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

A Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of  
the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Economics

At Massey University, Manawatu,  
New Zealand

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2017



## **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

## **Acknowledgements**

Time flies: it is almost the end of my Ph.D. study. Looking back, I can see clearly how I have come to this stage step by step with lovely people's help. The thesis is not only about the research but also about my life in New Zealand in the past four years. I feel very worthy being in Massey and accomplishing my Ph.D. here. I would like to express my greatest gratitude to those who have helped and supported me through the journey, although I know words can never express my gratitude enough.

First, I would like to thank all my supervisors: Professor Dr. Martin Young, Professor Dr. Huiyan Zhao, and Professor Dr. Allan Rae. I am grateful to have you as my supervisors and I would not make it without your help and support. Dear Professor Martin, I sincerely thank you for accepting me as one of you Ph.D. students. By offering me an opportunity and a new platform, you changed and uplifted my whole life level from then on. I thank you for keeping calm and give me confidence and encouragement whenever I was depressed or got lost in my study. I will always remember your support and kindness.

Dear Professor Zhao, you are my role model. Your optimistic attitude towards life and enthusiasm towards changing rural people's life, all contribute to my current research career. While collecting data in the harsh winter, I really appreciate you accompanied me going to every research area to ensure I got the satisfactory one. Sincere thanks to you, Dear Professor Allan, I will always remember that one morning in a two-hour time span, we exchanged eleven emails at a stretch simply for the selection of the preferred logistic regression models. I was deeply impressed by your clear mind and careful research attitude. I thank you for your patience, and lead me from an almost standby of economics to a researcher, although I know I need much more work to be like you.

I would also like to give my sincere thanks to Dr. David Tripe and Dr. Song Shi. Dr. David Tripe assisted me going through my hardest initial Ph.D. journey, and Dr. Song Shi, at that time sitting not far from my office, whenever I had puzzles, I went to his office, and he would put aside his work and give me some good insight, even knowledge in property. Sitting in one office, my Ph.D. mates, Bob Lissington, Andryan Setyadharma and Andres Camacho all gave me great help and encouragement in my daily progress. The newly enrolled Ph.D. candidates, Nikhil, Saba, Tran, Salah also brought me lots of friendship and pleasure. My friends Alice Cheng, David Zhuang, Peter Black and Jim McShane, and Chinese friends in the Bible study group also gave me various kinds of in time help and make the journey full of adventure.

I own my special thanks to my Chinese University, Northwest A&F University, without the grant they providing me to study in New Zealand, all this will not happen. Finally, yet very importantly, I extend my sincere thanks to my family: My great parents, husband, and daughter. Your support and love made all this become not only possible but true. I love you all.

Mei Yang

21/06/2017

*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.