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China: A Battle Against Food Extravagance

Fuping County, one of poverty-stricken counties in China, is located in Baoding City, Hebei Province. The total land area is 249396.95 hectares, including, 46442.34 hectares of timberland (18.62%) and 19055.10 hectares of grassland (7.64%), but only 14562.39 hectares of cultivated farmland (5.84%). Cultivated farmland and residential area are centrally situated in basins; timberland, garden plot and others are situated in mountainous region. With 210 thousand people, such a county without a large area of plain and farmland is bound to develop at an inferior starting point and boost its situation at a low speed. Moreover, continental monsoon climate leads to the result that Fuping is a well-known torrential rain area. Precipitation varies from summer to winter, which correspondingly takes up 82.9% and 9% of a yearly amount of precipitation. This fact inevitably brings about soil erosion. To avoid soil erosion getting worse, government chiefly constructs water and soil conservation forests. Complying with such land structure and climate characteristic, agricultural structure in Fuping is mainly composed of forestry. Except shelterbelts, there are 30,000 hectares of economic forests, of which most are jujube trees. Other species like walnut, apple, chestnut, apricot and persimmon are also major specialties in Fuping, which mostly depends on these to increase its income and get rid of poverty. Besides selling fruits directly, in recent years, Fuping concentrates on fruit deep processing. Such processing includes juice manufacture, vinegar and sauce manufacture and vintager. Although this paradigm shift made a difference to villagers' income, still, economic conditions in Fuping are looking blue.

The Wang's is a typical five-people family in Fuping. With three kids to feed, the couple of this family feel a great stress of making a living. Education is a big issue that bothered this family, two kids of which are all at the age of going to middle school. Fuping Middle School, however, is the only school located in the county town. For this countryside family, both tuition fee and traffic fee are headaches. Education, which seems to be the only way to change their future, is still a rough way. Chinese government takes this problem seriously and unveils fresh policy to settle it. Since 2006, compulsory education free of charge has been practiced smoothly. In addition of exemption of tuition fee, subsidy of lunch also takes effect. On the basis of Chinese commodity price, government subsidizes three yuan to each student's lunch in rural area, which means that every student can have extra 250g milk (1.8 yuan), an egg (0.6 yuan) and more vegetable for lunch. This subsidy is stipulated so strictly that it can't be used as other expense for schools and must be used to improve all students' meals. In fact, there has already been a subsidy for poor students in rural areas, which entitles primary school students to enjoy the right of getting four yuan a day and junior school students five yuan. Plus the present three-yuan policy, they can have 1600 yuan and 1850 yuan correspondingly per year, which is more than the per capita food consumption expenditure for rural residents. Charities and public figures also make an effort to donate or raise donation for these students. Most adults in Fuping were not well educated so that it is hard for them to find a job with decent wages in cities. They might only be offered some labor work which is rather energy-consuming but brings meagre wages. Situation in

the next generation may be changed in the future.

In former years, Mrs Wang was diagnosed with atrophic arthritis. Having such a disease not only directly affects their normal farm work, but also exerts a financial burden. The hospital charge costs at least 5000 yuan, and the medicine fee is around 200 yuan per month, which is by no means an affordable number to this family. The total yearly income being around 2460 yuan, it is arduous for them to pay medical bill and the fare to the hospital. Most villagers like Mrs Wang had to choose to endure the pain. Fortunately, new country cooperative medical care is being implemented presently. Referring to the scheme in 2011, each villager pays 30 yuan while the government subsidizes 200 yuan. Fifteen chronic diseases are in the range of diseases that can be refunded or subsidized. Pregnant women who are to be confined in hospital will enjoy a 200-yuan allowance. The subsidy rate in a county can be as high as 70% and the highest subsidy was raised to 60,000 yuan in 2011. Plus, schools apply for commercial insurance for students. The compensation pay-outs are not contradictory to the subsidy from new country cooperative medical care. Therefore, the expense of medical treatment has been guaranteed to some extents, whereas the low quality of medical facilities becomes another obstacle hindering local people from being completely cured. Backward medical technology, aging of equipment as well as lack of qualified staff all lead to the hardship in local clinics. To resolve it, the government encourages medical graduates to obtain employment in township health center and doctors in county hospitals to work there for short term. Besides, taking advantage of favorable policies is taken into account to improve the medical conditions. Furthermore, the government also enhances the training of medics to grant them professional qualification and in the meantime attracts them via favors.

In previous years, the Wang's grow potatoes and corns mainly. The output is not so sufficient that it can only meet their family provision. Family diet structure turns to be extremely unitary. The majority of food is, of course, potatoes. Other vegetables are hardly acquired for the simple reason that the cultivated farmland in Fuping is obviously barren for crops needing fertile fields to grow. Furthermore, this family, as well as many other similar families, lack scientific growing knowledge and technology can't be provided promptly and abundantly. Thus, crops merely grow naturally and the Wang's support their family relying on natural factors. These all account for the single diet, which inexorably results in malnutrition of villagers. In some developed western countries such as the US, the social welfare system is comparatively perfect, whereas in China it is not completed and needs modifying. In the US,

the plan of food aid has been raised, including food coupon, school lunch, nutrition plan for homeless children and so on. Chinese government ought to consider taking actions like such direct assistance and raise the proportion of budget in subsidizing food for the poor. Moreover, government should also put forward schemes of supervision as the allocation is likely to be abused by local government. The usage of the special fund is supposed to be made known to public to ensure citizens' right to know and make it authentically behooves to the poor.

While millions of rural people are starved or undernourished like these families, food extravagance in China is getting worse and worse. This is not agreeable to the target of building a well-off society in an all-round way. Recently, a protest against extravagance in food has provoked a noisy discussion in China. Even the Chairman of People's Republic of China Xi Jinping made comments and instructions

on a material, 'Netizens appeal for restriction upon waste on the table', which was reported by the Xinhua News Agency to demand politicians and citizens to practice strict economy and oppose squander. Indisputably, the extravagance on food in China is exceedingly severe. It is said by Zheng Chuguang, the member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and vice-chairman of the Hubei Province Political Consultative Conference that the amount of wasted food in China reaches approximately 25 billion kilograms per year, which is the equal of 1/10 of the total output. According to a conservative reckoning, what Chinese consumers waste in restaurants can at least be provisions for 200 million people a year, which is almost 1/7 of population in China. And waste of individuals and families also contributes 11 billion, corresponding to provisions for 15 million people a year.

This fact makes us sad because the current situation of starvation remains grievous. 868 million people are malnourished as before in the period of 2010-2012, even more than the amount, 867 million, in 2007-2009 in absolute number. As a matter of fact, China, with 158 million undernourished persons, takes up more than 18% of the total number of undernourished persons in the world, 94.6% of the number in Eastern Asia. This is to say, China still has a long way to go in solving food scarcity and enhance food productivity.

To achieve this goal, Ministry of Agriculture of People Republic of China raised four methods: stabilize the acreage, increase per unit area yield, strengthen protection and control of plant diseases and insect pests and disaster prevention and mitigation, as well as vigorously promote agricultural mechanization. Agricultural labor force and cultivated field are still two crucial factors to increase food production. Nevertheless, the urbanization in China accelerates at an increasing speed since Reform and Opening Policy in 1970s was put forward. On the one hand, such a fact is showing gratifying achievements in Socialist modernization in China. On the other hand, it also means agricultural labor force in an ever mounting number is draining and cultivated field is lessening, which intensifies the strain in food productivity. For increasing food productivity by technology, although the contribution rate of agricultural techniques has been advanced to 53% in China, compared with 60% in developed countries, it is not adequate. Thus it can be seen, to some extent, resolving food scarcity merely by increasing output is in deep waters. However, there remains a doubt: even though the growth rate of food is zero, what if all the food we have at present is thoroughly used? In other words, eliminating food waste can relieve the severe starvation situation, or rather, saving is more effective than increasing.

Here are multiple reasons why food extravagance in China turns to be awful. We conclude them in four aspects. Firstly, daily consumption is considerable. Eating in China is not simply something about fill one's stomach. There are other meanings endowed in eating. In traditional Chinese perception, offering more than we need in a meal means generous and hospitable and also shows a person's wealth. These are things arousing some people's sense of pride. So people are accustomed to leaving some food in their plates showing they are rich enough to afford those leftover. Owing to the detrimental tradition, people regard it a shame to pack up food left over after a meal. It's common that sanitation workers find fish, meat, steamed bread, etc, which haven't been consumed very much or are even with integral package. Moreover, recreational activities using public funds take up an extraordinary part in food extravagance. Statistics in 2012 show total sum of recreational activities

using public funds is up to three hundred billion yuan. Among all departments, nineteen consume more than ten million on this expense. Public funds occupy 18.6% of financial revenue. In the meantime, education, science and technology, recreation and sports, social security, medical treatment and other allocation in people's livelihood are not as much as 38%. We can suppose that if recreational activities using public funds are cut down, a huge amount of funds will stream to areas which are beneficial to every Chinese citizen. Last but not least, over-consumption in wine worsens the situation of food extravagance. Drinking wine plays a unique role in Chinese public relations, which becomes a latent rule in the business circle, political circle and other circles in which people need to have dealings with a variety of figures. It is all right if people only drink as a kind of entertainment or a way to promote friendship, but in modern Chinese society, people in an ever mounting amount drink with an abnormal mentality. Drinking to excess not only does harm to one's health conditions, but also wastes a large quantity of crops. As most Chinese can't accept fruit wine emotionally, crops are used to make wine generally, which burdens providing enough crops for eating. Each person (adult) purchases around 4.7 kilograms of wine a year, giving rise to a considerable quantity in the aggregate. Someone gives a vivid comparison that every year Chinese drink out a Xihu lake.

Secondly, links in process is another assignable reason. In the aspect of process, we mainly attribute it into the low transformation rate. In terms of pork, the transformation rate achieves 25%, while chicken 50% and beef 14%. Based on the population of 1.335 billion in 2009, supposing each person consumes one kilogram meat a year, China needs to increase 5.29 billion kilograms of supplement, equivalent to 34% of newly increased output amount in 2010. The average rate in developed countries can be up to 80%. To acquire one kilogram meat, China wastes at most 5.75 kilograms more crops than other developed countries. This waste burdens Chinese food supply.

Furthermore, food extravagance originates from improper conservation. Ren Zhengxiao, the secretary of State Administration of Grain, disclosed that 20 billion kilograms of grain are wasted as a result of simple and crude equipment, lack of technical guidance and service, and the destroy of injurious insects, rats and sparrows. Sun Wenxian, a peasant in Hunan province, when interviewed, said that it was difficult for him to dry out all of his grain because they lacked sunning ground. This becomes a factor leading to grain going bad. So there is a weird saying that 'The more it produces, the more it loses'. Facing the embarrassing situation, peasants only have two options. One is to give up harvesting a part of the early season rice in order to spare more time for the late season rice which has a higher price. Therefore, at least tens of thousands of rice are squandered. Another method is to sell the early rice at a low price. A peasant loses over three hundred thousand yuan for a premature sell. Another obstacle is the lack of drying machine. It is universal that the high price and small quantity of drying machines and the tremendous demand contradict each other. Sun Wenxian said their township at least needs twenty drying machines which can handle fifteen tons of grain a day while they have none at present. The lack of hardware equipment as well as the awareness of reserving grain in a safe way finally brings about a large quantity of waste.

Finally, some irresistible causes are the influence that major issues like climate change and pollution exert over food extravagance. Irregular weather usually brings about ruinous destroy in agricultural production, especially global warming. Global warming prolongs the high temperature and expands

the high-temperature area. The higher temperature directly shortens growth period and deadens photosynthesis, giving rise to reduction of output. Averagely, when the temperature in China rises by 2.5°C-3°C, the output of rice, wheat and corn descends continuously. Besides, high temperature indirectly exerts its influence on food production. Firstly, most insects and diseases fit in such a warm environment in which they multiply in a large number and at a higher speed. Meanwhile, high-latitude areas which didn't suffer from pests become disaster areas now. Furthermore, global warming makes glacier melt rapidly so that the sea-level relatively rises. Coastal cultivated land is submerged by the sea water with a high salinity, exacerbating the salinization in Northern China. This accounts for a decrease in fertility of soil, which does harm to agriculture.

As for China, a country with the largest population, this is undoubtedly vital in feeding its people in the first place. As is mentioned before, Chinese waste 25 billion kilograms of food every year. In terms of provisions for people, 158 million undernourished people can be sufficiently fed by the wasted 25 billion kilograms of food. In terms of cultivated farmland, if one acre of field can provide 3000 kilograms of food, eliminating such waste is tantamount to enlarging 8,333,333 acres of field. Based on statistics in 2005, China still owns 254 million people whose daily expenses are less than 1.25 dollars, the international poverty standard. By 2020, China will have realized its goal of building a comprehensive well-off society. One of the standards requires peasants' income. However, a worsening extravagance in food will enlarge the distance between rich people and poor people, which is contradictory to the goal. Holding back such extravagance does good to help achieve a comprehensive well-off society which benefit the whole 1.3 billion Chinese.

In addition, eliminating food waste also benefits controlling food price. During 2010~2011, rise in price has caused 70 million people tramped into extreme poverty, according to statistics from World Bank. In 2008, Gordon Brown, former British Prime Minister emphasized in Group of Eight Summit, Hokkaido, Japan that food extravagance led to rise in price. In consequence of this, he appealed for British citizens to save food. There is no doubt that raising food price makes significant threat to developing countries like China, especially to poverty-stricken people like the Wang's which is mentioned formerly. Saving food makes conditions to guarantee an abundant supply, which relieves food price continuously going up. The Wang's has already suffered from a single diet that is followed with malnutrition. Purchase turns out to be the sole way to get different nutrition. But this family may easily give up this choice, or has to give up it if the food price is unstable. Conversely, a stable and reasonable price can stimulate this family to consider a purchase of other types of food to improve their nutrition structure. And it's already emphasized that government subsidize three yuan in each student's lunch in poor area. It goes without saying that rise in price weakens the purchasing power of the three yuan. Students' lunch level may be degraded under the influence of the price rise. Saving food indirectly benefit their children in having a nourishing meal.

Taking actions is hanging over China's head. China has already implemented some measure to dispose the thorny problem. The State Council requires launching propaganda to intensify citizens' awareness of saving food. All levels of food administration departments and all food enterprises should take steps effectively to reduce food waste, enhance food availability, hold back unreasonable consumption and defend food security from a strategic view of practicing Scientific Outlook on Development and building a resource conservation society. Realistically improve the conservation

conditions and make the purchase consummately. Accelerate the establish of modern logistics facilities to reduce the loss in transportation. Draw up scientific standard of food products and raise the transformation rate. Regard the value of science and allocate more fund to develop saving technology. Guiding food enterprises to save food and do well the relevant works.

On the initiate of central government, local governments, communities and families are expected to respond in an active way. Here are proposals about making laws anti food extravagance, which means taking advantage of legislation to force people to stop wasting. Restaurants also have the responsibilities to change their management form. For instance, they are supposed to provide half sized meals or sized meals for customers. Also, they should put advertisements about saving food in a distinct place. Buffets can reward customers who save food rather than punish customers who waste as they are doing now. Offering coupons to them is a good choice. Media can do their effort by means of introducing skills to conserve food. Food producers can change large pack into small pack. Education for children is very significant as well. Both families and schools ought to educate children the importance of saving food and let them be grateful to what they eat.

Li Shangyin, a famous Chinese ancient poem, once remarked that *历览前贤国与家，成由节俭败由奢*. It means that according to the former experience of both countries and families, thrifty leads to boom while extravagance decay. Today, I use this to finish my essay. The battle against extravagance is bound to be a fierce one, but we have the duty and confidence to settle it, because it is worth that we make it.

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