Current Status of Peasants’ Quality in China and Cultivation of New Peasants in the View of New Countryside

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Abstract This paper introduces the quality characteristics of new peasants in China, and analyzes the current status of peasants’ quality in China from 5 aspects. Finally, we put forward the related countermeasures for improving the peasants’ quality.

Key words New countryside of China; New peasants; Cultivation

New socialist countryside construction is not only the practical need of solving the "Three Agricultural Problems", but also the inevitable requirement of building a well-off society and accelerating the socialist modernization. Improving the peasants’ quality and cultivating the new peasants are the essential contents of new socialist countryside construction.

1 Quality characteristics of the new peasant

The Outline of the 11th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China clearly points out that the new peasant is the one with knowledge, farming technique and management skills. The basic qualities that new peasant should have are summarized. However, we argue that the new peasant should have more qualities compared with the traditional peasants. Fig. 1 illustrates the major three aspects of the peasant’s qualities.

![Quality characteristics of new peasants](image)

Fig 1 Quality characteristics of new peasants

1.1 Learning-type peasant During the new countryside construction, new technical ability is needed to realize the ample life of peasants. Both the local custom civilization and the clean and tidy village require the edification of cultural knowledge. The management democracy requires the scientific decision-making. We can conclude that none of the above can be separated from knowledge. Therefore, learning-type peasant should firstly study and grasp the scientific knowledge and skills actively, in order to improve their production development and living standard. Secondly, peasant should be good at study, and be willing to accept the new cultural ideas and the way of life in order to improve mental model and to realize the local custom civilization. Knowledge is the ladder of human progress, education is the foundation of human resources development, and study is the basic way to enhance the capacity of people. However, peasants often lack the enthusiasm and initiative of study due to the cognitive bias towards knowledge under market economy.

Rural population in China accounts for 70% of the total population. The majority of peasants have relatively short education period and their education level is low. With the acceleration of urbanization in China, rural surplus labor force is transferred. But the problem of reverse elimination gradually becomes apparent. Peasant who abandons agriculture, leaves rural areas and brings their assets to the cities and towns is usually rich and has entrepreneurial qualities and strong management ability. While the people who remain in rural areas are mainly the elder, women and children. They can hardly shoulder the burden of new countryside construction either in cultural quality or in technical and operational quality. Therefore, cultivating learning-type peasant and making them become the backbone of the new countryside construction have become the urgent requirement for promoting new countryside construction.

1.2 Political peasant Political peasant is the peasant who has high political participation enthusiasm, concerns about the state affairs, knows about the policies, and actively defends the state and public benefits. He is aware of his legal rights, and has the courage to shoulder the social responsibility.

On the one hand, constructing the new socialist countryside and realizing the villager autonomy and democratic management are carried out for the fundamental interests of the majority of peasants; on the other hand, the two can not be achieved without the active participation of vast peasants. However, peasants were far away from the center of political power in traditional society, and were regarded as "non-political class". The rules of the game of political community are completely determined by the political elite; and peasants lack the rights and enthusiasm for political participation. With the continuous advance of reform and opening up, the economic and social development in rural China has stimulated the political

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participation consciousness of peasants. Implementation of village autonomy has also set up the institutionalized channels for the realization of this consciousness⁹. Peasants' willingness and behavior of political participation have changed greatly. Historical experience has proven that if government is not supported by the masses of peasants, the country's long-term stability cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, cultivation of the political peasant is needed during building a new socialist countryside.

1.3 Innovative peasant Innovative peasant refers to the peasant who has the sense of innovation, innovative idea and capability. They dare to change the traditional concepts and farming methods, abandon the consciousness of small-scale peasant economy, consciously adjust production according to market demand, and constantly improve their own quality of culture and skills by studying the advanced technology. Only in this way can they constantly update their concepts, broaden their horizons, and make bold innovations.

Compared with the developed countries, the biggest problem for agriculture in China is that the overall level of science and technology is low. Traditional production still exists in many areas. Especially in the vast central and western areas with the lag of agricultural development, peasants still cling to traditional agricultural production and operation methods with the characteristics of low scientific and technological contents, single species, poor quality, lack of brand concept, high cost and low income. To achieve the task of developed production and ample life, China must accelerate the process of agricultural modernization with innovative peasant cultivation as the breakthrough point on the basis of current agricultural development in China. In recent years, there are groups of innovative pacesetter peasants¹⁰ in many places, which have already become a new force of new countryside construction. They try to be the model-men of new technologies, the leaders of new industries, the test men of new varieties, and the moving spirits of new ideas, in order to help local peasants to become rich.

2 Analysis of the peasants' qualities in China

At present, the overall quality of peasants in China is still poor, and has a long distance to go compared with the new peasants. According to the characteristics of agricultural and peasants, peasants' quality includes 5 aspects (Fig. 2). The 5 qualities are not independent, but have mutual influence and mutual restriction. Physical quality of the peasant is the base of other 4 qualities. Cultural quality of peasant is the prerequisite of the sci-tech quality and management quality. The ideological and ethical quality is the fundamental guarantee for the comprehensive quality of peasants.

2.1 Current situation of cultural quality At present, the cultural quality of peasants in China can hardly adapt to the construction of modern agriculture. Since the reform and opening up, cultural quality of peasants has improved in a certain degree with the development of rural economy and the improvement of peasants' income level. However, the overall level is still low. Related investigation shows that the peasants in rural areas of China receive 7.8 years of education on average, while those in urban areas receive 11 years of education¹¹. There are more than 0.2 billion young peasants below the age of 35 in China, but their average education is less than 7.5 years, and the people received vocational education of agriculture is less than 5.0%. Table 1 reports that rural labor forces with middle and primary education occupied more than 80% at the end of 2006, those with high school education accounted for 9.8%, and those with junior college or higher education occupied only less than 1.2%. Education degrees of peasants are unbalanced in different regions of China. And peasants' education in western region is significantly lower than those in the eastern, central and northeast regions. The education level of rural residents is far below that of urban residents, and the overall level of cultural quality of peasants is low, which directly impacts the improvement of sci-tech quality and the transfer of labor force in rural areas.

![Diagram](image_url)

**Fig. 2 Composition of peasants' quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Eastern area</th>
<th>Central area</th>
<th>Western area</th>
<th>Northeast area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high school</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high school</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college and higher</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data come from the Bulletin of Major Data of the Second National Agricultural Census of China, (No.5).

2.2 Current situation of sci-tech quality Sci-tech quality refers to the technology and knowledge level of peasants, which reflects the number and quality of scientific knowledge peasants mastered, and the proficiency in applying to agricultural production practice. At the end of 2006, there were 34.874 × 10⁵ people employed in agriculture in China. Among them, 207 × 10⁴ people were agricultural technical staffs, accounting for 0.6%. There was 0.09 people with technical and professional title in every rural household on average. Number of people with vocational education and training in very rural household was 0.12. In the year 2008, peasants received short-term training only accounted for 20.0%, those with primary vocational and technical education or training occupied 3.4%, those with secondary technical education occupied 0.13%, those without technical training reached as high as 76.4%⁰¹. Survey by the Ministry of Agriculture shows that...
peasants received more than one times of technology training was less than a third of the peasants, those received more than three times was less than 3%. The coverage of technology training is very small, and the sci-tech quality of peasants is poor, which directly influences the improvement of peasants' ability. A large number of advanced agricultural science and technology achievements can not be transformed. This restricts the improvement of the efficiency of agricultural production, and hinders the improvement of the international competitiveness of China's agricultural products.

2.3 Current situation of management quality Management quality refers to the ability and level of agriculture operation and management and agricultural marketing of peasants. Modern market economy requires certain degree of market awareness and the capacity of information acceptance and feedback. Peasants should have the ability to organize production, to participate in market competition, and to rationally allocate the human, finance, material, land and other resources. At present, agricultural development in China is not only affected by the resource but also by the market. This is closely related to the poor management quality, the weak market awareness, and the poor ability of information acceptance and feedback of peasants in China. Decentralized management is the major mode in rural China with family as the unit. Though this form is relatively free and flexible, use efficiency of agricultural resources is low. It is difficult to create the scale economy, and is far from the objective of realizing the agricultural industrialization and systematization. Moreover, the vast majority of peasants have not received systematic education and training about market knowledge, so that they are greatly impacted by the traditional natural economy and the planned economic system. Peasants lack the awareness of market subject and the internal impulse to enter the market and to seek for development. They are less familiar with the market rules and have poor ability of information acceptance and feedback. Therefore, their production has the characteristics of blindness, and they are difficult to achieve the optimal allocation of resources, which make peasants in a passive situation in the market competition.

2.4 Current situation of physical quality Physical quality is the basis of work ability of human. Good physical quality is an important prerequisite for the enrichment of peasants. However, in rural areas of China, especially in the poor and backward mountainous areas, peasants' concept of diet is still very old, and their nutritional awareness is weak. They generally focus only on "adequate food", rather than pay attention to "good meat". Single food structure can hardly meet the needs of human nutrition. In addition, most peasants lack the knowledge of health care. The concept of "filthy food will not make you ill" has far-reaching impacts in rural China. Rural population has high incidence rate for a long time. The phenomenon of turning or returning poverty by diseases is relatively serious. Disease has become a serious obstacle to peasants' becoming rich. In December 2008, the Medical and Health Research Center, Guanghua School of Management, Peking University selected three key indices (self-rated health, chronic illness, and mental illness) to investigate the latest status of health in Beijing, Xi'an, Chengdu, Kunming and other Cities of China. Investigation result shows that chronic illness rates of urban residents and rural residents have kept at 20.56% and 20.04%, respectively. But the chronic illness rate has an upward trend in recent five years. And the economic risk of chronic illness for rural residents is 65.00% higher than that for urban residents. Rural and urban residents have different levels of poor psychological condition in mental health, but the rural residents are significantly higher than the urban residents.

2.5 Current situation of ideological and ethical quality Since the reform and opening up, spiritual civilization construction in rural areas has made great progress. The peasant's ideological and ethical quality has been overall improved, but there are still some unsatisfactory points. From the aspect of local custom civilization, peasants in some places are still the advocates of feudal superstition and illegal religious, clan force remains its influences. With the prosperity of market economy, the peasants' value, the view of right and wrong and the view of good and evil have been challenged. Mercenary behavior becomes popular in a part of peasants, Gambling, unrealistic competition, lavish burial and other out-of-date customs are of common occurrence. From the legal point of view, local culture formed over thousands of years is very difficult to be assimilated by modern civilization in a short time. Peasants, who are greatly affected by the local norms and traditional ethical, have weak political awareness, and backward concept of democracy and legal system. When their rights are violated, peasants do not know how to protect it. They are easy to adopt violent means to vent their dissatisfaction when meeting trifles such as neighborhood disputes, turning an ordinary civil disputes into criminal.

3 Path analysis of new peasant cultivation

Both the cultivation of new peasants and the improvement of peasants' quality are the objective requirements of solving the "Three Agricultural Problems" and constructing the new countryside construction. They are long-term and arduous tasks, which need a wide range of effective measures.

3.1 Vigorously developing rural education; enhancing the cultural quality of peasants The backwardness of rural education is the root cause of peasants' poor cultural quality. To improve the development of rural education, government should firstly increase investment in rural education, establish the long-term mechanism to protect the healthy development of compulsory education in rural areas, ensure the rapid and healthy development of rural compulsory education. Young people in rural areas is the reserve force of rural economic construction. Their cultural quality directly relates to the future development of rural areas in China. Secondly, we should strengthen the construction of rural teachers, enhance the salary of rural teachers, and attract more outstanding talents to engage in rural education. Long-term development of rural education requires a number of stable and highly qualified teachers. They should constantly update their own educational philosophy, knowledge and teaching method in order to promote the education for all-around development, to enhance the practicality and of rural education. Thirdly, we should improve the rural education system, implement the coordinating development of
basic education, vocational education and adult education. Government should strengthen the input and guidance of rural vocational education and adult education, establish and improve the rural vocational education and adult education network, and support the development of rural vocational education and adult education.

3.2 Developing the training of agricultural skills, cultivating the sci-tech quality of peasants. Firstly, to ensure the identity and coherence of peasants’ training, government should improve the relevant policies and regulations about peasant education and training, formulate policies in order to encourage the scientific and technical personnel to send technology to countryside, and encourage college graduates and urban professionals to work in rural areas. Secondly, we should extensively mobilize all sectors of society to set up vocational education and training institutions for peasants, develop job training using the method of sharing the training costs by government, enterprise and trainee, and make people have the opportunity to receive re-education, who have the condition, ability and willingness for agricultural skill training. Thirdly, vocational skills training of peasants should follow the principle of multi-level, multi-form and practicality, and combine the specificity of peasants and the cultivation of new peasants together in order to adapt to the general requirements of agricultural and national economic development. Finally, the transfer of surplus rural labor can be achieved.

3.3 Organizing the knowledge study on operation and management; improving the management quality of peasants. Management quality is the main part of peasants’ quality, just as the sci-tech quality. Firstly, peasants’ awareness of market subject is fostered by organizing trainings on market economic knowledge and marketing, in order to enhance the capacities of economic participation and market competitiveness. Secondly, management knowledge training can promote the management model of modern enterprise, enhance market philosophy of large-scale production, socialization collaboration and integrated operation, guide peasants to follow the path of industrial development, cultivate leading enterprise of agriculture, set up new economic cooperation organization in rural areas, and improve the level of peasant organization and the capacity of management. Thirdly, we should extensively hold the agricultural business management seminar, invite experts and scholars to do a lecture, organize peasants to participate in the discussion after the lecture, and encourage peasants to advance related suggestions on perfecting agricultural management according to the local realities.

3.4 Strengthening rural health work; enhancing the physical quality of peasants. Firstly, government investment should focus on hygiene in rural areas. According to the current situation of backward reform of medical and health system, lack of capital investment, shortage of health talent, and poor infrastructure, we should increase the support for health aid in countryside and the strength of poverty alleviation, establish and improve the new rural cooperative medical system and medical aid system. Secondly, we should carry out a wide range of nutrition and health education in rural schools at all levels. Nutrition and health education should be carried out throughout the whole process of education and teaching. We should popularize the health knowledge, advocate a civilized, healthy and scientific way of life, help the peasants change their ignorant and backward living habits. Secondly, we should vigorously develop rural sports, carry out various forms of fitness sports for peasants. In recent years, the National Peasants’ Sports has promoted the sports fitness in rural areas. Governments at all levels should perfect the infrastructure construction of peasants’ fitness projects, offer venues and equipment for peasants’ physical training, regularly carry out physical activities for the purpose of health, leisure and entertainment, and continuously enhance the physique of peasants.

3.5 Promoting the spiritual civilization construction in rural areas; enhancing the ideological and ethical quality of peasants. Firstly, the scientific theory, the advanced culture and the peasant production and living should be combined together in order to enhance the ideological awareness of peasants, and to always maintain a high-spirited, progressive and positive mental state. Secondly, we should widely popularize the basic moral norm of citizens, develop continued and deep publicity activities and education programs with diversified forms by using the rural library, broadcast studio, cultural activity center, cable television and other resources, turn the peasants’ moral ethics into practice in order to change the various out-of-date customs, consciously cultivate peasants’ civilization for modern social life, and make the new ethics, new custom and healthy culture play the leading role in rural area. Thirdly, we should deeply develop the legal publicity and education, integrate the law-related education into the actual living of peasants by holding legal lecture, legal knowledge contest and law consultation, delivering knowledge of law to the rural areas, and analyzing law by cases. We should also enhance the peasants’ consciousness of legal compliance, democratic participation, democratic supervision, defending rights and handling affairs according to law.

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新农村视野下中国农民素质现状与新型农民的培育

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摘 要 培育新型农民是社会主义新农村建设的重要基础和核心内容。本文讨论了新型农民具备的 3 方面素质：一是积极主动的学习，善于学习并乐于接受新的文化观念和生活方式；二是政治参与热情高、关心国家大事、了解政策方针，并具有的法律意识．勇于承担社会责任；三是有创新意识、创新能力和创新能力。从 5 个方面分析了现阶段中国农民的素质状况：一是文化素质现状，中国农民文化素质近年来有一定的提高，但整体水平仍然较低，区域之间呈现出明显的不平衡；二是科技素质现状，中国农民科技素质普遍偏低，导致大量科技成果转化、现代农业发展缓慢，从而制约了农业的提高；三是经营管理素质现状，中国农民的市场意识淡薄、信息接受与反馈能力不高，对农业资源的利用效率低下，导致生产盲目性；四是身体素质现状，农民由于缺乏营养保健知识、食品结构单一，发病率一直很高，健康状况堪忧；五是思想道德素质现状，农民的思想道德素质总体上有所提高，但仍有很多不尽如人意之处，有待不断完善。最后，提出了培育新型农民、提高农民素质的 5 条路径：大力发展农村教育；开展技能培训；开展经营管理知识学习；加强农村卫生工作；推进农村精神文明建设。

关键词 新农村；新型农民；培育

基于 Topsis 法的农村基本公共服务能力地区差异评价——来自 31 个省市农村地区的实证

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摘 要 回顾了关于公共服务均等化的相关研究，中国学者主要从财政均等化和公共服务水平两方面来设计评价指标体系，具体的评价方法主要有关均等性的评价方法和层次分析法。选取了 5 个方面 5 项具体评价指标，运用 Topsis 法对中国 31 个省市农村公共服务能力进行了评价。具体思想是：通过选出有限方案中的最优与劣方案，计算评价对象与最优和劣方案的相对接近程度，以此作为评价优劣的依据。实证结果表明：财力的非均等化是实现农村公共服务均等化的最大障碍，不同地区农村基本公共服务均等化的差距集中表现在人均财政收入、文化教育、医疗保健和社会保障等方面的差距。此外，人均财政收入的差距最大，不同地区农村的基本公共服务能力存在较大差距，上海、北京、广东等经济发达省份的基本公共服务能力排名靠前，经济相对落后的甘肃、云南、西藏等 6 个地区排名靠后。最后，提出了解决政策性建议：① 服务水平与层次应推进基本公共服务均等化，加强农村教育、医疗保健和交通等公共产品和公共服务的均等化程度；② 公共财政政策要以经济建设为主导，促进财政向民生、公共服务的转移；③ 努力构建多元化基本公共服务供给体制。

关键词 农村地区；基本公共服务；均等化；评价

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