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# **Acceleration of Rural Environmental Protection Work in a New Era**

The 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to firmly implement the strategy of rural revitalization, adhere to the priority development of agriculture and rural areas, and strengthen the prevention and control of agricultural non-point pollution. The author believes that we should fully understand the urgency and importance of strengthening rural environmental protection, clearly define the focus of rural environmental protection in the context of the strategy of rural rejuvenation, and effectively implement the arrangement of the 19th National Congress on rural ecological and environmental protection.

## **Path and objectives of rural environmental protection**

To do a good job of rural environmental protection in the new era, we should focus on the following aspects:

Take the path of attaching equal importance to urban and rural areas, adjusting measures to local conditions and highlighting features. Adhere to both urban and rural pollution control, and scientifically determine specific targets, priorities, methods and standards of different areas in view of the actual situation in different rural areas. Avoid cutting down trees as much as possible, forbid digging mountains and filling lakes, protect the beautiful scenery and highlight the characteristics of the countryside.

Take ecological livability, waste recycling and farmers' benefit as our task. Insist that green hills and clear waters are gold and silver mines, strengthen rural natural-ecology protection, and carry out village greening and environmental governance. Take rural organic waste utilization as the main way to practice green production and lifestyle, promote farmers to increase incomes and help the strenuous effort to overcome poverty.

Take institutional innovation, mechanism innovation, and science and technology triggered innovation as the driving force. Deepen the rural reform in an all-round way, break down the dual structural and institutional obstacles of urban and rural environmental protection, and establish and improve the institutional mechanisms for rural environmental governance. Give full play to the supportive role of science and technology, and promote the solution of rural environmental problems through technological innovation.

Take government leading, villagers' participation and social support as the guideline. Strengthen government investment and leading responsibilities, and support the construction and operation of rural environmental facilities with public service properties. Adhere to the dominant position of farmers, and encourage and guide farmers to participate in and support rural environmental protection. Cultivate and

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develop market players, and guide and encourage greater investment of non-governmental capital.

**Specifically, we should carry out the following key tasks:**

1. Strengthen environmental protection of drinking water sources in rural areas. Speed up the demarcation of rural drinking water sources and areas. Carry out special law enforcement inspections, eliminate the drain ports in the protected areas of rural concentrated drinking water according to law, and strengthen environmental law enforcement supervision and risk prevention in key industries such as chemicals, paper making, metallurgy and pharmaceuticals and key pollution sources that may affect the environmental safety of rural drinking water sources. Carry out water quality monitoring of rural drinking water according to the "National Rural Environmental Quality Pilot Monitoring Work Program", and timely announce water quality monitoring information. Give priority to the treatment of domestic sewage, domestic waste, livestock and poultry farming and agricultural non-point source caused pollution around rural drinking water sources, and eliminate potential pollution hazards that affect water quality. Formulate emergency plans for environmental incidents in areas for rural drinking water sources, and strengthen the prevention, early warning and emergency treatment of pollution accidents.

2. Continue to promote the comprehensive improvement of rural environment. Further implement the policy of "Promoting Governance by Award", take the surrounding villages of "good water" and "poor water" as the key areas for improvement, focus on domestic waste and sewage treatment, and continually promote the comprehensive improvement of rural environment. Encourage the implementation of combining the "centralized treatment of urban and rural domestic sewage by means of unified planning, unified construction, unified operation and unified management" with the decentralized treatment of rural sewage based on "households, joint households and household groups and villages", promote the classification and utilization of rural garbage, improve the mode of combining the centralized disposal of rural garbage by means of "household classification, village/household-group collection, town/township transportation, and city/county treatment" with the decentralized disposal by means of "household classification, village/household-group collection, and town/township/village in-situ treatment", and promote the establishment of village cleaning system.

3. Strengthen resource utilization and pollution control of livestock and poultry waste. In accordance with the "Action Plan for Water Pollution Prevention and Control" and the "Technical Guide for Demarcation of No Livestock and Poultry Farming Zones", complete the tasks of zoning and controlling forbidden areas on time. Integrate domestic waste, livestock and poultry manure, straw and other organic waste, taking waste-turned resource utilization as the main way to promote pollution prevention and control of livestock and poultry farming across the whole county. Adopt the model of government organizing, corporate leading and farmer participation to promote the establishment of a three-level network system of collecting, transforming and utilizing

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rural organic wastes. Vigorously support standardized reconstruction/building of livestock and poultry scale farms (zones). Strengthen environmental supervision of livestock and poultry farming, strictly implement environmental examination and approval, and gradually include the livestock and poultry farms (zones) with sewage outlets into the sewage permit management; strengthen daily environmental supervision of livestock and poultry farming, and investigate and punish illegal acts.

4. Strictly prevent urban industrial pollution from getting transferred to the countryside. Make strict planning and EIA management of industrial parks and construction projects, resolutely prevent urban pollution from getting transferred to rural areas and resolutely prevent severely polluting enterprises from relocating to western China or backward rural areas. Promote environmental law enforcement to expand from cities to rural areas, unify the law enforcement requirements, strengthen environmental monitoring in rural areas, carry out special law enforcement inspections on the protection of rural centralized drinking water source, the disposal of household waste and sewage, and the control of straw burning as well as pollution caused by livestock and poultry farming. Strictly implement national industrial policies and environmental standards, and shut down and ban a batch of backward "scattered, disorderly and polluting" enterprises.

5. Integrate and regulate all kinds of Beautiful Countryside Construction programs. In view of the comprehensive improvement of the rural environment, integrate rural household waste management, rural cleaning, clean small watershed management, urban and rural environmental sanitation and other actions or projects to comprehensively improve the rural living environment. Integrate all kinds of pilot/demo projects that have already been deployed such as demonstration villages/towns for ecological civilization, beautiful leisure villages/townships and beautiful livable villages/towns, include them into the experimental zone of ecological civilization, and construct the beautiful rural areas in an all-round way according to the national guideline of "Beautiful Village Construction".

### **Suggestions on strengthening rural environmental protection**

For strengthening rural environmental protection in the new era, the author has the following suggestions:

Improve rural environmental policies, regulations and standard systems. Study and formulate land acquisition, electricity pricing and other supportive policies for rural environmental facilities construction. Formulate and improve economic-incentive policies such as those for organic fertilizer production and use, clean planting and farming, production of organic agricultural products and comprehensive utilization of agricultural waste. Through taxation, loans and other fiscal and taxation policies, support the development of rural environmental protection enterprises, and attract non-governmental funds into rural environmental protection. Encourage all localities to formulate rural environmental protection laws and regulations and technical specifications in line with actualities. Develop and improve standards or technical specifications on such areas as aquaculture industry emissions, simple

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disposal/treatment of rural household waste and pollution control of waste incineration and environmental monitoring in rural areas, and guide rural environmental protection work across the countryside.

Straighten out rural environmental protection systems and mechanisms. Clarify the responsibilities of governments at all levels, and promote the regularization and legalization of environmental-protection authority in rural areas. Explore the establishment of a unified management system for rural sewage treatment, and earnestly solve the problem of multi-agency co-management. Local governments at various levels, especially county-level governments, are responsibility principals for improving the rural environmental quality in their respective administrative areas. Do a good job of planning, financial guaranteeing, facilities construction, operation management, supervision and performance-assessment etc, and build an appraisal system with one level supervising the next level. Establish the national and local linkage mechanism, and timely master and communicate environmental protection in rural areas to ensure that rural outstanding environmental problems are solved timely and effectively. Establish the inter-departmental linkage mechanism, integrate resources and form synergy. In accordance with the requirements of Suggestions on Strengthening the Operation and Management of Rural Environmental Infrastructure by Awarding, pay close attention to the establishment of a long-term mechanism for the management and care of rural environmental facilities to ensure that each one built can be operated effectively.

Establish a diversified rural environmental investment mechanism. Clarify the responsibility of investment by governments at all levels, and promote the establishment of a system for investment in rural environmental protection facilities with clear authority, agreement of power with responsibility, support by the central government, provincial planning, and county-level responsibility to carry out the plans. For rural sewage and garbage treatment and other infrastructure that has certain benefits, construction funds mainly come from the government and non-governmental capital, and farmers can be earnestly guided in its investment. Support local governments to take rural environmental protection relevant planning as the basis, and integrate funds from different channels but with similar construction contents to form synergy. Give play to the guidance and leverage of government investment, and adopt various methods such as direct investment, investment subsidy, and after-construction subsidy to support the construction of rural environmental protection facilities. Through the mode of cooperation of the government with non-governmental capital, support the overall packaging of rural environmental protection facilities projects, enhance the profitability and cultivate the main body of rural environmental protection market. Respect the dominant position of farmers and give full play to their role in decision making, investment, construction, management and protection of rural environmental protection facilities. Explore the establishment of the rural household payment system for sewage and garbage disposal.

Develop and promote a batch of rural environmental-protection and practical technologies. Set up the rural environmental protection practical technology and equipment research and development content, and conduct area-specific and

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type-specific research in key R & D programs organized by national agencies. Carry out the assessment of practical technologies for comprehensive improvement of the rural environment, summarize, form through screening and integrate a number of rural environmental pollution control technologies that are suitable for different regional characteristics, formulate and release technical catalogs, and increase the promotion of mature technology models and successful experience. Adopt ecological technologies such as ecological ditches and artificial wetlands in line with local conditions in rural drinking water sources, nature reserves and other environmentally sensitive areas. Set up an expert team for rural environmental protection and practical technical services to strengthen the technical guidance of rural environmental protection in the county and the township. Improve farmers' environmental awareness and technical skills by such means as training and thematic publicity films broadcasting.

Accelerate the establishment of a unified environmental supervision system in urban and rural areas. Explore and gradually improve the rural environmental supervision system of "governance by villagers and supervision by the county/township ". Drawing on the effective practice of "one discussion for one thing", encourage the establishment of the system for farmers to select, construct, use and manage some environmental protection facilities, encourage farmers to invest with labor, and fully mobilize the enthusiasm of farmers to build beautiful homes. Further strengthen the monitoring and law enforcement power for the grass-roots environment in combination with the reform of vertical management system for monitoring and law enforcement by environmental protection agencies below the provincial level, further strengthen the environmental supervision and law enforcement at the grass-roots level, establish and improve an environmental law enforcement mechanism with downward movement of the focus, law enforcing and good-environment guaranteeing. Strengthen the co-ordination of law enforcement in urban and rural areas, strengthen the construction of grassroots-level environmental law enforcement systems, sufficiently staff the law-enforcement team and ensure the covering of the work costs in towns and industrial areas that have the conditions. Develop rural environmental monitoring technology route, and speed up the establishment of the rural environmental monitoring network and information release system.