

Handloom Cloth: People's Daily Article

A bolt of roughly 15 x 0.5 m corresponds roughly to the basic clothing needs of an adult person – two suits of clothes, or a padded suit composed of an outer shell and lining. It takes three weeks to produce a bolt: about 15 days to spin the yarn, and six days to weave the cloth.

'How does the Ma Tinghai Agricultural Production Cooperative mobilize women to participate in production' (Ma Tinghai nongye shengchan hezuoshe shi zenyang fadong funü canjia shengchan de 马廷海农业生产合作社是怎样发动妇女参加农业生产的), *Renmin Ribao*, Feb 2, 1954: 2.

'Ma Tinghai Agricultural Production Cooperative in Huangpi Village, Dayi County, Shaanxi Province, was formed on the basis of a Mutual Aid Team formed in March last year. It includes 30 households with 134 persons and a male and female labor force of 65 fulltime workers, 31 of whom are women, and 13 half-time workers, 4 of whom are women. [...] The cooperative mobilized women to work in the fields, with the following results:

First, payment by labor day and the principle of equal pay for equal work must be carefully implemented. Many women in Huangpi Village have the habit of working [in the fields]. However, the Mutual Aid Team that preceded the cooperative did not implement the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women. In consequence, some women did not work the land, while others worked for themselves and were unwilling to help each other. For example, in the summer of the previous year, the mutual aid group gave low scores to women workers, and the actual wages were low. Male farmers were generally awarded ten work points a day while women of comparable labor capacity were rated seven to eight points. Male farmers thus received seven kilograms of wheat per labor day, while women received only five. Some female team members said "if you treat us as half persons, why should we go to work in the fields?" [...]

Second, we must pay attention to political and ideological education for women and continue to help them learn about culture and agricultural production techniques. Attracting women to meetings is a good way to raise their political awareness.[...] Last summer, the cooperative found that many women rely on men; when it comes to lead the work, they let men take the initiative; when it comes to assign work points, they rely on male cadres. At this time, the cooperative launched a women's study group to read a *People's Daily* article on equal pay for equal work: "Labor is Liberation, only Struggle gives Status", which greatly stimulated the independent thinking of women's members and improved their enthusiasm for production.

In order to further improve women's agricultural production techniques, the cooperative often appoints cadres to teach women skills. Before the fight against cotton pests, the coop asked its vice director Liu Manchang to teach women how to spray pesticides.[...] Experience has shown that this is the only way to empower women to master agricultural technology and to increase women's interest in agricultural production. Last year, female coop members cultivated

six acres of high-yield cotton fields. Although they failed to get a bumper harvest due to their inexperience and to rain damage, they had higher yields than neighboring villages. [...]

Third, we must pay attention to solving the problem of how to combine family sideline production, housework operations and agricultural labor. When women participate in field work, this may conflict with domestic sideline production and housework. The coop's solution to this problem is: most of the time, women use slack days and rainy periods to carry out textile and needle work, and participate in field labor for the rest of the time; during the cotton harvest in autumn, they use mornings and evenings to do domestic work. From the end of the autumn harvest to the second lunar month of the next year, they spin and weave and make summer clothes and shoes. In the quiet two weeks after the summer harvest, they prepare clothes and shoes for winter. [...]

According to the coop's experience, the contradiction between women's participation in agricultural production and domestic sidelines and housework can be solved. The majority of women in the coop worked fulltime in agriculture for six months and did domestic work for the rest of the time. Spinning and weaving takes two and a half months (spinning takes two months, weaving half a month). If we assume four *liang* (250 g) [两] of yarn a day, a woman can spin 15 jin (7.5 kg) of thread in two months. Each *jin* [斤] yields one *zhang* [丈] (3.33 m) of cloth, for a total of 15 *zhang*. A person's average yearly need is four *zhang*; one woman's work thus provides clothing for three people. Each person needs four pairs of cloth shoes a year. A family of three needs 12 pairs. It takes three days to make a pair, 36 days in total. The remaining two months and nine days are used for sewing and mending. If we add to this the work she does in the morning and at night, a woman can do six months of farm work and still provide for the clothing needs of a family of three. In fact, most women who participate in field work have small families, or have someone at home who helps with their work, and therefore had no problem in working in the fields for half a year. The rest of the coop's women spend most of their time at home and therefore have no problem with housework.'

TITLE

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