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# Suggestions for New Socialist Countryside Construction Based on Current Situations

YAN Shun-xi<sup>1\*</sup>, WANG Xiao-lei<sup>1</sup>, YAN Yong-lu<sup>2</sup>

1. College of Mining Engineering, Hebei United University, Tangshan 063009, China; 2. Institute of Rural Economy, Hebei Academy of Social Sciences, Shijiazhuang 050016, China

**Abstract** According to our field survey, we analyzed current situations and existing problems in the new socialist countryside construction of Hebei Province. Based on these, we put forward our suggestions: put the government and farmers in correct place; improve farmers' quality and educational level; implement the new socialist countryside construction under the guidance of overall rural plan and combining natural and economic conditions of rural areas; and ensure continuous and long-term work.

**Key words** Rural culture, New socialist countryside construction, Institutional construction, Existing problems

## 1 Basic information of Hebei Province

Hebei Province lies in central areas of North China Plain. Beijing and Tianjin Municipalities, which border each other, were carved out of Hebei. In 2011, the total output value of Hebei Province reached 2 422.82 billion yuan, and total grain yield was up to 31.725 billion kilograms. The industrial production grows steadily and rapidly. Value-added of industrial enterprises above designated size was up to 1 050.94 billion yuan. Consumer goods market keeps rapid growth, and total retail sales of social consumer goods of the whole year reached 803.55 billion yuan. Besides, income of urban and rural residents also keeps rapid growth, and the income gap between urban and rural residents is gradually narrowed.

As a large agricultural province, Hebei develops rapidly in economy, but the integrated production capacity of agriculture is slightly low. The foundation for increase of grain yield and farmers' income is weak. And the economic distribution is not balanced: Tangshan, Qinhuangdao, and Langfang are economically developed; Shijiazhuang, Handan, Baoding and Xingtai rank in the level of middle regions; and most parts of Cangzhou, Hengshui, Zhangjiakou and Chengde are underdeveloped.

## 2 Analysis on current situations of new socialist countryside construction in Hebei Province

Hebei Province is a large agricultural province with greater proportion of rural population, thus the promotion of new socialist countryside construction is of great significance to overall construction of comparatively well-off society and building har-

monious Hebei Province. At present, Hebei Province has marched into middle stage of industrialization, and preliminarily has the capacity and condition of promoting agriculture with industry. In addition, it has established a batch of ecological and civilized villages, and accumulated certain experience of new socialist countryside construction. Besides, rapid rise of the urban circle around Beijing – Tianjin – Hebei will accelerate better development of Hebei Province, and create valuable opportunity for the new socialist countryside construction. What's more, great development of rural economy, agricultural production condition and social security lays solid foundation for the new socialist countryside construction.

In the course of development of Hebei Province, there are also complex conflicts and problems. Firstly, the urbanization level is low, financial strength is weak, and the capacity of urban driving rural areas and industry nurturing agriculture is low. Secondly, dual structural system of urban and rural areas is still not eliminated, and the channel is not smooth for connecting urban and rural industries, resource sharing and element flow. Thirdly, there is no fundamental change of traditional agricultural pattern, and still no long term mechanism for increase of farmers' income. Fourthly, social cause development of rural areas lags behind, social security level is relatively low, and rural democratic political system is still not perfect. Finally, the regional development is seriously unbalanced, and there are still a lot of poor people in rural areas.

### 2.1 Achievements of rural development in Hebei Province

(i) Rapid development of industrialized operation of agriculture. Agricultural industrialization is an important approach to increasing farmers' income. It mainly develops three leading industries (animal husbandry, vegetable, and fruit) on the basis of stable development of grain production. Meanwhile, it strengthens brand construction. In the whole Hebei Province, there are more than 30 agricultural "China Top Brand Products" or "Chinese Well-known Trademark", 103 "Hebei Top Brand Products" and 75 "Hebei Quality Products". Besides, it expands and strengthens leading enterprises, builds high

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\* Corresponding author. E-mail: tsyanxizi@163.com

standard processing parks on the basis of modern agriculture, and introduces enterprises to concentrate on park areas. For example, Chengde Food Processing Park, Longyao Hualong Food City, and Daming Processing Model Park have started to take shape.

(ii) Gradual improvement of agricultural production conditions. Capital construction of farmland irrigation and water conservancy projects has made significant achievements. The annual investment in water conservancy infrastructure is more than 4 billion yuan; over 130 000 projects are completed; the effective irrigation area newly increased reaches 54 000  $hm^2$ ; water-saving irrigation area newly increased is over 147 000  $hm^2$ ; the total power of agricultural machinery in Hebei Province reaches 100 million kilowatts; actual area ploughed by tractors is up to 5.317 million  $hm^2$ , and the mechanical harvesting area is over 3.429 million  $hm^2$ .

(iii) Advance in rural social cause construction, acceleration of rural tax and fee reform, and great improvement of farmers' living conditions. In recent years, Hebei Province gradually abolishes the agricultural taxes, popularizes and consolidates nine-year compulsory education, popularizes new rural cooperative medical system, and establishes rural social endowment insurance system. All of these play a great role in increasing farmers' income and improving farmers' living conditions.

(iv) Stable growth of rural economy. Hebei Province constantly increases the financial support for agriculture and farmers, which energetically maintains stable growth of agricultural and rural economy. In the first three quarters of 2011, the gross output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery reaches 400.13 billion yuan, 54.86 billion yuan more than (3.7% higher than) the same period of last year. Farmers' net income per capita is up to 6 385 yuan, having an increase of 21.5%. Farmers' living consumption expenditure per capita reaches 3 350 yuan, having an increase of 7.2%. Besides, the output value structure of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery is further optimized, and the three leading industries (animal husbandry, vegetable and fruit) have a higher and higher proportion, up to 66.1%.

## 2.2 Existing problems in the new socialist countryside construction

(i) New countryside plan lags behind and restricts rural development. Rural plan is not proper; as a result, villagers build houses along the road sides or near market town. Consequently, their original natural villages become hollow villages, then the comprehensive utilization ratio of land decreases<sup>[1]</sup>.

(ii) Long-term mechanism for increase of farmers' income is weak. On the one hand, Hebei Province implemented series measures, such as agricultural tax deduction and exemption, paying rural medical insurance and endowment insurance, and agricultural subsidy. These have increased farmers' income to some extent. However, most farmers in Hebei Province earn income mainly from crop cultivation, and low labor productivity and price rise of agricultural means of production cause that increase of farmers' income is limited<sup>[2]</sup>. In addition, in the course of new socialist countryside construction, some grass-

roots governments only pay attention to infrastructure construction, but neglect measures for increasing farmers' income and developing rural economy.

(iii) New socialist countryside construction attaches importance only to functions of government, but neglects subject role of farmers. On the one hand, farmers' educational level is relatively low due to limitation of self-cognition. Chinese traditional feudal thought constrains farmers' individuality, and farmers lie under domination of government for a long time. They have no initiative and often take the wait-and-see attitude towards state policies, such as new socialist countryside construction. On the other hand, the new countryside plan does not proceed from the reality and just impose uniformity without examining individual cases. In consequence, the new countryside model is single and inconsistent with reality of economic development. Government has invested a lot, but it does not conform to willingness of farmers, which becomes a bottleneck on the present new socialist countryside construction.

(iv) Management mechanism of rural grass-roots organizations lacks democracy. Many rural affairs, no matter big or small, are decided by village cadres. Financial administration is neither democratic nor public, leading to villager cadres seeking interest from collective assets. Farmers feel angry at it but dare not speak it and have low ability of exercising democratic right. In particular, they lack necessary legal sense and knowledge, and their ability of safeguarding rights and discussing about political affairs is relatively low.

(v) Understanding of new socialist countryside construction is one-sided. Some regions take for granted that construction projects can bring benefits for their villages. In this situation, they only value construction projects, but neglect comprehensive and sustainable development. Sometimes, they wouldn't scruple to destroy original ecological environment and resources, such as forests, grassland, water, etc. Some rural areas pay close attention to living construction, but pay little attention to production construction. For instance, some villages take for granted that the new socialist countryside construction is change of rural toilets, change of water, and road construction, village plan or new residential construction. As a result, big demolition becomes a widespread method. Some villages do not consider farmers' willingness and pull down farmers' houses by force. What's worse, some even put all funds for water conservancy and afforestation to demonstration points, leading to the new socialist countryside construction becoming an image project which exhausts the people and drains the treasury.

## 3 Suggestions for new socialist countryside construction in Hebei Province

### 3.1 Taking the planning in the first place during the new socialist countryside construction

It is required to make an overall plan through taking regional development, industrial development, infrastructure, and village construction distribution as an integrated system. Firstly, government should make proper plan for public facilities, including water, electricity, toi-

let, medical service, etc. Also, it should guide farmers to improve their housing environment. Secondly, living construction of road and living condition should take the first place and development of industrial projects or other important projects take the second place. The former is near-term target and secondary conflict, and the latter is long-term objective and primary conflict. To handle their relationship, we should neither pay attention only to project and rural economic development, nor simply orientate new socialist countryside construction towards improvement of rural living environment, lacking long-term plan and development concept. Thirdly, it is proposed to divide main producing areas of grain, processing regions, agricultural tourism areas, and industrial park, on the basis of protecting rural water resource, soil and vegetation, according to regional development orientation and industrial development plan.

**3.2 Strengthening rural cultural construction** The new socialist countryside construction should adhere to integration of external image and internal quality improvement. Improvement of farmers' quality is not only fundamental task of new socialist countryside construction, but also essential condition for sustainable development of rural areas. Cultural construction of Hebei Province includes following aspects. To begin with, it should carry out various forms of popularization of science and technology. For example, villages broadcast various preferential policies and support policies for farmers in every evening when farmers return home from fields; popularize related knowledge of new socialist countryside construction and village autonomy; disclose new policies and laws and regulations of the state to villagers. Only when farmers' quality is improved, can they really realize their importance, bring into play their subject role in new socialist countryside construction, and improve their ability of participation and consultation in government and political affairs, and improve democratic politics in rural areas. Next, it should enhance training for farmers' scientific skills through inviting experts and dispatching agricultural technical personnel to agricultural universities and colleges, scientific research institutions, and popularization institutions. Besides, it should bring into play leading role of rural mass cultural organizations (Yangko Team and Lion Team for instance), and provide certain economic support, such as purchasing stage props, stage clothes. It is proposed to organize various activities, such as singing match, cultural performance and labor skill match, to enrich daily cultural life of farmers. Finally, it is required to push forward construction of rural information service system. For economically developed villages and towns, it is proposed to popularize knowledge of surfing the Internet, reduce the price of surfing the Internet, collect policy information, scientific and technological information, market information, weather information, production service information, and plant diseases and insect pest prevention and control information, rather than play cards or games; for less developed towns and villages, village collective can provide fund for building factories and inquiring about information.

**3.3 New socialist countryside construction should be carried out in stages and by different levels** The new so-

cialist countryside construction should consider actual local situations. For the same region, it is required to gradually push forward the construction in stages. At initial stage, government should provide guidance, mainly including construction and improvement of rural infrastructure, labor training of farmers, agricultural skill training, and relevant law and policy training. It should also enhance farmers' subject awareness, eliminate institutional obstacles to restricting farmers' subject role, and establish corresponding encourage mechanism. At development stage, it should take farmers as subjects with government support and wide participation of social forces of all circles, to further adjust rural industrial structure and develop modern agriculture<sup>[3]</sup>.

**3.4 New socialist countryside construction should pay close attention to institutional construction** The new socialist countryside construction is not a temporary rectification movement, but a long-term mechanism. Therefore, it should not simply lie in technical level, but should attach importance to institutional innovation. The institutional innovation of new socialist countryside construction in Hebei Province should include the land circulation system, population management system, public financial system, rural financial system, and grass-roots administration system. Institutions should reflect farmers' actual demand. Once formulated, institutions should have binding force and warning function. Also, they should be consistent with actual situations. All institutional provisions should be realized practically. It is proposed to enhance continuous and long-term work through strengthening institutional and mechanism construction.

**3.5 New socialist countryside construction should suit local situations and act according to its actual ability** It should give full consideration to actual situations and economic conditions of every village, and farmers' willingness, to select proper development model. (i) Economically developed villages generally have developed industrial enterprises, convenient traffic, their own characteristic brand; and most villagers work without having to go far, have higher demand for housing, and even some villagers build houses with their own funds. For these villages, it is proposed to seek farmers' willingness and rely on township or key projects, to build new countryside with complete service facilities, energy conservation and environmental protection, and central heating through integrated demolition and construction. (ii) Villages having medium level revenues generally have certain quantity of secondary and tertiary industries, but farmers' income still mainly comes from agriculture. These villages take up the major part in Hebei Province, so they are major points of new socialist countryside construction. These villages should energetically develop industrial enterprises and ensure stable development of agriculture. Firstly, it is recommended to develop rural traditional handicraft, such as embroidery of Langfang Fengxia, traditional Chinese painting, hand-woven Han brocade, Xing Kiln white porcelain, tiger-head shoes of Xingtai, and paper-cut of Weixian County of Zhangjiakou, etc. Handcraft features low energy consumption, little pollution, high added value and high profit. It can promote development of cultural industry and increase farmers' income

without letting farmers go outside. Secondly, it is proposed to develop agricultural product processing industry, to fully utilize rural raw materials and realize value preserving and appreciation of agricultural products<sup>[4]</sup>. Thirdly, it is preferred to develop labor-intensive industry and transfer rural surplus labor. For example, Qian'an of Tangshan City develops labor-intensive enterprises, which provide 110 000 jobs for farmers. Fourthly, it should develop rural building industry. Hebei is a large province with developed building industry. In 2010, workers engaged in building industry reach three million. It indicates that building industry is a major channel for transferring rural surplus labor and main source for rural areas increasing revenues. New socialist countryside construction should consider farmers' willingness, and build in the original place or improve original public facilities. (iii) Villages with low income and weak collective economy take the agriculture as major part, and infrastructure and environment are relatively bad. In these areas, the new socialist countryside construction should include two aspects: firstly, rectifying infrastructure that concerns people's livelihood, such as water for villagers, road hardening, cable TV, and village commune hospital, *etc*; secondly, further developing labor economy, combining government guidance and market operation, increasing labor training effort, perfecting service organization for labor export management, and transferring rural surplus labor, to increase farmers' income.

## 4 Conclusions

New socialist countryside construction is a long-term task. Although Hebei Province has made significant achievements in new socialist countryside construction, there are still many problems that should not be neglected. To promote further rural

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livelihood economy in a sense. Therefore, on the basis of enriching and stabilizing people, it should mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of the broad masses to accelerate the development of township economy. First of all, it should deepen market orientation, and further stir the tremendous growth potential of the private economy. Secondly, it should further expand opening-up, and expand space for development of township economy; seriously learn from the successful opening-up experience of the trailblazer areas, enhance the awareness of opening, optimize the investment environment, form new opening-up road that suits local circumstances, and give full play to late-development advantage.

**3.2.4** Strengthen the government service function to create efficient government. It should optimize the administrative environment; carry out the construction of office efficiency; strengthen the construction of working style in administration offices; effectively transform the government functions toward economic regulation, market supervision, social management

development, Hebei Province should take measures in the light of the realities, make breakthrough by classifications, and select cutting point and key points on the basis of stage, level and diversity of new socialist countryside construction. Villages with solid economic foundation and high quality farmers can be used as pilot villages. Besides, it is proposed to increase support for poor villages and households.

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and public service; strive to improve the operating mechanism of government.

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