

# Research on Improving the Rural Land Management System and Empowering the Rational Use of Land Resources

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**Abstract:** Land resources constitute a vital foundation for socioeconomic development, and their rational development and efficient utilization are crucial for achieving sustainable development. A sound rural land management system can effectively address current issues of resource constraints and wastage, promote rational land use, and provide institutional support for implementing the rural revitalization strategy. Based on this, the article examines the importance of improving rural land management systems for rational land resource utilization, systematically analyzes existing operational challenges, and proposes practical approaches to enhance these systems. The study aims to offer theoretical references and practical guidance for advancing market-oriented allocation of rural land resources, safeguarding farmers' land rights, and facilitating comprehensive rural revitalization.

**Keywords:** Rural land management; Management system; Land resources; Rational utilization

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## 1. Introduction

As China's rural revitalization strategy advances, rural socio-economic development has entered a new phase, placing higher demands on the efficient and rational use of land resources. Research indicates that any irrational land use practices may negatively impact the ecological environment, degrade land quality, and even threaten human survival and development<sup>[1]</sup>. In recent years, the country has continued to reform rural land systems, with the implementation of the "three rights" separation system providing an institutional breakthrough for rational land use. However, there remains room for improvement in refining institutional implementation and adapting to local realities. Against this backdrop, exploring how to strengthen rural land management systems and transform land resources from "inefficient utilization" to "efficient and rational use" has become a key research focus in rural economic studies.

## **2. Overview of the rural land management system**

The rural land management system is a regulatory framework established by the state to standardize and regulate socio-economic activities related to rural land property rights, circulation and transactions, use control, and income distribution, based on the attributes of rural land resources and the needs of rural development. It aims to achieve multiple objectives, including the rational utilization of land resources, the protection of farmers' land rights, national food security, and rural development. This system not only relies on public authority to ensure the realization of the public nature of land and national strategic goals but also stimulates the vitality of land factors through judicial means, such as clarifying property boundaries and standardizing transaction rules. It primarily focuses on three dimensions: resource allocation, risk prevention, and rights protection. Specifically, the system guides the concentration of land factors in efficient sectors by clarifying property rights and standardizing circulation, prevents risks in farmland utilization through use control to ensure food and ecological security, and safeguards farmers' core rights through a sound registration and distribution mechanism, thereby laying a solid institutional foundation for rural development and social stability. China's rural land management system has undergone multiple rounds of reform and evolution, gradually forming an institutional form that aligns with China's national conditions and the stage of rural development. The current system is based on the "Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China" as its core legal basis, establishing a rule system that covers key aspects such as land contracting, circulation, and protection. Through institutional norms and guidance, it coordinates the relationship between land resource protection and development, promotes the orderly flow and efficient allocation of land factors, and thereby lays a solid institutional foundation for rural industrial upgrading, farmers' income growth, and the sustainable development of rural economy and society.

## **3. The importance of improving the rural land management system for the rational utilization of land resources**

- (1) Clarify the boundary of property rights and consolidate the right basis of rational utilization of land resources

The core value of improving the rural land management system lies in establishing a standardized property rights definition and registration mechanisms. This framework clarifies the boundaries between collective ownership, household contracting rights, and land management rights, eliminating resource utilization barriers caused by ambiguous ownership and overlapping responsibilities. Clear property rights delineation defines the scope of rights and obligations for land users, ensuring regulated behavior and preventing disorderly occupation or inefficient use due to unclear entitlements. Simultaneously, transparent property rights create prerequisites for orderly land resource circulation, reducing information asymmetry and dispute risks in transactions while enhancing users' stable expectations for land operations. This guides proactive utilization aligned with local resource endowments and market demands. Furthermore, refining property rights systems strengthens stakeholders' awareness of rights protection, encouraging them to balance short-term gains with long-term conservation and sustainable use of land resources. By addressing rights at their root, this approach establishes institutional safeguards for rational land resource utilization.

- (2) Optimize the allocation of factors and improve the efficiency of land resource utilization

A sound rural land management system can break down institutional barriers to land resource mobility by establishing standardized land transfer mechanisms and market-oriented allocation rules. This

facilitates the concentration of land resources from inefficient to efficient utilization sectors, enabling optimal integration with other production factors such as labor, capital, and technology. A well-designed land management framework clarifies transaction procedures, rights and obligations, and regulatory standards for land transfers, reducing transaction costs and risks while invigorating the land transfer market. This promotes the concentration of land resources in entities with strong operational capabilities and high utilization efficiency, fostering the development of large-scale, intensive business models. Simultaneously, institutional guidance ensures land use aligns with regional industrial development plans and resource endowment conditions, preventing wasteful practices caused by blind development or disorderly allocation. By optimizing the allocation pattern of land resources, a robust management system fully taps into the productive potential of land, enhances comprehensive land use benefits, and drives the transition from “fragmented and inefficient” to “centralized and efficient” land utilization, ultimately maximizing the value of land resources.

#### **4. Problems in the current rural land management system**

- (1) Insufficient refinement of the property rights definition, obstruction in the exercise and protection of rights

While the current rural land property rights system has established the core framework of the “three rights” separation, significant gaps persist in defining responsibilities and rights at the operational level, creating multiple obstacles in exercising and safeguarding institutional rights. Specifically, the entities exercising collective ownership, decision-making procedures, and oversight mechanisms remain unclear. In some regions, irregularities in collective land rights disposal procedures and missing stakeholders hinder the full utilization of collective members’ collective influence. The boundaries of farmers’ contractual rights lack clarity<sup>[2]</sup>, leaving them without clear institutional support when asserting rights during critical phases like land transfers and expropriation compensation, resulting in insufficient targeted and effective rights protection. Supporting regulations for land management rights transfer filing and rights protection remain inadequate, with core rights such as investment income rights and risk protection rights lacking sufficient institutional backing. These systemic deficiencies not only reduce the overall operational efficiency of property rights systems but also constrain the rational utilization of land resources at the foundational level of rights.

- (2) The transfer mechanism is not standardized, and the efficiency of factor allocation is limited

The standardization of rural land transfer mechanisms remains inadequate to meet the practical needs of optimal land resource allocation. Numerous institutional shortcomings directly hinder improvements in transfer efficiency and quality. The land transfer market’s service system is still underdeveloped, lacking unified mechanisms for standardized information disclosure, price evaluation, and dispute mediation. This results in significant information asymmetry between transfer parties, substantially increasing transaction costs and potential risks. Furthermore, the low standardization of transfer contracts—some containing ambiguous clauses and unclear rights and responsibilities—poses hidden dangers for future land rights disputes. Meanwhile, the market-oriented guidance mechanism for land transfers is insufficient, with unclear boundaries between administrative intervention and market regulation, failing to fully leverage the market’s decisive role in land resource allocation. These issues have led to fragmented and short-term land transfers in some regions, hindering the establishment and consolidation

of large-scale, intensive operational models.

(3) Insufficient enforcement of use control and weak regulatory coordination mechanisms

The rural land use control system faces challenges in practical implementation, particularly due to insufficient regulatory rigidity and weak supporting supervision mechanisms. These deficiencies further undermine the system's overall effectiveness. In some regions, enforcement standards for farmland protection and land use conversion remain lax, while investigations and corrections for non-grain cultivation and non-agricultural land use are often delayed or incomplete, failing to effectively safeguard land use safety. A dynamic monitoring system for land use control has yet to be fully established, with inadequate coverage of the entire process and limited application of technical monitoring tools, hindering early detection and intervention of violations. Additionally, coordination among regulatory departments remains inadequate, with overlapping responsibilities or poor communication between land resources, agriculture, and rural revitalization authorities, resulting in fragmented oversight efforts. These systemic shortcomings in supervision and collaboration undermine the regulatory constraints of the land use control system, further impeding the rational utilization of land resources.

## 5. Practical path of improving the rural land management system

(1) Refine the rules of property right definition and improve the system of rights protection

To address the insufficient refinement of rural land property rights definition, optimizing the rural land management system requires taking the “three rights” separation as the core, further clarifying the responsibility boundaries and exercise rules of various rights holders, and establishing a comprehensive institutional framework covering rights definition, registration, exercise, and protection. At the collective ownership level, relevant authorities should define the statutory rights and responsibilities of collective economic organizations as the main entities exercising ownership, refine decision-making processes for key aspects such as collective land planning formulation, rights disposal, and income distribution, and establish a dual-level supervision mechanism composed of a representative assembly of collective members and a supervisory board. Through standardized public disclosure systems and diversified participation channels, the will of collective members should be fully reflected, preventing potential issues such as absent entities, procedural irregularities, and power abuse during ownership exercise at the institutional level. At the household contract right level, relevant departments need to precisely distinguish the core rights boundaries of possession, use, income, and transfer included in contract rights, and determine the basis and implementation pathways for rights claims in key scenarios such as land transfer filing, expropriation compensation standards, and mortgage guarantee restrictions<sup>[3]</sup>. Meanwhile, improving the verification and dynamic update mechanisms after the confirmation, registration, and certification of contracted land rights, strengthening the stability, exclusivity, and security level of contract rights, and alleviating farmers' concerns when disposing of land rights<sup>[4]</sup>. Furthermore, a comprehensive digitalization initiative for rural land property rights registration should be implemented. This involves consolidating property rights data from land administration, agriculture, and other relevant departments to establish a unified, interconnected national platform. The platform will enable precise aggregation, real-time sharing, and easy access to property rights information. It will provide technical support for efficient rights exercise by all stakeholders and precise regulatory oversight by relevant authorities, thereby addressing systemic bottlenecks in property rights enforcement and safeguarding the

legal foundation for rational land resource utilization.

(2) Standardize the land transfer mechanism and improve the efficiency of factor allocation

To address the insufficient standardization of land transfer mechanisms, it is essential to establish a market-oriented, standardized, and efficient rural land transfer system. In developing the service framework, relevant authorities should accelerate the establishment of comprehensive land transfer service platforms at the county, township, and village levels. These platforms must integrate end-to-end services, including information aggregation and dissemination, price evaluation, contract execution, registration procedures, dispute resolution, and policy consultation. They should also clarify the public welfare nature and operational standards of these platforms, staff them with professional personnel, and enhance service standardization and accessibility. This will effectively alleviate information asymmetry between transfer parties and reduce transaction costs. Regarding the improvement of transfer rules, authorities should prioritize standardizing land transfer contracts.

To address different land transfer models, including subcontracting, leasing, assignment, and equity participation, differentiated model contracts should be developed. These contracts must clearly define key terms such as transfer duration, rights and obligations of both parties, profit distribution mechanisms, risk-sharing arrangements, and contract termination conditions. Additionally, detailed standards for identifying and handling breach of contract liabilities should be established, along with standardized procedures for contract signing, filing, and performance tracking <sup>[5]</sup>, thereby reducing potential land transfer disputes at the source. In terms of market-oriented optimization, it is essential to strictly delineate the boundaries between administrative intervention and market regulation. This involves minimizing unreasonable government interference in land transfer pricing and participant selection, while fully leveraging the market's decisive role in land resource allocation. By implementing a dynamic monitoring and public disclosure mechanism for transfer prices, both parties can form reasonable price expectations <sup>[6]</sup>, ultimately directing land resources toward entities with strong operational capabilities, high alignment with industrial development needs, and efficient resource utilization.

(3) Strengthen the rigidity of use control and improve the coordination mechanism of supervision

To enhance the practical effectiveness of rural land use control systems, the key lies in establishing a comprehensive, multi-tiered, and highly efficient regulatory framework. In terms of enforcing strict implementation, relevant authorities must rigorously adhere to the strategic priority of farmland protection, clearly delineate the rigid boundaries between farmland and permanent basic farmland, refine prohibitive lists and restrictive regulations related to “non-grain use” and “non-agricultural use”, and develop differentiated penalty measures. For violations such as unauthorized occupation of farmland or arbitrary changes in land use, a “zero-tolerance” approach must be maintained, with intensified efforts to identify and rectify violations, increase the cost of illegal activities, and ensure the effective implementation of land use control rules. Simultaneously, standardized approval procedures for land use conversion should be established, specifying specific conditions, operational procedures, and approval authorities for different types of land. Strengthening substantive reviews during the approval process will help curb unauthorized land use conversions at the source. Regarding collaborative mechanisms, it is essential to improve interdepartmental supervision coordination, clarify the regulatory responsibilities and division of labor among departments such as territorial spatial planning, agriculture and rural affairs, rural revitalization, and ecological environment, and address overlapping responsibilities and regulatory gaps. On this basis, efforts should be intensified to promote and interpret land use control policies,

enhance compliance awareness and responsibility among land users, guide them to actively follow land use plans, foster a societal atmosphere of collective land resource protection, and fortify the security barrier for rational land resource utilization.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the effectiveness of rural land management systems directly determines the efficiency of land resource utilization and serves as the core institutional foundation for implementing the rural revitalization strategy. By refining property rights definition rules, standardizing land transfer mechanisms, and strengthening the rigidity of land use controls, we can effectively improve rural land management systems and promote rational land use. Moving forward, relevant authorities should further address the dynamic adaptability issues in system implementation, explore the deep integration of digital tools in enforcement and supervision, and provide more targeted theoretical and practical support for the continuous optimization of rural land management systems.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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