

# From Fragmentation to Systematization: Reconstructing the Policy Support System for New Farmer Cultivation from a Rural Revitalization Perspective—Based on Practical Exploration in Foshan

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**Abstract:** New Farmers are a critical talent force for activating rural endogenous dynamics and advancing comprehensive rural revitalization. However, the current policy support system targeting New Farmers generally suffers from "fragmentation," characterized by departmental segmentation, supply-demand mismatch, and lifecycle disconnection, which severely restricts the effectiveness of policy implementation and the large-scale growth of the New Farmer community. From the perspective of "systemic" reconstruction, this paper employs a methodology combining policy text analysis and qualitative case studies, using the city of Foshan—a region with significant urban-rural integration characteristics—as a practical sample. It deeply analyzes the specific manifestations and deep-seated attributions of policy fragmentation in New Farmer cultivation and its institutional obstacles to New Farmer development. The study finds that although Foshan provides strong support for New Farmers in areas like financial innovation and industrial integration, it still faces the governance inertia of "nine dragons managing the waters" (fragmented administration), a top-down supply-oriented approach, and a cyclical shortcoming of "prioritizing attraction and cultivation over integration." This paper argues that the reconstruction of the policy system must achieve a conceptual shift from "manager" to "enabler." It proposes a "four-dimensional reconstruction" framework to move from "fragmentation" to "systematization": achieving structural reconstruction through "platform coordination," process reconstruction through "full-chain support," content reconstruction through "precision irrigation," and social reconstruction through "ecosystem cultivation." This article aims to provide a theoretical reference and practical pathway for Foshan and similar regions across the country to build a high-efficiency, integrated policy ecosystem for New Farmer cultivation.

**Keywords:** New Farmers, Policy Support, Fragmentation, Systemic Reconstruction, Rural Revitalization, Foshan.

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## 1. Introduction

For rural revitalization, the key lies in people [1]. Against the grand backdrop of the historic shift in the focus of China's "San Nong" (agriculture, rural areas, and farmers) work, cracking the "talent bottleneck" in rural areas has become a prerequisite issue for comprehensively advancing rural revitalization. In recent years, along with the accelerated two-way flow of urban-rural elements and the active guidance of national policies, a "New Farmer" group—represented by returning university-student entrepreneurs, veterans, business executives, and scientific/technical personnel—has rapidly emerged. They are not only reformers of traditional agriculture but also "active agents" in rural industrial integration, cultural inheritance, and governance innovation [2]. Cultivating and strengthening the New Farmer community has become a core lever for activating endogenous rural development dynamics.

To address the common difficulties New Farmers face in business start-up, technology application, market development, and social integration, central and local governments have issued a dense array of policy support documents, covering multiple dimensions such as fiscal subsidies, financial credit, technical training, and land use guarantees. However, behind this intensive policy "largesse," the "last mile" problem of policy effectiveness remains

prominent. Existing research has largely focused on exploring the impact of a single policy (such as financial support or entrepreneurship training) on New Farmer entrepreneurial performance [3], or on cataloging the types of policy tools [4]. However, few studies have examined the structural flaws of the current support system from the holistic perspective of a "policy system."

A pressing real-world question that demands a response is: Why, despite the continuous superposition of policy "dividends," do New Farmers still commonly report that "policies are hard to find, thresholds are high, and they are difficult to use"? This paper argues that the crux of the problem lies not in the insufficient total supply of policies, but in the "fragmentation" of policy provision. "Fragmentation" refers to a state in which the policy system lacks internal synergy, coherence, and integration due to administrative departmental segmentation, conflicting multilateral goals, and obstructed information flow during policy formulation and execution, presenting a scattered, disjointed, and even contradictory status [5]. This fragmentation leads to a significant waste of policy resources and creates invisible "institutional obstacles" to the development of New Farmers.

Therefore, this study attempts to move beyond the singular analytical paradigm of the "policy toolbox" and introduces the theoretical perspective of "systemic reconstruction." Using Foshan—an important node city in the Guangdong-Hong

Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area with a high degree of urban-rural integration—as a practical sample, this paper aims to answer three core questions through qualitative analysis and case studies: First, what are the specific manifestations of the "fragmentation" of the policy support system for New Farmer cultivation in the specific context of Foshan? Second, what are the deep-seated institutional attributions leading to this fragmentation? Third, how can we move from "fragmentation" to "systematization" to reconstruct a policy support ecosystem that is adapted to the growth needs of New Farmers?

## **2. Theoretical Basis: The "Fragmentation" of New Farmer Cultivation Policy and Its Systemic Transcendence**

### **2.1. The Diverse Needs of New Farmers and the Necessity of Policy Support**

The composition of the "New Farmer" group is highly heterogeneous, and their needs are correspondingly diverse, dynamic, and complex. Compared to traditional farmers, New Farmers (especially "cross-boundary" entrants) generally possess higher knowledge levels, stronger market awareness, and greater innovation capabilities. However, they also face a "triple weakness": First, "capital weakness," with immense needs for start-up and subsequent development capital but lacking the collateral recognized by traditional financial institutions. Second, "technical weakness"; although they have new ideas, they lack a deep understanding of agricultural production cycles, applicable technologies, and the rules of the rural "acquaintance society." Third, "social weakness"; as "outsiders" or "alienated returnees," they lack social networks rooted in the local community, facing significant resistance in land transfer, labor employment, and public relations coordination.

It is precisely this co-existence of "high capability" and "high vulnerability" that dictates that the growth of New Farmers is extremely dependent on the "empowerment" and "guarantees" of an external policy support system. A sound policy system should act like an "incubator," providing them with comprehensive support to hedge the high risks of their initial entrepreneurial phase.

### **2.2. Policy "Fragmentation": Concept Definition and Analytical Dimensions**

"Fragmentation" is a classic issue in the field of public governance, originating from the inevitability of professional specialization under bureaucracy [5]. However, when fragmentation exceeds a critical point, it leads to governance failure. In the field of New Farmer cultivation, policy fragmentation mainly manifests in the following three dimensions:

#### **2.2.1. "Departmental Segmentation" of Executive Bodies**

New Farmer cultivation is a systemic project that spans multiple functional departments, including agriculture and rural affairs, human resources and social security, science and technology, finance, market supervision, and education. Under the "tiao-kuai" (vertical-horizontal) administrative system, each department "governs its own turf" according to its functions, and the policies introduced often "treat the head for a headache and the foot for a footache." For example, the agricultural department is responsible for technical training,

the human resources department for entrepreneurial subsidies, and the finance office for coordinating loans. This "nine dragons managing the waters" situation forces New Farmers to "run their legs off" to connect with different departments. Furthermore, each department's policy goals and standards vary, lacking synergy and linkage, making it difficult to form a unified policy force.

#### **2.2.2. "Supply-Demand Mismatch" in Policy Provision**

Policy formulation under a fragmented system often exhibits a "top-down" supply orientation rather than a "bottom-up" demand orientation. There is significant "information asymmetry" among policymakers, policy implementers, and the policy target group. What the government "wants to give" is not what New Farmers "actually need." For example, the government may invest heavily in building standardized training bases, while what New Farmers urgently need are "small-class" practical courses on brand IP creation, live-streaming e-commerce operations, or supply chain finance. The government may provide "inclusive" interest-subsidized loans, but what New Farmers face is the "difficulty of securing a first-time loan" or the absence of venture capital funds.

#### **2.2.3. "Lifecycle Disconnection" in the Support Process**

The growth of a New Farmer is a complete "lifecycle," which can be roughly divided into the "germination and exploration phase," "start-up and survival phase," "growth and development phase," and "maturity and integration phase." Fragmented policies, however, are often "project-based" and "campaign-style," prioritizing "attraction" over "cultivation" and "start-up" over "development." A large number of policies are concentrated in the "start-up and survival phase" (e.g., one-time business start-up subsidies, rent reductions for premises). Yet, in the "growth and development phase," when New Farmers urgently need to scale up, upgrade their brands, and expand their markets, policy support "drops off." More importantly, the current policy system generally pays insufficient attention to the deep-seated needs of New Farmers and their families during the "social integration phase," such as social security, children's education, medical care, and cultural life.

### **2.3. Moving Towards "Systematization": The Reconstruction of a Policy Ecosystem**

The only path to transcend "fragmentation" is to achieve a "systemic reconstruction" of the policy system [8]. Systematization emphasizes the "holism, interconnectedness, and dynamic synergy" of policy elements. This requires policymakers to shift their perspective from that of a "manager" to that of an "enabler," and to move from "fragmented handouts" to "cultivating an ecosystem." A systemic policy support system should be an innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem that provides "full-lifecycle," "full-element," and "full-actor" synergistic support.

## **3. The Foshan Sample: Practice and "Fragmentation" Manifestations of New Farmer Policy Support**

As a major manufacturing hub in China and an important node in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Foshan's urban-rural relationship presents a unique landscape of high integration and high industrial correlation. The practice of New Farmer cultivation in Foshan, therefore, also

exhibits distinct "metropolitan agriculture" and "cross-industry" characteristics.

### **3.1. Policy Practice Achievements in Foshan's New Farmer Cultivation**

Governments at all levels in Foshan have undertaken numerous beneficial explorations in cultivating New Farmers and have achieved notable results. In our qualitative research, we found the following highlights in Foshan's policy practice:

First, "financial innovation" is strong. Relying on its powerful private economy and financial foundation, Foshan actively explores the "government-bank-insurance-guarantee" linkage model, developing financial products like the "Quangeng Loan" and "Nongdan Loan" for New Farmers. It also pioneered the "data asset" mortgage for industries like flowers and prepared foods in China, effectively alleviating the financing difficulties for some New Farmers.

Second, "industrial integration" guidance is robust. Foshan's policies are closely integrated with its "manufacturing-first" advantage, vigorously guiding New Farmers into integrated formats that "connect the first, second, and third industries," such as prepared foods, digital flowers, and rural cultural tourism, promoting the deep integration of Agriculture, Technology, and Culture (ATC).

Third, "social force" participation is deep. The Foshan government is adept at using its "small government, large society" governance structure. Through service procurement, project outsourcing, and other means, it guides industry associations, leading enterprises, and non-profit organizations to participate in New Farmer training, incubation, and market matchmaking, forming a positive atmosphere of "government-society co-cultivation."

### **3.2. Specific Manifestations of "Fragmentation" in Foshan's Practice**

Despite these significant achievements, the institutional obstacles of "fragmentation" are still clearly visible in Foshan's practical explorations. Through a review of policy texts and in-depth interviews with different types of New Farmers (cases), we summarize these manifestations as follows:

#### **3.2.1. Institutional Segmentation of "Cross-Boundary" Needs: The Case of "Prepared-Food" New Farmers**

Areas like Shunde and Nanhai in Foshan are going all out to build the "Capital of Prepared Foods." The prepared-food industry naturally has a "cross-boundary" attribute that links the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. A New Farmer who crossed over from the catering industry into the prepared-food sector faces complex needs: he needs support from the agricultural department for standardized planting and breeding bases, a food production license (SC certification) from the market supervision department, R&D support for cold-chain preservation technology from the science and technology department, and e-commerce channel support from the commerce department.

But under the "fragmented" governance structure, he must seek help "across departments." Support funds from the agricultural department cannot be used for the technical transformation of food processing workshops; R&D projects from the science and technology department are difficult to align precisely with the needs of his small-scale enterprise; and the approval process from the market supervision

department does not match the application cycle for other subsidies. This "each-minds-his-own-business" segmented governance artificially cuts what should be a highly synergistic industrial innovation into several "policy silos."

#### **3.2.2. Homogeneous Supply for "Precision" Needs: The Case of "Digital Flower" New Farmers**

Lishui Town in Nanhai District, Foshan, is a nationally renowned flower industry base. In recent years, a batch of "second-generation farmer" New Farmers has successfully achieved the digital transformation of the industry using live-streaming e-commerce. Their core "pain points" are no longer "planting techniques" or "start-up capital," but "brand IP creation," "live-streaming supply chain management," "intellectual property protection," and a "shortage of high-end operational talent."

However, our research found that the "homogeneous" policy supply provided by the local government struggles to meet this "precision" demand. The "e-commerce training" organized by the human resources department is still stuck at the primary stage of "how to open a shop"; the "technology-to-the-countryside" experts from the agricultural department know very little about the brand logic of "digital flowers." And when New Farmers wish to apply for "talent introduction" policies to recruit a professional operations director for their team, they find that their "agricultural enterprise" status does not meet the certification standards for a "high-tech enterprise." A significant "supply-demand mismatch" has emerged between the "flood irrigation" of policy supply and the "precision irrigation" required by New Farmers.

#### **3.2.3. Cyclical Disconnection for "Growth" Needs: The Case of "Cultural-Tourism" New Farmers**

In the revitalization of ancient villages in Foshan's Chancheng and Nanhai districts, a group of New Farmers with design and cultural-creative backgrounds has been instrumental. By leasing idle residential buildings and transforming them into boutique homestays, art studios, or research-study bases, they have successfully "awakened" dormant rural assets. In their "start-up and survival phase," they enjoyed policy dividends such as simplified business registration and one-time start-up subsidies.

However, when they wish to enter the "growth and development phase," the problem of policy "disconnection" becomes prominent. For example, one homestay founder who wanted to rent several surrounding idle residences to expand his scale encountered obstacles with the "whole-village leasing" policy for collective land transfer. When he wanted to bring in external capital for a brand upgrade, he found that "rural cultural-tourism" projects struggle to receive the same financial valuation as urban commercial projects. What troubles them even more are "social integration" issues: their children cannot enjoy the same quality educational resources in the towns and villages as they would in the city, and barriers to the urban-rural transfer of medical and social insurance still exist. This "emphasis on start-up, neglect of growth, and lack of integration" cyclical disconnection allows New Farmers to "get in," but makes it difficult for them to "grow big or stay stable."

## **4. Deep-Seated Attributions of Policy Fragmentation**

The policy fragmentation demonstrated by the Foshan sample is not an isolated case; it has deep-seated institutional

and cognitive roots.

#### **4.1. The "Tiao-Kuai" Segmentation and "Departmentalism" of the Governance System**

"Tiao-kuai" (vertical-horizontal) segmentation is a typical feature of China's administrative system. On the "cross-domain governance" issue of New Farmer cultivation, the professional division of "tiao" (functional departments) and the territorial management of "kuai" (towns, villages) are intertwined. Each department gives priority to its own "KPIs" and "budget execution" rather than the "comprehensive needs" of the New Farmer. This "departmentalism" leads to policies being made in isolation, difficulty in synergistic execution, and a lack of inter-departmental information sharing, which is the most direct institutional root of fragmentation.

#### **4.2. The "Supply-Oriented" Logic and "Information Barriers" of Policy**

The current policy system mostly follows a "top-down" "plan-supply" logic, rather than a "bottom-up" "demand-response" logic [7]. Policymakers often design policy products based on "directives from above" and "existing resource endowments," lacking a sensitive channel to perceive the heterogeneity within the New Farmer group and the dynamic nature of their needs. The co-existence of "policy by decree" and "New Farmers running ragged" is rooted in the information barriers and the lack of feedback mechanisms between the "supply side" and the "demand side."

#### **4.3. The Misalignment of "Short-Term Visible" and "Long-Term Cultivation" Policy Goals**

The cultivation of New Farmers is, in essence, a long-term process of "nurturing people" and "cultivating an ecosystem," and its results are lagging. However, under the pressure of "term-based" and "tournament-style" performance assessments, local governments are more inclined to pursue "short-term visible" and "explicit achievements," such as the "number of talents introduced," "amount of subsidies distributed," and "area of parks constructed." In contrast, "implicit" "ecosystem construction" investments, such as building social networks, fostering an inclusive culture, and improving public services, are often relegated to a secondary position because their "effects are slow and difficult to quantify." This "prioritizing things over people" and "hard over soft" goal misalignment leads to "top-heavy" and "cyclically disconnected" policy support [9].

### **5. Policy System Reconstruction: A "Four-Dimensional Framework" from Fragmentation to Systematization**

Facing the "fragmentation" dilemma in New Farmer cultivation, a "systemic" reconstruction of the policy support system is essential. Based on the explorations of the Foshan practice, this paper proposes a "four-dimensional reconstruction" framework aimed at achieving "concept-structure-process-content" synergy.

#### **5.1. Conceptual Reconstruction: From "Manager" to "Enabler"**

The logical starting point for reconstruction is a shift in the government's role concept. The government should not be an "omnipotent" "manager" and "allocator," but an "ecosystem cultivator" and "enabler." This means the policy goal should no longer be "direct giving" (blood transfusion) but "stimulating agency" (blood generation). The core responsibilities of the government are to build platforms, link resources, set rules, and provide bottom-line guarantees, fostering an innovative and entrepreneurial environment based on the rule of law, market principles, convenience, and humanization, allowing New Farmers to "grow on their own" within that ecosystem.

#### **5.2. Structural Reconstruction: From "Departmental Segmentation" to "Platform Coordination"**

To crack the "nine dragons managing the waters" execution problem, a structural reconstruction is necessary, with the core being "establishing a coordinating platform."

In a "strong city (district)" system like Foshan's, it is feasible to explore having the municipal (or district) government take the lead in establishing a "New Farmer Cultivation and Rural Revitalization Coordination Leading Group," and operationalizing a "New Farmer One-Stop Service Center." This center would not replace the professional functions of the various departments but would act as a "Hub":

"Single Window" Acceptance: Consolidate all policy demands from New Farmers (land, finance, approvals, talent, etc.), achieving "one-window acceptance, internal circulation, and time-limited processing."

"Information Integration" Sharing: Break down departmental information silos, establish a "New Farmer Big Data Platform" to dynamically track their needs and provide data support for precision policy supply.

"Synergistic Supervision" Assessment: Conduct special supervision on cross-departmental synergistic matters and include "synergistic effectiveness" in the performance appraisal of each department, fundamentally reversing the "departmentalist" inertia.

#### **5.3. Process Reconstruction: From "Cyclical Disconnection" to "Full-Chain Support"**

Policy support must align with the "full lifecycle" of New Farmer growth, transitioning from "fragmented points" to a "coherent chain" [8].

"Germination & Exploration Phase" - "Guidance and Pre-incubation": The policy focus should be on "reducing the cost of trial and error." For example, the government can support the establishment of "Rural Maker Spaces" and "Field Schools" to provide potential New Farmers with low-cost, short-term "on-site experiences" and "mentorship," helping them validate business models and avoid blind entrepreneurship.

"Start-up & Survival Phase" - "Precision Start-up Support": The policy focus is on "simplification and acceleration." In addition to "first loan" support, Foshan should explore an "investment-for-subsidy" model, introducing government guidance funds to make "angel round" equity investments in New Farmer projects with high growth potential, transforming "fiscal funds" into "patient capital."

"Growth & Development Phase" - "Empowerment Acceleration": The policy focus is on "linking high-end resources." The government should use its credibility to connect New Farmers with the Greater Bay Area's industrial chains (e.g., leading enterprise supply chains), capital chains (e.g., VC/PE institutions), and innovation chains (e.g., university research institutes), and support them in achieving leaps in brand building, standard setting, and market expansion.

"Maturity & Integration Phase" - "Citizenization Guarantees": The policy focus is on "identity recognition and equalization of public services." This is precisely where an urban-rural integrated area like Foshan is best positioned to make a breakthrough. The core is to establish a "New Farmer Professional Competency Certification System," and to include certified New Farmers in the same "citizenization" treatment as urban talents in terms of social security, children's school enrollment, medical care, and political honors (e.g., People's Congress deputies, CPPCC members), completely resolving their "worries back home" [10].

#### **5.4. Content Reconstruction: From "Homogeneous Supply" to "Precision Irrigation" and "Ecosystem Cultivation"**

In terms of the specific content of policy support, we must transcend the traditional "giving money, goods, and technology" and shift towards the deep-level empowerment of "giving opportunities, connections, and identity."

Strengthen "Digital Empowerment": Foshan's "digital empowerment" should not stop at "live-streaming e-commerce." It should leverage its manufacturing advantages to promote the application of "industrial digitalization" tools among New Farmers, such as the "Agricultural Internet of Things," "supply chain finance platforms," and "big data market insights."

Strengthen "Social Empowerment": Policy should shift from "supporting individuals" to "cultivating organizations." The government should invest resources to support the development of self-organizations like "New Farmer Associations" and "Industry Alliances." It can use "rewards-for-subsidies" to support them in undertaking partial public service functions (e.g., industry training, standard setting). The value of cultivating this "social capital" for building a sense of belonging and a mutual aid network for New Farmers far exceeds that of mere financial subsidies [6].

Strengthen "Cultural Empowerment": Foster an inclusive and innovative "new rustic culture." The government should increase publicity for the advanced deeds of New Farmers, enhancing their social prestige. At the same time, in rural governance, New Farmers should be actively absorbed into village affairs decision-making, promoting cultural mutual learning and value integration between "new and old villagers," and creating a social environment where they feel "accepted and respected."

## **6. Research Conclusions and Policy Implications**

### **6.1. Research Conclusions**

Using Foshan as a case study, this paper has conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of the policy support system for New Farmer cultivation within the perspective of rural revitalization. The study shows that the "fragmentation" of the current policy system is a key institutional obstacle

constraining the growth of New Farmers. This fragmentation is specifically manifested as "departmental segmentation," "supply-demand mismatch," and "cyclical disconnection." Its deep-seated roots lie in the governance inertia of "tiao-kuai segmentation," a "supply-oriented" policy logic, and a "short-term visible" goal misalignment.

This paper argues that to crack the "fragmentation" dilemma, a "systemic reconstruction" of the policy system must be promoted. This reconstruction is not merely a simple superposition of policy tools, but a comprehensive innovation in governance philosophy, governance structure, governance processes, and governance content. The "four-dimensional reconstruction" framework proposed in this study—namely, achieving structural reconstruction through "platform coordination," process reconstruction through "full-chain support," content reconstruction through "precision irrigation and ecosystem cultivation," and all led by a conceptual reconstruction of the "enabler"—is an effective path to achieve synchronized resonance between New Farmer cultivation and rural revitalization.

### **6.2. Policy Implications**

Based on the above conclusions, this study provides the following specific implications for Foshan and similar regions across the country to optimize New Farmer cultivation policies:

Form a "New Farmer Service Super-Hub": It is imperative to break down departmental barriers and establish a "one-stop" service center, coordinated at a high level of government and operated by multiple departments in an institutionalized manner. This is the organizational guarantee for achieving systemic supply and solving the persistent problem of "policies from multiple doors."

Establish a Linkage Mechanism between "New Farmer Professional Certification and Citizenization Treatment": Introduce official professional competency standards for "New Farmers" as soon as possible. Use this as a lever to precisely link certification results with "citizenization" public services such as talent apartments, children's education, and medical/social insurance, to achieve the leap from "identity ambiguity" to "professional recognition."

Establish a "Full-Lifecycle Empowerment Fund": Fiscal support should shift from "inclusive subsidies" to "leveraged guidance." It is recommended to integrate existing agriculture-related entrepreneurial funds to establish a "New Farmer Full-Lifecycle Empowerment Fund." Using market-based methods like "angel investment," "risk compensation," and "IPO cultivation," support New Farmers in crossing the "valley of death" and achieving large-scale development.

Incorporate "Social Ecosystem Cultivation" into Government Assessments: Change the assessment orientation that "prioritizes hard over soft." Incorporate "ecosystem construction" indicators—such as "New Farmer organization activity," "social network construction," and "new and old villager integration"—into the performance assessment system for local governments, to guide policy resources toward long-term mechanisms that "nurture people, organizations, and culture."

### **6.3. Limitations and Prospects**

This study employed a qualitative case study method, focusing on constructing a "reconstruction framework" and "mechanism analysis." The generalizability of its conclusions needs to be tested by quantitative research with a larger

sample. As a developed and highly urban-rural integrated sample, the "market-oriented" and "socialized" reconstruction paths of Foshan may have limited transferability to underdeveloped regions in central and western China, which requires further comparative research. Future research could, on the basis of this framework, use survey questionnaires and other methods to quantitatively measure the relationship between the degree of policy "fragmentation" and New Farmer "entrepreneurial performance" and "social integration," in order to provide more precise data support for the "systemic" reconstruction of policy.

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