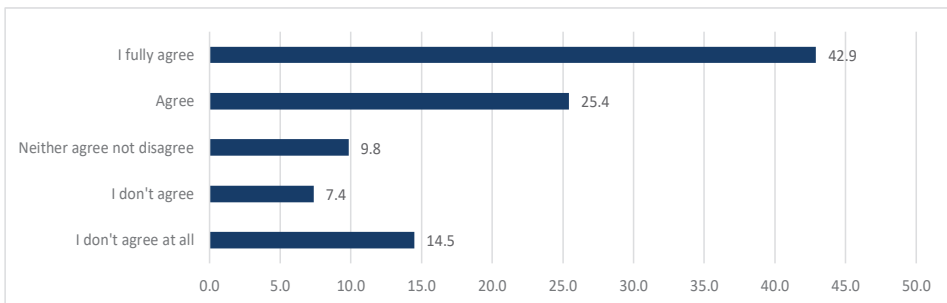
Cattle breeding infrastructures should be of common use and each villager should have their share of income



Around 68.3% of villagers agree with the collectivization of the agricultural machinery for common use (see Figure 78). One may assume that agricultural inefficiency and correspondingly, the well-being of the village resident, his/her social position, etc. are conditional upon accessibility to agricultural machinery, which has been unfairly privatized and since independence, has been in the hands of only a few people. Many villagers still have memories of collective farming, where, indeed, the machinery did not solely belong to one person.

Figure 78.

Agricultural machinery should be of common use and each villager should have his/her share of income



This survey has expressed that depending on the well-being of the household, village residents' agricultural practices change. Additionally, success in agriculture is often related to alternative household incomes, but alternative incomes assume the risk of ceasing agricultural activities.

... one cannot make a living only with farming, agriculture, if no other income is available.

50-year-old female, Ararat

An alternative source of well-being for villagers has continuously been the migration activity, working abroad.

I have gone to Moscow for ten years; whatever you see, I have been able to help my parents; we have built this greenhouse, purchased lands; this is how today we can make a living.

35-year-old male, Kotayk

At the beginning, their son went to Russia; he was helping them from there, so that they could live here; they were engaged in agriculture. But over time, now they have people living in Russia, who have good business and help; here they stopped doing, they already say that we are tired of doing that work, it is a dirty work, we will go abroad and do another work.

65-year-old female, Lori

The golden era for the Armenian villager was during the time of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Problems logically arose after the collapse of the USSR, when the inefficient privatization process occurred. Village residents have mentioned that many villagers have privatized lands, but for various reasons, they fail to cultivate these lands. Additionally, other villagers cannot do farming because they do not have their own land.

How was it in the past? During the collective and Soviet farming. Can you imagine how it is to cultivate that much land so that it is not left uncultivated? How much it will be. Why are privatizations left that one cannot cultivate lands? With pleasure, I would hand over, if we all get together and secure crop for the future of our children. It would be better.

65-year-old female, Kotayk

Villagers also recall “unfair” redistribution of the machinery, some of the results of which are complications in cooperation with the owner of the agricultural machinery. The results of this denationalization/privatization have become the reason for several ideological differences and current conflicts. According to village residents, **“winners” and “losers”, “successful villagers” and “failed villagers” resulted from privatization.** The so-called monopoly of the machinery still exists in villages, and prices are set by individuals.

After the Soviet period, I don't know how the distribution was made; someone applied, paid money, and thus, it was distributed among the villagers.

45-year-old male, Lori

Assessing agricultural infrastructure and difficulties in being engaged in agriculture from a current view point, the following more common problems exist:

- *Absence, insufficiency and poor conditions of infrastructures, production means, agricultural resources, of which the following are of special importance:*
 - *Imperfect irrigation systems,*
 - *Scarcity of and/or high price for hay, fertilizer, and machinery*

- *Mismatch of the benefit from agriculture and contributed efforts*

This often causes frustration leading to termination of agricultural activity.

Plant is spoiled; I don't know whether it is because of fertilizer or anything else. Injections are almost useless, and everything is spoiled. Why then I should cultivate the plant?

70-year-old female, Aragatsoth

It is too much; suffering is much higher; villager has to struggle and be tormented to be able to grow that plant.

50-year-old female, Ararat

- Problems of sale of the agricultural products – liquidation of markets, low prices for the goods, and intermediation of resellers

Today, agricultural production is mainly realized through a reseller, who, on the villager's opinion, takes the product at an incomparably low price, as compared to direct relations (selling) with the final buyer.

Resellers come and buy milk from us for 70-90 drams. And you see that a liter of milk costs 350-400 drams in the city; water is more expensive than milk. Why it should be so? They do not allow the villager to sell his/her own product.

50-year-old female, Ararat

It seems that since 1998 the market was not there anymore; we no longer went to the market. We cannot go door by door, sit in front of buildings and sell things. Firstly, my sons will not allow me to do so; they say, isn't it a shame that we are here and you go to sell the product in front of buildings? Let it be thrown away; we fill some of it into container, make vodka; no, they say – isn't it a shame for you at your age; I am already above 70...

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

- *Regulation and coordination issues relating to the agricultural sector*

Villagers expect the State properly manage and be the responsible party in relation to the broad problems in agricultural relations, rather than the free market. With this logic, the “guilty party” relating to villagers' problems are also the imperfect State. The State has actually left the latter alone in preliminarily defeatist conditions, especially, when the conventional opponent is the voluminous business, oligarchy, and effective agri-enterprise.

Fertilizers are expensive, and you don't know what you are injecting; there is no information, no coordinated approach that would be organized by the state.

35-year-old male, Armavir

- *Lack of knowledge and approaches relating to the sector*

Here, as well, the villager recalls their golden era during the time of the USSR. According to villagers' statements, in that period, farming for the rural resident was mostly mechanical work for which they received workday remuneration in the form of a salary. During this time, a knowledgeable agronomist would use effective ready agricultural approaches. After the collapse of the Soviet order, the rural resident is now alone in agriculture., without appropriate knowledge and skills. As a result, agronomists/farmers exchange methods, without properly studying their appropriateness, effectiveness, risks, etc. In many cases, this leads to failure.

At that time, people didn't know how to plough land; they would see that the neighbour had planted potatoes, they also would do that; they would see that they had installed a hail netting, they also would do so. Now knowledge is gradually increasing, but many people do not know how much it costs to plant, what they should keep to have a good result, depending on the position of the village.

35-year-old male, Armavir

- *Attachment to the place and impossibility of mobility*

Agriculture is characterized as "enduring suffering" and "loss of time" that does not allow for movement without incurring loss in agriculture. This is presented as a barrier and sometimes motivation for terminating agriculture. Such problems are particularly stressed in the context of livestock breeding.

Cattle is such a thing, that you don't have any Saturday-Sunday. If you delay the fodder, it starts making loud noises. We are isolated from good things. When we are invited by someone to a wedding party, we are thinking – who will go? Whom to say? Whom to ask? Either my husband should go, and I -not, or I should go, and he – not.

60-year-old female, Syunik

If you have at least one cattle, then every day you should allot at least 3 hours to the cattle – morning, noon, evening. It can be the case that you have 6 hectares of land plot, but you won't allot time every day.

40-year-old male, Lori

- *Lack of labour force*

The survey suggests that full involvement of family in agriculture contributes to the farming more successfully. In small families, where the adults of the family are mainly engaged in agriculture, the probability of its success is reduced.

Along with the barriers of farming, it is also important to understand the 4 main factors that predict the ceasing of agricultural activity.

1. Cultural segregation in the village:

There are families in villages which have been traditionally (from the Soviet period) engaged in agriculture; at the same time, there are the so-called “elite” of the village. Depending on such cultural status, participation of rural population in agricultural activities varies.

We cannot go from door to door, sit in front of buildings and sell things. In my family, everybody has been a pedagogue, I also have been a pedagogue; my sons will not allow me; they say isn't it a shame that we are here, and you go to sell the product in front of buildings; let the harvest be thrown away.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

2. Alternative employment/specialization:

Families with traditionally non-agricultural specialization, prioritize over time not only farming, but also education, knowledge, and skills that are considered valuable. To this day, this trend is normal for almost all the categories of the rural population.

My mother-in law would say that family has been a handful of galgalos wheat in a sack of wheat. We have later helped with their education, level. Then, due to the educational level, we began to live better, and discontinued farming; we were keeping only several trees for us.

70-year-old male, Aragatsotn

No, our situation completely changed; due to the educational level, we began to live better over time and gave up farming, as we can have incomes from other sources.

65-year-old male, Kotayk

3. Transformation of values, traditions and/or violation of the traditionality in households:

When the next generation fails to continue the activity that has been transferred from the previous generation.

We used to have everything possible, we would keep cattle in our house – domestic animals, cow, sheep, pig, horse – everything that was possible. According to my grandmother, if you won't keep any of these, then something very bad would happen to you. She wanted to have every type, irrespective whether we benefited from it, or it was an obstacle. But after my grandma, now we don't have anything, except for several chickens; for some times we were doing it with my mother; then we stopped doing.

40-year-old male, Tavush

4. Frustration:

Lack of efficiency in agricultural activity and labor productivity has been recorded. Farming is considered to not have positive prospects, contributing to exclusion of the younger generation from this sector.

... because they already know what is going to be; that is a dirty work, they will give it up; they will easily find a light work for them, will go to work; that is more advantageous for them, as compared to a young person in dirt and filth; everyone seeks to go to the city and find a job there.

65-year-old female, Lori

Note that in the case of households that have ceased agricultural activity, improvement in the state of the household has been recorded. The jobs substituting agriculture are **workmanship, a job in the service sector, and/or working abroad.**

In some cases, motivations for being engaged in agriculture are irrational and are not related to the efficiency of agriculture. These relate to the traditional legacy of agriculture and devotion to the agricultural work, as well as attachment to the place.

I dream that our arable lands are cultivated.

40-year-old male, Akner, greenhouse agriculture

Well, life in mountains is different. I seem to have enough desire; if not, I won't continue this occupation.

75-year-old female, Aragatsotn

... I cannot rely on somebody else, I should have, should create my own things.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

... It's a pity to waste; I may give it up, but it is a pity to waste. Say, I say, it is land, why it will be left ownerless-deserted; it is a tree, let's plant it; anything you harvest from the tree and sell, will be a sort of income.

50-year-old female, Ararat

Besides, villagers also have to be engaged in agriculture.

After the Soviet period, there was no job. People were left without work; what could they do? They had to do something; they had to deal with land; what else?

65-year-old male, Kotayk

Agriculture is a means of earning money in the right way, i.e., you cannot steal from the agriculture.

35 year-old male, Armavir

If you don't keep cattle, it won't work; then you have to leave the village. There is no other work; what else can we do?

60 year-old female, Syunik

Transformation of agriculture into a positive agricultural undertaking (farming agriculture, greenhouse agriculture, horticulture) is presented as a successful agricultural practice. Studying the experience of successful agronomists, as well as that of people involved in agriculture and having terminated agricultural acti-

vity, the main conditions, which, according to the rural population, are required for attaining success in agricultural activity, are presented below.

- *Consistent work*

It [agriculture] is profitable, when you do everything appropriately; the one engaged in agriculture should be completely engaged in it – treatment, irrigation. People, who take ownership, succeed.

50-year-old female, Ararat Marz

- *Complete contribution by household*

Firstly, the one engaged in agriculture should be completely engaged in it, should do it normally; it shouldn't be so that you try to do various things and fail to make a profit from any of them.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

- *Matching agriculture with the geographical position*

We are no longer planting potatoes, as we understood that in our region potato is not grown well, because of the geographical position. It would be better to be engaged, say, in cattle breeding; let them plant potato in such region where it grows better.

40-year-old male, Tavush

- *Adequateness of market consumption*

There are crops, for which every year is stagnated; there is a problem connected with sale, or, with the cost price, you cannot compete with large companies or large individuals, and it is not at all advantageous for you to do that cultivation. This is the result of not studying the market.

40-year-old male, Lori

I decided that today it is more advantageous to breed small cattle than the bigger ones. Big cattle are not profitable. You know that, when you keep the small cattle, people come and buy one sheep from you for a lower price – 40 thousand, Yezidis take. Now these small cattle are more advantageous than the big ones.

70-year-old male, Gegharkunik

- Knowledge/approaches required for effective farming

There are special approaches for doing everything; installation of smart systems, drip systems, so that it is irrigated on its own; you approach at least once per week to see in what maturing period is the crop, and according to that, you change irrigation and fertilization approaches.

40-year-old male, Lori

I have all this knowledge, I can even organize birth of pigs on my own; sometimes I inject my cattle; even when there is a need, I do not call veterinarians.

60-year-old female, Syunik

- Alternative sources of income

I was working and receiving salary; my husband was working in the anti-hail service. Along with that, we were keeping cattle, were engaged in agriculture, growing trees, maintaining agriculture.

70-year-old female, Aragatsotn

I have gone to Moscow for ten years; whatever you see, I have been able to help my parents; we have built this greenhouse, purchased lands; this is how today we can earn our living

30-year-old male, Armavir

- Own experience and experience exchange between agronomists

... My friend invited me to [name of the country]. He had strawberry gardens there. I went for one month. And I asked - what is needed for doing all that stuff. He had practical experience of a few years. He taught me and I learnt a lot of things from him.

40-year-old male, Lori

We had a new neighbor; she saw that I breed chickens, got interested, was glad; every day she was asking me questions – how should I keep this? What should I do for better results? ...she also brought and began to keep chickens; she does it with great pleasure and it works.

65-year-old female, Kotayk



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this survey was to reveal the rurality crisis in Armenia, particularly that of the villager and village along with agriculture in general. Along with this primary aim, diagnostics of the various situations related to rurality were developed and presented. This research has revealed the difficulties, if not infeasibility, of villagers' current abilities to overcome material and monetary poverty. Reasons for these difficulties have been identified as stemming from deep distortions in business/ industrial structures, processes, and relationships leading to ineffective sales. Other negative aspects associated with villagers' social constructs and social polarizations have caused additional problems. Additionally, the economic, ecological, social-legal, and administrative-political context of rurality was assessed to reveal the different aspects of the crisis in agriculture. This was done to fully identify and highlight the need for prioritization of the role of agriculture in Armenia.

• *Rural Crisis*

This crisis is specific to the contemporary villager and the rural community and relates to critical discrepancy within their cognitive constructs. The villager is the simultaneous bearer, reproducer, and consumer of often opposing polar world-views. The villager has both an ideological and normative bases for their social existence, as well as mutually refuting value, behavioral, and cognitive attributes. From a sociological perspective, signs of critical anomy or instability are observed in the current villager as they often continue with unsuccessful behaviors and fail to adopt or fully seize presented opportunities.

The construct of villagers' values is ambiguous, conflicting, often controversial, and underpinned by viewpoints composed of traditionality and contemporariness, conservatism and liberality, collectivism and individualism, community leading and democracy, paternalism, and free-thinking.

The multidimensional identity of the contemporary villager – the cornerstone of the rurality concept - is also critical. Here the normative basis, emotionality of perceptions, settings, goals of actions, functions, and meanings of social organizations diverge. The villager is withdrawn and alienated from the core basis of their existence: the land, due to feelings of not being able to escape their problematic situation or address it effectively. Yet, this statement is not homogenic, meaning

there isn't just one aspect. The class structure of the above-described reality must also be considered. There are several types of villagers, most likely, several forms of rurality, which are the drivers, if not intensifiers, of the crisis.

The survey has revealed several manifestations and foundational components of rural life and the rurality crisis. This crisis of agriculture, as a security institution that is the bearer of key production-consumption relationships, is a priority. Agriculture is not broadly attractive; the villager is poor. During these past few decades, the villager has had to struggle and compete with elements and competitors that were not present in the Soviet era. The villager is alone in facing various challenges of (neo) liberal markets, where villagers' use of their own unsophisticated tactics and strategies, being solely focused on a personal prosperous existence, will end in defeat. The land and agriculture, in general, are a means to effective capital creation, but proper management and strategies must be understood and used to maximize effectiveness. Due to the current conditions faced by villagers, survey results have revealed that villagers often express the necessity of state support; in other words, the villagers want to liberalize themselves from the uncertainty of free/open markets.

The reality described above is largely driven by years of lack of modernization, viability of agricultural and economic relations in Armenia, and the impossibility to do so. The rural population engages in agriculture driven by the principle of minimum exhaustion of efforts and, instead of effective farming, they dream of the classical industry, where they will work for pay.

The survey revealed that Armenian villagers are not modernized – instead, they lack development and are de-industrialized. Moreover, villagers have an idealized picture or memory of the industrialized, mechanized, and voluminous Soviet-era agriculture life. The myth of prosperity built on such foundations is complemented by “rural-urban” comparisons, idealization of whatever is urban, and, in case no way out for the village is feasible, permanent aspiration for the city.

The current collapsing rural community is compared with the former Soviet times, the vitality of which is directly linked with the former success of collective farming. Yet at the same time, the villager is opposed to the urban resident, the village is opposed to the city; the village is “clean” and the villager is also “clean.” The villager puts forward their own discriminatory views in opposing urban residents' per-

ceived attitudes towards the villager. Yet at the same time, as a potential resource of well-being, the urban resident is socially close to even the poor villager (images of the villager).

Continuous inefficiency of agriculture, along with perceptions of the infeasibility of modernization, alienates the villager from the resources constituting the basis for rurality – the land, community, and the normative bases of a traditional life. With this marginal and uncertain identity, the villager is left in an extremely dysfunctional state, combining traditional prepositions and new challenges (such as market failures).

Given the conditions presented, the villager manifests an acquired helplessness and irrationally relies on any type of paternalism. The villager lacks confidence, shows social nihilism, and lacks contemporariness. Unfortunately, here it is impossible to speak about further modernization and comprehensive improvement of the situation.

The villager's marginality is multidimensional. Released from former communal management, the villager professes individualism. Yet the villager is now defeated in liberalism, recalls collectivism, is responsible for only the narrow family, and now requests cooperative relationships.

Contemporary villagers' political standpoints - broadly speaking, the political identity, are critical and controversial. The concept of democracy, only recently learned by the villager, remains mainly incomprehensible, with many still expressing the imperative of a strong sole ruler.

The key divide of the heterogeneity of the general rurality is the class system, even if it is unusual for the 21st century. A major split exists between the successful villager, who is already an established farmer, and aspiring villagers. For the fully established villager, the uncertainty is less. They are not marginalized. There are clear vital strategies to help all villagers become more functional.

- The successful agronomist – the farmer, who is mainly the agriculturalist, is clearly oriented in the market (the selling of the product). He/she researches and works to understand the competition. They learn from successes as well as failures. This is an entrepreneur who is interested in the competition and the potential profits that

can be achieved. The long-run effectiveness of this type of undertaking reasonably requires the absence of external barriers. This type of new farmer must keep pace with environmental protections, cooperates with proper economic management, has a broad social responsibility, with minimal state interventions, all while evaluating their progress and achievements.

- This new villager is active in their agricultural endeavors by wisely investing in their own rural business. He/she is generally inclined to longer-term additional investments and avoids non-purposeful, dysfunctional accumulations of capital that are typical to the poorer class.
- The farmer is an innovator. Long-run successes are realized by seizing opportunities in streamlining one's own agriculture and related sectors.
- The villagers see social justice in guarantees of unbiased competition.
- The farmer is young, he/she is liberal, and is against any type of monopolistic management in the village. He/she demands to be involved in the power redistribution process in the village.
- They ensure their own efficiency through cooperation underpinned by exchange relationships with villagers and farm managers.
- They are against any collectivization of agricultural resources and processes, considering that any potential leveling-off will lead to the loss of their achievements and subsequently their own assets.

The survey shows that, in the context of the agricultural crisis, the problem of identity is central along with legal and economic issues. This identity component should be particularly taken into account in the context of making policies that target the village. It needs to be perceived as a multidimensional and multi-complex phenomenon, where the village is a community, is more than just agriculture, but where land is a social-cultural capital.

The social risks of not fully understanding this identity issue are observable in the community consolidation process. At the state level, this issue has been viewed as an administrative-territorial reform, in most cases omitting the problems and risks of identity, co-existence, and social inclusion arising from settlement consolidation. This causes an intensification of the rurality crisis. According to the survey results, complaints related to community consolidation are connected with aspects of administrative-political divisions and newly formed inter-settlement relationships. This has been particularly apparent in tension between prosperous and non-prosperous settlements that have found themselves in the same consolidated community.

Worries about sharp reductions in the number of administrative staff, loss of decent good-paying jobs, as well as effective management of new risks and opportunities have increased these tensions. Settlements in consolidated communities compete mainly for representation in community management units. According to village residents, the extent of the opportunity or risk of the consolidation process for a given community depends on the level of representation.

- *Agricultural Crisis*

Due to the impact of the 44-day Artsakh War and COVID-19 pandemic, the state of agricultural farms, agricultural value chains, markets, and prices have been exacerbated. Particularly, import volumes of cereals and legume crops have reduced and problems with fodder provision have increased. Additionally, indicators of local production of wheat, which is of strategic importance in terms of food security, are more than three times lower in Armenia as compared to the imported wheat volume. Despite this, the legislative framework and practical steps to promote the production of strategic wheat supplies in the country have not become priorities for decision-makers in Armenia. This must be recognized in that to ensure Armenia's food security; the role of the village and agriculture must be prioritized as a necessity.

Agriculture has a key role in the social-economic development context and foreign trade balance of Armenia. In the structure of agricultural products, the production of meat and milk, as well as cereal and legume crops, fruit, berries and grape are ranked high. Due to application of modern technology and mechanization, poultry breeding among livestock husbandry branches is well developed. On the contrary, because of the problems of irrigation and market accessibility, both the sown areas and the gross yield of vegetable crops and potatoes have been reduced over the recent years.

Around half of arable lands in Armenia are not used. One of the reasons that the lands are uncultivated or unproductive is due to fragmentation. Other reasons include migration from settlements and the absence of landowners.

Fragmentation of land areas, outdated or lack of irrigation systems and infrastructure, monocultures, and inefficient management of sown areas and pastures, soil degradation, and a number of other problems have led to deterioration of living

conditions for people living in rural areas and become the reason for them to leave the villages and agriculture all together.

Distortions in the link between policy and practical agricultural activity, lack of appropriate knowledge and skills, as well as the absence of an agrarian consultancy system are the reasons for the decline in agricultural productivity. Cooperation and experience exchange mechanisms between the people engaged in agriculture and farms need to be enhanced since they are currently poorly developed.

Currently, investments allotted for the agriculture sector are directed through banks and private companies and distributed to only a select few dozen medium and large land owners. These select few are equipped (re-equipped) with modern agricultural technology. Subsequently, villagers with less agricultural capacity and resources are mainly left out of the state support programs. Although the state and international programs invests several hundred billion drams per year into rural areas, they fail to reduce poverty indicators or provide solutions to food security issues. The Armenian agricultural sector is regulated by several laws, legal acts, and international conventions and agreements that are directly or indirectly connected with the sector. However, various laws and legal acts provide several characteristics, differing from each other to the person engaged in agriculture or the farm (for example, farm owner, farmer, villager, primary producer, farm, etc.). This does not clarify the legal status of the villager which then fails to define the guarantees of social protection for people engaged in agriculture. Note that, it is important to interpret discussions on the opportunities for social protection development through current villages' perceptions of the social structure.

Due to a lack of information, knowledge, and resources, people engaged in agriculture have weak bargaining power in the market. This is particularly due to not having favourable regulations in place which leads producers of agricultural products to mainly operate informally.

In rural settlements, infrastructures like market inaccessibility due to poor roads as well as a lack of regular and cold storage facilities, are poorly developed. Huge losses of agricultural products are seen in the logistic/transport segment of the value chain because due to a lack of modern technology and equipment. In addition, there are various obstacles to the development of the food processing industry and export market.

In agriculture there is almost the same number of females as there are males, however, women are mostly involved in informal agricultural activity. Besides unequal remuneration (pay) based on sex, there are other difficulties in Armenia for women's access to technical information regarding agriculture and benefiting from ancillary services and training courses. In rare cases, women manage farms and make key decisions concerning agricultural production. Rural resident women working informally on farms do not receive any compensation defined by the Labor Code such as sick leave or childcare allowance. Meanwhile, the involvement of children under five in preschool institutions is at a low level.

In general, agriculture in Armenia is characterized by scarcity of land and water resources and its ineffective usage. As climate change continues, Armenian agriculture becomes more vulnerable. Ecological problems are particularly worsened by villagers' use of non-sustainable practices in crop production and livestock husbandry.

About half of the area in Armenia is in the process of desertification, with one forth under the risk of desertification. Several man-made factors (mismanagement of grasslands and pastures, overloading of some fields because of agricultural machinery, disturbances in plowing and sowing processes, unsatisfactory condition of irrigation systems, lack of crop rotation, one-sided fertilization, tree cutting, and more) have led to land erosion. As a result, thousands of hectares of agricultural land need improvement.

Due to the depreciation of infrastructures and inefficient management of irrigation, more than half of the irrigation water is lost within the irrigation system and does not reach the field. The other half is used inefficiently by farms. Fish farming, requiring large quantities of underground freshwater, particularly increases inefficient water use. In Ararat Valley, where a significant portion of fisheries are consolidated, water is not processed and is used only once, exhausting great supplies of underground freshwater.

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Observable contradictions of the continuously expected rural life, contemporary competitive structures in agriculture, and the recorded loss of several characteristics required for effective rural life, best exemplify the present Armenian rurality crises. The chronic nature of the crisis makes simple solutions difficult to express.

However, working in various directions will create opportunities for conceptualization, and addressing of the issues of the village and/or rurality from a new angle. The targeted activity of policymakers and the government, as well as civil society and educational institutions, are essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Form an operational typology of rurality with explicit mutual exclusion of social parties that organize farm management by direct and indirect use of agrarian resources. Additionally, key concepts, such as village resident, villager, agronomist, farmer, etc. needed to be added on and synonymized in that they are extremely important for the development of the legislative framework for an effective policy and its public management.

- With perspective, effective progress, and multifaceted development of the modern Armenian village and villagers in the focus of public policy, recommend a multidimensional comparative index for the villager's vulnerability. Some main components of this are well-being, settlement, the potential of organizing agriculture, agricultural employment sector, production-economic turnover volume, accessibility to sales market, modernization of agriculture, and social-demographic characteristics of families.

- With the comparative index, map the Armenian villagers' multidimensional vulnerability along with its separate components, their goal-oriented synthesis, to capture especially vulnerable categories and situations for the long-run.

- Considering specific vulnerabilities of villagers and the fatal significance of their activity for permanent security, well-being, and lossless development of Armenia, form the legal standing of the villager, granting them a specific status.

- Ensure operability of villager's legal standing, the status, especially in production-economic, financial-economic, and trade relationships.

- Establish a system, a platform, operating with the bottom-to-top rationale, for the data on rural settlements, local infrastructures, social servicing structures, agricultural resources and mechanisms, collection, monitoring, and/or statistical recording of the locals' needs, the core organizational hub of which would be the local self-government body.

- Create a problem-based, active communication system with local self-government bodies (responsible representatives).

- Appropriate structures and organizations, create an accessible, effective net-

work system for agricultural information, consultancy, and situational interventions through functional unity with the Armenian National Agrarian University.

- Given the purposes of sustainable, lossless agriculture, create a lifelong effective educational system for professional training and promotion of villagers (the agronomists).

- Create an opportunity through the above-stated educational potentials and systems to enhance the standing of the village woman with more expansive, effective, and especially stressless involvement.

- Create a system for simultaneous statistical recording and monitoring of agricultural and related resources that are required for effective operation and perspective development of agriculture, as well as for appropriate and multidimensional databanks.

- Enhance the symbolic status of villagers' rural life to a desirable state, as well as expand the potential for attachment to the location. Create infrastructures in villages, such as cultural centers and sports areas, as well as organization of cultural events.

Experimental implementation of the presented recommendations requires several short-term pilot programs and measures to be taken.



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ANNEX



Additional materials can be accessed in PDF or ZIP format using QR codes.

Content:

- *Standardized survey questionnaire*
- *Qualitative interview questionnaire*
- *Expert interview questionnaire*
- *Information sheet*

(PDF)

https://southcaucasus.fes.de/fileadmin/Publications/2022/Rural_Crisis_in_Armenia_Appendices_ENG.pdf



(ZIP)

https://southcaucasus.fes.de/fileadmin/Publications/2022/Rural_Crisis_in_Armenia_2022_ENG.zip



ORGANIZATION (1933-1936), ARSHILE GORKY



Typifying his work of the mid 1930s, the completely abstract composition *Organization* (1933-36) is an amalgamation of Arshile Gorky's exposure to the Synthetic Cubist works of Pablo Picasso (with flat planes that are less fragmented and linear, yet more colorful), as well as the signature organic pictorial motifs of Joan Miro.

The painting explores a multitude of concepts put forth by these artists: flatness, form reduction, the arrangement of color, and images arising from the unconscious, even though *Gorky preferred to let his forms be directly inspired by nature and reality.*



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