

Recent Rural Labor Force Policy and its Implementation in China

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Since 2012, more positive measures have been taken to promote employment. The national employment situation kept steady as a whole, though the economy grew at a slightly reduced rate. The employment situation of rural workers was pretty good.

Main content of policy

According to a monitoring conducted by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security on labor markets in over 100 cities. In the first three quarters of 2012, mainly thanks to the rather fast increase of investments in the central and western regions of China and a fairly large amount of rural workers migrating to cities, mass migrant job seekers were on the rise. However, there was still an imbalance between the needs for workers and the structure of labor supply. To that end, the state continued strengthening efforts and enhancing services to promote the transfer of rural labor force in a multi-channel and all-round way.

First, the “Spring Action” program was implemented continuously. General surveys were organized by township-level governments to understand all the needs for workers to be recruited in key enterprises in local areas. Measures were taken to carry out publicity on employment to make people know all they should know and guide the society to understand the situation of job supply and demand in a right way. Activities like county- and township-level job fairs and offering jobs to the countryside were organized by county-level governments to provide information on proper posts to villages households and farmers. A platform for providing relevant services was set up to strengthen the linkage between recruiters and job seekers.

Second, labor management was improved. Focusing on construction, mining, manufacturing, lodging, catering and domestic services, efforts were made to urge enterprises, especially small businesses, to sign labor contracts with more rural workers in an accelerated way and improve the quality of contract execution.

Joint efforts were made by several departments to work out an implementation plan to thoroughly investigate the employment in key industries, find out the basic number of employees and make them register, and urge enterprises and migrant rural workers to sign and execute labor contracts. Guidance on and management of labor contracts were provided to enterprises in key industries. Guidance and services were supplied to enterprises with a large proportion of rural workers but a low contract-signing rate in industries like mining, lodging and catering. Simplified labor contract texts were drawn up continuously and promoted to help enterprises to sign labor contracts with rural workers in accordance with law.

The registration of employment of rural workers was promoted. Inspection and

enforcement of labor and social security and settlement of labor disputes were enhanced.

Third, special operations against late payment of rural workers' wage were carried out. In 2012, the state started special operations against late payment of rural workers' wage all over the country with a view to tackling the root cause. Efforts were planned to eliminate the problem of late wage payment within three years through concentrating on this challenge.

Fourth, public services for rural workers were improved. In 2012, focusing on education and health care, the state promoted the equal enjoyment of the basic public service in urban areas by migrant rural workers in an accelerated way. In order to solve the problem of how the children of migrant rural workers would take entrance exams, the General Office of the State Council transmitted a document released by four ministries including the Ministry of Education on promoting the children of rural migrant workers to take local entrance exams after the compulsory education.

Implementation of policy

As the policy of equal employment for urban and rural workers was implemented in recent years, the total number of migrant rural workers rose year by year. In 2012, the rural workers totaled 262.61 million nationwide, up 3.9% from the previous year, among which migrant rural worker totaled 163.36 million, rising by 4.73 million or up 3.0%.

1) Employment services for rural workers were continuously improved. According to incomplete statistics, during the "Spring Action" program, almost 40 million copies of publicity materials including "Spring Breeze Cards" were distributed and nearly 20,000 job fairs were held; cost-free employment services were provided in over 20 million times. Some 7.3 million rural laborers were moved between regions in an organized manner; 7.42 million rural laborers were employed by local enterprises. 1.6 million rural workers received training on job skills, with 0.2 million receiving business start-up training and 0.71 million receiving subsidies for training. 2.22 million rural workers received services for labor rights protection and legal aids. Local authorities across the country recommended more than 10,000 trustworthy service providers.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and China Mobile Communication Corporation worked together to provide free short message services, like information on job fairs and relevant employment policies, to cell phone users who purchased the product "one family in two cities" from the China Mobile during the "Spring Action" program.

New types of employment services were explored in all regions. Governments of Beijing, Hubei, Wuhan and Yichang launched official micro-blogs to release information on positions for recruitment and job fairs, directory of public institutions providing employment and human resource services, directory of institutions providing rights protection services, and updated information on the "Spring Action" program. In Shandong province, the program "supplying ten employment services into enterprises" was carried out to publicize the employment situation to enterprises with demand for workers and help them develop rational programs for worker recruitment and use, worker training and labor management. In Maanshan of Anhui province, 200 specially monitored enterprises and key enterprises of

commerce and trade were surveyed for launch of a series of activities to provide employment services to them.

2) Protection of rural worker's labor rights was enhanced. The special program for promotion of labor contracts in small-sized enterprises and the "Rainbow Project" program for promotion of collective contracts were continued.

Minimum wages were adjusted timely based on local economic developments in 25 provinces with an average growth of 20.2%. Salary guidelines for 2012 were released in 23 province with the base line rising about 14%. A total of 1.512 million disputes were settled in time by mediation and arbitration institutions in regions in 2012, rising 6.4% on year-on-year basis; workers involved in those disputes totaled 1.959 million, rising 7.9% on year-on-year basis; closure of disputes involved 23.77 billion yuan, rising 16.7% on year-on-year basis; 94.7% of all the disputes were closed by arbitration.

Networking and meshing of labor and social security inspection has covered 26 provincial capitals and 50% of prefecture-level cities. Labor and social security inspection and enforcement was linked with criminal justice and the fight against criminal activities like illegal employment was included in assessment of goals in national comprehensive social management.

3) The problem of late payment of rural worker's wage was mitigated. During the New Year's Day and Spring Festival holidays in 2012, 5.924 billion yuan of back wages and compensation was recovered for 1.29 million rural workers. There was generally no unpaid wages for rural workers during "two holidays" in 2012. Green channels for settling disputes over rural worker's wage were opened in a number of regions and all labor disputes about late payment of rural worker's wage were closed generally before the Chinese New Year. The situation of mass disturbances resulting from late wage payment was stable as a whole.

Meanwhile, more workers were covered by social security and public services for rural workers were steadily improved. At the end of 2012, the numbers of rural workers covered by basic pension, basic medical insurance, unemployment insurance and work-related injury insurance were 45.43 million, 49.96 million, 27.02 million and 71.73 million, up 4.03 million, 3.55 million, 3.11 million and 3.45 million respectively.

Public services for rural workers were improved continuously. In Beijing, rural worker's medical insurance was merged with urban worker's basic medical insurance. Rural workers, who had established labor relations with employers in the administrative region of Beijing, would be covered and pay the insurance premium in accordance with the standards for urban workers. Funded jointly by employers and individuals migrant rural workers would enjoy the basic medical insurance for urban workers in Beijing. In Guangdong province, the point-based system for rural workers to apply for per residence was improved through expanding the scope of applicants and lowering the threshold to allow more eligible rural workers to apply for permanent residence in Guangdong.

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