

Research on the Development Modes and Approaches of Leisure Agriculture in Wenchuan' Post-Earthquake Construction

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Abstract: This study expounds the background, achievements and advantages of developing leisure agriculture of the post-earthquake construction in Wenchuan, epicenter of the 2008 earthquake. Then the main development modes of leisure agriculture are summarized, namely; sightseeing farm, ethnic folk customs type, ecological landscape type, earthquake memorial type. At last, 5 successful approaches of developing leisure agriculture in Wenchuan are concluded.

Key words: 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, leisure agriculture, development mode, post-earthquake construction, China

INTRODUCTION

With social and economic development and changes to the industrial structure, agriculture has been transformed from the primary industry into a diversely managed industry (Meng-Long *et al.*, 2008). Leisure agriculture refers to a new type of agricultural production and management using pastoral landscape, natural environment, facilities and other agricultural resources to offer the public tourism and leisure projects and enhancing people's experience about agriculture, peasants and rural areas (Ling and Feng, 2009). Leisure agriculture has developed rapidly since 1990s, which can be seen from the relevance between the tourism theme in China and the agriculture or rural areas, for example, the Folk Customs Tour in 1995, the Chinese Urban and Rural Tour in 1999, the Rural China Tour in 2006 (Chunyan and Jinghua, 2009). Leisure agriculture can not only increase peasants' income but also prolong the agricultural industrial chain, improve the rural environment and promote the development of countryside (Meng-Jue and Dong, 2010). With abundant histories and mysterious while diverse folk cultures, minority regions are vigorously attractive to the urban dwellers. Many scholars have pointed out that developing agricultural and rural tourism is one of the effective ways to promote the rural construction in the minority regions (Li-Zhen, 2006; Jing-Fu *et al.*, 2008; Tong-Hui and Jin-Ye, 2010).

After gone through the tragic earthquake, Wenchuan county seized the opportunities of reconstruction supported by state and Guangdong province, expanding the domestic demands and Western development, further developed leisure agriculture by utilizing the

indigenous resources of the Qiang and Tibetan minority folk culture, the Great Yu culture, greatly enhanced the construction of new countryside and benefitted the economy and social affairs.

DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND OF LEISURE AGRICULTURE IN WENCHUAN

Background of the study place: Wenchuan county is situated in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province in China. Wenchuan was the epicenter of the 2008 earthquake. The tragic earthquake brought severe destruction on Wenchuan's economy and society and caused great loss of lives and properties. The infrastructures, houses and buildings in Wenchuan were completely destroyed and cultural relics and sites were seriously damaged. Moreover, the ecological environment suffered irrevocable destruction.

After the earthquake, all Chinese got together to rescue people and reconstructed the earthquake-hit regions under the support of international aid and Chinese government. After several years' reconstruction, Wenchuan's economic and social career have gradually recovered and even surpassed the conditions before the earthquake.

Since 2010, China has started to nominate and appraise the national leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration counties. At the end of 2011, there are 70 national leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration counties, among which 4 are in Sichuan province which can be clearly shown in Fig. 1.

The development of leisure agriculture in Wenchuan has reached a great leap forward achievement. In recent year, especially after the post-earthquake construction,

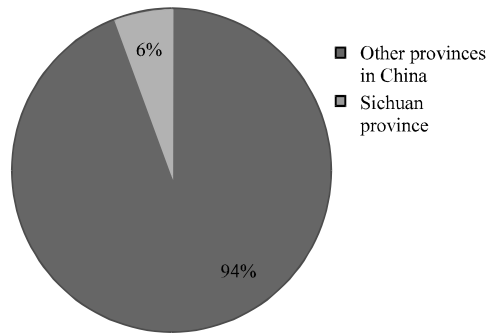


Fig. 1: Percentage of Sichuan national leisure agriculture and rural tourism; demonstration county in China

the leisure agriculture in Wenchuan obtained a burgeoning development and be honored with National Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism Demonstration Country, Sichuan Rural Tourism Demonstration Country and Sichuan Rural Tourism Model County from 2005-2010. At the end of 2011, the number of village inns hotels has exceeded 500 with 69-star level rural inns among which are one 4-star inns seven 3-star inns, fifty eight 2-star inns and three 1-star inns which can be shown in Fig. 2.

According to incomplete statistics, 1.7 million visitors came to Wenchuan and brought 87 million RMB incomes in 2011 which strongly drove up the development of leisure agriculture and new rural construction in Wenchuan and improved the economic and social sustainable development.

Tourism development background in China: Expanding urban population provides space for leisure agriculture. Since 2010, the statistics revealed that almost half of the national population dwells in the city. Due to the pressure from busy work and boring life style and the crowding environment, citizens are eager to get rid of the city and breathe the fresh air at suburbs or countryside.

Rapid economic growth provides economic condition for leisure agriculture. Many scholars had researched the relevance between the number of tourists and the GDP of the tourist country and indicated that the GDP per capita reaches \$1000 would generate domestic tourism while the GDP per capita reaches \$3000, international tourism would be popular (Shang-Qing, 1990; Xiao-An and Zong-Su, 1993; Liang-Yun and Tan, 2011). According to the statistics, the GDP per capita in China reached \$5414 in 2011 which means the crucial change will happen in Chinese residents consumption structure. Recreation consumption undoubtedly would be one potential market.

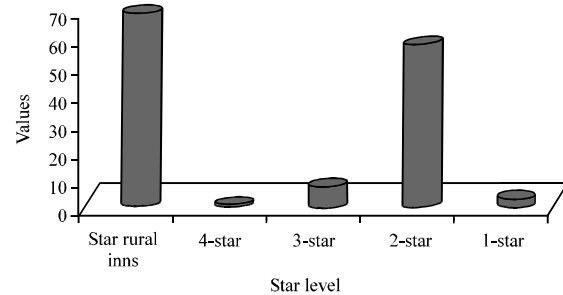


Fig. 2: Star level rural inns in Wenchuan

Advantages for leisure agriculture in Wenchuan

Comparatively advantageous location and sound traffic condition:

Weizhou, capital of Wenchuan county is only about 146 km away from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Two national-level roads cross Wenchuan which makes the traffic more convenient for tourists. The geographic location of Wenchuan is so important that it is recognized as the Southern door of Aba and the throat of Sichuan Northwestern plateau. Main traffic roads and rural roads in Wenchuan have been greatly improved during the reconstruction.

Rich historical legends and ethnic folk culture:

According to the folk legends, documents and scholars' studies on the sites, Mianshi, a town in Wenchuan is the birth place of the Great Yu. The Great Yu was the ancient hero for preventing the floods by controlling water and also the first emperor since China began to form a state. The Qiang ethnic minority lives mainly in the counties of the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan. Wenchuan is the agglomerated place for Qiang, Tibetan and Han nationalities while Qiang nationality takes more one thirds of the total population. The Qiang mainly lives off husbandry and specializes in raising sheep, that's why their culture and characteristics are with the distinguishing sheep feature. The Qiang are adept at building. The Diaolou, rope bridges, plank roads as well as weirs all have high artistic value. Diaolou, the Qiang building has the functions of storing food and firewood, defending enemy's aggression. The Qiang people are also versatile. The Qiang embroidery and carpeting weaving are outstanding among other groups in China. Their shoes, sewn and embroidered by Qiang women, look like delicate boats and are comfortable.

World natural heritage and wonderful natural scenery:

The Wolong and the Sanjiang nature reserve in Wenchuan all belong to the world natural heritage Sichuan Giant Panda habitat. Wolong presents a diversified topography and landforms of precipitous

mountains, deep gorges, glaciers, lakes and alpine meadows. The forest coverage of the Sanjiang nature reserve reaches over 90% with azalea, Chinese dove tree flower also known as pigeon flower for its shape and snow flake coming in the continuous period, bringing magnificent sceneries all the year around.

Wenchuan is abundant with natural scenery resources. Geomorphologic landscape, water landscape, biology landscape and astronomical landscape all add radiance and beauty to the wonderful views of Wenchuan. Here are situated the famous Oriental Alps, the Four-Maiden Mountain. It also owns the beautiful nickname of Queen Peak of Sichuan Mountains with altitude of 6,250 m above the sea level. There are diverse and unique landforms. Natural lakes, ponds, waterfalls, hot springs and snowfields make the water resources more diverse. What's more, the views of sunrise and clouds sea as well as ice cascade enrich the wonderful sight of the astronomical landscape.

MAIN DEVELOPMENT MODES OF LEISURE AGRICULTURE IN WENCHUAN

According to the operation ways and recreation resources, there are mainly sightseeing farm type, rural vacation type, ethnic folk customs type, ecological landscape type and earthquake memorial type.

Sightseeing farm: This kind of leisure agriculture mainly depends on the recreation attraction as farming sceneries, farming production activities, special and exotic agricultural products to carry out sightseeing of farming views, such as corn, maze, rice paddy field, flowers and fruits as well as participation activities, such as picking fruits, feeding animals, planting, sowing, plowing, etc., satisfying tourists needs for experiencing farming and returning to the nature.

Ethnic folk custom type: Wenchuan is one of the largest dwelling places for the Qiang and also the home of other ethnic minorities, such as Tibetan nationality. These tourism destinations are extremely attractive to the citizens and other nationalities, for the mysterious, time-honored history, exotic folk culture, different life styles and food, exquisite while magnificent architecture and colorful clothing present a visual, taste and cognition feast for tourists. In Wenchuan, Buwa village, Luobo village, A'er village, Qiangfeng village are the representatives of ancient Qiang stockade villages and Qiang ethnic culture. The Tibetan ethnic minority also diversify the cultural and folk resources in Wenchuan. Three rivers Tibetan village, Caopo Tibetan dwellings and Tibetan folk customs park are among the Tibetan folk culture tourism destination in Wenchuan.

Ecological landscape type: This kind of leisure agriculture depends on the unique landscape and rich natural and ecological resources as the name implies. There are two national nature reserves with a high percentage of forest coverage. Besides, when it comes to Giant Panda, Wolong nature reserve will spring to the minds of most people. While Wolong is situated in the Southwest of Wenchuan and attract thousands of tourists come here. Thus, a lot of small and large restaurants, inns and hotels which affiliated with the scenic spots carry out the tourism business.

Earthquake memorial type: Shuimo ancient town and the epicenter Yingxiu town are among the most typical models for post-earthquake construction and Shuimo ancient town was granted with best post-earthquake construction model in the world. From the day, these two memorials open for tourists, they have attracted millions of tourists from home and abroad to memorize the tragedy and admire the beauty of new towns and witness the new life of the people here. It is one of the successful cases which it seized the post-earthquake construction opportunity to develop recreation activities and enrich the peasants' life.

APPROACHES OF LEISURE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN WENCHUAN

Propelling the agriculture transition, promoting rural industrial restructuring: Developing leisure agriculture is the important entry point of industrial restructuring upgrade of rural industry. Lunching leisure agriculture actually is to transfer the agricultural resources of farm operation, rural views and peasants' productive labor into tourism production, to form local market, to realize industry value-added and to promote agricultural industrial restructuring. Leisure agriculture added more value to agricultural productions, effectively boost the restructuring of rural economy, employment and society. As an emerging business operation, leisure agriculture could expand peasants' wealth space by planting sceneries, diversified industrial structure and finally demonstrated competitiveness. In accordance with the development pattern of stabilizing primary industry, restructuring secondary industry and moving into third industry, Wenchuan government creatively developed the projects of cherry, carambola, flowers and plants, modern husbandry, leaded the industry of tea, poultry and established sets of river-valley garden villages, accelerating the pace of Wenchuan leisure agriculture development.

Increasing supports to help peasants get rich: Developing leisure agriculture, through positively attracting and guiding peasants to involve in the service of tourism reception, availed locals of a new channel to

cast off poverty and get rich without leaving home and narrowed the gap between rural and urban development. Wenchuan government subsidized the village inns and facilitated large quantities labors to devote themselves into tourism industry aiming at returning peasants labors. Shuimo ancient town, national AAAA level scenic spot, granted with best post-earthquake rebuild model in the world is crowded with visitors in an endless stream. Leisure agriculture has become the pillar industry of Shuimo, bringing locals a wealthy life.

Promoting construction of rural infrastructure and eco-environment: Developing leisure agriculture could effectively ameliorate rural environment and sanitation while accelerate infrastructure construction and rural outlook, speed up the use of clean and efficient energy, such as methane tank and solar energy. The development of leisure agriculture strongly depends on convenient traffic and impeccable infrastructure, like universal coverage of cable TV and public toilet for each village in Wenchuan. Besides, each public facility in Wenchuan like water, electricity, telecommunication, sanitation, medical treatment, service and afforest have gradually been improved and also the environment of investment, living standard and humanities have been highly promoted. The development of leisure agriculture in Wenchuan not only brought huge profits to locals but also awakened them to the importance of grateful outlook and full infrastructure to attract visitors.

Emphasizing on the culture-oriented development of leisure agriculture: Leisure agriculture development could not sustain with the soul culture. After earthquake, the culture of Qiang ethnic minority, Tibetan ethnic minority, the Great Yu and the home of giant pandas have formed Wenchuan' unique culture characters. Based on these cultures following the direction of delicate sightseeing, farm and village, Wenchuan has set up some culture tourism destination like Shuimo town of Qiang Nationality, Miansi-home of the Great Yu, Yingxiu the new town of the epicenter. The development of leisure agriculture has inspired locals the importance of ethnic and historical culture in order to re-evaluate them and also has arose them the awareness and inner impetus of protecting traditional cultures.

Strengthening the propaganda by holding tourism festivals: In 2011, Wenchuan had successfully taken the opportunities and held the opening ceremony of Sichuan International cultural tourism festival in Shuimo ancient town, fully exhibiting post-earthquake construction achievements and motivating the comprehensive recovery and revitalization of the tourism industry in Wenchuan. Meanwhile, Wenchuan successfully held the 2nd the

Great Yu cultural festival, large cherry festival and 1st Sanjiang Chinese dove tree cultural festival in 2011, further expanding Wenchuan's visibility and influence. The tourism festivals have brought more visitors, promoted local infrastructure and sanitation, strengthened the communication and narrowed the gap between urban and rural development, improved the construction of new rural village, national unity and harmonious society.

CONCLUSION

Leisure agriculture is a burgeoning industry for agricultural restructuring and upgrading, prolonging the agricultural industrial chain and effectively promoting the construction of new countryside. Though there are still some problems like low agricultural industrialization, non-systemization of the tourism operating management, etc., leisure agriculture in Wenchuan will have a bright prospect.

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