Evaluation of Farmers’ Participation in Rural Residential Land Consolidation
Ways of Improving Farmers’ Benefits in Hubei Province, China

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INTRODUCTION

China has experienced a long period of industrialization and urbanization oriented development. This one-sided development is based on the sacrifices of the benefits of rural lives. This makes the gap between rural and urban areas get worse increasingly. So, recently the national government has paid more and more attention on rural development and rural lives. In this regard, the Rural Residential Land Consolidation (RRLC) programmes have been used as a tool. However, there is low level of farmers’ participation in the RRLC programmes, since their opinions are not being sought by the authorities. Moreover, achieving sustainable rural development and improving benefits for rural farmers through RRLC must depend on farmers’ participation or their willingness to get involved. Although studies on RRLC programmes have been undertaken before, none of these has focused on the evaluation of farmers’ participation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the general relationship between all the stakeholders involved in RRLC.
2. To identify the key factors that affect farmers’ participation.
3. To compare the true state of farmers’ livelihood before and after the RRLC programme.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• The study was based on a multifaceted research design comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods.
• Primary data was collected through the use of two types of structured questionnaires. The first type of questionnaires were used to evaluate the opinions of farmers who have not experienced the RRLC and related to RRLC programmes. The second type of questionnaires were used to examine the livelihood and satisfaction degree of farmers who have already experienced the RRLC programmes and moved to live in the new rural communities.
• This was supplemented by an in depth secondary data analysis based on review of existing literature.
• Field data obtained from the first type of questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics using graphs, means, frequencies, and percentages using SPSS software, and the second type was analyzed through 7-points Likert Scaling Method using weighted average.

MAJOR FIELD FINDINGS:

• Large amount of young people have migrated to urban areas, leaving the rural areas dominated by the aged population.
• The overall education level and income level of farmers are very low, far behind that of the urban people.
• 64% of the population lives in Rural Areas and depends mainly on Agriculture and land resources for survival.
• The traditional agricultural production mode, with small scale of operation is still predominant in rural areas.
• Most of the farmers are dissatisfied with public participation system existing in rural areas.

RELATIONSHIP AMONG MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS IN RRLC IN CHINA

• Developer, seeks economic benefits by formal means or informal means.
• Farmer, the most vulnerable group, is in the passive state.
• Rural Collective Organization, acts as the interpreter and implementer of policies, seeks economic benefits by exerting political power.
• Local Government, the interpreter supports local government, directly facing farmers.
• Central Government, as the policymaker, constantly plays a special role in the real world.

SATISFACTION DEGREE OF FARMERS ON RRLC PROGRAMMES

• Generally, the respondents were dissatisfied with RRLC programmes and the states of livelihood after moving to the new communities, with 2.95 as the mean score of overall satisfaction degree (1-7 points, the lower score represents severe dissatisfaction).

VOICES OF FARMERS

• The majority of farmers are not willing to get involved in RRLC programmes due to effects of various factors such as the age, education level, occupation, land area, rural participation system et al.
• The farmers are more inclined to live in original residential areas which should be developed reasonably by governments.
• Farmers hope that the government can provide them with the same social welfare and security treatment as urban residents do; enhance the sustaining investment on rural development, and improve the rural infrastructure and agricultural facilities; improve governance capability of grass-roots governments; ensure the transparent implementation of national policies and measures and enhance the level of rural democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Develop Pro-Farmer Policies and Regulations.
• Improve Rural Democracy.
• Ensuring Land Tenure Security for Farmers.
• Enhance Rural Capacity Building.
• Adopting Participatory Rural Development.
• Combine Rural Residential Land Consolidation to Village Renewal.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

• Promoting Regional Integrated Development.