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# Interpretation of the Construction of Socialist New Countryside

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**Abstract** Several old problems in the new countryside construction at present are analyzed. For instance the land transfer mechanism is not flexible, land problems have restricted the development of agricultural industrialization; farmers still have serious problems in income increase and lack the rational investment and consumption awareness; farmers receive low level of education and their cultural qualities are general poor; for a long time, legalization and democratization process of rural grass-roots organizations has been lagged behind. Causations for problems in the new countryside construction are various, such as lacking the subject consciousness, a long-term mechanism, industrial support and capital input. Finally, several new ideas about the construction of socialist new countryside are put forward, including speeding up the development of modern agriculture and doing everything possible to increase the income of farmers; paying attention to the development of civilized villages and towns and doing everything possible to enrich the knowledge of farmers; accelerating the establishment of long-term mechanism and gathering the ideas of farmers to the maximum extent; fully integrating project funds and constructing the socialist new countryside.

**Key words** New countryside construction, Agricultural industrialization, Subject consciousness, Long-term mechanism, China

At present, the economic and social development of China has entered into a new stage of industry nurturing agriculture and cities supporting rural areas. The Fifth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee points that the construction of socialist new countryside is a major historic task during the process of modernization. New countryside construction has become a policy benefiting people. However, during the practical work, we also find out that some areas only improve the cleanliness of villages, but pay little attention to the developed production, the well-off life, the civilized rural custom, the democracy management. Therefore, the new countryside in these areas has not really taken the road of sustainable development<sup>[1]</sup>. As a project benefiting the nation and the people and strengthening agriculture, new countryside construction has already become an important event in China generally accepted by the mass. However, during the practical work, there are still some misunderstandings about the connotation of new countryside, such as paying attention to the image but neglecting the quality, focusing on the short-term effect but ignoring the long-term effect, attaching importance to the separation but looking down on integration, and paying attention to external drive but neglecting the internal activation. Therefore, accelerating agricultural industrialization, enhancing the education level of farmers, and promoting the institutionalization of management have become the key issues that urgently need to be solved during new countryside construction.

## 1 Several old problems in the new countryside construction at present

### 1.1 The aspect of production development

Since the

land transfer mechanism is not flexible, land problems have restricted the development of agricultural industrialization. An overall view of the three great developments in agricultural history of China shows that they all have close correlation with the land reform. The first great development is at the period of land reform. Due to the change from no place to having land, farmers turn the kindness of the Party into the passion of production. Grain production is greatly developed, which solves the food problem. The second is at the period of cooperative. Due to the favorable weather, agricultural harvest is obtained by taking the path of collective farming. However, this also gives the wrong impression to the Central Committee of the Party, leading to the road of the "Great Leap Forward". Thus, the economic development law is violated. Besides, natural disaster happens frequently, which nearly causes the collapse of the economy. The third great development is at the period of household contract responsibility system. Implementation of the land contract system has greatly promoted the development of agriculture. However, the household contract responsibility system still belongs to the small peasant economy, which pays attention to self-sufficiency, has weak sense of the market, and is low in land revenue. With the development of social and economic development, the household contract responsibility system is no longer adapted to the new situation of the current economic development in some aspects.

### 1.2 The aspect of well-off life

Farmers still have serious problems in income increase and lack the rational investment and consumption awareness. Some local governments misunderstand the connotation of new countryside construction. These areas have low degree of agriculture industrialization and small scale of agricultural production. Farmers follow the traditional farming operations and have few opportunities to work in

non-agricultural industries, so that farmers lack the stable sources of income, can hardly increase their income, and have to follow the traditional lifestyle of "working outside-building houses-getting married-growing old". At the same time, lacking the rational investment and consumption awareness, farmers are unwilling to invest in agriculture, and rely on the support of government. According to the development of other industries, industries absorbing more capital usually develop faster. The well-known pattern of "company + base + peasant household" lacks the operability in reality in most rural areas, because farmers determine the sales orientation and areas according to the market prices. They only sell products to enterprises when its market is good. Otherwise, they sell products to other markets, which causes the instability of this pattern. In consumption, farmers are willing to invest all their money in building house. But the utilization rate of house is low, because farmers only stay at home during the Spring Festival and go out to work in the rest of the year. The house in rural areas usually has no property ownership certificate, and can not even get mortgage loan from a bank. Besides, there is no one to rent or buy the houses in rural areas. Affected by the social environment, getting married in rural areas usually costs 100 thousand yuan, which is a huge waste of money. The Mark Six and other forms of group gambling also can easily absorb the hard-earned money of farmers.

**1.3 In the aspect of civilized rural custom** Ever since a long time ago, farmers receive low level of education and their cultural qualities are generally poor. At the same time, rural areas pay little attention to the construction of spiritual civilization, so that farmers' moral concepts are relatively backward and their sense of civilization is weak. For instance, the bad habits are widely spread, such as the speaking foul language, throwing garbage at will, and occasionally stealing and gambling, which damage the construction of new countryside. Besides, the traditional custom of extravagant and wasteful weddings or funerals in rural areas becomes a heavy burden for the farmers.

**1.4 The aspect of democracy management** For a long time, legalization and democratization process of rural grass-roots organizations has been lagged behind. Purchasing or buying official position sometimes occurs; management with centralism but no democracy sometimes is abhorrent from the principles of law, which have caused the poor quality and ability of rural grass-roots cadres, as well as the poor creativity, cohesion and fighting capacity of rural grass-roots organizations. Therefore, the new countryside construction has to rely on government in most areas of China, with the purely administrative organization management, the low participation enthusiasm of farmers, and the poor subject consciousness. And it is common that people do everything possible to become a cadre in the rich villages; while no body want to work for the public in poor villages.

## 2 Cause analysis of the problems in new countryside construction

**2.1 Lacking the subject consciousness** New countryside

policy has been implemented for many years. But farmers' still do not understand the policy correctly. They think that construction of new countryside relies only on the higher authorities; and what they can do is to enjoy the results. Farmers do not really understand the policy of new countryside, which is a work pattern of government guidance, department participation, and the mass as main body. Farmers have not realized that they are the main body of the new countryside construction. And the common attitude of "waiting for, relying on, and asking for" still exists<sup>[2]</sup>.

**2.2 Lacking a long-term mechanism** The phenomenon of paying attention to construction and neglecting management is common in many construction sites of new countryside. Some farmers even think that the new countryside has a new look in first year, is kind of changed in the second year, and is nothing good in the third year. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, most local governments try to make a show. The assessment of the higher authorities is just a superficial game for local governments, which lacks the long-term mechanism. Secondly, there are financial constraints in most of the rural areas. Except that few villages carrying out land development have collective income, most of the villages live on the transfer payment of higher authorities. They simply can not afford the wages of environmental management, and have to refuse to take any responsibility.

**2.3 Lacking industrial support** The key to establish new countryside is to cultivate new farmers. Most of the villages have no leading industries. Traditional agriculture can neither improve the income of farmers significantly, nor enhance the quality of farmers effectively. Most of the farmers have no stable income sources, not to mention the well-off life. Farmers even have not enough money to build houses, and can not afford to beautify their living environment. Therefore, most of the new countryside constructions are very short-lived, villages will turn back to its old way after a number of years.

**2.4 Lacking capital investment** During the planned economy, household register leads to the differences in employment and life. However, under the current condition of market economy, public financial investment of government causes the differences in education, medical care and public resources between urban and rural areas. At present, new countryside construction mainly relies on the subsidy fund of 100 thousand yuan for each village. And there are few investments from the mass. The large-scale new countryside sites usually integrate the relevant project funds, so as to obtain enough funds. Generally, most new countryside sites usually carry out road alignment work, water renovation, and improve the environment. Then, there is no fund left to solve other problems.

## 3 Several new ideas about the construction of socialist new countryside

**3.1 Speeding up the development of modern agriculture; doing everything possible to increase the income of farmers** It is commonly known that only when the living standards are improved, can the farmers have the ability and enthusiasm

to improve their inhabited environment and the quality of life. Construction of new countryside should firstly increase the income of farmers. Industrial planning should be planned according to the local situation. Government should integrate the economic and social development in both urban and rural areas, enlarge the employment market of the rural work force, adjust the development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas, improve the strategic role in rural development, make more detailed short, middle and long term plans for the tertiary industry in rural areas, improve the comprehensive support policy, further increase the input in tertiary industry in rural areas, and change the current situation of scattered and small-scale tertiary industry with low output. Under the premise of rational planning and design of industrial structure, the relationship between urbanization and new countryside construction should be treated correctly. On the one hand, new countryside construction in the suburbs should be integrated into the new urbanization strategy. During the implementation of the new countryside construction, reform should be promoted effectively in order to speed up the industrialization of new countryside by urbanization. On the other hand, during the process of urbanization, more farmers should be turned into urban residents, and their income should be increased by developing ecological agriculture, ecological tourism, and farmhouse enjoyment.

Firstly, government should increase input in the "Three Agricultural Problems" according to the requirements of equalization of basic public services put forward in the Fifth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee. Based on local characteristics and existing foundation, regional characteristic industry should be cultivated. Government should vigorously promote the industrialized operation of agriculture by using one development idea and a set of practical techniques and support measures for one industry, cultivate industries that increase the income of farmers, realize the mechanized farming, modern management, and scientific planting, and gradually promote the agricultural industrialization in order to lay a solid industrial base for new countryside construction. Secondly, government should accelerate the construction of land management law and land transactions act, strengthen the management of land, guarantee the nature and use of land, ensure the orderly transfer of land, and return the interests of land transfer to farmers, absorb social capital to participate in land investment, optimize the resources allocation, and accelerate the agricultural development. Thirdly, works should be carried out around the center of income increase of farmers. For instance, the food price should be increased to the level higher than the international prices in order to ensure the food security of China. At the same time, food subsidy for low-income residents and agricultural subsidies for peasant households should be implemented in order to safeguard the interests of farmers. Preferential agricultural policies put forward by the central government should be strictly enforced, in order to adjust the agricultural structure, develop high-efficient agriculture, improve the agricultural infrastructures, carry out the work of rural credit, develop agricultural production, establish rural social security system, implement

the lowest life guarantee system, the family planning policy, and the endowment insurance of rural cadres in both urban and rural areas, and guide the farmers to build houses and to invest rationally.

**3.2 Paying attention to the development of civilized villages and towns; doing everything possible to enrich the knowledge of farmers** To establish a new countryside with civilized rural custom and democracy management, creating the civilized villages and towns should be taken as one of the major tasks in the new countryside construction. Everything possible should be done to enrich the knowledge of farmers. Through developing the civilized villages and towns, we can gradually change the bad habits of farmers, change their backward way of life, establish the healthy, civilized and scientific modes of new modern life, make farmers to live and work happily, enrich the material and cultural life in rural areas, and create a harmonious living environment.

Firstly, construction of rural grassroots organizations should be carried out. The leaders of grassroots organizations play a very important role in leading the development of rural areas, and in ensuring the stability of rural society. In the past, the village Party secretary had certain political position but no economic guarantees. However, the situation is even worse at present. They have an uncertain political future and low economic treatment. Therefore, government should provide insurance for the aged, eliminate their worries, carry out trainings to improve their ability to take the lead, encourage the old cadres, change the person in charge of the party organizations in enterprises, and implement the project of University Student Village Officer. Secondly, government should reinforce the Sunshine Project and the training and management of farmers, improve the quality of training, enhance the production technology and practical skills of farmers, and cultivate new farmers with skills and management abilities. At the same time, government should give more finance support for the farmers setting up entrepreneurship, help the able farmers in the aspects of financing channels, technical training, item information, market expectation, mutual aid and cooperation. Thirdly, when developing economy and enriching the farmers, government should pay attention to the construction of spiritual civilization, ensure the colorful after-hour life of farmers, implement the legal awareness in rural areas, and establish the socialist morals or customs. Through carrying out a variety of cultural activities, the popular culture types among farmers are developed, and cultural performance team of farmers is established, so that farmers can learn a variety of cultural knowledge and both of their cultural level and spiritual level are improved.

**3.3 Accelerating the establishment of long-term mechanism; gathering the ideas of farmers to the maximum extent** It is difficult to carry out the new countryside construction; and it is ever harder to manage the new countryside. The end of a round of improvement usually means the start of a new round of "dirty and disordered" environment. Therefore, arousing the peasants' initiative by multi-dimensional measures should be put in the first place of new countryside construction.

A long-term mechanism of new countryside construction should be established with the participation of farmers, so as to form the atmosphere of the common maintenance and management, and to gather the ideas of farmers to the maximum extent.

On the one hand, government should publicize the measures, experiences and work developments of building new countryside, tell farmers the benefits and interests brought by the new countryside construction, and gain the support of farmers. Based on this, various propagandas close to the life of farmers and reflecting the trends of rural areas should be carried out. Close contacts and communication with the farmers should be carried out by conducting entertainment program and introducing the policy, key points and construction process of new countryside, which can stimulate enthusiasm of farmers for participating in the new countryside construction. On the other hand, based on consolidating the grassroots organizations, government should actively promote the construction of rural social groups and organizations, accelerate the democratization process of the management of new countryside construction, and ensure the basic rights and interests of farmers who participate in the construction and management of new countryside construction. For instance, the Village Council, or the Village Community Volunteers Association, can be taken as a platform to encourage the members and the village leaders to make a long-term mechanism of the public management affairs. Through carrying out the appraisal activities, we can guide the farmers to protect public facilities, to participate in the public management affairs, and to maintain a good village appearance.

**3.4 Fully integrating project funds; constructing the socialist new countryside** The objective of new countryside construction is to realize the coordinated development of rural culture, economy, politics and society. According to the experiences of different areas, it is necessary to integrate the funds of new countryside construction, in order to effectively promote the construction of new countryside. At present, each new countryside site only get about 100 thousand yuan, which is far

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increase within the lag phase of 2 – 6 years. Therefore, it can be concluded that development of township enterprises can help to improve the urban-rural dual economic structure to some extent.

### 3 Conclusion

Dual contrast coefficient reaches its maximum value in the 1990s, although the urban-rural dual economic structure in China further deteriorated in early 21st Century and the township enterprises lost their glories of the 1990s. This is a period that urban-rural dual economic structure achieves its greatest improvement in China. Result of cointegration empirical analysis shows that without the influence of other factors, development of township enterprises is the key to improve the urban-rural dual economic structure in China in the years 1979 –

from enough to build a standardized new countryside. Therefore, to effectively promote the construction, we should fully integrate the project funds, and motivate all sectors of society to construct the socialist new countryside.

On the one hand, the agriculture-related project funds obtained should be used for the new countryside construction according to the actual needs, in order to ensure the scale of construction. On the other hand, government should develop various preferential policies and measures, attract the funds of all sectors of society to invest in the new countryside. For instance, attract the investment of wealthy businessmen by tax preference, project attraction and other means; and attract the high-level talented person by handsomely-paid jobs. On the other hand, during the construction of the projects, government should strengthen the coordination and management of various departments, concentrate all forces on a major task, and motivate all sectors of society to support the development of new countryside construction<sup>[3]</sup>.

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2005, which is consistent with the original intention of the policy makers in China who want to promote the urban-rural dual economic structure by the development of township enterprises.

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