Research on Collaborative Governance Mode of Agricultural Products’ Quality and Safety

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ABSTRACT

With the problem of agricultural products’ quality and safety has become more and more obvious, the research on its governance is increasingly rich and deep. This paper finally proposes the effective closed-loop path to guarantee the agricultural products’ quality and safety through investigating the synergistic effects of different subjects to participate in the governance of agricultural products’ quality and safety issues.

INTRODUCTION

Whether the quality of agricultural products is safe or not is very important for individual health, social harmony and sustainable development. China has established agricultural standards, testing and certification system as the basis, the agricultural product quality safety guarantee mechanism by government supervision as the core, but the quality of agricultural products safety incidents occurred frequently in recent years, which caused people to think about the effectiveness of the existing mechanism. Therefore, based on the actual Chinese current agricultural products quality and safety issues, how to coordinate the distribution of benefits of agricultural producers, consumers, government and other third parties to control the quality and safety of agricultural products is worthy of our deeper exploration.

RELATED RESEARCH REVIEW

With the quality and safety of agricultural products has become increasingly prominent issue, researches on its security or governance are increasingly rich and deep and each market subject is particularly emphasized on the formation and influence of the quality and safety of agricultural products. Domestic and foreign scholars mainly focus on the management mode of agricultural products quality and safety issues from the perspective of subject behavior, which are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

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**Farmers**

In recent years, domestic and abroad scholars did richer and deeper researches on factors of moral hazard in the production of agricultural products by farmers (Sheriff[1], 2005; Hobbs[2], 2007), policy (Heyder[3], 2009; Wognuma[4], 2011; Zhang Bei[5], 2014), and considered that the farmers can effectively regulate the production behavior of the farmers to control the quality and safety of agricultural products from the source based on their own information superiority of the quality and safety of agricultural products. In addition, the related studies of Pennings (2004)[6], Kuwornu (2009)[7], Schipmann and Qaim (2011)[8] hold that the market contracts and reputation mechanism also play an irreplaceable role in the effective protection of the quality and safety of agricultural products. Huang Zuhui (2012) and other scholars put forward the farmer cooperative organization is essential to the quality and safety governance of agricultural products[9].

**Consumers**

The main focus of foreign researches are based on the condition of asymmetric information and discuss the factors influencing the cognition of consumers on the quality and safety of agricultural product quality safety (Gao, 1993; Caswell and Modjuzuksa, 1996; Marsden and Flynn, 2000) and their impact on consumer behaviors (Stiglitz, 1989; Flynn, 1994; Lin, 2006). Han Qing (2011)[10], Zhou Jiehong (2013)[11] and Liu Ruifeng (2014)[12] in their relevant market researches of Chinese agricultural products find that the changes of Chinese consumers’ awareness of agricultural products quality and safety, consumer attitudes and consumer behaviors are fundamental, and the majority of consumers are willing to pay extra price for higher quality and safety of agricultural products. In addition, strengthening the construction of agricultural product quality and safety certification system and traceable system (Golan, 2004; Liang Jing, 2010) are practically significant for the governance of the quality and safety of agricultural products and changing consumer attitudes.

**Government and Other Third Parties**

The features of agricultural products as public products such as externality, information asymmetry are so obvious that the participation of government and other third parties in making up for the deficiencies of the market mechanism (Turan and Goldsmith, 2005) is critical to govern the problem of quality and safety of agricultural products. The government can urge producers of agricultural products provide true information, reduce moral hazard and adverse selection, reduce information asymmetry, and ultimately improve the quality and safety of agricultural products through regulation, such as sampling detection, display information and social supervision methods (Venturini, 2003; Fares and Rouviere, 2010). In addition, Han Jun (2007) and Broughton and Walker (2010)[13] in their relevant researches consider that the main reason leading to the frequent problems of quality and safety of agricultural products in China is the lag of our government supervision on the problem and the lack of influence of other third parties as a main role in the process.
THE CURRENT SITUATION OF GOVERNANCE IN CHINA

This paper distributes and recovers 4000 questionnaires on farmers and urban consumers of awareness and behavior through field research carried out cross regional nationwide, and the statistical analysis shows that the quality and safety problems of Chinese agricultural products emerge in an endless stream, the cognition of city consumers and farmers on safe agricultural products and their producing process or outputs fuzzy, the supervision and regulation of government made for the problems of agricultural products is not enough, and the third parties’ standards of measure in credibility of quality and safety of agricultural products is relatively low, just as follows:

Farmers

Most farmers in China are relatively lack of awareness of organic agriculture or green agricultural products, and the problems of the excessive use of pesticides in agricultural products, soil and water pollution and so on are serious.

In addition, the farmers do not pay much attention to the problem of controlling the quality and safety of agricultural products in the production process, and lack of the professional technical guidance and training provided by government agricultural sector, agricultural cooperative organizations and universities research institutes, so the information asymmetry problem of controlling the quality and safety of agricultural products is very serious.

Urban Consumers

Firstly, Chinese urban consumers lack of attention to the quality and safety of agricultural products information, and even think that the higher the price, the quality of agricultural products better, more secure, and the cognitive level of the quality inspection standards of safe agricultural products is relatively low.

Secondly, the research shows that urban consumers hold that farmers do not have standardized ability and resources to product agricultural products scientifically and the consumers are not able to identify the quality and safety of agricultural products easily, so they usually will not take the initiative to report the relevant problems.

Government

Firstly, in the production and sales of agricultural products, Chinese relevant government departments fail to reduce the information asymmetry of farmers’ cognition of safe agricultural products, and to provide relevant technical training or guidance services effectively.

Secondly, the behaviors of illegal production, operation and sales do not be punished accordingly, which makes the problem of seeking illegal profits is so serious that Chinese laws and regulations on the quality and safety of agricultural products should be further improved.

Finally, Chinese agricultural products flow into the consumer market via the intermediaries; however, because of the negligence of the circulation and supervision of agricultural products and the imperfect traceable system, the
problems of Chinese quality and safety of agricultural products emerge in an endless stream.

**Other Third Parties Involved in the Subject**

The number of Chinese farmers who have taken part in the local agricultural cooperative organization is limited, and there are many difficulties for farmers to rely on the third parties to obtain the scientific guidance, technical training and testing on the quality of agricultural products, so it is difficult to reach a high level and standard of agricultural products quality.

**EFFECTIVE MODE**

As figure 1 shows, currently protecting the quality and safety of agricultural products requires more than the main common participation and the formation of cooperative governance mechanism, which is the so called four-in-one system, just as follows:

**Farmers**

With the help of the government and third parties, the farmers should take the initiative to accept the scientific guidance and professional training, quality inspection and level certification to stop substandard agricultural products from flowing into the consumer markets. Agricultural production operators need form an effective constraint incentive mechanism through their own constraints and the supervision of third parties.

**Consumers**

In order to ensure the safety and health of their food, consumers should take the initiative to search for certification standards of the quality and safety of agricultural products and clarify the types and labels of safe agricultural products in order to purchase more safe and high quality agricultural products.

**Government**

Chinese government should improve the authority of the relevant departments of the government by organizing and guiding the farmers to participate in the production and processing of agricultural products, and make strict testing and certification of the quality and grading standards of agricultural products. In addition, the relevant government departments should strictly enforce the law and punishment so as to prevent the unqualified agricultural products flowing into markets.
Other Third Parties

By accepting consumers feedback on problems of agricultural products quality and safety, the third parties should timely deal with the problems and maintain the legitimate rights and interests of consumers, and ultimately guarantee the harmful agricultural products no longer exist.

CONCLUSIONS

This research aims at restructuring the quality and safety mechanism of Chinese agricultural products based on the existing roots and problems, and putting forward the cooperative governance mechanism of quality and safety of agricultural products named four-in-one system through involving all the market resources and behaviors in the system so as to provide strong support for the quality and safety of agricultural products and the promotion and construction of agricultural modernization in China.

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REFERENCES


