

## THE IMPACT OF OFF-FARM ACTIVITIES ON ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

The existing off-farm activities in Weizhou township are evidently based on the comparative advantages of a mountainous area. This has been an appropriate strategy for local economic growth.

Reclamation of virgin hill slopes for the development of horticulture has expanded the carrying capacity of the land and has also brought more income. There are many mining resources under exploitation. The growth of the construction materials' industry based on local raw materials has generated employment and reduced the supply cost of raw materials. Livestock-raising has, to a large extent, fulfilled the demand for fresh meat in the township.

However, these activities have also influenced the regional ecology. Reclamation on steep hill slopes has caused soil erosion, especially during the rainy season. Mining activities located at water sources, or located adjacent to roads and residences without regard to zoning requirements, induce mudrock flows. This endangers the road and water sources as well as the stability of the hillsides. Overgrazing damages hill vegetation. The construction materials' industry, particularly the cement industry, produces dust and pollutes the air. These negative effects need to be considered in designing future development strategies.

### Indicators of "Success" and "Failure"

The positive and negative effects of two major off-farm activities in Weizhou are presented below. These are apple and S-pepper production and the construction materials' industry.

#### *Apples and S-peppers*

Positive Impacts. Resource and Environment : Utilisation of hill slopes; has expanded land availability.

Employment and Income : Has absorbed surplus rural labour and helped enhance the income level of farmers.

Agriculture : No competition with farming for capital, labour, and land; has contributed to the growth of agriculture through increased household incomes.

Society & Economy : As activities involving every family, apples and S-peppers are creating more market opportunities for local products.

Gender Issues : Women contribute more than half of the labour input; has helped in improving horticultural skills among females.

Negative Impacts. Resource & Environment: Soil erosion on slopes.

#### *Construction Materials*

Positive Impacts. Resource & Environment: Uses the natural resources in the mountains

Employment and Income: Has absorbed excessive rural labour and increased farmers' income; has also improved the qualifications and skills of labourers.

Gender Issue: No positive impact

Negative Impacts. Resource and Environment : Damaging water and causing soil conservation problems; has induced more natural calamities; problems of environmental pollution

Agriculture: Has no significant effect on agriculture.

Society and Economy : Because of low efficiency and poor management has marketing problems.

Gender issues : Very low participation on the part of women.

In terms of the impact on resources and the environment, apples and S-peppers are more favourable activities than the construction materials' industries. In terms of employment and income, both types of activity make a positive contribution. Apples and S-peppers bring about more social and economic benefits than construction materials. As for women, more female workers are involved in apple and S-pepper production than in construction materials' production.