

## Sowing Seeds of Mobility: Gender-biased Impact of Land Reforms

Ting Chen, Jiajia Gu, Rachel Ngai, Jin Wang

### Abstract

Developing countries are transitioning out of agriculture, but this transformation is often hindered by mobility barriers. This paper explores the unique aspects of China's `\textit{hukou}` system and its reforms to identify and quantify these barriers. A significant barrier posed by the `\textit{hukou}` system is that rural households risk losing their land if they migrate. We construct a novel county-level index to capture the staggered implementation of land reforms. Our empirical findings indicate that these reforms have encouraged rural women to migrate away from agriculture more than men and have increased joint spousal migration. We develop and calibrate a two-region model that allows households to decide which members to migrate. The model highlights that the land reform plays an important role in shaping the gender patterns of employment and migration during structural transformation.