

Transformation of Agriculture in Post WTO Era: Case Study of Taiwan's Rice Industry

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ABSTRACT

Along with the expansion of multilateralism, every country sought to widen the market and so did Taiwan. Taiwan acceded to World Trade Organization (WTO) since 2002 even if the anticipation of agriculture was pessimistic due to high per capita cost and low per annum output. In 2003, Taipei city was under the trepidation of Rice Bombs Incident, which was for the purpose of protesting the government about joining the WTO without taking care of vulnerable rice industry. The incident attracted researcher's attention and made this study came true. The main purpose of the research is to use corporatism theory to analyze transformation model for the rice industry in the post WTO era and investigating its pros and cons.

The researcher selected three rice industry transformation cases and conducted nine semi-structure interviews in Miaoli County during summer of 2015. This study tried to identify the impact of WTO on rice industry by using the two types of corporatism proposed by Schmitter: state and societal corporatism. While the former explores the top-down agricultural policy making, the latter investigates bottom-up grassroots transformation. The research produces three findings: 1) the transformation cases tended to be related to agritourism; 2) the advantage of middle player in coordinating transformation; 3) both state corporatism and societal corporatism are necessary for successful transformation. In sum, the WTO was the turning point for rice industry in Taiwan, even though it truly brought some negative impact. With the creative method and cross-sector collaboration, the rice industry could be diverted to a new path which will lead to bright prosperity.

Keywords: WTO, rice industry, agriculture transformation, state corporatism, societal corporatism