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**DIRECTIONS OF DIVERSIFICATION  
OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS  
IN TIMES OF CHANGE AND CHALLENGES**

In today's changing and challenging environment, agricultural activities require adaptation and the search for new ways of development. Diversification is aimed at expanding economic opportunities and ensuring the sustainability of agriculture. It aims to diversify industries, crops, products, and services, which helps agricultural enterprises to be more flexible and enables them to adapt to market conditions, climate change, and consumer demand.

When using a diversification strategy, agricultural enterprises are not only engaged in the cultivation of traditional crops but also in the production of high-value-added products, such as organic food, prepared foods, dairy products, etc. The introduction of new crops or livestock species, the production of non-traditional products, and the use of new technologies can help to improve farm efficiency, increase profitability and attract customers. In addition, diversification can stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship, the creation of new jobs in rural areas, and the expansion of markets [1, 2, 3].

Commodity producers who plan to diversify their agricultural production by expanding the existing range of products should first assess the market demand for their products [4, 5]. This will help to identify which agricultural products currently meet the needs and requirements of potential

consumers. However, when forming the range, structure of cultivation, and production, an agricultural enterprise should take into account not only the demand for these types of products but also ensure the most efficient use of available labor, raw materials, land, technical, technological, financial and other resources while minimizing the anthropogenic impact on the environment. In addition, it is necessary to study the competitive environment of the agricultural market in order to gain advantages over potential competitors.

According to U. Rosola, the formation of the commodity policy of agricultural producers on a marketing basis will allow producers to identify market needs, and their size, and respond flexibly to changes in market demand. Due to the seasonality of products, it is advisable for enterprises to diversify their activities and expand their product range or assortment. It is the diversification policy that makes it possible to compensate for losses in one market by making a profit in another [6].

In addition, diversification of agricultural activities helps to reduce the risk of loss of income due to dependence on one type of product. Growing different crops or raising different types of livestock helps to balance the risks associated with weather conditions, market fluctuations, and emergencies. In this way, in the event of negative changes in one area of activity, other areas can ensure income stability. Spreading risks and raising income from different sources reduces the vulnerability of the farm to negative changes, such as weather disasters or economic crises. This ensures the stability of the agricultural sector and the ability of the farm to recover from difficult situations [7].

Scientific works highlight the diversification of agricultural production as one of the directions of diversification of rural development, which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals [8, 9].

Diversification of agricultural activities contributes to the social and economic development of rural areas. The expansion of the agricultural range and the development of agritourism in rural areas create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and the development of the rural service sector. This will help increase incomes and improve the quality of life of the

rural population, create new jobs, and preserve human potential in rural communities [10].

By introducing environmentally sustainable production methods, preserving natural resources, developing local consumption, and the socio-economic sector of rural development, diversification fully supports the balance between the needs of modern agricultural production and preserving the natural environment for future generations [11].

In general, diversification of agricultural activities in rural areas has the following benefits: expansion of markets, risk reduction, environmental sustainability, development of the agricultural sector, improvement of the quality of life of the rural population, integration in line with market needs, enhancement of innovation and socio-cultural diversity, and promotion of resilience.

Given all these benefits, diversification of agricultural activities is an important strategy to support sustainable rural development, food security, economic growth, and natural resource conservation. This requires support from the government, the promotion of innovation and local market development, and the active adoption of modern agricultural management practices and technologies.

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