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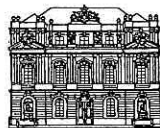
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY ON THE QINGHAI-TIBETAN PLATEAU

by

Lobsang, Beijing

This paper looks at ways of developing animal husbandry on the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau. The analysis takes into account ecological, agricultural and economic factors, at a local and a national level. Proposals for the strategic development of animal husbandry are put forward. It is suggested that animal husbandry is the only way to develop the local economy and at the same time protect the environment from further destruction.

There are a number of factors that obstruct the development of this important industry: production is at a low level; the local capacity to resist natural disasters is weak; the grasslands are impoverished, and there is an acute imbalance in the ratio of grassland to cattle. In addition there has been a decrease in capital investment, and reserve funds are insufficient. Scientific and technological capabilities are weak, and the labour force has a low educational quality and level of productivity.

The potential for developing the area lies in its vast expanses of grassland, the special genetic nature of the livestock, the requirements of the market, and the new opportunities offered by the rise of the secondary processing industry for cattle and sheep by-products. The aim is to transform the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau into a prosperous modern livestock base while promoting the harmonious development of other industries within a 30-year period and encourage rational grassland management through the partial sedentarisation of pastoral people (Chin. *ding ju lun mu*).¹

This development of animal husbandry involves designating the plateau as China's Premier Environmental Protection Zone; shifting economic development to the west of the country in national planning policy; maintaining national minority special privileges in the areas of prices, taxation, credit, finance and so on; and granting the minority areas a relatively high degree of economic autonomy. This further involves continuing the government's economic reforms; exploiting the grasslands' potential; absorbing modern technology; transforming traditional methods of rearing livestock; and accelerating the development of the local economy. Five main strategic measures are proposed here:

1. The grasslands form the economic base (to the pastoral areas), and the goal is the development of a modern form of animal husbandry. Development of the grasslands implies not only ecological efficiency (sustainability), but also the provision of basic materials for the economic development of animal husbandry. The protection and rational exploitation of the natural grassland requires the following: man-made, improved, and enclosed grassland should act as the basis for reducing the winter and spring seasonal imbalances in natural grass availability (for animal feed); also, each household should plant green fodder to reduce the (current) problem of the 'spring death' (of livestock).

¹ (Ed.) Chin. *ding ju lun mu* here has the sense of a main or permanent residence, from which one rotates the use of land.

2. Start-up capital should come from outside this region (Chin. *qu*), be in the form of joint investment through 'horizontal' linkages, and focus on production. These should be multiplex, that is form channels at many different types and levels.
3. A new commercial market structure needs to be established, which at local level requires: raising awareness of (the possibilities of) commerce and the socialist market economy; breaking-down the idea of a 'natural economy' with its emphasis on self-sufficiency,² and instead establishing the ideas of markets and efficiency. To be efficient production has to be geared to the market-place: the activities of pastoralism, industry and markets must link and reinforce each other in a positive cycle.
4. Education is the key factor to this new path. Science and technology are the 'productive forces' of Marxist theory, and they have a special significance nowadays as a new wave of technology is affecting production and economics world-wide. The backwardness of education and technology is one of the reasons for the Qinghai-Tibet plateau being 'poor and backward',³ and attention here is basic to the development of animal husbandry. The first effort should be basic education for all of whole (Tibetan) nationality (Chin. *min zu*). The second should be in technical training (of those in Tibet), and in attracting technicians (from beyond). The third should be in research, possibly with the establishment of a large-scale Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Research and Development Institute to focus research. The fourth is the application and extension of the new technology (that results).
5. Establishing a developed co-operative (exchange) economy according to principles of Marxism and economic reform requires the following measures: a division of labour and co-operation (exchange) between pastoral households of different local areas; encouragement by state intervention with price and market adjustments through 'rural townships' (Chin. *xiang*) and counties (Chin. *xian*); the provision of additional technical services through professional associations, such as the Pastoralist's Association, the Cattle Herder's Association, the Sheep Herder's Association and the Grassland Association.

² (Ed.) The term 'natural economy' (Chin. *zi ran jing ji*) is used in China to characterise an economy in which people rely on themselves to provide all basic necessities, that is they are self-sufficient.

³ (Ed.) The two terms 'poor and backward' (Chin. *pin qiong luo hou*) in China commonly are linked as a single expression and idea.