

# Research on the Development of China “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” Mode

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The realization of agricultural modernization, the solving of the “three rural” issue as well as the increment of farmers’ income is one of China’s top priority. Thus, under the support and encouragement of government’s relevant policies, China has introduced the “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” which is a new mode for the supply of agricultural products. This is an innovative of agricultural products circulation mode, and the comprehensive promotion will help supermarkets get cheap goods directly from the hands of farmers, thus forming price competitiveness; farmers can also get profits and subsidies from supermarkets which can eliminate middlemen’s profit, thus increasing their revenue; consumers can both get a guarantee of food safety and save expenses, and the win-win situation for the supermarkets, farmers, and consumers will be achieved. However, the dilemma between “farmers having difficulty in selling” and “supermarkets having difficulty in buying” is still frequent. So in this thesis, through theoretical research and situation analysis, each relevant part of the “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode will be studied as a whole. Moreover, effectiveness will be evaluated and relevant problems will be identified. Then, based on foreign experience and our national conditions, new modes and advice will be provided for users in different circumstances.

Key Words : Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase, Docking Mode, Farmers, Supermarkets, Farmer’s Professional Cooperatives, Agricultural Products

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## I. Introduction

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On December 2008, the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture jointly issued “notice on carrying out the pilot work of “supermarket-farmer direct purchase”, beginning to arrange the pilot work of Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase. Because that 11 provinces (cities, districts) such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong have carried out “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” model. The supply chain of the Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase can solve the docking problem of farmers planting and sale. Furthermore, it can reduce intermediate links, having reduced the price of agricultural products in the market. It also achieved the efficient convergence of small farmers and big markets, and then it has increased the farmers’ income (Hu, et al., 2004).

Therefore, in 2009, the scope has been expanded to 17 provinces to support the direct purchase between large chain supermarket and Farmer’s professional cooperatives in origins with fresh agricultural products; in 2010, the Ministry of Commerce further expanded the pilot scope of Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase to support the establishment of closer and stable relationship between substantial large chain supermarkets and circulation of agricultural enterprises as well as agricultural bases, promoting the development of “contract farming”; in 2011, during the “two sessions” period, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture jointly issued the “Guidance of comprehensively promoting the ‘supermarket-farmer direct purchase’ work by Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture”, fully deploying the “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” work; At the beginning of 2012, in the Central One document, the State Council again takes “focusing on rural work, developing agricultural production stably, and ensuring the effective supply of agricultural products” as the top priority of the government’s work; at the beginning of 2013, in the central document, that “encouraging and supporting contract land to transfer to professional investors, family farms and farmers’ professional cooperatives” has been further promoted. The Central Document No. 10 has focused on “Three Rural” issue for 10 years consecutively, and its main purpose is to ensure and increase farmers’ income. From the issuing of these series of documents, it can be seen that the government focuses on “Three Rural Issues” very much.

Under the government’s such strong support, the ratio of China’s agricultural products through supermarket sales is only about 15% and this mode has been widely adopted in developed countries. For example, in the United States, the proportion has reached to 80%. Moreover, with the development and deepening of the market economy, the production method of family running agricultural production has become more difficult to adapt to changes in the market economy, that is, the docking problem of “small producers” and “big

market” is becoming increasingly prominent. Therefore, many scholars are trying to find a “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode suitable to Chinese development, but the effect is not obvious. Some articles have field survey on “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode, yet lacking theoretical support.

Therefore, first of all, this thesis seeks to grasp each main part of the current Chinese “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode on the basis of the systematic theory and status analysis. it evaluate their effectiveness and identifies problems. Finally, it proposes new modes and solutions to facilitate the users in different circumstances according to combination of the experience of foreign countries and china's national conditions.

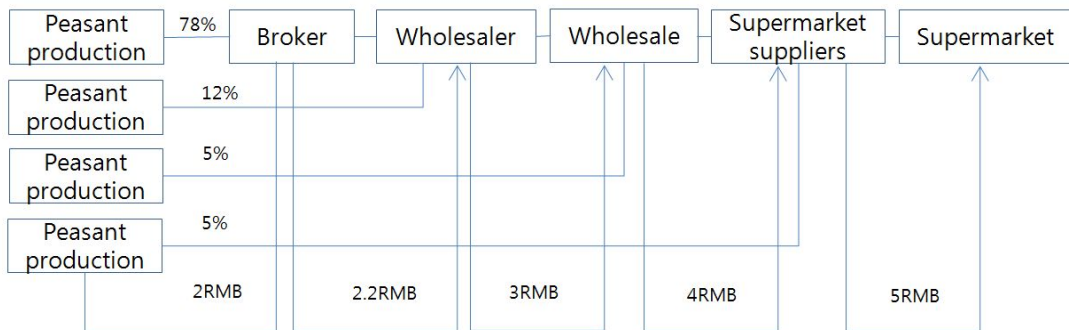
## II. Development trends and management status of corporate social responsibility in Beijing retail industry

Hua(2010) insists that Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase refers to the intent agreement signed by farmers and businesses, a new circulation means of agricultural products provided by the farmers to supermarkets, convenience stores and markets. The “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” is a new mode appearing with the continuous development of agricultural market. It constructed the production and marketing docking under the market economy system, thus reducing circulation and improving the new chain of circulation efficiency.

2.1. Supermarket–Farmer Direct Purchase mode has the following characteristics

(1) It has broken the old “norm”, having “seamless joint” of urban and rural markets, and supporting circulation of agricultural products, which has both promoted farmers’ income and enriched people’s food basket.

(2) It has shortened the traditional transport circulation, reducing the circulation cost of agricultural product. Before “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” is applied, the agricultural products bought by supermarkets need to go through the following subjects: rural brokers, original agricultural products’ wholesale markets, consumption place’s wholesale markets, as well as supermarket suppliers of agricultural products, as in Figure 1 and 2.

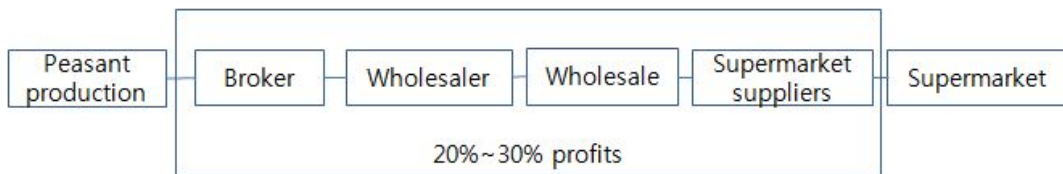


〈Figure 1〉 value chain of farmers selling their tomatoes to the supermarkets



〈Figure 2〉 time for tomatoes being picked up to going into the supermarkets

After the “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” procurement mode is applied, supermarkets can have direct procurement of agricultural products from farmers’ professional cooperatives, thus saving an average of 20% - 30% of the purchase cost, which has benefited the consumers, as in Figure 3.



〈Figure 3〉 distribution mode of profitability for supermarket-farmer direct purchase

(3) It can improve the quality of agricultural products. The “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” refers to that products are provided directly from production bases to the supermarkets, and by identifying and recording, it can have the complete course tracking to the historical periods, applied situation and places of agricultural cultivation, harvesting, transportation, processing, delivery and other aspects. If there are agricultural quality problems, it can be traced directly to products planting bases and in the shortest time, it can

receive those defective products which have been distributed to the retail supermarket stores.

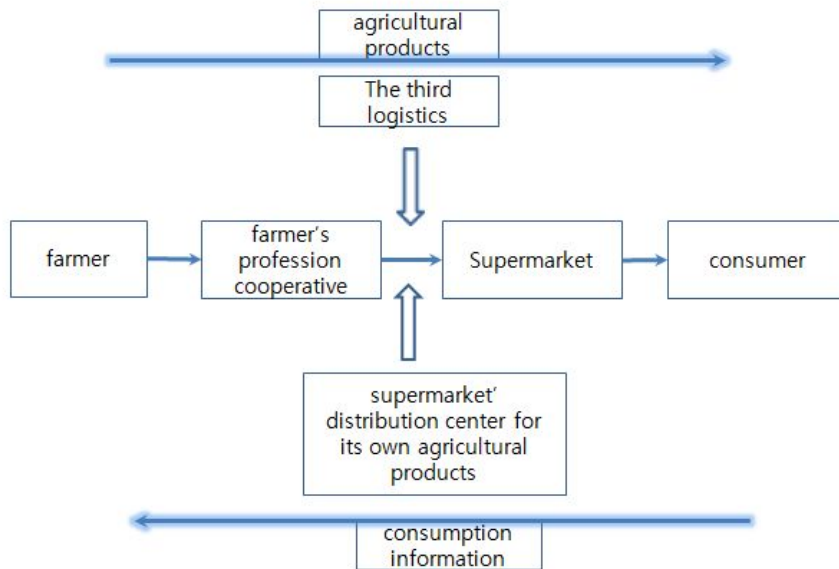
(4) It can reduce losses during circulation of agricultural products. Supermarkets apply modern management methods, with complete facilities and scientific management, having reasonable circulation processing to agricultural products, which can help to reduce losses in the process of storage and transportation of agricultural products.

China has a long history of agriculture, good intensive experience, abundant labor resources and other advantages. However, at the same time, there is a large population in China, with arable land per capita and a small number of natural resources; moreover, its agricultural productivity level is not high, and the agricultural technology and equipment is relatively backward, and its agricultural inputs are insufficient; there are big differences in natural and economic conditions in regions, and its economic development is uneven; there are uneven development of agricultural productivity levels with both traditional small holder production and a modern large-scale of farm production mode; with both the farmer's production in the unit of family and enterprise industrialization taking enterprises as the leading. All those are factors impeding the rapid development and all these determine that China's agricultural production can't be the same with that in United States or Japan. Therefore, China's mode must be different from these of the two countries. Therefore, exploring a diversified “Supermarket- Farmer Direct Purchase” mode with Chinese characteristics and supply chain relationships mode is a priority.

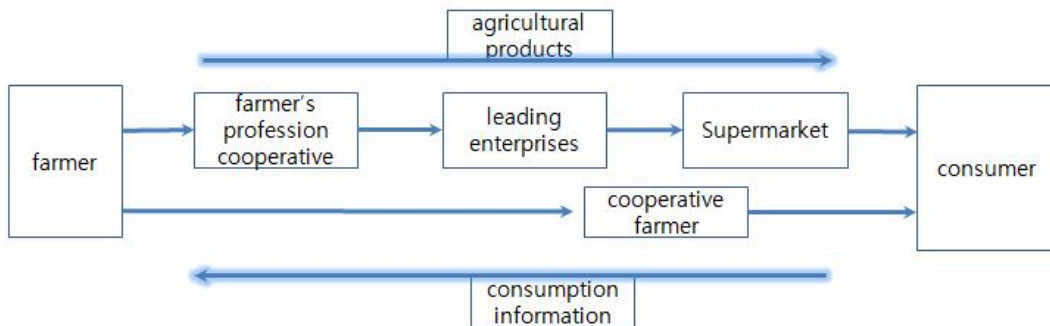
### 2.3. “Supermarket–Farmer Direct Purchase” mode

#### (1) qualitative research

Hu et al.(2009) believe that there are three modes of supermarket-farmer direct purchase: Carrefour mode (the “supermarket + farmers’ profession cooperatives + farmers” mode) as in Figure 4, Metro mode (the “supermarket + Agriculture industrialization leading enterprises + farmers” mode ) as in Figure 5. However, Shang & Sun(2005) insist that the Carrefour mode is a mode that Carrefour supermarket purchase farmers’ products directly through farmer’s professional cooperatives.



〈Figure 4〉 Carrefour model



〈Figure 5〉 METRO model

Hu & Yang(2005) insist that METRO mode is a mode of organizing farmers to produce through leading agricultural enterprises such as Metro, proposing scientific standardized production processes, guiding farmers to produce by the farmer farming agricultural consulting firms, commissioning the third parties to test agricultural product quality, and finally selling through METRO platform.

From the perspective of distribution channels, Xiong & Xiao(2011) divide “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode into integrated docking mode (forward integration docking, backward integration docking), market-oriented docking mode (compact docking,

semi-close docking), the Union of docking mode(the“supermarket+ cooperative” mode, the “supermarket+professional cooperative” mode, the “supermarket +wholesale+professional cooperative”mode, “joint direct mining” mode, the “supermarket self-support” mode). Such kind of study has laid foundation for the in-depth research of the follow-up studies of some specific “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode, but most studies just focus on elaborating through examples, instead of going deep into some specific region or some specific mode’s “supermarket-farmer direct docking”.

## (2) quantitative research

Lin(2010) uses data envelopment analysis to evaluate mode performance, and builds agricultural super-docking mode’s performance evaluation mode through the four areas of running from the internal, docking coordination, customer value and sustain growth. Dalian Development area of agricultural super-docking mode has been taken as an example to have analysis and evaluation on different categories of agricultural products.

Gu et al.(2011) research from the quality control efforts of Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase mode. Moreover, through the establishment of supply chain quality control mode, they prove that if quality can be traced, then measures of strengthening all aspects of testing strength, increasing penalties for substandard products and some others can be taken to achieve the effects of enhancing each link’s quality control efforts, thus better ensuring the quality of agricultural products.

Song(2012) investigates the operation of Zao Qiang county’s supermarket-farmer direct purchase mode of “supermarket+profession cooperatives+farmers”and establishes the index system of the supermarket-farmer direct purchase’s implementation effect evaluation for its “supermarket+cooperative+farmer”. Moreover, the corresponding evaluation mode has been constructed by using fuzzy hierarchy analysis method, and some of the problems existing in the process have been found and some recommendations have been made.

Shi et al.(2012) use the survey data of Shandong province , Hainan province and Zhejiang province and take the example of broccoli’s whole process from planting to marketing. Through establishing the measurement mode of factors affecting farmers’ net income of broccoli per acre, they find that the choice of distribution channels have significant impact on farmers’ net income of broccoli per acre.

### III. Challenges faced in the development of “Supermarket–Farmer Direct Purchase” mode

The supermarket-farmer direct purchase needs to achieve the “modern agriculture characterized by business enterprise, production scale, product standardization and benefits maximization”. Therefore, the achievement of the efficient docking between agricultural products and modern supermarkets requires farmers to have substantial changes in aspects such as thinking manner, mode of production, sales mode and production organization patterns(Hu, 2001). In fact, in the development process, the Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase mode has met the following problems, but these problems’ occurrence can not be simply regarded as a particular aspect of responsibility but a result of joint action

#### 3.1. fragmented agricultural cultivation, having not formed certain scale

From the field into the supermarket, agricultural products have to be through rigorous testing. In general, only if the origin has more than 100 acres, then supermarkets would have a variety of stable and secure supply of agricultural products. Therefore, as to the supermarket, one prerequisite of realizing agricultural super- docking is to have large-scale agricultural operations. However, province such as Guangxi as one of the country’s major agricultural province, except for a few more concentrated planting varieties, its most areas or the planting of products have not achieved such production requirements, which has seriously affected the initiative of supermarkets’ joining into it.

#### 3.2. single “Supermarket–Farmer Direct Purchase” mode

At present, China’s Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase has achieved some benefits. Some large chain supermarkets implement “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” firstly, such as Wal-Mart, Carrefour, Wumei, etc. All these groups mainly take the three docking modes of “supermarket+farmer’s professional cooperatives + farmers”, “supermarkets+bases+farmers”, and “supermarkets+leading enterprises of agricultural industrialization+farmers”. In these existing modes, the large chain supermarkets have considerable autonomy, but on the contrary, cooperatives and farmers are in a passive position. From the aspect of farmer’s professional



cooperatives, especially some developing small scale farmers' professional cooperatives, the passive position is more apparent. It is because that the lack of funds, relatively backward technology, poor management and some other causes lead that the scale can not be expanded quickly, thus making it difficult to achieve the quantity and quality requirements for agricultural products proposed by supermarkets. So they can not become fixed procurement bases, which would seriously affect the development of small-scale farmer's professional cooperatives.

From the perspective of farmers, due to market information asymmetry, the supermarkets usually have more price and requirement information compared with farmers, thus able to buy and sell products in cheaper prices, but if farmers want to get more information, they need to pay certain commission, leading to their increased costs and a decline of motivation. This position of inequality has largely affected the participating willing of the farmers' cooperatives and farmers, thus resulting in a decline in utility mode.

### 3.3. level of managers for professional cooperatives needs to be strengthened

Most farmers' professional cooperatives are composed by scale farmers. They find their way in practice, or based on a certain amount of short-term training, they have management on the farmers' cooperative organizations, but with the increase of varieties of agricultural cooperatives, expanding scale and closer cooperation with the supermarket, they have extended from a simple production to circulation fields, involving more bodies and wide range, thus needing to cooperate with multiple aspects in the advancing process. However, the majority of farmers' professional cooperative organizations lack professional management staff, and problems such as mismanagement, agricultural products circulation flaws usually appear, which have seriously hampered the development of cooperatives and the process of Supermarket- Farmer Direct Purchase.

### 3.4. product standards system is imperfect and there are many problems for the quality of agricultural products

Most of China's agricultural products go into the market based on the initial forms, lacking precision machining and low added value. The standardization and commercialization of agricultural products is low, which can not have fair and equitable

trade, and agricultural products' quality and safety are difficult to be guaranteed. Lacking of professional and technical guidance, farmers have difficult to achieve the requirements of product standards in supermarkets, which seriously affect the quality of agricultural cooperatives. In order to ensure that the Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase project can be carried out smoothly, the improvement of farmers' production technology is imminent.

### 3.5. the professional cooperatives and brand management awareness of farmers is weak

Farmers cooperatives still have not strong brand awareness, and the phenomenon of "focusing on the present but the future" is serious, at the same time, with serious shortage of brand-building investments. China is a large agricultural country, but its farmer's professional cooperatives often lack the ability of integrating brand resources. Thus, the lack of brand and poor brand management awareness has become China's largest agricultural marketing short board. There are very few companies having its own brands and most companies do not have R&D capabilities, core technology as well as independent intellectual property rights, mainly relying on OEM production, thus having no pricing power and bargaining power, and no market dominance.

### 3.6. supermarket' s traditional means and methods of settlement funds restrict docking efficiency

Supermarkets generally use the bank settlement payment, and there is a relatively long period of trade exchanges, with prevalent being on credit. China supermarket commonly uses 30-60days account period, leading to the decreased rate of capital turnover for supplier of agricultural products, profitability decreased. Taking goods from farmers' cooperatives, the supermarkets usually pay the purchase price after a period of time, which has become one of the main obstacles that impact on Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase.

### 3.7. docking mechanism of interests are lacked between supermarkets and farmers

Rational allocation of supermarkets and the interests of farmers is the basic premise for

developing agricultural super-docking, but because that China’s agricultural super-docking is still in its infancy, there is only the relationship of buyers and sellers between supermarkets and farmers between buyers and sellers. Relationship between the two is mainly dominated and maintained by the product’s purchase and sales contracts. Either in price and some technical services, or in the whole agricultural product’s deep processing and the final sales link, farmers can not obtain the benefit, which will inevitably affect the stability of agricultural super-docking. If there is no reasonable distribution relationship between supermarkets and farmers, there will be no way to enjoy the benefits or shoulder risks together.

### 3.8. Too many logistics chains easily lead to the improvement of product costs

Compared with the traditional cooperative, the “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” on the surface can reduce the cost of procurement of the supermarket, but as most of the farmers cooperatives and supermarkets do not have transportation and preservation capabilities, cost of third party logistics are usually high. Moreover, due to the immature transporting and cold chain control technology, great losses are often resulted. At present, China’s agricultural logistics are mainly normal temperature logistics and there are unreasonable packaging, transport and storage phenomenon, which also lead to a great loss in the circulation of fresh agricultural products. Survey data show that vegetables and fruits entering the circulation have a loss rate of over 10%. In fact, this part of the loss belongs to consumers, which to some extent has weakened the effectiveness of “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” mode.

## IV. Policies and recommendations

### 4.1. proposals for the developing mode of “Supermarket–Farmer Direct Purchase”

#### 4.1.1. exploring the “government + college + farmers’ professional cooperatives + farmers + supermarkets” docking mode

In this mode, the government and the universities have been introduced. In the course of the cooperative development, lack of funds is a major constraint. But if there is involvement of the Government, then it is necessary for it to be in consultation with financial institutions and give farmers cooperatives preferential lending policies. Government can provide land and policies, actively organize to establish cooperatives, find suitable supermarkets cooperation and advertise super-docking connotation and philosophy, etc., which can play a significant role in promoting. The introduction of universities and colleges can invite some experts on management and production technology to have regular training on some the managements of cooperatives and farmers representatives. The training management personnel must have basic management knowledge. They impart production knowledge to the farmers and make the agricultural products produced can reach the required quality standards to ensure the smooth development of agricultural super-docking. This has to some extent solved the financial and technical issues of farmers and farmers' professional cooperatives, rather than simply rely on the supermarket, thus conducive to enhancing their voice and initiative.

#### 4.1.2. Developing “brand agricultural supermarket + farmers’ professional cooperatives + farmers” docking mode

For large chain supermarkets such as Wal-Mart, Carrefour, and Jayvee, although they have their own chain stores in many parts of China, but most of these stores are located in the bustling city. After carrying out the Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase, consumers in the large cities have benefited from this new way of agricultural products selling, but the benefited farmers only account for a very small percentage of the overall number. Therefore, for this situation, farmers’ professional cooperatives can depend on the local characteristics and product characteristics, to be in accordance with safety and quality standards strictly for the production of agricultural products, and timely setting up agro processing enterprises to transit the current status of passive to active status. They can apply for product certification after the process of processing and packaging of their own products, thus creating their own brands. Moreover, cooperation between cooperatives can be strengthened and mechanisms for sharing benefits can be established.

Establishing their own agricultural products brands supermarkets in the nearby provinces can put their own fresh productions in their own supermarkets, and the agricultural prices can be set to between the wholesale price of the cooperative chain supermarket and the

retail price of the supermarket. This sales mode is the easiest circulation, whose circulation cost is also lowest, which can make more consumers benefit from it. Consumers can buy freshest and safest agricultural products at a lower price, and farmers and cooperatives can also get greater profit margins, thus achieving win-win results.

#### 4.2. improving the proposals of the "Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase" mode

##### 4.2.1. Strengthen farmer' s professional cooperatives' own business

Taking into account farmers' professional cooperatives in its infancy in China, the government should increase its efforts to support farmers' professional cooperatives to promote its expansion, and increase the investment of its technical guidance , information provision and related infrastructure, such as cold-chain equipment, quality testing equipment and transport equipment and other hardware, thus enhancing farmers' professional cooperatives' own strength .

##### 4.2.2. Speeding up the construction of agricultural supply and demand information platform

To achieve the symmetry of demand, supply information, and transaction information, rural areas should establish their own information centers, rely on professional agricultural information platform, and serve the surrounding towns. Agricultural information platform takes the county as a unit, sharing agricultural product transaction information of previous years with national, provincial and municipal interconnection; moreover, they should establish expert decision support systems to analyze domestic and foreign markets of relevant years. Through the information platform, it can make the supply and demand information of agricultural products open to public, thus improving farmers' ability of using the information. Information trunks can be established among Agricultural products processing enterprises, logistics and distribution centers, agricultural inspection and information channel, thus forming information platform of multi-linkage, making agricultural products form characteristics of a certain scale, brand and standardized, which can not only reduces the transaction costs of agricultural products, but also it can enhance the visibility and competitiveness of agricultural markets.

##### 4.2.3. Further exploring the mechanism linking the interests of stability

According to industry characteristics, market development, business operations, farmers' sense of competition and other aspects, the benefit distribution mode should be improved, thus establishing a stable benefit linking mechanism for farmers, which can not only promote the industrialized operation of agriculture, but also it can ensure the adequate supply of raw materials. Moreover, it can greatly improve the income of farmers.

#### 4.2.4. Take a variety of channels to improve the management and technical level managers

Governments, agricultural departments, farmers' professional cooperatives should strengthen cooperation with universities or colleges, and they can invite experts of management and production technology to have regular training on the management of cooperatives and farmers' representatives. In addition to the basic training of necessary management knowledge on management personnel, they should also pass a series of knowledge to farmer producers such as what kinds of planting ways should be applied as to different varieties of productions, how to nurture at different stages, and when to fertilizer. Only with technical support can farmers have scientific production, and the output of agricultural products can achieve the quality standard of "Supermarket- Farmer Direct Purchase", thus ensuring smooth development of the "Supermarket- Farmer Direct Purchase" and achieving the win-win goal for both supermarkets and farmers. In addition, training of farmer's professional cooperatives managers has become a trend, we can take advantage of this opportunity to train agriculture college students and cooperative management personnel into talents both skillful and manageable, thus providing personnel support for the smooth conduct of Supermarket- Farmer Direct Purchase.

#### 4.2.5. Promoting and encouraging agricultural scale operation

On the one hand, the large scale agricultural operation can enhance the bargaining power between farmers and supermarkets, achieving sales' initiative; on the other hand, it can effectively provide a stable supply for supermarkets, thus achieving win-win situation for both partners. Therefore, in the context of the current land transfer, the government should not only encourage agricultural leading enterprises to transfer land from farmer and be engaged in agricultural industrialization in a certain period time, having large scale operation, but also they encourage the rural large professional farmers and growing experts to lease land from farmers to conduct large scale operation. They should have integration of

agricultural products wholesale and logistics businesses, build core agricultural products distribution centers, thus forming an online trading platform integrated with trade, storage, processing, distribution, and many other aspects.

#### 4.2.6. Local authorities should step up publicity and support efforts to facilitate farmers to have long-term and stable cooperation with the supermarkets

In the early stage of agricultural super-docking, the government should take the initiative to contact supermarkets and farmers for the matchmaking of agriculture super-docking. They should encourage farmers and supermarkets to reach cooperative through tax relief, providing guarantees, financial support and other ways. They should also guide and organize farmer to establish farmer’s professional cooperatives which can arrange farmers to have unified production, and contact supermarkets to conduct agriculture super-docking. By lowering the threshold, more farmers' professional cooperatives and leading enterprises can participate in agricultural super-docking, thus increasing the proportion of fresh agricultural products in the sales of supermarkets. Then, supermarkets and excellent cooperative can enter into long-term supply contracts, and cooperatives can make reasonable arrangements for farmers with this order commitment, which are conducive to the long-term stable relations of cooperation between the two sides.

## V. Discussion and conclusion

The essence of “Supermarket-Farmer Direct Purchase” is to lead the modern way of circulation to vast rural areas, and dock small scale production of the thousands of families with ever changing big markets, thus building up the integrated production and marketing chain under the conditions marketing economy and enabling merchants, farmers, consumers to achieve win-win results. This mode of supply not only solves the contradictions existing in the production and circulation of agricultural products, achieving the docking between production and sales of agricultural products, but also it sets up a direct bridge between the production and marketing of agricultural production, which is conducive to the agricultural development, the maintenance of stable agricultural products’ price, the increment of farmers’ income and the reduction of consumer’s living cost, thus improving people’s livelihood and benefiting the whole community.

Therefore, for the problems existing in mechanism of the developing mode in the “agricultural super-docking”, analysis can be conducted and recommendations can be put forward, thus finding out more different modes available to users of different sizes to accommodate different factual situations.

It is hoped that with the increasing maturity of the market mechanism, there can be more patterns emerging. The market diversification will definitely lead to the coexistence of various modes, which is the result caused by the fact that retail business continue to try based on market conditions and their own conditions. There is no good or bad for mode itself and the key is to look at whether this mode adapts to the existing market demand.

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