

3. How Taiwan Farmers' Association Resists Risks in an Industrial Society

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A large floating rural migrant population presents a great risk of social instability in mainland China. In contrast, when Taiwan society was undergoing a similar social transitions (urbanization), there emerged no major gap between rich and poor, nor a social class of poverty-stricken migrant farmers in the cities. The Taiwan Farmers' Associate (TFA), an organization with over 100 years' of history, has played an important role in reducing the farmers' risks brought by the market economy under globalization. This article analyzes the structure and mechanism of TFA, and the role it played in protecting members against the risks of modernization. It also suggests lessons for present-day mainland China. .

The reason of TFA's success was that it effectively combined the local culture and historical tradition with foreign innovations and thereby formed its own style of operation that maximized its effectiveness in Taiwan context. It is not a complete modern agricultural system. It is rather a combination of official or unofficial multi-purpose organization with social educational function. Therefore, TFA can both digest the "good" goods brought by industrialization and produce the mechanism and ability to handle the "bads" brought by industrialization. The experiences of Taiwan, and similar ones of Japan and Korea, show that East Asian societies have the ability to structure a society with the wisdom from their long non-industrialized history and culture. It can provide some inspiration to prevent the more individualized risks in modern society.