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Problems of Rural Food Safety and Strategies of Constructing Supervision System

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Abstract This paper expounds the practical necessity of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system as follows: it is the necessary requirements of guaranteeing people's health and life safety; it is an important component of governmental function of social management and the logical extension of administrative responsibilities; it is the basis of maintaining order of rural society and constructing harmonious society. The main problems existing in the supervision of rural food safety are analyzed as follows: first, the legislative work of rural food safety lags behind to some extent; second, the supervision of governmental departments on rural food safety is insufficient; third, the industrial supervision mechanism of rural food security is not perfect; fourth, the role of rural social organizations in supervising food safety is limited; fifth, the farmers' awareness of food safety supervision is not strong. Based on these problems, the targeted strategies of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system are put forward as follows: accelerate the legislation of rural food safety, and ensure that there are laws to go by; give play to the dominant role of government, and strengthen administrative supervision on rural food safety; perfect industrial convention of rural food safety, and improve industrial supervision mechanism; actively support the fostering of social organizations, and give play to the role of supervision of organizations; cultivate correct concept of rights and obligations of farmers, and form awareness of food safety supervision.

Key words Rural food safety, Supervision, Main problems, System construction, China

Rural food safety is not only related to people's health and life safety, but also to the stability of rural social order and construction of harmonious society, therefore, strengthening food safety supervision in rural areas has important ethical value and strategic significance. However, the inefficient rural food safety supervision in China at present, restricts the improvement of overall level of food safety supervision in China, and affects the practical effect of food safety supervision. This paper expounds the practical necessity of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system. The main problems existing in the supervision of rural food safety are analyzed. Based on these problems, the targeted strategies of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system are put forward, in order to provide reference for practical work and theoretical research.

1 The practical necessity of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system

1.1 It is the necessary requirements of guaranteeing people's health and life safety The right of life and health is the most basic human right, that is to say, if there is no such basic right, other rights will lose their carrier, without substantive significance. Rural food safety is the top priority related with the health and life safety of rural residents and even all people in Country. Most of the food in our daily life, such as rice, flour, vegetables, meat, egg and so on, is from the rural areas, which determines that the rural area is the biggest "battle" of food safety supervision. With frequent vicious incidents of

food safety in China, effective food safety regulatory system can be conducive to finding the problems existing in production, marketing, consumption and other parts of rural food timely, obviating food safety hazards, exposing serious criminal acts of the food safety, and ensuring the food to meet safety standards in the source and process, which is also the inevitable requirement on rural food safety supervision for people's health and life safety.

1.2 It is an important component of governmental function of social management and the logical extension of administrative responsibilities The governmental function of social management is an important part of administrative functions of government. Especially when the civil rights are gradually guaranteed and civil society ceaselessly grows, the source of the legitimacy of the governmental administration does not merely take into account the extensive economic growth, but more relies on quality of social management, namely the recognition and support of citizens for governmental administration, which has become the new growth point for performance of the local government. As the rural food safety problem stands out, it poses challenges to social management function of the local government. People hope that the government can play a greater role and assume more responsibilities in food safety supervision, in order to maintain the right of life and health of citizens. Consequently, how the government plays a leading role in food safety supervision in rural areas, effectively avoids the absence, offside and dislocation of administrative supervision, and maintains the legitimate interests of the masses in the process of production, circulation and consumption of the rural food, become the necessity of logical extension of the government's administrative responsibilities.

1.3 It is the basis of maintaining order of rural society and constructing harmonious society

The problem of rural food safety not only becomes a threat to health and safety of people, but also spreads rapidly via developed information technology and the mass media in current society, causing panic to the masses and chaos of social order. In addition, the group events arising from rural food safety have the characteristics of suddenness, publicness, variation and so on, inflicting negative impact on the social order. Therefore, taking every precaution at beginning is the scientific way to realize effective rural food safety supervision, and effectively solve the ensuing public emergencies. This requires governmental departments to strengthen the administration-oriented function, vigorously implement the food safety supervision in rural areas, and actively carry out wide cooperation with businesses, social organizations, and individual citizens, so as to form diversified rural food safety regulatory system, effectively ensure the safety of people's lives and property, maintain the order of rural society and whole country, build harmonious society, and eliminate adverse factors.

2 The main problems existing in the supervision of rural food safety

2.1 The legislative work of rural food safety lags behind to some extent

The implementation of work of rural food safety supervision is inseparable from legislation which provides a clear legal basis for administrative regulation, industrial regulation, social supervision and so on. In recent years, with the rampant illegal behaviour and criminal offense concerning the food safety, as well as the frequent occurrence of public emergencies in society, food safety problems gradually capture the high attention of legislature, government and leaders. In 2009, *Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China* was enacted and implemented, on the basis of revising *Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China*. However, this cannot effectively maintain the safe operation of complex and fickle food market. The food safety incidents, such as toxic milk powder, toxic bun, lean meat powder and so on, occur successively, endangering people's lives and health, which exposes that *Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China* imposes insufficient punishment on offenders, without deterrent power^[1]. At the same time, the relevant administrative legislation work of the governmental departments lags behind, which cannot fully reflect the pith of *Food Safety Law*. The governmental department fails to frame perfect administrative regulation system, but depends on several limited imperfect regulations, such as *Hygiene Management Method of Genetically Modified Food*, *Hygiene Management Method of Food Additives* and so on, which makes it difficult to guide the safety supervision in the field of production, circulation and consumption of food. Especially the shortage of launching legislation work of the rural food safety makes the rural areas, as the forefront of food safety supervision, has no law to abide by, or due to the irrationality of provision, there is the phenomenon of not abiding by the laws, endangering the right of lives and property of peo-

ple, and generating negative impact on the social order.

2.2 The supervision of governmental departments on rural food safety is insufficient

Administrative supervision and regulation is the most direct and powerful means for rural food safety, relying on the administrative power, which has the advantages of authority, coercion, punishment and so on, and plays the role of major force in the rural food safety supervision. However, the management departments of China's government are decentralized and the functions of them are not uniform^[2]. The function of rural food safety supervision has not yet been fully and effectively exerted, which can be embodied as follows: the first is the absence of administrative supervision. Restricted by the rural geography, transportation and other factors, coupled with the fund problems of administrative supervision departments, the supervision of local governmental departments on rural food safety is insufficient, and local governmental departments cannot find illicit and criminal behaviours of rural food safety timely and wholly; the second is the offside of administrative supervision. When dealing with the lucrative cases that can increase the fiscal revenue of departments and thus show performance, the phenomenon that various related departments vie for the supervision occurs, resulting in the clutter and disorder of supervision on rural food safety; the third is the non-performance of administrative supervision. Impacted by the traditional parochial official achievement perceptive and the existing evaluation mechanism, the local government loosens the supervision on the safety problems in the field of production in rural areas, and takes pursuit of local economic growth as the basis of evaluating official performance, resulting in the infestation of violation of laws and codes of conduct in the field of food production in rural areas.

2.3 The industrial supervision mechanism of rural food security is not perfect

The industrial supervision in the supervision system of rural food safety, the powerful complement to administrative supervision, taking the industry as main body, through the form of establishing industrial terms of an agreement to set up industry alliances, is an effective regulatory mechanism restricting members' industrial behaviours. However, this regulatory mechanism has not yet played significant role in supervision on rural food safety, which can be embodied as follows: various kinds of industrial organizations and associations of rural food play unsound role, which cannot effectively organize and manage scattered production enterprises and workshop of rural food; at the same time, the regulatory organizations amid industries have not yet achieved corresponding development, and the industrial regulatory function is immature, restricting the formation and development of industrial regulatory mechanism of rural food safety. Moreover, in the fields of production, circulation and consumption of rural food, it lacks various industrial treaties at present, which makes it difficult to conduct effective constraint and circumvention on the illegal competitions and behaviours in the same industry, so that the industrial supervision is void in the field of rural food safety, and various enterprises, production workshops groups and individuals in industry are in an anarchic state, ratcheting

up the difficulty of supervision.

2.4 The role of rural social organizations in supervising food safety is limited The perfection degree of the system of social organization is an important symbol reflecting whether the development of civil society in one country is sound. Especially with the continuous differentiation of social organization, and incessant perfection of function, the perfection degree of the system of social organization is conducive to the occurrence of the third-party supervision subject amid the state and the citizen in the supervision of rural food safety. China's traditional centralized system leadership and administrative tendency have already permeated all aspects of life, as well as the development of social organization. The governmental departments outshine others in the supervision of rural food, devoid of communication and cooperation with social groups and organizations, which thus restricts the opportunities of development and growing of China's rural social groups and organizations in rural food safety supervision. Therefore, the rural social groups and organizations in rural food safety supervision are difficult to be as an independent third-party force, and play more roles of market supervision^[3]. Meanwhile, China lacks the tradition of self-governing mass organization, therefore, it has not formed corresponding social organizations, or due to the flaws of function differentiation of social organization, it has not yet formed multiple system of social organization, and in particular, the function of rural food safety supervision organization has not yet taken shape. There are few such organizations and groups, which thus increases the workload of governmental departments in rural food safety supervision, and makes the rural food safety lack organized and diversified supervision ways.

2.5 The farmers' awareness of food safety supervision is not strong The power of the masses constitutes the most timely and effective basis in the supervision of rural food safety. The public report and complaint is also one of the most important ways to find the incidents of China's rural food safety at present. But the rural residents' awareness of food security and supervision in China for the time being is relatively weak^[4], which is, on one hand, impacted by the traditional thought. They hold that they will be nonchalant about the thing unrelated with them, and fear to incur unnecessary trouble and retaliation from others, that is, they will turn a blind eye as long as it does not directly scathe their own interests. They just mind their own business, not taking the initiative to report and expose the illicit and criminal behaviours of rural food safety, which connives at and exacerbates the criminal behaviours of malefactor. On the other hand, restricted by the level of knowledge and knowledge of laws and regulations, the rural residents have not yet formed proper legal awareness, correct view of civil rights and obligations, and in fact they do not regard reporting and lodging a complaint against illegal incidents of food safety as their bounden duty. In the mean time, they lack sufficient understanding of the relevant laws and regulations, and do not know clearly the approach of reports and complaints, which further abates the rural residents' enthusiasm in participating in the supervision of food safety.

3 The targeted strategies of constructing diversified rural food safety supervision system

3.1 Accelerate the legislation of rural food safety and ensure that there are laws to go by Considering the diversity and variability of rural food safety offense cases at present, the legislature should implement special legislative work for rural food safety as quickly as possible, providing powerful legal guarantee for rural food safety supervision, making sure that there are laws to abide by. Firstly, legislation workers should make a careful study of food safety incidents that happened since 2009, make a systematic analyses on the food safety offense cases from the natures, characteristics, developmental trend and so on, and thereby make necessary amendments and supplements to *Food Safety Law*, so that *Food Safety Law* is more specific, more adaptive to the present need of food safety situation. Secondly, in light of the particular status of rural food safety, they should lay down special laws for rural food safety, such as *Rural Food Safety Law*, make a rational definition of various behaviors, rights and obligations in the fields of production, circulation, and consumption of rural food, and conduct definite stipulations on the role and function of the governmental departments, social organizations and citizen in the supervision of rural food safety. Finally, according to the guidance of related legal documents, the governmental departments should accelerate administrative legislation, lay down unified, clear and specific administrative laws and regulations, and perfect the administrative regulation system, which is shown in Fig. 1, providing work basis for governmental departments to carry out specific supervision of food safety. Moreover, the the governmental departments should rationally define the rights and liabilities relationship between different departments, and spin the law net of rural food safety supervision.

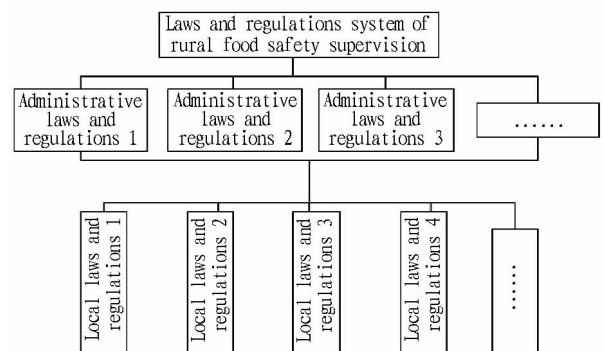


Fig. 1 Laws and regulations system of rural food safety supervision

3.2 Give play to the dominant role of government and strengthen administrative supervision on rural food safety

The government should assume the role of social management and market regulation, and reinforce the supervision on the rural food safety. In the first place, it should avoid absence. The governmental departments should actively undertake their role, assume the administrative function within their

role, and fulfill administrative duties conscientiously. For the rural food safety, it should combine regular inspection and irregular inspection, combine statically accepting reports and complaints, and dynamic visits and investigations, eradicate rural food safety incidents before they occur, find the risks and crises existing in the food safety, and make good preparation and disposal. In the second place, it should not exceed its duties and meddle in others' affairs. The government should formulate relevant rules and regulations, clearly define the specific responsibilities of the relevant departments in the rural food safety supervision, and prevent the phenomenon that if there is a problem, all departments will shuffle mutually, and go after fame and power for interests, so that all departments assume their responsibilities and cooperate vigorously in the work of rural food safety supervision. In the third place, it should establish administrative head responsibility system of rural food safety, change the traditional simple practice of taking economic development as the standard of evaluating performance of officials, and incorporate food safety into governmental performance evaluation. As for the establishment of administrative head responsibility system, it should crystallize the responsibilities and obligations of administrative head in the rural food safety, so that when there are food safety incidents, we can pin down the responsibilities and make local governmental officials strengthen the emphasis and implementation on the rural food safety supervision.

3.3 Perfect industrial convention of rural food safety and improve industrial supervision mechanism

Industrial supervision is one of the effective ways of improving the rural food safety supervision in China. The governmental departments should actively develop and make use of it, fulfill the supervision and restraint function that industrial association and industrial convention have on rural food safety so that the industrial supervision mechanism can be improved. First of all, we should establish and perfect all kinds of food industry associations and other industry organizations in the rural areas, integrate the scattered and atomized form of food production, circulation and sales enterprises and individual workshop to implement an effective organization management and reduce the difficulty of supervising food safety in rural areas. Secondly, we should establish and perfect the industrial conventions of different food industries in the rural areas as soon as possible. We take laws and regulations as the instruction. We reach the "contract" of food industry in the rural areas as a standard of behaviour for the enterprises, organizations and individuals by consulting and discussing among various enterprises, units and citizens. In addition, we should formulate rewards and punishments for various kinds of behaviours in the food industry, restrict all kinds of behaviours in the production, circulation and consumption fields in the rural areas with a common standard of value and regulations, and thus give full play to the management and supervision function of the industry association.

3.4 Actively support the fostering of social organizations and give play to the role of supervision of organizations

To get a better effect on the supervision of rural food safety,

the civil society should grow to maturity and participate in it. The imperfect development of the current social organization system in China restricts the development of civil society. Therefore, the governmental departments should transform administrative concepts and the mode of execution, change the imagination and practice of "outshining others" and "supremacy over all" in the economy, culture and social management. Especially in the supervision of food safety in rural areas, the governmental departments should positively encourage and support the growth and development of all kinds of social groups and nongovernmental organizations. They should also provide policy support, financial support and other resources support to gradually help social organizations to improve the socialized service, participation and supervision function, take them as an effective supplement to the social management and market supervision function of the government. The governmental department managers should change their thoughts, leave more opportunity and space for the social organizations to participate in the supervision of food safety in rural areas, encourage and reward all kinds of rural social organizations to participate in supervising food safety actively. During the process of cooperating with the government, these rural social organizations will constantly experience the period of running-in and joining with each other. Finally, we can achieve an agreed view and cooperation between the government departments and various kinds of rural social organizations and non-governmental organizations.

3.5 Cultivate correct concept of rights and obligations of farmers and form awareness of food safety supervision

The governmental departments should transform their administrative concepts and methods of work, strengthen the contact and cooperation with the rural people in supervising the rural food safety. They should foster the rural people's sense and capability of participating in the rural food safety supervision, thus practically giving play to the basic role of the general public. The governmental departments should increase the propaganda on laws and regulations among the rural people, let them have more knowledge about the laws, thus gradually cultivating their sense of legal system so that they can safeguard their rights of life and health in time by applying the weapon of the law and safeguard the legitimate interests of the surrounding people and the whole society. Meanwhile, the governmental departments should also strengthen the education of rights and obligations among rural people so that they can be aware that the legal rights which they should enjoy and the civic duties that they should fulfill as a member of the society. Rural food safety supervision is not only a legal right, but also an obligation that they should fulfill to maintain social stability and security. It is every citizen's bounden duty to denounce and complain the food safety illegal behaviour. To make the display of the supervision function among the masses more conveniently, train and exercise the supervision sense and the participation ability of the rural people, the government departments should set up simple hotline for people to involve in and other organizational

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other professional cooperative organizations also establish excellent connecting channels with farmers since they all formed based on farmers' voluntariness. Agricultural insurance business can be accepted by farmers more easily through their agent services.

4 Conclusion

Under the preconditions of solid household contract responsibility system, development of rural professional cooperative organization serves as an effective carrier for the future development of agricultural insurance in China. Conversely, development of agricultural insurance provides the guarantee for the healthy improvement of agricultural cooperatives. Undoubtedly, there are various kinds of troubles in the development of agricultural insurance as well as agricultural economic cooperative organization. In order to actively support the healthy improvement of agricultural professional cooperative, agricultural insurance system need to be perfected gradually, which means that insurance products should be designed according to the actual situations of different cooperative organizations. More comprehensive, considerate and professional insurance services should be provided for rural professional cooperative organizations to extend agricultural insurance to each section of agricultural industrialization production and management as well as every corner of the countryside, which helps farmers truly enjoy insurance benefits. Similarly, to effectively exert the function of agricultural insurance as an effective carrier, there is big room for perfecting agricultural cooperative economic organization. Luckily, with the quickening of agricultural industrialization, farmers' professional cooperative organization and agricultural insurance being the operation subject and primary guarantee of modern agricultural development respectively have been highly emphasized by the government sector. We have sound reasons to believe that with the policy boost of the government, agricultural insurance and agricultural economic cooperative organization will promote each other and develop together.



(From page 57)

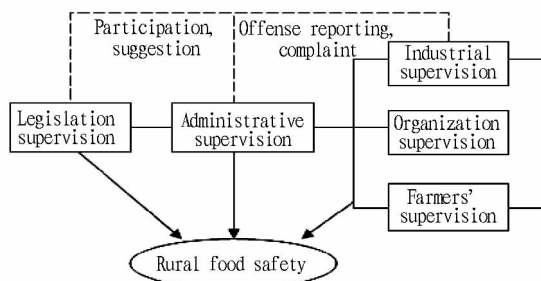


Fig.2 Rural food safety supervision system

channels. In addition, they should also do publicity and public. The governmental departments should have a reasonable reward policy for those individuals who play significant roles for the rural food safety and encourage the public to participate

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in supervising. The governmental departments play a leading role, take the legislation as guidance and cooperate with the industrial supervision and social organization supervision (Fig.2) to improve the supervision sense and supervision ability of the rural people in practice.

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