International Journal of Law, Ethics and Social Sciences

Article

Research on Access Standards for Service Providers in Rural Specialty Industries: A Case Study of Tea-Planting Service Providers in Jiangxi Province

Tingting Guo[1,2], Yilong Li[1,2], Liyan Chen[1,2], Yulin Chen[1,2] and Xia Qiu[1,2,*]

[1] College of Engineering, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China
[2] Research Center for Agricultural Mechanization Development, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China
* Correspondence: Xia Qiu, College of Engineering, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China; Research Center for Agricultural Mechanization Development, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China

Abstract: The tea industry is a distinctive industry in the hilly and mountainous regions of southern China. As the integration of smallholder farmers into modern agriculture continues to advance, agricultural specialized services are playing an increasingly prominent role. Yet the quality of these services is constrained by weak capacity among service providers, inconsistent service standards, and the absence of entry thresholds. Taking the tea-planting service providers of Jiangxi Province as an example, this paper develops dedicated access standards that define eligible applicants, basic principles, service categories, and admission requirements. In light of the realities of tea production in hilly and mountainous areas, it puts forward recommendations concerning tiered and category-based admission, dynamic evaluation, and policy coordination, with the aim of informing the improvement of access systems for service providers in the tea industry and, by extension, in other rural specialty industries.

Keywords: rural specialty industries; agricultural specialized services; access standards; service providers; tea industry

1. Introduction

Developing rural specialty industries and seeking greater returns through the integrated development of the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors on the basis of distinctive agricultural and rural resources is an essential way to broaden the channels through which farmers can increase their incomes [1]. Combining ecological, economic, and cultural value [2], the tea industry is a typical county-level industry that generates prosperity in the hilly and mountainous regions of southern China. Jiangxi, a province with a long history of tea cultivation, owes an important place in its local economy to the tea industry [3]. Its tea plantations, however, are located mainly in hilly and mountainous areas and are operated predominantly by household-based smallholder farmers. Consequently, labor constraints in tea-garden management, picking, and processing have grown tighter, and the demand for specialized, socialized services is particularly pressing. To address this challenge, this paper acts in the spirit of the 14th Five-Year Plan for Agricultural and Rural Modernization of Jiangxi Province and the Implementation Opinions of the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government on Promoting Rural Industry Revitalization [4-5]. In line with Jiangxi's conditions, it formulates access standards for tea-planting service providers in the province (hereafter "the Standard") and provides an analysis of these standards. The aim is to screen qualified service providers through clear admission requirements, regulate service-provision behavior, improve service quality, reveal the underlying logic, and propose pathways for implementation.

Received: 02 September 2026
Revised: 21 October 2026
Accepted: 03 November 2026
Published: 06 November 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

2. Eligible Applicants and Basic Principles

The Standard makes clear that any organization or individual-including farmer (farm-machinery) specialized cooperatives, agricultural enterprises, family farms, and village collective economic organizations-that wishes to engage in specialized farm-machinery services for tea production in Jiangxi may apply to become a tea-planting service provider. This provision reflects the breadth and inclusiveness of eligibility: rather than being confined to a single organizational form, it covers the main types of service suppliers currently found in rural areas, which helps to mobilize a wide range of actors to take part in specialized tea-industry services.

With regard to admission principles, the Standard establishes the core rule that "an applicant meeting any one of the following service conditions shall be admitted." Applicants are not required to possess the full range of service capabilities; they qualify as long as they satisfy the requirements for any one of the five categories, namely production services, agricultural technology extension services, agricultural input supply services, information services, and marketing services. This rule substantially lowers the entry threshold, encouraging diverse actors to participate and fostering a service market marked by vigorous competition and varied supply. It also embodies the institutional intent of "category-based admission that allows each provider to play to its strengths": actors are permitted to specialize in a particular service link or field according to their own capabilities, rather than being expected to deliver whole-chain services (As shown in Figure 1).

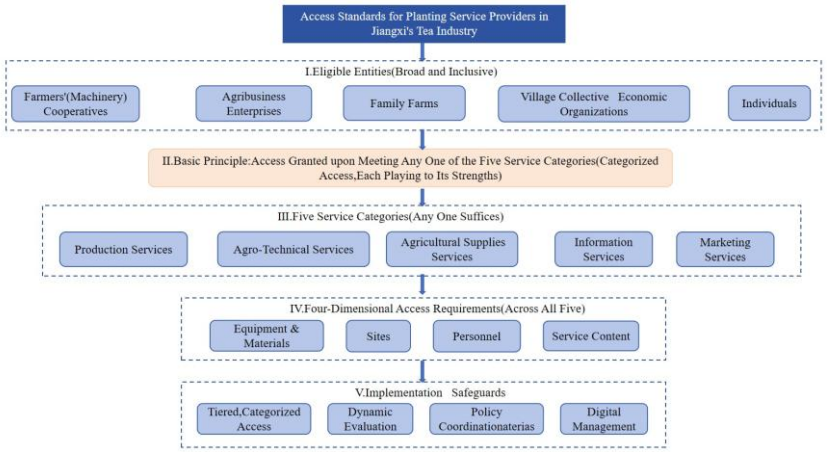


Figure 1. Framework of the Access System for Tea Planting Service Providers

3. Admission Requirements for Production Services

Production services form the core of specialized tea-industry services and constitute the most detailed part of the Standard. The Standard lays down specific requirements for production-service providers along four dimensions: equipment and materials, premises, personnel, and service scope.

In terms of equipment and materials, the Standard requires providers to be able to supply any one type of machinery or material related to tea production. These include materials such as tea-picking machinery, transport equipment, tea planting stock (seedlings), fertilizers, and pesticides; tillage and land-preparation machinery such as mini-tillers and tractors; protective equipment such as moisture-proof, sun-shading, and insect-prevention devices; plant-protection machinery such as plant-protection unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), boom sprayers, and mist sprayers; processing machinery such as fixation machines, rolling machines, strip-forming machines, dryers, roasting machines, and filling machines; and packaging machinery such as tea-metering, sealing, labeling, cartoning, and heat-shrink machines. Providers may also support the water and road infrastructure within the tea garden, building either a drainage,

impoundment, and irrigation system or a tea-garden road system, so as to ensure that the garden can accommodate mechanized production. This broadly framed equipment requirement is designed to lower the entry threshold so that providers equipped for even a single link are able to enter the service market.

With regard to premises, the Standard requires providers to be able to offer any one of the following: tea-planting land; storage facilities such as a tea storeroom; processing sites such as a withering/drying room or a roasting room; or research facilities for cultivar breeding, cultivar trials, or seedling production. This requirement likewise reflects a flexible approach, allowing providers to select the type of site suited to their own conditions.

For personnel, the Standard sets five requirements: familiarity with the relevant national, industry, and local laws, regulations, rules, and standards governing tea production and operation; the ability to formulate pest-control plans, determine control techniques, or provide guidance on the procurement, use, storage, and handling of pesticides and on pest control; the ability to apply, in accordance with the growth characteristics of tea plants and the conditions of the garden, such techniques as formative pruning, light pruning, and heavy pruning; proficiency in tea-processing techniques, including fixation, rolling, sun withering, and fermentation; and strong skills in verbal expression, communication, and coordination. These requirements span laws and regulations, pest and disease control, tea-plant pruning, tea processing, and communication, reflecting a comprehensive consideration of the professional competence expected of service personnel.

As for service scope, the Standard specifies that providers may offer services such as soil-moisture monitoring, tillage, planting, fertilization, pest and disease control, pruning and shaping, and harvesting; they may also supply the agricultural machinery used in these operations or provide production guidance for them. This extends service provision beyond operational work alone to include equipment supply and technical guidance, reflecting the diversity of service modes.

4. Admission Requirements for Agricultural Technology Extension Services

Agricultural technology extension services center on technology dissemination and training. In terms of equipment and materials, the Standard requires providers to be able to offer any one teaching facility, such as desks, chairs, computers, or projectors, together with tools for the repair and maintenance of the farm machinery used in the tea-production process or in a particular production link. With regard to premises, providers should be able to furnish a training classroom; facilities for storing and repairing tea-production machinery; sites for cultivar breeding, cultivar trials, or seedling production; demonstration bases for new technologies; and venues for hands-on skills practice. For personnel, they should be familiar with the repair and maintenance of the relevant farm machinery and with the associated knowledge and skills; be able to provide production training and guidance, technical consulting, and science communication; and be able to deliver practical training in new cultivars, technologies, and equipment to tea producers, with technical staff possessing the requisite professional level and service capability as well as strong communication skills. In terms of service scope, the Standard specifies that providers may offer both public-interest and commercial agricultural technology extension, technical consulting, and practical training in new cultivars, technologies, and equipment.

5. Admission Requirements for Agricultural Input Supply Services

Agricultural input supply services center on the supply of materials for tea production. The Standard requires providers to be able to offer any one material, such as tea seeds or seedlings and chemical fertilizers; to operate an agricultural-inputs store and hold valid, legally compliant certificates of registration with the national industry-and-commerce authority. Personnel should have a relevant professional background in areas

such as tea production, be familiar with the tea market and the types of chemical fertilizer, and be able to offer customers targeted guidance on purchasing tea seeds, fertilizers, and other materials. In terms of service scope, providers may supply products suited to the local tea-planting structure through formal sourcing channels, giving priority to name-brand products; they may provide a business area commensurate with the scale and scope of services and physically separated from living quarters, with the various functional zones laid out rationally and kept clean and tidy; they may make product batch numbers available for inspection and issue purchase invoices; and they may take back and dispose of waste such as used agricultural-input packaging materials.

6. Admission Requirements for Information Services

Information services center on the collection, organization, and release of tea-industry information. The Standard requires providers to be able to offer any one teaching facility, such as desks, chairs, computers, or projectors, as well as any one piece of equipment such as integrated monitoring devices for tea-production information. They should be able to provide a training classroom and a monitoring room. Personnel should be familiar with the knowledge and skills relevant to the tea-production process or to a particular production link; be able to carry out the transfer, training, and dissemination of tea-related technologies; be able to provide tea-production services such as technology demonstration, technical guidance, technical consulting, and scientific training; be able to guide clients in standardized production; keep abreast of developments in the tea industry; be able to identify and collect the technological needs of clients in a timely manner; and accept technical inquiries from clients. In terms of service scope, providers may organize information concerning weather, the environment, prices of agricultural inputs, science and technology, quality monitoring, product traceability, and product supply and demand; they may establish a database of tea-service clients, integrate it into weather monitoring, forecasting, and early-warning systems and weather short-message service platforms, and report information to tea farmers on a regular basis; and, on the basis of the information compiled, they may offer sound recommendations to tea farmers, particularly reminding them to take timely preventive measures in the event of disastrous weather.

7. Admission Requirements for Marketing Services

Marketing services center on the circulation of tea products and engagement with the market. The Standard requires providers to be able to offer at least one type of specialized transport equipment, such as vehicles for tea and related by-products; to provide at least one storage facility, such as a storeroom for tea and related by-products; and they may provide sales outlets while holding valid, legally compliant certificates of registration with the national industry-and-commerce authority. Personnel should have a relevant professional background in fields such as marketing, be able to provide sales channels, be familiar with market conditions for tea and related by-products, understand product pricing, and be able to bring economic benefits to customers. In terms of service scope, providers may offer services such as the storage, packaging, logistics and distribution, and purchasing and sale of tea products; may conduct safety assessments of tea products; may issue certificates of conformity; and may affix QR codes, barcodes, or supplementary labels, tags, and instructions to tea products (As shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Four-dimensional Access Requirements for the Five Categories of Tea Planting Service Providers

Service Category	Equipment & Materials	Sites	Personnel	Service Content
Production Services	At least one tea machine or material for picking, tillage,	Any one of tea fields, storage rooms,	Familiar with regulations and standards; skilled	Soil-moisture monitoring, tillage, fertilizing,

	plant protection, processing or packaging; supporting water and road facilities	processing or research sites	in pest control, pruning and processing; good communication	pest control, pruning and harvesting, plus machinery and guidance
Agro-Technical Services	Teaching facilities (desks, computers, projectors) and machinery maintenance tools	Training classrooms, machinery maintenance sites, seedling sites, demonstration and hands-on bases	Familiar with machinery maintenance; able to train, advise and conduct outreach	Public-interest and commercial agro-technical extension and advice; training in new varieties, techniques and equipment
Agricultural Supplies Services	At least one supply (tea seeds/seedlings, fertilizers) and a lawfully registered store	Sales area separated from living quarters, with rational layout	Relevant professional background; familiar with market and fertilizers; able to guide purchases	Brand-name products via formal channels; verifiable batch numbers, invoices, packaging-waste recycling
Information Services	Teaching facilities and integrated tea-production information monitoring equipment	Training classrooms, monitoring rooms	Familiar with production skills; able to transfer techniques, collect needs and answer inquiries	Compiling weather, price, traceability and supply-demand information; client databases and disaster early warnings
Marketing Services	Specialized transport vehicles, storage facilities and lawfully registered sales premises	Storage rooms, sales premises	Marketing background; able to provide channels; familiar with market and pricing	Storage, packaging, logistics and buying/selling; safety assessment; certificates and QR-code labels

8. Recommendations for Implementing the Access Standards

The formulation of the Standard provides a reference basis for cultivating tea-planting service providers in Jiangxi, although several key issues still warrant attention during implementation. First, emphasis should be placed on tiered and category-based admission, with differentiated capability requirements developed for providers of different service types and scales. Second, a dynamic evaluation system should be established that incorporates into its indicators such factors as service area, client satisfaction, and the pass rate of random service-quality inspections; admitted providers should be subject to periodic assessment and dynamic adjustment, so as to form a closed-loop management cycle of "admission–service–evaluation–exit." Third, policy coordination should be strengthened by organically linking admission management with such policy instruments as machinery-purchase subsidies, operation subsidies, and loan-interest discounts, and by giving preferential support to admitted providers in equipment purchase, technical training, and site development, thereby enhancing their capacity to sustain service delivery. Finally, digital management should be promoted: drawing on

agricultural specialized-service platforms, credit files for service providers should be established so that admission information, service records, and evaluation results are managed in a unified manner and made available for public inquiry, raising both regulatory efficiency and service transparency.

9. Conclusion

The access standards for tea-planting service providers in Jiangxi represent a worthwhile exploration in developing the institutional framework of specialized services for rural specialty industries. Guided by the principle of "category-based admission, with any one condition sufficient," the Standard builds an admission system covering five fields-production services, agricultural technology extension services, agricultural input supply services, information services, and marketing services-and sets specific conditions along four dimensions, namely equipment and materials, premises, personnel, and service scope, thereby exhibiting the institutional features of function orientation, flexible admission, and whole-chain coverage. Implementation of the Standard will help to cultivate a cohort of tea-industry service providers equipped with basic service capacity, move the specialized service system for the tea industry in hilly and mountainous areas toward standardization and professionalism, and provide firm support for the high-quality development of rural specialty industries.

Funding: This study was supported by the National Key Research and Development Program of China (2022YFD1600600).

References

1. J. Wan, "Developing rural specialty industries to broaden the channels through which farmers increase their incomes and prosper," *Agricultural Economics and Management*, no. 6, pp. 19–22, 2022.
2. W. Zhao, X. Yan, S. Ke, et al., "On the driving mechanisms and realization pathways of tea-tourism integration for ecological enrichment: a case study of tea-producing areas in Anhui Province," *Chinese Journal of Agricultural Resources and Regional Planning*, pp. 1–16, Apr. 10, 2026. [Online]. Available: https://link.cnki.net/urlid/11.3513.s.20260410.1253.010
3. L. X. Wang, Q. Y. Shuang, S. B. Wang, X. F. Jiang, J. G. Zhang, C. Y. Zhang, and G. Q. Huang, "New quality productivity empowers the high-quality development of Jiangxi tea industry: Connotation significance, realistic challenges, and practical paths," *Chinese Journal of Eco-Agriculture*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 1235–1244, 2025, doi: 10.12357/cjea.20240587.
4. Jiangxi Provincial People's Government, "Notice of the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government on issuing the 14th Five-Year Plan for Agricultural and Rural Modernization of Jiangxi Province," *Gazette of the People's Government of Jiangxi Province*, no. 7, pp. 8–45, 2022.
5. Jiangxi Provincial People's Government, "Implementation opinions of the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government on promoting the revitalization of rural industries," *Gazette of the People's Government of Jiangxi Province*, no. 12, pp. 10–14, 2020.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Publisher and/or the editor(s). Publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.