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V.O. BOIKO, candidate of economic sciences,  
associate professor (docent)  
L.O. BOIKO, candidate of agricultural sciences,  
associate professor (docent)

## Features of farm functioning under conditions of a competitive environment

*The purpose of the article is to determine features of the activity of Kherson region's farms and identify the tendencies of their development.*

*Research methods.* Both general scientific and special economic methods have been used while conducting the research: abstract and logical, monographic, statistical, calculation and comparison.

*Research results.* The paper analyzes the features of the activity and development of Kherson region's farms. There has been substantiated the selection of farm specialization and the role of farms in agricultural production. The study characterizes the advantages of farms over other forms of agricultural enterprises. One of the efficient measures aimed at farmers' adaptation to market conditions is agricultural service cooperation, which will allow farmers and other commodity producers to take the best advantages of participating in market activities and focus their attention on the effective use of production potential.

*Elements of scientific novelty.* It highlights the social and economic role of farming in the development of a market economic system, in the creation of a healthy competitive environment at the consumer market.

*Practical significance.* The results of the research are the basis for solving practical problems of creating agricultural service cooperatives to increase the competitiveness level of farms. Tabl.: 2. Figs.: 1. Refs.: 17.

**Keywords:** farm, competitiveness, sown area, branch structure, state support, cooperative movement.

**Boiko Viktoriia Oleksandrivna** - candidate of economic sciences, associate professor (docent) of the department of economics and finance, State Higher Education Institution "Kherson State Agricultural University" (23, Stritenska st., Kherson)

E-mail: boiko.vo17@gmail.com

**Boiko Liudmyla Oleksandrivna** - candidate of agricultural sciences, associate professor (docent) of the department of economics and finance, State Higher Education Institution "Kherson State Agricultural University" (23, Stritenska st., Kherson)

E-mail: boiko.mila7@gmail.com

**Scientific problem.** Under conditions of Ukraine's active involvement in the world globalization processes, the aspects of the development strategy of the agrarian sector of economy draw special attention. Farming is the most widespread form of all different forms of agricultural entrepreneurship, since it is one of the leading forms of agricultural activity in developed countries of the world. First farms in Ukraine appeared in 1989, i.e. before establishing a legal basis - the Law of Ukraine «About farms» in December, 1991. At the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century neither of the forms of entrepreneurial activity in the agrarian sector of economy drew such great attention of scientists as farming did. According to the Law (the changes dated 31 March, 2016) a farm is a form of

entrepreneurial activity of persons who are willing to produce agricultural commodities, process and sell them in order to make a profit on the farmlands, given them to own and/or use, including a land lease, for farming, agricultural commodities production, private rural farms, according to the law [16].

The number of scientific studies devoted to the development and analysis of farm activities in the regions of Ukraine under conditions of competitiveness, is continuously rising, that proves an increase in the interest to this problem.

**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** Theoretical and practical aspects of the creation and development of small and medium enterprises in Ukraine and farms in particular have been investigated by the domestic scientists: V. Boiko [1], M. Gorikhovskiy [4], I.M. Hlibchuk [5],

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V.P. Horovyi [6], M.M. Kropyvko [9], P.M. Makarenko [10], O. Maslak [11], V.Ya. Mesel-Vesliak [13], A.S. Mokhnenko [14] and many others. The development of farms in Ukraine in relation to the world experience has been considered by T.V. Mazan, V.P. Tkachenko [12]. Considerable attention to the research on the problem of the efficiency of farming activity has been paid by the foreign authors: L. Brown [2], E. Kasl, M. Bekker, A. Nelson [8].

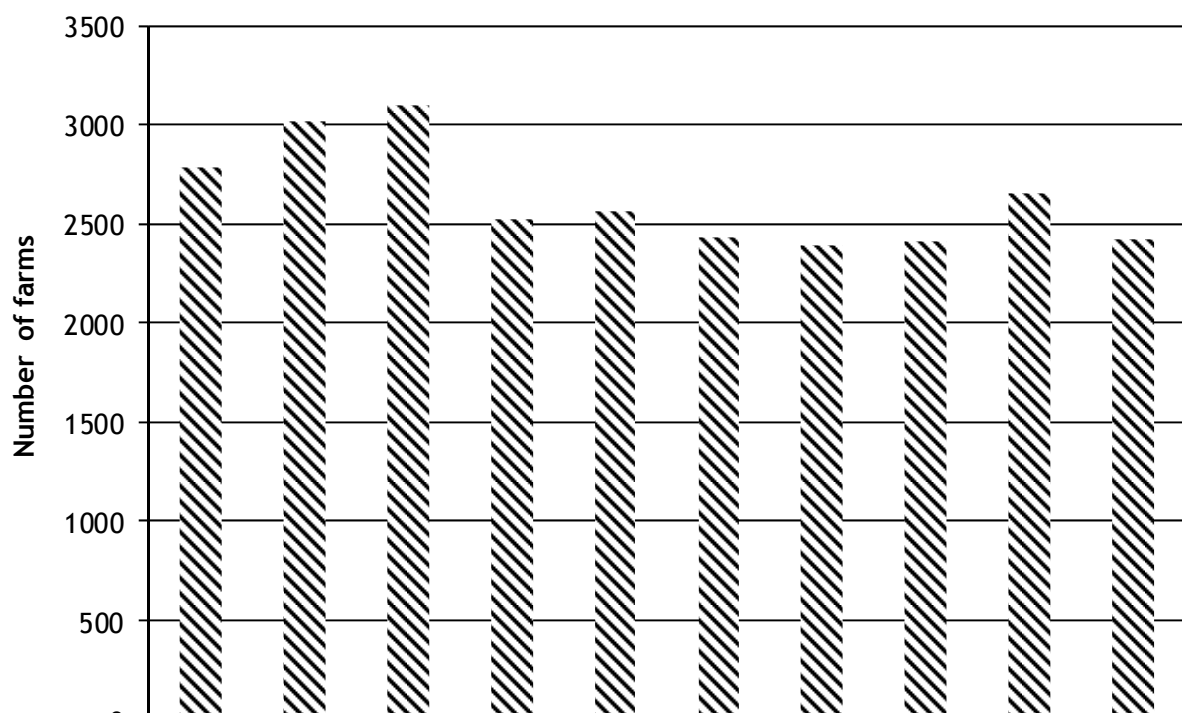
In spite of a significant contribution of the published scientific papers identifying the economic niche and the role of farming, the problems of their functioning in particular regions of Ukraine have not been covered yet.

**The objective of the article** is to determine the peculiarities of the activity of the farms in Kherson region and determine the tendencies of their development.

**Statement of the main results of the study.** The peculiarities of the development of the farms in the region depend on its historical and economic conditions. Kherson region is an industrial and agrarian area with

multi-branch industry and highly developed agriculture. The specialized branches of Kherson region's economy are industrial, agro-industrial and recreational complexes. The leading role is played by the agro-industrial branch, which is closely connected with natural and climatic conditions, technical facilities highly qualified labor.

A considerable experience of the development of the farms in Kherson region proves that farming was started in 1991 and the greatest number of them (3100 units) was noticed in 2002 (Figure). The dynamics of their number over the analyzed period of their functioning was uneven. Since 2010 a reverse process has been noticed, i.e. the number of the farms has been decreasing. As the practice shows, this process has an absolute regularity. A decrease in the reduction rates of the number of the farms proves the irreversible process of the activity of private enterprises in agriculture. Only strong enterprises and those which are capable of achieving competitiveness in future can survive in difficult conditions.



**Figure.** The dynamics of the number of the farms in Kherson region over the period 1995-2016

The source: The State Statistics Service of Ukraine [3].

The area of land use is significant for the production activity of farms and other agricultural enterprises. Every farmer determines the direction of production, its efficiency and

the possibilities of selling surplus products according to the land area [11].

At present the farms in Kherson region have different areas of land use. The amplitude of fluctuations of the figures representing the size

of the farms is quite high and the difference between the extremes of the size is over 3000 ha. There are both newly created farms with the least land area being 2.6 ha on average, and large farms with the area of more than 4000 ha. However, a predominant majority of the farms in the region have small land areas and one farm has 114-116 ha of farmlands on average. The highest indexes are in Velyka Lepetykha district - 171.5 ha, Verkhniy Rohachyk district - 169.0 ha, Nyzhni Sirohozy district - 166.9 ha. The lowest indexes are in Skadovsk district - 56.2 ha, Oleshky district - 70.1 ha and Kakhovka district - 92.3 ha.

The fluctuations in the size of the farms are explained by the fact that over the early years of the agrarian reform those who wanted to become farmers could receive up to 50 ha of farmlands and up to 100 ha of the total land area for land use. They received machines and other means of production as their property shares. Under those conditions the prices for machines and fertilizers were reasonable for farmers. The deepening of price disparities and a deep crises of the entire economy including agriculture, hyperinflation caused the situation when those interested in farming did not have resources and "start-up capital", and it is impossible to start an own farm without it [7].

Whereas over the past years there has been a tendency for a reduction in the number of farms and an increase in the land area in their land use, in 2016 as compared to the year 2015, the number of the farms rose by 16 units, and the area of farmlands increased by 1.0 thous. ha. In 2016 the specific weight

of the agricultural lands given to the farms in the total area of agricultural lands increased by 2.0% as compared to the year 2015.

The major farming activity is crop production. In 2016 the total area under crops in the farms made 275.4 thous. ha, or 21.6% of the total area under crops in the region (1271.2 thous. ha). The farmers are mainly engaged in growing grain and vegetable crops. For instance, in 2016 the areas under grain crops occupied 112 thous. ha. In 2016 the areas under sunflower increased by 21 thous. ha as compared to the year 2015 (115.9 thous. ha was sown). Moreover, 5.64 thous. ha was occupied by vegetables, melons and potatoes: potatoes - 0.04 thous. ha, vegetables - 2.7 thous. ha, and melons - 2.9 thous. ha.

Analyzing the structure of the areas under crops in 2016, it is necessary to mention, that the areas under industrial crops were mainly reduced at the expense of the decrease in the areas under potatoes and vegetables.

It is important to underline, that the farms have increased the areas under industrial crops at the expense of a partial reduction in grain crops. It is mainly explained by an increase in demand for the products of industrial crops over the past years and a fairly reasonable price for farmers at the product markets. This tendency is caused by a continuous demand for grain at both regional and national food markets, and also by its less labor intensity as compared to other crops. This made it possible for the farms to increase production of grain and other crops for the period of their activity (Table 1).

Table 1

**The Dynamics of Production Volumes of Main Products in the farms of Kherson Region, thous. t**

Kind of products	Years								
	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Grain crops	35.3	95.1	130.9	166.9	89.8	188.3	248.9	372.2	320.5
Sunflower	6.3	22.5	35.6	55.3	57.0	73.6	55.3	99.7	115.9
Vegetables	3.3	20.7	50.1	82.4	133.6	118.6	129.6	128.1	133.6
Livestock products	*	*	*	1.8	2.2	3.6	5.9	4.7	9.5

The source: The State Statistics Service of Ukraine [3].

note\* - no data available.

Nowadays farming survives tough times. The number of those who wants to farm independently under conditions of a severe expansion of agro-holdings is constantly falling, there is a lack of the government support and a massive attack on tax benefits for farmers

has started. Farmers are worried because of prospective implementation of land buying and selling in the case of the expiration of the corresponding moratorium, since they have already undergone the practice of «deprivation» of the lands rented by them.

It is necessary to mention, that farms and agricultural enterprises work under equal conditions, but the yields of the represented crops, except vegetables, are unfortunately lower in farms.

For instance in 2016 the farms harvested 320.5 thous. tons of grain and legume crops (11.7% of the total volume), the average yields in the region being 34.1 c/ha (in the farms - 28.6 c/ha). 115.9 thous. t of sunflower was harvested (15.5% of the total volume), the yield being 17.2 c/ha. To compare: the average yield in all the categories of farms - 16.0 c/ha, in the farm societies - 13.1 c/ha 133.6 thous. t of vegetables (9.9% of the total volume) was harvested, the yield being 465.7 c/ha. On average in the region the vegetable yields make 301.4 c/ha. The yield of berries in all the categories of farms of the region makes 85.2 c/ha, in the farms - 13 c/ha in particular.

There are reasons of inner nature for this situation, namely: low culture of farming, violation of crop rotation, the lack of agrochemical passports. High yields are characteristic of

those farms whose directors were main specialists, best agronomists, engineers and machine-operators in the past. Such farmers rent lands, follow the techniques of growing crops, apply mineral fertilizers, introduce the system of crop protection against pests and diseases. Thus, in order to increase competitiveness, agricultural enterprises should introduce new technologies into production, including resource-saving ones, expand the production of innovative products which have better consumption properties and are capable of competing successfully with foreign analogs at both domestic and foreign markets.

It is also necessary to mention the unbalanced sectoral structure of farms: they mainly develop crop industries and partially - livestock industries, which are more labor intensive, and they were less economically efficient or unprofitable at all because of the disadvantages in price policy. Only 3.0 % of farms specialize in producing livestock products. There is concern about the fact that in 2016 there was a reduction in the number of livestock (Table 2).

Table 2

The number of farm animals in the farms of Kherson region, thous.heads

Kind of animals	Years								
	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Cattle	1.4	0.2	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0
Including cows	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Pigs	3.2	0.8	2.8	6.9	5.6	6.0	5.3	6.0	4.9
Sheep and goats	1.1	0.2	1.7	3.4	1.2	1.4	1.9	2.4	1.4
Poultry	31.4	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.2	5.1	5.1	0.4

The source: The State Statistics service of Ukraine [3].

The constraining factor in the development of many farms is insufficient technical equipment. The provision of the farms in Kherson region with machinery has not changed substantially as compared to the previous years. The machine and tractor park numbered 5801 items on January 1, 2016, and it is 41 items more as compared to the past year. The majority of the tractors in use are out-of-date, and the farmers have no money to buy new machinery. The situation is analogous in the provision of the farms with combine harvesters. The farms try to renew the machines at least partially at the expense of buying second-hand machinery or at the expense of buying new machinery under the protection programs for domestic producers.

The government support for farms is given at the payback basis and the amount of money does not exceed 500 thous. UAH for the period up to 5 years with providing mortgaged property. The support can be obtained to: purchase machinery and equipment, renew circulating assets, purchase mother stock of farm animals (heifers, cows, sows, yearling ewes, ewes, goats) and evaluate the appropriateness of organic production (raw materials), produce and process agricultural products, construct and reconstruct production and non-production buildings, start perennial plantations, develop credit and service cooperation, pay contributions to unit trusts of agricultural service cooperatives, created by farms on their own or together with the

members of individual rural farms, for irrigation and land reclamation [15].

Farmers are active participants of cooperative movement. They are initiators of creating agricultural service cooperatives, which consolidate agricultural producers to provide services to their members, common use of machinery and technical equipment, store and sell agricultural products. For instance, 4 agricultural service cooperatives were created in Kherson region throughout 2017 and at the beginning of 2018 their total number is 58 units (10% of the existing cooperatives in Ukraine).

Cooperation not only maintains the stability of separate farms or sectors at the market, but also stimulates necessary competition between small-scale and large-scale production. Unlike economically developed countries, in Ukraine and former socialist countries horizontal cooperation has been developing. The greatest opportunities for cooperation in Kherson region are in Bilozerka, Beryslav, HOLA Prystan, Novotroitsk and Henichesk districts. In these districts with the greatest density of farms the development of all types of cooperatives is potentially possible: cooperation can be realized among farms, enterprises of a public sector and individual subsidiary establishments. In addition, an agricultural cooperative can be a member of the cooperative, organized with a public sector enterprise. Therefore, it is possible not only expand, but also complicate horizontal (territorial) relations.

Nowadays the role of cooperation is extremely low, actually there are less than 600 existing cooperatives in Ukraine [17]. Among the reasons, impeding this process, there are the following ones: continuous economic weakness of most farms, territorial remoteness, the lack of transportation, production and social infrastructure, the lack of the experience in creating and managing coopera-

tives. The practice of organizing farms shows that more than a half of them are combined by a production principle, less than 40% - in supplying and selling products, material and technical support. Whereas cooperation is a major condition of farm activity and development. The development of a wide variety of cooperatives is considered to be a factor of successful farm activities, and further prospects of a farm sector in agriculture of Ukraine and Kherson region are connected with it.

**Conclusions.** Farms have a number of advantages over other forms of agricultural enterprises in Ukraine, thus they have all the premises for their development, and this development depends on stability of both political and economic nature. The research on the current condition of the activity of Kherson region's farms shows substantial heterogeneity of their production capacity and resource potential. Small farms are more dependent on the provision with resources than large farms and it considerably determines their competitiveness level.

Farmers should solve certain problems in order to compete at the market. It is important not only to grow crops, but also store and sell them advantageously. One of the efficient measures aimed at farmers' adaptation to market conditions is agricultural service cooperation, which will allow farmers and other commodity producers to take the best advantages of participating in market activities and focus their attention on the effective use of production potential.

High interest rates do not allow farmers to take financial resources from banks to buy machinery and implement new technologies for increasing their productivity. Therefore it is entirely obvious, that substantial changes in legislation and efficient government support are necessary for successful activity of family and individual farms.

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*Бойко В.О., Бойко Л.О. Особливості функціонування фермерських господарств в умовах конкурентного середовища*

**Мета статті** - визначити особливості функціонування фермерських господарств у Херсонській області та виявити тенденції їх розвитку.

**Методика дослідження.** Використано загальнонаукові та спеціальні економічні методи: абстрактно-логічний, монографічний, статистичний, розрахунково-конструктивний та порівняння.

**Результати дослідження.** Проаналізовано особливості діяльності й розвитку фермерських господарств Херсонщини. Обґрунтовано вибір спеціалізації фермерських господарств та їх роль у виробництві сільськогосподарської продукції. Охарактеризовано переваги фермерських господарств над іншими формами сільськогосподарських підприємств. Сільськогосподарська обслуговуюча кооперація дасть змогу фермерам разом з іншими товаровиробниками отримати відчутні переваги від участі в ринковій діяльності та зосередити увагу на ефективнішому використанні виробничого потенціалу.

**Елементи наукової новизни.** Досліджено соціально-економічну роль фермерства в розбудові ринкової економічної системи, формуванні стійкого конкурентного середовища на споживчому ринку.

**Практична значущість.** Результати дослідження є підґрунтям для вирішення практичних завдань щодо створення сільськогосподарських обслуговуючих кооперативів з метою підвищення рівня конкурентоспроможності фермерських господарств. Табл.: 2. Рис.: 1. Бібліогр.: 17.

**Ключові слова:** фермерське господарство, конкурентоспроможність, посівна площа, галузева структура, державна підтримка, кооперативний рух.

**Бойко Вікторія Олександрівна** - кандидат економічних наук, доцент кафедри економіки та фінансів, Державний вищий навчальний заклад «Херсонський державний аграрний університет» (м. Херсон, вул. Стрітенська, 23)

E-mail: boiko.vo17@gmail.com

**Бойко Людмила Олександрівна** - кандидат сільськогосподарських наук, доцент кафедри економіки та фінансів, Державний вищий навчальний заклад «Херсонський державний аграрний університет» (м. Херсон, вул. Стрітенська, 23)

E-mail: boiko.mila7@gmail.com

*Бойко В.А., Бойко Л.А. Особенности функционирования фермерских хозяйств в условиях конкурентной среды*

**Цель статьи** - определить особенности функционирования фермерских хозяйств в Херсонской области и выявить тенденции их развития.

**Методика исследования.** Используются общенаучные и специальные экономические методы: абстрактно-логический, монографический, статистический, расчетно-конструктивный и сравнения.

**Результаты исследования.** Проанализированы особенности деятельности и развития фермерских хозяйств Херсонщины. Обоснован выбор специализации фермерских хозяйств и их роль в производстве сельскохозяйственной продукции. Охарактеризованы преимущества фермерских хозяйств по сравнению с другими формами сельскохозяйственных предприятий. Сельскохозяйственная обслуживающая кооперация даст возможность фермерам вместе с другими товаропроизводителями получить существенные преимущества от участия в рыночной деятельности и сосредоточить внимание на эффективном использовании производственного потенциала.

**Элементы научной новизны.** Исследована социально-экономическая роль фермерства в развитии рыночной экономической системы, формировании устойчивой конкурентной среды на потребительском рынке.

**Практическая значимость.** Результаты исследования являются основой при решении практических задач по созданию сельскохозяйственных обслуживающих кооперативов с целью повышения конкурентоспособности фермерских хозяйств. Табл.: 2. Илл.: 1. Библиогр.: 17.

**Ключевые слова:** фермерское хозяйство, конкурентоспособность, посевная площадь, отраслевая структура, государственная поддержка, кооперативное движение.

**Бойко Виктория Александровна** - кандидат экономических наук, доцент кафедры экономики и финансов, Государственное высшее учебное заведение «Херсонский государственный аграрный университет» (г. Херсон, ул. Стретенская, 23)

E-mail: boiko.vo17@gmail.com

**Бойко Людмила Александровна** - кандидат сельскохозяйственных наук, доцент кафедры экономики и финансов, Государственное высшее учебное заведение «Херсонский государственный аграрный университет» (г. Херсон, ул. Стретенская, 23)

E-mail: boiko.mila7@gmail.com

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