



Characterizing the attitudes of the grain-planting farmers of Huaihe Basin, China

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ABSTRACT

At the end of 2015, the Chinese government enacted the “supply-side structural reform”. The fundamental purpose of this reform is to implement people-centered development and to improve the level of social productivity. As different types of farmers have different needs in terms of management incentives, it is necessary to evaluate the attitudes of Chinese farmers in the period of agricultural supply-side structural reform. In this study we used the Q-methodology to divide 26 grain-planting farmers in the Huaihe Basin into three types, positive development farmer (PD), negative development farmer (ND) and family support farmer (FS), based on their attitudes towards policy, land, livelihood and planting plan. We found that: (1) Policy: FS-type evaluated the direct subsidy policy most highly. In contrast, ND-type had the most negative attitudes toward food-related policies. (2) Land: PD-type, which are representative of the new generation of grain farmers, had the highest dependence on the land, and land resources are likely to become their most scarce resource. (3) Livelihood: ND-type had the highest responsiveness to livelihoods, and they were most inclined to co-op. (4) Planting plan: FS-type were the most likely to replace food crops with cash crops. PD-type’s planting plan is limited by the sales capacity, and ND-type’s planting plan is most affected by technology. According to the characteristics of Chinese farmers, expanding the classification of different aspects is not only the development of the Q classification in the study of farmers, but also a new perspective to study the individual differences of Chinese farmers under the background of supply-side structural reform.

1. Introduction

By characterizing the attitudes of farmers towards planting plans, i.e., whether they are willing to continue to grow crops, how they are going to deal with their land and what are the most important source of their livelihood when they get older, we can do more to promote agricultural supply-side reform in China. However, we know little about the basic view of farmers. Several policies, including the food direct subsidy policy and the minimum grain purchase price policy, have been introduced to both ensure that the country’s food supply and grain farmers’ interests are met. The main goal of supply-side structural reform is to improve the quality and efficiency of the agricultural supply system, and to promote farmers’ income. Innovative institutional mechanisms should be formulated to optimize elements of agriculture, adjust the products, technology, industry, regional and other aspects (Government documents of the Ministry of Agriculture of China).¹

However, the views of farmers towards these policies are unknown.

With the reform and opening-up policies in China, redistribution has resulted in farmers having different needs in terms of agriculture, land and grain production incentives. Farmers originally had overlapping income, status, and prestige, and the differentiation of farmers into different levels and types has resulted in different demands for incentives. However, most villages have failed to establish an incentive mechanism that is compatible with this differentiation (Li, 1999).

It is acknowledged that farmers themselves, as capitalists and collectors of land and technology are worthy of thorough research, i.e. conducting a full analysis of the role farmers play when studying a public problem (Kang, 1998; Thebe, 2017). Several studies have yielded important insights, including the behavior of farmers and their choices based on laborer endowment (Chang and Zhang, 2017; Dodd et al., 2017) and family endowment (Liu, 2017), the market economy (Luo, 2017) and the external environment (Stavropoulou et al., 2017; Zhao

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¹ http://www.moa.gov.cn/govpublic/BGT/201702/t20170206_5468139.htm, The implementation of the Ministry of agriculture on promoting the structural reform of the agricultural supply side. Publish day: January 26, 2017, effective date: February 6, 2017, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of People’s Republic of China.

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