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New Path for Integrated Reform of Urban and Rural Household Registration System in the Context of Informationization

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Abstract In China, household registration system has the problems of unreasonable standard setting and relevant supporting measures failure to keep pace with the development trend. From analysis of current problems and situations, it is believed that household registration system should undertake reform and take a new road by means of informationization. Strengthening informationization management in land, population, education and labor market can better perform urban and rural integration.

Key words Informationization, Urban and rural integration, Household registration reform

With constant high-speed growth of economy and deepening of industrialization and informationization in the whole society, serious out-of-balance occurs in China's industrial and agricultural development, leading to widening gap between urban and rural areas. Issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers resulted from this and dual division system of separate close of urban and rural areas have become bottleneck restricting development of China's economy. The *Report to the Sixteenth National Congress of the CPC* has put forward the idea of "integrating urban and rural areas" and stated that it is an important task for building full well off society to make an overall plan in economic and social development of countryside and city, build modern agriculture, and increase farmers' income. In October 2003, the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China made clear that the balanced development between urban and rural areas, between economic and social undertakings, between man and nature as well as between domestic development and opening – up to the world are the fundamental requirements of the Scientific Concept of Development. Integrating urban and rural development, as important part of Scientific Concept of Development, is to realize sustainable development of agricultural and rural economy through promoting agriculture by industry and promoting rural areas by urban areas; take the city and countryside as a whole, break the dual economic and social structure in urban and rural areas, provide rural areas with equal status and development opportunity, promote optimal allocation of urban and rural resources through relevant system reform, finally to achieve benign interaction of urban and rural areas and the common prosperity.

Integrating urban and rural development not only includes economic development, but also includes integrated material, political and spiritual civilization development.

1 Importance and necessity of household registration reform in integrated urban and rural development

The existing household registration system is established in the specific historical background of planned economy. Compared with other countries, China's household registration is not only used for providing population information and proving subject identity, but also provides reference for controlling population floating and allocating social benefits and resources. This makes the household registration system becomes one of the most remarkable marks of China's dual urban and rural economic structure. The chief of Institute for Urban and Environmental Studies of Chongqing Academy of Social Sciences, Xu Yuming, once stated that the reform of integrating urban and rural areas is to declare a war against the dual urban and rural structure, and the household registration reform is just an essential work of integrating urban and rural areas. The *Chinese Modernization Report 2012: Agricultural Modernization Research* issued in May 2012 by Chinese Academy of Sciences states that China should make 280 million farmers migrate. In this situation, it is an inevitable choice to gradually cancel household registration system, establish credit management system and speed up migration of agricultural labor forces.

The importance and necessity of household registration reform for integrated urban and rural development can be shown in following aspects.

1.1 Promoting social fairness and justice With advance of China's urbanization and industrialization, long time dual household registration system expedites the emergence of a special group, migrant workers. At present, most cities provide social services on the basis of household registration. As a result, migrant workers, in spite of being busy in cities, fail to enjoy the same education, housing, social insurance and medical care as citizens. Integrating urban and rural development and reforming existing household registration system to turn migrant workers to urban residents can ensure migrant workers really enjoy equal right for equal work and equal treatment as citizens, make them work and live with honor and dignity.

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1.2 Breaking dual urban and rural structure and solving the problem of large population migration

According to the *Report on China's Migrant Population Development 2011* issued by National Population and Family Planning Commission of China, the migrant population grows by 10 million each year in recent three years. By the end of 2010, the migrant population has reached 221 million, accounting for 16.5% of the total population of China. During the Spring Festival, huge migration of migrant workers creates considerable pressure and unstable factors, and labor shortage resulted from home return of migrant workers also increases high cost for cities and enterprises. In addition, this can make migrant workers have real home in cities, so they do not need to move between cities and countryside. Then, it can effectively reduce social management cost and lower idle cost resulted from labor shortage.

1.3 Speeding up urbanization and promoting industrial structure adjustment

The data in *China Statistical Yearbook 2011* indicates that by the end of 2010, the employment percentage of primary, secondary and tertiary industry was 36.7%, 28.7% and 34.6% respectively. In the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan, the employment percentage of primary industry was 1.43%, 1.37% and 4.24% separately, and the employment percentage of tertiary industry reached 77.96%, 76.37% and 67.89% respectively in 2007. From the data comparison, it can be seen that China's industrial structure should be further improved. The Transformation of Economic Development Models Seminar, Development Research Center of the State Council, states that compared with rural residents, Engel coefficient of urban residents is much lower, indicating they have higher consumption proportion and level. If rural residents become urban residents, the expenditure of government on public services will definitely rise, which will promote development of service industry. Therefore, integrating urban and rural development and implementing the household registration reform will speed up urbanization, provide a broader foundation supporting environment for development of secondary and tertiary industry, promote development of secondary and tertiary industry, and accordingly it will become an important motive force for optimizing China's industrial structure.

1.4 Promoting rural development and solution of issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers

The data in *China Statistical Yearbook 2011* shows that by the end of 2010, China had 671 million rural people, while the cultivated area was only 122 million hectares. Too low per capita agricultural resource element in addition to extensive production model causes China's agricultural production to fail to realize large-scale and intensive development. Besides, young labor forces migrate to cities but they still possess cultivated land, then much land lays idle, which further impedes rural economic and agricultural industrialized development. The household registration reform can improve per capita rural resource element and output level, realize increase in farmers' income, rural economic development and agricultural industrialized development, and narrow the urban and rural gap.

1.5 Alleviating the problem of labor shortage and extending the period of "demographic dividend"

According to the green paper *Reports on China's Population and Labor No. 8: Lewis Turning Point and Its Policy Challenge*, the labor shortage started in China's coastal areas and gradually spreading to the whole country indicates gradual formation of Lewis Turning Point. The limitless supply of rural cheap labor becomes short, even in many provinces and cities that still exist in the period of "demographic dividend", there is rise of average labor age in varying degrees. The chief of Institute of Population and Labor Economics of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IPLE – CASS), Cai Fang, said: "China will be faced with serious labor shortage after over 20 years of 'demographic dividend'" in 2006. Through household registration reform, it is expected to liberate more rural labor forces to go to cities, and so as to extend the period of demographic dividend and delay the advent of Lewis Turning Point.

1.6 Changing the consumption idea, expanding domestic demand and promoting transformation of economic growth

The 2008 financial crisis exerts dramatic impact on China's economic growth mode. Central finance has to allocate 4 000 billion yuan to expand domestic demand and revitalize economy, and takes the expansion of domestic demand as a new approach to promoting economic development. At present, migrant workers move to cities and become urban population in statistics sense, but do not realize the real transformation of status. Without citizenship, they neither have permanent residence and their work and life have great uncertainty, nor enjoy social security and public service equal to other citizens. Furthermore, according to research of the Transformation of Economic Development Models Seminar, Development Research Center of the State Council, at the same income level, consumption propensity of urban residents is up to 70%, while that of migrant workers is below 50%. Such low quality urbanization mode has seriously influenced the expansion of China's domestic demand. If the household registration reform provides migrant workers citizenship, they will have the same social security, effectively change their lifestyle, raise their consumption level, and release huge consumption demand, and accordingly become a new growth point for effectively expanding domestic demand.

2 Existing problems of household registration reform

Stalin once stated that we have to sacrifice farmers' benefits to achieve the industrialization. However, the practice of over three decades of reform and opening-up, the dual urban and rural household registration system brings numerous rural labor forces and makes China complete the primitive accumulation and preliminary industrialization, but also results in further widening gap between urban and rural areas, as well as plundering farmers and discrimination against migrant workers in social welfare and security. Most parts of China have implemented the household registration reform, but there are still many problems in the process of the reform. Liu Huijun contends that the real household registration

reform should completely change the difference of identity between urban and rural residents, to provide farmers equal national treatment, social security right and benefit distribution opportunity through a series of social and economic policy reforms^[1]. Hu Xingdou believes that supporting systems are not effectively and comprehensively reformed, leading to the household registration reform beset with difficulties and hard to implement^[2]. Jiang Ye thinks that the existing household registration reform leads to shortage of urban resources, highlights regional disparity in the urbanization, and failure to realize real equality of resident status^[3]. Lan Qiang holds that the household registration reform is greatly obstructed from lagging of education system reform, significant difference of urban and rural social security, different employment system between urban and rural areas, as well as benefits affiliated to the household registration system^[4].

2.1 Standard of the household registration reform in disorder The establishment of access threshold, as an innovation of household registration reform in most regions, removes the innate unequal status. In other words, every citizen has the right to choose the place to live, but whether he can live well is the threshold. However, since the establishment of access system has no definite standard and the establishment criterion is to be standardized, inappropriate standard establishment will cause rural elites move out of countryside and small towns, speed up brain drain and capita loss in rural areas, and widen the urban and rural gap, forming the difference of wealthy quarter and slum in downtown and suburban areas.

2.2 Unreasonable industrial structure leading to difficulty in implementing the household registration reform The data in *China Statistical Yearbook* 2011 indicates that by the end of 2010, the employment percentage of primary, secondary and tertiary industry was 36.7%, 28.7% and 34.6% respectively; the percentage of total output value of primary, secondary and tertiary industry is 10.1%, 46.8% and 43.1% respectively. According to statistics of the World Bank, the proportion of the tertiary industry into the GDP is up to 60% to 80%, so China's secondary and tertiary industry should be further expanded. Reflected in the household registration reform, the unreasonable industrial structure leads to: rural residents become landless and have to turn to the secondary and tertiary industry, which can not accept so many labor forces. As a result, it is difficult for rural residents to find jobs to support their living in cities, and finally have little enthusiasm for changing their identity of household registration.

2.3 Issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers and economic and cultural difference between urban and rural areas leading to slow household registration reform By the end of 2011, China's agricultural employment population takes up 36.7% of the total employment population, but the output is only 10.1%, reflecting the severity of issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers. Too low per capita resource element and extensive production mode lead to low income of farmers, so there is no sufficient material foundation to guarantee well

living of migrant workers. In addition, backward rural economic and cultural development results in wide gap in farmers' living mode and awareness between urban and rural areas. Urban residents are inclined to exclude migrant workers, which also hinders progress of the household registration reform.

2.4 Supporting measures not ready leading to deep conflict of dual urban and rural structure The household registration reform is not only to eliminate the difference between agricultural household and non-agricultural household in public security department, but also a systematic reform project that influences the whole. However, in most regions, the household registration reform still remains in the simple change of the household registration system, and few regions touch upon systematic planning of the reform. Even, some regions force rural residents to become urban ones to meet the objective of improving urbanization and accomplishing the target of turning agricultural household into non-agricultural household. As a result, farmers who change their household status lose land, but fail to find jobs in cities to support their survival in cities. Even if migrant workers have the urban resident household, they still have to face many problems, such as social status, children education, employment, medical care and health, social insurance, and welfare difference.

3 New path for the household registration reform in the context of informationization construction

In 2009, No. 1 document of central government clearly put forward the development of rural informationization; in 2010, No. 1 document of central government also stated it should strengthen market monitoring and information service, promote rural informationization, improve rural comprehensive information service system, and drive the agricultural modernization, to establish a new pattern of integrated social and economic development of urban and rural areas^[5].

As a large project, the household registration reform will not realize the increase in farmers' income, agricultural industrialized development, effectively promote urbanization, or provide considerable demand and solid foundation for development of secondary and tertiary industry and social informationization without systematic and comprehensive reform. Therefore, in the context of social informationization construction, we believe that comprehensive, systematic and high-efficient household registration reform can be achieved through following aspects of advantages of informationization.

3.1 Promoting informationization of the household registration reform to realize uniform and transparent household registration reform system and standard Through application of information and communication technology, it is expected to establish a regional or national household registration portal, publish the reform standard in the website, and establish corresponding consultation feedback mechanism, to facilitate citizens' consultation and benefit normalization, transparency and standardization of the household registration reform.

3.2 Promoting operation informationization of the household registration reform to guarantee benefits of farmers who change their household status

It is proposed to apply information technology to integrate the process of farmers' changing their household status into special-purpose processing platform (shown in Fig. 1), and provide corresponding rights and living guarantee for them. Through coordination of education, medical care and social insurance websites, the relevant departments should conduct a second time review of those who have successfully changed their household status, to prevent the problem of no basic living guarantee after they come to cities. Besides, through normal on-line operation, it is able to prevent those farmers who do not meet requirements from changing their household status blindly, as well as occurrence of establishing unprincipled connection, securing advantages through influence, bribery of public servants, and counter-urbanization like changing non-agricultural household into agricultural household.

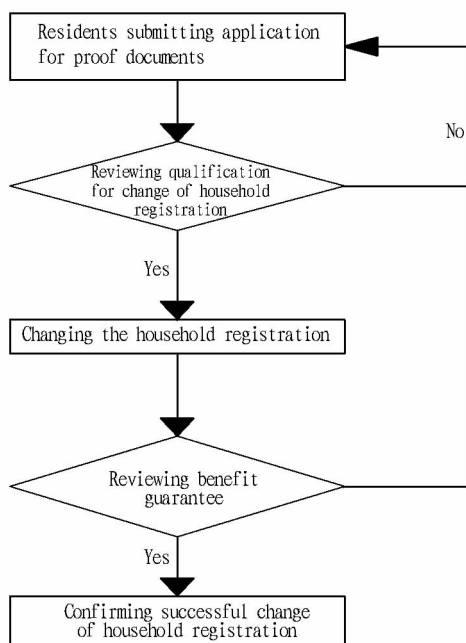


Fig. 1 Operational flowchart for change of household registration

In this entire flow, the review of benefit guarantee is the key to ensuring no harm to benefits of residents. The review mainly includes: (1) housing guarantee; (2) employment guarantee; (3) education guarantee; (4) social security guarantee, and (5) medical care guarantee. Without meeting all these five conditions, the final step of confirmation of successful change of household registration will not be taken.

3.3 Promoting informationization of population management to realize overall development of urban and rural population in the reform of household registration system We should establish a nationwide online population registration management platform with the aid of information and communication technology, to achieve transformation of static population manage-

ment to dynamic population management^[1]. For the total population of near 1.4 billion and floating population of 221 million, the management is extremely difficult. The household registration reform further removes limitation on individual migration, so the regional population flow will be more frequent. How to register and manage in an effective way has become a problem to be solved urgently. With the aid of information technology, public security department can establish a scientific population management system outfitted with state-of-the-art science and technology, to realize dynamic population management, accurately grasp information of change of urban and rural population, and gradually realize sharing of national population statistic data.

3.4 Promoting informationization of land management to realize overall development of urban and rural land utilization in the reform of household registration system With the application of modern information and communication technology, we can establish rural land online transaction platform, and apply market mechanism to take effective land circulation, to vitalize rural land resource. For example, Chongqing Municipality sets up the rural land transaction platform in the integrated urban and rural reform, auction and circulation contracted land of those residents who want to change their status of household registration. By 2011, the land transaction platform realized the transaction amount of 3.6 billion yuan; 85% of which was allocated to those residents. Through this, they obtained land income in contract period. Besides, this also vitalizes rural land, connects separate land together, changes extensive agricultural production mode, achieves intensive management, and accelerates rural construction and economic development. In addition, through informationization of land management, it is expected to connect expansion of urban construction land with reclaimed land of homestead of those residents who have changed their household registration status.

3.5 Promoting education informationization to realize overall development of urban and rural education in the reform of household registration system At present, children education has become an important factor influencing migration of rural residents. After reform of the household registration system, it is inevitable that residents who change their status of household registration will choose areas with better education resources to live. This will lead to concentration of high quality education resources in some areas and regional shortage of education resources. Therefore, the application of modern information and communication technology, acceleration of digital construction of quality education resources, and gradual integration of network interconnection with various education services are favorable for realizing sharing of quality education resources, improving education quality of rural areas and small towns, promoting education fairness, and achieving overall development of urban and rural education.

3.6 Promoting informationization of labor market to realize overall development of urban and rural employment in the reform of household registration system The labor shortage originated in coastal cities has gradually spread to the whole coun-

try, enterprises are faced with the difficulty in attracting workers, but it is also hard to solve the employment problem of rural residents who have changed their status of household registration. It is preferred to establish labor force E-commerce platform covering the urban and rural areas with the aid of modern information and communication technology. For example, publish labor supply and demand information with the help of real-time communication media, such as radio, television and Internet, keep employment channel of rural residents who change their status of household registration smooth, and alleviate the problem of difficulty in employment due to information blockage between urban and rural areas, to realize overall development of urban and rural resident employment.

3.7 Promoting informationization of agricultural development to realize overall development of urban and rural economy in the reform of household registration system Agriculture is the foundation of industrial structure in rural areas and also the base of national economy^[6]. The stability of agriculture concerns the development of entire economy. *The Chinese Modernization Report 2012; Agricultural Modernization Research* issued in May 2012 by Chinese Academy of Sciences shows that China's agricultural labor productivity is only 2% of development countries, and only 1% of the United States. Due to limitation of land resources, China's agricultural production still stays in the state of small peasant production. Long production cycle, low capital return and uncertain natural risks result in lagging of agricultural development. Therefore, application of electronic information technology in agriculture will inevitably become an important approach to improving China's agricultural modernization and agricultural labor productivity.

It is recommended to popularize information technology in agricultural production, establish agricultural information network and develop agricultural information resources, to realize agricultural informationization. Before agricultural production, it is proposed to guide farmers to conduct agricultural production according to market demand through connecting market demand and price information with the aid of information network; during agricultural production, we can transmit agricultural information through network information and mobile phone short messages, to reduce production risks; in the sales section, it is recommended to establish agricultural product supply and demand and price information system, establish online agricultural product sales channel, and transform traditional production and sales mode, to reduce production costs and smoothen sales channel. Also, it is able to adjust planting structure and optimize allocation of agricultural resources with advanced GIS, RS, and GPS technologies, to achieve fine agriculture and improve agricultural output level, finally to promote rapid and healthy development of rural economy and realize overall development of urban and rural economy.

3.8 Promoting informationization of new socialist countryside construction to realize overall development of political and spiritual civilization in the reform of household registration system In the course of new socialist countryside construc-

tion, we should energetically promote informationization construction, smoothen information exchange channel, and narrow urban and rural information gap, to provide equal opportunity for rural areas in obtaining and applying information. In the aspect of agricultural production, we can transmit various new advanced agricultural technologies to farmers through network, raise their production skills and labor productivity, to make farmers have more free time to enter cities for employment, finally to realize increase in farmers' income, rural economic development and narrow the urban and rural economic gap. Besides, we can apply rural E-government affair system to expand channel for expressing farmers ideas, strengthening farmers' ability of participating in and discussing government affairs, and promote villager autonomy and democratic management^[7]. Through information dissemination in various forms, it is expected to convey advanced scientific and cultural knowledge, popularize civilized action and healthy habits, enrich rural cultural life, and improve farmers' cultural and spiritual civilization level, and finally to lay solid economic and cultural foundation for the reform of household registration system and development of urbanization.

3.9 Improving urban informationization to speed up promoting reform of the household registration system and progress of urbanization The research of American Brookings Institution indicates that in the course of broadband construction in social informationization development, each broadband manufacturing industry job can create 2.91 new jobs; each broadband service industry job can bring 2.52 new jobs; with increase of 1% in broadband popularity, the employment rate will rise by 0.2 to 0.3%; the function of broadband industry pulling upstream and downstream employment is 1.17 times that of traditional industry. In this situation, speeding up social informationization construction and development of information industry will play a great role in solving the employment problem of residents who change their status of household registration. In addition, from urban and rural interaction, the improvement of informationization can strengthen the urban radiant force, break the regional barrier between urban and rural areas through information network, and extend various advanced technical services to rural areas, to realize effective promotion of rural development and overall urban and rural development.

4 Conclusions

As an essential work in the development of urbanization, the household registration reform needs wisdom and joint efforts of the whole society. Although there are many problems in the course of this reform, we can apply informationization to solve these problems. All we need is to guarantee benefits of residents who change their status of household registration and explore suitable ways of household registration reform through sticking to the principle of seeking truth from facts.

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6 Conclusions

(1) In accordance with the eco-environment restoration pattern of "building terrace and returning slope farmland to forests and grass", in the Loess Hilly-gully Region, $69.16 \times 10^4 \text{ hm}^2$ of new terrace needs to be built, $79.2 \times 10^4 \text{ hm}^2$ of economic forests and orchards need to be extended, $541.02 \times 10^4 \text{ hm}^2$ of vegetation needs to be restored, and the total investment demand is 15.82 billion yuan (6.743 billion yuan for the building of new terrace; 3.315 billion yuan for the extension of garden plot; 5.762 billion yuan for vegetation restoration).

(2) In terms of geographical distribution of "building terrace and returning slope farmland to forests and grass" in the Loess Hilly-gully Region, obviously there are two key areas for eco-environment restoration. One is the northeastern key area, roughly located in the border area between northern Shaanxi and northwestern Shanxi, north of the Ansai – Yanchuan – Liulin – Lishi line, including 14 counties, with main characteristics of large area of terrace newly built, onerous task of vegetation restoration and huge investment demand. The other is the southwestern key area, located in the eastern Gansu and southern Ningxia area, including 17 counties (cities), with main characteristics of large area of garden plot extension and vegetation restoration, onerous task of building new terrace in some counties (cities), and huge investment demand. Various indicators in the counties (cities, districts) between these two key areas are relatively low.

(3) In terms of various indicators and regional differentiation characteristics, the promotion of eco-environment restoration pattern of "building terrace and returning slope farmland to forests and grass" in the Loess Hilly-gully Region should spring up all over the place. It is necessary to concentrate the limited funds in the two key areas, formulate the classified regional guidance policies and supporting investment-sharing policies as soon as possible.

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