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# The Predicament of Rural Development under the Strategy of Rural Revitalization

Junpu ZHANG \*

School of Health Caring Industry, Sichuan University of Arts and Science, Dazhou 635000, China

**Abstract** Solving rural poverty is the most urgent problem to be solved in the current rural revitalization strategy. The "alienation" of farmer organizations makes it difficult to give full play to the function of farmer organizations. The institutionalized obstacle of urban-rural dual division restricts the urban integration of migrant workers. There is an institutional conflict between the construction of new countryside and rural urbanization. It is the best way for farmers to find a suitable model for local development according to local conditions, but the exploration and practice of rural development model will be a complex and tortuous process.

**Key words** Rural revitalization, Organization, Migrant workers, Urban integration

## 1 Introduction

The strategy of rural revitalization was put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping in the report of the 19th CPC National Congress on October 18, 2017. The problem of farmers is a major issue related to the stability and development of China, and an important issue to realize the revitalization of rural areas. Therefore, the academic and political circles have conducted a fierce discussion on the solutions for farmers, and put forward a series of views and suggestions on the problem of farmers. At present, there are two major ways to get basic recognition; one is the organization of farmers, and the other is the integration of farmers into the city. These two viewpoints have explored the ways for farmers to a certain extent, and have achieved varying degrees of success in some areas. However, according to my actual survey of rural areas in different regions, whether it is the organization of farmers or the urban integration of migrant workers, there are a lot of problems. In view of the current vigorous rural revitalization, we should constantly carry out theoretical innovation and practical testing, and explore a road of rural development suitable for China's actual socialist characteristics.

## 2 It is difficult to give full play to the function of farmer organizations—the "alienation" of farmer organizations

The problem of farmer organization has always been the focus of academic and political circles. Mr. Liang Shuming, who was engaged in the modern rural construction movement, once said: "The disease in Chinese society is looseness, and the way to cure

it lies in the unity and organization." Dr. Sun Yat-sen also said that China was lacking in the spirit of cooperation. Chairman Mao Zedong was also aware of the disadvantages of dispersed farmers and took action, relying on the individual prestige and the powerful administrative power of the new regime to organize the scattered farmers into a collective with the integration of government and society<sup>[1]</sup>. Although these strategies have not fully achieved the goal of common prosperity, they have explored and innovated the ways of development in China's rural areas. The household contract responsibility system implemented in the rural reform has basically solved the problem of food and clothing for farmers, but its function in the further development of the economy has been exhausted.

With the further development of market economy and globalization, the organizational form of each family is too single and scattered to meet the requirements of modern economic scale, industrialization, science and technology and marketization. It is also unable to meet the requirements of China's agriculture in line with international standards, so it is necessary to strengthen the degree of organization of farmers and organize scattered farmers to resist the challenges of the big market. The local government has also actively promoted the establishment of various industry organizations. Farmers' professional cooperative organizations throughout the country are blooming all over the country. The Potato Association, the Medicinal Materials Association, the Apple Association, the Wheat Association and so on have all been built. However, with the in-depth investigation of rural areas, it is found that these nominal farmer organizations are not farmers' own organizations in essence. They have had a serious "alienation", so it is difficult to really solve the problem of scattered farmers' development. The current economic professional cooperation organization is not a spontaneous combination between farmers, and generally it is the union between the previous acquisition points, that is, the union between "middlemen". In essence, they are not farmers' own organizations, but organizations among rural elites, so the real function of farmer

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\* Corresponding author. E-mail: yanshi03@163.com

organization is difficult to play. Take Sichuan Vegetable Association, Medicinal Material Association and so on as an example, once the purchase point practised decentralized management, and was in the inferior position in terms of the price and the market. Now they form industry associations, which can better deal with the impact of market behavior such as variety, price, and sales. In addition, through their joint action, they can also get more support and resources from the government. For example, in a county in Sichuan, where the local vegetable association built an underground storage room, the local government would subsidize it with 1 800 yuan. The government has also given some policy support in introducing excellent varieties and opening up the market. In the actual operation, these trade associations can play a certain role in dispersed farmers' response to the market. Whether it is a farmer organization or not, after all, it has introduced the fruits of farmers' labor into the big market, so that farmers' products have more ways out.

But the reality is that the product sold by farmers is an out-and-out low value-added product, without any processing and packaging, the profit is very low. Farmers' products fall into the hands of consumers after experiencing packaging, transportation and other links. Although the prices of agricultural products are already high when they get into the hands of consumers, these profits are earned by middlemen. According to 2017 data, the potato purchase price of the vegetable association in a potato producing area was generally about 1 yuan/kg, while the market price after coming on the market was about 3 yuan/kg. Therefore, we believe that the current organizational process of farmers should be changed, at least the farmer organization should be their own organization, farmers should get more profits in the organizational process<sup>[2]</sup>. First of all, it is necessary to build a real farmer organization, and there must be profits that farmers can obtain. Farmers always treat their own behavior very rationally, and due to the weakness of farmers themselves, only after farmers see real interests can they form their own organization. Second, there must be homegrown farmer elites. This leader has the prestige and ability to unite the farmers, not just for his own interests, but for the purpose of getting rich for all. Finally, there should be a new type of farmers with a sense of cooperation and the support of the government, without these two, farmer organizations will not be able to form. However, the formation of these conditions is not easy, the process of farmer organization is a revolutionary process of concept, way of life, organization and system. If a real farmer organization is formed, the farmers themselves will be able to increase the added value in the packaging and processing of their products and reduce the cost in terms of transportation and opening up the market. Therefore, such a farmer organization is the way out for the development of farmers<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3 It is difficult for migrant workers to really integrate into the city—institutionalized obstacle of urban-rural dual division

Urbanization is one of the central contents of modernization. The

so-called urban integration of migrant workers is to let the broad masses of farmers accept urban civilization and gradually transform rural people into urban people<sup>[4]</sup>. At present, the reality in China's rural areas is that the rural population is too large and the cultivated land is insufficient, and the cultivated land per capita is short. In addition, the agriculture which can produce high value-added agricultural products is not universal, so one way to solve the problem of farmers is the urbanization of farmers. Some farmers enter and integrate into the city through their own efforts. In this way, the per capita arable land of farmers will increase, which is conducive to expanding the scale of agriculture, and farmers will be able to get rid of poverty. The farmer urbanization has been under way and appears to have been very successful. Due to the widening gap between urban and rural areas, farmers' feelings of "dislike of countryside and abandoning agriculture" have become more and more serious. It changed from the transfer of surplus labor force in the early 1990s to the "holistic" transfer in the late 1990s, and a large number of young and strong workers in rural areas went out and even moved out of their hometown.

According to my field investigation, the "hollowing out" phenomenon of villages has appeared in many rural areas in Sichuan. A large number of rural people enter the city, and farmers going into the city to work has become a common phenomenon in society. Whether they are educated or not, they can find their own position in the city, and can accept the edification of urban civilization. Specific figures for migrant workers are already difficult to get. It is an objective fact that many of the people left behind in rural areas are only women, children and the elderly in villages. The income of working has become the main income of rural families. However, I would like to emphasize another fact that the vast majority of farmers who work in cities are difficult to become real urban people, most migrant workers are only passers-by in the city. In addition, due to the instability of urban work, if the national economic situation changes a little, migrant workers will lose their jobs. For migrant workers, there is no basic living security in the city, migrant workers have no expectations for their own future. So even if some people think of moving their homes to the city, it will be difficult to achieve because of the high housing prices in the city. Especially when there are some problems in economic development, there are a large number of layoffs in enterprises, and migrant workers have to look for jobs everywhere. Finally, they have to return to the countryside, and there is often a tide of migrant workers returning home.

Whether the proposition of farmer urbanization is correct or not remains to be studied. Because few migrant workers think they are changing to urban people, and they still classify themselves as farmers, and do not think that they will become urban people.

The urban integration of migrant workers does not just mean that migrant workers can find a job to sustain in the city. It means that the rural people working in the city adjust themselves in the aspects of economy, life, social communication and psychology in order to adapt to the new urban living environment. On this basis,

they take the initiative to make various adjustments in order to gradually integrate into the city at the economic, social, cultural or psychological levels, so as to realize the active transformation from farmers to citizens. At present, the system and thinking of the dual opposition between urban and rural areas are very difficult to change, farmers can only solve the current family's economic difficulties by working in the city. There are still many institutional obstacles to truly integrating into the city.

In addition, due to the instability of China's current land policy and the implementation of various state policies to benefit agriculture, farmers will not easily give up their land. In any case, there will always be a profit from the possession of land, which is their last guarantee of life. Therefore, the future situation of rural areas will not develop to the model described by some economists: "A large number of rural people are changed into urban people, so as to achieve large-scale management in rural areas and improve the living standards of farmers."<sup>[5]</sup> This is a theoretical expectation that needs a long historical period to be achieved. It will be a long process to rely on farmers' urbanization to get rid of the current situation of rural poverty.

#### **4 The predicament existing in the construction of new countryside—the serious loss of rural elite**

Rural revitalization strategy is for the development of new socialist rural construction, and more theoretical researches are needed. The experience of building a new socialist countryside may bring me into some reflection. Scholars have done a lot of researches and discussions on the issues related to the construction of a new socialist countryside. However, how to build a new socialist countryside and how to change the backwardness of the countryside is still a big problem. Theory and reality have not been linked together, so there is no practical way out. Is the new rural construction just a slogan or can it play a great role in improving the rural situation? It should be tested by the facts. A positive phenomenon is that the state has recently increased its investment in rural infrastructure construction, and rural infrastructure is gradually improving.

However, a fact that cannot be ignored is that the rural population is gradually moving to the cities, so who will revitalize the current rural areas? Therefore, I believe that there is a contradiction between the previous new rural construction and the current rural revitalization and the process of farmer urbanization. On the one hand, China's rural areas are facing the problem of large population and little land, rural labor surplus. The mainstream voice of political and academic circles is to accelerate the development of urbanization and rapidly increase the proportion of urban population to the total population of the whole country. The problem of rural poverty can only be solved through rapid urbanization, so it needs a lot of rural people, money and goods to flow to the city. On the other hand, the rural people gradually enters the city through going to school, joining the army, working and so on. The elites in the village who have the knowledge, the ability and well

know the outside world have flowed to the city. The main body with mobility in rural areas is generally the rural elite, because only the groups with rich human capital, social capital and other resources have the ability to transfer to the city. And the current socialist new rural construction feels an urgent need for such elites. Therefore, fundamentally speaking, it is not that there are no talents in rural areas, but that rural talents have gone to the cities. It can be said that rural areas have trained a large number of specialized talents for the cities. Government departments also see this problem, and try their best to promote college students to go down to the grass-roots level, and go to the countryside, and give various kinds of support and preferential treatment to the college students working in the rural areas. On the one hand, it can solve the social pressure brought about by the difficulty of college students' employment. On the other hand, it can strengthen the new forces in building rural areas, and provide rural areas with educated and capable talents, to better build a new socialist countryside.

According to my investigation and understanding of the "village officials", some college student village officials have incorrect thinking and attitude, and do not sincerely go in for the rural work for the development of the countryside. They only aim to get their own preferential policies for college student village officials, and do not have the idea of taking root in rural areas and developing for rural areas for a long time. In addition, it is worth discussing whether college students can get recognition and cooperation from villagers and whether college students can adapt to the living environment in rural areas.

#### **5 Question left behind—where is the way out for the new generation of migrant workers**

How should the countryside develop? Where is the way out for migrant workers? In particular, where is the way out for the new generation of migrant workers who entered the city at a very young age or were born in the city but did not have an urban identity? With the growing group of new generation of migrant workers, more and more new generation of migrant workers will become strangers living in the gap between urban and rural areas. If migrant workers can neither integrate into the city, nor return to rural areas, long staying in this marginal state, it will inevitably lead to the intensification of social contradictions, or will become the core factor affecting the social and economic development of urban and rural areas. Realizing the urban integration of migrant workers, especially the new generation of migrant workers, is the key to solving the problems of agriculture, rural areas and farmers and accelerating the process of industrialization, urbanization and modernization in China.

How to effectively promote the gradual integration of migrant workers, especially the new generation of migrant workers into the city is the problem that I have been thinking about. Due to the vast territory of China and large local differences, the influencing

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factors of rural development are complicated, and the proof and derivation process of some economic development theories are very scientific, but the combination of theory and practice will always encounter many problems. Any theory of economic development is not omnipotent, to find a suitable model for local development according to local conditions is the best choice for rural areas, but the exploration and practice of such a development model will be a long and complex process.

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