CHAPTER 12

2012 Peasant Development Report

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Abstract

The year 2012 saw China's ninth consecutive year of bumper crop. This achievement can be attributed to advances in China's agricultural modernization of recent years, as well as in major adjustments to the distribution of China's agricultural production capacity. Persistent changes to the employment structure of the rural labor force have on the one hand helped increase occupational differentiation for rural workers and on the other greatly changed the source structure of income for the rural population. Rural society is currently in a key era of modernization, and both rural public welfare and rural social organizations are steadily growing steadily. However, the high incidence of social conflicts and degree of tension in rural areas deserves serious attention.

Keywords

agricultural modernization – distribution of agricultural production capacity – occupational diversification of farmers – rural social transformation

China marked its ninth consecutive year of bumper crop in 2012. The state further strengthened policies designed to benefit and enrich farmers and greatly increased investments towards resolving the “Three Rural Issues.” Overall rural agricultural economy maintained steady growth. A regional distribution of agricultural production capacity is beginning to take form, and there have been marked increases to both the scale of agricultural operations and the level of agricultural mechanization. Rural incomes are growing rapidly. Advances in agricultural technology have helped improve the social service system for agricultural production. The peasant population continues to differentiate internally, and both moving among multiple jobs—both agricultural and non-agricultural—and professionalization of scale operations have

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become widespread. Rural incomes are growing faster than urban incomes, but since baseline of rural incomes was low to begin with, urban-rural income disparity continues to grow in absolute terms. Moving among multiple jobs in different sectors and professionalization of scale operations are coming to coexist in agricultural operations, and there have been marked increases to the levels of agricultural technology and agricultural mechanization. Levels of public services provided in rural communities are on the rise, and basic guarantees have been established. All farmers are now beginning to benefit from social security. At the same time, transformation of rural villages has begun to accelerate. The awareness among rural residents of land usage rights and community resource interests has heightened, but there are still frequent conflicts over excessively low compensations for requisitioned land.

1 Agricultural Modernization and the Distribution of Agricultural Production Capacity

In 2012, China's agricultural production developed steadily, and marked the ninth consecutive year of grain yield increases. Cotton, oil crops, and sugar crops yields remained steady. Aggregate yield of sugar crops grew. The livestock industry maintained steady development, and the dairy industry's aggregate production increased. Aquatic food production grew steadily, and the animal husbandry industry maintained steady growth throughout the year. The development of agricultural production in China owes much to advances in agricultural modernization and recent adjustments to the regional distribution of agricultural production that have proven particularly effective in facilitating increases in agricultural yield.

1.1 Advances in Agricultural Modernization

The most prominent manifestations of the development of agricultural modernization are increases to the level of agricultural mechanization and advances to the organization of agricultural production. At the agricultural mechanization level, progress has been rapid since entry into the 21st century. From 2001 to 2011, the total capacity of nationwide agricultural machinery rose from 551.721 million kilowatts to 977.347 million kilowatts, an increase of 77.1 percent. The number of large and mid-sized tractors grew from 829,900 to 4,406,471, 4.3-fold increase. The number of small tractors grew from 13,050,840 to 18,112,663, a 38.8 percent increase. The number of diesel-powered irrigators grew from 7,285,693 to 9,683,914, a 32.9 percent increase. The effective area of