

LINKAGES OF OFF-FARM ACTIVITIES

Linkages with Agriculture

In the 1980s, horticulture expanded rapidly in Weizhou. A relevant question is: has this negatively affected cropping? In Weizhou S-peppers, as noted above, are not cultivated on prime arable land. Reclamation of hill slopes has resulted in the expansion of acreage under apples. Arable land has not decreased as a result of the growth of horticulture. Further, in most cases, there is no conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural development regarding land use, because construction materials and mining are always located on the hills far away from village and farmland. Additionally, the families with individual non-agricultural businesses usually possess sufficient a labour force for off-farm jobs. Household expenditure on agricultural activities, as derived from the Binli survey, shows that on an average the cropping sector received 42.6 per cent of the total expenditure (highest 59%, lowest 2%). The expenditure in the off-farm sector was 57.4 per cent on an average (highest 98 per cent, lowest 24 per cent), which in fact is commensurate with the contribution of the off-farm sector to total household income.

Linkages with Off-farm Activities

These linkages can be seen in the area of horticultural development vis-a-vis the growth of processing industries, marketing, transportation, and water conservation.

Horticultural Production and Processing Industry

The local market is large enough for fruit production but will be too small once all the apple trees start producing, and then there will be a huge demand for post-production services such as processing, storage, and preservation. Such post-production facilities and services do not exist at present.

Horticulture and Marketing

The farmers will have to make a choice concerning different marketing channels, by participating in wholesale markets or forming a marketing cooperative in the near future when peak production is reached.

Horticulture and Transportation

In the current stage, the farmers in Weizhou mainly deliver their fruits in two ways: (i) by carrying them in baskets down to the central town for sale, or (ii) by transporting them by tractor. Apple quality deteriorates because of transportation delays caused by poor road conditions or vehicle break-downs. It is, therefore, necessary to improve the road system. This would benefit the industrial and mining sector also.

Horticulture and Water Conservation

Because of the semi-dry climate, there is a growing demand for irrigation for agricultural, horticultural, and industrial uses. Water conservation is therefore urgently needed to strengthen the linkages between off-farm activities.

Figure 1 illustrates the chain of different industries in Weizhou, although the linkages between different industries at the current stage remain loose.

Figure 1: The Chain of Industries in Weizhou

