Rural Development Policies as State's Response to Farmers' Demand
Historical Background of Parallel Growth of Urban and Rural Areas in Korea

NAWAKURA Akio
(Meiji University, Tokyo, Japan)

Introduction

This study asks how the state of South Korea (hereafter Korea) communicated with farmers and their interest representatives in the developing age from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Korea has been one of the rare emerging economies to achieve parallel income growth of both urban industrial sector and rural agricultural one in the process of rapid industrialization. While many other high growth Asian economies such as China and Thailand have been suffering from serious income gap between urban dwellers and farmers, Korean farmers' income has been more than 60% of urban workers' one for these five decades. This performance was a result of the government's active rural development measures such as the price support of agricultural products in the 1960s, the New Village Movement in the 1970s, and the debt moratorium in the 1980s (Nawakura, 2016). Based on this experience, the government of Korea today offers rural development programs as its official development assistance.

Though Korea has been a rare case to achieve parallel growth of industry and agriculture, however, why the Korean state has implemented the farmers-friendly policies has not been clear. In other words, while some numbers of previous studies have clarified what the Korean developmental state did for agriculture, only limited number of works has argued why the state did so. In terms of the Korean state's support for agriculture, on the one hand, a number of academic works, statistic data, and journal reports have clarified how political leaders such as President Park Chung Hee were passionate to boost agriculture sector, how the government's master plans put their priority on agriculture, and how much the government paid for agricultural policies (Nawakura, 2016). On the other hand, they have offered poor explanation on the reason for the passionate agricultural policies. Some previous studies have argued that the Korean state assisted the modernization of rural and agricultural areas because it needed political approval from farmers got stable rule. However, they are insufficient to explain the reason of the Korean state’s assistance on rural sector. Because some other Asian countries such

1 National Statistic Agency of the Republic of Korea
http://m.kosis.kr/mobService/jipyolist/ModDataA.do?parmMainJipyo=38&parmPrdSe=&parmAreaType=1&parmDataGubun=&parmTypeGubun=A&rn=0&listSearchText=&listNm=&preCode=A&preListNm=인구가구 (Reviewed on April 4, 2017)
as Indonesia and Thailand neglected to assist rural sector in the process of industrialization despite they also needed to gain the approval from rural sector for stable rule.

The remarkable performance of urban-rural parallel growth and the government's assistance for it hints us: Korean farmers in developing era demanded their government to improve their life and work environment. Without any demand from farmers, the government must have had poor incentive to do something for farmers. Then, how have Korean farmers demanded their government to implement pro-rural policies and how has the government heard the farmers' voice? In other words, how have Korean farmers and the government communicated in terms of rural development? To answer the questions, the chapters below see the Korean farmers' voice in the developing era and communication between the farmers and the government employing the framework of corporatism.

**Previous Studies on South Korea's Rural Development Policies**

Since the 1960s, the government of Korea has implemented a number of rural development projects. Previous studies have described what the government did for the growth of agricultural sector. Lee Ji Soo (2010) points out that the government, particularly former President Park Chung Hee from 1963 to 1979, actively led the rural development projects giving incentive for farmers to make effort. Kim Jeong Ryeom, a secretary of the President's Office in the 1970s noted President Park ordered the governmental organisation to implement rural development projects as politically neutral measures (Kim, 1997). This order meant that the government had to assist the development of rural areas not for the sake of Park but for that of farmers themselves. While describing how the President and the high rank officials acted for rural development, however, these literature have poorly mentioned to the reason for the government's active attitude.

As some literature point out, President Park's passion to assist farmers could be a major factor (Park, 2005; Lee, 2012; Lee, 2013). However, there have been many developing economies which have experienced serious urban and rural division in spite of political leaders' attitude for rural development. This indicates that some factors might have worked in Korea to transform the political leaders’ passion to detailed rural development projects with financial background. However, the factors have not been clear.

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2 For example, Suharto in Indonesia took poor actions for rural development while pushing industrialization from the 1960s to the 1990s. As a result, Indonesia shifted from a net-exporting country to a net-importing one in terms of agricultural products during the Suharto age.

3 In the case of Indonesia again, Suharto did not neglect rural development. Rather, He issued many number of decrees to assist rural economy during his 32years presidency (Oshima, 1998). However, they have not performed to achieve parallel growth of urban and rural areas.
Korean Farmers' Wishes to be Rich and Their Tools

When Korea began its rapid industrialization in the early 1960s, the nation was a poor agrarian society whose gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was less than USD 100\(^4\). In addition to the extreme poverty, increasing population by mostly 2% annually could cause serious food shortage\(^5\).

Some numbers of anthropology studies in that age, mostly implemented by Japanese researches, mention to how the Korea farmers wished to be rich. Ito (2013), monitoring a rural village in South Jeolla Province for more than four decades, describes that the rural residents made every efforts to avoid poverty and shared the strong wish to be rich. In addition, Ito also describes that the farmers expected the national and local governments to offer some measures to improve their life (Ito, 2013). Also Shima (1985), who researched some villages in North and South Gyeongsang Provinces, points out the Korean farmers in the 1970s participated in the government-led rural development projects expecting to be rich. The studies above indicate that the Korean farmers requested the government to do something for their income growth.

From the perspective of historical studies, Hong (2013) points out that the Korean farmers’ uprising since the 19th Century has not targeted landlord class but the government. According to his study, against the Marxism view, Korean farmers have not struggled on landlords but have demanded the government to implement pro-farmers policies such as tax reduction. This indicates how Korean farmers have expected their government to do something for them.

While the farmers have been demanding on the government, also the government and ruling parties have been sensitive to hear the farmers’ voice. In 1979, for example, President Park suggested the ruling Democratic Republican Party to deregulate farm land transaction to utilize land use in rural areas. Because of huge domestic migration from rural to urban areas, Korea in the 1970s had much abandoned farmlands. The deregulation of farmland transaction was expected to utilize the abandoned lands. Under the command by the President, the Ministry of Agriculture and governmental think tanks proposed a farmland bill. However, the party's National Assembly members rejected the proposal because most farmers opposed the deregulation bill for it might have caused the revival of tenant farming\(^6\). Finally, the President gave up the deregulation\(^7\). The lost of the ruling party in the National Assembly election in


\(^6\) The Korean government implemented land reform in the end of the 1940s and distributed the nation's most farmland to former tenant peasants.

\(^7\) National Archives of Korea https://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=003658 (Reviewed on May 9, 2017)
previous year encouraged the President to give up his idea. This episode indicates, in spite of its authoritarian characteristic, the elite of Korean state in developing era heard the voice of farmers by some means to sustain political approval from them.

Then, how did the farmers communicate the government to convey their messages in the 1960s’ and the 1970s’ Korea? Because the nation from the early 1960s to the end of 1980s was under authoritarian rule, previous studies have not shaded light on this point. However, as the exact data will be shown in the following chapter, Korea’s authoritarian rule was the one which opposition parties won more than half seats in legislative election. In such a ruling system, the state of Korea must have had strong incentive the voters’ voice, including the farmers’ one to win elections.

How did the state hear the farmers’ voice? And by which framework the political communication can be explained? Considering the characteristics of Korea's largest farmers' association, the National Agricultural Cooperatives Federation (NACF), the framework of corporatism is a possible hypothesis.

Different from agricultural cooperatives and their federation in the Western countries, the NACF has been a highly centralised quasi-governmental organisation. In 1961, the NACF was founded by the military junta’s initiative. The government's prime purpose to found the NACF was to build the state’s control of agriculture. Under the NACF as the national headquarters, its branches were put in every province and each provincial branch managed local cooperatives located in every rural villages. Also, in terms of personnel, the Korean agricultural cooperatives were hierarchical: The head of the NACF was nominated by the President of the Republic of Korea and cadres of local cooperatives were named by the head of the NACF before the reform in 1989. Though the participation in local cooperatives has not been duty for farmers, they had to join the cooperatives because most governmental assistance for farmers such as subsidy and fertilizer has been distributed via the NACF system.

The characteristics of the NACF above indicate that agricultural cooperatives have been a major route to connect farmers and the government. To analyze the cooperatives' role, corporatism is likely to an optimal framework. The next chapter explains what corporatism in this study means and how the analysis using this model is meaningful.

Framework of Corporatism

According to Schmitter (1974), corporatism is defined as a system of interest representation with limited number of singular, compulsory, non competitive, hierarchy, and
functionally differentiated interest groups. Under the regime of corporatism, the dominant interest group in each sector is licensed or recognized its prerogative status by the state and certainly controls political demand in its own sector. Depending on the Schmitter's definition, a number of academic works have attempted empirical studies on actual corporatism bearing some sub categories of neo corporatism and state corporatism.

As Cardoso (2012) mentioned, however, many numbers of previous studies on this framework have argued only labour politics. Particularly, the empirical studies on the corporatism in Korea have been limited to see state-labour or business-labour relations. For example, though Kitamura (2008) argues the Korea's corporatism after the Asian financial crisis in 1997, his scope is limited to the interest representation of major businesses of chaebol and trade unions. Also Bramble and Ollett (2006), Kim (2008) and Lee (2016) see only labour policies or business-labour relations in their studies of multinational comparison of corporatism with historical perspective. Though the field of labour politics fits the corporatism theory, the concept of dominant interest representation can be applied to more broader areas. Actually, McNamara et al (1999) points out that the Korea's agricultural policies have had some characteristics to fit corporatism such as the agricultural cooperatives' role to push collectivity of farming.

In empirical case studies on the Western countries, some previous studies have argued that the framework of corporatism can also be applied to the policy field other than labour ones. For example, Winter (1984) applies the framework to agricultural policies in the United Kingdom. According to Winter, the retailing of dairy products in the UK is strictly controlled by the Milk Marketing Board, a nation-wide centralized organization consisted by dairy farmers. The Board has rich political resource to lobby and sustains the status of the only recognized dairy retailer by the government. Reviewing these characteristics, Winter points out that the corporatism theory can be employed to see the agricultural politics in developed countries.

As mentioned in previous chapter, Korea has quite unique agricultural cooperatives which fit the criteria of interest representation under corporatism regime: Prerogative legal status, de facto compulsory membership, and dominance without competition. Next chapters see how the Korean agricultural cooperatives have behaved in the context of farmers' interest representation and how it has performed.

The NACF Regime from the 1960s to the 1980s

When the government founded the NACF and local cooperatives under it (hereafter the NACF system) in 1961, the system had fundamentally different characteristics from existing local institutions in rural Korea. As they have moved from one village to another frequently, the Korean farmers have had loose and ad hoc local connection. In terms of finance, for example,
the Korean farmers have used *gye*, rotating association, as a major mean to save and credit. Because *Gye* is an financial association based rotating system, it is dissolved when all the member use its financial service (Lee, 1981). Also in terms of farming works, traditional mutual assistance of *pumasi* has been based on single year covenant (Lee, 1981), which mean that the covenant on mutual assistance among farmers expires within one year. Therefore, if a farmhouse helps its neighbors in a particular year, its debt must be repaid before calendar year changes. In other words, the Korean farmers had had quite poor experience of firm or permanent local networks until the founding of the NACF.

The government's initiative to 'install' agricultural cooperatives changed their tradition drastically. Since the mid-1960s, local agricultural cooperatives under the NACF umbrella have worked as permanent and one-stop institutions to offer financial credit, government's subsidy, fertilizer and technical education for farmers. Though the government founded a number of umbrella-like organisation in rural areas such as 4-H Clubs, the National Reconstruction Movement⁹, and the New Village Movement, they have not been as comprehensive as the NACF has been¹⁰. As a result, the NACF gained the dominant status as a nationwide organisation for farmers. Though membership of agricultural cooperatives has not been for legal duty for farmers, they have had no option but to join the cooperatives because the NACF system has been the only rural institution to offer various assistance including credit and information for long term. In addition, because the government distributed assistance materials such as fertilizer through the NACF organs, the farmers could not receive any public support without the cooperatives' membership. These features indicate that the NACF system fits the criteria as an organisation in corporatism regime.

Because of its dominant status, the NACF system has been seen as a 'quasi-executive organisation of the government.' Actually, under the head of the NACF nominated by the President, agricultural cooperatives in Korea have worked as a part of executive branches. However, this NACF's characteristics do not deny its another function: a centralized and nationwide interest group of farmers which is influential on the government's agricultural policies. Under the authoritarian rule from the 1960s to the 1980s, the NACF system worked as the only legal channel to convey the farmers' political request to the government officers and the National Assembly members in ruling parties¹¹.

Different from the general reputation as a quasi-executive organisation, the NACF system

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⁹ The 4-H Clubs and the National Reconstruction Movement were government-led nationwide campaigns to encourage the modernization of the nation’s industry.

¹⁰ The NACF was the only rural institution founded by the government which has had its own bank. Based on this financial background, the NACF has operated various activities such as retailing of agricultural products, education and training on farmers, promoting mutual communication among farmers, and nationwide-chained supermarket.

¹¹ Though Catholic churches also acted in rural areas, they rather focused on grassroots assistance for farmers than behaved as interest groups.
often expressed objection on the government's policies. In 1964, for example, the Central Committee of the NACF demanded the government to decouple its fertilizer policies and subsidy policies\textsuperscript{12}. Under the mid-term master plan of the First Five Year Plan of Economic Development (1962-1966), the government tied the use of agricultural subsidy with the fertilizer retailed by government-designated enterprises to save the cost and decrease the import. However, the NACF demanded the Ministry of Agriculture to cancel the coupling because the measure does not match the farmers' actual needs on subsidy.

While the NACF often demanded the government to revise or adjust policies in the form if official resolutions on the one hand, it contacted the cadres of the Ministry of Agriculture and local governments on the other. The NACF and its member cooperatives have had monthly meetings with both central and local governments\textsuperscript{13}. The meetings have been held in three levels: municipal level, provincial one, and national one. While each local cooperative had meetings with its counterpart of municipal government every month, each provincial branch of the NACF did with provincial government. And the NACF leaders reported its activities to the Ministry of Agriculture and the President Office monthly. Though the Basic Law of Agricultural Cooperatives of 1961 officially prohibited the NACF system's political activities, these monthly meetings played the role for the cooperatives to require the government on what policies to implement. For example, Gyunggi Province branch of the NACF has held monthly meetings with the provincial government and the meetings have played the role as an arena to negotiate the amount and usage of the province's agricultural budget\textsuperscript{14}.

Even in the 1970s and the 1980s, the agricultural cooperatives acted to request on governments. In 1972, the government began the New Village Movement, a nationwide campaign to build agricultural infrastructure, and launched the Central Committee of the New Village Movement to guide the campaign. Though the government pushed the campaign as a matter which the NACF did not join, the annual congress of the NACF requested the government to push the New Village Movement in collaboration with agricultural cooperatives\textsuperscript{15}. By the joining of the nationwide and comprehensive agricultural organisation, as a result, the New Village Movement gained more resource to improve rural infrastructure.

As seen above, while the government has guided the founding and operation of the NACF system, the cooperatives have demanded the government on what policies to be implemented. Next section sees the fact that the demand has often been influential on the government.

\textsuperscript{12} The NACF http://www.nonghyup.com/Html/Nhnonghyup/Ustatus/Trace/1960.aspx (Reviewed on May 9, 2017)
\textsuperscript{13} The NACF http://www.nonghyup.com/Html/Nhnonghyup/Ustatus/NhWork/Education.aspx (Revied on May 9, 2017)
\textsuperscript{14} The Korean Farmers and Fishermen Times http://www.agrinet.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=37486 (Reviewed on May 9, 2017)
\textsuperscript{15} The NACF http://www.nonghyup.com/Html/Nhnonghyup/Ustatus/Trace/1970.aspx (Reviewed on May 9, 2017)
The Government's Response to the NACF System

When the government launched economic development policies in the early 1960s, more than 70% of Korean population lived in rural areas. For President Park, who seized the power by coup in 1961 and was inaugurated to the president in 1963, it was necessary for the win in coming elections and stable rule to gain political approval from the farmers.

Though Korea from the 1960s to the 1980s is seen as under authoritarian rule, Park Chung Hee's and his successor Jun Doo Hwan's rule was different from other non-democratic regimes in Asia such as Indonesia under Suharto and Taiwan under Chiang Kai Shek: Park and Jun had substantial opposition parties to challenge their rule. Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, who both won the National Assembly election in the early 1960s, have heavily criticized Park and Jun as the ruler without democratic legitimacy leading opposition parties.

Table 1 indicates the result of the National Assembly elections in the developing era. In the 1960s, the ruling party won mostly two thirds of total seats. In the 1970s, however, while the ruling party decreased its share in total seats, opposition parties increased its share. In the 1978 election, opposition parties won more than half seats. Also in the 1981 and 1985 elections, opposition parties won more than 40% of total seats while the Jun Doo Hwan’s ruling Democratic Justice Party won majority slightly. And in the 1988 election, first National Assembly election after the democratization of 1987, opposition parties seized the majority of legislature. This fact indicates that, against the stereotype of authoritarian rule, the ruling parties of Korea in developing age faced heavy competition with opposition parties in legislature. In such competitive situation, the government had incentive to hear the farmers’ voice to gain their approval.
Table 1: Results of the National Assembly Elections from the 1960s to the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1967</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1973</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>*146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruling Party</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositions</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td>*154</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruling Party</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositions</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit: Seats


*=From 1972 to 1979, two-thirds of the members of the National Assembly were elected by direct election while the left one-third was nominated by the President. The data on this table does NOT include the number of the seats nominated by the President.

Opposition parties were popular in urban areas while farmers tended to support the ruling party. This meant that the ruling party needed to secure the farmers’ support and to prevent the opposition parties' emerge in rural areas. In order to consolidate the farmers’ support, the government did not hesitate pork barrel measures, which were opposed by the Ministry of Agriculture as seen below.16

In deciding the exact usage of the budget, the communication with the NACF system

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16 The description of the government's loan reduction for farmers in the 1980s depends on Korean Rural Economic Institute (1999).
played important role. Policies for indebted farmers in the mid 1980s are typical examples. When Korea achieved its full self sufficiency of rice in the mid 1970s, the government began to encourage the farmers to operate dairy farming. This policy shift had two purposes. First, the government tried to avoid overproduction of rice which causes rice's price drop. The encouragement on farming other than rice, particularly farming of dairy products, was a major option for the stable price of rice. Second, the government tried to raise Korean agriculture's productivity by encouraging dairy farming because dairy products such as milk, beef, and pork were expected to bring high gain to farmers.

However, the government-led shift from rice farming to dairy one caused heavy debt on farmers. Though dairy farming was more productive than rice one, it needed much investment. Because the most Korean farmers were unfriendly in dairy farming, they could not gain as they had invested and, as a result, they were heavily indebted. In 1985, non performing loan on average Korean farm household accounted almost one million won, which was equal to their annual income.\(^{17}\)

Meanwhile, the 1980s' Korean agriculture faced another subject: Trade liberalization of agricultural products. As trade friction emerged as a serious matter between Korea and the United States, Washington insisted on Seoul to open its domestic market. Agricultural products were not exception. This forced Korean government to reform its agriculture for more productive one. In the mid-1980s, the Ministry of Agriculture preferred to transform the nation's agriculture more competitive and saw shot-term measures such as debt reduction did not contribute to that purpose. While the Ministry's proposal was expected to raise the productivity of Korean agriculture, it was also expected to trigger forced retirement of farmers with low productivity. As Korea has had poor non-farm industry in rural areas, the retired farmers had high risk to suffer from jobless and poverty.

As a result, the Jun Doo Hwan government decided to rescue the indebted farmers by debt reduction. The Competitive Project of Rural Development in 1986 offered the indebted farmers a 'loan transition program.' The program was a financial measure to lend cash to the indebted farmers with low interest rate. The farmers, in exchange for accepting the governmental loan, were exempted all of their debt on dairy farming from private financial institutions. Though this 'loan transition' method was often employed in rural finance in the 1960s and the 1970s, the Ministry of Finance has been critical on the methods because it distorted the nation's financial market. In spite of such criticism, the government measured to liberate the indebted farmers from high interest rate.

The farmers' demand on the government through the NACF system played as a major

\(^{17}\) The National Statistic Agency of the Republic of Korea
contributor to realize the loan transition program. Since the early 1980s, the headquarters of the NACF and local cooperatives under it have repeatedly requested the government's assistance on the indebted farmers by financial measures. The cadres of the NACF headquarters have repeatedly contacted the Ministry of Agriculture and the secretaries in the President Office. Also local cooperatives have had meetings with municipal and provincial governments demanding the loan reduction.

For the government, it was quite risky to ignore the farmers' voice because general election of the National Assembly was scheduled in coming years. Because Jun Doo Hwan and his ruling Democratic Justice Party were unpopular among voters, the military-based rulers lost in the previous elections in 1982. In order to secure the farmers' approval on the ruling party, the government could not ignore the indebted farmers.

Conclusion

In spite of parallel income growth of urban and rural areas during rapid industrialization, the reason why the state of Korea has made efforts to achieve the parallel growth has been a black hole in previous studies. Some works have pointed the political leaders' will and passion to achieve it as a major contributor. However, they were insufficient to explain the distinguished performance of Korea.

The analysis above indicates that the competition with opposition parties in elections played the role of incentive for the Korean government from the 1960s to the 1980s to gain the farmers' political approval in the National Assembly's elections. For that purpose, it has been a major option for the government to implement pro-rural policies. In concrete, then, what kind of measures was ideal? And how did the government know it?

The nationwide organisation of the NACF system worked as a major communication channel between the government and farmers. While acting as a quasi-governmental organ, the NACF has demanded pro-farmers measures such as the decoupling of fertilizer policies and subsidy ones in the 1960s, adjustment with other rural organisations such as the New Village Movement in the 1970s, and debt reduction in the 1980s. The local cooperatives under the NACF also contacted local governments to gain agricultural budget.

As a result, the communication between the NACF system and the government based on corporatism structure played a major role on deciding the government's agricultural policies in developing era from the 1960s to the 1980s. Because the government had the incentive to respond to the farmers' request to win the competitive National Assembly elections, the

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18 The National Archives of Korea
http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectContentArchive.do?page=6&subjectContentId=004860&pageFlag= (Reviewed on May 16, 2017)
government often heard the NACF system’s voice.

This conclusion shows an implication for theoretical studies on corporatism. In academic common sense, corporatism is a state-friendly regime because the state can easily control private interest groups under corporatism than pluralism\(^\text{19}\). However, this case study indicates that interest groups under corporatism can be influential on the state. More detailed and broad empirical analysis on how the influence on state works is a research subject in future.

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통계청(National Statistic Agency of the Republic of Korea) http://kosis.kr
한국농어민신문 (The Korean Farmers and Fishermen Times) http://www.agrinet.co.kr