

Comprehensive Land Consolidation as a Tool for Rural Restructuring: Lessons from MHPFP in Jiangsu, China

Zhihong Zhang (China, PR)

Key words: Land management; Comprehensive land consolidation; rural development transformation; driving force of rural development; rural restructuring

SUMMARY

In rural China, land use patterns, especially rural construction land, are not spatially optimized in the process of population urbanization. China is facing a major challenge, i.e. rural decline after 30 years of rapid development. A new policy was expected to provide land quota for urban development and capital demanded for rural restructuring, promote land transfer, release rural surplus labor, and enhance agricultural productivity through comprehensive land consolidation (CLC) in 2008. In order to evaluate the role of CLC for rural restructuring and improve the practical operability of the policy for future CLC, a field survey was conducted in Jiangsu Province, China. The result shows that CLC can serve as a powerful tool for rural restructuring, which facilitates non-agricultural employment, increases rural incomes, and improves rural pensions and health care. In a total of 42 CLC projects, 88.1% of the projects achieved a significant increase in per capita income for rural residents. 26.7% of the rural labor force within the project areas sought non-agricultural employment. Most of increasing income of rural residents is attributed to non-agricultural employment. Local industrial development and educational levels are the important social and economic variables for rural development transformation. Capital demanded for rural restructuring mainly relies on land quota transfer fees in Jiangsu Province, which can maintain financial balance in most projects. However, the level of local economic development and government capacity in financial operations are considered limiting factors of rural restructuring process. The policy of land quota for urban development is feasible through land quota transfer fee for rural restructuring in Jiangsu Province. However, potential risks should not be ignored. Practical operations of CLC project for rural restructuring in China need to be further improved, such as a one-vote veto system for issues relating to ecological protection and public satisfaction of sustainable community development.