

The Potential Volume of Government Support for a Region's Agricultural Sector in a Climate of Import Substitution

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to help enhance existing methods for determining the size of budgetary funding to be outlaid for the support of a region's agriculture. To this end, the authors introduce a methodology that factors in the pursuit of import substitution policy and relies on the level achieved in the previous year to determine a specific amount within overall expenditure from the budget. The study involved investigating a set of factors and conditions that may influence the size of government support for the agricultural sector in a region (herein Siberian Federal District) and surrounding areas, and conducting an analysis of existing techniques for measuring the volume of government support for agriculture. Based on the above research, the authors designed a special methodology for measuring the volume of government support for a region's agriculture, which determined the size of support for agriculture per 1 ruble of gross output and also implied outlaying additional funding for specific programs on import substitution. The study revealed that, in planning expenditure from the regional budget for 2017, the government should have brought the size of funding on the 'Agriculture and Fisheries' section up to at least 609 million rubles (210 million rubles more than in 2016). The findings from this study could be utilized by government authorities in measuring the volume of support provided for the agricultural sector, including in terms of projects on implementing a strategy of import substitution.

Keywords: Government support; Agriculture; Import substitution; Budget; Region; Effectiveness.



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1. Introduction

The purpose of government support for the agro-industrial complex is to boost the competitiveness of Russian agricultural produce in the internal and external markets. Organizing a favorable climate for agri-producers ought to be regarded not as a temporary measure associated with the imposition of sanctions but a clear-cut strategy to be pursued as part of the state's policy aimed at equalization of conditions of doing business for rural producers in various regions, i.e. ensuring fair competition among producers in the market (Mukhina, 2007); (Semina *et al.*, 2012). In today's conditions, due to its insignificant size, budgetary funding can be used mainly as a mechanism for launching and adjusting market processes that can augment government influence in the direction of boosts in sustainable development in the agro-industrial complex. Budgetary support for agriculture could be planned by reference to the level achieved in the previous year via the establishment of a specific amount within overall expenditure from the budget.

The government program for Omsk Oblast 'The Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Produce, Raw Materials, and Food in Omsk Oblast' lists the following as the more pressing issues in the operation of the region's agro-industrial complex that need to be resolved in the near future:

- low levels of funding for rural areas;
- poorly developed social and engineering infrastructure in the agricultural market and rural areas;
- insufficient support for the implementation of a strategy of import substitution and the development of exports.

Some of the key focus areas for the transformation of regional policy on government regulation include: stepping up funding for the agro-industrial complex; enhancing the procedure for provision of government support factoring in the pursuit of import substitution policy; providing support for the development of regional agricultural exports.

On the whole, the structure and areas of government support for agriculture in Omsk Oblast match the overall situation in the country.

At present, the targeted program ‘The Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Produce, Raw Materials, and Food in Omsk Oblast’ for 2013–2020, signed into law via Decree of the Government of Omsk Oblast No. 252-p of October 15, 2013, is the main regulatory document governing the provision of support to agri-producers in Omsk Oblast (Oktyabrya, 2013).

The program envisages work on the following key focus areas:

- 1) facilitation of sustainable development in rural areas;
- 2) creation of general appropriate conditions for the operation of the agricultural sector;
- 3) development of promising subsectors;
- 4) achievement of financial and economic sustainability.

The above program is aimed at boosting the competitiveness of domestic agricultural produce in the internal and external markets (factoring in Russia’s entry into the WTO), as well as fostering the import substitution of agricultural produce, raw materials, and food (Kozlova, 2016).

To create the conditions for the appropriate provision of support and statutory regulation thereof, the government of Omsk Oblast has been working on a set of decrees focused on particular tenets of the targeted program, including executive orders regulating activity by government authorities on specific issues of support provision.

The program features a set of types of support aimed at speeding up the import substitution of the agricultural staples, including meat, milk, vegetables, and various food products, ensuring the sale of agricultural produce, and boosting its marketability via the creation of appropriate storage and conditioning conditions.

The targeted program is comprised of the following subprograms:

- Development of a crop farming subsector to enable a better focus on the processing and sale of output from crop farming;
- Development of a livestock farming subsector to enable a better focus on the processing and sale of output from livestock farming;
- Provision of support for agricultural activity by small businesses and creation of appropriate conditions for their development;
- Facilitation of sustainable development in rural areas;
- Facilitation of the implementation of the state program with a focus on government control and monitoring over certain sectors within the agro-industrial complex;
- Promotion of sustainable waste management practices;
- Development of effective farmland improvement practices;
- Development of outdoor and indoor vegetable farming and seed potato farming;
- Development of dairy stock farming;
- Provision of support for activities related to pedigree work, selection, and seed farming;
- Development of wholesale/distribution centers and the infrastructure of the social catering system.

As part of the program, the government is currently implementing in Omsk and Omsk Oblast a project entitled ‘A Beginner Farmer’, which encompasses absolutely all major spheres of agriculture – meat and dairy cattle farming, poultry farming, rabbit farming, bee farming, and crop farming. The project provides young farmers with a real chance to build their farm in a fast manner via a grant they will be entitled to, plus a one-time cash assistance payment for social development. A key outcome of the above project is an increase in the number of developed peasant (farmer) plots and, as a consequence, in the quantity of output produced by the farmers. The size of the grant for building a farm is up to 2 million rubles, while that of the one-time cash assistance payment for social development is 250,000 rubles. The size of the grant for each project participant is determined by a competition committee run by the Ministry of Agriculture.

It is worth noting that virtually each subprogram within the government program for Omsk Oblast ‘The Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Produce, Raw Materials, and Food in Omsk Oblast’ for the period 2013–2020 is influencing, in one way or another, the process of implementation of import substitution policy in the region. Worthy of special mention are activities aimed at the technical and technological modernization of production and facilitation of innovation-driven development.

The program envisages the use of a set of indicators of the efficiency of use of subsidies, but, in the authors’ view, it takes insufficient account of the role of projects aimed at import substitution. Perhaps, it will help to select these projects based on how advisable it is to implement them and how much value there is in them in terms of helping achieve positive social and economic effects, as well as boost the financial condition of an organization that will be implementing a certain project.

Table 1 illustrates spending from budgets of all levels on support for agri-producers in Omsk Oblast across a set of key areas in the period 2014–2016 (Russian Federal State Statistics Service. Rosstat).

Table-1. Dynamics of Spending from Budgets of All Levels across the Major Areas of Support for Agriculture in Omsk Oblast in the Period 2014–2016 (thousand rubles)

Major areas of government support	2014	2015	2016	2016 to 2014, %	Relative share across major areas of government support, %		
					2014	2015	2016
					Reimbursement of a portion of agri-producers' expenditure on insurance	143,001	96,790
Reimbursement of a portion of the interest accrued on loans	1,240,337	1,899,967	1,277,572	+2.9	36.9	49.4	43.2
Government support for livestock farming	313,718	332,304	396,604	+20.9	9.3	8.6	13.4
Government support for crop farming	12,579	95,200	45,142	+72.1	0.4	2.4	1.5
Provision of decoupled support to agri-producers in the area of crop farming	1,109,627	1,007,604	897,342	-23.7	33.0	26.2	30.4
Federal Targeted Program 'Measures to Drive Sustainable Development in Rural Areas for the Period 2014–2017 and through to 2020'	354,672	258,093	88,706	-299.8	10.6	6.7	3.0
Government support for small businesses	48,373	121,640	147,551	+67.2	1.4	3.2	5.0
Government support for economically significant regional programs	122,177	24,829	40,420	-202.3	3.6	0.6	1.4
Reimbursement of a portion of direct expenditure on the creation and modernization of facilities within the agro-industrial complex	–	–	34,749	+100	–	–	1.2
Federal Targeted Program 'Measures for Farmland Improvement in Russia for the Period 2014–2020'	16,297	12,533	12,915	-26.2	0.5	0.3	0.4
TOTAL	3,360,781	3,848,960	2,955,114	-13.7	100	100	100

An analysis of the above information indicates that in 2016 the size of spending on support for livestock farming (13.4%) was 8 times the expenditure on support for crop farming (1.5%). The reasons behind this prioritization of the livestock farming sector, in the authors' view, include cutting-edge technology being introduced in the agro-industrial complex, products with high added value being turned out, employment being available all year round, which is highly significant for rural areas, real prospects for sustainable growth being offered, new jobs being created, and, ultimately, there being greater potential for improvements in standard of living in the community.

It is worth noting that in the period 2014–2016 the greatest volume of support was directed toward reimbursing a portion of the interest accrued on loans (in 2016 – 43.2% of the total across all areas). In the 3-year period under consideration funding for this area increased nearly 3%. There was a sharp drop in funding outlaid for the implementation of the federal targeted program 'Measures to Drive Sustainable Development in Rural Areas for the Period 2014–2017 and through to 2020' and for the state support of economically significant programs. There is a belief that the funding outlaid for these focus areas was redistributed toward the support of small businesses.

Without question, stepped-up lending support facilitated greater success among enterprises in attracting credit resources to fund their current activity and develop their production. Yet, for the most part, access to loans is open to just a narrow circle of entities – high-margin producers, while low-margin or red-ink organizations seem to have little to no chance of getting that kind of assistance (Shelkovnikov *et al.*, 2010)

In this regard, it may help to differentiate government support for agri-producers depending on their economic status, as well as step up the volume of decoupled support relative to 1 ha of farmland and to 1 kg of milk sold or delivered for processing and introduce a subsidy relative to 1 nominal cattle head, etc.

Pursuant to Decree of the Government of Omsk Oblast No. 252-p 'On Signing into Law a Government Program for Omsk Oblast entitled 'The Development of Agriculture and Regulation of Markets for Agricultural Produce, Raw Materials, and Food in Omsk Oblast' of October 15, 2013, agri-producers are entitled to subsidies that support agricultural production provided that they:

1) submit to the Ministry reports on their financial/economic condition in relevant accounting periods based on forms established by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, while persons with a simplified taxation system do so based on state federal statistical monitoring forms (except for horticultural, market-gardening, or dacha noncommercial associations of citizens, as well as citizens with a personal subsidiary plot) within a timeframe established by the Ministry, and other documents the roster of, forms for, and timeframes for submitting whereof are established by the Ministry;

2) have no documented violations at the time of obtaining a subsidy and during the period of using it;

3) direct a subsidy within 5 business days, above all, toward:

- paying all unpaid wages;
- paying all taxes, levies, and other charges payable into the budget of the Russian Federation.

In the event false information has been provided, as well as any of the terms under which subsidies are provided have been violated, the government will have to discontinue the provision of subsidies. The subsidies are subject to repayment within 30 days of receipt of a written notice from the Ministry, which will ask one to return the subsidy to the bank account specified. Failure to return a subsidy within the due timeframe will cause the Ministry to take the matter to court in accordance with existing legislation.

Subsidies are provided to agri-producers included in a roster established by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation.

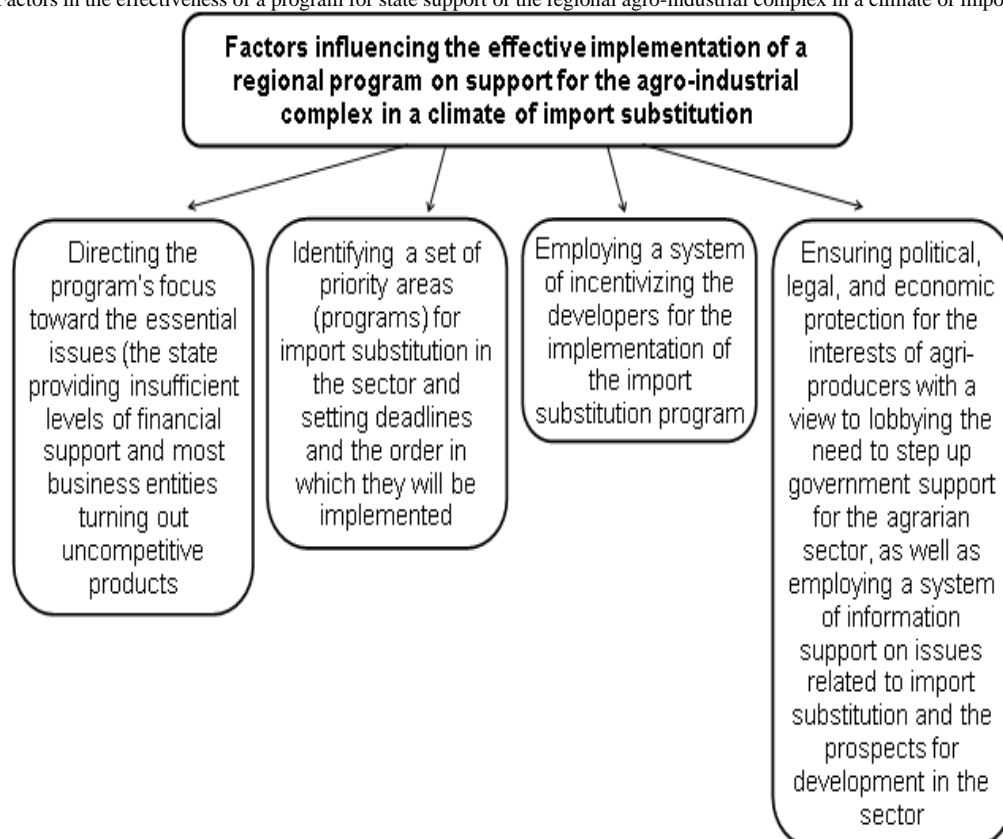
Success in achieving sustainable development within the agrarian sector of Omsk Oblast largely depends on the direction and efficacy of government support for the region’s agro-industrial complex, as well as on its timeliness. The overall recession in agriculture and the current state of the nation’s food security require new scientifically substantiated mechanisms for the state support of agriculture that are different from those employed in developed countries and are aligned with the pursuit of import substitution policy.

In a climate of import substitution, one may witness an increase in demand for the sector’s products, for which there are strict quality requirements, the analogues of which fall under the embargo. However, to implement these strategies, the nation needs timely support on the part of the state, and its forms and methods must stimulate agricultural production via the differentiation of measures by reference to conditions of production among agri-producers, their financial condition, geographic location, etc. (Shumakova, 2016).

A major problem with budgetary policy in the area of support for agriculture today is the lack of appropriate mechanisms for determining the volume of and priority areas for funding, especially those related to import substitution.

Each region develops a distinct system of organization of government support, determination of its size, establishment of relevant components related to it, and assessment of its effectiveness. The methodology underlying the planning of budgetary expenditure on the agro-industrial complex ought to be oriented, in present-day conditions, toward implementing a strategy of import substitution and ensuring the nation’s food security.

Figure-1. Factors in the effectiveness of a program for state support of the regional agro-industrial complex in a climate of import substitution



In these conditions, government support provided to the agro-industrial complex out of the regional budget is becoming one of the crucial factors in the competitiveness of enterprises engaged in interregional competitive rivalry.

Success with the effectuation of regional programs of any level is largely determined by the efficiency of the implementation mechanism, which must incorporate a set of mandatory conditions (Figure 1).

It appears to be advisable to step up government support in the short run. It will help to keep in place at the regional level existing concessions on energy-related expenses, develop further the system of concessionary lending to agri-producers, expand the potential for acquiring machinery through a leasing arrangement, and restructure household liabilities to the budget and vendors, the debt that has been throwing agriculture's financial system out of gear.

There is a need to single out the more promising areas for development in the sector. In the long run, it will help to develop draft programs for development and bring produce out to the external market. Special attention must be devoted to enhancing the procedure for getting budgetary funds to agri-producers.

Government support is a composite of various controls, instruments, and activities – economic, legal, and organizational. Efficient assistance from the government, which requires much greater funding out of budgets of all levels, ought to be oriented toward restoring the health of enterprises that are in a state of recession. This should help increase agricultural output, create new jobs, revive the countryside, and improve people's socio-economic standard of living.

The key objectives for government regulation of the agricultural economy include the following: (1) there is a need to step up financial support for the countryside as a whole; (2) this support must be provided on a not-fully-gratuitous basis, meaning that it must be linked with the end results. Investors and the government must be confident that the funds they are investing are put to efficient use.

Of major significance are issues of optimization of spending on the support of agriculture in a climate of implementation of a strategy of import substitution. There is a need to transform the system of government support based on the development of a program for regional agricultural development under the new conditions. Employing proper financial and organizational instruments may help foster a favorable climate for the development of agriculture and boost the competitiveness of Russian agricultural produce in the internal and external markets, which, in turn, should ensure boosts in the flexibility and manoeuvrability of import substitution strategies.

2. Methods

2.1. Existing Techniques for Establishing the Volume of Government Support for a Region's Agriculture

The concept on economic policy in Omsk Oblast envisages ramping up the volumes of food production with a view to providing the population with wholesome food products and the volumes of agricultural produce exported to outside of the region – to the common Russian market. The program for socio-economic development in the oblast envisages boosts in GRP, so there is a need to stimulate agricultural production. A possible solution is stepped-up funding for agriculture from the budget of Omsk Oblast.

Currently, Omsk Oblast is lagging behind surrounding regions tangibly in expenditure on agriculture. However, the region has led the way in terms of the indicator of agricultural output per 1 ruble of budgetary funding (in 2016 – 180.5 rubles in Omsk Oblast; 82.8 rubles in Novosibirsk Oblast; 165.7 rubles in Altai Krai). Consequently, organizations within the agro-industrial complex in other regions are currently having a competitive edge over Omsk agro-industrial enterprises. This situation is, above all, having a negative effect on the processing industry. There is a real danger that Omsk processing enterprises may gradually be pushed by competition out of the raw-materials markets and markets for finished products. Thus, there is a need to employ a methodology for substantiating the volume of funding outlaid by the region for the support of the agro-industrial complex, which could help facilitate the equalization of conditions of doing business for rural producers in a climate of implementation of a strategy of import substitution.

The authors examined several existing techniques for measuring the size of government support for the agro-industrial complex. For instance, a methodology developed at the All-Russian Research Institute for Economics, Labor, and Management in Agriculture is founded on the development of standards for subsidizing an agricultural enterprise differentiated by reference to natural and economic conditions. To substantiate subsidies for expanded production, the methodology calculates a set of indicators per 1 ruble of increase in output. The standard size of government support for agricultural enterprises is calculated based on a set of groupings associated with the natural fertility of soils and production costs per 100 ha of farmland (Bespakhotnyi, 2006).

In the view of specialists at the All-Russian Research Institute for Economics and Standards, the general need for government support must be measured as total government subsidies for the reimbursement of a portion of the interest accrued on loans granted to agricultural organizations for production using common crop and livestock farming technology (Tarasov, 2008).

Researchers at Novosibirsk State Agrarian University link the need for subsidies with the amount of funding an organization needs to be able to achieve a profitability level of 40% and a 130% rate of return on expenditure on primary production (Shelkovnikov *et al.*, 2010).

A methodology for planning support-related spending developed by the representatives of a school of thought at the Penza State Agricultural Academy I.A. Bondin and N.N. Bondina links budgetary funding with the rate of return on expenditure on primary production (Bondin and Bondina, 2014).

To the authors, worthy of special attention is a set of methodological approaches proposed by scholar O.N. Mikhailiuk, who correlates budgetary funding with the GDP, the agro-industrial complex's contribution to the GRP, the share of subsidies in direct costs associated with agricultural production, etc. (Mikhailiuk, 2009).

Another methodology that is worthy of mention is a model developed by a group of specialists at Nikonov All-Russian Institute for Agrarian Issues and Informatics, which reflects an interrelationship between the size of government support and the volume of agricultural output, while factoring in all government programs in operation at the moment. The authors, however, find this methodology too complex to employ in practice (it contains over 500 formulas).

Consequently, an analysis of existing techniques for measuring the size of funding to be outlaid for support indicates that all of the existing methodologies are oriented toward programs for the development of agriculture without factoring in the pursuit of a strategy of import substitution.

2.2. The Authors' Proposed Methodology for Determining the Size of Budgetary Funding to be Outlaid for the Support of A Region's Agriculture

Considering that agriculture is a sector that can generate a significant multiplication effect across other sectors of the economy, the authors propose planning total expenditure to be outlaid in a region for the support of agriculture by reference to the priorities set in conjunction with the pursuit of import substitution policy and through reliance on the figures posted in the previous year via the establishment of a specific amount within total budgetary expenditure using the following methodology (Zaitseva, 2011):

1. Determine the size of support for agriculture per 1 ruble of gross output in current prices out of the budget of Omsk Oblast, as well the budgets of neighboring regions within Siberian Federal District.

2. Compare the figures. In the event the regional indicator of support for agriculture per 1 ruble of gross output is below the average figure for Siberian Federal District, set the objective of achieving the right figure.

The authors propose measuring the total size of support via the following formula:

$$F = S \cdot G \cdot (1 + i), \quad (1)$$

where F is the amount of funding outlaid from the regional budget for the support of agriculture in the next year;
S is the size of support for agriculture per 1 ruble of gross output on average across Siberian Federal District in current prices in the last year;

G is the value of gross agricultural output in a region in the last year;

i is the size of inflation in the last year.

3. Results

Table 2 lists some data required to measure total budgetary outlays on support for a region's agriculture.

Table-2. Data for Measuring the Volume of Support for a Region's Agricultural Sector

Indicators for 2016	Omsk Oblast	Novosibirsk Oblast	Altai Krai
1. Value of gross agricultural output in the region in 2017, million rubles	96,365.0	85,297.0	141,356.0
2. Total support for agriculture, million rubles	399	761	541
3. Total support for agriculture per 1 ruble of gross output	0.004	0.009	0.005

By using Formula 1, we can arrive at the conclusion that, in planning regional budget expenditure for 2017, the government should have brought the total volume of support on the 'Agriculture and Fisheries' section up to at least 609 million rubles (210 million more than in 2016): $96,365 \cdot (0.004 + 0.009 + 0.005) / 3 \cdot (1 + 0.0538) = 609$.

4. Discussion

If the volume of support out of the regional budget for the agro-industrial complex per unit of gross output has reached a similar average figure for Siberia already, it may be worth planning expenditure by reference to the objectives for the implementation of a strategy of import substitution listed in the plan for socio-economic development in the region. This proposal is in keeping with the idea of transformation of policy of support for the regional agro-industrial complex and pertains to the implementation of the second stage in the lifecycle of the import substitution process, which implies diversification regarding local production, investment, storage, transportation, and commerce. In implementing this stage's activities, it is important to properly organize the import of equipment, spare parts, raw materials, and supplies and, afterwards, reproduce them based on an R&D framework of one's own, with a focus on building and maintaining a workforce of competent specialists.

Thus, it may help to plan the provision of additional funds for specific import substitution programs, which could be expressed via the following formula:

$$F = S \cdot G \cdot (1 + i) + IS, \quad (2)$$

where IS is the amount of funding required for the implementation of new programs and projects on import substitution.

The above formulas (1 and 2) for computing the volume of support out of the regional budget are oriented toward a situation where support for the agro-industrial complex out of the federal budget in Russia will not be

reduced. A situation with reductions in federal support is not considered due to the fact that the size of support for the agro-industrial complex in the Russian Federation is currently much smaller than in countries with a developed economy and further declines in it are unacceptable ([Information guide on measures and directions of state support of the agro-industrial complex of the Russian Federation, 2017](#)).

In planning expenditure on support for the agro-industrial complex mid-term, one takes into account the objectives in the program for socio-economic development in regions dealing with boosts in the volume of agricultural output, as well as the potential for funding expenditure based on data in a forward financial plan.

5. Conclusion

At first glance, the authors' proposed methodology for measuring the size of regional support is quite a simple one; yet it may provide a number of important benefits when used in practice:

- ✓ firstly, in implementing it, one will need just a minimum of information and will not have to perform any complex calculations;
- ✓ secondly, the authors' proposed technique for determining the size of budgetary funding may facilitate equalization of conditions for doing business for agri-producers in different regions and thereby help foster fair competition in the market;
- ✓ thirdly, the use of the above methodology should have a positive effect in terms of the implementation of a strategy of import substitution in regions.

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