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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RURAL AREAS OF KAZAKHSTAN: CURRENT STATE

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In this paper, the authors analyze the contemporary sustainable development of rural territories. It is the stability of the agricultural sector that exerts the greatest influence on the condition of all spheres of human activity, ranging from regional to global levels. The sustainable growth of both the national and regional economy, considering the general trends of functioning and advancement of the country, possesses its own specific features defined by the conditions of production, the efficiency of resource utilization, human capital, and other factors. Sustainable development reflects a state of balanced and fair progress, expressed through the coordinated use of natural resources, distribution of investments, direction of technological advancement, personal improvement, and institutional reforms. At present, Kazakhstan's economic development has contributed to a more rational operation of the agricultural management system. The study emphasized the current status of rural sustainability: the condition of rural territories, principal indicators of animal husbandry, crop production, and related areas. It should also be stressed that to successfully implement the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals, a comprehensive investigation is required, with special focus on gender aspects within all demographic groups. Currently, in Kazakhstan, during budget planning, efforts are made to systematically consider the demands of diverse demographic categories. Therefore, acquiring strong skills in effective cost reduction is essential, as it ensures the production and sale of agricultural goods with competitive advantages over other market actors. To broaden the range of agricultural products, it is equally important to acquire expertise in diversification of agricultural production.

Keywords: sustainable development, settlements, rural areas, agriculture, crop production, animal husbandry, ecology, agricultural products.

ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ АУЫЛДЫҚ АУМАҚТАРЫНЫҢ ТҰРАҚТЫ ДАМУЫ: ҚАЗІРГІ ЖАҒДАЙЫ

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Бұл мақалада авторлар ауылдық аумақтардың қазіргі тұрақты дамуын қарастырады. Дәл ауыл шаруашылығы секторының тұрақты дамуы адам қызметінің барлық салаларына – аймақтықтан ғаламдық деңгейге дейін – ең үлкен әсерін тигізеді. Елдің немесе жекелеген өңірдің экономикасының тұрақты дамуы, мемлекеттің жалпы қызмет ету және даму заңдылықтарын ескере отырып, өндіріс үдерісінің жағдайларымен, ресурстық әлеуетті пайдалану тиімділігімен, адами капиталмен және басқа да факторлармен айқындалатын өзіндік ерекшеліктерге ие. Тұрақты даму табиғи ресурстарды үйлесімді пайдалануымен, инвестицияларды бөлуімен, ғылыми-техникалық прогрестің бағытталуымен, тұлғалық өсумен және институционалдық өзгерістермен сипатталатын теңгерімді әрі әділетті ілгерілеу жағдайын білдіреді. Бүгінде Қазақстан экономикасының дамуы ауыл шаруашылығы басқару жүйесінің неғұрлым ұтымды жұмыс істеуіне ықпал етті. Зерттеуде ауылдық аумақтардың тұрақты дамуының қазіргі жағдайы: ауылдық аумақтардың жағдайы, мал шаруашылығы мен егіншіліктің негізгі көрсеткіштері және басқа да салалар қарастырылды. Сондай-

ақ, Тұрақты даму мақсаттарын тиімді іске асыру үшін барлық демографиялық топтардағы гендерлік мәселелерге ерекше көңіл бөлуге негізделген кешенді зерттеу жүргізу қажеттігін атап өткен жөн. Қазіргі таңда Қазақстанда бюджет жоспарлау барысында әртүрлі демографиялық топтардың қажеттіліктерін жүйелі түрде ескеруге бағытталған жұмыс атқарылуда. Сондықтан шығындарды тиімді қысқарту дағдыларын меңгеру аса маңызды, себебі бұл ауыл шаруашылығы өнімдерін басқа нарық қатысушыларымен салыстырғанда бәсекелік артықшылықтармен өндіруге және сатуға мүмкіндік береді. Ауыл шаруашылығы өнімдерінің алуан түрлілігін арттыру үшін аграрлық өнімдерді әртараптандыру қабілетін игеру де қажет.

Түйін сөздер: тұрақты даму, кенттер, ауылдық аумақтар, ауыл шаруашылығы, Өсімдік шаруашылығы, мал шаруашылығы, экология, ауыл шаруашылығы өнімдері.

УСТОЙЧИВОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ СЕЛЬСКИХ ТЕРРИТОРИЙ КАЗАХСТАНА: СОВРЕМЕННОЕ СОСТОЯНИЕ

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В данной статье авторы рассматривают современное устойчивое развитие сельских территорий. Именно устойчивое развитие аграрного сектора оказывает наибольшее влияние на состояние всех сфер человеческой деятельности – от регионального до глобального уровня. Устойчивое развитие экономики как всей страны, так и отдельных регионов, с учётом общих закономерностей функционирования и развития государства, имеет собственные особенности, которые определяются условиями производственного процесса, эффективностью использования ресурсного потенциала, человеческим капиталом и другими факторами. Устойчивое развитие отражает состояние сбалансированного и справедливого прогресса, характеризующегося согласованным использованием природных ресурсов, распределением инвестиций, направлением научно-технического прогресса, личностным ростом и институциональными преобразованиями. Сегодня развитие экономики Казахстана способствовало более рациональному функционированию системы управления в аграрной сфере. В работе освещено современное состояние устойчивого развития сельских территорий: состояние сельских районов, основные показатели животноводства, растениеводства и других направлений. Также следует отметить, что для эффективной реализации идей Целей устойчивого развития необходимо проведение комплексного исследования, в ходе которого особое внимание будет уделяться гендерным вопросам во всех демографических группах. В настоящее время в Казахстане в процессе бюджетного планирования ведётся работа по системному учёту потребностей различных демографических категорий. Таким образом, приобретение навыков эффективного управления сокращением затрат имеет решающее значение, так как позволяет производить и реализовывать сельскохозяйственную продукцию с конкурентными преимуществами по сравнению с другими участниками рынка. Для расширения разнообразия сельскохозяйственной продукции важно также овладеть умением её диверсификации.

Ключевые слова: устойчивое развитие, поселки, сельские территории, сельское хозяйство, растениеводство, животноводство, экология, сельхлозпродукция.

Introduction. Achieving sustainable economic growth remains one of the challenges facing the world today. The concept of economic growth goes beyond short-term economic growth; it emphasizes the importance of economic development and efficient use of resources while preserving the environment for future generations. In fact, sustainable development involves achieving three

interrelated goals: promoting economic growth, ensuring social equality, and protecting the environment. Only by achieving these goals together can genuine long-term economic stability be achieved.

The path of economic development, whether national or regional, is determined by governance principles and local conditions such as productivity, resource efficiency, and human development. Economic growth cycles are often characterized by an increase in consumer demand combined with increased productivity, expanding markets, and rising living standards. However, it should be noted that rapid economic growth often comes at a high cost, including environmental degradation and social inequality. However, the key to sustainable development is making smart decisions and strategies that ensure a balance between growth and work, ensuring that today' s progress does not jeopardize tomorrow' s opportunities.

At the global level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a worldwide call for action to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, improve human health, and empower all people. Adopted in 2015 by all UN member States as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 16 reflects a 15-year global agenda for building a just, sustainable and inclusive world. Despite progress towards achieving these goals, the overall results remain uneven and the pace of change does not match the needs. Thus, 2020 marks the beginning of an important "decade of action" that highlights the urgent need to redouble efforts to achieve these goals by 2030. An equally important role is played by the annual DIM global reporting system, which provides a comprehensive assessment of progress, identifies areas of success and areas where attention should be focused. These reports are compiled on the basis of data provided by international and regional organizations, specialized agencies, foundations and monitoring centers under the auspices of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In addition, national statistical authorities, civil society representatives, and academics play an important role in ensuring that the monitoring process reflects diverse perspectives and provides reliable information. The purpose of this article in this global context is to assess the current state of rural development in Kazakhstan and to assess the implementation of National Environmental Policy in the economic, social and environmental context.

Materials and methods. Developing a comprehensive framework for measuring sustainable development, which integrates both quantitative indicators and qualitative characteristics, represents one of the central and most challenging tasks within the broader concept of rural sustainability. Such an approach is essential because rural development involves not only economic growth but also the preservation of ecological balance, improvement of social well-being, and strengthening of institutional capacity at the local level. The "Agenda for the 21st Century" program, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, drew attention to the importance of creating a structured system of sustainability indicators. These indicators have been identified as important tools for decision makers that enable them to monitor trends, assess risks, and make informed decisions. In addition, they form the methodological basis for ensuring the sustainability and longevity of integrated ecological systems and rural areas dependent on them.

At the current stage of research and based on a review of the scientific literature, it is becoming clear that there are no generally accepted quantitative criteria that can be consistently used to determine the level of development in different countries, regions or rural areas. Despite significant progress in this area, researchers and scientists still have different and sometimes contradictory opinions about the fundamentals of "sustainable development", its definition and the best ways to achieve it. This diversity of viewpoints reflects the complexity of the concept itself, but at the same time enriches scientific discussions and opens up the possibility for collaborative approaches. After studying numerous studies and scientific literature on this topic, two main approaches to the development of sustainability indicators can be

identified. The first approach focuses on economic and environmental sustainability, while the second focuses more on the environment and long-term institutional development.

Theoretical and empirical data were used in the preparation of this article. The theoretical framework was built on the basis of basic concepts and applied methods developed by domestic and foreign researchers in the field of rural development. In addition, various materials presented at international and domestic scientific and practical conferences and forums were presented, as well as technical work on practical models of sustainable development management and their direct impact on rural development dynamics. These resources have provided a better understanding of global trends and how these principles can be adapted to the specifics of Kazakhstan.

The empirical basis of the study was mainly based on statistical data published by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Statistical bulletins, collections, and official documents provided reliable and up-to-date information reflecting the current state of rural areas, their development dynamics, and major challenges. In addition, the analytical work of modern researchers on rural sustainability was reviewed, the main indicators of rural development, socio-economic changes were presented, and an in-depth analysis of environmental conditions was conducted. The combination of these sources provided a unique analytical approach to the article, which allowed us to explore not only abstract theoretical models, but also real-world experience, supported by empirical evidence and substantial observations.

Results and Discussion. Achieving sustainable economic growth remains one of the most difficult challenges facing all countries of the world today. This issue is not only economic, but also social and environmental in nature and requires a multidimensional approach. It should be emphasized that the main goal of development is to ensure long-term economic growth and economic development while preserving, strengthening, managing natural resources and protecting the environment for future generations. In modern discourse, the concept of ”sustainable development” is defined as a state of the national economy in which three closely related goals are simultaneously achieved: economic stability, human health promotion and effective environmental protection. These three components are the cornerstone of sustainable development, and the balance between them determines the sustainability and longevity of any society. However, it should be emphasized that although the concept of sustainable development is internationally recognized and is increasingly being discussed in academic, political and professional circles, the depth and scope of research on this issue remains limited, especially in national studies. However, with the focus on rural development, there has been growing cooperation. Among the scientists who have made significant contributions to this field are Faber A., Khambar B., Utebayeva A. B., Kafyatullina D. F. and others [1-2]. Their research highlights the difficulty of integrating the economic, social and environmental aspects of rural development into a single concept.

Clarifying the precise definition of ”sustainable development” is a key element in advancing the discussion, as different authors interpret this concept in different ways. It is well known that the World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as a set of measures aimed at meeting the needs of our time while preserving the quality of the environment and natural resources in order not to jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similarly, G.H. Brundtland articulated it as a model of human progress in which the basic needs of the current generation are fulfilled without depriving future generations of this opportunity. In contrast, Aitzhanova D.A. and Omarov A.K. emphasize a transformative process whereby natural resource management, investment flows, scientific and technological progress, social conditions, and institutional reforms are carefully coordinated, thereby strengthening the state’s ability to meet the population’s needs in the long term. At the same time, Pustnikova E. V. and

Uskova E. O. emphasize that sustainability should be considered as a system in which competing economic and social systems of society are formed by harmonizing and balancing the interests of all participants - initially within the framework of economic well-being, gradually moving towards ecological and natural systems.

From this other point of view, it can be concluded that the concept of sustainability is a global human structure based on two fundamental principles: anthropocentrism and biospherocentrism. Anthropocentrism presupposes equal opportunities to meet their basic needs by ensuring the universal right of all people to life, health and dignity. On the other hand, biospherocentrism emphasizes the importance of preserving the biosphere as the fundamental basis of all life on Earth. He emphasizes the importance of ecological stability, natural evolution, and ecological balance, but also emphasizes that human development should not take place in a way that damages the environment or destroys the natural systems on which life depends.

A number of local scientists also expressed valuable ideas about the development of the village. For example, Y. N. Buzdalov emphasizes the exceptional role of the economic factor in ensuring the sustainability of rural areas. A. A. Anfinogentova considers the development of the socio-economic structure of the food industry as an important factor of sustainability, emphasizes its importance for ensuring food security of the country. E. N. Aile, a member of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, emphasizes the versatility of agriculture and the important role of agriculture in the context of agricultural development. His work demonstrates not only the interdependence and interaction of the main factors — economic, social and environmental — but also the role of agricultural knowledge and skills in food security. This vision reflects a unique perspective for rural development, in which the agricultural sector acts not only as a producer of products, but also as the main driver of innovation, knowledge transfer and prosperity in rural areas [3, 4].

This perspective is further expanded by V. V. Kozlov, V. M. Bautin and A.V. Merzlov, who provide a broad and comprehensive definition of rural development. According to their interpretation, this is a rural development strategy that ensures the fulfillment of basic economic functions (food production, processing of agricultural and related products, provision of public utilities), as well as rural livelihoods, cultural traditions, rational use of land, developed territories and the preservation and maintenance of human development. Moreover, their approach stresses the importance of improving the quality of rural living, maintaining ecological equilibrium in the biosphere, and safeguarding the environment as an inseparable component of rural development [5].

At present, rural areas remain the backbone of agricultural and food production, serving as the primary source of resources that guarantee the food security of the nation. Agriculture is the main producer of agricultural products, which is the basis of national stability and self-sufficiency. Food security, which is one of the pillars of sustainable development, is directly linked to the ability of rural areas to maintain and increase production. However, problems remain: the lack of sustainable farming practices often leads not only to shortages at the national level, but also exacerbates global food security problems. As a result, rural development is becoming an important factor not only for meeting domestic needs, but also for addressing global challenges related to hunger, poverty, and equal access to resources.

Since the introduction of market relations, Kazakhstan’ s food sector has undergone profound and multifaceted changes, the consequences of which continue to shape the national economy. These changes have had a significant impact on many aspects of this sector, in particular on the volume and structure of agricultural and food production, the balance between supply and demand in the domestic market, the ratio between domestic production and imports, the dynamics of prices for basic foodstuffs and the overall stability of the food economy. First of all, it should be recognized that compared to the period before the reform, production volumes and productivity levels

have significantly decreased. These events had long-term consequences for the viability of agriculture and food security.

One of the main reasons for these changes is the restructuring of the primary sector, in particular the introduction of private ownership. The privatization process has led to a reorganization of land use and a reduction in the centralized allocation of agricultural resources. This has led to a decrease in the area of land used for large-scale agricultural activities. As a result, large agricultural enterprises that previously provided the main means of production have been replaced by small farmers such as family farms, peasant farms, and individual farmers. While this diversification has led to increased ownership, it has also led to fragmentation of production, weakening its efficiency and reducing its ability to meet industrial demand.

Simultaneously, the processing capacity of the food industry underwent a sharp decline. Many enterprises, including large meat processing and dairy processing plants, have ceased operations or significantly reduced production. This situation has weakened the infrastructure that previously ensured Kazakhstan' s food self-sufficiency. The decrease in production capacity has not only affected production volumes, but has also changed the quality and range of food products offered to consumers, as well as increased the country' s dependence on imports. In this context, it is important to emphasize the key role of rural development in the implementation of food security policies. Rural areas form the backbone of the country' s food production, and their sustainable production capacities directly reflect the effectiveness of the Government' s efforts to ensure food security. Therefore, it is important to constantly monitor and evaluate in detail the potential of rural development. At the same time, promoting rural development requires making reasonable use of the comparative advantages of geographical location, identifying and promoting "growth zones", creating priority development zones, and integrating institutional and financial mechanisms to promote progress. Another important task is to create a financial base for regions and rural areas so that they can respond independently and flexibly to new challenges. It is also important to recognize that within the same region, many rural areas may have different socio-economic characteristics, levels of sustainability, and development prospects. The sustainability and viability of these zones depend on the coordinated interaction of many factors: rational resource management, reasonable allocation of investments, promotion of scientific and technological knowledge, formation of human capital and institutional reforms. Together, these factors create conditions for fair and equitable development, thus strengthening the ability of communities to meet the needs and aspirations of the population. This, in turn, guarantees an increase in the standard of living not only for current generations, but also for future ones.

At the international level, sustainable development is defined as a path of economic growth that simultaneously promotes human progress and prevents the depletion of natural resources. Sustainable change requires the gradual introduction of self-organizing social systems, including economic, social, and environmental systems. Sustainable development itself is characterized by three principles: effective economic management, environmental protection and rational use, and social justice. These principles serve as criteria for formulating public policy and evaluating development successes.

Currently, the state planning system of Kazakhstan plays a decisive and strategic role in guiding the nation toward the achievement of its sustainable development objectives. Over the past several years, this system has been substantially restructured to emphasize not only abstract priorities but also clearly measurable and concrete outcomes. Since 2021, Kazakhstan has adopted a renewed state planning model (see Figure 1), where the central principle is the integration of measurable indicators directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into state planning and programmatic documents.

This transformation reflects the country' s

desire to align its national planning system more closely with global standards of sustainable development. In the same year, Kazakhstan also adopted a set of national SDG indicators, which provide a framework for assessing progress towards achieving global goals. These indicators serve as tools to track progress in national development, strengthen government accountability, and ensure that local initiatives align with global development commitments. The transformation of the Kazakh food sector reflects, in particular, the duality of this evolution: on the one hand, there are serious challenges associated with structural reforms, on the other - there are new opportunities to strengthen the political base of the government. Although market mechanisms and trade have significantly transformed the agro-industrial sector, the long-term success of food security policies depends on strengthening rural resilience, increasing sustainability, and integrating sustainable development principles into planning and budgeting.

At the same time, it should be underlined that Kazakhstan is still at an early stage of embedding the SDGs into its budgetary planning framework. Recognizing this, the government, with the technical support of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), undertook a rapid yet detailed review of budgetary programs in order to evaluate the degree to which the allocation of national resources is aligned with the SDGs [6]. This assessment covered a wide range of functional groups and revealed that budget programs currently address approximately 46% of the SDG-related targets (77 out of 167).

The analysis further demonstrated uneven alignment across the different goals. The strongest compliance was found with SDG 16, which addresses “peace, justice, and effective institutions” – achieving an impressive 92%. This was followed by SDG 11, on “sustainable cities and human settlements,” with 80%, and SDG 9, focusing on “industrialization, innovation, and infrastructure,” with 75%. Education (SDG 4) also demonstrated high compliance at 70%, while “good health and well-being” (SDG 3) reached 69%, and SDG 13, on climate change action, showed 67% alignment. Moderate correspondence was observed for SDG 7 on clean and affordable energy (60%), SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth (50%), and SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production (45%). However, alignment was weaker in relation to SDG 1, “ending poverty” (43%), and SDG 10, “reducing inequality” (40%). The lowest levels of compliance were recorded for SDG 17, “partnerships for sustainable development” (37%), SDG 15, “life on land” (33%), and SDG 2, “zero hunger,” which reached only 25%.

These findings highlight a critical issue: although progress has been made, the current degree of budget program compliance with the SDGs cannot yet be regarded as a strong or sufficient indicator of financial support for achieving these goals. Ongoing efforts are therefore aimed at further harmonizing budget programs with SDG targets, ensuring more efficient distribution of financial resources, and aligning state expenditure with sustainable development priorities [7].

Another important aspect is the need to integrate cross-cutting social issues into planning and budgeting. For example, the effective realization of SDG principles requires a comprehensive approach that considers gender equality across all demographic groups. In Kazakhstan, efforts are already being made to incorporate the needs of different population categories into the budgetary process. With the support of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), a child-oriented budgeting framework has been developed, designed to measure and strengthen the level of social protection for children [8, 9]. This initiative demonstrates Kazakhstan’s movement toward more inclusive budgeting practices that reflect the diversity of its population.

In addition to institutional changes, Kazakhstan’s future development will largely depend on the development of new approaches to agricultural production. Increasing the efficiency and sustainability of agriculture is considered by the population as a key factor in food security and overall economic efficiency. However, the development, implementation and management of

efficient agricultural systems remains a challenging task. Sustainable agriculture is important not only to meet domestic needs, but also to address global challenges such as population growth, income inequality, environmental degradation, and resource depletion. It also helps to meet these two future needs. Agricultural sustainability, therefore, requires close integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions, as well as active collaboration between different sectors [10, 11].

The establishment of an effective management mechanism within the agrarian economy represents a key prerequisite for enhancing Kazakhstan's overall competitiveness at the current stage of its development. Recent progress in the national economy has facilitated a more rational and structured performance of the agricultural management system. Moreover, the utilization of local agricultural products offers several competitive advantages, including vast expanses of arable land, the ecological purity of domestic products, and the availability of surplus labor in rural areas. Together, these factors create favorable conditions for high-quality and competitive food production, thereby strengthening the country' s food security and Kazakhstan' s opportunities on world agricultural markets [12, 13].

It should be emphasized that the development of agriculture is inextricably linked to various security measures, in particular political, legal, economic, environmental, social, information, governance and international cooperation. Agriculture is not an isolated sector but a system that interacts with virtually every area of national development, making its effective regulation a matter of strategic importance. In this context, government regulation of agriculture is rightly regarded as one of the most crucial functions of public administration. Without Government oversight and targeted policy measures, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to ensure food security, protect the interests of rural populations, and conserve natural resources.

From an economic point of view, the best way to achieve good results within the framework of sustainable growth is to maintain a balance between two forces: direct government intervention and the autonomy of producers in market mechanisms. A balanced approach allows governments to set common standards, provide infrastructure, and protect vulnerable sectors, while leaving producers free to adapt to market conditions, innovate, and compete. However, in practice, agriculture and the food market cannot be regarded as fully self-regulating systems. Their distinctive characteristics – reliance on land as the principal production resource, underdeveloped infrastructure, limited pace of technological modernization, dependence on natural and climatic conditions, conservatism of production practices, rigidity of institutional structures, low profitability, and persistent disparities in agricultural pricing – hinder their ability to self-balance and adapt quickly to shocks [14,15].

For this reason, government involvement remains indispensable.

When discussing the modern sustainability of rural territories, several important aspects should be underlined. First, the financial resources of rural areas are generally much smaller compared to those of urban centers. Limited local budgets restrict the ability of rural administrations to address pressing social and environmental problems, which, in turn, hampers their ability to achieve a sustainable balance across the economic, social, and ecological dimensions.

However, ensuring rural sustainability requires not only local initiatives, but also government support, allocation of resources, and well-designed rural development programs.

In this context, territorial planning plays a key role, which determines the distribution of population and resources in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Territorial planning allows a country to distinguish between different types of settlements and their development needs, whether they are large cities, growing cities, medium-sized cities or small rural settlements. This distinction is important because each type of settlement faces different challenges: while cities experience overcrowding and problems with urban infrastructure, villages often face demographic decline, lack of investment, and unemployment.

The structure of Kazakhstan' s territorial administration reflects this diversity. At the beginning of 2023, there were 17 regions, 188 districts and 89 cities in the country, three of which - Astana, Almaty and Shymkent - were declared the capitals of the country. In addition, there were 29 cities, 2,177 administrative districts and 6,295 settlements in Kazakhstan. This structure reflects the scale and complexity of rural and urban area management within a single administration.

By July 1, 2025, the administrative and territorial system of Kazakhstan has become more extensive and organized. It included 17 regions and three national capitals: Astana, Almaty and Shymkent. At the regional level, there were 195 administrative districts that functioned as integral parts of regional Governments and played a key role in the implementation of national policies at the local level. The urban network included 90 cities, including three cities of national significance and 29 cities with official status. The rural system was represented by 2,159 administrative districts and 6,124 villages, which emphasized the predominance of rural areas in terms of land distribution and settlement patterns.

This administrative system therefore combines large urbanized centers with an expansive network of rural districts, creating a multi-level governance framework capable of managing both the challenges of modernization and the needs of rural sustainability. The coexistence of megacities with dynamic economies and small villages dependent on agriculture illustrates the diversity of Kazakhstan's territorial development model. It also highlights the importance of designing policies that are flexible enough to meet the requirements of different settlement types, while simultaneously ensuring coherence and balance at the national level (Table 1).

Table 1 - Administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of July 1, 2025

	Districts			Settlements					Akim's Office				
	total	of these: districts in cities		City			Villages	Village	Village		county		rural
				total	Of these:				total	of which: consisting of only one LS*	total	of which: consisting of only one LS*	
		Republican Significance	of regional significance		of regional significance	of District Significance							
Kazakhstan	195	19	6	90	39	48	29	6124	27	19	2159	508	105
Abay	10	-	-	4	2	2	2	320	2	2	134	39	-
Akmola	17	-	-	11	3	8	5	589	5	4	191	19	38
Aktobe	14	-	2	8	1	7	-	312	-	-	133	32	2
Almaty	9	-	-	5	2	3	-	368	-	-	131	33	-
Atyrau	7	-	-	2	1	1	-	153	-	-	67	23	-
West Kazakhstan	12	-	-	2	1	1	3	405	3	-	147	25	-
Zhambyl	12	-	2	4	1	3	-	353	-	-	146	38	3
Zhetysu	8	-	-	6	2	4	-	350	-	-	112	15	-

Karaganda	9	-	2	8	6	2	8	342	7	7	151	54	5
Kostanay	16	-	-	6	4	2	3	492	3	2	156	27	36
Kyzylorda	7	-	-	4	2	2	2	223	2	-	142	97	-
Mangystau	5	-	-	3	2	1	-	59	-	-	34	24	12
Pavlodar	10	-	-	3	3	-	3	352	3	3	119	14	4
North Kazakhstan	13	-	-	5	1	4	-	590	-	-	186	26	-
Turkestan	14	-	-	7	3	4	-	794	-	-	174	21	3
Ulytau	2	-	-	3	3	-	2	72	2	1	33	11	-
East Kazakhstan	11	-	-	6	2	4	1	350	-	-	103	10	2
Astana city	6	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Almaty city	8	8	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shymkent city	5	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
* LS - Local Settlements													

It should be emphasized that promising rural settlements must include infrastructure elements that enable the expansion of entrepreneurial initiatives, as well as essential components such as advisory support and organizational structuring of enterprises.

During the years of independence, rural development has faced a structural crisis caused by the transformation of ownership models and the transition of all spheres of activity to market-based principles.

In GDP composition, the agricultural sector's share in 2022 reached 5.2%, with the physical volume index compared to the same period of the previous year standing at 106.4%. It should also be highlighted that the growth of the rural population in 2022 rose from 155,8 thousand people in 2018 to 111,9 thousand people. According to the Bureau of National Statistics, by the close of 2023, the gross volume of agricultural production amounted to 37 754,7 million tenge, showing a substantial increase. For instance, in 2018, the gross output grew from 4 497 585,4 million tenge to 9 521 002,3 million tenge in 2022- nearly doubling. Next, let us examine the availability of cereals and legumes by Kazakhstan's regions as of January 1, 2024.

As of July 1, 2025, the reserves of cereals and legumes in the Republic of Kazakhstan amounted to 6.7 million tons, of which the main part is wheat — 5.7 million tons. At the same time, food grains form the predominant volume (5.8 million tons), while the share of seed and feed grains is significantly less — 149 thousand tons and 692 thousand tons, respectively. Among other crops, significant amounts are accounted for by barley (502 thousand tons), oats (118 thousand tons), rice (111 thousand tons), corn (63 thousand tons), buckwheat (48 thousand tons) and millet (23 thousand tons). Thus, the stock structure shows the dominant importance of wheat in the country' s food security, while the share of other crops remains relatively small, indicating weak diversification, but at the same time underscores the strategic role of the grain sector for the economy and sustainable development of Kazakhstan' s agricultural regions (Table 2) [15].

In 2022, Kazakhstan's agricultural sector demonstrated notable growth in both animal husbandry and crop production, reflecting positive dynamics in comparison with the previous year. The

French total production volume in the livestock sector reached 25 127.3 million tenge, which is 103.6% of the level of 2021, which indicates the stability and steady growth of this sector. The volume of production in crop production amounted to 12 623.7 million tenge, which is 110.6% more than in the previous year, which indicates a rapid increase in agricultural production. If we consider the specific results of animal husbandry, the country produced 12 463.3 tons of meat (in live weight), which is 104.3% of the previous year' s level. Milk production also increased to 40 727.6 tons (105.2%), and egg production reached 2 578.200, which is 102.5% more than in the previous year. These figures confirm not only the high growth rates of the agricultural sector, but also its significant contribution to ensuring food security. In this regard, it is important to continue analyzing the main trends in agricultural production in Kazakhstan, as this region plays an important role in the development of agricultural production and the stability of the country' s economy.

Table 2 - Availability of grain and legumes by region as of July 1, 2025 (tons)

	Total	Including							
		for legal entities with the main type of activity						for other legal entities	for individual entrepreneurs and peasant/farm enterprises
		crop and animal husbandry, hunting and provision of services in these areas	production of the flour and cereal industry	wholesale of grain, seeds and animal feed	grain warehousing and storage	production of ready-made feed for farm animals	production of other basic organic chemicals		
Kazakhstan	6 679 010,6	2 323 493,1	903 658,6	188 409,0	2 156 179,4	12 547,5	7 300,5	151 055,0	936 367,5
Abay	128 898,3	55 757,7	19 178,1	8 317,1	-	-	-	-	45 645,4
Akmola	1 678 481,7	561 168,4	179 590,2	4 710,5	734 037,5	-	4 424,3	11 273,0	183 277,8
Aktobe	153 559,2	27 537,7	39 365,4	49 607,2	30 321,4	-	1 890,7	1 515,7	3 321,1
Almaty	52 250,7	31 661,4	14 103,7	809,4	x	21,0	x	818,9	1 949,1
Atyrau	347,3	-	-	-	-	-	-	347,3	-
West Kazakhstan	118 651,7	17 615,6	55 421,8	2 861,8	23 775,8	x	-	2 267,7	16 609,0
Zhambyl	47 395,9	9 252,0	1 808,5	-	-	-	-	19,7	36 315,7
Zhetysu	12 708,5	1 568,2	-	4 053,2	-	-	-	7 033,5	53,6

Karaganda	463 105,8	240 749,8	52 568,8	5 413,8	46 728,2	-	-	7 890,5	109 754,7
Kostanay	1 384 167,5	399 044,6	172 645,8	72 091,5	471 162,9	64,7	-	4 685,7	264 472,3
Kyzylorda	110 168,3	32 679,5	47 564,1	-	-	-	-	11 143,8	18 780,9
Mangystau	2 082,0	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pavlodar	264 325,5	122 870,9	27 654,1	21 644,3	37 473,1	-	-	16 326,3	38 356,8
North Kazakhstan	1 903 621,7	739 069,6	128 182,9	12 392,8	769 669,2	8 568,8	-	58 912,2	186 826,2
Turkestan	52 467,5	12 022,5	36 635,7	-	-	-	-	96,0	3 713,3
Ulytau	2 265,1	-	1 800,0	-	-	-	-	-	465,1
East Kazakhstan	203 511,6	65 411,6	52 510,6	6 445,1	25 675,5	3 793,0	-	27 226,6	22 449,2
Astana city	23 965,1	-	7 990,0	-	15 434,1	-	-	541,0	-
Almaty city	1 286,1	-	x	62,3	-	-	-	-	-
Shymkent city	75 751,1	5 919,6	64 497,1	-	-	-	-	957,1	4 377,3

Table 3 - The main indicators of livestock development in all categories of farms

	Agricultural formations			**Including**						**Households of the population**			**All categories of farms**		
				agricultural enterprises			**individual entrepreneurs and peasant or farm enterprises**								
	2025	2024	2025 as a percentage of 2024	2025	2024	2025 as a percentage of 2024	2025	2024	2025 as a percentage of 2024	2025	2024	2025 as a percentage of 2024	2025	2024	2025 as a percentage of 2024
Production of certain types of livestock products in January-July															
Slaughtered on the farm or sold for slaughter of livestock and poultry (in live weight), tons	577 688,1	572 202,8	101,0	378 221,2	383 512,2	98,6	199 466,9	188 690,6	105,7	442 304,9	429 497,9	103,0	1 019 993,0	1 001 700,7	101,8

Slaughtered on the farm or sold for slaughter of livestock and poultry (in slaughter weight), tons	380 048,3	374 092,1	101,6	277 163,9	277 221,2	100,0	102 884,4	96 870,9	106,2	228 804,9	222 930,9	102,6	608 853,2	597 023,0	102,0
Cow's milk, tons	865 922,4	804 383,2	107,7	439 954,4	391 770,8	112,3	425 968,0	412 612,4	103,2	1 389 455,5	1 313 776,2	105,8	2 255 377,9	2 118 159,4	106,5
Chicken eggs, thousand pieces	2 199 851,8	2 157 046,8	102,0	2 178 800,2	2 143 881,8	101,6	21 051,6	13 165,0	159,9	410 217,0	425 496,5	96,4	2 610 068,8	2 582 543,3	101,1
The skins are large, pieces	505 809	550 587	91,9	105 007	154 593	67,9	400 802	395 994	101,2	819 694	809 937	101,2	1 325 503	1 360 524	97,4
Small skins, pieces	942 599	984 446	95,7	77 217	97 277	79,4	865 382	887 169	97,5	2 068 190	2 207 297	93,7	3 010 789	3 191 743	94,3
Number of livestock and poultry as of August 1, 2025, heads															
Cattle	4 696 141	4 678 781	100,4	884 146	871 245	101,5	3 811 995	3 807 536	100,1	4 003 463	3 996 057	100,2	8 699 604	8 674 838	100,3
from it cows	2 446 929	2 377 473	102,9	363 216	362 983	100,1	2 083 713	2 014 490	103,4	2 101 888	2 033 863	103,3	4 548 817	4 411 336	103,1
Sheep	12 593 777	13 056 228	96,5	1 406 083	1 401 858	100,3	11 187 694	11 654 370	96,0	8 504 079	8 860 857	96,0	21 097 856	21 917 085	96,3
Goats	670 127	696 805	96,2	30 187	27 690	109,0	639 940	669 115	95,6	1 225 828	1 305 718	93,9	1 895 955	2 002 523	94,7
Pigs	309 357	313 904	98,6	257 873	264 376	97,5	51 484	49 528	103,9	169 473	182 211	93,0	478 830	496 115	96,5
Horses	2 817 035	2 612 136	107,8	412 701	379 989	108,6	2 404 334	2 232 147	107,7	1 784 661	1 701 520	104,9	4 601 696	4 313 656	106,7
Camels	168 834	164 273	102,8	18 763	18 891	99,3	150 071	145 382	103,2	131 521	124 674	105,5	300 355	288 947	103,9
Bird	40 474 115	37 312 521	108,5	39 880 005	36 868 094	108,2	594 110	444 427	133,7	7 555 181	7 755 875	97,4	48 029 296	45 068 396	106,6

In January-July 2025, Kazakhstan' s livestock industry demonstrated positive dynamics: the gross physical output index was 103.2% compared to the same period last year, the volume of livestock and poultry slaughter in live weight increased by 1.4%, milk production increased by 7%, and the production of eggs increased by 0.9%. At the same time, the structure of the livestock population was distributed as follows: cattle are concentrated mainly in the population (46.3%) and farms (43.7%), sheep — in farms (52.4%) and in the population (41%), goats mainly in the population (65%), while pig and poultry farming They are mostly concentrated in agricultural enterprises (50.5% and 82.8%, respectively). Average productivity indicators show mixed trends: milk yield per cow decreased by 0.6%, and egg yield per laying hen increased

by 0.8%. These results confirm the sustainable development of the industry while maintaining its key role in ensuring the country' s food security (Table 3).

Overall, it is important to emphasize that the available data clearly demonstrates positive dynamics in the development of rural territories, indicating that their current state is gradually improving and moving toward greater stability. The role of public administration in the sustainable development of rural areas is of great importance during this transition period. The main activities of the state:

- development of mechanisms of cooperation and interaction in rural communities in order to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders;

- ensuring broad and equitable access to credit and financing in rural areas;

- implementation of a fair and transparent pricing policy that guarantees a fair distribution of profits between producers and consumers;

- implementation of an effective policy for the distribution of agricultural and food products on the national market;

- implementation of comprehensive insurance systems to protect agricultural producers from production risks;

- systematic implementation of advanced agricultural technologies;

- protect, effectively use and restore lands and natural resources; promote environmentally sound production methods;

- modernize tax systems to better coordinate with agricultural systems;

- improve the legal and institutional framework of the agro-industrial complex;

- create an integrated knowledge platform for the agricultural sector; and promote rural development through environmentally sound and socially inclusive initiatives.

The discrepancy between the pace of agricultural reproduction and the actual demand for food products within the country makes state regulation of agricultural production and the food market not only necessary but also strategically vital. The central goal of such regulation is to guarantee the sustainable growth of the agrarian sector by accounting for its specific structural features, while at the same time ensuring that the agricultural potential of Kazakhstan is used rationally and efficiently to meet the social and economic needs of society. Within this regulatory process, the interests of a wide range of actors-state institutions, agricultural and industrial producers, financial and credit organizations, trade companies, and the population of both urban and rural areas-intersect. Therefore, the key task of the state is to develop mechanisms and tools that harmonize these interests and prevent conflicts between them. The effectiveness of government regulation is reflected in the degree to which the objectives outlined in state programs and legislation are achieved.

The guiding principle of agricultural policy is the promotion of agriculture and rural development. The goal is to increase the competitiveness of agricultural products, create jobs for rural populations, conserve natural resources, and make the sector more attractive for investment. These goals serve as a guideline for administrative activities. Performance indicators include the growth of gross domestic product and high added value, investment potential, profitability of enterprises and increased labor productivity. At the same time, the analysis of the agricultural sector reveals a number of internal and external factors hindering its overall development. External challenges include increased competition from foreign markets, lower consumer demand, and increased imports. Internal constraints are related to poor governance, insufficient and often fragmented government support, barriers to market entry, and general inefficiency of institutional mechanisms. In addition, agricultural organizations themselves face numerous operational constraints: lack of working capital, inefficient management due to traditional methods, dependence on outdated and energy-intensive technologies, rising but inaccessible production costs, inflation, dependence on weather conditions, limited access to credit and affordable financing.

Conclusion. in order to overcome these problems and ensure their long-term competitiveness, agricultural producers should focus on strengthening their positions in national and international markets. This requires the adoption of modern cost-cutting strategies, the implementation of diversification strategies to increase production and the introduction of non-traditional agricultural activities such as camel farming or rice farming in areas where these sectors have not previously developed. Of particular importance is the introduction of advanced technologies, improved equipment, new plant and animal species, improved storage and processing systems, increased investment and increased productivity through reliable access to water resources. To achieve these goals, it is also necessary to switch to less water-intensive agricultural production, reduce the use of aggressive pesticides, introduce integrated pest and disease control methods, and take measures to protect soils from erosion. Special attention should be paid to supporting environmentally friendly projects, as they are an important foundation for the sustainable development of Kazakhstan' s agricultural sector and balanced socio-economic development of rural areas.

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