

The Historical Evolution and Model of Rural Social Governance in France

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Abstract: France is the largest agricultural country in Europe, with 28.66 million hectares of agricultural land, accounting for 52% of the national territory. With approximately 430000 farms and 67 million people, France has a rural population of 19% and an urbanization rate of 81%. France's production of agricultural products such as beverages and wine accounts for 18% of the total EU production. After World War II, France successively implemented plans such as "Rural Renewal", "Revitalization of Weak Countryside", "Excellent Countryside", and "Tomorrow's Town", which presented significant characteristics of residents' autonomy, population return, diverse industries, superior ecology, and prominent culture in French rural areas. France has rich experience in rural social governance.

Keywords: France, Rural social Governance.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8353215>

1. The Policy Background of Rural Development in France

According to the historical background of rural development in France, the development of modern rural areas can be divided into three stages, namely the "Post World War II Basic Agriculture", "Revitalizing Weak Villages", and "Three Seven Years" period. During these three different stages, the French government formulated policies that were suitable for the national conditions to promote the revitalization of rural areas in France.

1.1. Postwar Basic Agriculture

In 1946, France focused on developing modern agriculture and strengthening rural infrastructure construction to promote balanced urban-rural development in response to the problems of low agricultural productivity and high rural unemployment rate.

In terms of machinery and equipment, in 1946, France introduced the "Monet Plan", which was implemented from 1947 to 1952 to promote the updating and technological reform of agricultural machinery and equipment, achieve agricultural mechanization, and regulate the use of fertilizers. In 1954, the "Modernization and Mechanization Plan" was introduced to achieve the modernization of agricultural technology, establish purchase subsidies for agricultural machinery, and stimulate farmers' purchasing power of modern agricultural machinery.

At the level of land management, in order to promote land concentration and large-scale agricultural production,

the French government introduced the "Agricultural Guidance Law" in 1960, which stipulated that the completed land would be sold to young farmers with rich management experience and agricultural technology. In 1962, the French government introduced the Supplementary Law on Agricultural Guidance, which allowed older farmers to voluntarily withdraw and transfer their farms, establishing the "Farm Retirement System". The implementation of this policy gradually made young farmers the main force of French agricultural production.

At the level of farmer autonomy, in 1966, France established the Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives, also known as CFCA, to assist farmers in establishing cooperative organizations, improving agricultural technology, and helping farmers improve the efficiency of using agricultural equipment. Preferential policies such as low interest loans and price subsidies were given to farmers who joined CFCA, promoting agricultural mutual assistance and cooperation, and achieving the organizational movement of farmers.

At the level of rural infrastructure construction, the Rural Renewal Act was introduced in 1967, which not only proposed to ensure efficient agricultural production, but also encouraged the development of rural industry and service industries, supported tourism and training activities, established the Rural Renewal Committee, established five rural renewal areas, and carried out different rural renewals according to the characteristics of different renewal areas. For example, due to the wide mountainous coverage and beautiful natural environment of the Ovne Region, The focus of this region is to revitalize animal husbandry, tourism, and forestry; The Brittany region is suitable for

concentrated small plots of land, rural public facilities, and road construction.

At the level of urban-rural integration, France focuses on narrowing the gap between urban and rural infrastructure and public services, and ensuring the quality of life of rural populations. The 1970 Rural Development Plan promoted balanced development within rural areas and strengthened regional coordination. The introduction of the Rural Renovation Plan has also improved the construction of public facilities in rural areas, promoting the development of non agricultural industries such as industry and rural tourism.

1.2. Revitalizing Weak Villages

In France from the 1980s to the 1990s, in order to further narrow the urban-rural gap, address the problem of population outflow from remote rural areas and uneven regional development, France promulgated the "Local Decentralization Law", gradually transferring some of the central government's power and responsibility to local governments, mobilizing their enthusiasm and innovation, and strengthening public participation.

Rural Revitalization Zone: In 1995, the "Regional Rectification and Development Guidance Law" was promulgated, establishing priority rural areas for development. Within this scope, rural areas that meet at least one of the following criteria are classified as rural revitalization zones: firstly, rural areas with a decrease in total population, a decrease in labor force, or a proportion of agricultural labor force exceeding twice the national average; The second is for towns with a population density of less than or equal to 5 residents per square kilometer, where residents in the area can enjoy tax incentives and are exempt from business tax, corporate income tax, and employee social security for 5 years.

Industry and Commerce: In 1988, France implemented the "Trade and Crafts Restructuring Business Plan", which encourages artisans and traders to repair houses, increase employment opportunities, and revitalize the local economy through training, consulting, and other commercial activities. In 1989, France established the Inter Ministerial Fund for the Protection of Handicrafts and Commerce (FISAC) to encourage the development of handicraft enterprises in rural areas, municipalities, and emerging cities. Enterprises investing between 50000 and 100000 francs can receive a bonus of 8000 francs, while enterprises investing between 100000 and 150000 francs can receive a bonus of 12000 francs. Encourage the development of agricultural products, food processing industries, and small-scale processing industries that are suitable for rural needs. As long as they can contribute to underdeveloped agricultural areas and mountainous rural areas, they can receive bonus support.

Cultural heritage: Implement heritage economic policies and utilize heritage resources in various regions to

drive economic development. Heritage is divided into types such as commemorative heritage, rural dialects or special industries, cultural or natural landscapes, and ethnic related heritage. Each region designs project plans based on the type of heritage, and the state provides funding. For example, the village of Loz in the Burgundy region has an 18th century church and a 17th century winery. The local use of the winery and surrounding vineyards to build a wine museum, exquisite tools and vessels, and the past life of valley winemakers immerse tourists in the world of wine. The village has been certified as a "French characteristic town". Pay attention to protecting the original style of rural areas, and pass legislation on "sensory heritage" to protect the original flavor of rural areas such as chicken chirping and dog barking. Implement rural heritage protection projects to protect religious buildings in rural areas and towns with less than 5000 people, as well as civilian facilities such as wells and small workshops with a cultural and historical atmosphere. The government provides maintenance subsidies. Between 1989 and 1998, the French Ministry of Culture invested approximately 25.3 million euros in this project, covering 10-15% of rural areas throughout the country.

Ecotourism: In 1982, France established the "Most Beautiful Villages Association", which required villages with a population of no more than 2000 and at least 2 protected sites. Selected villages could obtain national registered trademarks and be promoted through Michelin maps, travel guides, and various media. For example, Gold Village in the Luberon region hangs high from the mountaintop, with a 12th century monastery and a 16th century castle. The latter cultivates a beautiful lavender field, and the former holds art exhibitions all year round, making it a popular tourist check-in destination. This village is one of the famous wine producing areas in France. It is produced according to the French agricultural "origin naming control" certification standards. Taking advantage of the Mediterranean climate and high altitude geographical environment, the wine produced is of excellent quality and best-selling. The village has developed agricultural tourism and established an education farm that combines agricultural production and popular science education functions.

1.3. Three Seven Years

Under the EU Rural Development Framework, France implemented three consecutive 7-year Rural Village Development Plans from 2000 to 2020. Since 2000, France has shifted from revitalizing weak rural areas to developing excellent rural areas, and its development philosophy has shifted from "filling shortcomings" to "enhancing strengths". It has placed greater emphasis on urban-rural spatial connections, narrowing regional disparities, and promoting sustainable rural development.

The planning measures from 2000 to 2006 included 22 items, including farm investment, economic and agricultural organizations, placement of young farmers, vocational training, early retirement, agricultural environment, agricultural product processing and marketing. In the first seven years, France focused on strengthening market economy organizations, producer organizations, and agricultural industrialization management system organizations, focusing on the fair distribution of food added value among farmers, processors, and commercial enterprises. And establish organizations for rural farmers to coexist fairly with other participants, respecting competition between different economic sectors.

From 2007 to 2013, the focus was on increasing support for farm production and technical training for young farmers. Compared to the previous seven year plan, France increased funding for modernization of farms, resettlement of young farmers, and vocational training, reduced investment in agricultural environments and disadvantaged areas, and focused on developing the self-development ability of rural residents, tapping the potential of rural development, in order to achieve sustainable rural development.

The rural development plan from 2014 to 2020 focuses on implementing measures such as agricultural modernization, food quality improvement, biodiversity protection, soil erosion, and soil management, supporting rural residents and social organizations in creating rural development projects. The European Fund for Rural Development and Agriculture has provided significant assistance to France, receiving 12 billion euros from the European Fund for Rural Development and Agriculture (EAFRD) for rural development and governance over the past seven years. Typically, EAFRD funded Cellaouate's "Brittany Newspaper Recycling" project, which received a development fund of 20000 euros to recycle news newspapers from rural areas of Brittany and generate insulation and soundproofing materials. It is a recycling project for waste newspapers. For example, the Breizh Bocage program, which received a 377300 euro fund from EAFRD, aims to collaborate with local authorities and organizations to replant small forests on farms, reduce pollutant transfer to rivers, prevent soil erosion and flooding, and promote biodiversity development. Another 2017 "In Signy I 'Abaye, It's Warming Up! Thanks to the Sun" project, jointly funded by EAFRD and local governments for 50000 euros, was included in the support project of the rural development plan. The project is jointly studied by municipal communities and local energy institutions on the construction of photovoltaic village power plants, and is sponsored by the Simplification Action Association (SAS) Establish and guide the participation of many residents, and install photovoltaic solar panels on buildings that voluntarily rent out roofs. The electricity generated will be resold, and the resale proceeds can be used for other renewable energy and energy management. This project is jointly developed by residents, communities,

social organizations, and companies to promote the construction of rural power stations.

2.The Policy Background of Rural Development in France

In the process of promoting modern rural governance, France has launched the "Rural Development Plan", which formulates policies and plans from various aspects to promote orderly rural development. Since the third seven year plan, not only the government and citizens have participated in rural social governance, but non-governmental social organizations, companies, experts, etc. have also participated in the governance of French rural areas. The French government has also adopted a power transfer model to empower local governments and non-governmental organizations Citizens, etc. The author will introduce several cases of rural organizations in France participating in rural social governance.

2.1. French Rural Parliament

In recent years, with the implementation of the "Rural Development Plan" in France, rural areas have increased the construction of smart villages and future rural areas. In June 2019, the French Rural Parliament was officially established, which brings together stakeholders involved in rural areas, including non-governmental organizations, companies, experts, citizens, etc., representing the diversity of rural areas in France. The main activity of rural councils is to raise issues of rural development among multiple governance entities, participate in the formulation of public policies in rural areas, and develop a positive image of rural areas beyond the classic duality between urban and rural areas. On October 8, 2020, 40 representatives of the Rural Action Network of the French Rural Parliament held a plenary meeting and raised questions to the French government, calling for the reduction of binding standards applicable to small rural institutions and addressing the travel difficulties of rural vulnerable groups. The meeting also discussed themes such as the inclusiveness of digitization for vulnerable groups, public service development, youth and education, The purpose is to directly and concretely improve the living conditions of rural people.

2.2. ADRETS

ADRETS is an association that brings together citizens with shared resources and a willingness to work actively to develop and improve public services in rural Alpine areas. The members of ADRETS come from different backgrounds, including citizens, municipal communities, associations, etc. The diverse backgrounds reflect the diversity of the organization's partners.

The association mainly engages in research on rural development, supports municipal authorities, and designs and implements territorial projects and strategies between

communities, covering services to the population, reception and attractiveness, health, digital transformation, digital inclusion, etc. In 2021, it was responsible for drafting a report on "Smart Villages" (autumn 2021) for the French rural network, Based on a comprehensive analysis of observation and on-site feedback, public authorities advocate for the interests of the Alps region. Suggestions are also made for public policies and various measures beneficial to rural and mountainous areas (such as mountain plans, mountain plans, SIMA, EAFRD, etc.), to intervene in the formulation of policies in Alpine rural areas from the perspective of rural residents.

2.3. Association National "Nouvelles Ruralit s"

Rural territory is an opportunity and asset for the future of France. ANNR aims to actively discuss the rural sector, thereby influencing public policies in rural areas, changing the difficulties of territorial concentration, policy saturation, and pollution, and enhancing the positive image of French rural areas in France. The main task of ANNR is to raise public awareness of the potential of rural areas, protect rural land, reduce conflicts caused by rural territorial struggles, and collaborate with multiple organizations on a digital basis to achieve consensus.

2.4. Association of Rural Mayors of France

The Association of Rural Mayors in France (ARMF) collaborates with mayors of municipalities with fewer than 3500 residents, providing assistance to sparsely populated municipalities. The association is committed to defending the specific interests of rural areas at the local and national levels. It is committed to adopting a more balanced approach to local planning and placing its actions within a broader European rural context.

The main activity of ARMF in recent years has been to establish a network and working group related to "smart villages" to promote modern governance of villages. Through digital solutions and digital mediation, ensuring good service levels in rural areas and promoting the widespread use of digital technology, ARMF and the French rural network are jointly committed to the development of "smart villages".

3. Conclusion

Overall, as the largest agricultural country in Europe, France has achieved significant achievements in rural development. Through the stages of historical development, we can see that the French government has implemented plans such as "rural renewal", "revitalization of weak rural areas", "excellent rural areas", and "tomorrow's small towns" at different times, laying a solid foundation for rural revitalization. At the same time, France has adopted a multi organizational model in modern rural governance, with the participation of government, citizens, non-governmental social organizations, companies, experts, and other parties,

forming a diversified pattern of governance.

This multi organizational participation model makes rural social governance in France more flexible and efficient. Local governments, non-governmental organizations, and citizens have played an important role in promoting the orderly development of rural areas. This also provides useful experience and inspiration for other countries in rural development.

The successful experience of rural development in France is attributed to the wise policies of the government and the modern governance model of multiple organizations. With the development of the times, we hope that French rural areas will maintain their agricultural strength while further achieving comprehensive development in various aspects such as society, economy, and culture, exploring more beneficial paths and methods for rural revitalization.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and valuable suggestions.

Funding

Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflict of interest

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Not applicable.

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