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Barriers to Rural Women's Involvement in Economic Activities: Evidence from Shaanxi, China

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Abstract

With China's fast development in urbanization and agricultural modernization, rural women are one of the most affected yet ignored groups in society. However, strong evidence has shown that women's active economic participation can not only reduce the likelihood of household poverty, but also improve distributional dynamics within a household. With first-hand data collected from three areas in one province, this research studies rural women's barriers to economic participation in farming and off-farm employment under the government's policy of land transfer. It is found that rural women are facing different challenges and have diversified needs and aspirations. There is a mismatch between the training local government offered and what rural women really want. The study of women professional farmers aims at building an updated understanding of rural women within the fast pace of China's modernization. This research covers some of the critical factors of economic growth, such as the role of geography, gender, history and institutions. The findings provide information to policy makers, researchers and social organizations concerned with the future of rural women, and assist the sustainable implementation of the land transfer policy and gender equality.

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Abbreviations

ACWF: All China Women Federation

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

GAF: Gender Analysis Framework

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

HRS: Household Responsibility System

Hukou: Household Registration System

LDC: Less Developed Country

NWAFU: Northwest A&F University

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

PRC: People's Republic of China

PWF: Professional woman farmer

STSCRW: Science and Technique Service Centre for Rural Women in Shaanxi Province

TVEs: Town and Village Enterprises

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

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If China wants to be strong, agriculture must be strong. If China wants to be beautiful, the countryside must be beautiful. If China wants to get rich, the farmers must get rich.

By China's President Xi Jinping's address to the Central Rural Work Conference, which ended on December 23, 2013?

Women should participate and contribute on an equal basis with men in the social, economic and political processes of rural development and share fully in improved conditions of life in rural areas.

Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, July 1979.