Study on Countermeasures for Increasing Income of Herdsman in Western Ethnic Minority Areas—A Case Study of Evenki Autonomous Banner

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Abstract Taking typical western ethnic pastoral area—Evenki Autonomous Banner in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region as an example, this article analyses the factors restricting income increase of herdsman penetratingly as follows; the growth in revenue of animal husbandry in pastoral area is limited by ecology; the infrastructure construction in pastoral area lags behind, and the development of animal husbandry is still sluggish; the overall level of industrialization operation of agriculture and animal husbandry is not high; the employment structure of herdsman is simple, and the channel of income increase is narrow; the transfer of labor forces in pastoral area shows "pumping-like transfer"; herdsmen enjoy few national policies of supporting agriculture and benefiting farmers, and the policy support is short. On the basis of the actual situation in western minority areas, following countermeasures and proposals are put forward for increasing herdsman’s income; transform the mode of production and operation, enhance the organization degree of the majority of herdsman; improve infrastructure conditions, and promote comprehensive production capacity of agriculture and animal husbandry; quicken pace of industrialization, strengthen the construction of technology support and service system; speed up human capital accumulation rate of herdsman, improve self-development ability of herdsman; propel transformation of production pattern of animal husbandry, innovate ecological protection construction mechanism; increase subsidies for animal husbandry, pastoral area and herdsman in western ethnic minority areas, strengthen policy implementation.

Key words Herdsman, Income increase, Animal husbandry, China

China is a big grassland country, with nearly 400 million hm² of various types of natural grassland, accounting for approximately 41.7% of land area. China’s natural grassland is mainly distributed in 12 provinces, regions and cities in China; Inner Mongolia, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the Tibet Autonomous Region, Chongqing City, Sichuan Province, Guizhou Province, Yunnan Province, Shaanxi Province, Gansu Province, Qinghai Province, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The area of natural grassland is 0.33 billion hm², accounting for 84.4% of the area of China’s grassland. According to National Grassland Monitoring Report in 2008, it shows that the area of usable grassland in 266 pastoral areas, semi-farming and semi-pasturing regions, counties (banners) is 246 million hm², accounting for 61.5% of the total area of China’s grassland; there are 176 counties (banners) with the overload rate of livestock more than 20%. In fact, China’s pastoral areas, semi-farming and semi-pasturing regions, are concentrated in western pastoral areas, semi-farming and semi-pasturing regions. The western pastoral areas are not only the key areas of national ecological construction, but also an important part of the national and regional economic and social sustainable development.

The issues concerning "animal husbandry, pastoral areas, herdsman" in vast ethnic minority areas are in fact the specific embodiment of China’s issues concerning agriculture, country-side and farmers in many western ethnic minority areas[1]. Due to historical, natural conditions and other factors, in terms of economy, society, culture and other aspects, China’s western ethnic pastoral areas, semi-farming and semi-pasturing regions, counties (banners), lag far behind the rest of China’s regions, so the development of pastoral areas is not only an important part of rural reform and development in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period, but also the focus and difficulty of China’s rural reform and development. In 2008, the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen in China’s western regions was 3 517.73 yuan, 53.3% of that in China’s eastern regions, 73.89% of the national average. In China’s four great pastoral areas (Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Qinghai) boasting 65% of the grassland area in China, per capita income of herdsmen was only 75.6% of the national average in 2008.

In addition, the income gap between herdsmen and farmers is also expanding in some places. According to the data in Inner Mongolia, it shows that during the period of the Eighth Five-Year Plan, Ninth Five-Year Plan and Tenth Five-Year Plan, the growth rate of herdsmen’s per capita net income is 15.6%, 12.8%, and 5.3%, respectively, with trend of conspicuous decline in growth rate; during the period of the Tenth Five-Year Plan, the growth rate of herdsmen’s per capita income in whole region is 2. 53 percentage points lower than farmers who grow grain; since the period of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, the growth rate of herdsmen’s per capita net income has declined by 3.83 percentage points. At the same time, the herdsmen’s per capita consumer spending is significantly higher than farmers’ per capita consumer spending. According to the survey of Jiu San Society, since the majority of herdsmen live in the remote areas, thus the cost of living is relatively high; production and living expenditure on water, electricity, war-
ming, schooling, medical care, transportation, forage, sty, and fence, increases year by year. In the period 2003–2007, the herdsman's per capita household operating expenditure in Inner Mongolia is 2 times more than that of farmers; the herdsman's per capita living consumer expenditure in Inner Mongolia is also 2 times that of farmers.

The multi-coupling of China's vast pasturing, semi-farming and semi-pasturing areas and ethnic minority areas, herdsman and poverty, makes "animal husbandry, pastoral areas and herdsman" become three issues troubling China's vast western ethnic pastoral areas. Taking typical western ethnic pastoral area—Evenki Autonomous Banner in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region as an example, we conduct in-depth analysis of the restricting factors influencing herdsman's income increase, and put forward some countermeasures and proposals for increasing herdsman's income based on the actual situation in western ethnic minority areas.

1 Overview of Evenki Autonomous Banner

Established in 1958, the Evenki Autonomous Banner, one of China's three ethnic autonomous banners, located in the east of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, western foot of Greater Khingan Mountains, eastern Hulun Buir Grassland, is the ethnic autonomous region consisting of 24 ethnic groups such as Mongolian and Daur, with Evenki as main body. At the end of 2008, the whole banner has 49 971 households, with a total population of 144 409, consisting of 24 ethnic groups. 4 towns, 1 township, 2 sumu, 44 administrative villages and 15 communities, are under the jurisdiction of Evenki Autonomous Banner. The total area of land is 19 111 km², and the area of usable grassland is 11 803.3 km², accounting for 62.5% of the total area of the banner. 22 500 people, 5 495 households, are engaged in animal husbandry, and the minority population is 57 978, accounting for 40.15% of the total population of the banner. Evenki Autonomous Banner is China's typical ethnic minority area, and also typical western pastoral area.

In 2009, GDP of Evenki Autonomous Banner was 5.37 billion yuan, an increase of 24.4%; the financial revenue reached 1.7 billion yuan, an increase of 23.9%; the local fiscal revenue reached 1.32 billion yuan, an increase of 38.5%; people's living standards were significantly improved, and per capita disposable income of urban residents and per capita net income of herdsman reached 12 143 yuan and 7 883 yuan, an increase of 13.2% and 11.8%, respectively. In 2009, the livestock in whole year was controlled at 790 000 million heads; the improvement proportion of fine varieties breeding reached 96%; the output of milk reached 207 000 t; the meat yield reached 15 000 t; 260 million kg grass was stored in whole year; the growing area of potato reached 1 333.33 hm²; there were 6 leading industrialized enterprises of agriculture and animal husbandry; the sales revenue reached 225 million yuan, and the value added reached 42.89 million yuan; the circulation area of grassland in whole banner reached 5 780 hm²; the number of various types of economic organization and association that have registered and operated, reached up to 84. According to the survey of relevant departments in Evenki Autonomous Banner in 2009, there are 5 495 households, 22 483 people engaging in animal husbandry in whole banner, and 9 314 labor forces; the number of livestock is 449 000, and the area of grassland occupied is 383 300 hm². Among 44 administrative villages in whole banner, 39 administrative villages are provided with electricity, but there are still 11.4% of administrative villages having not been provided with electricity; 43 administrative villages are provided with road access but there is still one administrative village having not been provided with road access; 29 administrative villages are provided with telephone, with coverage rate less than 66%; 41 administrative villages are provided with radio and television, but there are still 3 administrative villages having not been provided with radio and television; 26 administrative villages are provided with clinics (including township health center), the coverage rate of clinics not more than 60%; only 14 administrative villages are provided with tap water, with the coverage rate less than 32%.

The majority of people's houses in pastoral areas are brick bungalows and adobe houses built in the 1980s, currently becoming or verging dangerous houses. For the time being, there are still 3 850 herdsman households having no house or living in dangerous houses, with 422 households having no house and 1 329 households living in adobe houses. Among the households in whole banner, there are 1 765 poor households, 6 180 people, with per capita net income less than 1 800 yuan, and there are 546 absolutely poor households (1 771 people). The minority nationality poor households account for more than 97% of total poor households. Taking Tuanjie Administrative Village as an example, Tuanjie Administrative Village is a pure animal husbandry administrative village. Among the existing 196 herdsman households in 2009, 156 households were poor households, and the poor households accounted for nearly 80% of households in the administrative village.

In recent years, through the efforts of all parties, in Evenki Autonomous Banner, the sum of various poverty alleviation funds reaches 19. 3 million yuan in total; 1 380 poor households, 4 800 poor people are supported; 3 500 herdsman are trained; the problems of food and clothing of 4 061 people are solved; the poor households' basic production and living conditions have been improved; the quality of labor forces is improved; the poverty situation in pastoral areas is changed.

2 Analysis of the factors restricting increase in income of herdsman in Evenki Autonomous Banner

2.1 The growth in revenue of animal husbandry in pastoral areas is limited by ecology Animal husbandry in grassland is the main source of income for herdsman, accounting for more than 75% of herdsman's income in pastoral areas in general. But the primary measure of ecological protection in grassland is to change the status quo of overgrazing as soon as possible, and implement "returning pasturing to grassland", "prohibiting pasturing", "balancing grassland and livestock" and other rational use systems of grassland. It is required to limit
the number of livestock grazing in the grassland, and increase the alternative forage for livestock and management costs, which will objectively and directly affect herdsmen's income and benefit from animal husbandry. Herdsmen's income, from picking, excavating and selling wild plants in grassland, is decreased. In recent years, in order to prevent the destruction of grassland vegetation, the state has strengthened management and control over the wild plants in grassland, such as licorice, Herba Ephedrae, Cordyceps, Cistanche deserticola, and long thread moss, implemented measures of prohibiting picking or limiting picking. It is estimated that the income of herdsmen in China decreases by several hundred million yuan annually. From the perspective of the protection of grassland resources, this management measure will, to be sure, be further strengthened.

2.2 The infrastructure construction in pastoral area lags behind and the development of animal husbandry is still sluggish The overall production capacity is low, the employment opportunities are limited, and increase in herdsmen's income is difficult; the production conditions in pastoral areas are backward, and the supporting facilities fail to meet the needs of development of animal husbandry. In Evenki Autonomous Banner, the total traffic mileage reaches 397.0 km. By the end of 2008, the total mileage of highway has reached 918.7 km (provincial highway, 207.7 km; county road, 60 km; township road, 361 km; village road, 249 km; special road, 41 km). The mileage of county and township road accounts for 45.8% of the total mileage, having a certain scale, but because of shortage of funds in road maintenance and management, weak technology strength and outdated facilities, etc., there are road distress, roadbed subsidence and other problems universally in county and township road network, and the integrity rate of road in whole road network is only 45%. This situation affects the level of service of the entire road network.

2.3 The overall level of industrialization operation of agriculture and animal husbandry is not high The development of pastoral cooperatives is uneven, with relatively small scale, weak driving capacity, low cooperation level, low degree of standardization, and lack of staying power. As of 2009, the number of registered economic cooperation organizations in Evenki Autonomous Banner grew to 19, with 1 149 members, including 11 cooperatives and 8 associations, forming the development scale of 18 million yuan fixed asset. The leading companies have small scale, and weak driving ability. In particular, there is a shortage of companies with distinctive advantage, prominent competitiveness and strong driving force. The capacity of production and processing is weak, the added-value of products is low and there are few famous brands, impeding continuous increase in herdsmen's income. For the herdsmen in Evenki Autonomous Banner, what they are most concerned about and most confused about is "milk price", because "Sanlu incident" leaves shadow in their heart. After the incident, the milk price is too low, and herdsmen describe the milk price not as high as price of mineral water, having a great impact on income.

2.4 The employment structure of herdsmen is simple and the channel of income increase is narrow In 2008, the wage income of farmers and herdsmen in the western regions was only 59.26% of the average level of farmers in China. The wage income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Qinghai was only 40% of the national average, and in the pure pastoral counties, the wage income of herdsmen is lower. The overall quality of herdsmen is not high, and their work skills of engaging in non-pastoral production are poor. Together with differences in language, customs and other aspects, the ability to go out of grasslands, and transfer labor forces is relatively weak, therefore, the growth of the wage income is restricted greatly. In Evenki Autonomous Banner, herdsmen engaging in the secondary industry and tertiary industry are less than 10%, and 90% of herdsmen's net income is from animal husbandry. Herdsmen's educational level, professional skills, and market awareness, also restricts increase in herdsmen's income.

2.5 The transfer of labor forces in pastoral area shows "pumping-like transfer" The young man and able man choose to go out, while the old man and children stay in pastoral areas. It is difficult to transfer the poor herdsmen. In Evenki Autonomous Banner, the current income changes from mainly depending on animal husbandry, to depending on young man's working out of home and the old man and woman's pasturing. In recent years, with the outflow of young labor force from the pastoral areas into the city, in "grass cutting" summer, there is a shortage of labor forces in pastoral areas, and it is hard to employ the casual laborer with 100 yuan a day. In addition, it is noteworthy that most of the young herdsmen working outside home are not interested in labor in pastoral areas, therefore, the shortage of labor forces in pastoral areas will become increasingly prominent.

2.6 Herdsmen enjoy few national policies of supporting agriculture and benefiting farmers and the policy support is short In recent years, the state has adopted a series of policies to support agricultural development, but these policies are mainly aimed at rural areas and grain growers. In 2009, the central finance offered direct grain subsidies for farmers, subsidies for means of agricultural production, seed subsidies, and subsidies for agricultural machinery, totaling 127.46 billion yuan, and offered financial support to the major grain-producing counties and the major pig-raising counties. In 2010, the state arranged 818.3 billion yuan of input to agriculture, countryside and farmers (increasing by 93 billion yuan on the previous year), mainly used to improve the agricultural infrastructure building focusing on enhancement in comprehensive grain production capacity. Clearly, for the herdsmen engaged in animal husbandry in grassland, these policies are difficult to make the herdsmen enjoy the same benefits as the grain growers. It is estimated that from 2005 to 2009, the per capita state's subsidy to the grain growers is approximately 63 times that to herdsmen in pastoral areas, semi-farming and semi-pasturing regions. Inner Mongolia's statistical analysis shows that in 2009, there were at least 13 kinds of agriculture-related subsidies enjoyed
by the farmers, such as subsidies for means of agricultural production, direct grain subsidies, and seed subsidies, which enabled farmers to increase 368 yuan per capita, but as to the subsidies for the grassland, there was only feed subsidy for project of returning animal husbandry to grass, confined to the implementation zone of project of returning animal husbandry to grass. And the subsidy standards are low; subsidy for the grassland prohibiting pasturing is 74.25 yuan/ (hm² · year); subsidy for the grassland not used as pasture during a period is 18.6 yuan/ (hm² · year); the subsidy term is only 5 years. Data show that the ratio of the per capita national subsidies enjoyed by farmers to herdsmen in Inner Mongolia is about 66:1, with obvious contrast.

3 Proposals for increasing income of herdsman in western ethnic minority areas

The outline of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan clearly states that we should broaden the channels for increasing farmers’ income. During the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period, we should regard promoting herdsman’s income as a starting point, and from a strategic and overall perspective, make many constructive measures in western ethnic pastoral areas. We should improve herdsman’s vocational skills and income-generating capacity; encourage herdsmen to optimize breeding structure and improve efficiency; improve the system of subsidizing animal husbandry and other support systems; increase herdsman’s income through many channels. These are important links for achieving prominent economic development, significant social progress, obvious ecological improvement and harmonious society in western ethnic minority areas.

3.1 Transform the mode of production and operation and enhance the organization degree of the majority of herdsmen

We should organize herdsmen into all links of large-scale socialized production of farming and animal husbandry; use professional cooperative economic organizations to develop and promote the organizational degree of herdsmen; make a fundamental breakthrough in transformation of operating system, mode of operation, and mode of production; implement the mode of pasture building and the mode of share-holding responsibility system; based on the principles of voluntary combination and moderate concentration; actively promote normative and orderly circulation of contractual grassland, moderate concentration of grassland resources, and gradual clustering of factors of production to major breeding households, business master-hand, cooperative economic organizations, and the leading enterprises, to form large-scale production and commercialization management, providing basic conditions for improving organization of herdsmen. In the mean time, the government should increase support and input; offer more preferential policies for professional economic organizations in terms of taxation, credit, technology development, construction of supporting facilities and other aspects; offer support in terms of attracting investments from overseas, credit guarantee, tax incentives, etc., to create favorable environment for improving the organization of herdsmen.

3.2 Improve infrastructure conditions and promote comprehensive production capacity of agriculture and animal husbandry

We should increase inputs to the infrastructure construction of farming and animal husbandry, in order to create good environment for disease prevention, breeding, network-based management, promotion of scientific research results and other work, to ensure rapid and efficient development of farming and animal husbandry. We should take strengthening the construction of various types of facilities as important breakthrough for developing ecological agriculture and animal husbandry; focus on promoting the construction of animal husbandry facilities to propel intensive development of animal husbandry; strengthen the infrastructure construction in grassland of fencing, livestock stable, immunization and injection corral, and artificial feed bases, to promote rearing in confinement, regional rotation grazing, and improvement in conditions of water, electricity, and road. Through returning pasturing to grass, pest control, and other grassland protection measures, we should improve the production capacity of natural grassland. We should make good use of natural grassland, establish forage bases, vigorously support the leading enterprises of livestock production and processing, develop forage industry, and increase the proportion of rearing livestock in confinement.

3.3 Quicken pace of industrialization and strengthen the construction of technology support and service system

Taking market as orientation, we should rely on animal husbandry associations, professional cooperative economic organizations, and the leading enterprises, and adopt the production modes of cooperation between members, becoming a shareholder, and leasing, to promote the moderate concentration of pastures, livestock and other means of production, propel large-scale, intensive, and industrialized operation. We should actively foster and introduce the leading industrialized enterprises; strengthen support in terms of capital, policy, information, training and resource allocation; do a good job in marketing; publicize and recommend characteristic livestock products, focus on brand building, and create "natural grassland", "eco-grassland", "green grassland" and other brands that are invested with regional features and industrial advantages, in order to improve the economic value and enhance market competitiveness. We should strengthen disease prevention and control system; further improve and enrich the integrated grassroots service stations of animal husbandry; update equipment and facilities, and improve the working environment; train technical staff to effectively complete prevention and monitoring on the animal disease; effectively improve the scientific and technological content in farming and animal husbandry; accelerate construction of better strain breeding system; establish and improve socialized whole-course service network of farming and animal husbandry; speed up the information network construction of farming and animal husbandry; do a good job in market forecast, and information collection, information analysis and information release of development of the leading enterprises, disease detection, prices of forage, agricultural products and livestock products, to provide whole-course service for produc-
tion of agriculture and animal husbandry. Moreover, we should strengthen promotion of science and technology for agriculture and animal husbandry; vigorously propel the overall production technology of agriculture and animal husbandry; improve technology content in production of agriculture and animal husbandry; vigorously improve cultivation, processing, and use technology of fodder, and promote conversion rate of forage; vigorously promote advanced machinery for production of agriculture and animal husbandry, and continuously improve the mechanization level of production of agriculture and animal husbandry.

3.4 Speed up human capital accumulation rate of herdsmen and improve self-development ability of herdsmen

On the one hand, the government should strengthen the vocational skills training for herdsmen; carry out vocational training for young herdsmen that have completed compulsory education; carry out vocational skills training focusing on production skills, and marketing training. On the other hand, it should incorporate the funds of skills training for herdsmen into range of public financial support of government at all levels; effectively solve the problem of long-term shortage of human capital in pastoral areas; strengthen technical training highlighting practice for people who are engaged in production of farming and animal husbandry; encourage herdsmen to work outside home and improve their employment skills; establish a set of methods and systems of promoting labor forces in pastoral areas to work outside home, to improve income-generating capacity of labor forces in pastoral areas.

3.5 Propel transformation of production pattern of animal husbandry and innovate upon ecological protection construction mechanism

On the one hand, we should actively promote changes in production mode of animal husbandry. The government departments should speed up the training of new herdsmen that can adapt to the construction needs of new socialist pastoral areas, so as to make new herdsmen play a good demonstration role in driving the comprehensive transformation of production mode of animal husbandry in pastoral areas. On the other hand, we should actively innovate upon ecological protection mechanism, and combine the ecological animal husbandry, settlement project of herdsmen, and the project of "expansion of the town", to fundamentally solve the contradiction between conservation and development. By virtue of settlement project of herdsmen, in accordance with the principle of starting from reality, taking actions that suit local circumstances, and concentrated building, we should promote the rational allocation of resources, and propel the development of ecological animal husbandry. Under the premise of ensuring that the interest relations between herdsmen and grassland is solid, the contractual right is constant, and the income is never diminished, for the herdsmen departing from grassland, we should implement "three concentration", namely, concentration of grassland, concentration of livestock, and concentration of population, in order to promote the large-scale intensive production of animal husbandry. Through organizational and intensive development of ecological animal husbandry, we should improve production efficiency and economic benefits of animal husbandry, and reduce the number of people engaging in animal husbandry, so that the surplus herdsmen go out of the grassland to settle in cities and engage in non-pastoral industries. We should also promote smooth implementation of settlement project of herdsmen, the project of returning husbandry to grassland and the project of "expansion of the town". We should seriously distinguish between pastoral areas and agricultural areas; implement grassland household contract system in pastoral areas, taking family as contractual unit; encourage herdsmen to conduct joint governance, protection and construction in grassland on the basis of completing initial allocation of property rights of land in grassland. In order to promote herdsmen to change jobs, we must enhance skills training for them.

3.6 Increase subsidies for animal husbandry, pastoral area and herdsmen in western ethnic minority areas and strengthen policy implementation

The ecological protection and governance in ethnic minority areas, is not only a simple ecological problem, but also related to political stability, national unity and social stability in ethnic minority areas. We can refer to the policy of national agricultural subsidies, and formulate the subsidy system concerning the construction of ecological protection in grassland and the construction of artificial forage base in accordance with local conditions, to improve enthusiasm of ecological protection and basic production in pastoral areas, such as prohibiting grazing, balancing the grass and livestock, offering subsidies for fine varieties breeding, offering subsidies for the transfer and training of labor forces in pastoral areas, and offering subsidies for herdsmen to buy animal husbandry machinery. We should refer to "National Park Reserve Plan", research and develop milk storage technology or increase inputs of deep processing technology of milk. If the technology is feasible, the state should start "Reserve Milk System" in an appropriate time. Thus, in face of "Sanlu incident" and other incidents, herdsmen's economic interests can be better protected. We should strengthen implementation degree of various subsidies, formulate the relevant responsibility system, and implement the accountability system, to ensure implementation of national policy concerning animal husbandry, pastoral areas and herdsmen.

References


