

# Research on the Administrative Efficiency of Township Cadres — Taking the Protection of Basic Farmland in X Town as an Example

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**Abstract:** The key subject of grassroots policy implementation is township cadres, whose administrative efficiency can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of national governance. In the process of implementing the basic farmland protection policy, various factors combined with personal motives such as risk aversion and interest balance will have an effect on the performance of duties of township cadres, such as avoiding the contradictions of people's livelihood and selectively performing tasks, leading to deviation in policy implementation and tension between cadres and the masses, such as avoiding contradictions related to people's livelihood and selectively executing tasks, resulting in deviations in policy implementation and tension between cadres and the masses. Based on the theory of power-responsibility relationship, taking X Town as an example, this paper uses the methods of literature analysis and in-depth interviews to explore the influencing factors and correction path of the performance effect of township cadres.

**Keywords:** Township cadres; Administrative efficiency; Basic farmland protection

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee showed that, in terms of the national governance system and governance capacity building, the grass-roots government is the cornerstone of national governance and the fundamental project to achieve the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, and grass-roots governance is the most dynamic in the field of national governance. It is the closest to the masses and the deepest integration into life. It is the “face-to-face” governance with the broad participation of the masses. The key executors of the basic farmland protection policy are township cadres. The implementation of this policy can ensure the food production capacity, so as to make the “Chinese rice bowl” more secure, curb the “non-agricultural” and “non-grain” of cultivated land, maintain the ecological balance, promote the

intensive development of agriculture, and promote the revitalization of rural areas. This paper aims to study the administrative efficiency of township cadres in the protection of basic farmland, and put forward countermeasures and feasible suggestions to solve the problem.

## **1.2. Literature review**

### **1.2.1. Definition of administrative efficiency**

With regard to the quantification of local government efficiency, the research group of “China’s local government efficiency research”, composed of experts from Beijing Normal University and Jiangxi Normal University, will issue the “China’s local government efficiency research report” every year from 2010 to 2019. The impact factors include four categories: government public services, government size, government openness, and residents’ economic welfare. The standardized value of local government efficiency in 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in China is calculated <sup>[1]</sup>. Government efficiency was originally called administrative efficiency, which originated from Wilson’s famous work “Research on Administration” in 1887. It pointed out that “the purpose of research on administration is how the government performs its duties efficiently.” It was first defined that administrative efficiency is to achieve the highest efficiency at the lowest cost <sup>[2]</sup>. Hindy (2007) believes that efficiency is the maximization of the ratio of output to input or the ratio of results to resources, which is the only standard for evaluating administrative performance in the classical period <sup>[3]</sup>. Chenxiaoling and Lixiaoqing (2013) elaborated that government efficiency is manifested in the benefits and effects of the government in providing public services to the public, effectively eliminating market failures, promoting sustainable economic development, and maintaining social equity <sup>[4]</sup>.

### **1.2.2. Measures to improve the performance efficiency of township cadres**

Establish and improve the fault tolerance and error correction system, and encourage cadres to be bold in innovation and responsibility. People should strengthen the exchange of cadres in rotation, education and training, broaden the vision of cadres, and improve their professional quality and innovation ability <sup>[5]</sup>. To promote the development of China’s agricultural economy, the relevant governments should improve their efficiency. To do this, first of all, people should improve the relevant management system, pay attention to the cultivation and improvement of the comprehensive quality of the relevant management personnel <sup>[6]</sup>. Only by establishing a strong concept of efficiency can people attach importance to and try to improve efficiency, and there can be a situation of vitality and vigor in work. People must make the administrative staff continue to establish the concept of efficiency and improve work efficiency through training <sup>[7]</sup>. The essence of service-oriented government is “social standard, citizen standard.” As the personnel who exercise the state administrative power and perform the state public affairs, civil servants are also the image spokespersons of the government. Whether their quality and ability are good or not is closely related to the quality of the government’s public service supply, and also directly affects the government’s credibility <sup>[8]</sup>. In essence, administration is still inseparable from people, and there is no administration without people. Therefore, the most important thing to improve the efficiency of administration is to improve the quality of staff, that is, to establish a high-quality and excellent administrative management talent team <sup>[9]</sup>. The fundamental way to solve the problem of government efficiency is to effectively improve the government’s execution and credibility <sup>[10]</sup>.

## 2. Analysis of the administrative efficiency of township cadres in basic farmland protection in X Town: Content analysis of interviews with township cadres in X Town

In order to deeply analyze the administrative efficiency of township cadres in the implementation of basic farmland protection policy, unstructured interviews were conducted with two township cadres in different positions in X Town to explore their work difficulties and needs from multiple perspectives. Before the interview, an interview outline was formulated around key issues such as policy implementation cognition, resource allocation, rights and responsibilities, and assessment pressure to ensure that the content of the interview was comprehensive and focused on research topics. The main contents of the interview are shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Interview content

Respondent number	Position	Interview content
1	Office director	The main content of the interview was the conflict between the policy and people's livelihood in the implementation of the policy.
2	Head of the law enforcement department	The interview mainly focused on unreasonable assessment pressure.

## 3. Research on influencing factors of administrative efficiency of township cadres in X Town

### 3.1. Complex administrative process

The administrative process in the basic farmland protection policy is complex and lengthy, which is easy to affect the effect of performing duties. When the basic farmland has been changed for use, illegally occupied, and other violations, township cadres need to deal with it. According to laws and regulations, the masses are required to hand in a number of necessary materials, such as land ownership certificates, agricultural production planning, and so on, and the authenticity and compliance of the materials are verified. However, the verification work involves multiple departments and needs to be approved by different levels of government. The short time the materials are submitted for approval is weeks or months, and the poor information communication between departments and the existence of information islands will also make the process repeated, ultimately affecting the administrative efficiency.

### 3.2. The diverse demands of the masses

In the protection of basic farmland, the diversified demands of the masses are often placed in front of the work of township cadres. With the improvement of the awareness of protecting the rights of the masses, demands for the protection of basic farmland are increasing, including illegal land occupation reports, land ownership disputes, and other issues. However, the demands of the masses are numerous and complex, and the township cadres are unable to take care of everything due to the constraints of human resources, time, and other resources.

### 3.3. Imbalance of rights and responsibilities

The “administrative contract awarding system” essentially belongs to an organization type of intermediate form, which is a mixture of bureaucracy and outsourcing<sup>[10]</sup>. China is a unitary country. The current administrative system is the system of the combination of Parliament and administration under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Horizontally, the highest organ of state power is the National People's Congress, and the Communist Party of China is the core of leadership of the Chinese government. All functional departments of

the government are in charge of social affairs and perform their respective duties. Vertically, the power of policy-making lies in the central government, and local governments exercise decision-making power according to the guidance of the central government and the policies and legal procedures formulated by the central government.

### **3.4. Financial power and administrative power do not match**

In China, the basic pattern of administrative power is formed by the joint management of governments at all levels under the institutional framework, and the administrative power of local governments is the refinement and expansion of the power of higher-level governments. As the most grass-roots organization of the national governance system, township cadres are the subject of specific policy implementation and the service subject directly facing the masses, so they have heavy responsibilities and busy work. Township governments' financial power is reduced, their powers are expanded, and there are fewer resources and more affairs. However, the sinking of affairs has led to the downward shift of responsibility, while resources and power have not been correspondingly empowered. Grass-roots cadres are at the end of the pressure-type system chain, and the power is limited and responsible behavior.

The protection of basic farmland is a red line and a hard indicator. The responsibilities undertaken at the township level tend to expand, but on the contrary, they are not given corresponding powers. The county-level government has complete powers, while the administrative law enforcement functions and powers at the township level are not sufficient <sup>[11]</sup>.

## **4. Corrective measures for township cadres' evasion behavior**

### **4.1. Improving the incentive mechanism for township cadres**

People should improve the performance appraisal mechanism with the results of basic farmland protection as the core, take the data of cultivated land ownership and illegal land use rectification rate as the evaluation criteria, and form the evaluation criteria with local characteristics in combination with the people's satisfaction with the protection of basic farmland and the topography and geomorphology of local basic farmland distribution; A special incentive fund for the protection of basic farmland at the provincial, municipal and county levels should be established to give material rewards such as bonuses and subsidies to township cadres who have made outstanding performance in the protection of basic farmland.

### **4.2. Strengthen the training of township cadres and improve their comprehensive ability**

The township cadres should strengthen their understanding of relevant laws and regulations. Combined with the typical cases of basic farmland protection in recent years, the common misunderstandings and key points in policy implementation should be analyzed. By simulating the disposal process of cases of illegal occupation of cultivated land, the township cadres should grasp the whole process from on-site evidence collection, document delivery, case filing and investigation to judicial transfer; Regularly carry out policy update training, timely convey the latest requirements of the central government on the regulation of "non-agricultural" and "non grain" cultivated land, help cadres accurately grasp the work scale, and prevent anomie and shirking responsibility due to insufficient understanding of the policy.

### **4.3. Optimize the assessment scheme for township cadres**

Officials will improve the multidimensional evaluation system for township cadres, include indicators such as

people's satisfaction, the success rate of conflict mediation, and the coverage of policy publicity into the core assessment category, build a satisfaction survey platform combining online and offline, and quantify people's satisfaction with the implementation of policies and cadre services through regular anonymous questionnaires and household interviews; Improve the accounts of contradictions and disputes, and dynamically track the mediation efficiency and success rate of land ownership disputes and complaints about illegal land use.

## 5. Conclusion

Research has shown that the administrative efficiency of township cadres will ultimately be affected by various reasons. In the new stage of grass-roots governance modernization, we need to constantly improve the assessment, responsibility, incentive, and other systems according to the actual situation of grass-roots governance in China, so as to better safeguard the interests of the people, shape a good government image, and further build a service-oriented government.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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