

## EMPLOYMENT IMPLICATIONS OF OFF-FARM ACTIVITIES IN SHUIMO TOWNSHIP

The contribution of off-farm activities to household income clearly shows the employment implications of off-farm activities in Shuimo. The labour days used by two farmers, Zhang and Shun, show the interrelationship of farm and non-farm activities in terms of employment.

Zhang Xintai is from Huangjiaping, which is a mountain village. His main activities are farming, odd jobs related to logging, and raising pigs, and cultivation of medicinal plants. During the slack agricultural season (months, 6, 7, 11, 12) he is engaged in logging in the State-owned forest for the Township Forestry Station. He is engaged in farm (crop-related) activities for 40 to 50 per cent of the time. About 20-30 per cent of his time goes to off-farm activities on the farm. Months three, four, five and nine are particularly busy months for crop activities (Table 11).

**Table 11: Distribution of Annual Labour Days for Two Farmers in Shuimo Township**

Months	Zhang (days)			Shun (days)			
	Farm	OFEA on the Farm	Free	Farm	OFEA on the Farm	OFEA Outside Farm	Free
1	20	5	5	0	20	0	10
2	10	0	20	5	0	0	25
3	20	0	10	15	0	0	15
4	30	0	0	30	0	0	0
5	20	0	10	10	0	0	20
6	10	15	5	10	0	0	20
7	0	25	5	0	0	30	0
8	10	10	10	0	0	30	0
9	30	0	0	25	0	0	5
10	10	5	15	5	0	0	25
11	15	15	0	10	0	0	20
12	10	20	0	0	30	0	0
Total	185	95	80	110	50	60	140
Percentage	51.4	26.4	22.2	30.6	13.8	16.7	38.9

In contrast to Zhang, Shun (who is from the valley village) spends about 25-35 per cent of his time in crop-related farm activities. Shun works in the Naoren village-run oil extraction plant, which is a seasonal enterprise, for about two months in a year (months seven and eight). He undertakes odd jobs for about 50 days during the winter.

While Zhang has about 80 days free (including festivals), Shun has about 140 days free. The two cases show a typical distribution of labour days in different farm and off-farm activities.

### Implications of Off-farm Activity for Women and Low Income Groups

In Shuimo, off-farm activities affect women in many respects. First, women undertake more work in off-farm agro-activities than men. Household surveys, show that women undertake almost all the animal raising chores and half of the related work (Table 12). This has augmented the already heavy burden of agriculture on women, and it will tie women to land-based activities more strongly. Second, women's participation in most non-agricultural activities is less than that of males. Among the total of 130 industrial workers, females accounted for nine employees, only 6.9 per cent of the total. Among the total of 150 building workers, only 10 are females. The share of female workers in tertiary activities was much higher than in industries and building. This indicates the necessity of releasing women from the land to participate actively in non-agricultural activities.

**Table 12: Division of Labour by Gender (contribution in per cent)**

Type of Activity	Female	Male	Total
	%	%	
Industry	6.9	93.1	100
Construction	6.7	93.3	100
Transport	0	100	100
Tertiary Services	40	60	100
Horticulture and Forestry	45	55	100
Livestock	60	10	70*
Sideline	30	70	100
Farming*	50	50	100

\* 30 per cent is contributed by theoretical non-workers (i.e., females below 16 and above 55 and males below 16 and above 60).

As a result of the lack of funds, operational ability, and other causes, the participation of low income families in off-farm activities is lower than that of other groups. In some villages the difference in wealth between the "rich" and the "poor" has increased considerably, but off-farm activities are helpful in alleviating poverty. Most off-farm activities do not require complicated skills or large amounts of funds, therefore, everyone can undertake them without much trouble. The poor can earn cash to improve the productivity of farming as well as their living standards.

One of the biggest obstacles to the low income group's participation in off-farm activities is that they are reluctant to take risks. They prefer to spend money on wedding or death rites. For example, in Shuimo

township many low income families have not planted *Shanmuyaochai* or other tree crops, but many middle and high income families have. The required investment for *Shanmuyaochai* is very low. It is only 66 yuan/mu for *Huangbo*, 120 yuan/mu for *Duzhong*, and 60 yuan/mu for *Houpu*. Even the poorest family can manage to afford it, but they do not make the investment.

### Profiles of Some Pioneers in Off-farm Activities

As in other townships and counties in this area, the pioneers in off-farm work are normally educated persons with previous experience in the township/county administration. The cases of Xiao Yeuyon and Luo Zhongchen are typical.

Xiao Yeuyong is a 50-year old farmer with junior high school level education. He is from Naoren village. At present his main occupation is mushroom cultivation. Farming is his subsidiary work. In 1986 he became interested in mushroom cultivation (through a newspaper report) while working as an accountant in a village-run brick plant. When the brick plant started to show declining profits, Xiao realised that he should now look for new avenues for remunerative employment. He began to learn the skills for cultivating mushrooms through a correspondence course. After four years of learning through practice, (and a number of problems) he now is a skilled mushroom cultivator. In 1990 he resigned from his job. He makes a net income of 2,000 yuan per year through the sale of mushrooms. His mushrooms have a ready market in Shuimo as well as in Xiankon. He plans to expand the scale of operations but is constrained by the lack of funds.

Luo Zhongchen from Dachao is 49 years' old and has a junior high school level education. He is a village leader with farming as his main occupation. He is a carpenter and is also partly engaged in horticulture-related activities as well as pig-raising. His interest in the cultivation of medicinal plants and other cash-crop trees dates back to 1984. Since that time he has planted over 10 types of cash-crop tree on his contracted hill land of about 1.5 mu. The plants include *Phellodenidron* (120 plants), *E. ulmoides* (125), *Magnolia officinalis* (50), lacquer trees (150), persimmons (25), cherries (5), grapes (6), pears (10), walnuts (6), and plums (7). Since 1989 he has also been cultivating *moyu* on 1.5 mu of his cultivated land. Many of the plants have now begun to bear fruit. In 1990 he received an income of about 400 yuan from *Phellodenidron* alone. The total investment in these plants has been only 40 yuan.