

REFORMS IN THE FIELD OF LAND RELATIONS REGULATION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article examines the ongoing agricultural and land reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan, with a focus on land privatization and efficient land use as critical components of sustainable economic development. The paper highlights the unique characteristics of land as a natural and economic resource, the legal and institutional reforms aimed at improving land management, and the implications of privatization for economic activity, investment attraction, and property rights protection. Special attention is given to the implementation of land privatization laws, urbanization strategies, and pilot programs such as the Syrdarya region experiment. The analysis emphasizes the importance of transparent, market-oriented land governance for fostering agricultural productivity, supporting entrepreneurship, and building a prosperous society.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, land reform, land privatization, agricultural policy, land ownership, property rights, urbanization, agricultural land, land legislation, sustainable development.

Introduction

The consistent implementation of land reclamation, salt removal, fertility improvement, the introduction of modern irrigation systems, and the efficient use of land in the agriculture of our country remains highly relevant. The implementation of an effective agricultural policy in Uzbekistan, in turn, requires attention to the following aspects:

First, as a result of the fundamental reforms carried out in the sector, there has been an improvement in agricultural legislation and the effective organization of mechanisms for its implementation;

Second, the limited and non-renewable nature of land resources, as well as the relatively small share of high-quality and fertile agricultural land, necessitate rational and efficient land use.

In the agricultural sphere, land as a natural resource differs from labor, material, capital, and other resources due to the following features:

Permanence – land does not wear out or disappear; rather, with proper and rational use, its quality and productivity can be improved.

Mobility – crops are sown and cultivated using labor, indicating land's interaction with production inputs.

Stratification – land varies by fertility and location (land rent). Fertile, well-located lands are more valuable and assessed accordingly.



Limited Supply – economically, land is a finite production resource that cannot be reproduced. Land resources are limited even on a global scale. For example, the total surface area of the Earth is 510,072,000 km², of which 148,940,000 km² (29.2%) is land and 361,132,000 km² (70.8%) is water. The total area of agricultural land globally is about 4.48 billion hectares. This includes approximately 1.457 billion hectares of arable land, perennial crops, and shrubs, and about 3.005 billion hectares of hayfields and pastures. Forests cover over 30% of global land, or about 4.0 billion hectares. Non-agricultural land accounts for approximately 4.4 billion hectares.

In Uzbekistan, out of the total land area, agricultural land amounts to 22,614.0 thousand hectares, or 50.9% of the total land area (44,410.3 thousand hectares). However, intensive farming is carried out only on 4,278.0 thousand hectares of irrigated land, which represents just 9.6% of the country's total land area. These lands vary in productivity and are located in diverse agro-ecological zones with varying reclamation and environmental conditions. This necessitates continuous monitoring and analysis of land use and land condition at the state level.

Particularly notable is the adoption of Law No. ZRU-552 “On the Privatization of Non-Agricultural Land Plots” on August 13, 2019. This law emphasizes the strategic importance of agriculture in Uzbekistan's economy.

It is also important to note that, due to population growth and increasing social needs, as well as the acceleration of industrialization globally, significant portions of agricultural land are annually withdrawn from agricultural use. This occurs for purposes such as city expansion, industrial construction, transport infrastructure, and other developments.

In addition, global climate change is causing a rise in surface temperatures, leading to permafrost melting, flooding in some regions, and drought in others, thereby impacting the usability of agricultural land.

According to Presidential Decree No. UP-5623, dated January 10, 2019, “On Measures to Radically Improve the Processes of Urbanization,” individuals and legal entities are now guaranteed the right to own land under residential and non-residential buildings and structures, thereby integrating land into civil turnover.

DISCUSSION

Starting from July 1, 2019:

Legal entities who are residents of the Republic of Uzbekistan are granted the right to privatize land plots they own or use, on which buildings, structures, and industrial infrastructure are located, including adjacent land needed for production;

Individuals, i.e., citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, are entitled to privatize land allocated for individual housing construction and maintenance;

Privatization is conducted based on applications submitted by individuals and legal entities and approved by local self-government bodies;

Privatized land becomes private property (an object of civil turnover) and is inviolable, protected by the state under the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Protection of Private Property and Guarantees of Owners' Rights.”



Land privatization is permitted only if cadastral documents are available and the payment amount is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. Privatization principles include legality, voluntariness, payment, unity, openness, and transparency of land and real estate transactions. According to Law No. ZRU-552 dated August 13, 2019, the following land categories are eligible for privatization:

Land owned or privatized by legal entities, with buildings, structures, or industrial facilities located on them, including adjacent territories necessary for operations;
Land allocated to citizens for housing construction and improvement;
Vacant land plots.

Privatization may also involve land transferred to the Urbanization Development Fund under the Ministry of Economy and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Land not subject to privatization includes:

Land without approved and published planning documents;
Land containing non-privatized mineral deposits, strategic state-owned assets;
Protected lands including nature reserves, recreational, cultural and historical sites;
Public lands such as forests, water resources, streets, squares, and embankments;
Land contaminated with hazardous substances or biotoxins;
Land in free economic zones or small industrial zones.

From March 1, 2020, legal entities and individuals are permitted to privatize non-agricultural land plots.

Decree No. UP-5780 (August 13, 2019) "On Radically Improving the System for Protecting Private Property and Strengthening Guarantees of Owners' Rights" provides:

A legal experiment in Syrdarya region to test land privatization procedures;
Procedures for acquisition of land in Syrdarya under permanent or inheritable use rights;
Online auctions for privatizing vacant non-agricultural land;
All privatization must be aligned with approved urban plans and regulatory documents.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the event of delays or disagreements in the land allocation process, unresolved submissions are deemed approved. The use of electronic auctions for land privatization in Syrdarya indicates a shift toward a digital agricultural economy.

Heads of authorized agencies are held personally responsible for timely approval of land documentation and conclusions. Each land plot is sold individually based on coordination with authorized agencies.

Privatized land is protected by the Law "On Protection of Private Property and Guarantees of Owners' Rights." Why is this important?

Property rights protection is essential for economic activity. People will not invest in homes or businesses if there is a risk of their property being confiscated. For example, in Tokyo, a small, unattractive house remains untouched among skyscrapers because its owner's rights are protected—even aesthetically displeasing, it demonstrates strong property rights.



Countries with protected property rights are wealthier. Economic growth is driven by secure ownership, not merely natural resources. Wealth stems from citizens who are motivated to invest, knowing their assets are safe.

Land ownership facilitates access to credit. Privately owned land serves as collateral, lowering loan risks and interest rates.

Legal land trade replaces illegal transactions. Transparency reduces corruption and encourages market-based development.

Privatization increases income and GDP, attracts investment, and creates jobs.

To build a prosperous nation, real (not declarative) protection of property rights is crucial.

On June 3, 2021, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a meeting on improving land relations.

CONCLUSION

Despite progress, illegal seizure, unauthorized sales, and lack of transparency in land allocation persist. The current process for allocating land, including unsuitable and agricultural plots, remains flawed and opaque.

The President criticized these shortcomings, emphasizing the need to transform land into a marketable asset, establish its economic value, and include it in financial circulation. There is also a need to strengthen state and public control over land allocation and use.

Key proposals include:

- Granting land to the private sector through ownership and lease;
- Providing land to state organizations on the right of permanent use;
- Abolishing outdated forms like lifelong inheritance or temporary use;
- Reducing land rights types from six to three;
- Selling inefficient land only through auctions;

Allocating agricultural land solely on a lease basis through open competition.

Applications will be evaluated electronically, and only Uzbek citizens and organizations (excluding foreigners) may participate. Stronger mechanisms are being introduced to monitor land allocation and use.

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