

## Stages in the Development of the *Responsibility System*

There were four stages in the development of the agricultural *Responsibility System* in Miyi County.

- (i) The Centralised Development Stage. The document entitled "Resolution on a Few Problems Concerned with the Acceleration of Agricultural Development", adopted by the Fourth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, on September 28th, 1979, affirmed the "contract" production and management system of group output. This, in fact, was an official approval of the *Responsibility System*. Coming at a time when the system was still under dispute, it gave added impetus to its re-emergence, and, within two years, it had spread rapidly. Twenty per cent of all production teams were involved in "Household Contracts"

The main problem with the group contract was its continuing relevance upon the workpoint system. Thus, productivity remained mediocre and farmers were still eating "from the common pot". These drawbacks in the group contract arrangements led to the farmers welcoming the Household Contract system.

At this stage, there are many different types of the latter contract in Miyi. Public land is managed by all households collectively and agricultural taxes, State purchase and collective quotas, and grain ration land are all managed by individual households. Thus management by household is mixed.

**Table 3: The Rise and Development of the Agricultural Responsibility System in Miyi County**

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	
Total Number of Production Teams	832	924	927	927	929	
Teams Adopting Responsibility System	Teams Contracting Output by Group		666			
	Teams Contracting Output by Household		166	800	299	6
	Teams Contracting by Household Generally			555	919	929
Teams not Adopting Responsibility System			73	2	0	
Percentage of Teams Practising Output linked Contracts from Total Numbers in Miyi	about 20	86.5	92.13	99.78	100	
The Percentage of Teams Practising link Output linked Contracts by Household from Total in Miyi		20	59.87	99.14	100	

- (ii) Growth of the Household Contract System. On September 27th, 1980, the Central Committee issued a "Summary of Discussions on the Problems Involved in Further Strengthening the Agricultural Responsibility System". It was a summary of discussions held by the First Secretaries of the various Party Committees in the Provinces. It concluded in affirming the value of the Responsibility System and pointed out that it was essential to support it in order to increase productivity and income. It especially stressed that the Household Contract was a way of maintaining links with the masses, improving production, and solving the problems of basic needs in the mountain areas. Finally, they declared that the "Contract System" was dependent upon a Socialist economy and was in tune with Socialist ideals.

Under the guidance of the summary issued at that time, Miyi County developed rapidly and in 1981, 70 per cent of households were practising the Household Contract System and 20 per cent "output contract farm work by household". However, the method of accounting and payment was still dependent upon the workpoint system and teams had no initiative to manage. This meant that their skills were not being exploited to the full.

- (iii) Growth of Miscellaneous Contract Systems. By the end of 1981, many different kinds of *Responsibility System* had been approved by the Government. However many demerits as well as merits of the system emerged. Comparatively, Household Contract farm work is the best for agricultural production, especially in the mountain areas and farmers are free to manage the way they see fit. As a result, this is the most acceptable contract in Miyi County and it spread rapidly, within one year, from 1981-1982 until more than 60 per cent of all production teams were Household Contract teams. In its turn this put an end to the custom of "eating from the common pot" and farmers became more involved in management.

The farmers were happy with this system and in fact, were apprehensive that a further change in government policy might negate the developments that had taken place. However, in January, 1983, the Central Committee issued a circular entitled "Discussions on the Current Rural Economic Policy", in order to put the farmers' minds at rest. The circular stressed the strengthening and perfecting of the *Responsibility System* and reaffirmed the commitment of the Central Government.

- (iv) Expansion of the Household Contract System. From 1983 to 1985, the output contract system in agricultural production expanded. The number of production teams in 1983 was 99.14 per cent of the total number of production teams in the County. This situation continued throughout and the contract period was prolonged on the basis of no changes within 15 years. Such issues as duties, rights, and interests were legalised but, on the other hand, weaknesses were found in individual labour and management. These weaknesses were related to the prevention and control of plant diseases, elimination of pests, and the dissemination of advanced technology, etc. There were also problems related to the placement of surplus labour force before, during, and after production.

It can be seen that the "household contract" system is still not perfected and is still subject to many improvements. After 1986, a number of measures were introduced to correct the weaknesses that had arisen. A system of "double-level management" was introduced (this refers to the method of contracting out work that can be handled best at household level to households, at collective level to collectives). Professional contracts, transferring land on a small-scale to skilled farmers are now being undertaken in some places.