

## Problems of Kazakhstan Rural Areas: Modern State and Prospects of Transition to the Way of Sustainable Development

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**Abstract:** At the present stage of Kazakhstan development, an urgent task is the rural sustainable development, providing the optimum performance of rural economy and simultaneous improvement of social standards, quality increase of people's life conditions. To create and implement the efficient programs of rural development, it is necessary to study the economic, social and organizational problems of rural people. One of the important approaches for solution of such kind of problems is the strengthening and development of rural business activity, covering and improving different aspects of social parameters. Successful strategic programming and development of rural areas shall consider and integrate the views of government agents, scientific, business and local communities. That is why the government policy for rural sustainable development shall play an active part in more efficient use of reserves and resource potentials of their growth.

**Key words:** Rural areas • Stability of social-economic system • Economic and institutional basis • Economic opportunities • Business activity • Innovative capacity

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### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable economic development and growth of people welfare is mainly determined by the development of rural areas. After socialist system decay Kazakhstan rural economy passed through the structural crisis, caused by a gap of inter-industry relations and a decay of large-scale farming. A transition period was followed by the disproportions between the demands and the manufacture of core products, required for balanced and sustainable development. The problems of social-economic development of villages, revealed in diversity intensification of economic rural areas and in deepening of differences in starting positions, became sharp. Radical transformation of economic environment of business entities affected the busy status and earnings of rural population, resulting in paradoxical situation: on the one hand, it is labor surplus and on the other hand, it is the lack of skilled specialists at the change of life quality, which significantly influenced on high migration processes, downsize of rural population and depopulation of separate villages.

Insufficient rates of the pool formation process of the rural business economically active subjects limit the opportunities of rural general employment. Average level

of labor remuneration in agriculture, despite the annual growth, stays one of the lowest among the other economic sectors. Recession of rural population life support level has a negative impact on reproducing processes of human capital, which is a basis for sustainable development of rural villages. The essential component of the rural sector competitiveness growth and the determining factor of the country food safety is the qualitative formation of labor forces, the provision of which is possible only due to high welfare level of rural population.

Modern state of the Kazakhstan Republic economy testifies about positive changes and achieved economic growth, based on strategically verified economic policy, aimed at the diversification of national economic system and giving a stable tone to the economic development. As a result, the financial backing for the rural development and the scope of qualitative changes of the parameters in economic and social spheres of villages are quite significant. Alongside with that, rural areas still have the unsolved problems, holding their transition to sustainable development. The core ones are the following: insufficient development of engineering and transport infrastructures, low level of labor capacity, formal employment and qualification of labor forces. It is evident, that an

important condition for transformations shall be the clear integral viewing of general direction of social-economic processes development.

At the present stage, the theoretical and practical management aspects of rural sustainable development become one of the urgent tasks. That is why to determine the further trend of rural areas progressive growth and development of efficient program documents, it seems appropriate the theoretic and empiric understanding, methodic substantiation of rural areas transition to the way of sustainable development. As a result, there will be provided the increase of life level and quality of rural people - the main factor for growth of attraction to living in the rural area.

Many national and foreign researches contributed much to the solution of problems, connected with the sustainable development at regional level, the study of economic, social and ecological aspects of rural sustainable development.

In modern economics, a considerable economic literature base is devoted to the study of role of urban agglomerations. Alongside with that, despite the sufficient study of problems of rural sustainable development, there is no unified position to the essence of rural sustainable development; problems, factors, ways and models of transition to the way of sustainable development are understudied. That is why this problem requires further development in terms of the system concept, organization of local government and increase of rural areas competitiveness.

This study describes the author's approach, aimed at the solution of the existing social-economic problems of rural area, which is an integral part in terms of subject-object aspect of the following:

- business relationships in the system of national economic area;
- social, cultural and political relationships as a part of the country social development.

**Purpose of Investigation:** The development of globalised processes and the long-term strategy of the country development predetermine the necessity in updating the agroindustrial complex and its sustainable development.

The economy of the village and the village itself are interconnected, as an agricultural production is a real base for rural communities formation, which are more or less connected with the rural sector in profession, lifestyle and way of self-dependence.

Kazakhstan rural sector has positive changes; it provides food safety and economic self-reliance of national food system in the basic types of food. Country gross output of the crop production is mainly formed by means of agricultural enterprises and peasant (farm) households. The share of population households, directly involved in private subsidiary farming, prevails in the general scope of animal production. High concentration of farm animals in this category of households has a prominent impact on food situation in the country.

Private subsidiary farmings have become an important sector of rural economy; they have taken an independent place among the other household structures and they are one of the sources of income generation for rural people. More than 30% of Kazakhstan rural population belongs to the category of self-employed people, forming a sector of informal employment. At the same time, a high share of the self-employed people, working in private subsidiary farming, prevents from the efficient use of territorial resources, affecting the potential of rural development.

Integration of the self-employed population to the one general economic system is very important, as this category will be covered by the system of social protection and state support.

The base for the improvement of rural population life quality is the regional economic policy, which proceeds from the conditions of rural areas economic safety; at that, a balance development of all essential life support systems is of the utmost importance.

Nowadays 56% of Kazakhstan rural population lives in settlements with high potential for development [1]. For the further increase of settlements with high economic return, it is necessary to use the resource capacities of the territories, to increase the quality and economic activity of internal resources of labor forces.

To develop the rural areas and to expand the share of rural districts with agricultural-industrial specialization, it is necessary to use the instruments, which would promote the diversification process of manufacturing structures in order to provide multisectoral sustainable development. The growth of business activity will positively affect the indices of rural population employment. The improvement of social-economic status of rural areas will promote the slowdown of internal migration of rural population to the cities.

The increase of the investment attractiveness of rural areas is connected with the possibility to create the alternative income sources. Among them are those income types, which were created in nonagricultural

sector. That is why multifunctionality is an important factor, providing local potential growth and balanced rural development.

Irrational settlement structure of rural population, implemented at the planned economy, also intensifies the problem of rural sustainable development, as there is a need in the investments for institutional development of rural area social sphere.

The study shows that there are separate excess working rural settlements, which retard the increase of rural people life quality and the planning of rural sustainable development.

That is why the purpose of this investigation is the theoretical-methodological substantiation and revealing of conceptual basis of the model of rural sustainable development from the perspective of reproductive approach and the development of the way for its implementation.

The object of the investigation is the socio-economic development processes of rural areas.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Rural areas do not only play the part of food safety source, but they are also a residence place of the significant part of population. In the Kazakhstan rural area lives 45% of general population of the country, the demographic resources of which equal to 7,5 mln. people, including the labor forces, equal to 3,9 mln. people. Rural settlement potential of the republic comprises 6979 settlements in total [1].

A state program for rural development for 2004-2010 was accepted and implemented in the Kazakhstan Republic for the first time in the former Soviet Union; it provided a complex approach to rural development and differed in immensity and diversity.

The program combined the financial opportunities of different levels of the state budget to solve the problem issues of social-economic rural development. A consolidated budget of the program for the whole period of implementation amounted to 974 bln.tenge, providing the successful overcoming of economic crisis of the transition period on the Kazakhstan rural areas and creating start conditions for the rural economy to take the way of sustainable development.

An annual monitoring of rural villages development during the period of this program implementation shows, that the quantity of the following rural settlements was increased:

- with high social potential - by 1,7 times;
- with high potential of engineering infrastructure - by 1,3 times [1].

As a result of the implementation of the abovementioned State program, the social infrastructure was expanded and improved in many villages. Alongside with that, the investigation shows, that in development of social and engineering infrastructures of the rural settlements, the number of problems still exists; to solve them, it is necessary to involve private capitals, to expand public-private partnership and to use the experience of private sector in project management more intensely, taking into consideration the limitations of budget funds.

During the investigation it was found out, that one of the main investment sectors, which is financed at the expense of population, is the residential construction.

Commissioning of dwellings in the Kazakhstan rural areas for the period of 2007-2011 testifies that the main construction is carried out by the private developers (Diagram 1).

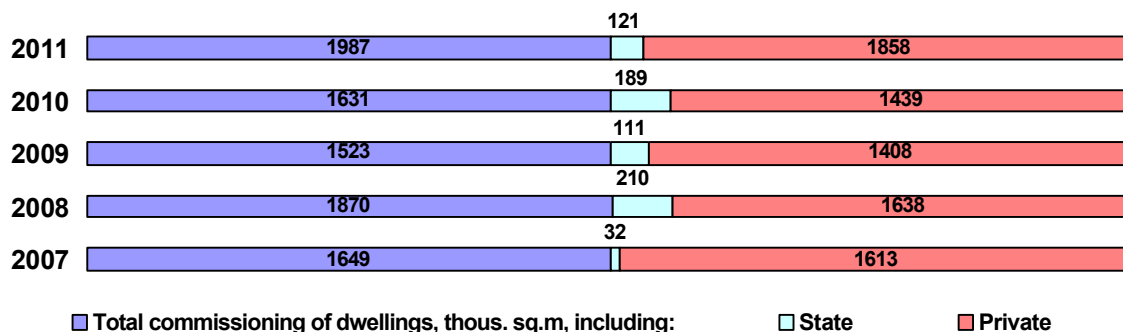


Diagram 1: Commissioning of dwellings in the rural areas of the Kazakhstan Republic.

Source: "The Kazakhstan Republic Statistical Agency "Investment and Construction Activity in the Kazakhstan Republic in 2007-2011" Astana 2012

In the Kazakhstan Republic villages private residential stock was mainly formed in the soviet period, its state is characterized by high useful lifetime, wear and low level of comfort. Its reconstruction and modernization requires capital investment, providing capital raising to construction industry. As per the Kazakhstan Republic Agency data, statistically, the construction material market is mainly provided by the import. That is why to meet the demands of rural population in modern construction materials, we assume, that there is a sufficient niche in this direction for the diversification of rural production.

Overcoming the differences in rural people life level is one of the urgent tasks of regional development. Population welfare growth is firstly characterized by the earnings of rural people. To involve the low-income, unemployed and self-employed people to the active promotion programs of productive employment and improvement of the situation with the earnings of rural population in terms of the Program "Employment 2020", a number of measures was taken:

- the access to capital and credit resources was expanded;
- rural people, organizing their own business, are provided with the opportunity to supply the business objects with the missing engineering-communication infrastructure free of charge at the government cost;
- the mobility of labor force was increased by means of moving to the places of economic force [2].

Agricultural manufacture has a significant impact on the level of social-economic development of villages. It is proved by the fact, that the basis for rural development is the agricultural sector, which plays an important part in the structure of the rural economy and plays a system-forming part in support and development of economic and social potential of these areas.

Dynamics of production of Kazakhstan farm gross output for 2007-2011 reflects the increase of agricultural production volumes, except for 2010, conditioned by the reduction of production volumes of the plant-growing branch due to weather-climatic conditions (Table 1).

Agricultural sector, more than other economic sectors, uses its own products - feed, seeds etc. - for the reproduction process. A unique peculiarity of the competitiveness of the Kazakhstan rural areas, which are an important factor for sustainable development, is rooted in the historically formed traditions of cattle production. This agricultural branch, due to vast territories and profitable geographical location, has a great potential and significant strategic growth reserves, which are not fully implemented, because of the water supply absence for the development of pasture grounds infrastructure of the 181 bln.ha square. That is why there is an objective need in wide use of high-productive breeds of farm animals, adapted to climatic and feed conditions, as the main peculiarity of competitiveness of the specified branch is the production of ecologically clean meat and meat products.

Globalizing processes expand the external sale markets and they are also an essential factor for the increase of production and consumption of this food group. In the report of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization it was mentioned, that "the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, following the Program of multiway trade and economic cooperation, actively promote the facilitation of trade and investment and also perform an effective cooperation in agriculture and other sectors" [3]. All of this create the favorable prerequisites for Kazakhstan to take the positions of the largest manufacturer and supplier of animal products in the world food market, at the same time strengthening the food independency of the country.

Table 1: Farm Gross Output of the Kazakhstan Republic

bln. tenge	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Households of all categories					
Agriculture	1 089 384	1 404 493	1 641 352	1 442 630	2 266 042
Agricultural enterprises					
Agriculture	291 078	364 034	443 862	277 508	671 018
Peasant (farm) households					
Agriculture	266 709	325 492	402 997	345 676	686 424
Households of population					
Agriculture	531 598	714 967	794 503	819 446	1 026 600

Source: The Kazakhstan Republic Statistical Agency "Rural Forest and Fish Industry" Astana 2012

Implementation of the concept of rural areas transition to the sustainable development, understood as the guarantee of balanced social-economic processes and environment, is mainly determined by the formation of sustainable multiway rural economy.

A system approach, providing the rural sustainable development, is possible, if the individual peculiarities of each rural area are taken into consideration. Since the scientific investigation of this sphere has a relatively short period, the investigation area was expanded up to stability of social-economic systems, using its important characteristics with regard to the rural area. Each system consists of sub-systems and elements, which interact with each other and form the unity. A village, being a local level of administrative territorial division, is an open social-economic and ecologic subsystem on the one hand and it is a part of the higher level of the hierarchy system on the other hand. Consequently, the destabilization of economic performance of each rural area results in resistance breaking of the rural region, having the negative impact on social-economic state of the whole country. This investigation deals with the definition of stability of social-economic development of rural areas as an integral index, including aggregative and individual indices, which determine the stability of business activity at micro- and macroeconomic levels. In this context not only the stability of economic parameters of the development, but also the harmonious correlation of social-economic and natural aspects are taken into consideration. That is why the rural sustainable development is an important factor, providing sustainable development of economy, increase of life level and welfare of the population of the whole country.

During the investigation it was found out, that there is no generally accepted formula for the term of "the sustainable development of rural areas". At the present times the term "sustainable development" with respect to the rural areas gets a wider interpretation from several positions, as a unity of economic, social, cultural and ecological spheres of community development. In the opinion of some scientists, ecological aspect dominates in the term of rural sustainable development, others consider, that the attention is focused on social-economic constituents.

In the opinion of Bautin V.M., when defining the sustainable development of rural areas, it is necessary to take into account the integrity of economic, social and ecological constituents [4].

In the opinion of academician Petrikov A.V., the sustainable development of the village is a sustainable

development of rural community, meeting the criteria of economic, social and ecological efficiency and providing the following:

- fulfillment of the economic functions by the village;
- expanded reproduction of the population, growth of its life level;
- improvement of ecological situation in the rural area [5].

A scientific viewpoint of professor Kushlin V.: a notion of sustainable development is expressed in qualitative characteristics of the phenomena, connected with the economic growth, at this the economy shall be based on non-waste technologies, closed production cycles and recultivation of natural resources [6].

Distinguished professor of sociology, agriculture and natural sciences Cornelia Flora of the University in Iowa State includes the following important principles to the notion of "sustainable development":

- lifetime of economy;
- maintenance of sound ecosystem;
- life quality [7].

Summarizing the scientific viewpoints to the terms of "sustainable development" and "sustainable development of rural areas" and determining our point of view, we consider it possible to suggest the following definition of "sustainable development of rural areas". Under the sustainable development of rural areas it shall be understood the stability of rural community development, progressive development of rural economy based on innovations, structural reorganization of household complex, expansion of production activity, increase of people welfare, protection and maintenance of environment and also the purposeful self-organization of rural community in socio-eco-economic relation by means of provision of social fairness, efficient economic and ecological development.

## **RESULTS**

The experience of investigation of the problems of rural areas development and control is formed in Kazakhstan as far as the regional features of economic laws manifestation are revealed. Provided that, the assembly of methods and ways of regional policy implementation is based on the solution of the specific issues in development of rural regions, in their

coordination with the strategy of development of the whole country.

A priority and an important moment for Kazakhstan is the search of all-round plan for achieving the goals of transformation the institutional, structural, social-economic spheres of rural development, providing the mobilization and concentration of the state resources on the solution of the problem of transition to the rural sustainable development.

State regulation shall take into account such coordination of various interests, which will promote the economic sustainable development, the increase of resource efficiency, improvement of social parameters and welfare growth of the whole society.

During the investigation process the basic provisions of the theory of rural sustainable development as an interdisciplinary approach were systematized and the term "sustainable development of rural areas" was defined. Theoretic-methodological bases of economic investigation of the rural sustainable development were substantiated. It was stated a new viewing of complex treatment of rural areas from the viewpoint of regional economy and efficient environmental impact, in order to support the dynamic balance. With this approach it is possible to solve many socio-eco-economic problems, implemented in the process of development of both rural areas and the country in whole. In the social-territorial structure of space formations there are city and rural settlements, interrelations and interdependencies of which form an important aspect of economic, political and social life of socium and they are one of the main feature, which is a base for evaluation the level of economic and social development of the country. That is why, a distinct viewing of the role and place of rural areas in the context of the country development is very important.

The analysis of social-economic state of the rural areas showed, that the working out of the conceptual basis of the sustainable development active policy requires a special regional approach, as the creation of favorable economic and social climate in the rural area predetermines the implementation of system measures in each settlement, which are differentiated in not only potential economic opportunities, but also the existing typical problem issues. To provide the rural sustainable development based on self-development, it is necessary to implement one of the priorities - the increase of production potential.

Considering the net of Kazakhstan rural settlements, it is possible to distinguish two main economic types:

territories with the one village-forming production core; territories with the disperse production base. The investigation shows that the first type of the rural settlements is characterized by more stable social-economic structure; it has higher competitiveness, as the production households in the form of production cooperatives, limited partnerships and others integrate different living spheres of the village and show high corporate social responsibility. However, the rural settlements of the second type prevail and constitute the main part; the majority of small business entities with different legal-organizational forms (peasant households, sole proprietors etc.) functions there. In order to intensify the competitiveness of rural areas, it is necessary to take measures on the upgrading of economic entities efficiency.

General Secretary of the UN Pan Gi Mun points out, that "the private sector participation in public-private partnership provides great opportunities for rural sustainable development" [8]. Consequently, consolidation and unification of the households shall be based on the market mechanisms and wide use of public-private partnership, aimed at implementation of priority cluster projects, promoting the economic development of villages.

As per the System of State Planning, the programs of territorial development are being worked out in the Kazakhstan Republic at the level of regions and districts. In our opinion, in terms of the administrative reform in progress, providing the decentralization - expansion of references of the inferior control agencies, development of local government, introduction of electivity for heads of local administration of villages and strengthening of their role (by delegation of new functions, consolidation of machinery size and resource base), it is necessary to consider the programs of territorial development at local level, i.e. for each village or rural district.

Many foreign countries have a system of support measures for development and a branched network of institutes, providing assistance to rural people in adaptation to varying conditions, in development and presentation of projects [9].

A model Leader, developed by the European Union, has a key direction in development of rural areas. Program periods of this model provide the succession of actions; their implementation on the relevant territories allows to solve the existing problems at the limited resources and to stimulate further development of the territories [10].

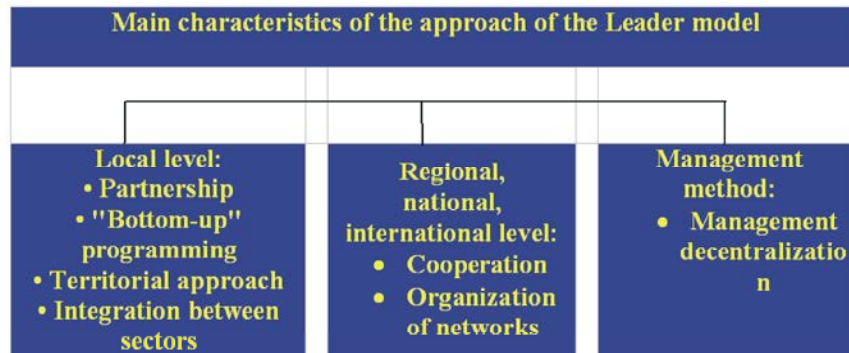


Fig. 1: Distinct elements of the Leader model (made up by the authors)

Based on Leader method, a local level expands its participation by means of bottom-up programming, influences on higher authorities regarding the development and adoption of the appropriate policy (Figure 1).

Historical experience of the European Union countries in regional marketing and development of rural areas, presented by economic and organizational approaches, accumulated knowledge and practical skills, can be very important and useful for Kazakhstan during the implementation of the rural development policy.

The working out of the active policy for the development of Kazakhstan rural areas shall be predominantly aimed at the territorial model, providing a strategic orientation at diversification of economic activity and activation of rural self-development. At the same time, for the well-balanced, sustainable and socially oriented rural development, it is necessary to work out the relevant regulators, based on the mechanisms of functional economic systems.

An advanced mechanism of rural development is the diversification of rural economy; its analysis requires attending to its growth level, i.e. if this tendency of economic development has a feature of stability or not. Growth of rural economy is possible at the current level of labor capacity; however, this level does not guarantee the stable economic growth.

At the present time key agricultural sectors mainly manufacture the intermediate products, that is why the transformation of the manufacturing system for the final products output becomes an important factor for stable rural economy. One of the main components of rural development is the existence and domination of strong, competitive agricultural enterprises.

A modern stage for the developed states is characterized by transition to postindustrial development,

changing the approaches to the notion of capital, where the intellectual aspect begins to dominate. In the opinion of the majority of scientists, it becomes obvious, that the intangible asset - human knowledge - has a determining impact on the effectiveness of companies. It transforms the capital optimization structure and criterion [11].

An ability of the company to show its efficiency is an important condition of investment attractiveness of agricultural enterprises to participate in development programs of state, private and social structures, in the opinion of professor K.Flor and K.Grosso [12].

To achieve the abovementioned goal, from our point of view, in the process of economic management, it ought to rely on the necessity: firstly, the direction of the investments to the human resource development; secondly, wide use of the methods of qualitative planning, achievement and observation the final results and , thirdly, implementation of the principles of the Balanced Scorecard, developed by R.Kaplan and V.Norton, providing the stability of business subjects on a long-term basis [13].

In total, organizational-economic mechanism of rural sustainable development shall include the following important aspect: implementation of measures and use of resources for achievement of strategies and goals shall be provided to an adequate degree with a high efficiency level. The solution of this problem depends on the qualitative management. A system approach is important, considering the specific properties of the project management, management of final results.

## CONCLUSIONS

The formation and implementation of the policy of rural sustainable development shall fully include the diversity of natural and economic conditions of these

territories. In the system of rural sustainable development, a special role belongs to agriculture, the qualitative development of which is determined by the level of competitive staff, presence of the modern material-engineering base and the use of innovative approaches.

To work out a successful strategy of territorial development and business activity, it is necessary to update the manufacturing systems of rural areas with substantial orientation to the use of resource-saving technologies. The main purpose of this approach is to provide the increase of local competitiveness quality, growth of competitiveness of rural economy, taking into consideration the preservation of environment.

The investigation successively reflects the core basis of the notion of sustainability in relation to the notion of stability, as the first assumes the system support of sustainability of economic, social and ecological parameters, characterizing life activity of rural people.

Based on scientific method of analysis of economic and social processes of Kazakhstan rural areas, it was found out, that they differ in diversity of economic area, differentiation in the levels of social-economic development, that is why we suggest a substantiated system approach in terms of creation the favorable conditions and management for rural sustainable development due to formation of cluster rural economy, development of Foresight system - a modern instrument of viewing and projection of future, based on widespread experts inquiry to determine the spheres of strategic investigations and technologies, which will provide the maximum economic and social advantages. Also in this context it seems advisable to update the existing institutional structure, or to develop such institutes, which will promote the implementation of the daily needs and interests of rural population, integrate family households for the purpose of effective projects, strengthen the "bottom-up initiative", provide information services and activate business, investment and innovative activity of rural people. The implementation of the complex of measures, suggested in the investigation, promotes the formation of conditions for labor capacity increase, solution of social problems of rural development, firstly, for the growth of rural people life level and quality, approximation of these indices to the city standards, organization of constant and temporary workplaces and increase of employment.

The investigation shows, that one of the important constituents of the agricultural sector sustainability is the state regulation, based on different instruments and

motivation for the business entities to carry out the measurements, focused on the improvement of qualitative composition of soil layer, consolidation of agricultural product processing enterprises with the agricultural product manufacturers. Regional marketing promotes the rural development, having a positive impact on the strengthening of agricultural sector potential, as the organization of vertically-integrated structures can provide the flow of financial resources from one sector to another and the creation of high-value added products. At the same time, an important condition for formation and support of rural sector sustainability is the determination of priority directions for the efficient use of investments, state support of manufacturers, producing the competitive goods, by providing them with benefits and preferences.

In the concept about turning points in the dynamics of agriculture, Bicanic R. states, that the evolution of production factors has three stages. The first stage emphasizes the natural factors and risks, support of labor potential of the village. Commercial factors are the most important in the second stage. Financial and innovative factors are the most important in the third stage [14]. That is why the transition of the household pattern of Kazakhstan rural areas to the third stage is one of the conditions for sustainable development.

Based on the analysis of development tendencies of agricultural business activity, it was concluded, that the increase of financial-economic stability of the subjects of this national household sector, updating of the technological structure, change of their profile and taking the effective measures on activation of investment activity of the existing and newly created subjects of small business shall make a foundation of economic policy of both central and local executive authorities.

The results of our investigation showed that the priorities of this policy shall be carried out in the following directions:

- the use of special economic motivation in form of financial preferences and tax benefits, aimed at the increase of investment and business activity;
- creation of powerful innovative engineering base, which reduces the material consumption and energy intensity of manufacturers and significantly increases the level of labor capacity, provides the output of competitive products and preserve the environment due to rational use of resources;



- strengthening of measures of state stimulation and support of agricultural products recycling;
- expansion based on intensification of scope of agricultural products manufacture, which guarantee not only the production independency of Kazakhstan, but also form the export resources, providing of taking the export niches at international markets;
- state support measures shall be aimed at the manufacture of high-quality products, with high-added value and the products of regional specialization; this shall be carried out using a wide cluster approach. Cluster is one of the efficient directions of the territorial development and an instrument for achieving the priority goals - increase of regional yield, labor capacity and guarantee of employment.

In the process of investigation it was substantiated, that a significant reserve of rural sustainable development is a definite part of economically active population, which at the present time is not integrated to economic and labor activity. This category of rural population is able to promote the sustainable development if provided with the following conditions - their involvement to the working process or business by teaching to high-demand professions and business organization, carrying out the advanced professional training or retraining, relevant to the current state of requirements to skilled stuff. Implementation of the abovementioned measures will provide the transition to the qualitatively new forms of life activity of rural people, growth of population income, forming of the consumer demand and will also create the favorable conditions for rural sustainable development.

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