

## **New study: Russia has Abandoned 39 Million Hectares of Agricultural Land** **Health/Science**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2018/4/17 0:28:40

**That limits the possibility that Russia can develop its agriculture rapidly enough to become the export earner many in Moscow hope for or even save villages in areas where large parcels of land have been abandoned**

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": April 15 – Russian officials acknowledge that since the end of the Soviet Union, Russia has abandoned a great deal of farm land; but a new European Space Agency study shows that it has given up 39 million hectares\*, an area greater than the size of Germany, and that much of this land is now reverting to forests. That limits the possibility that Russia can develop its agriculture rapidly enough to become the export earner many in Moscow hope for or even save villages in areas where large parcels of land have been abandoned ([newizv.ru/article/general/15-04-2018/dannye-so-sputnikov-zabroshennye-pahotnye-zemli-v-rossii-pre-vyshayut-ploschad-germanii](http://newizv.ru/article/general/15-04-2018/dannye-so-sputnikov-zabroshennye-pahotnye-zemli-v-rossii-pre-vyshayut-ploschad-germanii)). One of the reasons the Russian government has undercounted this loss of agricultural land is that it only counts land as being lost if its owners have made a declaration to that effect. In many cases, the owners simply stop using the land as it had been exploited. The new study, which includes a map, fills in the gap. The Russian Federation is not the only post-Soviet state to have abandoned farmland since 1991. According to the study, the other countries in this region have lost 20 million hectares, and consequently, they too are less well-positioned agriculturally than there were a quarter of a century ago and more reliant on imports.

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: [paul.goble@gmail.com](mailto:paul.goble@gmail.com)

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