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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

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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.
Table of Contents:

Abstract .................................................................................................................................... III

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... IX

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... XI

Abbreviations ......................................................................................................................... XII

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... XIII

Chapter 1. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
  1.1. Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................ 1
  1.2. Research Questions ..................................................................................................... 2
  1.3. Objectives of the Study ............................................................................................... 2
  1.4. Chapter Outline ........................................................................................................... 3

Chapter 2. Background, Theoretical Base and Literature Review ............................................. 5
  2.1 Background Information .............................................................................................. 5
    2.1.1. Hukou System ...................................................................................................... 5
    2.1.2. The Evolution of the Rural Land Property System in the PRC ........................... 9
    2.1.3. On Agricultural Extension and Technical Trainings ......................................... 14
  2.2. Theoretical Base: Development Economics ................................................................. 19
    2.2.1 Lewis’s Dual Sector Model and Todaro’s Development Model ......................... 20
    2.2.2 Likonomics ........................................................................................................ 23
    2.2.3 Summary ............................................................................................................ 25
2.3 Literature Review......................................................................................................................27
2.3.1 Urban–rural gap, Regional gap, and Gender gap in China.................................................27
2.3.2 Studies on Gender, Economics, and Development..............................................................33
2.3.3 Women, Rural Women, and Land in China.............................................................................37
2.4 Summary ......................................................................................................................................42

Chapter 3. Methodology and Data..................................................................................................46
3.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................................46
3.2 Research Design and Framework ..............................................................................................46
3.3 Choice of Research Sites ............................................................................................................48
3.4 Data Collection Methods ...........................................................................................................52
3.5 Data Collection Process ............................................................................................................55
3.5.1 Survey on Rural Women in Farming Sector .........................................................................56
3.5.2 Survey on Rural Women Engaging in Off-farm Activities ....................................................59
3.5.3 Characteristics of the Whole Sample .......................................................................................61
3.6 Missing Data and What Can Be Learnt from It ...........................................................................62
3.7 Data Analysis Methods ..............................................................................................................64

Chapter 4. Getting to Know Rural Women in China.......................................................................65
4.1 Rural Women in Farming ............................................................................................................66
4.1.1 Descriptive Results from the Survey .....................................................................................66
4.1.1.1 Marital Status, Age, Educational Attainment and Social Connection...............................66
4.1.1.2 Understanding State’s Land Policy and Attitudes towards Farming........75

4.1.1.3 Rural Women’s future plan ................................................................................78

4.1.2 Interview Results from the Three Specific Research Sites.................................80

4.1.2.1 Luoquanyan Village in Ningqiang .................................................................80

4.1.2.2 Huaixi Village in Mei County .......................................................................82

4.1.2.3 Yangling: Complicated Land Situation .......................................................85

4.2 Rural Women in Off-farm Work.........................................................................99

4.2.1 General Characteristics of Rural Women in Off-farm Sector .........................100

4.2.2 Comparison of Rural Women’s First Job and Current Job............................102

4.3 Results and Discussion....................................................................................107

Chapter 5. Predictors of Rural Women’s Off-farm Activities.................................113

5.1 Introduction.......................................................................................................113

5.2 Literature Review..............................................................................................114

5.2.1 Women and Migration in the PRC.................................................................114

5.2.2 Land Transfer Market Studies in China.........................................................119

5.2.3 Summary.......................................................................................................122

5.3 Methodology....................................................................................................123

5.3.1 Independent Variables of the Empirical Model............................................123

5.3.2 Goodness of Fit of Each Model and Results Report.................................128

5.4 Logistic Results...............................................................................................129
5.4.1 Full sample ....................................................................................................... 130
5.4.2 Yangling ........................................................................................................... 136
5.4.3 Ningqiang ......................................................................................................... 142
5.5 Discussion ............................................................................................................... 147

Chapter 6. Professional Women Farmers ................................................................. 152
6.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................... 152
6.2 Theoretical Base: Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach ........................................... 154
6.3 Data and Method ..................................................................................................... 156
6.4 Professional Women Farmers from Yangling .......................................................... 158
   6.4.1 PWF1, the Head of the Fuqianjia Breeding Cooperative ................................. 158
   6.4.2 PWF2, the Chairwoman of the Meixin Land Share Cooperative ................. 159
   6.4.3 PWF3, the Head of the Sister Lan Family Farm .......................................... 161
6.5 Trainees from Professional Training Class in Hanzhong Prefecture ...................... 162
   6.5.1 PWF4 ............................................................................................................... 162
   6.5.2 PWF5 ............................................................................................................... 164
   6.5.3 PWF6 ............................................................................................................... 166
6.6 Discussion: PWFs’ Common Traits and Challenges .............................................. 166
   6.6.1 Agency and Self-direction ............................................................................... 166
   6.6.2 Social Network and Political Empowerment ................................................. 170
6.7 Conclusion: Common traits and challenges ............................................................. 172
7 Conclusions ................................................................................................................................. 174

7.1 Summary of Major Findings ................................................................................................. 174

7.1.1 Rural Women’s Current Situation and Challenges .......................................................... 174

7.1.2 Predictors of Rural Women’s Off-farm Choice ............................................................... 176

7.1.3 Rural Women in Off-farm Sector and Professional Women Farmers ................. 180

7.2 Policy Implications .............................................................................................................. 181

7.2.1 On Trainings and Local Officials’ Sense of Service ..................................................... 181

7.2.2 Match the Growth of Off-farm Employment with Land Transfer Rate ................. 183

7.2.3 Social Norms and Professional Women Farmers’ Demonstration Roles ............... 184

7.3 Closing Statement: Limitations and Future Studies ......................................................... 185

References ..................................................................................................................................... 187

Appendix 1. Interview Outline with Women Cadres .................................................................. 203

Appendix 2. Research Site Basic Information ............................................................................ 204

Appendix 3. Questionnaire for Rural Women in Farming ....................................................... 205

Appendix 4. Questionnaire for Rural Women in Off-farm Work ........................................... 209

Appendix 5. Questionnaire for Professional Woman Farmer ................................................ 213

Appendix 6. Questionnaires in Chinese .................................................................................... 214

Appendix 7. Multicollinearity Test Before and After ............................................................... 222
List of Tables

Table 2-1. Rights and Privileges Tied to Hukou Statuses ................................................................. 7
Table 2-2. Evolution to Land Tenure through Time since the Implementation of HRS ............... 13
Table 2-3. Characteristics of Centralized and Decentralized Diffusion Systems .................... 15
Table 2-4. Operationalizing Gender-Sensitive Agricultural Extension: Key Shifts ............... 18
Table 2-5. Changes of Urban - rural Residents Income Ratio from 2001 to 2014 (RMB) ....... 32
Table 3-1. Coverage and Distribution of Data Collected from Farming Sector ................. 58
Table 3-2. Variable Means in Farming and Off-farm ................................................................. 62
Table 3-3. Missing Value Distribution of the Key Variables in Econometric Model ......... 63
Table 4-1. Respondents’ Marital Status .............................................................................. 67
Table 4-2. Respondents’ Age Distribution ........................................................................... 68
Table 4-3. Age Range for the Respondents’ in Ningqiang ................................................. 69
Table 4-4. Comparison of Rural Women’s Educational Attainment .................................. 71
Table 4-5. Ratio of Rural Women as Left-behind in Three Research Sites ................. 73
Table 4-6. The Social Connection of Rural Households in the Three Research Sites ...... 74
Table 4-7. Understanding of the State’s Land Policy in the Three Research Sites ........... 75
Table 4-8. Rural Women’s Attitude towards Farming ......................................................... 76
Table 4-9. Rural Women’s Challenges in Farming .............................................................. 77
Table 4-10. Attendance of Agricultural Technical Training ............................................. 78
Table 4-11. Comparison of Rural Women’s Life Plan in the Three Research Sites .......... 79
Table 4-12. Ranking of Challenges in Farming in Ningqiang ........................................... 82
Table 4-13. Ranking of Challenges in Farming in Mei County .......................................... 84
Table 4-14. Means from the Survey of Rural Women in Off-farm Work ......................... 100
List of Figures

Figure 2-1. Three Major Land Reforms in the PRC .................................................. 10
Figure 2-2. Lewis’ Dual Sector Model of Growth ...................................................... 21
Figure 2-3. China’s Annual GDP Growth 2007-2016 .................................................. 27
Figure 2-4. ‘Three Agrarian Issues’ in China .............................................................. 29
Figure 2-5. Incomes between Rural and Cities (RMB) ................................................ 29
Figure 2-6. The Thinking Trace of the Study .............................................................. 43
Figure 2-7. Rural Women Studied in This Thesis ....................................................... 45
Figure 3-1. Research Design ................................................................................. 47
Figure 3-2. Framework of the Thesis ....................................................................... 48
Figure 3-3. Map of Shaanxi and Prefecture-level Cities and Sub-provincial Cities ...... 49
Figure 3-4. The Sub-provincial and Prefecture-level Cities in Shaanxi ....................... 60
Figure 5-1. The Left-behind Elderly and Children in Rural China .............................. 115
Figure 5-2. Left-behind Rural Women in China ....................................................... 116
Figure 6-1. Chinese Professional Women Farmers’ Capabilities .............................. 156
Figure 6-2. Illustration of PWFs’ Agency and Self-direction ...................................... 167
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.