

The Beginning of the Uzbek Farming Movement: Initial Stages, Problems, and Characteristics

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Annotation: The article discusses the development of farms and their activities in the agricultural sector in Uzbekistan during the period of independence.

Keywords: Farmer, farm enterprise, cooperative enterprise, decree, conception, regulation, privilege.

In the Uzbek SSR, farms, a new form of ownership in the agricultural sector, began to be established in the late 1980s. Dehkan (farmer) farms in the Uzbek SSR were first established in 1988–1989 on land temporarily leased by collective and state farms in the Bukhara region and the Republic of Karakalpakstan[1]. Dehqan (farmer) farms were established without any legal basis. The process of the emergence of dehqan (farmer) farms in Uzbekistan is associated with the development of family contracts. That is, in the early period, dehqan (farmer) farms were a specific form of family contracts. Dehqan (farmer) farms, like family contracts, rented livestock, land, feed, machinery and other resources from collective and state farms. In 1990, at least 300-500 thousand rubles were required to establish a dehkan (farmer) farm. Therefore, this new form of property arose in state and collective farms in the form of a lease. Based on this, farming is a farm that produces commodity products for the market based on private or leased property, using personal family or hired labor[2]. There were no special regulatory documents about dehkan (farmer) farms in the 3-4 years from their establishment until November 1991. There is also no accurate information about their number before 1991. By the end of 1991, the number of dehkan (farmer) farms in the republic was 1,868, with 13.7 thousand hectares of land allocated to them[3]. Almost 98 percent of dehkan (farmer) farms were owned by collective farms on the basis of a lease contract, while the remaining 2 percent had the right to own land. The average

size of land plots allocated to dehkan (farmer) farms was 10.2 hectares. 80 percent of dehkan (farmer) farms received land for a period of 5 years, and the rest for a period of 15 years. 67 percent of dehkan (farmer) farms specialized in livestock breeding[4].

After the Republic of Uzbekistan gained independence, attention to the farming movement increased. In the first 4 months of independence, in order to further develop dehkan (farmer) farms, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-295 “On further strengthening dehkan (farmer) farms in the republic and state support for entrepreneurial activity in the republic” and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures for further development and strengthening dehkan (farmer) farms in the republic”[5] were issued.

According to this Decree, since 1992, in order to develop dehkan (farmer) farms, in exchange for reducing the area of cotton and other agricultural crops, a special land fund has been established in Uzbekistan, land plots for the organization of dehkan (farmer) farms have been leased for a period of at least 10 years and the right to extend the lease term has been granted. Land is allocated primarily for the cultivation of livestock products. Dehkan (farmer) farms are given the right to deliver at least 50 percent of the products they grow to state organizations on a contractual basis, and to dispose of the remaining 50 percent independently[6].

In accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 85 dated February 26, 1992 “On measures for the further development of entrepreneurial activity in the Republic”, the “Fund for the Support of Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Uzbekistan” was established[7]. Two million rubles were allocated to this fund to support entrepreneurs and farmers.

On February 26, 1992, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Dehqan Khojaly” was adopted, regulating the activities of dehkan (farm) farms. In this Law, the name dehkan (farm) farm is used as “dehqan Khojalik”. According to the Law, dehkan (farm) farms are established in two ways. First, they are established on reserve lands, on the lands of collective and state farms with a shortage of labor resources, and in newly developed territories, as well as on land funds specially formed for farms. Second, they are established on the lands of state farms and other agricultural enterprises, as well as on unprofitable or low-profitable lands, based on the application of citizens for the establishment of a dehkan (farm) farm, based on the decision of the general meeting of collective and state farms[8].

For the purpose of running a dehkan (farmer) farm, land plots were allocated to certain individuals for lifetime ownership with the right to bequeath or for lease for a period of at least 10 years. The size of the land area allocated to dehkan (farmer) farms was determined by the district khokim, having studied local conditions. As a result, the number of dehkan (farmer) farms in the Republic in 1991 was 1868, but by the end of 1992 it had increased to 5942[9], and the land at their disposal amounted to 33 thousand hectares[10].

By the end of 1993, the number of dehkan (farmer) farms in Uzbekistan had reached 13 thousand, of which 6 thousand were independent and had accounts in state banks, and the rest operated on the basis of contracts with collective and state farms. 80 percent of dehkan (farmer) farms specialized in livestock farming, 11 percent in agriculture, and 9 percent in other sectors. Dehkan (farmer) farms engaged in livestock farming had 90 thousand heads of cattle, 32 thousand heads of sheep and goats, 5 thousand heads of pigs, and 1.5 thousand beehives[11]. As we can see, the specialization of dehkan (farmer) farms was mainly led by the livestock sector.

In the early years of the reforms, dehkan (farmer) farms were established in special land funds established by presidential decrees and decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers. In particular, according to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 300 dated December 30, 1991, 200 thousand hectares[12], according to Resolution No. 87 dated February 23, 1994, 76,921 hectares[13], according to Resolution No. 88 dated February 23,

1994, 100 thousand hectares[14], a total of 376,921 hectares of land were allocated for the establishment of dehkan (farmer) farms. However, by the end of 1995, the land at the disposal of dehkan (farmer) farms amounted to 264,587 hectares[15].

Because reforms in the agrarian sector were implemented slowly. This was due in many cases to the fact that district authorities, collective farms and state farms, and heads of various organizations in the region hindered the process of organizing dehkan (farmer) farms in order to keep natural, labor, and financial resources under their control. In the 1990s, about 5-6 percent of all workers in agriculture were engaged in managerial work. The formation of dehkan (farmer) farms led to a decrease in the number of managers and specialists[16]. The heads of state and collective farms wanted their managerial power to be in an optimal state. In addition, they did not want the increase in dehkan (farmer) farms to lead to a decrease in local management bodies and a decrease in leadership authority.

At the same time, farms were also established with loans from banking institutions. According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 315 dated December 29, 1991, the Agricultural and Industrial Bank of Uzbekistan provided loans of about 50 thousand rubles to peasant (farmer) farms for the purchase of livestock based on the guarantee of a collective farm, state farm or other agricultural joint venture[17].

In this case, banking institutions provided loans to farmers in accordance with the collective and state farm trust letters. As a result, the farms paid the interest on the loan. Therefore, this form of dehkan (farmer) farms, which were established at the expense of bank loans, increased the costs of state and collective farms[18].

In 1992, the issues of allocating land for dehkan (farmer) farms were studied, and 106.2 thousand hectares of land were allocated to them, including 33 thousand hectares for 1,194 independent dehkan farms and 73.2 thousand hectares for 8,060 tenant dehkan farms[19].

Leaders and specialists of some regional agro-industrial associations did not fully understand the essence of the event and did not pay sufficient attention to the development of new forms of economic management, especially dehkan (farmer) farms. They have not been provided with the necessary assistance in purchasing agricultural machinery, feed, and land allocation. There have even been cases where some leaders have obstructed such important work.

Farmers were allocated unproductive land without many irrigation and drainage facilities. Most dehkan farms raised livestock in unequipped barns that did not meet any sanitary and fire safety requirements. Dehkan farms were not in the same conditions as collective farms and state farms. In many cases, they were given land with poor quality. There were also cases where the arable land was 40-50 km away from the farmer's house. Farmers were allocated old machinery, and very high prices were charged for various services. Farmers had no place to park their machinery. The machinery froze in the winter.

One of the problems that caused difficulties in preparing this article is the lack of accurate accounting of the number of dehkan (farmer) farms and their land areas. The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and regional agro-industrial associations, as well as the heads of dehkan (farmer) farms, did not report to statistical agencies on time, which led to errors in the data. In particular, in 1993, according to the statistical agencies of Andijan region, 103 dehkan (farmer) farms were established, with a land area of 359 hectares, while the regional agro-industrial association reported that there were 436 dehkan (farmer) farms with a land area of 1,588 hectares. In the Bukhara region, this indicator is 186 dehkan farms in statistical offices, with an area of 5,733 hectares, while the data of the regional agro-industrial association indicate 856 dehkan (farmer) farms with an area of 10,023 hectares. In the statistical offices of Kashkadarya region, there are 377 dehkan (farmer) farms, with a land area of 8,071 hectares, in the regional agro-industrial association there are 2,396 dehkan (farmer) farms, with a land area of 22,817 hectares, in the statistical offices of Surkhandarya region there are 98 dehkan (farmer)

farms, with a land area of 1,207 hectares, in the regional agro-industrial association there are 445 dehkan (farmer) farms, with a land area of 7,998 hectares, in the statistical offices of Fergana region there are 30 dehkan (farmer) farms, with a land area of 408 hectares, in the regional agro-industrial association there are 617 dehkan (farmer) farms, with a land area of 6,277 hectares[20]. Such inaccuracies are also visible in the calculations for the Republic. For example, the report of the State Committee "Uzistiqlolstat" dated July 1, 1993, counted 5,273 dehkan farms in the Republic, organized on an area of 53.3 thousand hectares. The reports of the regional agro-industrial associations indicate that there are 10,493 dehkan farms in the Republic, with an area of 129.3 thousand hectares, while the results of the re-registration conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan in July-August 1993 indicate that the number of dehkan farms is 10,728 and 130.7 thousand hectares of land are assigned to them [21].

The "Annual Statistical Collection" of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, published in 2005, provides information that in 1995 the number of dehkan (farmer) farms was more than 17,100, and the total land area at their disposal was 307.7 thousand hectares[22]. According to the data of the State Forecasting and Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in 1995 the number of dehkan (farmer) farms was 18,085, and the land allocated to them was 264,587 hectares[23].

Thus, the statistical reports maintained by the regions and the Republic show different numbers of farms (dehkans) and the amount of land allocated to them during this period.

Another problem in the sector is that the economic and material capabilities of those who want to become farmers are not clearly and correctly assessed. The applicant did not submit any business plan. There were also subjective processes in the organization of a dehkan (farmer) farm, depending on the decision of the head of the farm. In 1996, there were 19,828 dehkan (farmer) farms in Uzbekistan[24], of which 1,083 ceased their activities that year. When analyzing the activities of the liquidated dehkan (farmer) farms, 203 of them were liquidated voluntarily, 92 due to lack of work skills, 127 due to lack of work and labor tools, and 661 for other reasons[25].

Thus, in 1997, there were 21,416 dehkan (farmer) farms in Uzbekistan[26], while 1,177 farms ceased their activities due to lack of productivity[27].

In 1995, dehkan (farmer) farms had 2,255 tractors, 2,313 cars, 282 combines, 1,781 trailers, 671 chain tractors, and other equipment at their disposal.[28] One of the problems in dehkan (farmer) farms was the lack of machinery. Even those farms that had machinery mainly used machinery that they had borrowed from banks, rented from state and collective farms, or had left the farm balance.

At the first stage of the formation of dehkan (farm) farms, the state provided comprehensive assistance to their development. Because dehkan (farm) farms were in dire need of state credit. For this purpose, in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 7, 1993 "On measures to further deepen reforms in the agricultural sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the joint-stock commercial bank "Tadbirkor" was established under "Uzdehqanchilik sanoat banki" to support farms. The main function of the bank was to provide services to dehkan (farm) farms and owners of personal subsidiary farms, and 1.5 billion rubles were allocated to this bank from the state budget[29]. Dehkan (farmer) farms received loans from the Tadbirkor Joint-Stock Commercial Bank at a rate of 0.3 percent for short-term periods of one year or long-term periods of 3 to 8 years[30].

By the end of 1997, the number of dehkan (farmer) farms in Uzbekistan had reached 21,416, an increase of 1,587 compared to 1996. The size of the cultivated area increased from 308,205 hectares[31] to 413,329 hectares[32]. The average land area per dehkan (farmer) increased from 18 hectares to 19.3 hectares. Agricultural production increased from 5.4 billion soums to 11.2 billion soums[33]. The number of dehkan (farmer) farm members increased from 109,029 to 135,762. The number of hired workers increased from 4,702 to 14,518[34].

In conclusion, in this way, farmer (dehqan) farms, a new form of property in the agricultural sector, emerged and developed in Uzbekistan. The majority of dehqan (farmer) farms carried out their activities on the basis of internal contracts within the farms, and a minority independently on the basis of decisions of district khokims. The lands of the initial dehqan (farmer) farms were mainly intended for grazing livestock. Over the past years, dehqan (farmer) farms have not only increased in number, but have also significantly strengthened in terms of organizational economy. A legal basis, albeit incomplete, for dehqan (farmer) farms has been created. Despite the opposition of the heads of state and collective farms, the dehqan (farmer) farm has proven to be effective. In order to develop peasant (farmer) farms and support them with money and credit, banks such as "Pakhtabank", "Gallbank", "Mevasabzavotbank", and "Tadbirkorbank" were established. As a result of the development of farms, the feelings of ownership and dependency in agriculture gradually disappeared.

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