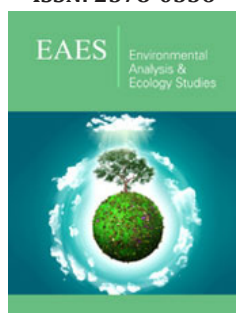


The Role of Governments in Promoting Rural Households' Willingness to Participate in Rural Environmental Governance

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Opinion

The continuous deterioration of the rural public environment is a significant problem faced by many developing countries. It has brought severe negative effects on the lives of rural households and has become an urgent problem in rural public governance. Due to the nature of quasi-public goods of the rural public environment. It is determined that its effective governance must be collectively participated by rural residents. Generally, governments promote rural households' willingness to participate in environmental governance in two ways: "behavior demonstration" and "education guidance." "Behavior demonstration" means governments provided public environment projects in rural areas, and through this behavior demonstration to drive rural households' willingness to participate in environmental governance; and "education guidance" refers to the government's environmental governance education and training for rural households to improve their environment Willingness to participate in governance. We believe that governments should play the role of an educational guide in promoting rural households' participation in rural environmental governance activities.

First of all, when the governments funded the implementation of public living environment projects in rural areas and conducted "behavior demonstrations" for rural households, it also brings free-rider problem. Since the marginal benefit of providing public goods is less than the marginal cost, no rural households try to provide public services and are unwilling to participate in environmental governance. Every potential public service provider is taking a free ride in governments' public services. Therefore, when the government conducts "behavior demonstration," rural households' willingness to participate will be lowered. However, governments enhance rural households' environmental risk perception and social responsibility and improve rural households' environmental governance skills through "educational guidance." Rural households will then play their subjective initiative to participate in rural environmental governance.

In order to verify the above hypothesis, we collected survey data from 100 villages in China and established a mediation and moderation effect model to analyze the promotion effects of the two activities on the increase of rural households' willingness to participate. The results found that when all other things being equal, governments' "Behavior Demonstration" will reduce rural households' willingness to participate by 59%, indicating that rural households' free-riding behavior is severe. The government's "educational guidance" can increase rural households' willingness to participate by 19.5%. Besides, these results will be moderated by the heterogeneity of rural households' environmental risk perception capabilities. Rural households' environmental risk perception can weaken the adverse effects of "Behavior Demonstration."

All in all, governments should play the role of education and guidance when increasing rural households' willingness to participate in rural environmental governance. In addition, in rural environmental governance, rural households should avoid "free-riding" behavior, establish a long-term mechanism, and achieve sustainable development of the rural environment.

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