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Theoretical and practical aspects of formation of strategies of sustainable development of farm enterprises

Scientific problem. In the conditions of a mixed economy the farm enterprise is an important form of business management which is able to ensure a high standard of agriculture, an appropriate level of production process management, careful attitude to soil use, other resources, property and labor. The type of the development of farm enterprises, wherein not only their resources and economic relationships but their competitiveness as well, will be able to be reproduced, is possible only under the condition of maximum employment of both internal and external resources of these farms. In this regard, it is necessary for each farm enterprise to develop and realize an effective strategy of its development. However, most farms do not have such strategies yet, which results in their financial instability and bankruptcy. The implementation of scientifically grounded strategies is the prerequisite of a successful farm enterprise performance in the long-term period.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. The problem of the formation of the strategy for sustainable development of farm enterprises has been paid much attention to in scientific research works recently. General

theoretical and practical aspects of sustainable development have been studied by B. Anderson, R. Bitmid, C.Johnson, [1], M.V.Bahrov [3], Ye.M.Borshchuk [4], O.V.Shubravska [12], and sustainable development of farm enterprises has been studied by O.Yu.Yermakov [5], M.I.Kisil [6], Yu.O.Lupenko [10], M.Y.Malik [10], B.Ya. Mesel-Veseliak [11], P.T. Sabluk [7] and other scholars. Nevertheless, theoretical-methodological and practical aspects of this issue connected with the formation of strategies of sustainable development have not been developed sufficiently yet

The object of the article is generalization of theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of the problem of formation of strategies of sustainable development of farm enterprises and development of scientifically grounded suggestions for its solution.

Statement of the main results of the study. During the research process it was established that the development of farm enterprises in previous periods took place on a staged basis, which caused changes of their strategies: The first stage (1992−1995) − large-scale creation of farm enterprises, allocation of land for their permanent use, introduction of state support mechanisms and formation of their establishing strategies; the second stage (1996−2000) – establishment of the pattern with a relatively stable number of farms, their active capital accumulation and reorientation of development strategies to mastering new crop rotations, gaining new professional knowledge, purchase of machinery and equipment, and development of material and technical facilities; the third stage (2001−2004) – additional impact, in the development of farm enterprises as a result of restructuring of collective farm enterprises, acceleration of processes of additional land plots lease, purchase of machinery and other assets, procurement of added capital, namely due to the assets of restructured collective farm enteprises, implementation of the strategies of operation expansion; the fourth stage (2004−2008) – slowdown in the processes of capital concentration, transformation of some part of farm enterprises into households in order to reduce tax burden; the fifth stage (2009−2013) – decrease in the number of farm enterprises with the simultaneous increase of their land areas, deceleration of the speed of accumulation of material-technical base and more active quality changes in the production potential; the sixth stage (from 2014 till now) – reorientation of farm enterprises to the strategy of development in the conditions of instability.

As in research works on economics and in practice the concepts of steadiness, stability and sustainability of enterprise development are often mixed, in the process of the research a conclusion regarding the reasonability of their study in hierarchic system was made. In this connection it was suggested to consider “sustainability” as a scientific category which includes such categories as “steadiness” and “stability”. As a result, a special concept of “sustainable development of the farm enterprise” was formulated and its essence basing on category “sustainability” was considered. As processes of economic development in the long-term period are characterized by their cyclical and wave-like nature, the features of sustainability in reproduction processes can appear continually despite natural fluctuations. That is, if in the conditions of general decline, a farm enterprise remains competitive, sustainability is achieved.

Sustainability should be regarded as an integrated category which spreads on global, planetary, national and other processes of development. As follows, sustainability of these processes can be reached by achieving a certain level of development in all the components. Taking into account that enterprises dominate in economic activity, the problems of sustainable development of a society as a whole can be solved with the secured sustainability of development of the absolute majority of them.

Sustainability of development has a permanent character as the conditions, which provide it, constantly change. As the global problem of provision of the Earth population with food products is becoming more urgent the continual change of opportunities of its solution is necessary. The main role in the provision of people with food is still played by agriculture where farmers are chief farm producers on the global level. Therefore, their strategies of development are extremely important for the solution of food problem in the future.

In the conditions of food products shortage the majority of farms can be competitive on the

farm produce markets as prices for their products will increase at comparatively higher rates. Thus, sustainability in agriculture should be considered as a qualitative index which is characterized by correlation between the amount of production and provision of the world population with food products. That is, sustainability of development of farm produce sphere of any country should be regarded in the global aspect.

On the assumption of its wave-like character, agriculture can not ensure continually high rates of extended reproduction, it repeatedly needs an impact for its development (Figure 1).

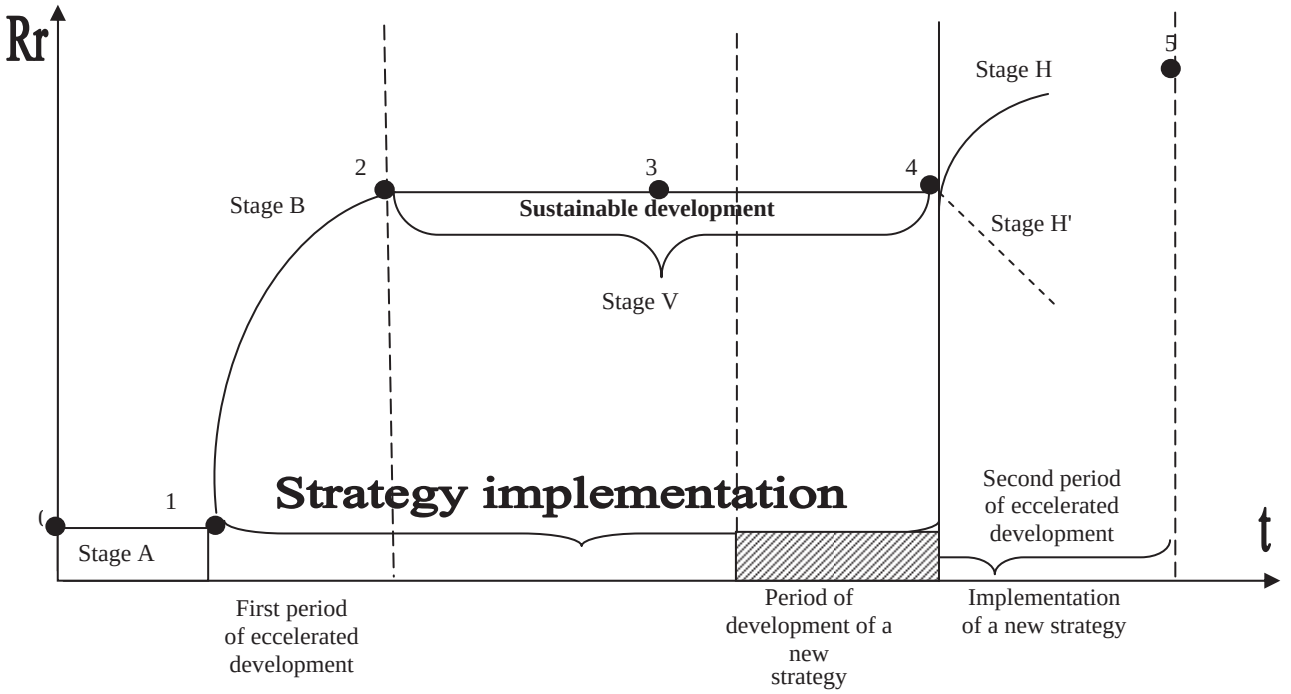


Figure 1. Scheme of stage wise securing of sustainable development of farm enterprises in the process of their strategic management

Rr – level of development, t – period of development; stages of strategies formation – strategy planning and making a decision as to its implementation (A), achieving indexes of strategic indicators (strategy mastering) (B), sustainable development of farm enterprise (V), new strategy mastering (H), possible decline (H′); periods of development – preparatory period of elaborating a strategy and making a decision as to its implementation (0-1) accelerated development (1-2), stable development (2-4), possible decline on the condition of unavailability of a new strategy of development or accelerated development period; points of transition from one stage to the other one – beginning (0) and completion (1) of the stage of planning a strategy and making decision as to its implementation, achieving strategic indicators (2), possible correction of strategic guidelines (3), beginning of a new strategy implementation (4) and achieving strategic indicators of a new strategy (5).

Source: Suggested by authors.

As wave-like nature of economic processes has an objective character, it is the basis for the formation of sustainable development and the condition for implementation of the strategy of sustainable development of farm enterprises and the stage of stable development is one of the components of the process of planning and implementation of this strategy.

The wave-like nature of the development of innovative processes is caused by the fluctuations of the level of the efficiency in the aggregate of farm enterprises. However, with the decrease of the general level of efficiency, the majority of these farms can be competitive. Therefore, the strategy of sustainable development of farm enterprises should anticipate regular measures to increase their produce competitiveness. In this connection the authors suggest considering the concept of ”sustainable development of farm enterprises” as a wave-like process in which simple and accelerated reproduction of manufacturing of their commercial output, resources, capital and economic relations takes place, competitiveness of their commodity output, active operational, investment and other kinds of activity are secured as well as the requirements of their efficiency are met.

The character of the development of farm enterprises influences the level of sustainability

of general processes of social development in the country or its particular region. Therefore, to achieve social processes, it is essential to secure sustainability of the development of farms and other agricultural enterprises which requires state support. In order to determine strategic priorities and mechanisms of development of the agrarian sector of economy, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine has developed a general Strategy of Development of Agrarian Sector of Economy of Ukraine for the period up to 2020 which anticipates: achievement of food security of the state, ensuring predictability of development and long-term sustainability of the agrarian sector on the basis of its multi-stage character, facilitation of the development of rural settlements and formation of the middle class in villages on the basis of employment of rural population and increase of their income, improvement of investment potential of the agrarian sector branches and financial security of farm enterprises, broader participation of Ukraine in the procurement of the world market with farm produce and food products; rational use of farm lands and lower technology related burden of the agrarian sector on the environment [9].

However, at the present stage due to certain objective reasons, additional negative factors have appeared which make the fulfillment of the set tasks impossible. At present it is necessary to make changes in this Strategy taking into account changes in the real opportunities of the state as to the support of the agrarian development. For farm enterprises this change of the conditions of their development means reasonability of reorientation to the strategy of survival and readiness to disastrous risks and termination of business.

Due to the fact that a farmer is an owner, manager and worker in one person, he takes the responsibility for the formation and implementation of the farm's strategy. The main purpose of the strategy implementation is the development of the farm enterprise as a highly efficient and competitive one on internal and external markets which facilitates food security of the state, manufacturing high quality agricultural produce in the amounts which are sufficient in meeting the needs of population and processing branches, and strong economic basis for social-economic development of a Ukrainian village.

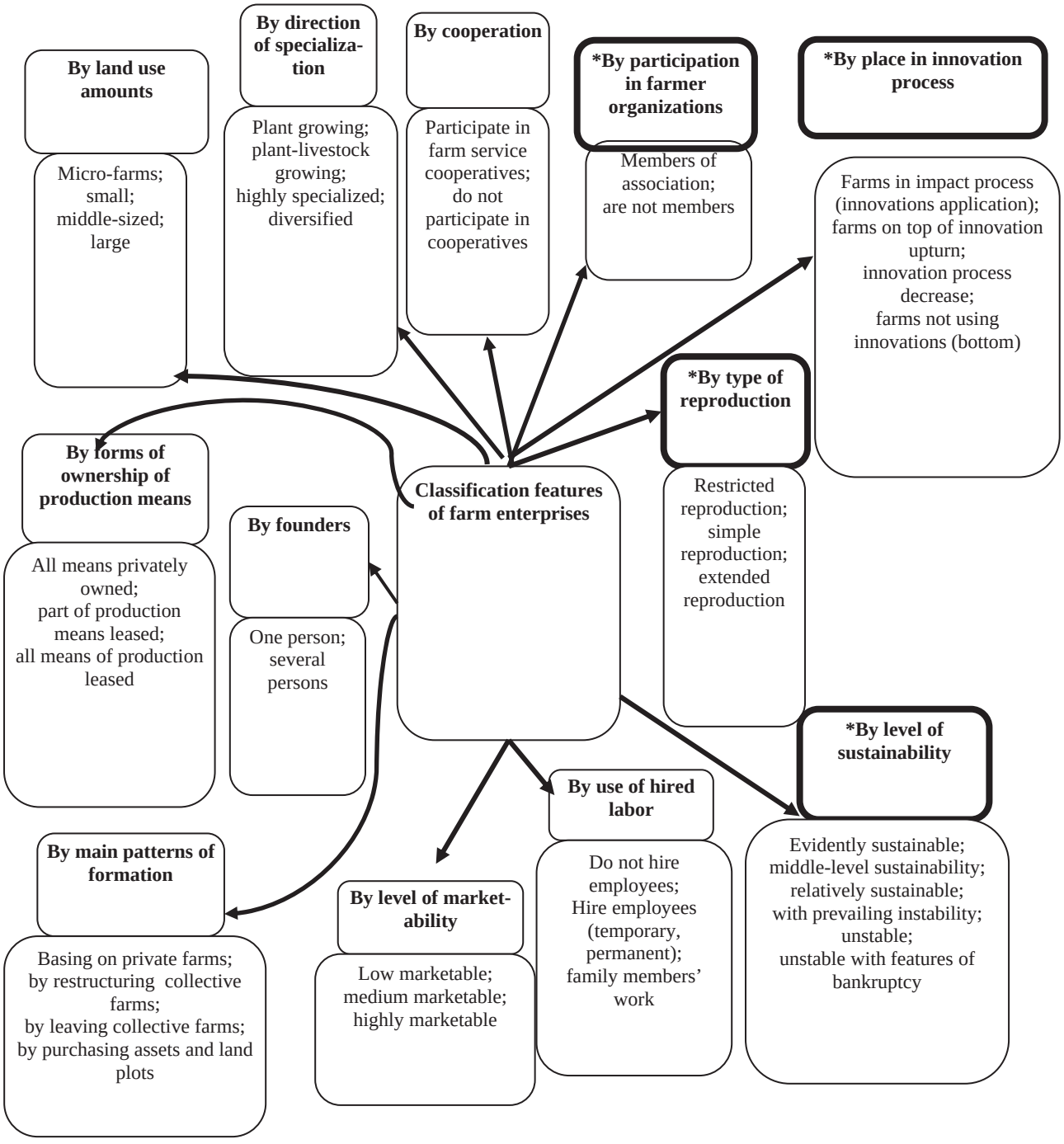
In their substantiation of the strategy choice, the heads of farm enterprises should apply a system approach. First, the strategy of the farm enterprise should be developed, then its corresponding programs and plans. While choosing the strategy, the heads of farm enterprises should take into account a great number of factors working both on the farm and in the external environment.

As decision making regarding the choice of strategy of sustainable development of farm enterprises requires appropriate efficiency evaluation, it should be carried out by the method of project analysis. Being a kind of a business project the strategy of development needs relevant management.

Formation of the strategy of sustainable development for farm enterprises is facilitated by its development on the basis of their scientifically grounded classification which reflects the most important features of this development. The classification of existing features of farm enterprises, which is used in researches and practice nowadays, is imperfect [2]. That is why in the process of the research it was suggested to add the following features to this classification of farm enterprises: according to their place in the innovation process, type of sustainability, type of capital reproduction and participation in integrated institutional organizations, and also exclude from it organizational-economic, social-legal features, which will make it possible to improve the monitoring system of the process of development and implementation of the strategy of development of these farms (Figure 2).

Taking into account the uncertainty of the future it is advisable to estimate financial coefficient of the farm's strategy according to aggregated indexes of monetary flows, present value and terms of return on investments. The process of substantiation of goals and tasks of the strategy of development of farms should be regarded as a stage of pre-project analysis of one or several real investment projects of the farm. On this stage costs and revenues of the farm for the strategic perspective are defined by aggregated indexes.

In the evaluation of the state of sustainability of farm enterprises in the process of their development it is desirable to apply a suggested division into six groups – evidently sustainable, with middle-level sustainability, relatively sustainable, with prevailing instability, unstable and unstable with the features of bankruptcy, within the mentioned groups to differentiate sub-groups of farms, that ensure social effects and ecological costs as well as develop for them special strategies of development and the process of reproduction.



*suggested new features

Figure 2.Classification features of farm enterprises for the purposes of formation of strategies of their development

Source: Improved by authors published suggestion [2].

The types of these strategies and their substantiation depending on the level of sustainability in the researched farm enterprises of Monastyryshche district of Cherkasy region are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Types of special strategies of development chosen by the researched farm enterprises of Monastyryshche district of Cherkasy region depending on the level of their sustainability

Type of level of sustainability of farm enterprise	Characteristics of farms by level of sustainability	Advisable type of strategy	Share of researched farm enterprises by their strategies of development	
			Number of farms, units	%
1	2	3	4	5
Evidently sustainable	Active processes of manufacturing output, inputs of resources and capital and improvement of economic relations, which in long-term period ensure competitiveness of produce, active operational, investment and other activities and return on investments, as well as ecological and social components	Strategy of growth	11	33,3
Middle level sustainability	All mentioned benefits of clearly sustainable farm enterprises are insufficiently supplied	Strategy of activation of activity	14	42,4
Relatively sustainable	Do not have losses but the dynamics of their profits do not change sufficiently	Strategy of gaining of the state of stable sustainability	6	18,2
With prevailing instability	Is characterized by lower efficiency of economic activity, which appears in comparatively lower return on capital, longer operational cycle of farms and advance of liabilities, problems in ecological and social components	Strategy of increasing the level of sustainability	2	6,1
Unstable	Financial instability, problems with cash, insufficient level of competitiveness	Strategy of increasing the level of investment potential and financial recovery of enterprise	Not fixed	0,0
Unstable with features of bankruptcy	Farm can not pay back its debts, expenses growth rates exceed the rates of increasing money received, state of large financial instability, threat of bankruptcy	Strategy of preventing bankruptcy and restoring solvency of farm	Not fixed	0,0
Total			33	100,0%

*Source: Questionnaire survey of farm enterprises of Monastyryshche district of Cherkasy region.

Basing on the study of the peculiarities of strategies implemented by farmers, it was established that it is advisable to consider as desirable such development of farm enterprise in the process of which the level of net income per unit of rate of expenses is supposed to exceed the correspondent index of the array of farm enterprises and therefore, in this case, relatively higher competitiveness of output is achieved.

The data of table 1 show that at the researched farms four types of strategies are most wide-spread – growth, activation of activity, achieving the state of continual sustainability and increase of the level of sustainability.

The level of sustainability additionally characterizes the indexes of land efficiency, labor productivity, capital efficiency and product costs, and its increase demonstrates positive changes of these indexes in dynamics. According to the suggested in the process of the research division of farm enterprises by the level of their sustainability, the main indexes of their development should be evaluated within the rates from one to six according to the below rank:

1) indexes of efficiency according to its place in the rank – highest, middle, low, slight loss ratio, middle loss ratio (do not exceed the level of depreciation) and high level of loss ratio;

2) average annual rate of capital gain is high (>10,0%), medium (4,0–9,0%), low (1,0–3,0%), insignificant decrease (від –1,0 до –2,0%), medium level of decrease (from –3,0 to –7,0%) and significant decrease of capital (>–8,0%).

3) change of value of indexes of produce output in the strategic period as percentage of the previous period – significant rates of growth (>6,0%), medium rates of growth (2,0–0,0%), insignificant decrease (to –2,0%), medium rates of decrease (from –3,0 to –5,0%) and significant decrease (more than – 6,0%).

At insufficiently sustainable by their character farm enterprises negative factors, connected with unethical competition and lack of farm cooperation, prevail. Therefore, while working out the strategy of development farmers should pay more attention to risk diversification, especially production, economy, territory and criminogenic ones. Measures for creating by farm enterprises agricultural service cooperatives primarily for procurement, storage, transportation, processing and selling farm produce will facilitate decreasing the risks.

Strategies of development of family farms are realized through the work of farmers and their family members as all the process of the creation of a farm, use of resources and supply of capital depends on them.

Analytical researches established that the process of establishing and development of farm enterprises of Ukraine was influenced by both internal and external factors, the combined effect of which stipulated trends of their development. The number of farms is unequal in the regions, which demonstrates different approaches to their creation on a local level. At the beginning of 2014 in Odesa region 5327 farm enterprises were registered while in Rivne region only 506 farms were placed on record. A considerable differentiation in number of farm enterprises is also observed in districts.

The researched family farms of Cherkasy region are characterized by the following features: farmland area and the average number of employees – 117 ha. and three workers respectively; average annual value of the main and circulating assets per 1 ha. farmland – 17,7th.UAH; correlation between main and circulating assets – 1:0,71; average tractor resources for one farm– 1,1 psc, harvester-threshers – 0,2 pcs.; average annual revenue – 410.000 UAH, spendings – 245 and net income – 165,000 UAH per farm. Before 2013 the majority of farms had satisfactory conditions for implementing effective strategies of development.

At present the main form of state support for Ukrainian farm enterprises (more than 30%) is value added tax return. The share of other mechanisms of state support is constantly reducing. The state support using governmental grants has reduced especially. The amount of this support in 2014 as compared to 2008 has decreased by more than 7 times. The state support of farm enterprises in Cherskasy region using governmental grants is lower than at the national level and reduces annually.

A negative external factor of operation of the absolute majority of farms of Ukraine is that the prices for their produce are lower than for similar products of commercial farm units. However, a part of farms with grain storage places have the potential for increasing selling prices due to selling their produce in the period of seasonal price increase. Therefore, these farms are better provided with financial resources for both spending them on production and product distribution and for farmers' and their families' needs.

An important external reason for termination of a part of farm businesses was their inability to compete with large commercial farm organizations. That is why it is actual for farms to promote the strategy of changing market behavior, production of alternative products and carrying out measures for cooperation and integration.

An ideal variant of development of many-stage agrarian economy is the formation of directions of farms' activity. Consequently, they should compete with each other without confronting with big and medium-sized commercial farm units.

In this connection, while developing the strategy of development the farm enterprise should anticipate production specialization. Nowadays farmers most effectively produce plant products, namely, wheat, barley, grain maize, millet, buckwheat, sugar beets, sunflower, soybeans, rape, potatoes, and vegetables. In recent years farm enterprises have increased cattle stock by 80% and number of pigs by 60%. However, the most sustainable farms are the ones that occupy other product niches and do not compete with large farm organizations.

The level of the efficiency of farms depends on factors and implemented development strategies (table 2).

Table 2.Indexes of efficiency of performance of farm enterprises of Ukraine in 2010 – 2014

Index	Year				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Income from selling farm produce and services per 1 ha, UAH	2514	3206	4086	3929	5184
Income, loss (–) from selling farm produce and services per 1 ha, UAH	612	789	892	639	1183
Level of profitability of manufacturing farm produce, %	32,4	33,4	27,8	19,2	29,6

Source: Estimated on the basis of data of State Statistical Service of Ukraine for corresponding years.

Performance of farm enterprises is efficient in general, though the level of performance indexes is lower in comparison with other farm enterprises, especially the big ones.

The majority of farm enterprises of Cherkasy region carry out environmental measures, particularly, for land erosion control, leaching of acid soils and gypsum treatment of salt-effected soils, introduction of soil-protecting crop rotations, meeting the requirements for pesticide and fertilizer storage, preventing and eliminating harmful effects on the environment, installation of tanks for waste fuel and lubrication materials, asphalt paving of grounds for farm machines, training of employees in environment protection issues.

In order to ensure sustainable development for farm enterprises it is necessary to work out measures for rational use of resources, namely: personal – family supplies, revenues from operational and investment activity, immobilized for investments floating added and reserve capital, lending resources, of them bank loans, purpose credits of the Ukrainian State Fund of Support of Farm Enterprises and Investment Loans, as well as other investment resources.

Due to the fact that nowadays the opportunities for utilization of additional land areas by farm enterprises are practically exhausted, the strategies of their sustainable development should include measures to change the direction and increase the level of specialization in output production. One of such perspective directions is horticultural, vegetable and soft fruit production.

While choosing the strategy of development, the researched farm enterprises of Cherkasy region and other farms should prefer those strategies which foresee the extended reproduction of capital, and find the ways of realizing the options which ensure first high (12%), then medium (9%) and moderate (6%), and finally low rates (1–3%) of reproduction of capital. For the farms ensuring extended reproduction of capital it is reasonable to apply the strategy of growth, for the farms with medium rates – the strategy of activation of performance, and with moderate rates – the strategy of achieving the state of constant sustainability. With the reproduction of capital only on a simple scale it is advisable to form the strategy of increasing the level of sustainability.

In the process of formation of all strategies of sustainable development of farm enterprises it is reasonable for them to include, first and foremost, the introduction of balanced and organic farming, cooperation with scientific-research institutions, investing in education, use of new varieties of plants, breeds and species of livestock and poultry and other innovative developments. The application of No-till, Em-technologies, Nanotechnologies and other latest technologies, optimization of the structure of cultivated areas, introduction of efficient methods of crop growing and other new findings should become an important direction of development of farm enterprises in the strategic perspective. Due to these innovations farms can increase profit amounts and improve the level of profitability of their production.

Conclusions.

1. Development of the agrarian sector of economy is an important national goal, the achievement of which influences development of the society and the state's integrity. This development will be efficient, if in the long-term period a sustainable character of processes of reproduction and formation of competitive produce is secured.

2. The concept "Sustainable development of farm enterprises" should be regarded as the process of reproduction of their production, resources, capital and economic relations, which in the long-term period secures produce competitiveness, active operational, investment and other kinds of activity as well as achieving the conditions of efficiency.

3. The dynamics of the development of farm enterprises is influenced by the wave-like nature of the innovative process in which under the influence of innovations an impact and development acceleration starts at the beginning of each wave and therefore the process of sustainable development includes both simple and extended reproduction of resources, production and economic relations and admits some irregularities in reproduction processes on certain stages. Herewith, it is important to ensure produce competitiveness.

4. In estimating the state of sustainable development of farm enterprises it is necessary to apply the suggested division of them into six groups - evidently sustainable, with middle-level sustainability, relatively sustainable, with prevailing instability, unstable and unstable with the features of bankruptcy, and also to develop relevant strategies of their sustainable development according to peculiarities of the specified groups.

5. In order to form competitive output production at the farms it is advisable to work out measures for ensuring an innovative impact, particularly, with the help of formation of new technological patterns based on No-till, Em-technologies, Nanotechnologies, biotechnologies, genetic engineering, molecular biology and introduction of other high technological innovations which will make it possible to increase the level of sustainability of development, efficiency and competitiveness.

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