

Practice and Effectiveness Evaluation of Rural Professional Manager System in Zhejiang Province: A Deep Cases Analysis

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Abstract: The rural professional manager system in Zhejiang Province is an innovative model of rural revitalization and governance implemented in select areas. This pioneering approach involves the appointment of a specialized "economic village official" who formulates a development plan of exclusive economic based on the village's actual development situation, agricultural industry, and other relevant factors. With the core concept of assigning professional tasks to capable individuals, this system injects new vitality into rural development under the premise of revitalizing rural areas, thereby introducing "rural professional managers". The rural professional manager is an exploration on the road of rural revitalization everywhere, especially in the coastal areas. It plays a huge role in the development of the countryside, constantly "energizing" the local economy, maximizing the value of the advantages of the countryside, and bringing great influence and change to the development of the countryside and the economic income of the rural people. After the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Zhejiang Province emerged as the nation's pioneering "demonstration zone for high-quality development and common prosperity construction". Its objective is to explore strategies for bolstering rural strength, enhancing rural aesthetics, and fostering agricultural prosperity through rural revitalization efforts, thereby narrowing the urban-rural income gap. Consequently, Zhejiang Province initiated a groundbreaking initiative by introducing professional managers. In 2019, Zhejiang Yuhang issued a recruitment announcement seeking professional managers specifically for rural areas. The introduction of these professionals has facilitated rapid economic growth in Zhejiang's countryside, substantial advancements in agricultural production levels, and progressive transformation of rural industries into large-scale operations characterized by efficiency, standardization, and branding-all contributing significantly to promoting rural revitalization. This paper provides an empirical assessment of the implementation and impact of the professional manager system in rural areas of Zhejiang Province, using pilot cases for in-depth analysis.

1. Introduction

Beginning in 2019, Yuhang District in Zhejiang Province has taken the lead in taking action by posting job openings on a large scale in order to find professional managers for the countryside, with the main goal being to expect that these individuals will be able to advance rural renaissance and help to advance the development of the rural collective economy^[1]. In the new era, the work of "Three Agriculture" faces new historical tasks, and the development of rural industries requires the revitalization of existing assets and resources. This job has a high degree of magnetization and professionalism, and it is urgent to introduce specialized talents with professional knowledge, work experience and rural feelings. Taking on the responsibility of "rural CEO" and carrying the "three capital" preservation and value-added business in rural areas is not only a useful supplement to the rural talent team, but also the practical needs of rural industrial development. Only by introducing and reusing a group of social talents who are good at agricultural and rural economic work and making them qualified rural professional managers can rural industries continue to develop and grow. Since 2019, Zhejiang, as the first province to introduce rural professional managers, has formulated plans in line with rural development by investigating the actual situation of rural areas, specific industrial and agricultural development conditions, and constantly adopted advanced agricultural management concepts, introduced new varieties, new technologies and new models, strengthened cooperation with modern enterprises, and effectively realized high-quality agricultural production. This paper will analyze the problem from two aspects: the practice of rural professional manager system in Zhejiang Province and the effective evaluation of rural professional manager in Zhejiang Province.

2. Practice of professional manager system in rural areas of Zhejiang Province

2.1 Technology empowering

In recent years, agriculture in Linping District, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, has gradually shown efficient development under the special action of "building production, life, and ecological science organizations or science associations with key people at their core". Fang Yong, as a professional rural manager, analyzed the agricultural output of Linping District according to the current situation of agriculture in the district, and actively visited the local agriculture, watched the cultivation of the fields, and made positive and bold predictions on the actual output of rice and the direction of future development^[2]. Based on his own experience and assessment of Linping District's agriculture, Fang Yong suggested that the current rice production in Linping District is low and still adopts the more traditional rice cultivation method, which is slow to increase production and unable to create higher economic benefits. Therefore, Fang Yong, through the township government, contacted the District Agriculture and Agricultural Science Bureau, and invited experts to Linping District to conduct field visits and provide corresponding technical guidance. At Fang Yong's invitation, the experts listened to Fang Yong's report and introduced a corresponding industrial upgrading programme, which led to the transformation and upgrading of the local plantation industry. Under the leadership of Fang Yong, the expert team would regularly go to the countryside to conduct field research and give corresponding guidance to the growers. Fang Yong also brought in the expert team to implement one-to-one guidance, and when there were new varieties, new technologies and new models, they would be the first time to put them into the actual planting industry, such as the "rice-fishery symbiosis, rice-turtle symbiosis" and the "Rice and turtle symbiosis" three-dimensional green farming mode, greatly improving the yield and quality of rice. Fang Yong passed the idea of "scientific and technological farming" to the villagers, and brought them technical guidance to help them solve the difficulties in actual production, and the

area of rice planted by Fang Yong has expanded from 2,000 acres to 4,000 acres. Under Fang Yong's introduction of technology, the yield of late rice in 2023 was 983.68kg per acre, which was the highest yield.

Yuhang District of Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province is the first area to introduce rural professional managers. Liu Song, as the first group of rural professional managers, put his ideas, skills, and experience into play in the construction of agricultural farmland. Liu is committed to working with the research institute to introduce high-quality varieties and digital farming technology, tripling the average yield of rice per acre from 2,000 yuan to 6,000 yuan. Subsequently, he has developed brand activities such as "Opening the Spring Festival", "Kai-sickle Festival" and "digital adoption field"^[3].

Liu Song entered the Yuhang District to set himself the first goal of agricultural digital transformation. Yuhang District's unique geographical environment and cultivation varieties gave him great confidence. He started with his expertise in agriculture, set up a professional operation team, and signed strategic cooperation agreements with 16 enterprises. With the help of the partners, the village has completed the construction of the first 1500 acres of the core area of the digital agriculture project, and developed a small program called "digital rice paddy adoption". Enterprises or individuals can "adopt" rice at a price of 80,000 yuan per 10 acres and achieve 24-hour "cloud planting" on their mobile phones.

More and more rural professional managers began to pay attention to digital technology farming, and introduced more rapid and efficient planting programs into agricultural planting, which increased the output and improved the quality, so that the countryside as a whole realized modernization, technology empowerment, and smart agriculture.

2.2 Focus on agricultural training

Wan Li Tang Lotus Root Co-operative is a rural science demonstration base in Linping District and the largest aquatic vegetable base in Linping District. Nowadays, the base has a planting area of 1,185 acres, with 7,500 tonnes of high-quality aquatic vegetables available for Hangzhou every year, and sales in 2022 reaching more than 50 million yuan, which cannot be separated from professional agricultural training and planting guidance. With the introduction of rural professional managers, Linping District has set up a special service team under the leadership of Liu Yong, and invites experts from the provincial Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Zhejiang University and agricultural technology station to cooperate with Hangzhou's professional agricultural technology companies every year to exchange advanced planting technology and experience, and provide professional technical guidance. In the face of new technologies, new skills and new models, rural professional managers will regularly invite provincial and municipal Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Zhejiang University and other relevant experts and teachers to give lectures. The teaching field is wide, focusing on comprehensively improving planting technology and expanding planting space, and passing on the latest policies and technologies to farmers. At the same time, professional teachers will be invited to the field to guide the village science popularization association to carry out various science popularization activities^[4].

The villagers of Chongxian Village in Zhejiang Province have been growing vegetables and fruits through traditional planting methods, which results in low yield and low quality. In the new era, after observing the current situation, Chen Libo, a rural professional manager, actively went into the homes of farmers, understood their actual ideas and actual needs, explained their concerns, and instilled in them the current advanced planting technology. He let the villagers watch the relevant planting video, through continuous explanation, training, so that the villagers began to accept the scale, standardization, technological planting methods. He went into the villagers' homes

to explain to them how to carry out transformation and upgrading, how to achieve biological prevention and control, to eliminate farmers' concerns. He elaborated relevant policies, experiences and technologies for them from different perspectives, so that more people can understand and participate in the actual reform and upgrading. At a later stage, Chen Libo constantly transferred his experience to the villagers, and invited professional teachers to the villagers' fields on a regular basis to carry out technical training, according to the actual situation of the villagers in each family to formulate the appropriate programme for them. Such "one-on-one" training enhanced the farmers' trust in Chen Libo, but also for the development of agricultural planting in the township to provide good conditions.

2.3 New thinking management

Rural professional managers should start from the thought, bring new ideas, new ideas into the actual work, transform traditional management ideas, innovative management ideas, combined with the actual development of the village, to help the rural revitalization work. In recent years, rural professional managers in Jiashan County, Zhejiang Province, have actively played their role in the Yangtze River Delta ecological and green integration demonstration area and the first start-up area, and have made every effort to promote the Yangtze River Delta integration and synergistic development in the field of agriculture and rural areas. The professional rural managers of Jiashan County and Qingpu, Wujiang and other districts and counties have constructed a co-construction meeting mechanism according to the advantages and characteristics of their respective villages, so that the main advantages of the villages can be brought into full play. The 2,413-square-kilometre Yangtze River Delta integration "test field" in Qingpu, Shanghai, Wujiang, Jiangsu, and Jiashan, Zhejiang, has expanded its production area of rice under the leadership of a professional rural manager, improved its rice cultivation technology, and vacated 40 acres of land through cooperative management and the vacating of scattered and chaotic enterprises. The government set up a platform and introduced a professional team to create a rural cultural tourism attraction by combining the construction of ecological civilisation with the development of cultural tourism. At the same time, it has also realized the complementary function of districts and counties, carried out digital cooperation in rural agricultural industry, jointly developed new varieties in agricultural planting, and carried out cooperative innovation in planting research and development, especially in technology sharing and agricultural talent exchange, to open the rural vision through different ways, so that agricultural cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta region can achieve common sharing and comprehensively improve agricultural output^[5].

The efficacy of rural professional managers is not only in thought, but also in practical action. Rural professional managers actively strengthen co-operation and communication with the government, and promote the upgrading of the rural agricultural industry through government-supported projects. With a history of more than 100 years, Xiapu Zheng Village's rice and noodle production has a soft taste and rich aroma, and its sales account for more than 60 per cent of the rice and noodle market in Taizhou. However, the rice noodle industry in Xiapuzheng village is mainly composed of low-level, small and scattered processing workshops, and its overall processing level is not high, production equipment and technology is relatively lagging behind, the influence of brand and quality is relatively weak, and the problem of environmental pollution is becoming more and more obvious. Rural professional managers use provincial collective economic development projects to promote the transformation and upgrading of rice and noodles industry in Xiapuzheng Village through the integration of resources. The rice planting and production will be built into a professional assembly line, from planting, processing to final sales to form a professional industry, set scale and specialization as one, highlighting the advantages of government

policy support. Furthermore, the development and progress of other industries in the countryside is driven by the rice and noodle industry, which has achieved the development and revitalization of the rice and noodle industry and the village collective economy^[6].

3. Effect evaluation of rural professional managers in Zhejiang Province

3.1 The effectiveness of rural professional managers in Zhejiang Province

Yong'an Village in Yuhang District, Hangzhou, has more than 5,000 acres of basic farmland, accounting for 97% of the village's arable land area, with a traditional planting pattern and low efficiency, and until 2017 the village's operating income was less than 300,000 yuan. After the introduction of professional managers in Yuhang District in 2019, the village's operating income increased by more than 4 million yuan. In September 2020, Liu Song and seven other colleagues from Yuhang District, as the second batch of "village CEO", successfully raised the average income of Yong'an villagers from 35,000 yuan in 2018 to 56,900 yuan in just two years, while the village's collective economy was also raised from 568,000 yuan to 3.15 million yuan, which have also succeeded in attracting many young people who have left urban labour to return to their hometowns to innovate, fulfilling their ideals of innovation and employment in their own homes. Due to its relatively poor geographical location, many resources have not been fully developed in Waipokeng Village, Jingling Town, Xinchang County, Shaoxing City. Under the leadership of rural professional managers, more people have come to know Waipokeng Village through the latest information technology, and many people have begun to pay attention to the rural folklore, agricultural specialists here. Since 2023, Waipokeng Village has sold a total of 20 million yuan of tea, 10 million yuan of tortillas, and more than 5 million yuan of other agricultural products and Chinese herbs such as sealwort.

Twenty years ago, Jingshan Village was a poor village. Under the advanced management of the professional rural managers, the cooperation with government agencies and various organizations has been strengthened. With the "Ten Million Project" as the traction, Jingshan Village has promoted the integrated development of culture and tourism, and developed a large industry integrating tea planting, tea production, tea selling and tea tourism, bringing richness to one side of the people with a piece of tea leaves. Through the efforts and perseverance of professional managers, people outside the village have seen a different landscape, and the villagers have realized high returns and enjoyed a brand new life.

The first step taken by Zhejiang Province has set a precedent for the national implementation of rural professional managers, and the concept of leaving professional things to professionals has been carried out and practiced in the process of exploration. In April 2019, four villages in Yuhang District launched the recruitment of rural professional managers for the first time, opening the precedent of excellent talents going to the countryside to start their own businesses. In 2020, eight more villages in Yuhang District openly recruited rural professional managers, and their salaries have been raised to 180,000 yuan. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, Zhejiang Province has openly recruited rural professional managers for the whole society, and its demand is growing, and the salary is gradually improving. Rural professional managers in Zhejiang Province continue to play to their strengths in their own areas of expertise, and according to the actual situation in Zhejiang Province continue to create a new path of development, introducing more advanced ideas and digital concepts into rural revitalization, and promoting the rapid and efficient development of rural construction in Zhejiang Province.

3.2 The development of rural professional managers in Zhejiang Province

As the first pilot province to introduce rural professional managers in China, Zhejiang's bold ideas and attempts have brought breakthroughs to its development^[7]. The economy of Zhejiang Province has been greatly improved through continuous exploration, experimentation and co-operation, and the high-quality development of agriculture has been realized. The improvement of people's economic efficiency has effectively promoted the development of rural revitalization. However, with the continuous progress and development of the times, the government should change its mindset in the introduction of rural professional managers, and cultivate full-featured rural professional managers.

The first is to develop a young team. Young people have more advanced and better ideas, and they are open-minded, accommodating more new ideas and accepting new suggestions. Young people dare to try, act quickly, promote the work in good condition, and are able to put what they think and need into action. Young people in the new era pay more attention to innovation, and their observation and creativity is innovative, which can lead the development of villages to a higher level.

Secondly, the training of rural professional managers should be functional, which means that their comprehensive ability should be strong. They should not only have advanced ideas and theories, but also implement them into practice, with practical operational ability, communication ability and co-operation ability. Governments at all levels should combine their own advantages and regional characteristics when introducing professional rural professional managers, and maximize the value of rural professional managers in the countryside. Only in this way can the value of the introduction of rural professional managers be ensured, and can really contribute to the revitalization of the countryside.

4. Conclusion

The development and progress of the times cannot be separated from the revitalization of the countryside. The revitalization of the countryside is the only way to promote the country's wealth and strength. At present, not only in Zhejiang Province, the introduction of rural professional managers is gradually carried out throughout the country. They use their theoretical experience, advanced ideas, and through strong action to lead farmers to get rich and promote rural development. In the new era, it is necessary to continuously improve the ability of rural professional managers and match the corresponding countryside, combine the advantages of rural development with the value of rural professional managers, strengthen the idea of innovation, technology empowerment, thereby promoting the high-quality development of rural revitalization.

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