

THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
FOOD GARDENING IN THE VLADIMIR REGION OF RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

Russia's family gardens currently produce over half of the country's agricultural output and represent a major sector of the country's economy, involving two thirds of the population. Despite this prominence, household gardening has been viewed as a recent phenomenon, an adjunct to the country's industrial agriculture, or a temporary response to the hardships of Russia's economic transition. However, this study of the current status of family agriculture, Russia's agrarian history, and the results of a 2006 survey of 1,500 families in the Vladimir region, show that gardens not only perform a wide range of economic, social and cultural functions, but also represent a highly sustainable practice embedded in the region's — and the country's — environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural context.

The survey offers detailed information on the economic, agricultural, social, and cultural dimensions of gardening in the Vladimir region, including respondents' adherence to a wide range of agrarian values. Based on the results, family gardening can be seen as a highly sustainable, diversified and culturally important practice, which needs to be given due consideration by scholars and policy-makers.