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An Inquiry into Cultivation of New-generation Farmers

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Abstract This article expounds the necessity of the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers; the building of new socialist countryside needs modern new farmers; the coordination of urban-rural integration development needs the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers; the development of modern agriculture needs the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers. Then it analyses the characteristics and role of new-generation farmers, and presents the way to accelerate cultivation of new-generation farmers; make sound laws and regulations, to lay solid foundation for cultivation of new-generation farmers; create conditions, to provide funds guarantee for cultivation of new-generation farmers; make scientific planning, to promote regular, systematized and standardized training work for new-generation farmers; focus on education, to promote the overall quality of new-generation farmers; innovate upon content, to meet the needs of development of new-generation farmers; highlight focus, to intensify competitiveness training for returning-home migrant workers.

Key words "New generation", New farmers, Cultivation

At present, China has entered a brand-new historical period. The economy and society in rural areas are experiencing dramatic changes, and modern agriculture is developing rapidly, posing new requirements on farmers. The new-generation farmers will replace traditional farmers (Main body of rural building) to inch by inch become essential vital force and main force in building of new socialist countryside, showing increasingly important position and role in economic and social development of rural areas. Accelerating the cultivation of high-quality new-generation farmers has become an urgent and important task in current economic and social development, which is of great significance to promoting building of new socialist countryside and transformation and development of modern agriculture, transforming enormous rural population pressure in China into human resources advantage.

1 The building of new socialist countryside needs the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers

1.1 The building of new socialist countryside needs modern new farmers The building of new socialist countryside is a rare development opportunity for agriculture, a great social change for rural areas, and a good time gospel for farmers. The general requirement of building new socialist countryside is "production development, affluent life, civilized township, neat village and democratic management"^[1]. It not only requires the development of productive forces, but also requires adjustment and improvement of relations of production; it not only requires speeding up economic development, but also requires speeding up social development; it not only requires strengthening mate-

rial civilization building, but also requires strengthening political civilization, spiritual civilization and harmonious society building^[2]. Farmers are the main body of rural building, and the building of new socialist countryside needs high-quality human resources in rural areas as protection. Under the condition of building of new socialist countryside, we must face the quality of rural labor forces in China. Currently in China's rural areas, the average years of schooling of labor forces are short, and the educational level and overall quality of labor forces are not high, with weak legal consciousness, lacking modern labor skills and knowledge, coupled with firm belief and sense of uplift. The farmers staying in the rural areas are difficult to undertake the important task of developing modern agriculture, and there is great volatility in employment of the rural labor forces seeking job elsewhere due to lack of employment skills and expertise, far from adapting to the needs of building new socialist countryside. Whether from the current view, or from long-term consideration, we need to do everything possible to improve the quality of farmers, cultivate the traditional farmers into educated and skilled new farmers who know business and management, and arouse the passion and vitality of the majority of farmers. This will definitely redound to promoting scientific and technological progress in rural areas, improving political progress, giving play to the role of cultural progress, and guiding the farmers to build better home with their own hands, to achieve the goal of building a new countryside.

1.2 The coordination of urban-rural integration development needs the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers The huge gap between urban and rural areas is the most prominent and greatest problem in the course of China's economy and society moving toward modernization. Chinese Party Central Committee proposed that in order to solve the issues concerning agriculture, farmers and countryside, we must balance urban and rural social and economic development, and take the problems existing in urban and rural areas and economic and social development in urban and rural

areas as a whole to research and plan. With the advance of balanced development in urban and rural areas, the rural areas are bound to extend from traditional agriculture to emerging large agricultural industry chain, transfer to non-agricultural industries, divert from simple labor to complex labor, gradually divert from labor-intensive mode to knowledge-intensive mode. In addition, some villages divert to cities and towns. People's quality and professional skills directly affect the process of balanced development of urban and rural areas, and low quality of rural labor forces at present and in the past hinders the advance of narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas. Since modern new farmers, especially the new-generation farmers have higher educational level than their parents, so their cultural foundation, ideas, technology quality and level of management are more adaptable to new knowledge and new requirements of balanced development in urban and rural areas under the new situation, than their elders, becoming the important factors in development of urban-rural integration.

1.3 The development of modern agriculture needs the transformation from traditional farmers to modern new farmers The actual situation of too many people and less land, relative shortage of resources, as well as the status quo of low rate of high-quality agricultural products and lack of international competitiveness, determine that China's rural areas must transform the model of agricultural development, take the road of developing modern agriculture, and use minimal inputs of human resources, finance and materials to achieve maximization of economic, social and ecological benefits. To achieve this goal, first, we must optimize and upgrade industrial structure and product structure within agriculture, popularize agricultural high technology, comprehensively improve efficiency of agricultural production; second, we must vigorously develop the secondary industry and tertiary industry based on agriculture, to achieve integrated development of agriculture, industry and business, drive strategic shift of the entire countryside. The implementation of this strategic shift hinges in a large measure on the transformation from traditional farmers to literate and skilled modern new farmers.

2 The characteristics and role of new-generation farmers

The new-generation farmers are relative to traditional farmers, the essence of which is still farmer. They are a new generation of educated and skilled farmers who know business, and the main force of new farmers in rural areas in a certain period at present and in the future. With the economic and social development and technological progress, they are not only the main body of building new socialist countryside, but also the vital force for advancing China's modernized production and achieve the development of industrialization, urbanization and agricultural modernization in China, which will show more and more important position and role in economic and social development in rural areas gradually.

2.1 The characteristics of new-generation farmers The new-generation farmers are mainly divided into two categories.

The first is the farmers fully engaged in agricultural production. Currently, these farmers are equipped with the knowledge and technology needed by modern agricultural production, but since they deviate from the agricultural production practice in the early period, their ability to engage in agricultural production is relatively weak; they have initiative, openness and creativity, but the labor skills are poor; they lack enthusiasm in participating in rural construction. In some rural areas, some affairs closely related to agricultural production and living, such as land contract, road and bridge construction, water and electricity supply, agricultural technology services, health care and family planning, almost all rely on push of the government, but if the government regulates excessive affairs, the farmers' enthusiasm to participate in public affairs will be abated. "Low quality" makes the new-generation farmers difficult to adapt to the high requirement of building new socialist countryside to some extent, resulting in increase in agricultural output, increase in farmers' income, difficulty in employment and re-employment of rural labor forces, and difficulty in transfer of a large number of surplus labor forces. Their stay in rural areas not only causes serious waste of resources, but also becomes the bottleneck hampering rural economic and social development, impeding the process of building a new countryside. The second is the farmers, without any farming experience, who hanker for entering and integrating into urban society. With the increase in age of the first generation of farmers and their returning to rural areas, they gradually enter into urban areas to become the main body, accounting for 70% of total number of migrant workers at present. Compared to the previous generation of migrant workers, the new-generation migrant workers are characterized by "three high and one low", namely high level of education, high vocational expectation, high requirement on material and spiritual enjoyment, and low work tolerance. As to working in the city, there are some problems to different degrees as follows: lack of ability to adapt to society; lack of the necessary employment skills; lack of active entrepreneurial enthusiasm; lack of capacity for taking pains. Thus they are trapped in a dilemma in terms of career choosing, employment, and working, that is, they are unwilling to go to rural areas, but the city is difficult to take them in.

2.2 The role of new-generation farmers

2.2.1 New-generation farmers are the internal driving force for accelerating the social development in rural areas. The development of rural community cannot be completed merely by building house and paving new road. It involves many aspects: either issues concerning economic development or problems regarding social progress; either the content on industrial restructuring, or the content on system reform deepening; either the use of technological means, or the choice of mode of operation. The backwardness of rural areas for the time being lies in fundamentally the backwardness of human being. As farmers' educational level is very low, seriously hampering the development of rural society. Only by improving the quality of farmers can the rural construction be carried on continuously^[3], effectively and rapidly advancing along the track guided by the scien-

tific concept of development, to ultimately achieve the desired goal. The Party and the State Council have attached great importance to education and training for new farmers, for example, *Several Opinions on Promoting Building of New Socialist Countryside*, *The Eleventh Five-Year Plan of National Economy and Social Development*, and *National Action Plan for Scientific Literacy*, have specially interpreted the content on vigorously carrying out skill training for rural labor forces, supporting technology training for new farmers, promoting farmers' farming skills and technology quality, and implementing scientific quality action plan for farmers. This series of policies and measures indicate that the new farmers play a very important role in China's economic and social development, and the CPC Central Committee and the State Council attach great importance to the cultivation of new farmers. The new-generation farmers are the most dynamic vital forces that are most likely to accept new knowledge, new policies and new things in new farmers. Therefore, the cultivation of new-generation farmers has become the intrinsic force for propelling comprehensive development of rural economy and society.

2.2.2 New-generation farmers are the key to transforming enormous population pressure into human resources advantage. Domestic and international experience shows that only by the transfer of rural surplus labor forces out can the farmers get rich and rural areas prosper. According to the key data from the sixth national census conducted by National Bureau of Statistics in 2010, it shows that the total population of China is 1 370 536 875; the number of people living in rural areas is 674 149 546, accounting for 50.32%. NPC Agriculture and Rural Work Committee in 2011 pointed out that at present, China's per capita arable land area declines from 1 053.386 hm² 10 years ago to 920.046 hm², only 40% of the world average^[4]. According to Ingalls modern index system, only when the proportion of agricultural labor forces is reduced to below 30% can it be consistent with standard of modernization. From China's current situation, the share of rural labor forces in China's labor forces is large, and rural employees account for 90.1% of total rural labor force resources^[5]. Too many people and less land cause voluminous surplus labor forces to be accumulated in rural areas. In addition to low educational level and lack of vocational skills, rural human resources are difficult to be effectively developed, which has seriously hampered the development of rural economy and increase in farmers' income. Accelerating the cultivation of new-generation farmers and promoting the quality of new-generation farmers, is conducive to propelling large scale of development of agriculture and rural areas, cultivating professional and industrialized modern production backbone, fostering a large number of high-quality new-generation migrant workers in cities, the secondary industry and tertiary industry, strengthening farmers' employment and entrepreneurship capacity, and transforming enormous China's rural population pressure to advantage of human resources.

2.2.3 New-generation farmers are the prerequisite for developing modern agriculture. China's modern agriculture and new rural construction is faced with the national food security, and a

series of challenges such as increasing farmers' income, improving the international competitiveness of agriculture, protecting the environment, and protecting consumer health. Meanwhile, on one hand, the domestic demand for agricultural products shows the trend of rapid growth along with the increase of population, income increase and industrial development; on the other hand, the domestic agricultural production is restricted by shrinking arable land, water resources shortage, deterioration of ecological conditions, low quality of workers and other factors. The key to resolving this contradiction lies in strengthening promotion and application of modern agriculture technology and innovation, reinforcing the management of modern mass production, and improving utilization efficiency of resources. However, ultimately it has to rely on fundamentally improving the quality of agricultural labor forces. Attention to cultivation of new-generation farmers has become the precondition of China's modern agriculture and new rural construction.

2.2.4 New-generation farmers are vital force for increasing farmers' income. An important way to increase farmers' income is to have a large number of agricultural scientific and technological achievements and transform them into practical productive forces. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization once measured the difference between vocational education and elementary education, and found that the labor productivity of workers who have received systematic vocational education is three times that of workers who have not received systematic vocational education. The new-generation farmers received systematic vocational education and elementary education, and at least received "6 + 2", "3 + x" basic education plus vocational skills training education, who can better and quickly master development, application and promotion of new technology, new varieties, and new cultivation methods, so that the scientific and technological achievements are converted into practical productive forces rapidly, and the agricultural productivity is improved, thus becoming the vital force and sustainable potential for increasing farmers' income, and achieving well-off target.

2.2.5 New-generation farmers are main factor of constructing harmonious society. In order to build a new socialist countryside, we must make the farmers live and work in harmony, and make the rural areas stable, orderly, be full of vitality. At present, due to low scientific and cultural quality, backward ideas of the majority of farmers, coupled with slow income growth and great survival pressure, various social contradictions are easily triggered to form unstable and discordant elements. The emergence of new-generation farmers will greatly enhance the overall quality of farmers, enhance the ability of farmers to get rich, safeguard farmers' legitimate rights and interests, and reduce the instable factors, having great significance to building a harmonious new countryside.

3 The way to accelerate cultivation of new-generation farmers

The cultivation of new-generation farmers has become an important way to resolve issues concerning agriculture, coun-

tryside and farmers, develop modern agriculture, build a socialist new countryside, and achieve the harmonious development of rural economy and society. How to speed up the cultivation of new-generation farmers not only needs correct understanding and wide attention, but also needs to focus on the following work.

3.1 Make sound laws and regulations to lay solid foundation for cultivation of new-generation farmers The enactment of relevant laws and regulations is effective protection for cultivating new-generation farmers. As for farmer training, many developed countries have formulated relevant laws and regulations, such as the UK's *Agricultural Training Act*, and Germany's *Vocational Education Law*, which provides relevant content concerning farmer training. Although China has promulgated *Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, it only in Chapter 1, Article 2 states that the state should take measures to develop rural vocational education, support the development of vocational education in ethnic minority areas, remote and poor areas, and it offers no corresponding instruction and provision in terms of cultivating farmers. As a country with a large agricultural population, China should pay more attention to farmers' education, use the form of legislation to crystallize the status, content and security conditions of training education for farmers, and regulate the responsibilities and obligations of the grass-roots government departments, education and training institutions and farmers. Through enacting regulations on farmers' education and training, we should put cultivating and promoting new-generation farmers' overall quality and labor skills high on the agenda of propelling new rural construction and harmonious development of economy and society, to ensure rapid cultivation of new-generation farmers.

3.2 Create conditions to provide funds guarantee for cultivation of new-generation farmers The state should raise funds through many channels, and in particular play the role of government funding as the main channel. For the farmer training funds allocated by financial departments at all levels, we should coordinate and well arrange these funds, to ensure that these funds are used for new farmer cultivation and training work. Ministry of Education states that we should take the work of new farmer training as public product of the government, and the financial training fund by county (cities, districts) is calculated according to population in county (cities, districts), not less than 1 yuan per person per year. But the government funding is insufficient to answer for the needs to cultivate new-generation farmers, so the relevant departments should encourage educational institutions, enterprises and farmers to actively participate in training, create the necessary conditions for education and training, offer grant or preferential policies, widely mobilize the enthusiasm of all parties, and ensure stable funding support for farmers' training.

3.3 Make scientific planning to promote regular, systematized and standardized training work for new-generation farmers The problem of new-generation farmers' education and training is a systematic and complex project. Due to long time span and great investment, it needs to mobilize all social

forces to participate. Governments at all levels should actively guide and support the new-generation farmers' education and training, strengthen management and increase inputs. The relevant departments should strengthen cooperation and coordination, give play to respective advantages based on responsibility, and pay attention to policy guidance, supervision and inspection, and the work of various services. We should plan the work of new-generation new farmers' education and training as a whole, highlight the focus, carry out the work step by step, conduct in-depth research and survey, find out the basic conditions, work out specific targeted training programs, carefully organize and implement the work, and gradually carry out training for the new-generation farmers. At the same time, we should strengthen publicity and guidance, create good social environment of emphasizing the work of farmers' education and training, work out effective incentives for the work of farmers' education and training, encourage farmers to actively participate in training, encourage employers to take the initiative to organize the farmers to participate in training, encourage all levels of education institutions to carry out farmers' training, improve the employment permit system, strengthen supervision and inspection, gradually form the rural labor transfer employment system of "training before employment"^[6], and push the work of new-generation farmers' education and training toward the development road of institutionalization and standardization.

3.4 Focus on education to promote the overall quality of new-generation farmers First, we should pay attention to the rural compulsory education, and focus on education for new-generation farmers from the source. At present, due to weak basic education in rural areas, the educational level of rural population is generally low, so we must make every effort to reinforce the rural basic education. Only there is a general rise in cultural foundation level of rural population can there be basis for the cultivation of new-generation farmers. Second, we should focus on rural vocational education, which is the key to the cultivation of new-generation farmers. The rural vocational education has unexampled advantages in promoting the workers' cultural quality, and cultivating technology talents and management talents that master the advanced productive forces and create advanced productive forces, which plays an irreplaceable role in developing rural human resources and transferring surplus labor forces. In the work of cultivation of new-generation farmers, the rural vocational education should focus on the combination with basic education in rural areas, to cultivate skilled and educated modern new farmers; based on the development of key industries in rural areas, we should strengthen the cultivation of new knowledge, new technology and ability of modern management; we should reform the talent cultivation pattern of the rural vocational education, strengthen school-enterprise integration, and focus on the cultivation of modern skilled personnel; we should pay attention to the cultivation of returning-home migrant workers, and promote returning-home migrant workers' resilience ability and ability to start business, thereby creating a high-quality, fair and good environment to cultivate more and better new-generation farmers.

3.5 Innovate upon content to meet the needs of development of new-generation farmers

As for the cultivation of new-generation farmers, we should focus on the development of key industries in rural areas, take industry as base in accordance with the local characteristics and advantages of agriculture, take market as orientation, take farmers' getting rich as target, take actions that suit local circumstances, take into account the demands of geography, crops, and farming season to innovate training content, and carry out various forms of practical technical training, so that the training content is precise and operable, and we can learn it and apply it to practice, thereby promoting the level of professional technical skills and management significantly. At the same time, we should consider the new requirements of developing modern agriculture and building new countryside, strengthen the cultivation of new knowledge, new technologies and new management ability, and reinforce the training on modern information technology, biotechnology, green production technology, environmental protection technology. For farmers engaging in agricultural production, processing, trade and other fields, the training content should note the emphases.

3.6 Highlight focus to intensify competitiveness training for returning-home migrant workers

After receiving the vocational education, considerable new-generation farmers, as surplus labor forces-migrant workers, choose to work in the city. Through a period of work, they accept the influence of the urban economy and life, and their ideas are greatly changed. Part of migrant workers with the dream of starting an undertaking, good wish of building hometown, and family's request, return to their hometown and start an undertaking in rural areas. However, they are not familiar with agriculture and rural economy, and the complexity of rural industrial construction coupled with the hardship of starting an undertaking are much more than what they have imagined. There is an urgent need to give care for them, and support training for them, to enhance success rate of entrepreneurship and employment. When carrying out training, we should meet the needs of social development; carry out special training based on the market demand; enhance the competitiveness of returning-home migrant workers' employment; focus on industrial restructuring, technological upgrading of enterprises; carry out vocational skills training for the

projects newly developed; promote the returning-home migrant workers' employment adaptability; conduct training around entrepreneurial project organizations of returning-home migrant workers; improve returning-home migrant workers' entrepreneurial capacity; based on the returning-home migrant workers' need, choose the training courses and profession, enhance the relevance and effectiveness of courses, and enhance employment rate of migrant workers^[7]. In training and education, we should also take flexible forms of education such as running evening classes, weekend schools, centralized training, on-site exercise, full-time classes and part-time classes for returning-home migrant workers. In a nutshell, based on the needs of reality and long-term development, we should comprehensively carry out labor skills training for returning-home migrant workers, which is not only conducive to returning-home migrant workers' employment, re-employment and entrepreneurship, but also plays an active role in increasing farmers' income, coordinating urban and rural development, and building harmonious society.

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