



China's Leisure Agriculture Booming Nationwide

Zhen Zhong

Assistant Professor

School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development

Renmin University of China

Recent years, leisure agriculture boomed across the country, with the number of leisure farms, their quality and profits are all on the rise.

First, the scale of leisure agriculture expanded gradually. At the end of 2012, some 90,000 villages engaged in leisure farming and rural tourism activities, and the number of leisure-farming businesses rose to around 1.8 million, including more than 15 million rural tourism service providing households and over 33,000 large-scale leisure farms. They received nearly 800 million tourists across the year in total, bringing in more than 240 billion yuan of operating revenues and employing around 28 million workers.

Second, the content of leisure farming was enriched steadily. Regional authorities accelerated the transformation of the development mode, paid high attention to innovation and planning, and continuously enriched the content of development. Through leisure agriculture, the agricultural production process, the natural environment and the rural culture and life were all commercialized, not only providing consumers with leisure tours, food, entertainment and other services, but also helping carry on the agricultural culture and popularize agricultural knowledge and technology. In other words, it thought into full play the multi-functionality of agriculture.

Third, the portfolio of leisure agriculture was more diversified. While promoting the development of the existing forms of leisure farming such as family inns and restaurants, leisure farms, agricultural industrial parks and folk-customs villages' regional departments across the country further expanded the development path and fostered more types of leisure agriculture. The development of leisure agriculture idea parks and specialized rural-tourism villages picked up steam, and agritourism that combines farming with natural sceneries and rural views had become an increasingly important form of leisure agriculture and rural tourism.

Fourth, both social and economic benefits were emerging. The development of leisure agriculture expanded the functionality of agriculture, beautified the expansive countryside, enriched numerous farmers, boosted the comprehensive benefits of agriculture, improved the distribution of rural and urban resources and promoted the integration of rural and urban economy and culture. It was turning into an important driving force for the development of agriculture and the rural economy, the growth of farmers' income, the expansion of domestic consumption, and the integration of rural and urban socioeconomic development. According to an MoA Survey

of 135,000 leisure agriculture service providers, they gained nearly 180 000 yuan on average from each hectare of land, 62 times as much as the national average per-hectare yield of farmland. The per capita output value of leisure agricultural farmers averaged 54 100 yuan, 2.75 times as much as the national average. Of those working for the 135,000 surveyed leisure agriculture service providers, 92.4% were farmers. Agro-product sales accounted for more than 40% of the operating revenues of the leisure farming sector. Leisure agriculture had grown into a public welfare industry not only improving the industrial structure but also bringing tangible benefits to farmers involved.

Date submitted: Oct. 29, 2014

Received, edited and uploaded: Nov. 4, 2014