

The Economy of Chinese Rural Households

Wenrong Qian et al.

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PREFACE

China is the biggest developing country in the world; issues of agriculture, rural development and farmers are always the fundamental concern in the modernization of our country. Reform of China started from rural areas. China's rural development has made tremendous achievements in 40 years of reform and opening-up. Total grain output and farmers' net income continue to increase. According to the existing standards in China, namely, per capita annual income of 2300 yuan (2010) in the calculation of the poverty line, poverty population decreased from 770 million in 1978 to 30 million in 2017 and the poverty incidence fell from 97.5% to 3.1%, equivalent to the reduction of nearly 800 million poverty population given the natural population growth factor. However, up to now, China's rural economic development still faces serious problems: the process of factors marketization lags behind the reform of commodity marketization, which restricts the integrated development of urban and rural areas. And the dual economic and social structure of urban and rural areas has not been completely eliminated. Under the background of narrowing the income gap between urban and rural areas, there is still an imbalance in the distribution of social security resources. The trend of widening differences between workers and peasants, between urban and rural areas, between regions and between classes has not yet been fundamentally reversed. The situation that agriculture is a weak industry, rural areas lag behind communities and farmers are vulnerable groups has not been fundamentally changed. Integrated development of urban and rural areas has become a major challenge facing China's rural economy and even China's modernization process, and the effective promotion and implementation of relevant reform

measures and policies to a large extent depends on the comprehensive and accurate grasp of the current situation and trend of China's agriculture, rural areas and farmers' development.

The household is the most basic unit of society. It is also the most fundamental social cell constituted by marital, blood and adoptive relationships. Rural households, on the other hand, are the basic organizational unit of rural society that combines production and social lives. Rural households are the basic units of rural consumption and demands as well as the supply side (including labor, capitals) of production factors. The China Rural Household Panel Survey (CRHPS) launched by Zhejiang University (hereafter referred to as ZJU) aimed at setting a baseline for investigating rural issues in China. This comprehensive survey involved complete information on China's rural households, including their basic household structure, employment, income and expenditure, household wealth, agricultural production and management, land utility and circulation, migration of population and urbanization, financial behavior, health and social security, education and training, and so on. The CRHPS could scientifically record and analyze the transition of China's rural households and integrate the multidimensional information of society through rural families at the micro level. It could also help us understand the development of rural China in the dimensions of society, economy, politics, culture, and resources and environment, as well as the basic features of rural consumption and demand, their production factors and the changes in their supply from a micro level. By continuously tracking and investigating all aspects of China's rural households and regularly recording their all directional transitions using micro-statistics, the objective reality of China's rural households could be thoroughly understood and the inner mechanism of the various kinds of social problems could be probed into.

In the final chapter of this report, we further summarized and refined what we think is important and put forward our own viewpoint and the conclusion. Readers may not have to agree to all of our points of view, but we hope it will have a certain reference value for the people who are researchers on the Chinese rural issue and concerned about China's rural development.

The authors of this book are Wenrong Qian, Shaosheng Jin, Jianqing Ruan, Rui Mao, Binlei Gong, Qing Yuan, Xin He, Sitong Chen, Tao Jiang, and Liangyan Guo. Due to the limited level of the author, coupled with the time and energy constraints, there must be unavoidable errors in this book; please let us know if you have any questions.

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