

Preface

Modernization is the process of transition from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society. The indigenous population of rural areas- poor agricultural workers - present particular difficulties for the complex processes of modernization.

These difficulties can affect the development path and smoothness of the transformation to modernization. In different countries and regions of the world there is a close relation between the paths to modernization and the chosen solutions of the problem of rural areas and peasant population.

China has a long history of agricultural civilization but is now in the process of transforming itself into a modern industrial state. At present, China's rural reform and development has reached a crucial stage, namely the integration of radically different urban and rural societies, and the construction of a new socialist countryside.

The main problem is how to provide inclusive rather than exclusive political, economic and social systems during the transformation of the traditional rural society. We must ensure that rural communities have the opportunity and ability to learn and ultimately gain a successful transition to groups of citizens who can develop within a modern state.

Confronted with such difficult problems, every country or region will face or has already faced the significant impact of modernization process, a process that can cause social tensions and require adaptations.

Although there are so many differences between societies, histories, cultures and political and economic situations, ultimately it is crucial for each country or region to best decide how to connect its older, traditional rural systems to the modern world. A successful transition will exert a tremendous influence on the future of a country.

A successful modernization will be closely related to the well-managed development of the rural population. In the light of such demands our institute has decided to hold this forum where high-level academic studies of rural populations and change can be exchanged regularly. We seek to strengthen dialogue and debate among worldwide experts and scholars from developing and developed countries.

For this purpose, The Institute for China Rural Studies of Central China Normal University has established the Overseas Rural Studies Centre as the agency of the International Forum on Studies of Rural Areas and Peasant Populations.