



改革面临 制度创新

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改革面临
制度创新

——“后包产到户”
阶段的深化改革

发展研究所
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INTRODUCTION

This book introduces the conclusions drawn from a comprehensive research project undertaken in 1986 by the Research Institute of the Center for Rural Development under the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Significant changes have taken place in China's rural areas since the production mode of fixing output quotas for each household was first carried out in the late 1970s. Although this reform has achieved substantial progress, new problems and difficulties keep popping up to block the advance. This book is intended to help readers to discover those obstacles by looking back at the history of the reform.

The rural reform was designed to emancipate the productive forces. Since the subject of the productive forces is the peasantry, the emancipation meant that of the peasants in the first place. Before the initiation of

reform, the peasantry held little in their possession. Their status of being the owners of the collective farms never became a reality, but only remaining at the nominal level. The confused system of "three-level ownership" led to the egalitarian distribution of means of production, which in turn led to the distrust of the collective economy on the part of the peasants. The old economic system created numerous barriers to the peasants' freedom of choice of vocation, migration and change of social status. The peasants were tied up to their ground by the people's commune's practices of grain rationing, household registration and workpointing. (Workpoint was a unit used to grade the quantity and quality of the labor performed, according to which payment in crop and cash was given after harvest.) The system proved to be profoundly destructive to the development of economy and of the qualities of the rural population.

The rural reform restored property right to the peasants. In 1985, what an average Chinese peasant held in possession in the forms of fixed productive assets, resident buildings, surplus grain, cash and bank deposits totalled 3800 yuan in value and the sum capital owned by all the peasants that year was estimated at 700 billion yuan.

Restoration of property right does not mean restoration of private ownership, however. Presently, dra-

ught animals, large iron and wooden farming tools, machinery for farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery again accounts for 57.4% of the peasants' fixed productive property, supplemented by a certain amount of cash and other material objects. Nevertheless, they must be used in conjunction with collectively-owned land which the peasants contract out in productive activities. The ownership of land and other property by the collective, which was realized through unified undertakings and the direct control of proceeds prior to the reform, is now realized mainly through the turnover of amounts stipulated in contracts by peasants households. Thus, although this transformation in which the 800 million peasants are heavily involved includes unavoidably factors of the redistribution of property and the formation of new property entities, fast growing total quantity of property constitutes the mainstream. The reform has not forsaken the basic direction of striving to find the most suitable form for building socialism in a country where the majority of the population are peasants.

Recognition of peasants' property rights requires that peasants be given more freedom in their economic activities. In China, the hundreds of millions of rural laborers have between them just over 1 billion *mu* of arable land to work on. The space for their economic activities is obviously very small. Between 1979 and 1985, about one-fifth of the rural labor force has

changed their employment, place of residence and actual social status. They are obviously no longer peasants in the conventional sense. This indicates that the freedom of the peasants (who make up 80% of China's total population) to change their profession and social status in keeping up with the needs of economic and social development has been markedly increased.

Property rights and freedom to change one's status are the two magic weapons in the switch to the practice of fixing output quotas for each household. They have aroused the enthusiasm of several hundred million Chinese peasants for their land, labor and life. This constitutes a major motive force for the rapid growth of the rural economy from 1975 to 1985.

Change in the production system requires significant development of the relationship between agricultural commodity and currency. In 1985, rural commodity rate reached 63.9% and cash income per capita accounted for 65.5% of the individual's total income. Currently, over 50% of the nation's purchasing power lies in the hands of the farmers. More than 60% of the total volume of retail sales is realized in the countryside. 60% of the market currency of the whole country is in the farmers' pockets. In China's history, there has never been so close a link of peasants' production and life with the exchange of commodities and the use of money, But in order that the apparent selling and

buying become equal-value exchange in its true sense, the whole economic system has to undergo fundamental changes, including adjustment of fundamental interest between producer, consumer and management.

The inevitability of reform does not guarantee the certainty of its victory. In practice, there are two outstanding problems which may eventually decide the success or failure of the reform. Firstly, the purchase and sale of some farm products have been deregulated but not freed, as a result of which seesaw battles and reversals have ensued. Secondly, some products no longer subject to unified state purchase and sale are producing market shocks as a result of violent fluctuations in supply and demand. Seen from both aspects, the reform is confronted with knotty problems. At this juncture, it seems that all of a sudden everyone is asking in retrospection, Why was the market mechanism introduced? Why do we have to go through this kind of suffering? It seems that problems once taken as the premise of the reform and which had long since been solved are re-emerging as strangers to the peasants, commercial institutions, consumers and government management departments. If we cannot clarify our understanding on the most fundamental issues of consciousness and grasp the true crux of the in-depth reform, people's enthusiasm for reform will be dampened, and they may have the occasion to

hear once again the laughing voice of the old structure, "Come back! It is the purgatory of the market mechanism."

The usual description given to the market mechanism is: liberty of pricing. However, we should go a step further and ask ourselves what kind of deep structural conditions, such as institutional norms, guiding principles for public behaviors and organisational carriers, need to be present before price signals could so authoritatively compel all producers and consumers to make the anticipated kinds of responses. From our experience we know that the deep structure of the market comprises two essential points. First, the interest of each socio-economic unit is clearly defined as independent ownership. To put the concept of ownership into reality, we have to set up concrete and complete norms of economic conduct. The second point is that complete commercial rules and regulations must be stipulated. People are expected to eventually abide by those principles through training and habit forming. Therefore, the autonomy of price and its authority over the distribution of resources are not determined by themselves, but by the deep structure of the market. Conceivably, the cause for the breakdown of the regulative power of price formation is to be found in the depth of the socio-economic structure.

If we are to make a brief economic analysis of the

difficulties confronting the reform, our conclusion would be, the practice of fixing output quotas for each household has greatly increased the production efficiency of the close to 200 million peasant households. But this is being offset by the drastic increase in transaction fees due to the absence of a corresponding deep market structure. People often wonder why the market price is going up all the time despite an increase in supply. An important reason for this is that while manufacture of "hard goods" (products) increases, "soft goods" (market organizations and regulations necessary for turning products and production factors into commodities) is falling short of demand. The inflation in transaction fees involved in the marketing of farm products has greatly reduced the possibility of steadily expanding equal transactions. This is the fundamental reason why bulk farm products are deregulated but not freed and why market fluctuations over the retailing of farm products cannot be checked.

If we go into the deep market structure to observe the problems, we would discover that there is an absence of effective intermediary of modern commerce to constantly lower the rising transaction fees which inevitably accompany the development of the elementary commodity-money relationship. To be precise, what we have encountered in the reform of the Price of farm

products is an economic organization crisis. In this respect, we do not have at our disposal existing conventional organizational resources such as the practice of peasant household undertakings

The demand for new organizations surfaced almost as soon as the system of responsibility was first implemented. The inherent pressure of economic development made it imperative to actively plunge into organizational innovation. However, we must recognize that the organizational innovation already under way in the rural areas is still basically restricted to the refurbishing of non-standard organizations, by which we mean organizations which do not require definite codes of conduct and where there is no unified social means of coercion to guarantee that the codes are backed by a network of blood ties, neighbors, relatives, "connections" and other elementary social relations, and are cemented through "human relationships" and other special mediums. These organizations have their limitations. They are greatly restricted in their choice of target by natural conditions and therefore cannot be optimized on an extensive scale. Their internal relations which are maintained chiefly by elementary social codes and dependent to a large extent on the "connections" and "personal integrity" of the persons concerned are extremely unstable. Their social status is not formally recognized so that people outside

these organizations find it hard to firmly place their hopes on them. All this has made it impossible for non-standard organizations to accumulate the achievements of their innovation, thus making them incapable of shouldering the burdensome task of substantially cutting down organizational expenses and transaction costs.

Thus far, no substantial progress in reform has yet been made in the sphere of standard organizations. This sphere has two special features: first, there are unified and definite codes of conduct for their members, and second, any member violating these codes of conduct will be subject to social coercive measures. As noted in the above paragraphs, although China is strong in its tradition of standard organizations, the codes of conduct and binding forces of these organizations have always been subject to vertical administrative subordination and to it alone. Anything that is outside the system of administrative authority is non-standard, this has more or less become the first crucial point in China's unwritten law. The typological uniformity of this kind of standard organization is a major obstacle to our efforts to carry the reform into greater depths. Ever since the reform started, we have had difficulty implementing the guiding principle of the "separation of government and enterprise functions." The crux of

the problem is that once our "enterprises" are separated from the government, they can only look for non-standard protection and recognition in the form of blood ties and human relationships in the sphere of non-standard organizations (such as contractual operations by individuals and households), and there will be nowhere else where they can exist as standard organizations. In the history of the Chinese nation, we cannot recall ever having any independent economic organizations that are at once free from the shackles of patriarchal relations and not attached to administrative authority set up to provide regular protection and constraints. Mere determination to decentralize power is no remedy for this natural defect.

When transformation in the sphere of non-standard organizations has reached a certain critical point, innate demands for standardization will be generated, which can only be accomplished in the old vertical administrative structure. The sprouts of these new organizations cannot be legalized and standardized unless they sacrifice their feature as products of the commodity economy. New things are constantly emerging, but they can't grow up, and if they do, they have to turn into what they are not. In terms of economic analysis, none of these forms can reduce transaction expenses on a large scale.

Since the complete and extensive application of

market mechanism inevitably correlates with the structural transformation within the sphere of standard organizations, the author firmly believes that the direction of further reform lies in the formulation of new rules and regulations, which should not only transcend blood ties and "connections", but also avoid becoming nursery for new forms of large administrative organizations.

This book consists of a main thesis entitled Peasant, Market and Structural Reformation—Fixing of Farm Output Quotas for Each Household which is supported by twelve additional topic discussions, and a detailed report on Tuxian County, Anhui Province which took the lead in the rural reform eight years ago.

前言

本书是国务院农村发展研究中心发展研究所1986年一项综合研究成果。我们希望告诉读者的，是关于中国农村自从70年代末包产到户变革以来，改革所取得的实质进展和面临的新的困难。从中长期的眼光来看，这些新的困难是无可回避的。通过组织创新和制度创新来克服这些新困难，是中国农村——那里居住着世界上最大的社会实体，即8亿中国农民——走向现代化的必修课程。成绩如何，可能对整个中国经济社会的现代化事业，有着无可替代的重大影响。

包产到户的成功，曾经给我们建立起改革必胜的信念。凡是对我国农村在改革前的实际状况有所了解的人，都对包产到户感到欢欣鼓舞。中国人通过包产到户告诉世界：我们勇于面对事实，也善于面对事实。只要面对事实，任何困难的问题，比如说，10亿人口的温饱问

题，也有办法解决。

但是，我们没有理由停顿下来欢呼包产到户的成功，而应当把眼光对准包产到户后的新的事实。当我们这样做的时候，我们看到了包产到户的巨大成功，仅仅还只是一个长长的历史过程的简短开头。它真正解决了的问题，远不如它引发出来的问题来得多，来得广泛而深刻。

本书记录和描述了依我们的眼光所观察到的事实：包产到户8年之后我国农村面临着制度创新的总趋势。同时，我们还依我们的认识对问题作了探讨，其中的主线是市场机制与组织和制度文明的关联。所有这些观察、描述和初步的分析都带有我们的局限；这里大胆地提供给读者，正是为了求得科学的批评。

我们相信，更多的人面对事实并且永远面对事实，是中国的发展和改革成功的保证。

本项研究课题的协调人是周其仁，从事研究工作的有陈锡文、杜鹰、高山、高小蒙、戴小京、卢迈、冉明权、杨经伦、邱继成、王振耀、曹和平、李国都、赵阳和郭绍迁。主报告

经课题组讨论，由周其仁、戴小京执笔撰写；王岐山、邓英淘、白南生、罗小鹏等提出过重要修改意见。各专题报告的主题由课题组确定，经署名人撰写而成；在收入本书时，又由周其仁、邱继成、李国都统一改定。本书附录是为了验证主报告的一些重要判断，而组织到安徽滁县、阜阳地区调查访问农民的记录，除以上人员外，参加访谈的还有谢扬、杨志坚、蒋中一、孙晓光、于深平、王军、刘丹华、马建英、吴丹毛、徐徐、方炎和黄一平，记录由杜鹰总其成。

本书的主报告及个别专题报告，曾在《经济研究》、《社会经济体制比较》等刊物上发表过，得到了唐宗焜、荣敬本、乔桐封、邱树芳等同志的指导；本书的公开出版，又得到上海三联书店陈昕同志的指导和帮助，在此一并致谢。

作者

1987年9月