

Analysis of Rural Women's Economic Participation in Shaanxi Province, China: Preliminary Results and Insights

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ABSTRACT

China has made significant progress in economic reform. This has entailed large scale migration and urbanization, but there is an accompanying problem of position of women in agricultural production in rural areas. To explore this, the study examines rural women's barriers and potential in economic participation in Shaanxi province through a survey of 356 rural women including both those engaging in farming and off-farming activities from three regions of Shaanxi with different developing characteristics. We use a mixed research methodology with both qualitative and quantitative elements. Unlike a handful of previous relevant studies, the collection of primary data allows a more in depth and systematic analysis of the current situation of rural women and the barriers they are facing. Preliminary results indicate that the situation of rural women in China presents a range of characteristics due to political factors, geographical location, low education attainment, and their role as care-providers. The results presented here here is mainly concerning the part of rural women engaging in farming.

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, China's industrialization and urbanization have been on an unprecedented scale(Bank, 2014): Around 250 million migrants have moved to cities from rural areas (NBSC, 2012) in supporting the country's rapid economic growth which has averaged around 10% annually. Meanwhile, starting from 2000, the number of left-behind rural women¹ or using a specific term in Chinese, *Liushou women* has increased sharply and it still increases each year. In 2000, the total number reached 13 million; by 2004, it increased to 43.1 million and in 2005, it went over 47 million. The current estimate stands for over 50 million(Yu, 2011). The re-allocation of traditional farm labour among women and the elderly during China's rapid economic development

¹ Although there are data showing that women are putting more than half of the total labor hours into farm work(Zhang, De Brauw, & Rozelle, 2004), contrary to the statements of those that call attention to the feminization of China's agriculture, de Brauw et al., (2008) finds no evidence that the proportion of hours put into farming by women are rising. Hence, in this thesis, we refrain from calling the active participation of women in farming "feminization", but rather feminizing agriculture.

has been substantial but little noticed, and now appears to be a persistent rather than temporary effect. To some extent, Chinese rural women and the rural elderly tend to shoulder agricultural production for the most populous country. However, their voices are seldom heard, and their productive potential remains low (IEAD, 1995; World Bank, FAO, & IFAD, 2008).

To fight against its decaying and backward agricultural situation and stimulate people's enthusiasm in farming, Chinese government for decades put forward a series of measures including loosening its restrictions on land circulation and Hukou system. The No.1 Document in 2013 has promised to finish the work of land identification, registration and issuing rural land ownership certificate to farmers within five years. The overall goals of this paper are to compare rural women in three different regions with different land situations in Shaanxi, contribute knowledge about the common and different traits they have, and the challenges they have in farming, their understanding and attitude towards the State's ongoing land transfer policy, their preference among farming, working and off-farm work and their sustainability of development.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2, literature review, briefly reviews previous studies on women in rural China, rural women and land, land transfer studies and points out the uniqueness of current Study. Section 3 presents the methodology and data. The findings and results are discussed in Section 4, and Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Gender has a close relationship with agriculture. Looking at it from the historical perspective can help us have a clearer idea of how it comes to today's situation. The evolution of PRC's land transfer policy will also be introduced in this section.

2.1. Women in Rural China

An oft-cited study published in 2002 found that, between 1995 and 1999, Chinese women committed suicide at a 25 percent higher rate than Chinese men and that rural suicides happened at three times the rate that in urban areas. More than a decade after its release, suicide rates among this demographic have plummeted, but the rural rate is still twice the urban rate (Fish, 2013). This to some extent reflected rural women's status and situation in China.

Fan (2003) pointed out that, due to the primary goal of the state being to boost economic growth, Chinese peasants are pushed into a much more vulnerable position. They must embrace labour migration as a source of livelihood and therefore follow a 'capitalist-like labour regime' which is the pursuit of cost-minimization and profit-maximization fostering segmentation and division of labour. Concurrently, Chinese social-cultural traditions which originated from Confucianism once again resurfaced and reinforced the stratification and division of labour.

The study of Tanner (2004) and Zhao (2002) pointed that the existing division of labor by gender, informal rules and gender norms in intra-household decision-making suggest that the propensity for migration in China differ by gender. There was a rapid increase in the migration of men of all ages to jobs in urban areas. Some women followed suit, but their overall participation in migrant labor markets has lagged behind comparing to that of men's. In the last decade or so, more women have joined in the rural to urban migration, particularly young, single women (Du, et al. 2005, de Brauw et al 2008). For most rural women, marriage was synonymous with the termination of migrant work and return to the village (Fan 2004). Thus, older, married women continued to stay behind in rural areas due to women's occupational options as migrants being inferior to that of men's (Fan 2003, Liang and Chen 2004). Song and Vernooy (2011), based on field research carried out in 2007 and 2008 in Guangxi, Guizhou and Yunnan, China, found women and old people have become the main agricultural labour force in most households and communities, playing key roles in local farming and livelihood systems yet they continue to have limited control over necessary resources and poor access to supporting services.

Seeing things from macro-micro perspectives, and based on the household economics, Yukun(2014) holds the idea that household job division resulted from differences of educational level. The traditional position for women during the process of rural labor migration led to women lagging behind men in the process of shifting from agriculture to non-agricultural industries. She claims that after decades of hard development, with the comparatively low status of agricultural income in rural household income and heavier labor burden and low return, farming is no longer the main source of family income, but rather a security net for rural households. After rural households had made their 'rational choices', it was usually rural women who remained trapped in an agrarian crisis, which led to the blockage of market information informing their knowledge. The state, coupled with the market economy, penetrated in rural people's daily lives, simultaneously intensifying economic stratification between men and women as well as inequalities. Female-led farms have lacked access to production factors such as land and capital over the past half-century.

Based on a survey of 100 female peasants, key informant interviews, six biography recordings and participatory observation in Yang Village in northern Jiangsu, Meng (2014) discussed the intra-household gender relations and women's well-being in rural China. She argued that the female peasants themselves did not recognize the significance of agricultural production adequately, thus leading to the denial of their contribution to agricultural production and to the household, which is not objective enough.

Meanwhile, lots of specific research on current rural women is given to the left-behind women, including (1) the causes for such group of people, represented by F. Wang (2007) and Kang (2008). From institutional and traditional aspects and using gender division, the former explained the formation of left-behind women phenomenon; the latter argued more physical capabilities of women; (2) the challenges and difficulties left-behind women facing and solutions to helping them through case studies (Shi, 2007); (3) the contributions that left-behind women made towards the development of rural areas (Ye 2009); (4) on specific questions, such as children's education, social support network, personal development and rights-safeguarding (Xu, 2007). Liang, Tang, & Huo (2014) focused their study on left-behind women's happiness and factors influencing it, finding that

the financial situation, personality, government efficiency, conjugal relationship and relationship with in-laws are significant factors influencing the happiness of left-behind women.

The most important determinant of rural women's off-farm activities is often said to be marital status. Most researchers arguing the majority of migrant women are single, and marriage has a negative effect on women's migration decision-making. With more and more rural women stepping into off-farm work, another characteristic of rural women's off-farm employment is that that the ratio below 40 years old is about two times higher than those above 40 years of age(Y. Hu, 2007). Thus, relatively older, less educated and married women continue to stay behind in rural areas. This could be explained as a consequence of heavier family responsibilities, such as the presence of preschool children or children in the primary or junior middle schools reduced their likelihood of migration(Li & Zahniser, 2002), and more rigid social norms faced by married rural women.

2.2. Rural women, land and land transfer

Gender bias was explicit in the implementation of both policies in the village between 1980 and the mid-1990s. Since that time, explicit gender bias has been reduced and policies have stressed market incentives more, reflecting China's modernization goals and accession to the WTO. Yet the policies are not gender neutral in their implementation, effects, and interactions. Women remain the target of the eased population policy, and they are more likely to become "landless" at marriage, divorce and widowhood (Liaw, 2008). The policies work together to reinforce traditional and emerging forms of gender bias, though at times they offset each other. They impact women's bargaining power within the home, status in the community, and social security. Together they provide a richer view of the gendered experience of living in the village(Agarwal, 1997).

Judd (2007), using field evidence from three upland agricultural communities in Chongqing and Sichuan (studied in 2003, 2004 and 2005), examined local conceptions, responses, and practices regarding land-use rights under "No Change for thirty years", where land allocations were fixed in 1995, 1999 and 2001 respectively. The ethnographic findings are further explored in relation to contemporary research on gender and land rights. The new regime, which has gradually come into effect as previous (usually fifteen-year) terms expired, authorizes an adjustment in land allocation which is then normally frozen for thirty years. Nowadays the land tenure policy has further extended to "No Change for Long and Ever", which not only exclude young people from direct access to land for long and ever from birth, but the de facto separation of the majority of women who marry or remarry to their husbands' villages from their own allocated land, thus for a while a growing number of women experience loss of contract land coincident with marrying, and this trend may be expected to increase (Judd, 2007).

Meanwhile, to deal with the out-of-date small-scale farming, land transfer was advocated and encouraged by the Chinese central government over the past decade. Wang (2010) defined rural land transfer as a market behavior to transfer or transact the use right of agricultural land without changes in usage within an effective contracting period. Land transfer/circulation can enable capable farming households in the countryside to gain access to additional land thus increasing their operational farm size and their income. The land lease market is regarded as an efficient way to bring about efficient resource allocation (Binswanger and Deininger 1995; Carter, Fletcher, and

Olinto 1996). But in reality, it is still at its initial stage in China, as only 3.4 hundred million mu of family contracted land are transferred, and the transfer ratio is only 26%(MOA, 2014-04-03).

Wang Le & Xianli (2012) put together the three prevalent models of land transfer in China together and made a comparison of the main features of (See Table2-1), and also the comparison of the practical operation of them, concluded that of the three, land bank with its fixed income and minimized risk, meet the characteristics of the western regions of China.

Table 2-1.The Comparison of Main features of the Three Modes of Land Transfer

Mode	Business Content	Function as	Interest distribution	Risk Management
Land Bank	Farmers voluntary their deposit land, lending together to business entities	A platform to provide land transfer services about land deposit and lending	To deposit, get interested, and loaning land needs to pay rent	Arbitration institutions, agricultural insurance
land circulation trusts	Agricultural land is entrusted to the trustees, and the trustees operate and manage them unified and legally	The land circulation intermediary platform for providing trust services	after deducting operating expenses, the rest earnings belongs to the Principal	Credit guarantees, legal protection
joint-stock cooperatives	Agricultural land as production shares, stock cooperative conduct enterprise management	joint-stock agricultural production enterprises	share dividend	Share interest and risks

Source: Wang Le & Xianli (2012)

2.3. Summary: the Uniqueness of the Current Study

In modern times, the study of gender and development has become a broad field that involves politicians, economists, and human rights activists. Scott (1986), a historian, claims gender, particularly the role of women, is widely recognized as vitally important to international development issues. This means a focus on gender-equality, ensuring participation, as well as an understanding of the different roles and expectations of the genders within the community are very important.

As China transitions out of a traditional agricultural nation, a key question is whether some groups are being held back in farm work, which could limit their social and economic mobility (Ren Mu & Walle, 2011). From the perspectives of labour supply, productivity and income, Brauw et al. (2008), claimed Chinese agriculture is not feminized, but more and more women are taking farming performance in the vast countryside in PRC, and an extensive body of literature on feminization in Chinese agriculture is available (Brauw, Huang JiKun, Zhang LinXiu, & Rozelle, 2012; Chang, MacPhail, & Dong, 2011; Y. Song, Zhang, Sun, Sun, & Jiggins, 2009), and most of them is simply a factual description of the rural economic situation.

Accompanying China's economic reforms, land reform, unprecedented migration, fast urbanization, and gradual Hukou reform, great changes have taken place over the past three decades, few researchers have done study on rural women, the mainstay and main force of China's agricultural

sector nowadays. To date, there have been a handful of English-language studies examining the situation of rural Chinese women (Chang et al., 2011; Meng, 2014; Murphy, 2004; Ren Mu & Walle, 2011), but no one has tried his/her study on rural women's situation in regions at different development stages, especially under the most recent impact of State land reform, and the difference of rural women's situation with a regional leading industry or without. In addition, previous study has a tendency of either only focusing on left-behind farm women or on simply those migrant women (Meng, 2014) (Jacka, 1997, 2006; Meng, 2014; Yukun, 2009), thus lack a complete picture of them as a whole. This study studies the challenges facing rural women either engaging in farming or off-farm activities and, investigates their current situation with the impact of the on-going land transfer, rural women's understanding and attitude towards the State's ongoing land transfer policy, their developmental sustainability allowing rural women to be involved in income generating activities and getting the maximum from development.

3. Methodology and Data collection

3.1. Research methods

We undertook a survey of 356 rural women, including 255 rural women engaging in farming (86 in Ningqiang, 96 in Yangling and 76 in Mei County respectively) and the remaining 101 rural women in off-farm employment. The data about rural women engaging in farming are drawn from Ningqiang County, Mei County, and Yangling Agricultural Hi-tech Demonstration Zone in Shaanxi, during the calendar year 2015. Villages in these three sub-provincial prefectures reflect the diverse patterns of rural development in Shaanxi. The questionnaire collected including detailed demographic information about each household member, gender, age, education obtainment, and marital status. And their original distributed land, current actual cultivating land, how comes it, any family members work in the official working unit. We also looked at their challenges in farming, and whether they have access to agricultural technical extension.

3.2. Background of the general research site: Shaanxi Province, China

Shaanxi is called "Qin" or "Shaan" for short, is the natural hub connecting the northwest and southwest of China. With China's economic development strategic focus has gradually shifted from east to west, Shaanxi plays an important position as it connects the east and the west of China. Shaanxi has arable land of 59,820,000 mu with per capita 2.5 mu. In 2012, of the 45,723,000 mu provincial rural household contracted arable land, 4,561,000 mu achieved transfer, accounting for 10% of total household contract area. In recent years, the speed and scale of land transfer in Shaanxi province are accelerated and enlarged. In 2012, the province's land transfer rate for the proportion of household contract management area, comparing to that in 2009, increased 4.3 percentage points. More than 94 percent of the counties in the province have established a land Arbitration Commission to stabilize the rural land contract relations (Shaanxi, 2013/10/18).

However, comparing to the developed regions in the east area of China, land transfer rate in Shaanxi province is still low. Till 2014, the rural land transfer rate in Shaanxi Province was 11.8%, not only lower than the 40% transfer rate in the eastern coastal regions, but also lower than the national average of 21.7%. (X. Wang, 2014). An insight from Gao et al. (2012) notes that Zhejiang province, the province with the richest rural economy and one of the most active off-farm labor employment

markets, early in 2008, has more than 40% of the cultivated land being rented in. Hubei increased rentals from 5% to 20% between 2000 and 2008, Sichuan from 2% to 14%, and Hebei from 7% to 12%. Shaanxi provinces have been relatively stagnant in the growth of cultivated land rental markets (Khantachavana, Yurvey, Kong, & Xia, 2013).

Figure 3.2. Shaanxi Consists of Nine Prefecture-Level Cities and One Sub-Provincial

Map	#	Name	Administrative Seat	Hanzi Hanyu Pinyin	Population (2010)
	— Sub-provincial city —				
	1	Xi'an	Weiyang District	Xī'ān Shì	8,467,837
	— Prefecture-level city —				
	2	Ankang	Hanbin District	Ānkāng Shì	2,629,906
	3	Baoji	Weibin District	Bǎoji Shì	3,716,731
	4	Hanzhong	Hantai District	Hànzhōng Shì	3,416,196
	5	Shangluo	Shangzhou District	Shāngluò Shì	2,341,742
	6	Tongchuan	Yaozhou District	Tóngchuān Shì	834,437
	7	Weinan	Linwei District	Wèinán Shì	5,286,077
	8	Xianyang	Qindu District	Xiányáng Shì	4,894,834
9	Yan'an	Baota District	Yán'ān Shì	2,187,009	
10	Yulin	Yuyang District	Yúlín Shì	3,351,437	

3.3. Reasons for choosing the three survey sites and data collection process

In 2015, Shaanxi ranks as the No. 15th in terms of GDP among the 31 provinces in China. From a total of 107 counties Ninaqiang rank at No. 80th, Mei County at 49th, and Yangling at 53rd in Shaanxi province. As a major agricultural province, the total number of its poverty-stricken counties in Shaanxi ranked the second in the whole country with 50 counties classified as national poverty counties with their per capita annual income was less than 1,300 yuan (Poverty Alleviation Office, 2012). The reason to choose these three regions is because they can relatively reflect rural woman's situation in Shaanxi, and the northwest of China more broadly.

Although Yangling ranks a little bit backward in GDP to Mei County, as the birthplace of Chinese agricultural civilization and a national-level hi-tech development zone approved by State Council in 1997, it is directly administered by the Shaanxi Province and 23 Central ministries. It enjoys various kinds of preferential policies for high-tech industrial development zone and the western development. 82 km away to Xi'an (capital city of Shaanxi Province) in the east and 86 km distant to Baoji (the second largest city in Shaanxi) in the west, Yangling located on the plains of Wei River. In the past, the majority of crops there are corn and wheat double-cropped each year, the emergence of kiwi in recent years has been due to the extension services sponsored by government programs and special credit programs leading to a dynamic and observable change to the rural landscape (Khantachavana et al., 2013).

In addition, since 2009, the Ministry of Construction Management is piloting the non-profit Yangling Land Bank to serve as a mechanism for the smooth transition of land transfers. The Bank negotiates with individual farm households to create an inventory of land, and then matches this inventory to other farmers seeking to expand; agricultural enterprises looking to modernize or other commercial interests (Khantachavana et al., 2013; Wang Le & Xianli, 2012). As a saying goes 'For the development of modern agriculture in China, go and have a look at it in Yangling'. In recent years, mainly launched by the local government, land bank is carried out widely, plus the fast pace of urbanization, lots of land in local villages are expropriated. Thus most of the rural women in Yangling either have no land or have only a small piece left, and they need to figure out ways to adapt to the new situation, we have every reason to choose it as a research site and see the impact on local rural women.

The survey covering all the five townships in Yangling, specifically was carried out through 12 local rural women representative cadres from 12 villages in Yangling, with five of the villages having land bank operation and three where land was either all or partially expropriated by the government. Land in the remaining villages all have different degrees of leasing or transfer. Two sets of questionnaires have been developed for primary data collection. The first set targets at village heads to draw basic information relevant to the topic of rural women; another set is designed for rural women in farming and off-farming activities respectively.

Mei County is under the jurisdiction of Baoji prefecture. As a national kiwi standardized production demonstration area, the county has 270,000 mu planted kiwi, and acquired kiwi National Geographic logo certification issued by the Ministry of Agriculture. Mei County has won the "China top ten counties of standardization of fruit and vegetables", and also the honorary title of "Chinese Kiwi Technology Demonstration County", and "the provincial advanced fruit industry county." On August 9, 2014, Shaanxi Provincial People's Government approved setting up a provincial Economic Development Zone at Mei County entitling it to relevant preferential treatment.

With mature leading fruit industry, Mei County already has some characteristic of modern agriculture, and the rural woman there are busy with farming. However at the specific research site, Huaixi village, although it has an individual-invested, individual-owned agricultural company, Baoji Huaixiang Fruit Industry Company, registered in August 2013, only 28 households joined the company, land transfer was fairly developed. Land ownership confirmation has been completed, but land certificate has not been issued to individual farmers, which is expected to put in place in 2016. The average household has 2-3mu of strawberries, a few reach 7-8 mu.

The specific survey site in this research is at Huaixi village in Huaiya town. Huaiya town located in the east of Mei County, with state road 310 (south-west line) and the Haiya to Tangyu high-speed road directly pass it through connecting north and south, so it has good transportation, the land there is in flat terrain form. Like the county, villagers at Huaixi have strawberry and kiwi fruit as its leading industry. The transportation for the villagers is very convenient, and market is set right at the roadside, and thus it is convenient for villagers and businessmen to make transactions. Due to the low agricultural income, most men work outside of the village, and the whole process of strawberries from seed planting to strawberry collection is mainly operated by female villagers.

It took two trips for the researchers to get the data there. For the first time, after telephone communication, the researchers went there by 50 minutes' drive from Yangling, communicated with the village cadres about the village's information, and then gathered more than ten rural women to answer the questionnaire; it turned out that most of them either too busy with their farming work, to finish the questionnaire, or just could not answer the survey properly due to their low literacy. So based on local women schedule, another survey time was arranged, and collected altogether 76 valid questionnaires.

Table 3. 2. Basic information of the Huaixi Village in Mei County

Rural households: 605	Populace:2400	Residential populace: 1700	Arable land: 3410 mu,
The grain crops: wheat, corn	Cash crops: strawberry	Per capita share of cultivated land: 1.3 mu	Annual per capita net income:12,000 yuan

In contrast, lying in the west south mountainous area of Hanzhong prefecture, Ningqiang County has lower average income for its local resident's, and is one of the national level poverty counties. It has neither land transfer nor a mature leading industry, and represents China's traditional backward farming pattern. However, the land size for local rural households also experienced great change, due to the State policy of Returning Farmland to Forest launched in 1999 and still working. Unlike the land bank in Yangling, farmers get subsidy by reducing farming size in the west aiming at improving the ecological conditions, stopping soil erosion and desertification. One of the largest impacts of Returning Farmland to Forest policy is that it stimulates local surplus rural labour to do non-farming transition, in other words, engaging in migrant work in other provinces. So rural women in Ningqiang, as long as conditions permit, will go outside of their hometown as migrant workers to make a living.

The specific survey sites were three villages randomly selected at Bashan Town, Ningqiang County. Irrigation there simply depends on the weather, yet the excessive rain easily cause floods. Because most of the arable lands locate in the hillside and in the form of terraced slopes, so it is unable to implement mechanized farming methods. People there basically rely on manual labor, and rarely use agricultural science and technology in agricultural production. Types of crops there are mainly corn, potatoes, beans, herbs, and vegetables, and the main breeding are pigs and chickens. It can be a typical representative of the west backward rural areas in China.

The survey was done from 13th to 17th January, 2016, about 20 days before its spring festival. Firstly, the interviewers tried to walk into scattered rural households to do one hundred questionnaires face to face. But it turned out it was so hard to find the subjects. For one thing, people live scattered in mountainous area, it took lots of time on the way to walk into their houses, most of the time, only to find the door was locked and no one was there, so it is very time-consuming and lack of efficiency. For another, even if we luckily found someone in the house, they were likely to be either old or disabled, or both, which is not suitable as survey targets. Finally, it took eight of us some time only to get 86 respondents with one invalid, of which 25 were answered by migrant workers who just came back either because of no work at the moment due to the cold weather, or due to their health issue, or the spring festival. In addition, there are 8 respondents whose age passed 66, and the oldest respondent reaches the age of 78. But because of the hard life, most of them still manage to do some farming to make a living.

Table 3.1. Basic information of the three villages the survey was taken in Ningqiang County

Name of villages	Number of households	populace	Labour force	Per capita income(Yuan/year)	Populace of migrant workers	Land resource(Mu)	grain& herb(Mu)	Vegetable(Mu)
Maizping village	293	1005	530	5263	510	1500	1470	653
Wangjiagou village	358	1240	876	5194	887	2683.8	2532	712
Luoquanyan Village	246	936	603	5097	410	2984	1603	1282

4. Results and findings

This section consists of two parts: part one is the results from interview with local village cadres concerning various kinds of land status and its impact on rural women in Yangling. Part two includes the results from the survey taken in the three regions regarding the comparison and contrast of rural women's age, marital status, education attainment, social connection, left behind women ratio, the impact of land situation on them, challenges in farming and their attendance in technical training.

4.1. Various land situation in Yangling and its impact on rural women

Land situation in Yangling currently are very complicated. Based on local village cadres' description, altogether three villages in three different towns of different land situation are introduced here to illustrate the diversified land situation in Yangling and its impact on rural women.

4.1.1. Shuaijia Village, Wuquan Town

The total arable land area in the village is 1,500mu. Since 2012, 940.056 mu of land in the village is claimed in land bank and managed by a full-time director in the village. The land is rented at the price of 700 yuan/mu/ year, and in every four years the rent increases 10%. All together the land bank has three layers of administration: the Regional Industrial Office, Farming Management Station and the village committee. Till 2015, altogether five enterprises, Kanglong mushroom Huicheng fruit industry, Tianhe mushroom industry, Qinbao breeding industry and Luyuan Cleaning Company, have leased land from the land bank and set their factories over there. Shuaijia Village is said to be the No. 1 in the management of land bank in Yangling: Assuming the rent is due in March, the village cadres will remind the companies in February, so the villagers can always get the rent in time.

Due to close by to the enterprises factory sites, villagers have more working opportunities. Young people usually do some technical work in the factory and the elderly do some odd work. Farm work in the enterprise is not strength-demanding as the traditional farming, and farmer workers get paid in the form of work ticket every day. The populace in the village is stable with no idlers in the village, and not much conflict among villagers.

The remaining 400 mu in the village is slope land and not fertile. The village collected the land back, did unified management such as, inserting pole for the kiwi fruit plantation to complete the standardization and then give it back to relevant villagers to manage. Three wells with pipe buried underground in the village were made thus solved drought problem. There were more than 10 times

agricultural training arranged by the village cadres on kiwi fruit, pesticides, and the usage of fertilizers.

Like other villages in the region, there was not few training sponsored by local government and operated by local vocational schools. The target of the training was rural women to making use of the rural surplus labour force. Simply in 2015, the various training held in the village could be added up to two months. The content was on embroidery, cooking and knitting. Due to not able to bring an immediate obvious increase in income, rural women showed little interest in them. The trainers were young and energetic and often played with the trainees during the training break, such as teaching them some popular folk dance, so the training turned out as something fun or to kill time for locals. So in terms of economic effect, it did not achieve its initial purpose, thus became a waste of money for the government.

4.1.2. Bailong village, Rougu Town, based on the description of the village cadre.

Since 2014, land at Bailong village has been put in Land Bank with a rent of 700 yuan/mu for twenty years, with an extra 500yuan as a compliment from the township government, altogether peasant receive a rent of 1200 yuan/mu/year. The villagers are given an account number, and can claim their rent by the end of the year. The land is rented away by people outside, and still leave idle and do not know what they are going to do with the land.

Valid labour force accounted for 40% in the village all go out as migrant workers, the rest 60% labour force in the village can only occasionally find some part-time or temporary jobs, in a sense, are all unemployed. At noon when the sun was good they all came out, sit in the warm sunshine like thick cloud (the woman representative's word) and kill time. In 2015, the State's economy was not good, and real estate had a downturn. Many rural men could not find a job outside and thus they came back in early November to wait. Till next February and March, when spring comes and the weather becomes good, they can go out to find some off-farm work again. Women, as usual, simply do some needlework, for those young women, they might find a job at local supermarkets or other service industry.

The original land size distributed by the village for one person was 1.1 mu, but now one person only has 0.1mu land left, which can only harvest two bags of wheat and two bags of corn. The villagers had no other income. To those villagers originally engaging in small –scale farming, land Bank is a good thing as their income gets higher now through rent and wages. To those who previously did well and engaged in a variety of farming business accounted for 1/3 of farmers in the village, they are dissatisfied. Because they can only get the rent from the land now, this was much less than their previous income. And they know well about farming and don't want to leave their land to do some off-farm employment. However now to rent out the land, the rent is 1500 yuan/mu, 300 yuan more than they get the rent. Meanwhile they need to meet relevant requirements such as having facilities planning and passing experts and professors' assessment. Ordinary farmers who want their own land back just cannot meet the high ritual criteria. So now the situation in the village is that many farmers have no land and no income as well, and the unemployment is severe there.

4.1.3. Nanyang village, Yangling Jiedaoban.

The land situation in the village is different by the division of Yangfu Road. To the west of the road, all the land was expropriated, and all the land to the east of it was not. Three times of land expropriation took place with a total of 300 mu of land in the village, and the village now has about 800mu of land left.

Because of the inconsistencies of land expropriation policy, the villagers were dissatisfied. The first time, 60 mu of land was expropriated by two industries with a price of 40,000 yuan/mu. The village committee kept 3000 yuan as village public fund, and every villager in the end only got an average of 3000 yuan. Looking back, villagers realized it was not worth, for they have no right to the land forever with only 3000 yuan. The second time, 130 mu of land was taken away at the price of 17,000 yuan/mu, with relevant farmers got 'double eight hundred' (eight hundred jin² of corn and eight hundred jin of wheat) as subsidy every year. Villagers do not need to farm, and three years has past, it is alright in terms of the sustainable giving of subsidy. For the third time 70mu was taken away by the same way. Now it is the fourth time. The village and the enterprise are negotiating now with every natural village has three representatives. Due to both parties cannot reach an agreement on the price, and the contract has not signed yet.

The impact of the land transfer on female villagers is different. For those relative young at their 20s, they go out and find opportunity to work. For those between 30-40 years old, who need to take care of kids, they would either find a stable job at local supermarkets and institutes, or just some local temporary jobs (such as in local service team to give assistance to those households in the events of weddings or funerals). To those at their 50s, 60s and above, usually their husbands do the farming and the women choose to cook at home and taking care of the households. There are micro-loans, but it is kind of troublesome, as it not only requires guarantee, but also company registration and business license etc. No woman in the village has got it.

4.2. Results from the survey

4.2.1. Rural women's marital status and age in the three research sites

The marital status for rural women is consistent in the three regions. The majority of the respondents are all married rural women with the percentage of 88.2% in Ningqiang County, 93.4% in Mei respondents and 95.8% in Yangling respectively. Around 5% respondents are widow, and very low percentage, might be around two percentage of single in rural area. The data further accords to the fact that the current rural area is mainly occupied by married women. Of all the 256 respondents engaging in farming, there is only one divorced woman, Song Zhongmin, in the respondents in Ningqiang. Thirty-eight years old, Song Zhongmin's hometown was from Anhui province, yet married a Ningqiang guy while she was a migrant worker in Beijing. Through first getting working contract, then gathering and organizing their fellow folks to work on the construction site, they made some money. The guy's mother was sick then, they took their money and came back his hometown a remote village in Ningqiang, to assist. It was not sure from what time on the guy started to have an affair with another woman. Song had no choice, but agreed to divorce and makes a living by herself with her eight-year-old son.

² 1 jin = 0.5 kilogram.

Table 4-1 Respondents' Marital status

Marital status	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
single	2	2.4	0	0	1	1.1
married	75	88.2	71	93.4	91	95.8
divorced	1	1.2	0	0	0	0
widow	7	8.2	5	6.6	3	3.2
Total	85	100.0	76	100	95	100
Missing	1		0		1	

The age distribution of respondents has similar characteristics in three regions: with most of them are at forty-one to fifty years old. Both in Ningqiang and Yangling, the age group took up 46.9% of the respondents, in Mei County, 56.6%. The second largest age group in rural women is from 51 to 60 years old, taking up around one fifth of them. Respondents in Ningqiang and Yangling above the age of sixty-one although got the same percentage 18.5%. For one thing, it reflects, besides rural women, another left-behind issue in rural China, the ageing issue in farming. With a closer look at the data, we can find that the ageing issue in Ningqiang is much serious.

Table 4-2 Respondent's age

Respondent's age range	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
=<30	3	3.7	3	3.9	3	3.7
31-40	9	11.1	6	7.9	9	11.1
Valid 41-50	38	46.9	43	56.6	38	46.9
51-60	16	19.8	16	21.1	16	19.8
=>61	15	18.5	8	10.5	15	18.5
Total	81	100.0	76	100.0	81	100.0
Missing System	5		29		5	
Total	86		105		86	

As maintained before, while the research team doing the survey in Ningqiang, the rural women we encountered are mostly the elder at their seventies, or disabled, not suitable to be included in the survey. Later on with some efforts to avoid it, we got eighty six respondents. However 25 of the respondents turned out as migrant workers who came back home at the time either because of no work at the time, health issue or for the spring festival. Among them, 21 went out in the form of couple, leaving their land to their parents or relatives; two of them not only the couple, but also their elder daughters all went out. But the couple normally work on construction sites in the northwest province, their daughters to the south China and work in a factory or shop, leaving their younger teenager child studying in the middle school in the county capital, and the 76 years old

grandfather or the in laws at home taking care of the household and the land. The last two were the women in the household went out, leaving their old and sick husbands farming at home.

In addition, of the 25 migrant worker rural women respondents in Ningqiang, two of them are under thirty, three of them are between thirty to forty years old, and the rest twenty are all between 41 to 50 years old group. So the actual age range for the respondents engaging in farming in Ningqiang turned out to be the following table: In this adjusted new table, rural women age above 51 took up 55.4% of the whole and become the major group engaging in farming. As to the age group 41 to 50 years old taken up 32.1%, drop to the second large group, and those under forty only took up 12.5%.

Table 4-3 Adjusted age range for the respondents' solely engaging in farming in Ningqiang

Age range for the respondents' engaging in farming		In Ningqiang	
		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	=<30	1	1.8
	31-40	6	10.7
	41-50	18	32.1
	51-60	16	28.6
	=>61	15	26.8
Missing	Total	56	100.0
	System	5	
Total		61	

The oldest respondent in Mei County is sixty-nine years old and sixty-five years old in Yangling, with the respondents Ningqiang much older. Eight of the respondents in Niangqiang are older than sixty six years old, and the oldest one among them is 78 years old, and her husband is 83 years old, who still have to do some farming to make a living. So rural women in the three regions present some same characteristic: mainly above forty years old, however, the poorer the region, the aging farming situation is more serious: with less opportunity of making money locally, and the low return of farming, rural women at their 40s and 50s in Ningqiang still go out of their hometown to find some off-farm employment to support their family.

4.2.2. Rural women's educational obtainment and social connection, understanding of land reform in the three research sites

Of the three research area, rural women in Ningqiang have the lowest educational obtainment, those in Mei County ranks the middle, and Yangling, the best. The illiteracy rate among rural women in Ningqiang reaches as high as 20.5%. 7.2 % only have one to three years primary education and 42.2% has roughly primary education. In sum, about 67.9% rural women in Ningqiang are either illiterate or have less than primary schooling, and 26.5% has obtained middle school education. In Mei County, it turns better, but the illiteracy rate is still 7.9%. Around one fifth (17.1%) of the respondents in Mei County only possess one to three years of primary schooling, 10% higher than that in Ningqiang County. Altogether 35.5% respondents in Mei County are illiterate or have less than primary schooling, 44.7% possess middle school education. However, In Yangling, only one respondent is illiterate, took up 1.1%. Then, unlike Ningqiang and Mei County, no one has less than

one to three years of education in Yangling. The majority respondents in Ningqiang, 42.2%, have four to six years of primary school education, meanwhile only 26.5% have middle school education and only 3.5% have high school education. Furthermore, there is no one obtains higher education among the rural women in Ningqiang. While in Mei County, the majority rural women, 44.7% got middle school education, with 18.4% received high school education and one person has higher education.

In contrast to the other two regions, rural women in Yangling have received much better education. Respondents either possessing middle school education or high school education takes up the same valid percentage 39.1% respectively. In other words, rural women only possessing primary schooling accounts to less than one fifth in Yangling. Furthermore, there are even 3.3% rural women in Yangling received higher education. The reason for rural women’s higher educational obtainment in Yangling is most likely due to Yangling’s specific location: With a small area of 94 square kilometres, the birthplace of Chinese agriculture, there are seven teaching and scientific research institutions in Yangling³, which, for decades, has a strong impact on local people’s notion about education.

Table 4-4 Respondent's education obtainment

Years of education	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
0	17	20.5	6	7.9	1	1.1
1-3 years	6	7.2	13	17.1	0	0
4-6 years	35	42.2	8	10.5	16	17.4
7-9 years	22	26.5	34	44.7	36	39.1
10-12 years	3	3.6	14	18.4	36	39.1
=>13 years	0	0	1	1.3	3	3.3
Total	83	100	76	100.0	92	100.0
Missing	3		0		4	
Total	86		76		96	

The results of left-behind women ratio in the three regions is a little bit surprise yet understandable (See Table4-5). The rate is very close in Ningqiang and Yangling, to be exact, 36.1% and 37.9% respectively. The two research sites are in sharp contrast regarding their natural condition and rural economy, but due to the State different land policy and purpose, the same effect reached on local people’s migration: Local male farmers in the two research sites all chose to go out of the rural hometown to make a living by off-farm employment. The left behind rural women ratio in Huaiya village, Mei County is more than ten percent lower the other two regions. This is probably because it has its leading industry, cash crop: strawberry, farmers can make some money and do not need to leave their soil and home to find something off farming to make money.

³ The seven teaching and scientific research institutions in Yangling are Northwest Agricultural University, Northwest Forestry College, Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Northwest Institute of Water Resources Science, Shaanxi Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Shaanxi Provincial Academy of Forestry, and Northwest Institute of Botany. In 1997, the seven merged and became today’s Northwest A & F University,

Table 4-5 Ratio of rural women as left behind in three research sites

Are you a left behind woman?		In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	22	36.1	13	20.3	36	37.9
	no	39	63.9	51	79.7	59	62.1
	Total	61	100.0	64	100.0	95	100.0
Missing	System	11		21		1	
Total		86		86		96	

As to the household social connection, 85.5% households in Ningqiang has no one work in the official working unit, 14.5% households has one member working in official work branch. In Mei County, although still the majority households 76.6% has no one work in the official branch, but the figure drops and situation tends to be better. 17.2% has one person working in the official branch. In contrast to no households has two or even above two members working in the official branch in Ningqiang, 6.3% households in Mei County have. Unlike that in Ningqiang and Mei County, the majority households in Yangling, 51.6%, has at least one member working in the official branch, and 18.8% households in Yangling have two or more than two household members working in the official branch, and in contrast, no one in the household work in the official branch becomes minority, only took up 29.5%.

Social connection reflects the human capital of social resources of a rural household. In China, a society put a great weight on *Guanxi*, have household members working in official branches has many implications, such as they may have special channel to get some key information, and thus take advantage of it.

Table 4-6 The social connection of rural households in the three research sites

Any person in the household work in the government unit?	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
No one	65	85.5	49	76.6	28	29.5
One person	11	14.5	11	17.2	49	51.6
Two persons	0	0	1	1.6	16	16.8
More than two	0	0	3	4.7	2	2.1
Total	76		85		95	
Missing	10				1	

4.2.3. Rural women’s understanding of national land policy, challenge in farming and agricultural technical training attendance

Chinese government has been spending lots of money and efforts on its land reform. Rural women, at the front layer of agriculture, winning their understanding and support is critical to whether it can achieve satisfactory result or not. The survey shows that 57.3% rural women in Ningqiang chose don’t understand or know much about the State land policy, and 24% even disapprove it. Although it might be partly because the age and low literacy issue exposed in our study, government at all levels still needs to pay attention to the phenomenon. Strengthen its policy spreading in remote area with approach that local people can easily accept.

Meanwhile, the majority of rural women both in Mei County and Yangling express that they support the State’s land reform policy, and even speak out the reasons are that it does well for moderate-scale farming and release surplus labour from land. This proves that rural women in the two regions have a good understanding of the national land policy.

Table 4-7 rural women’s attitude toward State’s land policy in three research sites

Rural women’s attitude toward State’s land policy	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid don’t understand	43	57.3	12	15.8	10	11.2
don’t care	3	4.0	10	13.2	13	14.6
support	11	14.7	43	56.6	50	56.2
disapprove	18	24.0	11	14.5	16	18.0
Total	75	100.0	76	100.0	89	100.0
Missing System	11		29		7	
Total	86		105		96	

While as few as 10.3% rural women said they attended some agricultural technical training, as high as 74.7% rural women expressed they had challenges in farming in Ningqiang. The situation in Mei County is similar to Ningqiang: few rural women, 15.9%, claimed that they attended agricultural technical training, yet highly to 82.9% said they encountered difficulties in farming. The survey results of rural women’s agricultural technical training attendance in Mei County went against the village cadres words. Based on the descriptions of the village leaders in Huaixi, plenty of technical training was held in the year. In spring, training was on the introduction of new varieties, usage of fertilizer, and ways of irrigation. In winter it was on soil treatment, handling with virus damage, organic fertilizer and manure. Villagers at the village know very well the benefits of scientific farming and showed great interest in participating training. Each time, when there was training, villagers would sit crowdedly in the training venue and it always turned out not enough seats for attendants.

So if, as the village cadres words, there were that many trainings and that many training attendants, yet the attendants are not local rural women, then a question must be asked here: who on earth

attended the training? In fact, in the survey another question concerning why rural women did not participate training. The results say 63.1% rural women in Mei County select either no one organized or they did not know where the training was. It is clear more work needs to be done to notice rural women about the training. When asked how they solve their farming problems, 42% of rural women respondents in Mei County select stuck in it and had no way out; 33.3% respondents said they would solve the problem through working longer hours, seek advice from experienced ones, find answers on TV, or simply transfer land to others. Two of the respondents answered they would just take care of the house chore and the kids, and let it be. Only one of the respondents has the awareness to ask government for help. The answer shows rural women and farming marginalized status: the trainings carried out did not really reach to the ordinary in need rural women, and they are still used to rely on their own individual power to solve problems. Even though there is a company in the village, it does not work for ordinary rural women. and currently it is still individual-farmer oriented, mainly by rural women themselves to face all kinds of farming challenges and shoulder the risk as well.

Table 4-8 Rural women’s farming challenge in three research sites

Any challenge in farming?	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid yes	59	74.7	58	82.9	39	41.9
Valid no	20	25.3	12	17.1	54	58.1
Total	79	100.0	70	100.0	93	100.0
Missing System	7		35		3	
Total	86		105		96	

Table 4-9 Rural women’s agricultural technical training attendance in three research sites

Have you ever attended technique training	In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid yes	8	10.3	11	15.9	37	44.0
Valid no	70	89.7	58	84.1	47	56.0
Total	78	100.0	69	100.0	84	
Missing System	8		7		12	
Total	86		76		96	

4.2.4. Rural women’s sustainable development in the three regions

The question about rural women’s plan in the near future is mainly to seek the difference of their sustainable development. 41.9 % rural women in Ningqiang said they did not have plan for future. It is most likely because of their remote mountainous natural condition, their old age and health issue,

etc. and human being becomes kind of passive in front of such factors, besides 32.3% rural women there chose farming, which equals to keep on doing what they are doing now. Although 24.2% rural women in Ningqiang showed their interest to run a business and make money, most of them added that they were lack of fund for business and thus hard to fulfil. In short, rural women in Ningqiang cannot much have possibility of sustainable development, without the outside intervention.

The answer from rural women in Huaixi village in Mei County to the question consistently (53.5%) show their enthusiasm in farming. It is not surprised, because the strawberry in the village has already has scale with good profit. Rural women are willing to rely on it. 23.9% rural women said they have no plan: one third of them are satisfied with their current situation, no plan means they keep moving on their current life; One third expressed that they are afraid of failure if they try something new, to be more specific, they are conservative. The last third is because of age issue and low literacy.

Table 4-10 Rural women’s plan for future in three research sites

Plan for future		In Ningqiang		In Mei County		In Yangling	
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	no specific plan	26	41.9	17	23.9	15	15.5
	farming	20	32.3	38	53.5	20	36.8
	off-farm work	1	1.6	4	5.6	34	72.6
	start and run a business	15	24.2	12	11.4	26	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	73	100	95	
Missing	System	24		3		1	
Total		86					

The same question answered by rural women in Yangling illustrates that as high as 72.6% chose to engaging in off-farm employment, due to their specific strategic location, they have not much land left due to national policy and the fast process of urbanization, what they hear and see daily is not restricted to farming anymore, and they even do not like farming because its’ low return and labour demanding. But the challenge they are facing is that how to upgrade their current situation concentrated in repeated and lack of skill-content service industry. Another finding worth to notice is that 15.5% respondents in Yangling selected nothing. Among them, some of them live a care free life: neither that young nor that old, their daily life only consists of doing some light necessary house chore and then eating and idling around. In the local transition from farming to non-farming process, it seems that relying on the thin rent, they are not much bothered by their unemployed situation, and even satisfied with it. But when asked the deep reason, with no skills to meet the outside challenge, it is better for them to accept reality and rely on their husbands and family members, and enjoying life.

In short, of the three regions, rural women in Mei County have a very clear plan in life. They want to keep on engaging farming, make money and make life better. Yangling women have little interest in farming, and want to make money from off-farm work. What Yangling women really need is to have a clear understanding of themselves, learn relevant skill and blend themselves in modern society.

Rural women in Ningqiang have many constraints. From personal perspective, their low educational attainment is their biggest limitation. Plus the remote location and aging farming, government at various levels or social forces need to give them special attention and measure to help them.

5. Conclusion and policy implications

Currently, even with the same identity, rural women are in quite different situations and have diversified needs impacted by location, government policy, their age and educational attainment.

5.1. Tradition and customs, the State's gender blindness and time to take measures to eradicate all negative impact of these factors.

To understand rural women's behavior and choice in China need to take into consideration of traditions and customs. With a long history of feudalism and Confucianism, Chinese women, for thousands of years, were under various kinds of oppressions. The late Mao's famous Hunan Report(Mao, 3-5-1927) once lists four oppressions of Chinese people with the fourth one being patriarchy, especially aiming at women. As he said:

The imbalance is even greater in rural areas. A man in China is usually subject to three systems of authority (political authority, clan authority and religious authority). As for women, in addition to being dominated by these three authorities, they are also dominated by men (the authority of the husband). These four authorities - political, clan, religious and masculine - are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal stem and ideology, and are the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people - particularly the peasants.

By the 1940s, the CPC clearly advocated women's emancipation from the abuses of Confucian patriarchy, following the orthodox Marxist position, by joining the public labor force, women were to "liberate themselves" ((Wolf, 1985), in conjunction with government-sponsored programs of marriage reform and land reform.

New China, founded in 1949, proclaimed that Chinese women enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life and that they have become, like all Chinese citizens, masters of the state and society. The Chinese government also employs legal, administrative and educational means to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women to protect their special rights and interests. As a result, Chinese women, to some extent, or at least, superficially, enjoy the equal rights which had remained unattainable in Chinese society over millennia. However, the Marriage Law, issued in 1950, advocating free choice of marriage and divorce to go against the previously prevalent arranged marriage, and the campaign for its implementation in 1953 was side-stepped because of rural resistance and official blinders to the strength of patriarchy. By patrilocal residence, strong patrilineal kin groups were reinforced as the basis for community and male control over the household economy. The CCP's blinders to the strength of traditional kinship structures prevented it from over-throwing patriarchy (Andors, 1983; Johnson, 1983).

The Great Leap Forward in 1958 allowed the full participation of women in the labor force, but because the rural collectivization built on patrilineal kin groups was already in place, it only strengthened the perpetuation of patriarchal institutions(Stacey, 1983). Meanwhile, it by assimilation of women into the male work-place and placed a low value on domestic labor, Great Leap Forward strategies exclude males from the realm of domestic labor. Thus although the Chinese

revolution overthrow Confucian patriarchy and democratic patriarchy, it sets up a socialist patriarchy instead. Stacey concludes that Chinese women have not been liberated under socialism, because socialism and patriarchy are compatible (1983: 266).

Comparing to land reform, production, and economic reform, those "more pressing needs", Wolf(1985) claims the liberation of Chinese women has been continuously set aside as "secondary". While embracing sexual equality as a principle, the CCP leadership fails to "recognize their cultural blinders" and saw revolution through the "cultural lens" of patriarchy. So in essence, Chinese women are excluded from the equal rights in the series of political movements and laws implemented and issued by the CCP.

So before the government carry out any measure, it needs to take into the consideration of gender impact. The consistent marital status for rural women is an example here. Without allocated land, marriage becomes the only way for an adult rural woman to have an attachment with a village. If a woman loses marriage, for example, she normally cannot set feet in the village anymore. All the villagers will think she does not belong to the village. The view was expressed by Fei Xiaotong(2006) through his well-read book on peasants China published in 1948, more than a half century has past, rural people still hold old customs and beliefs tightly. with an English title *From the Soil: Foundations of Chinese Society* , translated by Gary Hamilton, et al, . In the book, Fei expressed one of the characteristics of rural community as a fixed relationship of people and places through being born there and died there. He also concluded there were two ways for an individual to blends into a village: Firstly, setting root in the earth, that was as long as one has land in the village, he/she was locally rooted; another one was through marriage to get into local relatives' circle. Thus, once a woman got divorced, she becomes nobody to local villagers due to the loss of her marriage identity. Villagers interpret that she would remarry at any time, thus move to her new husband's place (village). Not only villagers treat her as an outsider, even those in-laws will not think she belongs to the family. She is excluded from both the household and the community benefit. That is the key reason that both the divorce rate and widow rate are very low in the rural area.

The divorced rural woman Song Zhongmin faces a very hard situation. The good side is that the Chinese economy develops fast and the society is also changing fast. Unlike rural women in the past whose life space is only 'centred-around the stove'(weizhe guotai zhuan), most rural women in recent years have the experience of migrant work or have household members employing off-farm employment, thus more or less have the exposure of modern notion and life. All this has undoubtedly opened their eyes, and give them some confidence to stick to what they believe. Song is one of such rural women. She likes to study new things and is keen on the development of cooperative. She has already set up her cooperative, meanwhile attends various kinds of training on professional farmers, and actively spread the environmental friendly products. The bad side, tradition notion is so stubborn and hard for local people to get rid of overnight. The whole village won't believe in her, including her ex-mother-in-law. As an individual, she needs to take plenty of pains to fight against it. It surely takes time.

Adjunct to Sichuan Province, Ningqiang County was severely affected by the earthquake in 2008. Although the government offered some funds to local people for post-earthquake reconstruction, 100% local rural couple used it to build two-floor cement house with around four to six rooms. As

the fund government offered was far from enough, most of the households take loans and could not pay back in time, so most of their names (including the village secretary) are now on the bank's black name list. With many newly-built houses beautifully standing there, the truth behind is they are empty houses locking all the year round. People there mainly rely on going out as migrant workers to make a living and paying back their loan.

The reason for local people spending almost all their money on house-building is due to traditional notions. Clothing, food, accommodation and mobility are customarily considered as four basic needs for ordinary Chinese. and accommodation is the one often valued by peers, neighborhood, colleagues and unknowingly oneself. It is such a common and unconscious idea that most Chinese take it for granted. Either in rural or urban area, if a young man wants to marry a girl, the first condition he or his family must meet is that they should have a newly-built house or buy an apartment for the young couple. So having a well-built at least equal to neighborhood-level residential place, if cannot be better, can reflect a family's economic status. It is the economic identity of the household, with which, all the other rural households in the neighborhood will not look done upon the family.

Thus when the government or a social force wants to give some intervention to rural people, they should not only consider local people's low literacy rate, aging issue and the transportation, but also local customs and people's gender notion. By using various kinds of methods to spread modern notion and get rid of those out-of-date ones, let more rural people understand what is going on within the State and even the world. Then they can take adaptive action and enjoy the fruit of development.

5.2. More practical and applicable technical training to meet rural women's needs

A big discovery about rural women in farming in this study was that majority of them have difficulties, yet very few of them have access to technical training due to their marginalized status. Although currently as the main body and main force in farming, they did not get they deserved attention. They still have to rely on themselves to solve problems, which is not only time-consuming but also inefficient. It also does harm for the national modern agricultural development. Instead of investing lots of money and designing those stereotyped training such as knitting and cooking with few rural women interested to learn and turned out something fun and killing time, local officials really needs to reach out their helping hands, go into rural households, talk with rural women and do careful and solid baseline investigation, study what rural women really want, make an evaluation, meanwhile taking into consideration of rural women's low educational obtainment, and their mobility, design some most practical and profitable training and try to carry it out on the spot at flexibly time for the convenience of rural women's participation.

Nowadays, rural women in Yangling and Ningqiang all prefer to do off-farm employment. For women in Yangling, it is due to the national fast pace of urbanization and local government policy, most of them have no land. In the surface, they have got rid of the constraint of land and actively engage in off-farm employment. However, their mind-set is still lingering on extensive farming, and don't have the up to date knowledge and skill for them to be involved in the market economy, that is why some, if they have enterprises in the village, are easily to find job in it, yet most of the time just

some simple repeating work without skill requirement; for those don't have the privilege, what they can do is mostly accept the reality, and do nothing. For women in Ningqiang, it is mainly because of bad geographical situation and low return in farming. Meanwhile, because of their low literacy rate, most of them do not have much choice, but can only find work on the construction sites, after around years of tedious demanding physical work, could not settle down due to the hukou system, they come back with various kinds of physical problems. So to this group of women, the government also needs to design some policy to give them relevant support.

So the government needs to intervene at this critical moment to make the transition more smoothly. Such as design some in time well-designed training that really meets rural women's needs. It is true rural women's needs are diversified, not easy to unify, but given the benefit of the training, it still worth to give it every try. In fact, rural women in farming center around the age group from 40s to 60s years old, most of their kids have grown up, they do not have many restrictions from family, if the State can make use it and turn the disadvantage into advantage, they can turn out to be very good human capital for the national development.

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