



Rural Revitalization in China

International Edition



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are lush green fields and a dense line of trees. A river flows through the middle ground, and a long bridge with multiple arches spans across it. The background shows more greenery and a hazy horizon under a clear sky.

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes **China's actions and achievements** in enhancing living standards as well as agricultural output in the countryside, through **its rural revitalization strategy**. It also highlights key policy documents supporting this, including the *Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)*; its **phased goals for rural revitalization**; and the **'five pillars' guiding this**.

By implementing its rural revitalization strategy and other relevant national strategies, including the poverty alleviation campaign, rural areas of China are catching up with the rapid pace of urban development. These positive developments and results provide valuable insights, best practices and lessons learned on pragmatic approaches to advance rural development across various provinces in China.

A notable approach in China's rural revitalization strategy has been its emphasis on **enhancing the role of technology in the agricultural sector to increase agricultural outputs and contribute to food security**. According to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in 2022¹, more than 72 percent of ploughing, planting and harvesting was mechanized, up 6 percentage points from 2017. This has helped to lift China's per capita grain output, reaching 483 kg in 2021, compared with 472 kg in 2018².

In tandem with agricultural development, the report also highlights how **rural incomes have grown**, consolidating decades of dedicated efforts in addressing poverty alleviation, with the government announcing its achievement in meeting its goal of eradicating extremely rural poverty by the end of 2020³. Rural residential incomes continued to climb, with the urban-rural income gap falling to 2.5:1 in 2021⁴.

The rural revitalization strategy has also focused on ensuring a more livable environment in rural areas. Since 2018, more than 40 million rural household toilets around the country have been renovated, with more than **70 percent of rural households now having access to sanitary toilets**⁵. The system for collecting, transferring, treating and disposing of domestic waste now also covers more than 90 percent of

1 News Center of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 29 Sep, 2022, *Continue to steadily promote the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas -- The relevant heads of the two departments talk about the progress of the implementation of the strategic plan for rural revitalization*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-09/29/content_5713520.htm

2 News Center of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 14 Sep 2023, *Major indicators such as grain output, per capita grain occupancy, and grain sown area have all increased - five sets of data to see the stability of "China's rice bowl."* Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202309/content_6903859.htm

3 The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, (2021), *Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution*. Retrieved from: <https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202104/06/WS606bffe7a31024ad0bab3c43.html>

4 News Center of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 11 Oct 2022, *National Bureau of Statistics: The relative income gap between urban and rural residents has continued to narrow in the past 10 years*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-10/11/content_5717714.htm

5 News Center of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 28 Jun 2022, *More than 70 percent of rural residents have access to sanitary toilets*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-06/28/content_5698070.htm

villages⁶.

China's rural revitalization strategy also emphasizes the importance of protecting arable land, **water-saving irrigation**, as well as agricultural resource conservation and utilization. The average quality rating of China's arable lands has improved from 5.11 in 2014, to 4.76 in 2019⁷. By the end of 2019, 226,000 square kilometers of land in China was upgraded with water-saving irrigation⁸. The use of **chemical fertilizers and pesticides has also fallen** prominently during the 13th Five-Year-Plan (2015-2020)⁹.

Despite these achievements, a key challenge identified is rural to urban migration, resulting in the **steady outflow of talented and educated individuals** who largely continue to move from the countryside to cities. To effectively retain and attract human capitals for rural development, a **series of policies and measures to progressively expand its rural human resource pool have been undertaken**, including providing targeted education and training opportunities, creating incentives for talented individuals to remain in or return to rural areas, as well as fostering rural entrepreneurship and innovation. Lessons learned have indicated that such efforts must continue to be expanded further in the future, to ensure their lasting effectiveness.

Overall, China's experience in rural revitalization offers valuable insights and lessons for global learning on accelerating progress towards the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),¹⁰ to end poverty everywhere and protect the planet.

The actions and achievements from China's rural revitalization strategy also underscore the critical importance of all stakeholders playing their part in achieving the SDGs. This encompasses the need for a whole-of-government approach in forming and implementing policies; unlocking the positive role of the private sector to accelerate inclusive socio-economic growth; leveraging technical insights and development solutions from academia; as well as engaging local communities in co-designing and implementing solutions for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future.

October 2020, Agricultural technicians in Baying County, Aksu Prefecture, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, explain vegetable planting techniques to the masses.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization



⁶ ibid

⁷ According to the national standard on "quality of arable land rating" (2016), the quality is rated from 1-10, with 1 being the best quality land.

⁸ News Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 13, Jul 2021, *Agricultural modernization brilliant five-year series of publications No. 23: Vigorously promote agricultural water-saving to ensure national food security*. Retrieved from: http://www.jhs.moa.gov.cn/ghgl/202107/t20210713_6371688.htm

⁹ News Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 16, Jul 2021, *Agricultural modernization brilliant five-year series of publications XXVI: zero growth of fertilizer and pesticide use has achieved significant results*. Retrieved from: http://www.ghs.moa.gov.cn/ghgl/202107/t20210716_6372084.htm

¹⁰ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals was adopted unanimously by all United Nations Member States in 2015 and serves as the blueprint for global and national development. The full text is available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

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Introduction



Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

1

Background

In 2017, to boost rural development and narrow the longstanding urban-rural income gap, China proposed a rural revitalization strategy based on a range of policy interventions at multiple levels. The strategy is now more relevant than ever, following the devastating impact of COVID-19, which reversed development gains for the first time in three decades. According to *the Human Development Report 2021/2022*, the global Human Development Index (HDI) value declined for two consecutive years for the first time since it was established in 1990, back to the level of 2016. This report provides an account of China's actions and experiences in rural revitalization, while introducing its policies and achievements in promoting rural development.



2

The Rural Revitalization Strategy

2.1 The Emergence of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

With a population of 1.4 billion, China is the world's largest developing economy, having confronted severe poverty challenges. Since its opening-up and reform, China has reduced the number of people living in poverty by over 770 million.¹¹ In doing so, it has made a significant contribution to the global fight to end poverty. Over the last decade, the Chinese government has enhanced efforts in devising a targeted rural poverty alleviation strategy, involving significant investments in human and financial resources. This required precisely identifying rural poor household and the causes of their poverty, followed by a package of targeted assistance measures. By the end of 2020, China had achieved its poverty alleviation target – to eradicate rural extreme poverty, as planned. However, despite this remarkable success, challenges remain in rural development, including agricultural weaknesses, underdeveloped rural infrastructure and low incomes.

Since the beginning of the People's Republic of China, the country has gradually adopted a dual urban-rural economic structure, leading to some longstanding economic development challenges and lower living standards in rural areas.¹² In an early attempt to address the problems of rural development under this dual economic structure, China proposed a new urbanization strategy with a focus on coordinated development for both urban and rural areas. While this helped to boost urban-rural economic growth and coordinate social resources, it also adopted administrative measures to encourage the migration of rural residents to urban areas, not necessarily promoting their revitalization. The dilemma of China's rural governance was therefore not resolved during the country's recent institutional changes and social transformation.

It became evident that to balance urban and rural development, it was essential to stimulate the intrinsic drivers of socio-economic development in rural areas. Recent years have witnessed a narrowing of the gap between urban and rural development, with the urban-rural income gap shrinking from 2.71 in 2017, to 2.5 in 2021¹³. However, inequalities remain in areas like education and healthcare.

To address these challenges, the 19th National Congress of the CPC, held in 2017, proposed a rural

11 Maria Ana Lugo, Martin Raiser & Ruslan Yemtsov, *What's next for poverty reduction policies in China?* World Bank Blogs, Oct 15, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/whats-next-poverty-reduction-policies-china>

12 The urban-rural dual economic structure originated in the era of the planned economy. Different models were adopted in urban and rural governance, as well as economic development. One manifestation, which is caused by the household registration system, is the gap in welfare provision between rural and urban households.

13 Press Release Center of the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, Sep 28th 2022, *The National Development and Reform Commission held a press conference on the progress of the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategic Plan (2018-2022)*, Retrieved from: http://www.scio.gov.cn/xwfb/bwxwfb/gbwfbh/fzggw/202211/t20221111_618756.html



Local government workers in Jiaoqu County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province, introduce the "One Code" method to impoverished residents, bridging the information gap for local people.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

revitalization strategy under the broader framework of the “Two Centenary Goals.”¹⁴ Realizing a fully developed countryside with a standard of living comparable to modern urban life¹⁵ is an essential part of achieving China’s Second Centenary Goal.

Rural revitalization is the continuation, extension and upgrade of the poverty alleviation strategy. It has a broader range of objectives, covering the economy, politics, culture, environmental and social issues. The ultimate aim is to realize “modernization in agriculture and rural areas”, through “thriving businesses, a pleasant living environment, a cultured and civil social environment, effective governance and prosperity.”¹⁶ Two critical milestones have been set: to achieve “pivotal progress” by 2035 through basic modernization of agriculture and rural areas, as well as realizing all-round rural revitalization by 2050.

2.2 Five Pillars of Rural Revitalization

Taking into account the complexity of rural contexts and development, a holistic approach consisting of five pillars of rural revitalization was proposed by President Xi Jinping during the National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (the “two sessions”) in 2018, after which the *Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)* was issued by the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council. The five pillars aim to promote “industrial, human capital, cultural, environmental and organizational revitalization” in rural areas (Figure 1).

14 The CPC drew up a development plan for the new era at its 19th National Congress. In the first stage, from 2020 to 2035, we will build on the foundation of the moderately prosperous society with 15 more years of hard work to see that socialist modernization is basically achieved. In the second stage, from 2035 to the middle of the 21st century, having achieved basic modernization, we will work hard for 15 more years and develop China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful.

15 Haipeng, Z., Liangliang, G., & Kun, Y. (2018). Strategic Thinking on Rural Revitalization Strategy: Theoretical Origin, Main Innovation and Realization Path. *Chinese Rural Economy* (11), 2-16.

16 Jinping X. (2017). *The 19th National Congress report*. Beijing, China: People's Publishing House

Figure 1: Five Pillars of Rural Revitalization



Source: Authors

The key elements are outlined as follows:

a) Industrial revitalization is the foundation of rural revitalization.

To revitalize rural areas, it is essential to generate economic opportunities, as well as promote job and income generation. The focus is on promoting targeted sectors and tapping available resources to build a modern rural industrial system, by leveraging unique local characteristics and diversified business models¹⁷.

¹⁷ Xiaowen, W., & Jimin, L. (2021). Understanding the Dialectical Relationship Among Five Revitalizations of Rural Revitalization from a Systematic Perspective *Social Sciences Review*, 36(05), 46-51.

b) Human capital revitalization provides human support for rural revitalization.

A skilled and qualified workforce is urgently needed, to empower rural social and economic growth, while also driving industrial, cultural, environmental and organizational revitalization in rural areas.

c) Cultural revitalization injects new vitality into rural revitalization.

In the process of rural revitalization, cultural traditions should be safeguarded and developed, taking full advantage of China's rich historic rural culture, which can be used as an asset in industries targeting sustainable rural development.

d) Ecological revitalization serves as the supporting point for rural revitalization.

Rural revitalization entails green and low-carbon development of rural areas and the agricultural sector to mitigate environmental harm. Alongside demand for higher incomes, rural residents are also demanding a more livable environment.

e) Organizational revitalization is the fundamental guarantee of rural revitalization.

Rural revitalization depends not only on capable individual participants, but also on enhanced collaboration among organizations and departments. It also calls for a modern social governance system led by Party committees and implemented by local authorities, based on consultation, coordination, broad participation, along with rule of law¹⁸.

To effectively evaluate the implementation and progress of the rural revitalization initiatives, the *Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)* identified 22 indicators (see Table 1). These are designed according to the five objectives: thriving businesses, a pleasant living environment, a cultured and civil social environment, effective governance and prosperity.

A mapping between these indicators and its focus areas against the key dimensions/ objectives of the global indicators of the SDGs¹⁹ shows congruence of a number of priorities in areas such as eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, ensuring basic public services, narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, along with promoting green and sustainable development (Table 1).

18 Qj, Z., Jiakun, Z., Shunqiang, L., & Mei, K. (2022). Scientific Connotation, Inner Relationship and Strategic Key Points of Rural Revitalization under the Goal of Common Prosperity. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 52(03), 44-53.

19 The global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators. Please note that the total number of indicators listed in the global indicator framework of SDG indicators is 248. However, thirteen indicators repeat under two or three different targets.

Table 1²⁰: Correspondence between Major Rural Revitalization Indicators²¹ and Focus Areas of the SDGs

Major Rural Revitalization Indicators		Corresponding SDGs with similar objectives/ focus dimensions	
1	Combined grain production capacity	SDG 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
2	Contribution rate of scientific and technological progress in agriculture	SDG 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3	Agricultural labor productivity	SDG 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
4	The ratio of processed agricultural product output value to the total agricultural output value	SDG 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
5	Leisure agriculture and agritourism person-times	SDG 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
6	Overall utilization rate of livestock and poultry manure	SDG 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
7	Greenery coverage rate in villages	SDG 15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
8	Ratio of villages that implement household waste management	SDG 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
9	Penetration rate of sanitary facilities in rural areas	SDG 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
10	Coverage rate of village comprehensive culture service centers ²²	SDG 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

²⁰ The table is based on the author's analysis.

²¹ Policy Documents of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 26, Sep 2018, *CPC Central Committee and State Council issues Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2018-09/26/content_5325534.htm

²² A village comprehensive cultural service center is a grassroots public cultural institution with abundant resources that offers comprehensive services for communication and culture, party member education, science popularization, legal education, sports and fitness.

11	Ratio of county-level and above villages and towns that received the honor of "civilized villages and towns" ²³	SDG 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
12	Proportion of full-time teachers in rural compulsory education schools with a bachelor's degree or above	SDG 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
13	Proportion of rural resident's spending on education, cultural activities and entertainment	SDG 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
14	Coverage rate of village planning and management ²⁴	SDG 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
15	Proportion of villages with integrated service stations ²⁵	SDG 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
16	Proportion of villages where the village Party secretary branch also serves as chairman of the village committee	SDG 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17	Proportion of villages with village rules and regulations	SDG 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
18	Proportion of villages with a strong collective economy	SDG 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
19	Engel's coefficient of rural residents	SDG 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
20	Income ratio between urban and rural residents	SDG 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
21	Tap water coverage in rural areas	SDG 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
22	Proportion of villages with adequate connecting infrastructure	SDG 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

23 The honor of "civilized villages and towns" aims to encourage the overall development of villages and towns by creating a sound social and living environment in rural areas, accelerating economic development and modernization of agriculture and rural areas, as well as improving quality of life for residents, among others.

24 The coverage rate of village planning and management refers to the ratio of the number of villages that formulate official village plans to the total number of villages.

25 An integrated service station is a station where village officials assist residents with administrative approvals, public services and utility bill payments. In some areas, the station also serves as an intermediary, where farmers can sell products and buy agricultural equipment.

2.3 Institutional Framework and Policy System for Rural Revitalization

Since the proposal of the rural revitalization strategy, a series of supporting policies for the strategy have been introduced, to provide financial support and legal guarantees (see Figure 2 for details). An institutional framework and policy system is now in place at the national level, laying the foundations for modernizing agriculture and rural areas.

Figure 2: Institutional Framework and Policy System for Rural Revitalization



- In 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Adjusting and Improving the Usage of Land Sale Revenue to Support Rural Revitalization*. These specify institutional arrangements on diversifying fundraising methods, establishing long-term mechanisms for stable public investment growth and raising the share of land sale revenues to invest in agriculture and rural areas.
- In 2021, the People's Bank of China and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission introduced the *Assessment Measures on Financial Institutions Serving Rural Revitalization*. This directs more financial resources into key areas for rural economic and social development, as well as making specific arrangements to enable financial resources to better support rural revitalization.



- In line with a management system defining clear responsibilities for officials, China adopted a working mechanism whereby the central leadership makes plans, provincial authorities take responsibility, while city and county authorities ensure implementation.
- The CPC committees and governments of each province, autonomous region and municipality must report to the central committee and State Council on their progress in implementing the rural revitalization strategy.



- Through the *Regulations on Rural Work of the Communist Party of China* introduced in 2019 and the *Rural Revitalization Promotion Law* introduced in 2021, effective policies, working mechanisms and methods relating to poverty alleviation and rural revitalization are written into the Party's regulations and laws.

Source: Authors. Based on the analysis of the following policy documents:

- 1.The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 31 May 2021, *Policy Document, the Assessment Measures on Financial Institutions Serving Rural Revitalization*(Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-06/04/content_5615563.htm)
- 2.The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 14, Dec 2022, *Policy Documents, General Office of the CPC Central Committee and General Office of the State Council Issue Measures for the Implementation of the Responsibility System for Rural Revitalization*(Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-12/14/content_5731828.htm?qid=894dfc51000167ea000000066462e067)
- 3.The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 1, Sep 2019, *Policy Document, the Regulations on Rural Work of the CPC* (Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-09/01/content_5426319.htm)
- 4.The National People's of the People's Republic of China, 29, Apr 2021, *the Rural Revitalization Promotion Law"* (Retrieved from: http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c30834/202104/t20210429_311287.html)



In May 2020, the highway leading to Abuloha Village, Wuyi Township, Butuo County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, was fully connected.

Source of pictures:National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

2.4 Importance of Rural Revitalization to China's Development Strategy

The rural revitalization strategy is encoded in the *Constitution of the CPC*, reinforcing its importance to the country's future. The strategy complements and mutually reinforces other policy priorities. Its implementation is essential to many of the government's development goals, such as delivering common prosperity, the "dual circulation" strategy²⁶, peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, along with China's goal of building an "ecological civilization".²⁷ This approach is further articulated through the perspectives below.

a) Rural revitalization is an important path to common prosperity.

Both rural revitalization and common prosperity aim to satisfy the people's expectations of a better life. As a large agricultural country, with over 500 million rural residents,²⁸ China cannot achieve common prosperity without a flourishing agricultural sector and affluent rural residents²⁹.

b) Rural revitalization underpins the "dual circulation" strategy.

China aims to steadily improve its resilience by leveraging its vast domestic market. To this end, strengthening domestic consumption and investments are two critical factors. Rural revitalization can thus greatly contribute to this agenda, as it has the potential to raise rural per capita disposable incomes, tapping into underutilized rural consumption.

c) Rural revitalization is key to achieving China's targets of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, as well as realizing China's goal of building an "ecological civilization".

The major battlefields of conserving energy and reducing carbon emissions lie in the industrial, energy and transport sectors. Although greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture make up only modest proportion of total emissions, the role of the agricultural sector in China's progress to its climate goals is not negligible, as it also involves carbon sink systems with vast carbon sequestration capabilities.³⁰ In addition, rural areas are blessed with rich natural resources, making them important fronts for building China's ecological civilization. Consequently, promoting green, eco-friendly and low-carbon agriculture will help in achieving carbon peaking and neutrality targets, as well as an ecological civilization.

26 The 'dual circulation' strategy is a key economic strategy proposed by the Chinese government. It aims to foster a new double development dynamic, with the domestic economy and international engagement providing mutual reinforcement, and the former as the mainstay.

27 The overall requirements for ecological civilization were clarified at the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012. It has been written into China's Constitution and serves as a guiding goal for the country's environmental policies.

28 National Bureau of Statistics (2021, May 11). *Communiqué of the Seventh National Population Census (No. 7)*. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Retrieved from: http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510_1817192.html

29 Qi, Z., Jiakun, Z., Shunqiang, L., & Mei, K. (2022). Scientific Connotation, Inner Relationship and Strategic Key Points of Rural Revitalization under the Goal of Common Prosperity. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 52(03), 44-53.

30 Ministry of Ecology and Environment (2019 July 1). *Key Statistics from China Second Biennial Update Report on Climate Change*. Ministry of Ecology and Environment of People's Republic of China. Retrieved from: https://www.mee.gov.cn/ywgz/ycqhbh/wsqtkz/201907/t20190701_708248.shtml

3

Revitalization of Rural Industry

3.1 Significance of Revitalizing Rural Industries

The scope of rural industries encompasses traditional and new industries, as well as the integration of primary, secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas. Revitalizing them involves raising their quality and increasing the benefits that they generate, improving the industrial system, optimizing their employment structure and better supporting their integrated development, which can expand income-generating opportunities in rural areas.

3.2 Policy Framework for Revitalizing Rural Industries

Industrial revitalization is the cornerstone of China's rural revitalization strategy. China has been improving the policy system and framework for industrial development since the 18th National Congress in 2012. In 2019, the State Council introduced the *Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Promoting Revitalization of Rural Industries*, which systematically explains the concept of revitalizing rural industry and relevant key actions. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) promulgated the *National Rural Industry Development Plan (2020-2025)* in 2020 and *Guiding Opinions on Diversifying Functions of Agriculture for High-quality Development of Rural Industries* in 2021. Policies for rural industrial development have been improved and are now an important component of overall policies for strengthening agriculture and benefiting rural people.

In the remainder of this section, a few select examples of supporting policies are presented.

a) Preferential Fiscal and Tax Policies: Since the 18th National Congress in 2012, China has been improving policies to boost agriculture and support the rural population, promoting more financial investment in agriculture, rural areas and rural people. Guarantees for rural fiscal budgets and support for rural industries have been strengthened. Policies have encouraged local funds to flow to rural industries and have required that more revenues from land sales be spent on agriculture, as well as the rural industrial sector. Local governments with suitable conditions have been encouraged to set up rural industrial development funds through market-oriented approaches, with a focus on technological innovation. They have also been encouraged to provide subsidies to agricultural enterprises that employ rural residents with disabilities and labor from poor rural households, along with implementing relevant preferential tax policies.

In September 2020, at the e-commerce service center in Yecheng County, Kashgar Prefecture, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, two local bloggers are live streaming on the social medias, selling walnuts and their processed products.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization



b) Financial Service Policies for Rural Areas: Since 2012, each year's No.1 Central Document³¹ has specified requirements and made plans to strengthen rural financial services. The *Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Promoting Revitalization of Rural Industries* makes clear that the government should guide county-level financial institutions to channel the deposits they absorb towards local development, particularly to local rural industries. Preferential policies for fundraising for small and micro businesses also apply to rural industries, innovation and entrepreneurship. The state also makes full use of the national agricultural credit guarantee system, which assists local authorities in supporting agricultural and rural industry credit guarantees, through measures such as guarantee fee subsidies and business bonuses. Under the system, the scope of collateral is expanded to allow farmers to mortgage agricultural facilities and machinery, as well as their contracted land use rights where there is clear ownership. Fundraising guarantees for rural industries have been reinforced. Local governments are encouraged to issue general bonds to support public welfare projects directed towards rural revitalization and special bonds to complete any financing gaps, to aid qualified, profit-generating, rural public welfare projects.

c) Policies on the Participation of Private Capital: Introducing private capital, where relevant, can potentially ease the debt burden and fiscal pressure on the government, while bringing direct and indirect benefits to enterprises. *The Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Promoting Revitalization of Rural Industries* states that industrial and commercial capital should be guided in an orderly fashion to invest in or start rural industries that local people can easily participate in and benefit from. Local governments will provide occupational training and employment services to attract and support enterprises, to promote local industrial development. MARA and the National Administration for Rural Revitalization (NARR) promulgated the *Guidelines on Private Capital Investment in Agriculture and Rural Areas* in 2020, 2021 and 2022. These Guidelines identify 13 key industries and fields in which private capital is encouraged to invest. It also outlines five models in which private capital could contribute to rural development, including promoting full

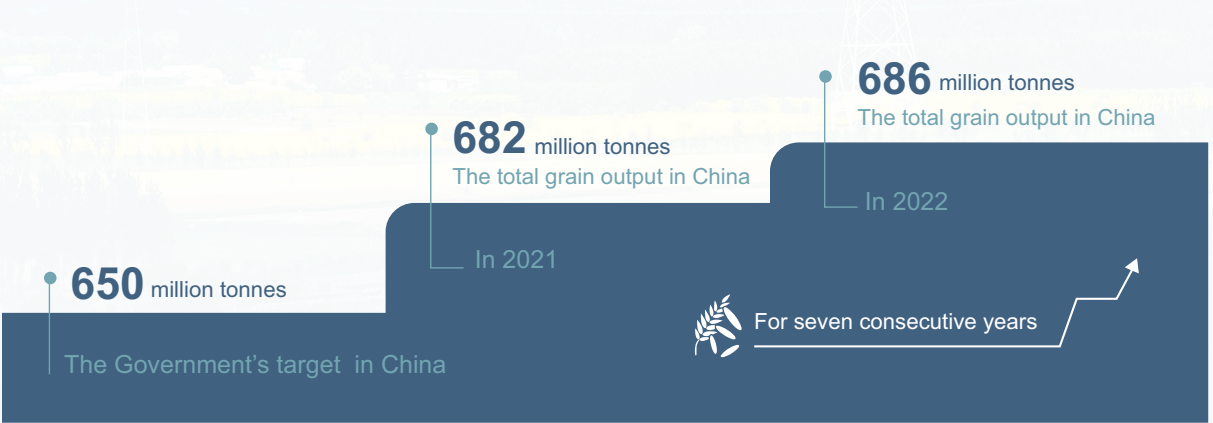
³¹ The No. 1 Central Document is the first policy document of each year issued in January by the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council. For the last two decades, it has focused on rural development issues.

industrial chain development, exploring opportunities for overall regional development, innovating public-private partnership, establishing rural revitalization investment funds and strengthening benefit-sharing mechanisms.

d) Supporting Policies for Rural Land Used towards Industrial Development. When making the annual plan for land use, greater support is given to the development of rural industries by allocating more land for this purpose. Laws and regulations related to this are being revised and improved, with reforms being made to bring rural collective construction land onto the market, which will increase the supply of land for rural industries. Management of idle rural land that belongs to counties and villages has been strengthened. This land is intended primarily for new rural industries and new forms of business, along with for those who return or move to the countryside to start businesses or engage in other innovative activities.

3.3 Achievements in Revitalizing Rural Industries

The development of modern agriculture is accelerating. Guaranteeing national food security is the top priority in developing high-quality, modern agriculture. In this respect, the total grain output in China reached 682 million tonnes in 2021, marking the seventh consecutive year above the Government’s target of 650 million tonnes. The total output of grain rose further in 2022 to 686 million tonnes.³²



Agricultural infrastructure has significantly improved, particularly regarding prime farmland.³³ The country has upgraded over 600,000 km2 of land as prime farmland and implemented a conservation program for chernozem soils.

Next-generation information and communication technology (ICT) has been used in agricultural production, operations, management and services. Statistics from the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in 2021 indicate that the contribution rate of science and technology to growth of gross output in agriculture reached 61 percent, up 3.5 percentage points from 2017. Further, more than 72 percent of crop ploughing, planting and harvesting was mechanized, up 6 percentage points from 2017.

32 China National Bureau of Statistics (2023). Statistical Communique of the People’s Republic of China on the 2022 National Economic and Social Development. Retrieved from: http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202302/t20230227_1918979.html

33 Prime farmland is level, fertile and contiguous land well-supported with modern amenities. It enjoys a sound ecology and is highly resilient. In line with modern agricultural production and management, it ensures stable and high yields even in times of drought or excessive rain.

Rural industry is steadily diversifying, through the development of numerous different industries, including services and rural tourism. In 2021, leisure agriculture and rural tourism made great strides. The number of leisure farms, agricultural parks and agri-entertainment facilities in China surpassed 300,000, generating an annual operational income of more than RMB 700 billion (USD 100 billion). In the same year, national rural online retail sales reached RMB 2.05 trillion (USD 293 billion), while leisure agriculture and rural tourism catered for more than 2.9 billion visitors.

There have been many innovative developments in the rural services industry, particularly regarding e-commerce. Over 30,000 e-commerce stations involving agriculture businesses achieved online sales of rural products of RMB 1.3 trillion in 2021 (USD 186 billion), of which RMB 300 billion (USD 43 billion) came from agricultural products.³⁴

There has been a significant shift towards rural industrial integration. “Agriculture plus” models integrating agriculture with culture, education, tourism, health and wellness, along with information technology, are developing fast.

Cooperation and benefits-sharing mechanisms are improving. According to statistics from MARA, as the country encourages cooperation between enterprises and farmers, more than 100 million farmers have signed contracts with leading enterprises in agricultural industrialization. A government report shows that contracted farmers can earn 50 percent more than their uncontracted counterparts.³⁵ Profit dividend models are promoted to help farmers raise and sustain higher incomes. These models include order purchase + dividend;³⁶ guaranteed return + dividend based on shareholding;³⁷ and land rent + labor salary + sales bonus.³⁸ Agricultural industrialization cooperatives have been built through cooperation based on shareholdings. These have a clear division of work and responsibilities, taking advantage of complementary strengths, as well as sharing risks and benefits.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are growing. China has built nearly 2,200 innovation and entrepreneurship parks and incubation training bases in rural areas, encouraging 11.2 million people to move or return to the countryside to launch startups or engage in other innovative activities. On average, each entity provides full-time jobs for six to seven people, along with flexible employment opportunities for 15 to 20 people³⁹.

34 Statistics released from the conference of implementation of The Rural Revitalization Strategy (2018-2022) held by the NDRC on September 28, 2022.

35 Changfu, H. (2019, April 21). *The State Council's Report on Rural Industry Development*. The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/npc/xinwen/2019-04/21/content_2085626.htm

36 Order purchase + dividend: In this model, an enterprise buys the product from the farmers for onward sales or processing and pays them an annual dividend based on overall profit.

37 Guaranteed return plus dividend based on shareholding: In this model, the farmers own shares in a collective enterprise. The enterprise buys their output at a fixed rate and pays them an annual dividend based on their shareholding.

38 Land rent, labor salary, + sales bonus: In this model, an enterprise rents the farmers' land from them, pays them a salary to work the land and grants them a sales bonus for their products.

39 See Footnote 27

Special Column 1:

Promoting Green Development of the Fruit Industry:

A Specialized Cooperative for Fruit Farmers of Longguang Village (Nanjiang Township, Guizhou Province)

Longguang Village, in Nanjiang Township, Kaiyang County, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province, is a prolific source of loquats. In 2014, Tao Qiuyun went back to Longguang, his hometown and launched a specialized cooperative for fruit farmers. At that time, the average household income of a local loquat farmer was only about RMB 8,000/Annum (USD 1,150). In just a few years, the orchards of Longguang Village have expanded from a few acres to almost 7 km², with many fruit varieties. The cooperative has registered trademarks and created a high-quality brand offering pollution-free and fully traceable fruit. Thanks to e-commerce, Longguang loquats are now sold nationwide. Furthermore, the vigorous development of the fruit industry boosted rural tourism in the county. In 2021, the average household income in Longguang Village rose to RMB 21,000/Annum (USD 3,000). Tao Qiuyun has not only transformed his own life, but also created a path to prosperity for the village.

Figure 3: Farmers in Nanjiang Township, Kaiyang County, Guizhou Province, picking loquats.



(Photo from the Internet)

a) Building a Service Platform that Focuses on the Whole Industrial Chain

The cooperative was launched by 11 farming households in Longguang Village, with the goal of expanding the scale and standardizing the development of the local loquat industry. By 2016, its membership had grown to 43 households, reaching 113 one year later. As a service platform, the cooperative is in constant contact with industries, farmers and experts, carrying out product research and development, expanding the market and serving its members. The cooperative organizes regular meetings for members to discuss development plans and explore solutions to problems that arise in production and sales. After several years, the cooperative has developed a standardized operation model characterized by unified management, quality technology, structured procurement, scientific pest control, price management, acquisition, branding, marketing and e-commerce.

b) Focusing on Product Quality and Enhancing the Loquat Brand's Added Value

The cooperative keeps strict control over product quality. In the production process, requirements for agricultural product safety supervision are rigorous. Fertilizers and pesticides are used on a rational and scientific basis – regular samples are taken and sent to the agricultural supervision authorities for testing. The cooperative also requires members to sign a security commitment document for internal scrutiny, so that products can be traced back to the individual source. In addition, it focuses on regional brand-building, reinforcing product traceability. Longguang Village has succeeded in aligning its production base with the market. The cooperative now plans to extend the industrial chain to deep processing, to add further value.

c) Growing More Fruit Varieties and Diversifying Sales Channels

Since the cooperative was established, the region has undergone a change from scattered planting under different standards, to nearly 7 km² of orchards covering three villages. To overcome a bottleneck particular to agricultural industrial development – whereby farmers' incomes fail to grow in parallel with higher output – the cooperative has adopted an integrated online and offline sales model. In 2021, they cooperated with fruit wholesale markets and supermarket fruit distributors in Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Kunming and other cities, selling more than 100 tons of loquats. In addition, they took advantage of the opportunity provided by a rich local resource – the Ten-Mile Gallery⁴⁰ – to organize fruit picking and other leisure activities for tourists. To ensure continued development, the cooperative commits 2 percent of its profits as a rolling fund for product packaging development, members' technical training, marketing and other related activities.

⁴⁰ The Ten-Mile Gallery is the local tourism area consisting of more than 10 villages in Hefeng Town and Nanjiang Town along the Qinglong River, where tourists can enjoy local scenery and engage in agricultural-themed activities.

3.4 Challenges in Revitalizing Rural Industries

Low added-value of agricultural products: capacities for scientific and technological innovation in rural enterprises are relatively weak, especially in agricultural product processing, where technology lags behind those of developed countries. Rural industries still mainly supply roughly processed products with low added-value, lacking targeted and mid-to-high-end products and services, thus creating limited brand premiums.



Most agribusinesses are scattered, with only 28 percent located in industrial parks, resulting in limited economies of scale⁴¹. Some regions and industries pursue expansions in scale and volume without careful planning, resulting in ineffective supply, intensified competition, as well as declines in quality and efficiency. As some agricultural industries expand, there is also a risk that production might move from suitable areas, to less suitable or even unsuitable locations, leading to lower quality products and a loss of competitiveness, possibly harming their branding and reputation.



Limited financial flows: rural industries depend heavily on public funds, with rural finance largely insufficient. Selective lending by rural financial institutions is a common practice, and there is a growing trend of financial resources leaning towards urban, rather than rural areas. Furthermore, there are limited business models that can turn rural resources into cash flows. Therefore, private capital remains reluctant to venture into rural industries.



Inadequate rural industrial infrastructure, leading to high operational and logistics costs. Some villages do not have adequate supplies of water, electricity and gas. Additionally, transport routes, networks and communications facilities, along with logistics and warehousing infrastructure, do not yet cover all rural areas in China. Additionally, some facilities are not well-established, such as wholesale markets in places of origin, platforms that connect products and markets, as well as direct sales outlets for fresh farm produce.

41 See Footnote 27

4

Human Capital Revitalization

4.1 Significance of Rural Human Capital Revitalization

The revitalization of human capital in rural areas aims at enhancing human capital for implementing China's rural revitalization strategy. As distinct from ordinary rural laborers, "rural capital resources" refers to groups with professional knowledge or skills working in, or serving the countryside, contributing to rural development and playing leading roles in it.

One of the key challenges facing rural development in China is the persistent loss of human resources in the countryside. Young or middle-aged residents and high-caliber workers continue to flow out of rural areas, leaving behind an inadequate workforce, as well as an aging population. Data shows that the number of migrant workers in China totaled 172 million in 2021, rising by 2.13 million over the previous year. The average age of migrant workers was 36.8 years; 17.1 percent had received junior college education or above. Rural residents who migrate to cities are mostly young, with relatively higher education levels than those staying behind.⁴²

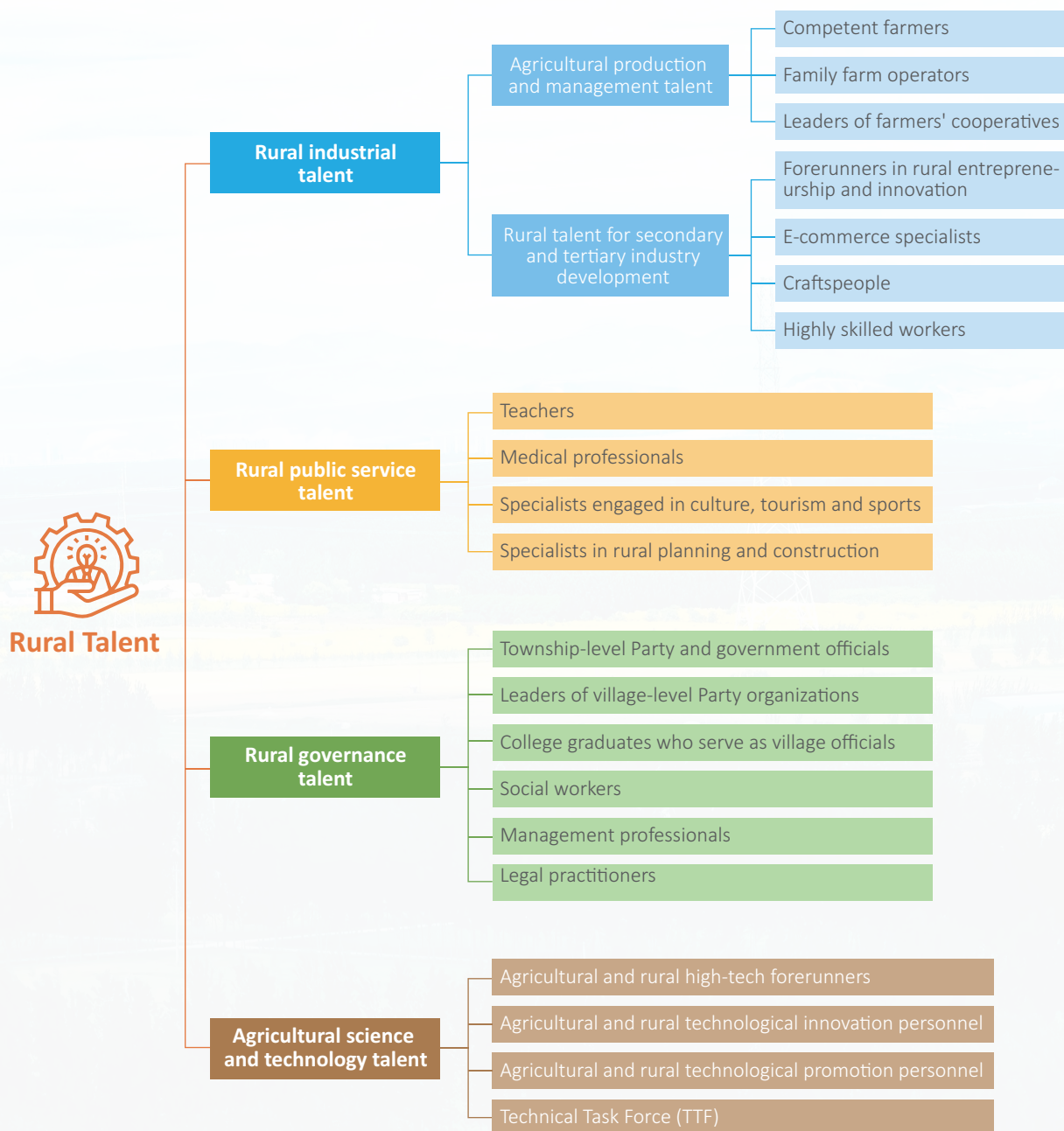
As China pushes ahead its rural revitalization strategy – accelerating modernization of agriculture and rural areas – the imbalance between supply and demand of skilled workers and professionals is a key area that needs to be addressed. Therefore, invigorating rural human resources and supporting a wide range of workforce skills are both requirements of the central government and ways of meeting urgent, practical needs at the grassroots level.

To encourage talented individuals of all types to participate in rural development, in 2021 the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Accelerating the Revitalization of Rural Human Capital*. This document classifies rural human resources into five categories: agricultural production and management, secondary and tertiary industry development, rural public services, rural governance, as well as agricultural science and technology.

The first two are also collectively referred to as rural industrial human resources (Figure 4).

42 National Bureau of Statistics (2022, April 19). *Report on Migrant Workers 2021*. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Retrieved from: http://www.stats.gov.cn/xxgk/sjfb/zxfb2020/202204/t20220429_1830139.html

Figure 4: Categories of rural human capital⁴³



⁴³ The State Council of the People's Republic of China, (23, Feb 2021), *General Office of the CPC Central Committee and General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Accelerating the Revitalization of Rural Talents*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-02/23/content_5588496.htm

4.2 Policies and Actions in Promoting Rural Human Capital Revitalization

To effectively retain and attract human resources for rural development, China has implemented a series of policies and measures to progressively expand its rural human resources pool, including providing targeted education and training opportunities, creating incentives for talented individuals to remain in or return to rural areas, while promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas.

4.2.1 Policy arrangements for rural human capital revitalization

1) Fostering rural human capital

A key part of the strategy is to provide education and training opportunities to equip rural residents with the skills they need to participate in the modern economy. Targeted trainings are designed for different types of human resources.

Box 1. Rural human capital

Rural industrial human capital: The success of rural industries hinges upon people with high-value knowledge and skills. Specifically, farmers who are trained, skilled in business operations and management, with technical expertise, are the core force for farming the land and ensuring food production and security. Family farms and farmer cooperatives are important components of the new agricultural management entities. As forerunners in rural entrepreneurship and innovation, rural e-commerce specialists, craftspeople, as well as highly-skilled workers, are expected to promote rural innovation and sustained economic development.

Rural public service human capital: To elevate basic public services in rural areas and achieve parity in this regard with urban areas, support for rural public service human resources, including teachers and medical workers, is essential.

Rural governance human capital: As “front-line forces” for grassroots governance, rural governance human resources includes two categories: 1) Township-level Party and government officials, leaders of village-level Party organizations, as well as college graduates serving as village officials responsible for carrying out policies relating to agriculture, rural areas and rural people; 2) Professionals from various fields, such as rural social workers, management professionals and legal practitioners. They play an important role in building rural social relationships, improving community social management, along with ensuring rural residents’ access to public legal services.

Agricultural science and technology human capital: Human resources in agricultural science and technology is the pillar for technological innovation and high-quality development. Agricultural innovation human resources refers to people who provide cutting-edge scientific and technological support to rural industries and undertakings, through continuous research and development, as well as by introducing and applying new technologies. The Technical

Task Force (TTF) includes professional and technical personnel selected and assigned by local CPC committees and governments to solve issues related to agriculture, rural areas and rural people. They engage in commercializing scientific and technological achievements, developing competitive and specialty industries, along with building agricultural science and technology parks, as well as industrial bases, to meet market demand and the needs of rural people.

a) Fostering professional farmers

First of all, China attaches great importance to cultivating professional farmers. According to China's *Development Plan for the Cultivation of New-type Professional Farmers Across China during the 13th Five-Year Plan Period* issued in 2017, the country intends to speed up the creation of professional farmers who are well-educated, knowledgeable about agricultural technology, as well as skilled in operations and management. The plan also supports agriculture-related vocational colleges by providing farmers with formal schooling, and sets out to create an integrated, digital platform at national, provincial and county-level, to better train these professionals.

To further promote entrepreneurship, China is increasing support to founders of new agricultural business entities. In 2017, China issued the *Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of Relevant Systems to Foster New Agricultural Business Entities*, specifying that support will be given to those who lead new agri-businesses, while promoting extensive training for such leaders across the country. In Shandong Province, for example, training in agricultural skills, operations, management and other areas is provided both online and offline.

Skills training is also being provided to improve the competitiveness of those who pursue opportunities in non-agricultural sectors within rural areas. MARA launched training programs on practical skills and delivered specialized training courses on e-commerce related to agriculture. Guangdong Province has also launched successful skills training programs for other groups of rural workers, including chefs, domestic service providers and technicians.

b) Attracting new human capital to the countryside

Introducing external talent to rural areas is equally important. To achieve this, China has implemented several policies and established platforms encouraging people to return to their rural hometowns and start businesses.

The government has been consistently promoting this idea since 2015, when the General Office of the State Council issued the *Implementation Opinions on Encouraging Migrant Workers and Other Personnel to Return to Hometowns and Start Businesses*. The *Guideline* calls on migrant workers, college graduates, decommissioned military personnel and others to return to their hometowns in rural areas to work, or to start businesses. The NDRC, together with relevant departments, has organized many pilot projects since

then to encourage this. To further strengthen policy support, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) and two other departments jointly issued the *Opinions on Further Encouraging Human resource to Return or Come to the Countryside to Start Businesses* in 2019.

Additionally, China has established platforms to support these returnees, building a talent ecosystem. In 2021, MARA issued the *Catalogue of National Rural Entrepreneurship Parks (Bases) 2021*, introducing 2,210 rural entrepreneurship parks and bases that provide large carrying capacities, a wide range of functions and quality services. The aim is to encourage more people to move or return to the countryside to start businesses. The MOHRSS has built more than 8,800 entrepreneurship carriers, such as startup incubators and entrepreneurship parks for returnees, providing low-cost, convenient incubation services for prospective entrepreneurs moving or returning to the countryside.

c) Innovative ways for urban human capital to serve in rural areas

To address the human resources gap in rural areas, especially in delivering public services, the government has established a system for coordinated use of trained professionals in counties that allows for more flexible employment arrangements. For instance, specialists employed by counties can be assigned to work in townships, and those employed by townships can be dispatched to work in villages. Furthermore, specific programs targeting three different types of human resources have been developed.

Firstly, several programs are in place to encourage urban-based educators to serve in rural areas.



For instance, under the state training program for special posts co-implemented by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance (MOF), college graduates are selected through open recruitment to teach in poor rural schools in central and western regions for a three-year period. During their service, they are paid out of special funds in accordance with national wage standards. In 2022, there were 67,000 such teaching posts.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

Secondly, capacities of grassroots medical and health service institutions continue to improve, supported by match-making personnel from urban areas.

China has strengthened the ranks of medical and health service professionals in rural areas, by launching tuition-free and targeted training programs for medical undergraduates, assistant general practitioners and leading doctors in county-level hospitals.⁴⁴ In 2021, medical schools from central and western regions admitted 6,280 undergraduate medical students into their targeted

⁴⁴ Tuition-free and targeted training for medical undergraduates is a special enrollment program in the national college entrance exam. Undergraduates in this program will receive free education and accommodation, as well as enjoy living allowances during their study term, if they sign a contract to serve in grassroots medical institutions for six years.



Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

training programs and trained 6,960 assistant general practitioners, thus ensuring a steady supply of medical professionals to rural area facilities. In the same year, a program was also initiated to encourage retired doctors to provide medical services for rural communities, maximizing the potential of retirees. In 2021, 529 institutions and 139 medical personnel registered for this program.

Thirdly, science and technology professionals are encouraged to work in rural areas, in support of rural revitalization.



Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) operates the TTF program, along with a special program assigning technical professionals, including prioritizing ethnic minority areas and border regions. In 2021, MOST sent 18,072 technicians to 22 central and western provinces and cities, where they provided training for 3,534 local people.

4.2.2 Creating an enabling environment for rural human capital revitalization

To ensure that China's rural revitalization strategy is implemented smoothly and strengthen cross-ministry cooperation, the Chinese government has launched a cross-ministry working mechanism that includes relevant departments, coordinated by the rural working group of the CPC Committee. With support from this working group, "A guideline on accelerating the revitalization of rural human capital" was jointly issued by the Central Committee of CPC and the State Council in 2021. In addition, rural human capital revitalization has been included as a performance indicator for overall rural revitalization. China also encourages systematic, regulated and consistent human resource development in relation to agriculture, rural areas and rural people, by cementing investment in rural human resource revitalization, building related platforms, formulating special planning, as well as improving rural infrastructure and public services.

a) Funding support for rural human capital

The government provides subsidies and preferential policies to those who start businesses in their hometowns, including entrepreneurship and loan interest subsidies. In 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council promulgated *Opinions on Accelerating the Revitalization of Rural Human Resources*. This requires creating subsidy policies for people experiencing harsh living conditions while working in rural and remote areas, so as to grant higher incomes to township

Villagers of Huaxi Village are discussing the village poverty alleviation and development plan.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization



officials than their counterparts in government bodies at the county-level. Local governments also provide their own subsidies. Changsha city in Hunan province, for example, grants respective one-time subsidies of RMB 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 to those who are recognized as junior, intermediate and senior new-model professional farmers.

b) Public service guarantee for rural human capital

In 2020, nine ministries, including MARA, jointly issued the *Opinions on Deepening the Cultivation of Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship Leaders*, which call for accelerating the establishment of a nationwide, unified social insurance public service platform. This platform seeks to provide an efficient transfer and continuation of social insurance relationships for rural innovation and entrepreneurship leaders. In 2022, MARA introduced the *Development Plan for Building Human Resource Teams in Agriculture and Rural Areas during the 14th Five-Year Plan*. This encourages local governments to remove policy barriers in education, medical services, social security and public services between rural and urban areas, to encourage human resources to remain in rural areas.

5

Cultural Revitalization

5.1 Significance of Cultural Revitalization

Perceived as the root and soul of the Chinese people, Chinese traditions and local culture are a vital intangible asset. If utilized appropriately, they can serve as a driving force for rural development, a resource to enrich rural residents' intellectual and cultural lives, as well as promoting a cultured and harmonious social environment, as highlighted in the primary targets of rural revitalization. Cultural revitalization comprises two major elements:

Firstly, through the inheritance and protection of traditional culture, cultural revitalization aims to harness local cultures to develop cultural industries and tourism, along with leveraging the market value of rural cultural resources, while nurturing rural culture in return.

Secondly, cultural revitalization is dedicated to providing quality intellectual and cultural services to meet the ever-increasing expectations of rural residents. To this end, modern cultural facilities should be established taking local conditions into account, while enhancing access through digital technologies. In addition, publicity campaigns are being launched to help combat unhealthy customs and activities⁴⁵, as well as to motivate rural residents participating in rural governance⁴⁶.

5.2 Critical Measures in Support of Cultural Revitalization

5.2.1 Financial support

Since 2015, the central government has established a series of fiscal subsidies to aid the development of local public cultural services. Amounts of the fiscal subsidies have fluctuated over the years. In 2021, the central government provided RMB 15.2 billion (2.2 billion USD) to support the local public cultural service system, roughly the same amount as the previous year. The purpose of these subsidies is to guide and support local authorities in providing basic public cultural services, improving public cultural facilities and expanding the cultural human resource pool at the grassroots level. It also intends to accelerate development of a modern public cultural service system, as well as facilitate standardization and equal accessibility of basic public cultural services. Those subsidies guarantee basic rights to the public, such

45 Xiaowen, W., & Jimin, L. (2021). The theoretical quality of the great poverty alleviation spirit and the practical expression of rural revitalization, *Gansu Theory Research*, 267(5), 13-18+2.

46 Chengmin, H. (2021). The contemporary value of rural revitalization, *Red Flag Manuscript*, (23), 29-32+1.



In June 2020, students in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County, Laibin City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region are taking artificial intelligence courses.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

as reading books and newspapers, watching TV programs, enjoying movies, appreciating art, as well as engaging in cultural and sporting activities.

To improve the financial support mechanism, the General Office of the State Council issued *the Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Advancing the Reform of the Division of Financial Powers and Expenditure Responsibilities between the Central and the Local Governments in the Domain of Public Culture* in 2020. This document clarifies that free access to public cultural facilities is a responsibility shared by the central and local governments. It also defines the standards and ratios of basic subsidies provided by the central government. Additionally, MOF and relevant central government departments have jointly established a management process for public cultural services, covering the entire chain of fund allocation, budget implementation and performance evaluation. Indicators reflecting the protection of people's basic cultural rights and interests, such as residents' satisfaction with their ability to participate in cultural activities, have been selected to assess local governments' performance in providing cultural services. Funds will be allocated by the central government based on local performance to further encourage local governments and departments of culture and tourism to improve the quality of their public cultural services.

5.2.2 Improving the rural public cultural service system

Three main policy documents are relevant here:

1. *The Cultural and Tourist Development Plan during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period and the Public Cultural Service System Building Plan during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period*, released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT). Both documents prioritize creating an integrated urban and rural public cultural service system. They also require efforts to remedy shortcomings at the grassroots level and coordinate

development in urban and rural areas to narrow the gap in public cultural services.

2. In 2021, the MCT, NDRC and MOF jointly released *Guiding Opinions on Enhancing the Quality Development of Public Cultural Services*. The document puts forward nine concrete steps, including standardizing public cultural services, improving the grassroots public cultural service network, expanding public cultural spaces in rural and urban areas, along with increasing the quality and efficiency of public cultural services.

3. Regarding standards, *the National Standards for Basic Public Services (2021 Version)* was issued jointly by the NDRC, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and other departments. It clarifies the eight major features of China's basic public cultural services: free access to public cultural facilities; bringing traditional Chinese opera performances to rural communities; access to movies, to books and newspapers, to radio and television broadcasts; ensuring cultural services for ethnic minorities; as well as providing cultural and sports services for people with disabilities. The document also specifies the recipients, contents, standards, responsibilities and leading departments relative to each service. It provides an important base for governments at all levels to deliver their respective duties and for people to enjoy their corresponding cultural rights.



In May 2018, villagers in Dashiling Village, Shangen Town, Wanning City, Hainan Province, read in a rural bookstore jointly built by the village.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

5.2.3 Protect and leverage rural culture heritage

In terms of rural cultural inheritance and protection, *the Opinions of the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council for Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalization and Accelerating the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas*, also known as the No. 1 Central Document for 2021, calls for stronger guidance on defining features of the countryside and protecting traditional houses, along with historical and cultural towns and villages. It also demands greater efforts to preserve cultural heritage and relics in rural areas. Since 2012, the former Ministry of Agriculture has been sponsoring fieldwork to identify important areas and features of Chinese agricultural heritage.

To enrich the rural cultural industries, the MCT released the *Plan of Cultural Industry Development during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period*. This proposes actions to build a number of towns and villages characterized by unique cultural industries, as well as to facilitate the blending of rural cultural features and traditional techniques with innovative designs, modern technologies and new trends. Examples include agricultural leisure products, agricultural museums, museums of village history, agricultural handicraft products, Chinese folk-art performances, traditional festival celebrations and rural cultural products based on agricultural tools.

5.2.4 Discourage undesirable rural customs and activities

The No. 1 Central Document of 2021 further specifies the requirements for raising cultural and ethical standards in rural areas. Efforts should be stepped up to discourage undesirable rural customs and activities and do away with unhealthy behaviors and traditions. Examples may include excessive dowries, extravagance and waste on social events such as weddings and funerals, households obsessively trying to outdo each other in “generosity”, as well as feudal superstitions. In 2020 and 2021, MARA organized 46 promotional campaigns for exemplary cases of civil and cultured social behavior in rural villages.

5.3 Achievements in Cultural Revitalization

In China’s rural areas, notable achievements have been made in cultural inheritance and preservation, developing cultural industries and creating a cultured and civil social environment. These successes have vastly enriched the spiritual and cultural lives of rural residents.

5.3.1 Rural residents’ consumption of cultural and entertaining products is growing steadily

Rural residents’ cultural spending in China is growing steadily, with rural per capita consumption of education, culture and entertainment in 2021 climbing by 25.7 percent year-on-year, to RMB 1,645. Rural tourism in China also continues to grow, albeit slower than in urban areas, according to data from *the Statistical Communiqué of the People’s Republic of China on the 2021 National Economic and Social Development*. In 2021, China’s domestic tourists reached 3.25 billion, rising by 12.8 percent year-on-year. Urban areas received 2.34 billion total tourists, a 13.4 percent increase, while rural areas saw 900 million tourists, climbing by 11.1 percent.

5.3.2 Infrastructure for rural culture and sports activities is improving

More integrated cultural service centers have been built in grassroots communities. By the end of 2021,

more than 570 thousand integrated cultural service centers had opened at village and community levels, covering almost all rural areas.⁴⁷ About 94 percent of counties, cities and districts in China have set up a network of cultural centers (providing 32 thousand branches) and 93 percent of counties, cities and districts have established a system⁴⁸ of libraries (providing 49 thousand branches).⁴⁹

Radio and television infrastructure have also improved. In 2021, the rural radio broadcasting coverage rate was 99.3 percent, while the television broadcasting rate was 99.5 percent. According to the China Internet Network Information Center, all administrative villages are equipped with Internet infrastructure and enjoy broadband services. As of June 2021, there were 297 million rural netizens – an internet penetration rate of 59.2 percent – with the urban-rural Internet penetration gap reduced to 19.1 percentage points.

To further support cultural revitalization, a national fitness campaign has been designed since 2017 to achieve the following goals: improve sports and fitness organizations; construct sports and fitness facilities; enrich sports and fitness activities; support sports and fitness events; strengthen physical fitness guidance; and promote sports and fitness culture. The campaign has reached all urban and rural areas, improving rural sports facilities, enhancing access to basic sports and fitness services, as well as accelerating the establishment of a public service system for sports and fitness. According to *the Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2021 National Economic and Social Development*, there were almost 4 million sports venues in the country, covering a total area of 3.41 billion m² with per capita space of 2.41 m², providing rural communities with much-improved basic public sports facilities.

5.3.3 The quality of rural culture and sports services continue to improve

New management and operational mechanisms for delivering cultural services have been introduced, such as governments procuring public cultural services from the private sector. These reforms have contributed to innovation in public cultural services, expanding their variety and scope.

5.3.4 Traditional rural culture is being effectively passed on

Preservation and utilization of agricultural heritage has been strengthened. As of 2021, MARA has designated 138 items of agricultural heritage. Six rounds of fieldwork have been carried out to discover more of China's most important agricultural heritage sites, resulting in a steady increase in the number of such sites, with more diverse types, covering more regions and ethnicities. In particular, a number of traditional agricultural systems with unique characteristics in the central and western regions have been included in the scope of protection, showcasing a wider range of China's long and rich history of farming culture.

47 The integrated cultural service includes the provision of entertainment performances, newspapers, radio and television, film screenings, cultural and sports activities, exhibitions and trainings.

48 On December 29, 2016, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, the General Administration of Sport, the NDRC and the MOF issued a notice on printing and releasing Guidelines on building central-branch systems of libraries and cultural centers at county-level. The *Guideline* pointed out that creating such a system is critical to building a modern public cultural service system. It also represents a drive for more efficient integration of public cultural resources, better public cultural services and higher quality cultural resources towards grassroots communities.

49 Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, Public Service Division, *Letter of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on Proposal No. 02028 of the Fifth Meeting of the 13th National Committee of the CPPCC (No. 164 in the category of Sports and publicity)* https://zwgk.mct.gov.cn/zfxgkml/zhgl/jytadf/202211/t20221117_937545.html

More efforts have been dedicated to protecting traditional villages. By 2021, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD) had added 6,819 villages to the list of traditional Chinese villages in need of protection. These villages are managed under a nameplate system, in which basic village information and the name of the person responsible are inscribed on the plate for open and easy scrutiny. The measures serve as a model and have protected traditional villages from disappearing in 10 cities and prefectures. Digital museums of traditional Chinese villages have also been constructed. The number of villages with a digital museum has reached 606, covering 31 provinces, districts and cities. This has helped to reverse the rapid trend of traditional villages disappearing and strengthened the influence of traditional Chinese culture.⁵⁰

Special Column 2: Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival

After the launch of the rural revitalization strategy, China established the Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival in 2018 as the first national festival dedicated specifically to the country's farmers. MARA and relevant departments are responsible for organizing numerous events, such as online and offline promotional events for agricultural products designed to increase rural incomes, along with a range of agricultural activities to enhance public knowledge and encourage engagement in Chinese agricultural traditions.

50 Information Center, 2022, Traditional Chinese Village Digital Museum, *Traditional village weekly information highlights (05.16-05.22)* Retrieved from: <http://www.dmctv.cn/zxShow.aspx?id=187>

6

Ecological Revitalization

6.1 Significance of Ecological Revitalization

China's proposals for building an ecological civilization and achieving its dual carbon goals (reaching peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060) have set an ambitious green tone for the country's future development. As society shifts increasingly towards the green transition, one of the major tasks for rural revitalization is to coordinate rural development with environmental protection. Ecological Revitalization consists of three main themes:

6.1.1 Achieving a green and low-carbon transition in agriculture to reduce the pressure of agricultural activities on the environment. Agriculture is a major source of GHG emissions and a giant carbon sink system, yet at the same time it is a victim of global warming and climate change. Extreme weather events caused by climate change – such as hot spells, drought and flooding – threaten the healthy development of agriculture and the nation's food security. It is therefore necessary to promote a greener model of agriculture, enhancing the quality of agricultural products while reducing use of resources, in an environment with limited availability of arable land and water. This model can safeguard the nation's food security, create new development opportunities in the agricultural sector and stimulate green consumption at the same time.

6.1.2 Satisfying the people's demand, especially rural residents, for a pleasant living environment, promoting a healthy planet, and accelerating the building of a beautiful countryside. Compared with urban residents, Chinese rural residents generally enjoy a less livable environment, with significant gaps in sanitation facilities, particularly waste and sewage disposal services. As the economy develops, with urban and rural areas engaged in closer social exchanges, residents in both areas will have higher expectations for cleaner air and water, as well as a healthier environment.

6.1.3 Conserving and restoring rural ecosystems under the guidelines of China's ecological civilization, to enjoy the social, economic and ecological benefits of lucid waters and lush mountains.

6.1.4 Accelerating the Green Transition in Agriculture

China's "1+2+3" goal⁵¹ involves controlling (1) overall water consumption for agriculture, (2) reducing the

51 "China's '1+2+3' goals" were proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture at the national agricultural meeting in 2014, followed by a series of documents released by the MOA for implementing these goals, which have become the key task of green agriculture development during China's "13th Five-Year Plan" period.

use of fertilizers and pesticides and (3) extensively utilizing animal manure and straw as resources, while recycling film mulch. These actions can help to establish a green agricultural system aligned with its carrying capacity in terms of resources and the environment, supporting the country's overall ecological goals.

6.2 Strengthening resource conservation and their sustainable use

Since the launch of the rural revitalization strategy, China has made great efforts to conserve arable land and use water efficiently in agriculture, with encouraging results in boosting green development in agriculture and building China's ecological civilization.

6.2.1 Achievements in conserving arable land

Through the *Action Plan on Conserving and Improving the Quality of Arable Land*, the country has specified goals on improving the quality of arable land, treating heavy metal contamination and plastic pollution. Technical measures have been taken to conserve and improve the quality of arable land, which have raised the quality of topsoil. These include developing prime farmland that is well-provisioned with facilities and amenities, conserving chernozem soils in northeast China, controlling soil pollution and managing soil rehabilitation, recycling straw on farmland, replacing chemical with organic fertilizers, practicing crop rotation and fallow systems⁵², subsoiling⁵³ and deep plowing, along with treating heavy metal contamination. In 2021, around 67,000 km² of chernozem soil were under conservation and utilization. There has been a steady improvement in the quality of arable land. According to the national standard released in 2016, arable land in China is appraised by MARA every five years on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the best quality land. In 2014, the average rank was 5.11; in 2019 it was 4.76, an increase of 0.35 points.

6.2.2 Agricultural water use efficiency is improving steadily

China suffers from a serious shortage of water resources; the imbalance between supply and demand is a major challenge to its sustainable development. Placing a high value on saving water in agriculture, in 2012, the General Office of the State Council issued the *Outline of the National Agricultural Water Conservation Program (2012-2020)*. Following its guidelines, the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) and MARA have promoted greater efficiency in the use of agricultural water resources. Their measures include building efficient water-saving irrigation facilities, such as field water pipelines, sprinklers and micro-irrigation in areas short of water, with inefficient irrigation, or with a prominent imbalance between supply and demand due to uneven temporal and spatial distribution, adapting to local conditions. The measures are expected to increase the scale and spread of effective irrigation, improve water utilization efficiency, as well as encourage intensive water conservation and use. In 2021, the effective utilization coefficient of farmland irrigation water reached 0.568, up by 0.052 from 2011.

6.3 Significant progress in preventing and treating agricultural nonpoint source (NPS) pollution

Propelled by strong policies such as the *Opinions on Comprehensively Enhancing Ecological and*

⁵² A fallow is a stage of crop rotation in which arable land is left without sowing for at least one harvest cycle. This can allow the land to recover, while disrupting pests feeding on the crop.

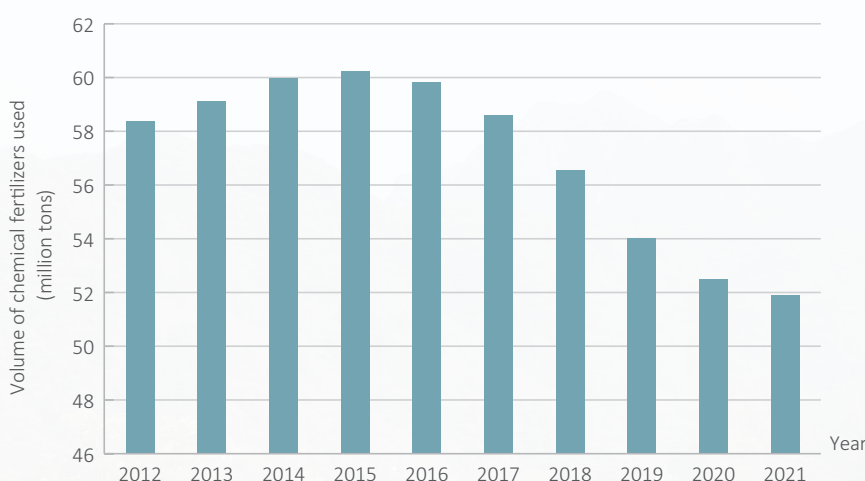
⁵³ Subsoiling is a soil management technique to improve crop production, by loosening subsoil to reduce compaction.

Environmental Protection and Resolutely Winning the Tough Battle for Prevention and Control of Pollution, as well as the Action Plan for the Battle of Agricultural and Rural Pollution Control, the country has clarified its “1+2+3” goals through a strategy to prevent and control agricultural NPS pollution,⁵⁴ which has moved on from treating existing problems to curbing increments.

6.3.1 Use of chemical fertilizers is falling steadily

In 2015, the former Ministry of Agriculture rolled out the *Action Plan on Zero Growth of Fertilizer Use by 2020*, which made specific arrangements for improving the efficient use of chemical fertilizers to increase output and quality. Since 2016, the nationwide use of fertilizers and pesticides has decreased every year, reversing a long-standing upward trend. The volume of fertilizers used for crops across China fell by 13.8 percent, from 60.2 million tons in 2015, to 51.9 million tons in 2021 (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Volume of Chemical Fertilizers Used from 2012 to 2021



Source: China National Bureau of Statistics, Annual data on agriculture, <https://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=C01>

6.3.2 Use of pesticides continues to fall

In 2015 the former Ministry of Agriculture rolled out the *Action Plan on Zero Growth of Pesticide Use by 2020*, making specific arrangements to improve the efficiency of pesticide use. Under its guidelines, MARA has vigorously pushed forward actions to reduce the use of pesticides and improve their efficiency, as well as replaced chemical methods of prevention and control with green approaches. Specifically, 94 model counties have been established for green prevention and control, which promote green technologies for increased production. These include ecological, biological, and physiochemical traps and controls, bee pollination, along with the use of more efficient and less toxic biopesticides. A training campaign on scientific and safe use of pesticides is also being carried out nationwide, helping millions of farmers and

⁵⁴ Nonpoint source pollution (NPS) comes from multiple points, such as excess fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides. It can spread through various means, including land runoff or drainage, with significant negative impacts on water quality.

Voluntary agricultural technicians go to Fenghua Village, Tai Lake Town in the county to publicize agricultural knowledge.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization



new agricultural operating entities to apply key technologies for reducing pesticides. As scientific pesticide application becomes more broadly accepted, pesticide-saving technologies are being more widely adopted, accelerating the use of green, efficient products. Highly-efficient and low-risk pesticides now account for over 90 percent of the total used. In 2021, the green pesticide utilization rates for three major crops across China – rice, wheat and corn – all exceeded 40%, 4-5 percentage points higher than in 2015.

6.3.3 Utilization of animal manure

Agricultural production inevitably produces waste, including animal manure from livestock and poultry farming, straw and plastic film used for crop protection. Unless treated properly, such waste will have a negative impact on the environment. Therefore, utilizing agricultural waste as a resource is an effective way to develop a circular economy and achieve sustainable development. In 2016, the *Plan on Promoting the Pilot of Utilizing Agricultural Waste as Resources* was published, exploring effective technical methods and creating a comprehensive model of agricultural waste treatment through pilots.

In 2017, the General Office of the State Council published the *Opinion on Accelerating the Utilization of Waste from Livestock and Poultry Farming*⁵⁵, a campaign to encourage the use of animal manure as a resource and accelerate the green development of animal husbandry. Afterwards, the former MOA formulated the *Action Plan for Utilizing Animal Manure as A Resource*⁵⁶ (2017-2020) to activate key tasks. This created a system whereby the project is implemented across an entire county, supplemented by multiple measures, such as introducing organic fertilizers for fruit, vegetables and tea, as well as testing heavy metal residues. Under the guidance of the plan, all 585 major livestock counties have engaged in county-wide projects promoting animal manure as a resource. In 2020, similar projects were carried out in another 120 counties that are less livestock-oriented, to improve their capacity to treat and utilize animal manure. In 2021, the campaign yielded positive results: the national comprehensive utilization rate of

55 Public Information of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, (2017), *Opinion on Accelerating the Utilization of Waste from Livestock and Poultry Farming*, retrieved from, https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-06/12/content_5201790.htm

56 Public Information of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China, (2017), *Action Plan for Utilizing Animal Manure as A Resource (2017-2020)*, retrieved from: http://www.moa.gov.cn/nybgb/2017/dbq/201801/t20180103_6134011.htm

animal manure exceeded 76 percent – 16 percentage points higher than in 2015 – and over 97 percent of large-scale breeding farms were equipped with manure treatment facilities.⁵⁷

6.3.4 Comprehensive use of straw

To address challenges related to the surplus of straw, several measures have been adopted. MARA has identified 401 key counties across the country for work on straw use, with a focus on adopting straw as fertilizer, fuel, feedstuff, raw material and base material (the “five materials”). Secondly, the ban on straw burning was reinforced through more extensive use of technologies, such as remote sensing from satellites, drones and high-definition cameras to monitor and control ignition points, along with special inspections to enforce burning bans by holding offenders to account. The open burning of straw has diminished sharply. In 2021, more than 647 million tons of straw were recycled across the country, with their utilization rate reaching 88 percent⁵⁸ and an upward trend of using straw for the “five materials”.

6.3.5 Reducing and recycling plastic film

Led by MARA, multiple ministries have collaborated in a campaign against “white pollution”, by regulating the actions of agricultural film producers, sellers and users, holding each entity accountable for recycling discarded film, while guiding local governments to promote standard soil films that improve their recyclability from the onset. They have also worked on a full-process regulatory system that covers the production, sales, usage and recycling of agricultural film. Through this full-process regulation, the recycling rate of film waste across China now exceeds 80 percent⁵⁹.

6.4 Actions continue to increase variety and quality of seeds and breeds, build brands and promote standardization

In March 2021, the General Office of MARA issued the *Action Plan on “Improving Variety, Quality and Brand and Standardizing” Agricultural Production*. This proposes actions to breed better varieties, improve product quality, as well as build brands and standardize production, to advance the green development of agriculture more broadly. Examples of actions taken by MARA include:



◆ Cultivate better varieties

selecting new varieties, purifying and reinforcing local specialty varieties, breeding breakthrough varieties with high yield and quality, as well as building a number of breeding bases for prime seeds.

57 Public Information of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China, (2022), *A Reply to the 0509 Proposal of the Fifth Session of the 13th National People's Congress*, retrieved from: http://www.moa.gov.cn/govpublic/xmsyj/202208/t20220825_6407761.htm

58 Institute of Agricultural Resources and Regional Planning, CAAS (2022). *China Agriculture Green Development Report*

59 The Bureau of Environment and Resources, National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China, (2021), *Farmland "white pollution" prevention and control effect is obvious, the recycle rate of agricultural film is stable at more than 80%*, retrieved from: https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/hjzy/zyzhlyhjhjj/202106/t20210628_1315403.html



◆ **Promoting high-quality agricultural production**

promoting technologies and production methods, improving the environment in production areas, promoting green inputs and safe green veterinary drugs, as well as building a key indicator system for agricultural product quality.



◆ **Strengthening the capacity to build agricultural brands**

fostering renowned brands and a brand appraisal system, strengthening brand management and regulations, along with advocating brand marketing. In addition, MARA is reinforcing regulations on agricultural products, to promote safe, green and high-quality agricultural goods.



◆ **Advancing standardization of the entire industrial chain**

led by new agricultural operating entities, driven by cross-sectoral services and the agro-processing industry, facilitated by the intensive processing of agricultural products and supported by pilot projects in key areas.

By the end of 2021, more than 13,000 national and industrial standards applied to agriculture, effectively covering the full production process of major agricultural products. 62,000 agricultural products have been certified as green and organic, or granted a geographic indication (GI). The overall pass rate⁶⁰ of agricultural products through quality and safety monitoring exceeds 97.6 percent.⁶¹

6.5 Steady Improvement in the Rural Living Environment

Enhancing the living environment of rural areas is a significant element of the rural revitalization strategy and “Building a Beautiful China”. Since the strategy launched, departments in all regions have followed the action plan on rectifying and improving rural living standards. Lessons in achieving this were learned from a pilot program in Zhejiang Province – “Thousand Village Demonstration and Ten Thousand Village Rectification”. These have created systems to ensure all tasks relating to the rural living environment are implemented, creating more than 50,000 villages with diverse forms and distinct features.

⁶⁰ The pass rate is formulated according to the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Quality and Safety of Agricultural Products*.

⁶¹ Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Press Office (2021, December 28). *The Pass Rate of 2021 Routine Monitor of Agricultural Product Quality and Safety is 97.6%*. Retrieved from: http://www.jgs.moa.gov.cn/gzdt/jgjd/202112/t20211228_6385798.htm

6.5.1 Domestic waste treatment is fully covered in rural areas

In 2019, the MOHURD supported local governments in implementing *the Guiding Opinions on Establishing and Improving the Collection, Transfer and Disposal System of Rural Domestic Waste*. By the end of 2021, more than 90 percent of villages in China were collecting, transferring and treating rural domestic waste, rising by 15 percentage points from 2017⁶². Localities generally adopt an approach under which waste is categorized by household, collected by village, transferred by town and disposed of by county. When local conditions permit, some rural areas are also integrated into the urban sanitation system. More than 95 percent of villages have carried out the clean village initiative, improving village living environments.⁶³

6.5.2 Moving forward on rural domestic sewage treatment

In 2019, nine authorities – the Central Leading Group for Rural Work, MARA, MEE (Ministry of Ecological Environment), MOHURD, MWR, MOST, NRDC, MOF and CBIRC jointly issued the *Guidelines on Promoting Rural Domestic Sewage Treatment*. This directs localities to reduce sewage by category in a recycling-oriented approach adapted to local conditions. MARA, NARR, MEE and other authorities have pressed ahead with developing rural domestic sewage discharge standards and a county-wide planning system. Rural domestic sewage treatment pilots have been conducted in 120 counties, with black and foul water bodies in rural areas broadly identified. By the end of 2021, China had built more than 500,000 rural domestic sewage treatment facilities, with almost 28 percent of domestic sewage in those villages now being properly processed⁶⁴.

6.5.3 The rural “Toilet Revolution” is making progress

Since 2018, toilet facilities in more than 40 million rural households have been upgraded. By the end of 2021, over 70 percent of rural households across the country had access to sanitary toilets. Of these, in the Eastern region, along with suburbs of central and western cities, 90 percent had access to sanitary toilets plumbed to harmless treatment facilities.

6.6 Good progress in building Rural Ecosystems

Since 2012, the Chinese government has made significant efforts to promote ecological civilization, proposing a strategy of coordinated management of mountains, water, forests, farmland, grassland and desert. A series of policies on environmental protection and restoration have been introduced. The implementation of supporting policies has strengthened the ecological functions of forests and grasslands, renewed wetlands, as well as protected and restored biodiversity. These include the *National Key Ecological Function Division (Revised Edition)*, the *National Ecological Protection and Construction Plan (2013-2020)*, the *Plan for National Grassland Protection, Construction and Utilization during the 13th Five-Year Plan Period* and the *Plan for National Wetland Protection during the 13th Five-Year Plan Period*. Such measures will further help to restore healthy ecological functions in rural areas.

62 Policy document of Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, (2022), *Interpretation of the Notice on Further Strengthening the Construction and Management of Rural Household Waste Collection, transportation and Disposal System*, retrieved from https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-05/29/content_5692927.htm

63 News Center of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, (2021), *The Central Agriculture Office and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs notified and praised 106 advanced counties in the national village cleaning action* retrieved from http://www.moa.gov.cn/xw/bmdt/202102/t20210224_6362207.htm

64 News Center of Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, (2022), *a regular press conference of MEE in April*, retrieved from: https://www.mee.gov.cn/ywdt/zbft/202204/t20220422_975721.shtml



One after another, beautiful highways have been built, opening up the door for impoverished areas to the outside world and creating a man-made miracle.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

6.6.1 Coordinated protection and restoration of mountains, water, forests, farmland, grasslands and deserts to enhance the resilience of ecosystems

China supports rural areas in coordinating all natural factors for the overall protection, systematic restoration and comprehensive treatment of mountains, water, forests, farmland, grassland and deserts, to improve the functioning of regional ecosystems and environmental quality.

a) Good progress in grassland protection and restoration

To protect grasslands, the supervision and inspection of the designation of prime grassland protection zones have been reinforced, farming-pastoral ecotones⁶⁵ (FPE) have been delineated and red lines have been set for prime grassland protection. The coverage of grassland vegetation in major ecological engineering zones is 11 percentage points higher than in other zones, while the grass is over 50 percent taller.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, in accordance with the policy on prime grassland protection, China continues to apply the allowance incentive for grassland protection and the program of returning pastures to grassland. Through grazing prohibition, rest-grazing, rotational grazing, captive breeding, grassland renovation and grass plantation, the grass to livestock ratio is improving. The transition of the grassland livestock industry from traditional, nomadic husbandry to modern husbandry, is also being facilitated. Areas of farmland returning to forest and grassland, as well as pasture returning to grassland, are expanding. By the end of 2020, the Fraction of Vegetation Cover (the fraction of ground covered by vegetation as a percentage of the total area) for grassland had reached 56.1 percent, compared to 54 percent in 2015⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ An ecotone is a transition area where two very different ecosystems meet.

⁶⁶ Ecological engineering zones are areas that the government has identified for restoration and protection, to improve ecosystem functions and services.

⁶⁷ News Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 14, Jul 2021, *Agricultural modernization brilliant five-year series of publications XXIV* The ecological environment of grasslands across the country continued to improve: Retrieved from: http://www.ghs.moa.gov.cn/ghgl/202107/t20210714_6371800.htm

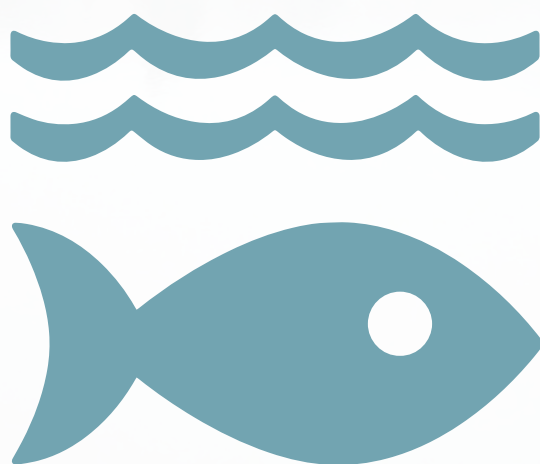
b) A shelterbelt forest system⁶⁸ is in place

Under projects related to important ecosystem protection and restoration, six million hectares of forest are now under protection and a contiguous agricultural shelterbelt forest system has been established in major agricultural areas. Shelterbelt projects on the Yangtze River, the Pearl River and China's coastal areas, along with the Taihang Mountains, have received a total of RMB 1.87 billion (USD 280 million) from the central budget for construction tasks across 3,426 km² of land, supporting better natural resources in construction zones, higher quality forests and greater environmental security.

6.6.2 Advances in protecting water resources and the ten-year fishing ban on the Yangtze River is beginning to have an impact

In 2020, MARA started a ten-year fishing ban across key waters along the Yangtze River, as well as on all the seven major inland rivers through a closed-season system. Major rivers, lakes and seas across China are all covered by the fishery ban and moratorium. To accelerate resettlement and support for fishers, the central government has allocated a subsidy of RMB 13 billion (USD 1.9 billion), with supporting funds of RMB 11.5 billion (USD 1.7 billion) from local governments, providing social security for 218,000 people and helping 165,000 to secure jobs in other industries.

Emphasizing the protection of rare or endangered species, China has carried out action plans for saving rare species, including the Chinese sturgeon, Yangtze finless porpoise and Yangtze sturgeon. It has also formulated the *Plan for Building Biodiversity Conservation Projects on the Yangtze River (2021-2025)*, to further protect and nurture aquatic creatures along the Yangtze.



⁶⁸ To tackle the severe problem of environmental degradation and the ever-increasing loss of natural resources, since 1978 the Government of China has started implementing the Three-North Shelterbelt Programme, namely the “the Great Green Wall”, which is composed of the network of shelterbelts and tree plantations across the entire region in northern China. The Three-North Shelterbelt Programme is the largest afforestation programme in the world. It aims to establish 35 million ha of shelterbelt forests between 1978 and 2050.

Organizational Revitalization

7.1 Significance and Types of Rural Organizations

Revitalization of rural organizations and institutions is an important component of China's rural revitalization strategy. It refers to reinvigorating organizations in rural areas, allowing them to better perform their political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and other functions, so as to further strengthen rural governance. According to their functions, rural organizations in China can be divided into four types: political organizations, autonomous organizations, economic organizations and social organizations (Figure 7).

Historically, rural organizations in China have played an important role on rural governance at village level, with evolving functions as rural areas developed. As distinct from urban organizations where functions are assigned to different organs, rural organizations have long played multiple roles. The Party branch committee and villagers' committee (collectively known as "two committees") at the level of the administrative village (potentially a number of distinct geographical villages) are organizations with overlapping functions, such as economic, political and social organizations.

Figure 7: Categories of Rural Organizations

Rural political organizations



Party groups, Party branches and general Party branches established in natural and administrative villages, as well as Party organizations built within other rural economic and social organizations, etc.

Rural economic organizations



Rural economic collectives, rural cooperatives, agricultural enterprises, family farms, agricultural socialized service organizations, etc.

Rural autonomous organization



Villagers' committees, villagers' groups, villagers' councils, village affairs supervision committees, etc.

Rural social organizations



Rural elderly care associations, women's federations, rural mutual aid cooperatives for poverty alleviation funds, various professional technical association, new-type rural opinion leaders' organizations, councils on wedding and funeral management, etc.

Source: Policy Documents of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, (2019), Regulations of the CPC on the Work of Rural Grass-roots Organization. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-01/10/content_5356764.htm

Their membership is usually limited to a small group of people in a particular locality, or those engaged in a particular line of work, thereby establishing clear membership boundaries. The organizational structure also tends to be simple, due to limited membership turnover.

Box 2. Categories of Rural Organizations

a) Rural political organizations

Rural political organizations are the main rural grassroots organizations of the CPC. According to Regulations on the Work of Rural Grassroots CPC Organizations, they are responsible for “comprehensively leading all kinds of organizations and work in China’s townships and villages”, including discussing and making major decisions on regional economic, political, cultural, social, environmental and Party matters, along with rural revitalization. In addition, village-level Party organizations are responsible for facilitating rural grassroots consultations on major decisions and supporting villagers in carrying out self-governing activities in accordance with the law.



Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

b) Rural autonomous organizations

Rural autonomous organizations, such as villagers’ committees, are responsible for managing local affairs and representing the interests of their community. They serve as the major platform for rural people to directly participate in self-governing activities related to local political, social and economic life, such as building new village infrastructure and protecting their environment. Since the 1980s, China has established a system of village-level self-governance, which involves villagers’ committees, villagers’ meetings, villager representatives’ assemblies and villagers’ supervisory committees. They also provide a platform for villagers to voice their concerns, providing decision-makers with extensive and timely information on public opinion in rural areas.

c) Rural economic organizations

Rural economic organizations are organizational units engaged in agricultural production and management for specific economic goals. With the advance of China's reform and opening-up, along with the further division of labor and industries in rural areas, new organizational models are constantly emerging, including family farm alliances, farmers' cooperative unions, industrialization consortiums and socialized service alliances, as well as enhanced profit-sharing mechanisms. Specifically:

Rural economic cooperatives: In China's rural areas, land is collectively owned and contracted by farmers for operation. Rural economic cooperatives are organizations formed by rural residents to jointly manage collective assets at the village level.

Specialized farmers' cooperatives are formed by farmers with a common interest or specialty to jointly manage and operate their economic activities and resources related to that. Such organizations provide sales, processing, transport and storage services, as well as technologies and information related to agricultural production and operations, based on household land contracting and operations. By pooling their resources, knowledge and expertise, members can improve the quality and quantity of their production, reduce costs, as well as access markets and financing that might be difficult to realise individually, strengthening their market risk management.

Family farms are a new type of agricultural management entity, operated by family members as the main labor force, engaged in large-scale, intensive, commercialized agricultural production and management, with agricultural revenues being their main income source.

Agricultural enterprises are profit-oriented organizations involved in production and management activities such as planting, animal husbandry, forestry, fishing and other agricultural industries. Thanks to their larger scale and reach compared to small-holder farmers, they possess advantages in integrating rural resources, such as land, labor, capital, culture and technologies.

d) Rural social organizations

Rural social organizations are nongovernmental or nonprofit organizations that play a vital role in rural socio-economic development, by serving as intermediaries, communicators and coordinators. They encompass a wide range of organizations, such as rural elderly care associations, women's federations, special technology associations, along with councils on wedding and funeral management.

Rural organizations are important entities that cover every aspect of rural development. Different organizations play different roles in rural revitalization. Economic organizations can unite small farmers and help them to build strengths in economic scale and resilience to market risks. Political organizations are key in attracting and fostering talented workers. Social organizations and self-governing organizations play a crucial role in cultural and Ecological Revitalization, by encouraging the rural population to protect cultural heritage, establish good rural ethics and conserve the environment. Consequently, to increase their capacity, the government must strengthen relevant policies, encourage more talented people to work in those areas and allocate more funds to them.

7.2 Actions and Measures in Revitalizing Rural Organizations and Related Institutions

7.2.1 Strengthening self-governance with innovative forms of stakeholders' engagement

Since China's reform and opening up, rural self-governing organizations and their related institutions have continued to evolve.



Firstly, China's rural self-governing organizations have formed an organizational structure whereby executive, decision-making and supervisory responsibilities are separated and act as a check on each other. Their governance structure includes villager meetings and representative assemblies as the major decision-making bodies, the villagers' committee as the executive body and the village affairs supervision committee as the oversight body.



Secondly, community-level negotiations, along with village regulations and agreements are promoted. In addition, more self-governing organizations have emerged, such as villager and ethnic conferences, as well as anti-gambling and anti-drug associations.



Thirdly, China has promulgated *The Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China* in 1998 and revised it in 2010. In 2002, 2004 and 2009, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued institutional documents on several critical issues including: ensuring smooth elections for villagers' committees, improving transparency of village affairs and strengthening democratic management systems. Over 640,000 villages and communities in China are equipped with professional legal advisors, accounting for more than 90 percent of counties in China.

Special Column 3:

Xiuzhou District in Zhejiang: Village Regulations and Agreements Cultivate New Cultural Customs

Village regulations and agreements are self-regulating rules formulated by villagers based on the local context, with the aim of maintaining social order, social public morality and village customs, which guide villagers' behavior. For the harmonious and civilized development of the village and its residents, the villagers' committee of Tengyun village, Xiuzhou District, Jiaxing city, Zhejiang Province, has formulated people-oriented regulations and agreements to explore new models of community-level governance in recent years.

In line with the rural revitalization strategy, the Tengyun Villager Committee has improved its village regulations and agreements about marriage and family, along with neighborhood relationships, improving the local living environment and security with popular participation. One of the new agreements is to build a more pleasant village environment, by encouraging villagers to keep the locality clean, maintain green spaces, keep areas around their houses in order and sort garbage at source. Through such agreements, the committee is forming a new model of governance based on communal action and shared benefits, with a rewarding system for individuals and families that best follow regulations and agreements, while violators receive constructive criticism and education from the committee.

7.2.2 Boosted economic organization to take the lead

China consistently explores ways to develop the collective economy and cultivates new types of agricultural businesses, such as family farms, farmer cooperatives and commercial organizations that provide agricultural services. The No.1 Central Document issued by the Central People's Government every year regularly highlights the importance of new high-quality types of agricultural business. To this end, in 2022, MARA promulgated the *Notification of Improvement of New Types of Agricultural Businesses*, underpinning rural revitalization and the modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

By the end of 2021, official recognition had been granted to more than 90,000 enterprises as leading bodies in agricultural industrialization, as well as to 3.9 million family farms and 2.22 million farmers' cooperatives. Better benefit-sharing mechanisms also arose, such as contract farming, dividend sharing and equity cooperation, raising the incomes of rural residents.

7.2.3 Social organizations to provide better public services

To emphasize the value it places on rural social organizations, the CPC Party Committee and State Council introduced the *Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee on the Party Building of Social Organization (for Trial Implementation)* in 2015. It also released the *Opinions of the Ministry of Civil Affairs on the Development of Community Social Organizations* in 2020 and the *Opinions of the State Council on the Improvement of Management of Urban and Rural Communities* in 2021.

The State Grid Shaanxi Yulin Power Supply Company dispatched the first secretary of Lijiazhan Village, Shajiadian Town, Mizhi County, to discuss with the villagers the advantages of establishing a breeding cooperative.



Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

These regulate and refine guidelines for the development, management and supervision of rural social organizations. With the support of national policies, rural social organizations – such as opinion leaders' councils⁶⁹ and volunteer associations – are playing a more important role in rural governance. For example, women's federations at community level take the lead in encouraging women to contribute to economic development, environmental protection, as well as managing rural customs and civic life. In addition, many social organizations promote projects that focus on female equality: the China Foundation for Rural Development and the Ant Foundation launched the Digital Heroine Mu Lan Project to develop county-level digital industries and new forms of professional training, creating more diverse employment platforms and opportunities for women in underdeveloped areas of central and western China.



69 A civil organization composed of opinion leaders, either with local knowledge or with relevant expertise.

Special Column 4:

Local Female Volunteers Safeguard the River Environment in Neixiang, Henan

At Pengying Village, Zuoqu Township, Neixiang County, Henan Province, a group of female volunteers are busy along the Ziqi River, a tributary of the Danjiang River, removing garbage, patrolling the waterway, removing weeds and deterring antisocial behavior. Their bright red waistcoats form a spectacular contrast with the green water plants.

This volunteer team of “water-guardians” was set up by female members of households that have been lifted out of poverty, along with “left-behind” women⁷⁰ in Pengying Village. They each spend about two days a week protecting brooks in the village and on the Ziqi River.

“I asked some women in the village to join me in the team. We can clear the garbage in the waters in our free time. In doing so, we hope to protect the river nearby and help all the villagers get access to clean water,” said Sun Xiaoying, the team leader, adding that team members help conserve the environment while socializing.

With the encouragement of Sun, her 24-year-old daughter, Yuan Yanting, also became a member of the team, which has grown to more than 10 women. Neixiang County is the source and catchment area, as well as the main water conservation area of Danjiangkou Reservoir and the key water source of the middle section of China’s South-to-North Water Diversion Project. It is responsible for transferring water to China’s northern areas. The Ziqi River in Pengying Village ultimately flows into the Danjiangkou Reservoir.

In addition to protecting these waters, the team also plays an important role in village governance, including improving the living environment, providing services for left-behind groups, assisting in nucleic acid testing and reminding residents to keep safe in the summer. They are always willing to help whenever and wherever they are needed.

Thanks to their efforts, the water of the Ziqi River has become clearer and the local environment more beautiful. Other neighboring villages are now following the example of Zuoqu Township. A “water-guardians” team has been established in Chenjiaying Village, with a voluntary service team in Wangjing Village. Both are composed of female residents and team members are making a difference in their residential environment and providing voluntary services for vulnerable groups in the community.

⁷⁰ “Left-behind” refers to children and other members of households who remain in their home villages while the family breadwinners travel elsewhere to work as migrants.



Chen Wanghui (first from left), director of the village committee of Maoshui Village, Dawei Town, Xiaojin County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, led the masses to develop the rose planting industry and get out of poverty.

Source of pictures: National Publicity and Education Center for Rural Revitalization

Rural organizations are diverse. They include the Party, the market, self-governing organizations and social organizations with different priorities and functions. All have a role to play. Experience has shown that to revitalize rural organizations, China should strengthen the leadership of rural grassroots Party organizations and encourage autonomous organizations to participate fully in managing rural social affairs. It is also important to allow market-oriented organizations to play the main role in resource allocation, as well as leverage the vital functions of social organizations in gap areas out with the responsibilities of the government and market. This will result in positive coordination and interaction among the various entities involved.

Led by Party organizations, village committees can create favorable conditions for market organizations. Production allocation in agriculture and rural areas should be further optimized to effectively boost social organizations, promote social progress and create a strong force for revitalizing rural organizations.

Working across all stakeholders, it is possible to continue to improve quality of life, economic output and governance in the countryside – a crucial step in realizing the core promise of the SDGs: to end all poverty and leave no one behind.