

## Abstract

In this paper, Miyi County, in the Sichuan Province of China, is taken as an example of the development of the *Responsibility System* in rural China. It is seen from the perspective of a policy of agricultural development, in order to alleviate rural poverty and break away from the subsistence cycle. The previous, stereotyped organisational models were seen to be unsuitable, particularly for the development of mountain agriculture. The suitability of development measures and their sensitivity to mountain characteristics is one of the important concerns of researchers engaged in the development of policies and strategies for mountain agriculture.

The *Responsibility System* is here described and analysed in its various forms; from a system of collective agricultural organisation (which can also be State-owned) to the two main types of *Contract Responsibility System*; viz, related to output and unrelated to output. Currently Miyi County has been practising the *Household Contract Responsibility System* which is output-related.

The *Responsibility System* is seen to have promoted unprecedented development in *Miyi County*, improved agricultural production, and optimised the rural industrial structure. Outputs of grain and of commercial agricultural products have increased substantially and income levels and living standards have improved markedly. The weakness in the system is the small-scale of production, because in *Miyi County*, the *Responsibility System* is applied at the household level and on small tracts of land only. This in itself has produced a number of socioeconomic and technical problems. One glaring problem is the economic differentiation among different households, among those who are becoming prosperous, and those who are still quite poor; the latter living in regions that are not suitable for large-scale infrastructural development and where there is insufficient coordination between production and the market economy.

The author suggests that the solution to these problems is to guide and implement the paid transfer of land, establish social services, develop cooperative economic organisations, and establish and strengthen, both at individual and at collective level, the organisation and management of State, collective, and individually run organisations. In concluding the author discusses the strengths of the *Responsibility System* and the possibilities of its application to other regions of the world.