

Basic Farmland Protection System in China: Changes, Conflicts and Prospects

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SUMMARY

Farmland protection is important for ensuring national food security and promoting sustainable socioeconomic development. China has a far lower amount of farmland area per capita than the global average. To improve farmland productivity, the Chinese government has implemented a basic farmland protection system (BFPS). A comprehensive and systematic analysis of the evolution mechanism of the BFPS, the failures of the BFPS and the key measures of the modern BFPS reform is lacking in the current literature. Based on a systematic review of the history of China's BFPS, this study first summarizes the evolutionary mechanism of the BFPS, then analyzes the current conflicts faced by the BFPS on this basis, proposes several main breakthrough strategies for improving the BFPS and finally provides key ideas for further strengthening the development of the BFPS in the future. The results of this study show that China's BFPS has gone through three development stages since 1963 and that there are differences in the main factors hindering the improvement in basic farmland productivity in the different stages. Correspondingly, the systems adopted to meet the demands for basic farmland protection are also different. The evolution of the BFPS is similar to a "scale" that constantly seeks balance between "system demand" and "system supply". In the present stage, the main conflicts faced by China's BFPS are between basic farmland quality and requirements for supplementary delimitation and production patterns; between basic farmland quantity, urban development and food security; and between basic farmland-use regulation and modern agriculture and the market economy. The Chinese government should further optimize the BFPS through improving the delimitation system, establishing a classified protection system and strengthening the basic farmland protection compensation system. To accelerate the establishment of a territorial spatial planning system in the future, the BFPS should also be fully integrated with the concept of an ecological civilization, be applied to resolve the contradiction between development and protection and be used to help improve the land-space-utilization control system, thus creating a unified development guide for national land.

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