

ENSURING COMPETITIVENESS OF AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES BASED ON DEVELOPING THE HR STRATEGY

Mihail Nikolaevich DUDIN¹, Evgenia Evgenevna FROLOVA²,
Boris Igorevich BASHILOV², Yulia Igorevna SHKOLNIK (PANOVA)²,
Olga Olegovna SMIRNOVA³

¹Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), 119571, Russian Federation, Moscow, 82 Vernadsky Av., Phone: +7 499 956-99-99, Email: dudin.n.mihail@mail.ru

²Peoples Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), 117198, Russian Federation, Moscow, 6 Mikluho-Maklaya Str., Phone: +7 (495) 434-53-00. Emails: evgevgfrol@mail.ru, borisigbashilov@mail.ru, shkolnik_panova@mail.ru

³The Council for the Study of Productive Forces under the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation (SOPS), 117997, Russian Federation, Moscow, 7 Vavilova St., Phone: +7 (499) 135-61-08, Email: smirnova81olga@mail.ru

Corresponding author: dudin.n.mihail@mail.ru

Abstract

The goal of the research is to stipulate the role of personnel in ensuring the competitiveness of agro-industrial enterprises and to define basic areas of its development. It is required to formulate essential provisions of the HR strategy in the agrarian sector to bring the latter to the leading positions in the national economy. The article shows that the formation of the competences of agro-industrial enterprise employees becomes a source of its competitive advantages. It shows the interrelation of the competitive personnel with the other elements of the competitiveness of the agro-industrial enterprise. It is determined that the development of the personnel of agro-industrial enterprises requires the relevant diversified support. The leading areas of the HR strategy of the development of the agro-industrial enterprises' personnel have been defined. In the context of these areas, the mechanisms whose joint functioning will allow improving the components of the competitiveness of the agro-industrial enterprises' personnel have been characterized.

Key words: *agro-industrial enterprises, personnel development, competitive personnel, enterprise competitiveness, strategy, strategic management*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of modern economic conditions, it is necessary to note the objective nature of import substitution in the Russian agriculture that is caused by the emergence and increase in the food import dependence during the previous years. That is why the need to develop the agrarian production, to maintain positions of the majority of agro-industrial enterprises (especially, small and medium-sized) on internal food markets and to strengthen their export potential acutely sets the problem of searching for new competitive advantages.

According to the authors of the article, the key competitive advantage of any enterprise in the

context of modern economic activity is the availability of the competitive personnel. The authors interpret it as the personnel that has the required set of competences, high self-organization, internal motivation and aims at fulfilling certain production tasks. These are employees with such qualities that can provide the balance between economic interrelations of agro-industrial enterprises and economic subjects of other sectors of the national economy. That is why constant development of the personnel is the key task of management of agro-industrial enterprises and consequently requires due scientific assistance. It is generally known that the enterprise competitiveness depends on its competitive advantages. Besides, some researchers tend to

identify a competitive advantage with the factors that define the final results of the enterprise operation, characteristics of its goods, etc. In particular, R.A. Fathutdinov states that in terms of results of the competitive struggle the competitive advantage is the best state of the competitiveness factor of the subject performing the economic activity as compared to the state of this factor with its competitors. In addition, the researcher interprets the competitiveness factor as a characteristic of the subject of competitive relations of the environment where it functions and that has an impact on the result of the economic competition [5].

According to the researchers, in the context of implementing the stipulated system of the state strategic policy focused on optimal use of the current resourceful potential to strengthen competitive positions of the agrarian sector of economy, it is necessary to move from obtaining certain competitive advantages related to the effect of price factors on the implementation of factorial advantages, namely intellectual capital, mineral wealth, and research and technical potential [8].

In spite of the fact that the enterprise competitiveness is formed under the impact of a number of internal and external factors, the authors of the article think that the personnel is the initial and at the same time determining element of forming its competitive advantages. Taking it into account, they agree with M.A. Suklyshkina that the organization competitiveness is directly related to the personnel's competitiveness, and this indicator directly characterizes the competitive potential of the enterprise [13].

As F. Yansen fairly states, today the world economic system is forming the paradigm of developing and improving the efficiency of social production based on using knowledge and innovations [17]. In this context, the factor of developing personnel for the agrarian sector of economy becomes especially important because without having employees of the relevant quality it is impossible to efficiently use the potential of the latest technical means, technologies, methods of management, and to fully implement the innovational model of the

agriculture development. Besides, only thanks to professional personnel, it is possible to provide high quality management, high level of labor and production organization, efficiency of the labor motivation system, timely and high quality fulfillment of production tasks, innovation in implementing the production and marketing strategy i.e. everything used by small and medium-sized enterprises of the agro-industrial complex to counteract agricultural holdings in the context of unequal technical and technological equipment of the production.

The uniqueness of the personnel in providing competitive advantages of the enterprise is defined by the fact that it is the basis of forming the human and intellectual capital that makes up the educational basis of developing and moving the knowledge. This is the employee who is the owner and bearer of knowledge, qualification, experience, and information he can accumulate, use, develop and transfer during the whole period of his life and labor activity. At the epoch of the post-industrial society the knowledge and information are considered to be among the basic resources that ensure the innovational development of economy and competitive product.

The position of S. Becker is rather grounded in this context. He states that "the human capital formed on the basis of the enterprise personnel is peculiar of self-growing value, and unlike other resources that require support and management to create competitive advantages of the enterprise, it is developed individually, attracts and combines other resources of the enterprise" [1].

Of course, the authors of the article share the opinion that the role of personnel in providing the competitiveness cannot be absolutized because the resourceful, technical and technological provision of enterprises, their functional opportunities, market positions, allocation and other factors are also important. However, the majority of them derive from the impact of the enterprise personnel, in particular management and organizational decisions of its management and results of the whole team work. However, the researchers' and experts'

acknowledgement of the priority of advantages of the certain enterprise personnel, as compared to others in the competitive struggle, is stipulated by the fact that modern technical means, technologies, and material resources are equally available to all competing subjects. That is why they cannot be a source of providing competitive advantages [6].

Therefore, the formation of a peculiar set of competences of the personnel (selection of employees according to the competences form), their constant development, as well as the specificity of the labor organization and motivation can become inaccessible for competitors. Along with this, collective knowledge and organizational culture that are specific for the enterprise and form so called non-codified capital can be rarely copied and transferred to the environment of another enterprise.

Consequently, the ability of the enterprise to train and develop its employees faster than competitors is a source of its economic, social, and strategic advantages not only on the sectorial or territorial but also on the all-national and international level.

Research references interpret the category "personnel development" mainly as a process of professional training, qualification improvement, and re-training of employees. Particularly, according to V.I. Maslov, the personnel development is a system of organized process of continuous professional training of employees to prepare them for fulfilling new production functions, professional and qualification promotion, forming the reserve of managers and improving the social structure of the personnel [10].

The personnel development is definitely strategically important for providing a high level of the enterprise competitiveness because it is an efficient means of strengthening and accumulating the personnel potential of employees both at the current stage of the enterprise functioning and over time.

The need in constant development of the personnel is also caused by the need to support its competitiveness. It is stipulated by its relativity, dynamism, and target nature because

even under the unchangeable quality and quantity of the personnel or organizational capital of the enterprise, the personnel's competitiveness in relation to positions of other enterprises can change, as a rule, for the worse. These changes can be a consequence of various tendencies in the external environment, changes of the market environment, institutional rules. It causes the correction of goals of the enterprise and requirements to the personnel's quality to achieve them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The further research will be methodologically stipulated by the provision related to the fact that the development of the agrarian enterprise personnel is strategically important for providing a high level of its competitiveness. Besides, according to the authors of the article, competitiveness of agrarian enterprises is expressed in the scheme of causal relationships shown in Fig. 1.

The top of this scheme is formed by the competitive personnel mastering competences that are essential for the enterprise and focused on the achievement of the enterprise goals.

On the one hand, this personnel generates competitive managers that manage it. On the other hand, it easily and correctly perceives all tasks and goals formed by the management. It means that as a result of the organic combination of the competitive personnel and management, the relevant organization of labor, motivation, formation of the unity and purposefulness of all team members' activity are provided.

The enterprise management is responsible for organizing the sale and promotion of goods on the market, i.e. for the formation of the efficient marketing strategy of the enterprise fulfilled by a certain group of employees.

The competitive personnel is also closely related to the technical aspect of the agrarian production. More than that, such personnel is an integral element of the innovational strategy of the enterprise development.

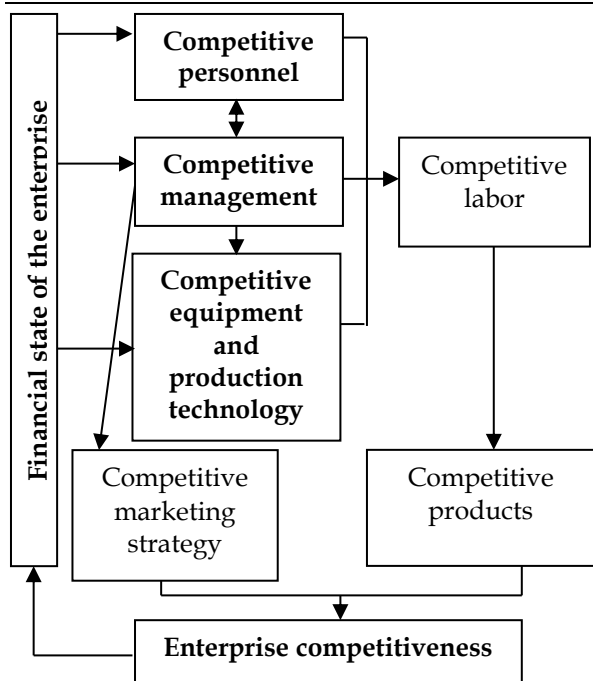


Fig. 1. Scheme of Causal Relationships of Providing Competitiveness of the Agrarian Enterprise
Source: Compiled by the authors.

In order to master modern technical means and production technologies, and to produce certain technological novation, it is necessary to have the relevant knowledge, experience, due attitude to labor and creative potential. Along with this, the development of employees' professional competences, and as well as the achievement of a certain level of the material and technical provision of the production depend on financial opportunities of the enterprise and volume of investments. In its turn, the cost of involving labor and material resources forms a certain level of production and sale expenses, which is one of the key factors of the products competitiveness. Thus, the competitive personnel headed by competitive management and equipped with modern technical means can provide high quality and efficiency of labor, and form the competitiveness required by the market. In its turn, the products competitiveness defines the market position of the producer (the products share on the market), forms its financial position, and secures the achievement of high competitiveness of the enterprise, as a whole. That is why the creation of conditions for the development of competitive personnel is a primary task and the most important

condition for ensuring the successful operation of enterprises of the agrarian sector of economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The scales and key parameters of the personnel's development are defined, above all, by the strategy of developing the agro-industrial enterprise, level of implementing innovational technologies in the production, competition on the intracompany and sectorial labor market, competitive positions on goods markets, and its financial opportunities.

Unfortunately, at enterprises of the agrarian sector of economy, basic characteristics of the personnel that define its potential opportunities are underdeveloped.

On the one hand, it is caused by the extremely unsatisfactory conditions of forming the rural human capital, and on the other hand, by insufficient attention of enterprises management to providing the process of the personnel development.

According to the research results, through the example of a separate region, agrarian enterprises tend to minimize expenditures for using labor resources and optimize their number [15, p.61].

This thesis is proved, in particular, by the data about the level of expenditures of agricultural enterprises for maintaining and professional development of the personnel as a whole in Russia as compared to enterprises performing other types of economic activity (Table 1).

It is possible to see that in 2013 the amount of such expenditures as calculated per one employee was RUB 22,765.5, which is 1.7 times lower than in the industry and 2.15 times lower than the average in the economy.

At the same time in the structure of expenditures, investments in the personnel's professional training made up only 0.1%, which is the lowest indicator among all types of the economic activity with such expenditures.

In absolute terms the expenditures for professional education made up only RUB 22.76 per one employee, 6 times lower than the average in economy.

Table 1. Expenditures of Enterprises for the Labor Power and their Structure by Main Types of Economic Activity in 2013

	Average monthly expenditures for the labor power, RUB	including, percent											
		Salary	including				Expenditures for providing employees with residence	Expenditures for the social protection		Expenditures for professional training	Expenditures for cultural and every day servicing	Other expenditures	Taxes and charges
			Payment for the time worked	Payment for the time unworked	One-time motivational payments	Payment for food and accommodation		Obligatory deductions and payments	Voluntary expenditures				
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	22,765.5	76.4	67.2	5.9	2.8	0.8	0.0	21.4	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.2
Processing industries	76,525.5	72.3	56.4	8.8	6.5	0.6	0.4	19.1	3.2	0.4	1.1	3.0	0.5
Industrial production	38,664.5	74.0	63.2	6.9	3.5	0.5	0.2	21.0	1.5	0.3	0.5	2.3	0.3
Production and distribution of electric power, gas and water	42,554.7	74.8	62.1	7.0	5.5	0.2	0.1	19.9	2.2	0.4	0.3	2.2	0.2
Construction	44,902.5	74.5	64.5	6.2	3.2	0.6	0.1	19.8	1.0	0.3	0.1	3.6	0.6
Wholesaling and retailing	35,686.1	76.5	67.3	5.3	3.5	0.3	0.0	19.6	1.0	0.2	0.2	1.6	0.9
Transport and communication	49,287.4	74.2	60.8	7.7	5.4	0.3	0.3	19.7	2.7	0.5	0.2	2.2	0.3
Financial activity	78,301.0	78.6	64.0	5.5	9.0	0.1	0.3	17.8	1.2	0.3	0.2	1.5	0.2
Operations with real estate, renting and providing services	53,217.2	76.4	65.5	6.2	4.6	0.2	0.1	18.5	1.3	0.3	0.2	2.8	0.4
In total for types of economic activity	45,870.2	75.1	63.3	6.7	4.7	0.4	0.2	19.7	1.7	0.3	0.3	2.4	0.4

Source: [14]

Consequently, there is a considerable gap between the total volume of investments in the personnel's professional development made by agro-industrial enterprises and economic subjects operating in other sectors. That is why at agro-industrial enterprises issues related to managing the personnel's development must be of top priority. It is related to the fact that social and economic contradictions accumulated in the rural environment cause the discontent of the employed population with the work, turnover of employees, lack of motives for professional

development, incompliance of the salary with the work results, etc.

The authors of this article do share the researchers' opinion that first of all it is necessary to focus on the development of creative, innovational qualities of the personnel, continuous use of results of the employees' creative activity in the economic activity. It is necessary to consider employees as an integral part of the enterprise intellectual capital [2; 4].

Table 2. Areas and Measures to Ensure the Personnel Development at Agro-Industrial Enterprises

PROVIDING DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONNEL AT AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES	
<p>Regulatory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Working out the provision about professional training and development of the personnel, Contractual documentation of relations between members of the professional development. 	<p>Organizational:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership of the administration and employees in the area of organizing professional education, Forming the system of education management, and Organizational support of employees during their self-education, and obtaining higher education.
<p>Professional:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Forming the group of tutors for training and production education, Attracting specialists from educational establishments and leading enterprises of the sector for learning about the latest achievements of the science and engineering. 	<p>Educational and methodical:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of active forms and methods of on-site training of employees, Development of individual and team programs of training and production education in accordance with the learners' needs, and Wide use of visual materials (brochures, booklets, and films).
<p>Financial and investment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing the fund of financing professional development, Attracting external resources of financing the personnel development, and Using methods of material motivation to stimulate employees for education and self-development. 	<p>Informational and consulting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Constant informing employees about the possibility and terms and conditions of professional education, training, or improving qualification at or beyond the enterprise, Explanatory work about the need to improve qualification.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Consequently, the improvement of the competitiveness of the personnel working at agro-industrial enterprises requires developing a consolidated mechanism of maintaining and developing the personnel's potential that will be based on the efficient use of the human resources, increasing the salaries, taking measures on motivating labor, improving

social safety and protection of employees, attracting investments in continuous professional training, and improving the personnel's qualification.

The implementation of the concept of the personnel's development requires from the administration of agro-industrial enterprises to take measures on providing this process in various areas (Table 2).

Summarizing the research approaches to understanding areas of the personnel's development under modern conditions [7; 3; 9; 11; 12; 16], and taking into account the level of providing the agrarian production with personnel and need to implement the innovational model of its development, the authors of this article think that the strategy of improving the competitiveness of employees of agro-industrial enterprises must be based on such target benchmarks as

- 1)Improvement of the qualitative characteristics of the enterprise personnel,
- 2)Development of the labor motivation system and improvement of the working life quality,
- 3)Development of an efficient personnel management system, and
- 4)Social protection and social provision of employees.

Every area assumes the use of specific mechanisms based on the complex of organizational and economic measures that have both direct and indirect impact on the personnel's development. Every group of measures contributes to the achievement of certain internal and external effects that to a definite degree are interrelated and inter-stipulated. Their consolidated effect allows not only improving the competitiveness of personnel, but also forming conditions for providing long-term stability of its reproduction. It means that making certain investments in the personnel's development in the above areas, the enterprise focuses not only on the current profits but also on the opportunity to obtain them in the future. The final result of implementing strategic measures on improving the personnel's competitiveness is the enterprise's achievement of specific economic results, such as labor efficiency increase, products quality

improvement, decrease in non-production expenditures and working hours losses, decrease in the employees turnover, and general increase in the economic efficiency of production. In its turn, it enables the enterprise to obtain additional competitive advantages and successfully function in the changing market environment.

According to the authors of this article, the improvement of the quality of the personnel of agro-industrial enterprises is a key area of its development strategy. Such personnel's qualities as educational level, qualification competence, working experience and practical skills, business and personal characteristics of employees are the most essential components of competitiveness. Its other elements - working capacity, efficiency and career perspective of employees - derive from the personnel's quality. Thus, the quality of the labor force is a sort of a basement of the employee's competitiveness and professional aptitude.

At the same time, specific qualitative characteristics of the personnel are estimated by employees differently: taking into account their perception, need in them, and opportunity to attract and efficiently use these qualities. It means that certain qualities of employees are considered as competitive only under conditions of a certain enterprise and a certain position. That is why in order to ensure the personnel's competitiveness, it is necessary to bring its qualitative characteristics in compliance with the requirements of the labor market and employers.

Thus, under the modern market conditions the main strategic goal of improving the personnel's quality for national agro-industrial enterprises is to form a wide range of competences required for implementing the innovational model of development. Above all, it goes about mastering modern technologies of production, new equipment, methods of labor and production organization, and management and marketing activity.

The enterprises that have limited opportunities to implement innovational projects and follow a traditional mode of activity must also focus on improving employees' professionalism and

personal characteristics, particularly, responsibility, adaptability (including professional and territorial mobility, motivation, innovativeness, creative approach to solving the set tasks, etc.).

The main mechanism of implementing goals related to improving the personnel's quality is the organization of continuous professional and production training of employees at agro-industrial enterprises, as well as investing in it. It will allow not only improving the personnel's educational and qualification level and innovational potential, but also stabilizing the number of the enterprise employees because, taking into account continuous training and improving the qualification of personnel, top managers of enterprises do not need to dismiss employees whose knowledge or professional skills are out-of-date in the context of the scientific and technical progress, and waste funds and time for selecting, educating and training new personnel.

The most important area of the personnel's competitiveness development strategy is the improvement of the labor motivation system and the quality of the employees' working life. Within this area, it is supposed to achieve two main goals:

To provide efficient stimuli for self-improvement, professional education, career growth, and creativity,

To improve the employees' material welfare and health protection.

The main mechanisms to improve them include the development of the system related to monetary (labor payment, bonuses) and non-monetary (social package) stimulating of employees, non-material motivation, social programs, and improving conditions and safety of labor.

As a result of these mechanisms effect, a certain level of the working life quality is achieved. The improvement of the working life quality creates conditions for the interest in the long-term employment of the employee at the enterprise and motivates him for further professional development, career growth, and increase in the labor efficiency. As for the enterprise, it obtains the relevant economic and social effects in the form of a decrease in the

employees' turnover, increase in the production efficiency, growth of economic and social activity of employees, their scrupulous fulfillment of duties, and care about final results of the activity.

The growth of the working life quality also results in the improvement of investments in human capital and formation of conditions for increasing them. This is because the reason of extremely low level of investments in preparing agrarian personnel is their high turnover that is usually stipulated by unsatisfactory conditions of labor and low salary. That is why entrepreneurs hardly spend funds for training their employees because of the possibility of the employees' change of work, and actually the fear to lose the spent funds. In the context of stabilizing the composition of the labor resources, this problem is dismantled.

In addition, respectable salaries, a considerable social package and other factors increase the attractiveness of agricultural employment. Thereby conditions for attracting young specialists and highly professional personnel from other areas are formed. The competitiveness of agrarian personnel also improves.

The labor motivation and working life quality are a limited supplement to the system of improving the personnel quality, and actually, the main linking element between all strategic areas of its development. Thus, the main motive of the employee to improve qualification and professional education is the opportunity to get a higher salary as a result of increasing the efficiency of his own labor, career growth, involvement in technologically difficult and thus highly paid types of work. However, it is possible only under the conditions of organizing an efficient HR management system that is considered herein as a separate strategic area of its development. The main goals of this area include optimization of the size and structure of the enterprise personnel by improving the level of technical assistance of production and service, provision of rational and efficient employment, minimization of the factors related to the seasonal nature of labor and so

on; providing compliance of the remuneration for labor with its results, and improvement of the efficiency of using the personnel.

The mechanism of achieving the above goals is based on general improvement of the system of social and labor relationships, particularly, their allocation component. Above all, it is extremely important to provide the dependence of the labor payment level on its efficiency. It is also necessary to rationally differentiate the employees' salary according to the professional and qualification characteristic, occupied position, type and complexity of performed works, etc. At the same time it requires the relevant organizational provision of the production process itself and the process of personnel management through the system of collective agreement based regulation, labor rating and payment.

In the context of managing the employee's career, it is necessary to develop a scheme of personnel's transfer, to define the procedure and conditions of vacancies filling and document them in relevant internal provisions. The career may grow both vertically (transfer to a higher position) and horizontally (qualification improvement, extending functions and tasks), and diagonally (the growth of the authority and recognition by colleagues). Managing the employee's career forms conditions for meeting his needs in self-implementing, colleagues' recognition, achievement of a certain status, etc.

The last important area of the strategy related to developing the personnel of agro-industrial enterprises is the organization of the efficient social protection and social provision of employees to increase their welfare and insure from various social risks. The top target benchmark is the formation of favorable conditions of the human development and reproduction of labor potential of the village.

The mechanism of implementing a social component is performed through the development of the internal economic social insurance, participation of the enterprise in programs related to contributing to the employment and social support of the population, financing the development of the social area.

Thus, there is an impact on the internal and external environment of the personnel's competitiveness development. On the one hand, the improvement of the employees' protection from consequences of social risks contributes to the improvement of the quality of their working life, and consequently, it is an additional motivator for improving the work results, professional and career growth, etc. On the other hand, participation in programs of economic and social development of rural territories improves the welfare of local population as potential employees, contributes to keeping the youth in the village and growth of the human capital quality. At the same time, top managers of enterprises must not consider the social development as secondary because basically the personnel composition of agrarian enterprises is formed by the rural population. That is why the creation of a relevant economic and social environment in the village is an important condition for accumulating those elements of the human capital that through the relevant development mechanisms will be transformed into the required competences and will improve the personnel's competitiveness. At the same time, economic and social effects achieved as a result of implementing the personnel development strategy not only form a certain level of its competitiveness, but also are themselves the result of the improvement of professional and personal characteristics of employees.

CONCLUSIONS

The modern stage of the development of enterprises functioning in the agrarian sector of economy prioritizes the problem related to providing them with the competitive personnel that has the knowledge and competences required for implementing the innovational model of the economic activity. It is the enterprise personnel that plays the key role in achieving a certain level of the labor competitiveness, i.e. it has a direct impact on forming final parameters of products (volume, price, quality) that define its competitive positions on the market.

A high level of the personnel competitiveness allows increasing the production profitability and the value of the enterprise assets, improving the efficiency of using resources, and what is the main, providing long-term, unique, self-growing and competitive advantage of the enterprise due to the use of the unique resources of competitiveness that cannot be followed by competitors. That is why the personnel's comprehensive development must be a strategic task of the HR policy of the agro-industrial enterprise.

The improvement of the competitiveness of the personnel of agro-industrial enterprises requires the development of a consolidated mechanism of maintaining and developing the personnel potential that will be based on the efficient use of human resources, increase in the salary level, measures on labor motivation, improvement in the level of social safety and social protection of employees, attraction of investments in the personnel's continuous professional training, and improvement of the qualifications.

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