

Migrant Workers and Diversified Livelihood Models of Chinese Farmers

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[Abstract] Empirical surveys have shown that migrant workers have profoundly changed the production and lifestyles of Chinese farmers. The livelihood of farmers is a complex process of constant change. Although agriculture is still an important means of livelihood, the livelihood model presents diverse characteristics. Educate and train migrant workers, vigorously develop the secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas, and gradually improve the rural social security system to further improve the livelihood ability of farmers.

[Key words] Migrant work; livelihood mode; livelihood ability

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I. INTRODUCTION

Livelihood is a way of earning a living and is the foundation of people's livelihood. For thousands of years, Chinese peasants, who are family-based and rely on a self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy, have been struggling with food and clothing, and livelihood problems have been prominent. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese farmers have successively practiced collectivized agriculture and household contracted agriculture. However, the contradiction between people and land is prominent. Agricultural livelihoods can only solve the problem of food and clothing for farmers, but cannot achieve prosperity. Farmers urgently need to stay outside of agriculture. Find a way out. After the 1990s, the development of the market economy and the loosening of the household registration system provided farmers with opportunities for non-agricultural employment. In order to increase income, rural laborers gradually flocked to urban labor and business, and labor income became the most important source of income for farmers. The traditional agricultural livelihood model has been changed to varying degrees, forming a multiple livelihood model with half-work and half-farming as the main body.

II. CLASSIFICATION OF RURAL HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD MODELS

In order to study the changes in rural households' livelihood patterns, we produced the "Questionnaire on Choice of Farmer's Livelihood Models", which selected 331 rural households in Fenfang Village, Yudong, as a sample. The main contents of the questionnaire included basic household information, household income, division of labor, and sideline farming. Management, etc. Because it is a household survey, all 331 questionnaires are valid, but in order to make the sample representative, this paper excludes a small number of livelihood types and actually uses 326 questionnaires in the statistical analysis. Through the analysis, it can be seen that Fenfang Village has formed a multiple livelihood model with half-work and half-farming as the main body.

(1) Semi-agricultural and semi-assisted: a diminishing livelihood model

Processing vermicelli while agricultural production was once a portrayal of the lives of most families in Fenfang Village. After the agricultural tax reduction, the cost of agricultural materials such as seeds and fertilizers has risen sharply, and agricultural profits can no longer sustain daily life, let alone complete life tasks such as building houses, weddings and funerals. At the same time, the vermicelli processing industry is gradually shrinking. In the face of migrant workers, the "golden industry" handed down from generation to generation has been regarded by young people as "dirty, tired, and non-profitable" "poor business". After 2005, most families no longer processed vermicelli, and the famous "Fenfang Village" abandoned the ancestral "family business". In the rural social competition brought about by the market economy, relying on agricultural production and vermicelli processing can no longer allow farmers to lead a decent life. The traditional semi-agricultural and semi-by-line livelihood model has become history.

(2) Half-work and half-farming: the most common livelihood model

The livelihood model of part-work and part-farming is common in most rural areas in central China, and Fenfang Village is no exception. Most of the young and middle-aged labor force in the village is working outside, and migrants have become the "main business". The elderly and women who stay at home run agriculture. Specific to different families, half-work and half-cultivation are manifested in three different forms: one is half-work and half-farming based on gender division of labor, that is, in the same family, male migrant workers and female farmers work at home, forming a "male worker and female farming" livelihood Mode; the second is the half-work and half-farming with the division of labor between generations, which means that the young children in the family go out to work, and the elderly parents work at home, forming a family mode of "old farming and less labor"; third is the seasonal division of labor Half-farming, the main labor force in the family goes out to work in the slack period of the farm, and returns to the village to work in the countryside when the farm is busy, forming a family model of "considering work and farming". Comparatively speaking, "older farming and fewer workers" is the most common household budget mode. The younger generation builds a house through work for the future to complete the tasks of building a house, their children get married and set up a family, and the elderly parents take care of their grandchildren at home and through farming. Maintain basic family life. For some families with young children who need to be nurtured or whose parents are elderly and infirm, the livelihood model of "male workers and women farming" and "work and farming" are adopted accordingly.

(3) Family work: the most popular livelihood model

With the improvement of migrant workers' housing, medical care, and children's enrollment in cities in recent years, more and more peasant households have chosen to "drag their families with their mouths" to work in cities. A family of several rents two houses in the suburbs and young people go to work. , Children go to school nearby or are looked after by the elderly. In this way, both earning income from labor and taking care of the family. Family migrant workers in Fenfang Village have risen from 9.6% in 2000 to 23% at present, and family migrant workers have become the most popular livelihood model. Family workers can take care of family responsibilities, but not all of them fit this model. From the perspective of family conditions, families with healthy parents and smaller burdens are more likely to go out with their families; from the perspective of migrant workers, migrant workers with stable jobs and relatively high incomes can "drag their families." For those migrant workers with heavy family burdens, unstable work locations, and low incomes, "old farming but few workers" is their most realistic choice.

(4) Middle peasant economy: a spontaneous livelihood model

The large-scale flow of labor has promoted the transfer of land use rights. Part-time and part-farming households hand over the land to their parents for farming, while family-based households transfer all the land to relatives or other people for farming, either for free or for paid transfer. But in any case, the land transfer prompted a new type of livelihood model in rural areas-the middle peasant economy. The middle peasant economy refers to the fact that some farmers need to take care of their parents, children, or other reasons (such as engaging in sideline jobs, working as village leaders, etc.). The whole family works in the township and cultivates 30-50 acres of land. The income level is no less than that of migrant workers. , And maintain a complete family livelihood model.

There are 13 middle farmers in Fenfang Village, and their livelihood model has the following characteristics: First, they cultivate 10-20 acres of land, and their agricultural income is between 10,000 and 30,000 yuan. Due to the small per capita arable land, it is difficult for middle-farm households to realize the 30-50 mu land scale described by some scholars. The second is to operate sideline businesses concurrently. The middle peasant households develop sideline businesses such as breeding, handicrafts, and commerce during the slack season to obtain family income equivalent to that of migrant workers. The third is mainly middle-aged and elderly families. Most of these farmers have elderly people who need to take care of them, or serve as village cadres, or rely on sideline jobs to obtain a decent life and "reluctant to go out and suffer crimes." The middle peasant class is based in the village, and concurrently runs sideline businesses while producing agriculture, obtaining economic income equivalent to that of migrant workers, while ensuring the integrity of the family. Although the number of middle peasant households is not large, they are at home all year round and are the backbone of the current rural society.

(5) Single agriculture: a livelihood model for farmers to provide for the elderly

In addition to the above-mentioned livelihood models, most of the elderly in the village over the age of 65 do not live with their children after completing their life tasks, and live a self-sufficient, pure agricultural life on the only 2 mu of land. There are 58 pure farmers over 65 in Fenfang Village. They usually live independently before they lose the ability to work. They start a stove and rely on their own labor to support themselves. During

the survey, the elderly often said that they should try their best not to be a "burden" for their children. Even if they are ill, as long as the husband and wife can take care of each other, they should not "trouble" the children.

The elderly farmers rely on the meager agricultural income and the occasional assistance of their children to maintain a simple and difficult life, which fully reflects the significance of land for the elderly. Although "raising children to protect the elderly" has been the Chinese way of providing for the elderly since ancient times, in recent years, the intergenerational imbalance and intergenerational exploitation in the intergenerational relationship of rural families have caused the parents to generally lack the expectation of elderly care. In addition, young laborers go out to work. Elderly families are becoming increasingly empty nests. As a last resort, in the current lack of social support, land has become the only guarantee for the livelihood of elderly farmers. This is also the most realistic answer to explain that farmers' feelings for land become stronger with age.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Migrating to work has profoundly changed the production and lifestyle of Chinese farmers. If we regard the surveyed villages as a microcosm of rural society in central and western China, and by glancing at the behavior of the 326 farmers in them, we will realize:

First, the livelihood of farmers is a complex process of constant change. It is the behavioral process of farmers based on changes in their living environment and constantly reflecting and adjusting under different scenarios to find the most suitable livelihood mode. It is a manifestation of the survival wisdom of Chinese farmers.

Second, the livelihoods of farmers are characterized by diversity. The changes in the system and the development of the market economy have enabled Chinese farmers to have multiple livelihood options for the first time. Employment, agriculture, sideline and any combination of them have become options for farmers. However, the differences in labor structure, family responsibilities, and cognition of individual farmers make livelihood choices diversified. Even in the same family, its livelihood pattern will be adjusted as the life cycle changes.

Third, agriculture is still an important means of livelihood. The uncertainty of labor income and the imperfect social security system in China's rural areas have made farmers afraid and unable to give up their land, especially for many elderly farmers who cannot go out to work. Agriculture still plays the main livelihood role. In the context of the country's vigorous promotion of urbanization, the phenomena of "virtual urbanization", "semi-urbanization", and "new dual structure" in the process of peasants entering cities all reflect that the pure labor economy cannot allow peasants to stay in cities. To lead a decent life, the countryside is still the main life aspect of farmers. Only when the worries about the safety of farmers' livelihoods are eliminated, can farmers realize the complete transformation from agricultural livelihoods to non-agricultural livelihoods.

In view of this, we recommend:

First, improve farmers' human capital quality through education and training. Only when farmers have a certain level of education and corresponding labor skills can they adapt to the labor requirements of modern industry and agriculture. According to the current status of farmers in the Midwest, the following measures can be taken to improve the quality of farmers' human capital. The first is to increase investment in rural basic education, improve rural school-running facilities and the level of teachers, and ensure the quality of compulsory education; the second is to organize vocational skills training classes in accordance with economic development and industry employment trends, and provide targeted vocational training for farmers. Improve its market competitiveness and employability.

Second, actively create conditions to improve the livelihood capacity of rural households who work part-time in the township. On the one hand, by vigorously developing the secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas, increasing local employment and business opportunities, attracting some young laborers from migrant workers to local migrant workers, and increasing the income level of rural households working part-time in the countryside. On the other hand, it is necessary to encourage the specialized and centralized operation of agriculture to improve the efficiency of agricultural production. In particular, it is necessary to adopt policies to support various forms of farming with households as a unit at an appropriate scale to increase the level of agricultural income.

Third, gradually improve the rural social security system. Young and middle-aged rural laborers have dedicated their best youth to cities by going out to work, and have made great contributions to China's industrialization and urbanization. However, when they are old and no longer need for urban development, they can only return to their hometowns to rely on land for the elderly. At present, China's rural old-age security is still in its infancy, and the problem of old-age care for the rural elderly is still prominent. Therefore, the government should implement a unified urban and rural old-age security system as soon as possible on the basis of the rural cooperative medical system. Only in this way can the worries of migrant workers be solved and the part-work and part-farming livelihood method can be sustainable.

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