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CHINA'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT MIRACLE

WITH INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

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Abstract

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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A major benefit of a systems approach to rural development planning is the focus on programs, projects and policies as alternative means of achieving improvements in rural development performance. In contrast, the standard project evaluation approach focuses on the narrow objective of income maximization. For example, World Bank project evaluation guidelines mention rural development goals as secondary issues and do not provide a planning framework for analysis of: income distribution, employment, access to land, internal migration, nutrition and health, and other rural development indicators. The need for a synthesis of the standard project evaluation approach and analysis of broad rural development goals is indicated by the disappointing results of a review of 25 years of African development projects which focussed on improving infrastructure, export commodities and industrial development during the 1960s and 1970s.

A proposed approach to integrating project evaluations in the context of a broader rural development planning framework is illustrated with reference to rural development planning in Canada and Africa. Canada's rural development policies (1960s to date) have varied from narrow resource development projects, growth centres and industrial development, and ten year comprehensive rural development plans in selected rural areas; to more recently focus on commodity stabilization and income distribution subsidies as solutions to rural development problems.

Rural development goals include: increasing food production (often food self-sufficiency), low cost food for urban consumers and industrial workers, rural income and standard of living improvement, participation of rural people in planning, social and cultural development, job opportunities, and the role of women. Constraints include: protection of natural environment, infrastructure (availability), management training, and foreign exchange. Quantitative economic feasibility measures need to be considered simultaneously with rural development goals and constraints prior to specifying implementation strategies. Rural development implementation strategies, programmes and policies can be developed to promote improvement relative to goals. Evaluation techniques and simulation models are available to assess the success of implementation strategies, programmes and policies and facilitate the revision of goals and strategies by policy-makers. The synthesis of project evaluation techniques within a rural

development planning context are discussed with respect to wheat production and research projects in Africa.