The Process of Land Consolidation Among Rice Producers in Mazandaran Province, Iran: Grounded Theory Approach

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Iranian agriculture with small fragmented peasantry farms will not be capable of providing minimum food requirement for an increasing population. In order to overcome, the problems and consequences originated from land fragmentation, specialists recommend the logical solution of land consolidation, which is a basic strategy for changing the farm size. The purpose of this research was to identify the factors influencing the land consolidation process in Mazandaran province, and to investigate the collective decision making process of land consolidation.

Purpose and Methods

This study employed grounded theory methods with a phenomenological paradigm of research. A grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. To insure internal validity of strategies employed in the research, data were refered to people from whom we have collected the data and asked them whether the results were acceptable to them or not, in the other word, the specialists were asked to judge about the effective factors in land consolidation which were generated through the use of grounded theory. Data were gathered from direct observations, interviews and focus group interview, with farmers, extension agents, specialists and local leaders in selected village.

Major points and Lessons Learned

In this research, a theoretical sampling was employed which was done through three sampling stages, open, relational and discriminative sampling, which was related to three types of coding (open, axial and selective coding). This data collection was continued until theoretical saturation of each category was reached. After coding data were conceptualized, and the abstract concepts of the phenomena created some sort of category in a distinct system. From concepts which were gathered through, 22 categories were identified. Diagrams were used for visual demonstration of the analytic though which included the process of the collective decision making for land consolidation, effective psychological factors influencing acceptance, the channels of receiving information by farmers, effective economical factors(farm size and fragmentation have effected production costs of small irrigated rice producers and costs had positive relation white fragmentation and negative relation with size under cultivation), effective extension strategies, personal factors contribution nonadoption, the condition of land and enviromental factors that influence the process of land consolidation.

Educational Importance

The role of land use systems is very important in agricultural development and the use of soil and water resources has been one of the fundamental issues of Iranian agriculture. It is importance is due to the types of land use systems which can affect production and resource allocation and in many cases it limits the utilization of agricultural technology.

The results of this research demonstrated that effective factors on adoption or nonadoption of land consolidation have different dimensions in three locations where study was conducted and have specific causal condition, intervening conditions, strategies and consequences which should be noted in determining target groups farmers. The theory developed in this research enables one to predict which farmers will accept land consolidation. The theory also helps to understand why some farmers do not adopt land consolidation. Therefore, where necessary, based on this theory, effective strategies could be developed to overcome the problems of nonadoption.