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Promoting sustainable development in pastoral areas by innovating institutions of economic organizations

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Key words: pastoral areas, cooperation, institutional innovation, sustainable development, Inner Mongolia

Introduction Household Production Responsibility System (HPRS), which was initiated at the beginning of 1980s, has brought great impacts on grassland ecology, herders' livelihood and Mongolian traditional culture. Confronted with the challenges of grassland degradation, population explosion, frequent disasters, market competition and decline of traditional culture, government and herders are trying to find solutions by establishing herders' cooperation to achieve sustainable development.

Materials and methods The data are coming from field study in six villages, covering topics on cooperation, grassland degradation and its reasons, and change of pastoral population. Moreover, statistical data on cooperation and other related regulations and policies are also analyzed in this article.

Results Since the first cooperation was established in Xilingol Prefecture in the year of 2000, there are 263 cooperations in Inner Mongolia now, including 16,024 households and 35,823 persons, which account for 9.9% and 6.1% of the total number of Inner Mongolia respectively. There are different reasons for establishing cooperation, such as facilitating projects implementation and government support and achieving high efficient management through cooperation. However, there are some herders who look on it and then decide if they join in the cooperation. Seeing from the kinds of business, most cooperations are depending on production and marketing with little profit, which are managed according to herders' shares of livestock, grassland and funds and under the guidance of some elite. The trend of cooperation development is united marketing—united production—united processing.

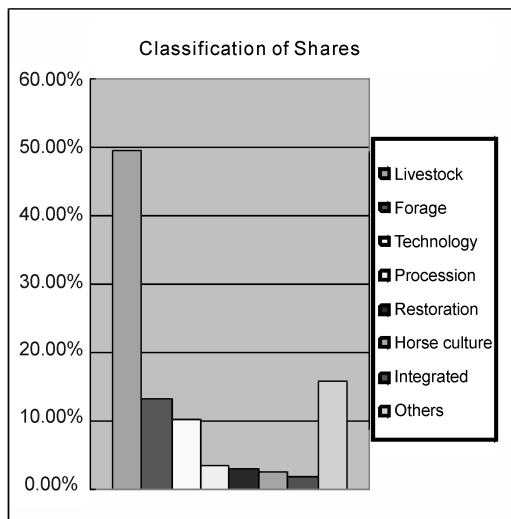


Figure 1 Classification of cooperation Business

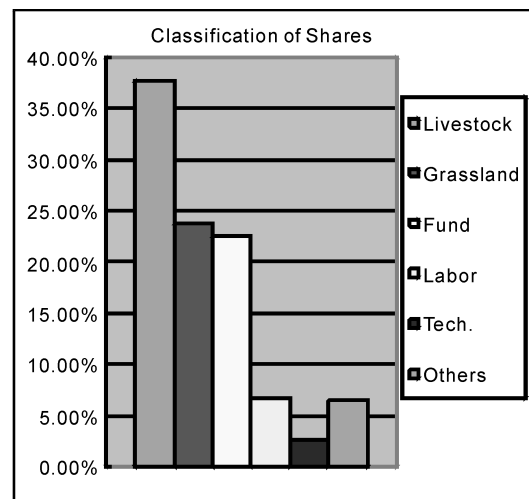


Figure 2 Classification of cooperation shares

Conclusion Even though herders' cooperation is comparatively new and having many problems, it has played important roles in co-managing grassland resources, dividing work and cooperating, decreasing productive cost, connecting herders and market, protecting herders' rights, transmitting culture and establishing harmony society. It should be supported by government continuously to achieve further success.