Transformation of the Pattern and Habits of Food Consumption of the Rural Population of Russian Federation

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TRANSFORMATION OF THE PATTERN AND HABITS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION OF THE RURAL POPULATION OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Introduction

Over the last decades, the traditional pattern and habits of food consumption of the rural population change under the influence of a number of economic, social and technological factors. The most important of them are the growth of incomes of individual groups of the rural population, its greater mobility, expanded circular migration, increased orientation to the urban way of life, and also changes in the consumers’ perception of the quality and safety of food. The aggregate impact of these factors causes the food consumption and consumer behavior of the rural population to change. The degree, to which the new food consumption trends manifest themselves on the level of individual households, depends on such factors as income, age, education level, the size of the settlements in which the consumers live, and on the remoteness of these settlements from district and regional centers.

Data and Methods

The paper is based on analyzing -
- the statistical data of the Federal State Statistics Service of RF depicting the level and pattern of consumption of basic food products, the cost of food, the nutritional and energy value of the food consumed by urban and rural households, households with different composition and households with different welfare, for the 2002-2012 period;
- the results of the sociological survey conducted in 2010-2011 in three administrative districts of one of the typical agrarian regions of Russia – Saratov Oblast. The spontaneous sample represents the able-bodied and working-age rural population of the country and includes 743 respondents. Particular attention in the course of the questionnaire survey was paid to the attitude of different population groups towards the need to check the quality and safety of the food purchased or produced and to control the diet.

Food consumption by basic groups, average per household, kg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All households</th>
<th>Urban households</th>
<th>Rural households</th>
<th>Rural vs. urban households, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>132,8</td>
<td>133,4</td>
<td>132,2</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>135,3</td>
<td>136,1</td>
<td>134,5</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NUTRITIONAL AND ENERGY VALUE OF FOOD

Average per household per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All households</th>
<th>Urban households</th>
<th>Rural households</th>
<th>Rural vs. urban households, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>112.2</td>
<td>114.7</td>
<td>110.7</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>114.3</td>
<td>116.2</td>
<td>112.4</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results and Conclusions

The growth of consumption of the most valuable food products – meat and dairy products, fish, vegetables, fruit and berries – by the rural population of Russia was observed in the first decade of the 21st century. Changes in the structure of the diet resulted in an increase of its nutritional value, and the diet also became more balanced in terms of protein content, including proteins of animal origin. The notorious heavy starchy diets turn increasingly unpopular.

Personal farming has always been one of the most important and accessible sources of food for rural households. However, now its role is on a steady decline, as the fraction of purchased food in the total consumption constantly increases.

In recent years, rural households to consume much more processed food products like sausages, meats and convenient foods, cheese, sour milk products and yogurts, fruit and vegetable juices. The consumption of canned vegetables and fruits – traditional domestically produced delicacies, on the contrary, decreased.

The proliferation of new information technology (satellite TV, the Internet) increased the rural residents’ awareness of new popular brands and new kinds of products, but also of the potential dangers of modern food production technology. Our results show that when buying food products, 35.7% of our rural respondents of the working age always check them for chemical, synthetic and genetically modified ingredients. Whether rural residents feel the need to check the composition of the food products they buy or not, mostly depends on their level of education and welfare. The level of education speaks for their awareness, and the level of welfare makes it possible for them (not) to choose among food products. For women, an important factor is also the presence of young children in the family, while for men – their age (among men of 40-50 years of age every second checks the composition of what he eats).

Contemporary rural residents pay attention not only to the composition of the food purchased, but also to the quality of personal farming products, especially when they are grown for personal consumption. To illustrate this, 63% of the respondents apply modern plant protection and productivity increasing products only if they are sure that they are safe. In general, each second respondent prefers not to risk, using conventional crop-growing methods. The general trend is that the rural population spends relatively more money on buying food and less time on personal farming and cooking. The fact that the role of personal farming as a source of food for the rural population is diminishing has ambiguous consequences.