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Land Reform and Land Relations in Rural Russia

Abstract

This paper addresses the impact of land reform policy on land relations and land use. The analysis is intended to begin to fill that void by answering the question: how did rural dwellers respond to reform policies and opportunities? The findings reported in this paper show a process of incremental rural adaptation to the new opportunities provided by land reform.

The first part of the article briefly reviews some of the key aspects of legislation and legal institutions that defined the parameters of land reform in Russia. The second part considers some regional aspects of land reform at macro level. Our primary focus is the third part, which uses village-level survey data to show actual changes in landownership and rental practices at the local level. In particular, these data show changes in the size of household plots, land rental by both formal and informal arrangements, different ways land is used, the size of different types of land shares and total household land use.

Keywords: farming enterprise, rural household, land reform, legislation, privatisation, Russia.

The fall of Communism in Russia brought with it privatisation, as society and the economy moved away from the tenets of Marxism. During the 1990s, industry, housing, agricultural enterprise and land privatisation were at the forefront of economic policy. Privatisation, as in Eastern Europe, was

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seen as the basis for a new capitalist economy. To be sure, Russian privatisation did not always run smoothly and many abuses have been documented.¹ Nonetheless, by the end of the 1990s Russia's economy was more private than not, as measured through the percentage of the population employed in non-state enterprises and the percentage of GDP generated by privately-owned companies.

Within the context of Russian privatisation, this paper focuses on land privatisation and patterns of behaviour that have resulted from it. As is well known, one of the primary goals during the early 1990s was to transfer land into private ownership and thereby to develop a new private farming system.² The assumption of reformers who created the land reform programme was that the transfer of land ownership from the state to private citizens would create a major change in the motivation and management of farming enterprises, which, in turn, would create a highly efficient and globally competitive Russian agricultural system.

This paper addresses one of the most contentious issues surrounding land reform in Russia, the impact of these reforms on land relations and land use. While there are a number of analyses at macro-level, both in Russian³ and Western economic literature,⁴ as well as a substantial amount of government data⁵ that have recorded the overall impact of these changes over time, much less information is available at micro-level. Our analysis is intended to begin to fill that void by asking the question: how did the rural population respond to reform policies and opportunities? Some analysts argue that Russian land reform was resisted and that few changes were evident in land relations.⁶ The findings reported in this paper, however,

¹ See, for example, Thane Gustafson, *Capitalism Russian-Style*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; and more recently, Marshall I. Goldman, *The Privatization of Russia: Russian Reform Goes Awry*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

² *Privatizatsiia zemli i reorganizatsiia sel'skokhoziastvennykh predpriatii v Rossii* [Privatization of Land and the Reorganization of Agricultural Enterprises in Russia] Moscow: International Financial Corporation (IFC), 1995, p 3.

³ See, for example, V. Y. Uzun (ed.), *Reformirovanie sel'skokhoziastvennykh predpriatii: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii analiz (1994–1997 g.g.)* [The Reform of Agricultural Enterprises: A Socio-Economic Analysis 1994–1997], Moscow: Znack, 1998.

⁴ See Stephen K. Wegren, *Agriculture and the State in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998.

⁵ See, e.g., *Zemlia Rossii 1995* [Land of Russia], Moscow: Komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po zemel'nym resurcam i zemleustroistvu, 1996; *Gosudarstvennyi (natsional'nyi) doklad: O sostoianii i ispol'zovanii zemel' Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2001 godu* [State (National) Report: On the Status and Use of Land in the Russian Federation During 2001], Moscow: Federal'naia sluzhba zemel'nogo kadastra Rossii, 2002.

⁶ See for example, Carol Scott Leonard, "Rational Resistance to Land Privatization: The Response of Rural Producers to Agrarian Reforms in Pre- and Post-Soviet Russia." *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, vol. 41, No. 8, December 2000, pp. 605–20.

show a process of incremental rural adaptation to the new opportunities provided by land reform.

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Changing Institutions Affecting Access and Use of Land

The legislative foundation for land reform in Russia was adopted during 1990–1995, including special articles in the 1993 post-Soviet Constitution, laws and presidential decrees. Modifications and “corrections” to existing legislation are continuing. The legislative basis of land relations has been extensively reviewed by other authors in other publications, so our intention here is to simply mention some of the legislative highlights and provide references for the reader who desires more detail.⁷

It is important to note that Russian land reform was from above, on the initiative of the government, and in particular the president and not the rural population. One of the first decrees of the new Russian government in the area of agricultural reform, number 323, issued in December 1991, was entitled, *O neotlozhnykh merakh po osushchestvleniu zemel'noi reformy v RSFSR* (On Urgent Measures for the Implementation of Land Reform in the RSFSR).⁸ Two additional decrees specifically directed at land relations were issued in 1993 and 1995. Decree number 1767, *O regulirovanii zemel'nykh otnoshenii i razvitii agrarnoi reformy* (On the Regulation of Land Relations and the Development of Agrarian Reform),⁹ was issued by

⁷ See in particular Zvi Lerman and Karen Brooks, “Russia’s Legal Framework for Land Reform and Farm Restructuring,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 43, No. 6, November–December 1996, pp. 48–58.

⁸ *Privatizatsiia zemli i reorganizatsiia sel'skokhoziastvennykh predpriatii v Rossii: Sbornik prilozhenii* [The Privatization of Land and Reorganization of Agricultural Enterprises in Russia: A Handbook of Appendices] Moscow: International Financial Corporation (IFC), 1995, pp. 17–19. This decree is no longer in force. It was superseded by Presidential decree No. 250, February 25, 2003; Government resolution No. 912 from December 30, 2002; and the law “On rural land transactions,” July 2002. See *Krest'ianskaia Rossiia*, June 21–27, 2004, p. 4.

⁹ *Privatizatsiia zemli i reorganizatsiia sel'skokhoziastvennykh predpriatii v Rossii: Sbornik prilozhenii*, pp. 28–31.

President Yeltsin on October 27, 1993.¹⁰ Government decree, number 96, *O poriadke osuschhestvleniia prav sobstvennikov zemel'nykh dolei i imushchestvennykh pavev* (On the Procedure for the Realization of Rights of Owners of Land and Property Shares)¹¹ was issued on February 1, 1995.¹²

Together, these decrees initiated the process of creating institutions which would eventually support the purchase and sale of agricultural land and thereby make land turnover possible. These extremely controversial decisions were a critical step in developing a larger set of formal-legal institutions to support a market economy in agriculture.

Approximately 117.6 million hectares,¹³ or 60 per cent of total agricultural land, was privatised during 1992–1997, including 98.7 per cent of arable land. While Russia distributed land through a *share certificate system*, privatised land was divided into 11.9 million land shares. Of this total, 7.7 million land shares (75.7 million hectares) were distributed to private owners. The remaining 4.2 million land shares (41.9 million hectares) had not been allocated by 2002.¹⁴

Land shares were distributed to members of collective and state farms (and their legal successors), pensioners, and in some cases to social service workers, teachers and medical personnel (depending on the decision of each local village community). The size of shares depended on the quality and amount of land in the large enterprise and the size and density of the local population. Typically, the size of land shares varied between four and ten hectares, with considerable regional variation.

Among those persons who received land shares, 70.8 per cent allowed the large enterprise to use their land in return for rent. Another 25.6 per cent of share-owners invested their land as part of the physical capital of the large enterprise, and, as a result, do not have any control over that land. Only 3.8 per cent of the owners of shares (290,000 persons) retain control over the land they have received. This last category of landowners has retained 3.6 million hectares under their control.¹⁵

¹⁰ For an analysis of this decree see Stephen K. Wegren, "Yel'tsin Decree on Land Relations: Implications for Agrarian Reform," *Post-Soviet Geography*, vol. 35, No. 3, March 1994, pp. 166–178.

¹¹ *Privatizatsiia zemli i reorganizatsiia sel'skokhoziastvennykh predpriatii v Rossii: Sbornik prilozhenii*, pp. 49–64.

¹² See "Chronology of Russian Legislation on Land Reform" in: *Land Reform in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Ed. by Stephen K. Wegren, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 34.

¹³ *Sel'skaia zhizn'*, May 7–14, 2002, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* In 2002, approximately 50 percent of the owners of land shares in Russia were not involved in agricultural production. This includes pensioners, non-agricultural workers in rural areas (teachers, nurses, etc.) and persons who have received an inheritance

The largest proportion of land remains under the control of large farming enterprises (former state and collective farms), but their share of total land use decreased from 98.1 per cent in 1990 to 75 per cent in 2001. Private farmers have slowly increased their proportional share of land use, but in 2002 they used only about nine per cent of total agricultural land in the country, including 11 per cent of arable land and five per cent of land used for forage crops.¹⁶ In 2002, households used about six per cent of total agricultural land (including six per cent of arable land and 4.7 per cent of land used for forage crops).¹⁷

The land transfers described above took place during a period when land laws were not fully developed in Russia. In September 2001, however, the Duma passed and President Putin signed the new Land Code (*Zemel'ny kodeks*), and a special law that officially institutionalised land transfers and sales.¹⁸ The main goal of this new law was to change the definition of land use that prevailed during the Soviet period. Under the old system, the national government was the owner of all land in Russia, but households had two basic legal "titles" to use land. One of these was "unlimited (termless) use of land" [*postoianno (bessrochnoe) pol'zovanie zemel'nimimi uchastkami*]. The second was "lifetime inherited possession of land" (*pozhitzennoe nasleduemoe vladenie zemel'nimimi uchastkami*).

The 2001 Land Code officially codified two fundamental rights connected with land use. These rights had been previously established in the 1993 Constitution and the 1994 Civil Code, as well as laws adopted during the late Soviet period. However, the 2001 Land Code brought clarity to land relations by establishing certain rights. The first was the actual right to own and transfer private property. The second was the right to lease land.¹⁹ According to the Land Code, each region was required to pass a special law regulating land transfer, including maximum and minimum sizes of parcels of privately owned land that can be used in agriculture. This law can be expected to increase the pace of land transfers in the future.²⁰ However, because the Land Code did not deal with the process of rural land sales, a subsequent law was adopted in 2002 and entered into force in January 2003.²¹

from parents or grandparents but who do not live in the village where the land is located.
Ibid.

¹⁶ *Rossii v tsifrakh* [Russia in Figures], Moscow: Goskomstat, 2004, p. 206.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Zemel'ny Kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Land Code of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Kodeks, 2002); *Federal'ny zakon 'ob oborote zemel' sel'skokhoziaistvennogo naznacheniiia*. [Federal Law on Rural Land Transactions] *Sel'skaia zhizn'*, August 1–7, 2002, pp. 8–9.

¹⁹ *Zemel'ny Kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Articles 20–22, pp. 15–16.

²⁰ Ibid., Article 33, pp. 30–31.

²¹ See Stephen K. Wegren, "Observations on Russia's New Agricultural Land Legislation," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 43, No. 8, December 2002, pp. 651–60.

Nevertheless, more than three years after the signing of the new Land Code, struggles in this area have continued. The government's plan was to complete the transition to private property before January 1, 2004.²² Later, however, the government changed the targeted completion date to January 1, 2006. It is unlikely that this change will be completed by 2006, since there remains a great deal of confusion among all land users in industry, agriculture and households.

Moreover, some regions have refused to accept the new Land Code. In the spring of 2004, the regional Duma in Murmansk *oblast*, for example, with the support of 35 of Russia's 89 regions, took its opposition to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, asking that this law be ruled unconstitutional.²³ At the time this article was completed the outcome was not known.

Regional Differences in Amount and Privatisation of Land

Variations in climate and soil conditions affect the quality and amount of agricultural land in different regions of Russia. Agricultural land is also affected by the development of the agricultural production system and the density of population in different rural areas. These factors have been important in influencing how regional governments have responded to land reform and privatisation.

Nevertheless, even during the 1990s, when the struggles between the executive and legislative branches of the Russian federal government on the Land Code were most rancorous, some regions took the initiative on their own to create new regional land laws and land markets. The first step forward in this regard, was in Saratov *oblast*, where the Duma passed a regional Land Law *O Zemle* in November 1997. Essentially, this law was almost a direct copy of one of the last versions of the proposed Land Code that at the time was being blocked in the State Duma.

Of particular interest is the Saratov Land Law, Chapter 14, articles 80–85, and Chapter 15, articles 86–88. These sections provided, for the first time in Russia, specific guidelines for the use and transfer of agricultural land. Most important, articles 87 and 88 legislation established minimum and maximum sizes for land to be classified for private agricultural use; five hectares minimum and 30 per cent of a *raion's* total agricultural land as the maximum.²⁴

²² *Zemel'ny Kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, p. 85.

²³ *Sel'skaia zhizn'*, April 20, 2004, p. 2.

²⁴ *Zakon Saratovskoi oblasti* of November 17, 1997, No. 57 "Zakon o zemle" (s izmeneniami of September 28, 2002, October 30, 2000, July 5, 2002, February 27 2003, October 6,

The second region to create its own Land Law was Samara *oblast*, where a bill was adopted on June 25, 1998, also entitled *O Zemle*. The third region to initiate its own Land Law before the federal government resolved its conflict on this issue was the Republic of Tartarstan, which established a Republic Land Code in July 1998.

By 2002 there were four categories of regional responses to land reform and privatisation.²⁵ The first category includes places where regional law does not recognise land as private property or it creates strong legal barriers to the purchase or sale of land. This group includes regions with poor quality agricultural land and a small density of population, such as Nenetskiy *avtonomnii okrug* in the far north of European Russia.

This category also includes, however, some regions in the south of European Russia, such as Krasnodar *krai*, which have some of the best quality of land in the country and the highest level of population density for rural areas. In the latter case, the regional government passed a special law on August 1, 1995 that specifically forbade the sale or transfer of agricultural land. Other regions in this group include the Altai Republic and Tyva Republic in southwest and central Siberia, North Ossetia Republic and the Ingushetia Republic in the North Caucasus Mountains, and the Udmurd Republic in the West Urals.

The second category includes regions where between 40 and 49 per cent of agricultural land has been privatised. Examples of regions in this group are Briansk *oblast* (west central Russia, close to the Ukrainian border), Chuvash Republic (Volga River Region), and Kaliningrad *oblast* (a far west enclave in the Baltic Sea area), Riazan *oblast* (southeast of Moscow) and Tver' *oblast* (north central Russia).

The third category includes regions where privatisation has covered between 50 and 59 per cent of agricultural land. Examples include Novgorod *oblast* (northwest Russia), Volgograd and Samara (Volga River Region), Voronesh, Tambov (Black Earth Region) and Tula (Central Region) *oblasts*.

The fourth type, where 60 per cent or more of the agricultural land was privatised, includes Belgorod, Kursk, Lipetsk, Orel, Rostov, and Saratov *oblasts*, which are located either in the central, black earth or Volga River areas and Stavropol *krai* in the north Caucasus region. Regions included in the third and fourth categories are all located in areas with good agricultural land and, together with Krasnodar *krai*, account for the largest part

2003, January 8, 2004). [Law of Saratov Oblast from November 17, 1997, No. 57, Law on Land (with changes from September 28, 2002, October 30, 2000, July 5, 2002, February 27 2003, October 6, 2003, January 8, 2004). See the URL:

<http://www.saratov.gov.ru/government/departments/komimu/docs/57-zso.txt>

²⁵ *Gosudarstvennyii (natsional'nyii doklad): o sostoianii i ispol'zovanii zemel' Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2001 gody*, pp. 36–37.

of agricultural production in Russia. Even in this category, however, there are large differences in the way that individual regions encourage land turnover. For example, compared with Saratov, which we described earlier, Lipetsk regional law established a minimum for farm land of 150 hectares (compared to 5 hectares in Saratov) and a maximum of 12 per cent of a *raion's* total agricultural land (compared to 30 per cent in Saratov).²⁶

Micro-Level Survey Data on Changes in Land Use

The remainder of this article is based upon survey data in various Russian villages. These data allow us to document a slow process of change at micro-level. One set of data come from panel surveys conducted in several stages: 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, and 2003. Three villages were surveyed: one each in Rostov (Latonovo village), Belgorod (Vengerovka village) and Tver' (Sviattsovo village) *oblasts*. Another survey, conducted in 2001 in five regions comprises the second source of data. In this second survey a total of 800 rural households were interviewed. The location of these villages is shown at the end of this article.

The data for both sets of surveys were collected through person-to-person interviews by trained staff from the Institute for Socio-Economic Studies of the Population (Moscow). Space constraints do not permit a more extensive description of the research design and methodology, so the interested reader is directed to another publication where a fuller explanation may be found.²⁷

From these survey data, certain patterns emerge. We will start with a short summary of some general trends in land relations, aspects which have been previously noted elsewhere, and then focus on unique aspects that arise from our survey data. Based on our survey data, it was clear that the following three trends were evident:

(1) A very small percentage of land transactions involved buying or selling of land. Although this was the goal of the reformers in Moscow, in our panel survey only 1.3 per cent of households reported purchasing land in the 2003 survey. The vast majority of changes in land use involved new types of formal land rental arrangements (81.8 per cent of the households)

²⁶ *Sel'skaia zhizn'*, April 20, 2004, p. 2.

²⁷ For information on the panel surveys of three villages, see David J. O'Brien, Valeri V. Patsiorkovski, and Larry D. Dershem, *Household Capital and the Agrarian Problem in Russia*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, chap. 4; for information on the 2001 survey of 800 households in five regions, see Stephen K. Wegren, David J. O'Brien, and Valeri V. Patsiorkovski, "Winners and Losers in Russian Agrarian Reform," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 30, No. 1, October 2002, pp. 3-4.

and informal land rental arrangements (51.1 per cent). (See footnote for explanation of formal and informal land rental arrangements.)²⁸

(2) An increase in the average size of private plots used by households. Nationwide, during the 1990s, and into the new century, the number of households in rural Russia decreased 16,380,000 to 15,872,000 (a decline of only 3.2 per cent), but the total amount of land in private plots increased from 3.2 million hectares to 6.4 million hectares.²⁹ In short, throughout rural Russia there is a pattern in which a smaller number of households cultivate slightly larger plots. This trend was reflected in two of the three villages in our panel survey, with Latonovo and Vengerovka experiencing slight increases in the average size of household plots. The village Sviattsovo also experienced an increase during 1995–1999, but by 2003 the average size had decreased to a level below that of 1995. This trend is most likely explained by an improving macro-economic environment that made reliance on the household plot for food less important.

(3) An increase in formally leasing land for agricultural use by households. More than half of the households in the panel study (56.3 per cent) initiated a formal leasing arrangement in 1993. In our 2003 panel survey, 75.9 per cent of the respondents said that they had leased land from their local government. The primary mechanism for organising and controlling this new type of arrangement has been the local village administration, although there were some differences in the way local governments and local village communities have implemented the new opportunities for land use.

We now turn to some unique aspects of land relations that have not previously been discussed by other authors. The first aspect to note is that households utilised a variety of different sources of land to use for agricultural production. This pattern shows that, far from eschewing new opportunities presented by land reform policies, households instead found new and creative ways of assembling several different types of land for usage. The types of land arrangements and the average size of each of five regions is shown in Table 1.

²⁸ Beginning in 1992, local village administrations were given the option, which some took and others did not, to establish formal rental agreements with households to use a portion of the land ceded from the former collective farm (*kolkhoz*). We refer to these arrangements as “formal rental arrangements.” Throughout rural Russia, from the early 1990s and continuing up to the present day, there have been numerous local “informal rental arrangements” in which one household will rent land from another household, usually the latter’s household plot, in return for some portion of the food produced on that land. Typically, these arrangements are made between elderly widows and younger couples, or between persons who have left the village and neighbors who remain in the village and now work their land.

²⁹ *Gosudarstvennyi (natsional'nyi doklad): o sostoianii i ispol'zovanii zemel' Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2001 gody*, p. 46.

Table 1

Average size of different Types of land use arrangements in 2001
(in hectares)

Region	Average size				
	private plot	formal leased land	share crop arrangements	informal leased land	total land use
Belgorod Oblast	0.35	0.13	0.17	0.43	1.09
Chuvash Republic	0.30	0.20	0	0	0.51
Krasnodar Krai	0.26	0.16	0.03	1.69	2.15
Novgorod Oblast	0.16	0.36	0.49	0.31	1.33
Volgograd Oblast	0.17	1.61	0.27	1.84	3.90
Total	0.25	0.49	0.19	0.85	1.79

Source: 2001 Five-Region Study (N = 800).

Columns 2 to 5 in Table 1 indicate the average levels of different types of land use. Column 6 shows the average total of land use in each region. We can see that there are not big differences between the regions with respect to the average size of private plot (column 2) or share crop (column 4) land use arrangements. The biggest differences occur in the categories of formal leased land (column 3) and "other type of land," mainly informal leasing arrangements (column 5). The highest levels of formal and informal leasing land use (columns 3 and 5) are 12.6 and 5.9 times greater than the lowest levels of land use, 12.6 and 5.9, respectively.

The effect of regional legal institutions is reflected in the data. The highest level of both formal (1.61 hectares) and informal (1.84 hectares) leased land is found in Volgograd *oblast*, where, as we noted earlier, the regional government has provided the best institutional support for easy access to land. By contrast, the Krasnodar *krai* regional government, created strong barriers to the development of formal institutions for land turnover, and this is reflected in the low level of formal leased land (0.16 hectares). In this region, however, informal leasing land use arrangements (1.69 hectares) have compensated for the lack of formal institutional change, which results in Krasnodar *krai* having the second highest overall land use by household.

The lowest average level of formal leased land is found in Belgorod *oblast* (0.13 hectares), which is consistent with the earlier findings of stability and slow change in land relations in the panel study village of Vengerovka. In the category of informal land lease arrangements, however, Belgorod *oblast* falls in the middle (0.43 hectares), which is higher than Novgorod (0.31 hectares) and especially Chuvash republic. In the latter

region, our surveys (as late as 2003) have yet to find any evidence of informal land lease arrangements.

The average level of total land use between regions, however, is quite substantial, with households in Volgograd *oblast* having on average the highest level of total land use, 3.90 hectares, compared with Chuvash republic, 0.51 hectares where households have the lowest level of total land use in the sample.

A second unique aspect that comes from our survey data concerns land shares. As noted above, Russian land reform was based upon the distribution of land shares. Table 2 depicts differences between regions in the average size and number of households with land shares. For the five-region sample, 59.6 per cent of households received land shares and the average size of land shares was just over five hectares, which is within the interval of share sizes that were noted earlier in this paper.

Table 2

Average size of land shares (in hectares) from privatisation of large enterprises in five regions in 2001

Region	Average size of land share	Number of households with land shares	
		Number	Percentage of HHs in regional sample
Belgorod Oblast	2.90	99	61.9
Chuvash Republic	1.97	64	40.0
Krasnodar Krai	6.30	117	73.1
Novgorod Oblast	4.41	82	51.3
Volgograd Oblast	10.38	111	69.8
Total	5.19	473	59.6

Source: 2001 Five-Region Study (N = 800).

These data confirm our previous analysis (see Table 1) insofar as the relative size of land shares correlates with the amount of leased land found in the different regions. In the Chuvash republic, for example, there is a high population density (74.2 persons per square kilometre) and a relatively small amount of good agricultural land (1,834,000 hectares) or 10 per cent of the territory.³⁰ In this region only 40 per cent of households in our sample received land shares. Typically, this meant that teachers, nurses and other personnel in the social service sphere in villages did not receive any land shares. By contrast, Volgograd *oblast* has a much lower population

³⁰ *Russia in Figures 2001*, Moscow, Goskomstat, 2001, p. 36.

density (23.5 persons per square kilometre) and a large amount of good agricultural land (11,288,000 hectares).³¹ In this region, 69.8 per cent of the households in the sample received land shares.

The third notable aspect that emerges from our data is that rural households control (have at their disposal) much more land than is customarily understood. Far from being land poor, our data suggest that many households not only have ample land, but considering demographic factors, may actually have more land than they can effectively use. Table 3 summarizes our findings about land use by households in different Russian regions.

Table 3

Average size of household land, used and controlled,
in five regions in 2001 (in hectares)

Region	Average size of household land plot	Average size of land share	Average size of land controlled by household
Belgorod Oblast	1.09	2.90	3.99
Chuvash Republic	0.51	1.97	2.48
Krasnodar Krai	2.15	6.30	8.45
Novgorod Oblast	1.33	4.41	5.74
Volgograd Oblast	3.90	10.38	14.28
Total	1.79	5.19	6.98

Source: 2001 Five Region Study (N = 800).

The most important column in the table is column 4 which shows the total amount of land controlled by households by region. These data are important for several reasons. Firstly, they suggest that in some regions, for instance Volgograd and perhaps Krasnodar, the distinction between rural household land holdings and smaller private farms may be blurred. Legally, this is important because private farms are subject to income tax on the sale of production whereas household production is not. Secondly, when one considers the average number of persons per household and the level of capitalisation per household, it appears that some households may actually have "excess land" that cannot be used effectively.³² Finally, these data are

³¹ Density of population data are taken from *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia 2000* (Moscow: Goskomstat, 2000), pp. 16–17. Agricultural land size figures are taken from *Sel'skoe khoziaistvo v Rossii 2002* [Agriculture in Russia], Moscow: Goskomstat, 2002, pp. 192–193.

³² The mean number of persons per household in the five region survey were: 2.75 in Novgorod, 3.49 in Belgorod, 3.21 in Krasnodar, 2.80 in Volgograd, and 3.13 in Chuvashia.

important for showing that rural households took advantage of reform opportunities to obtain land for use in agricultural production. This is especially important when one considers that in the late 1980s, prior to the introduction of land reform, households' main access to land was their private plot or collective garden plot, and these plots averaged about 20 hectares nationwide (with regional differences and differences by occupation and size of family). Thus, our data show that total land holdings have increased significantly since land reform was begun.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper provide a unique insight into the ways in which land relations are changing in Russia. Far from the views that have argued that "nothing changed" or that rural dwellers "resisted" land privatization,³³ our data illustrate that there has been much more change in land relations in the Russian countryside than has previously been acknowledged.

Although there is great regional variation, as reflected in our data, it is clear that rural households and individuals have responded in opportunistic ways, the net effect of which is an important restructuring of land use and landownership, much more so than we might otherwise conclude from previous macro-level studies that have been published. Going forward, if macro-economic trends continue to improve for Russia, and if rural incomes continue their real increase, the rural land market may be expected to become more robust and changes in land relations will take on even greater economic significance.

Commonly, a household was comprised of a husband, wife, and elderly parent of one of the spouses. Thus, the level of human capital was relatively low.

³³ Leonard, "Rational Resistance to Land Privatization," pp. 605-620.



**Province
Villages**

1. Belgorod
Vengerovka (panel 1995–1999); Veseloe, Zasosno, Kazatskoe, Streletskoe – 2001
2. Volgograd
Dobrinka, Dubovsky, Katovsky, Mikhailovskaya – 2001
3. Krasnodar
Kartushina Balka, Novoivanovskoe, Razdolnoe, Shkurinskaya – 2001
4. Novgorod
Berezovik, Borovenka, Melnitsy, Ozerki – 2001
5. Rostov
Latonovo (panel 1995–1999)
6. Tver
Bolshoe Sviattsovo (panel 1995–1999)
7. Chuvash
Vurmankasy-Munsut, Mikhailovka, Tuvsy, Churachiki – 2001

**Legend for Location
of Village Surveys**

