城乡融合视域下扩大农村内需的潜力与路径

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摘　要：实施扩大内需战略的潜力后劲、重点难点在农村。扩大农村内需是促进城乡经济循环，增强国内大循环内生动力的关键。未来，只要城乡居民收入保持合理增速，农村居民消费支出增速会持续高于城市居民。同时，建设农业强国、宜居宜业和美乡村蕴藏着巨量的投资需求，乡村产业高质量发展也会激发更多城乡居民的新消费需求。但受农村居民城乡两栖影响，农村内需潜力被城乡融合发展短板制约而难以释放。这些制约因素突出表现在农村居民收入结构性降速、稳定性不足，农村居民存在社会保障短板，乡村产业发展层次低、供给弱，乡村基础设施建设投入转化能力不足，面向城市居民的产品和服务供给不足等方面。要持续扩大农村内需，应在城乡融合视域下，瞄准实现城乡居民美好生活，围绕农村居民持续增收和生活提质，采取多元化路径和组合式政策工具，拓展农民持续增收渠道，推动农村消费市场升级，优化乡村建设投入机制，推动乡村产业高质量发展，建立起扩大农村内需的有效制度体系，畅通城乡经济循环通道，推动农业农村现代化有效融入国内经济大循环。

关键词：扩大内需战略　农村内需　城乡融合　农村现代化

JEL 分类号：E61, O18, R10

在新发展阶段，内需已经成为驱动国内经济大循环的主要动力。中共二十大报告提出“把实施扩大内需战略同深化供给侧结构性改革有机结合起来，增强国内大循环内生动力和可靠性”。但总需求不足是中国经济运行面临的突出矛盾，影响了国内大循环的稳定性和可持续性，主要表现为城乡消费和生活水平差距的城乡融合发展短板，使农村需求潜力未被激发出来，导致内需驱动的城乡经济循环受到限制。全面建设社会主义现代化国家，最艰巨最繁重的任务在农村，最大的潜力和后劲也在农村。对于扩大内需而言同样如此，要把扩大农村内需作为实施扩大内需战略的重点和难点。在农村户籍人口城乡两栖的城镇化格局下，农村是重要的消费市场和要素市场，农村内需是完整内需体系的关键组成部分。通过促进城乡融合，畅通城乡要素流动，激发农村消费潜力，对于构建新型工农城乡关系，发挥消费的基础作用和投资的关键作用，增强国内大循环驱动高质量发展的动力具有重大意义。目前，农村内需潜力难以激发的突出矛盾是农民消费需求数量少、范围窄、层次

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低，农村消费产品和服务供给种类少、质量低、体系弱，以及农业供给侧结构性矛盾对城乡居民消费需求的制约。需要从城乡融合的新视角，采取多元化路径和组合式政策工具扩大农村内需，充分发挥扩大农村内需重塑城乡经济循环、增强国内大循环内生动力的作用。

一、新时期中国扩大农村内需的巨大潜力

农村内需是内需在城乡地域空间上的分割，包括城乡居民等在农村空间范围内的消费以及政府和企业等在农村空间上的投资。农村内需和城市内需都是国民经济良性循环不可或缺的有机组成部分。城乡融合发展的重要内容和标志是农村内需和城市内需的有机衔接和融合。城乡二元制度和城乡发展差距，使农村内需和城市内需表现出一定程度的分离，既使农村内需被抑制，也使城市居民的农村消费受到限制。在中国，由城乡居民收入差距决定的城乡居民消费差距明显存在（见图1）。中国已经进入全面推进乡村振兴，加快城乡融合发展的新时期。城乡消费差距、乡村发展短板意味着农村巨大的内需潜力。一方面，近年来农村居民收入增速持续高于城镇居民，城乡消费差距持续缩小，农村居民消费短板逐步补齐，农村居民的潜在消费需求迅速释放。如果按照城乡居民实现消费均等测算，扩大内需的主要空间在农村。另一方面，乡村产业振兴和环境改善为城乡居民创造更多的消费选择，提高城乡居民消费层次，将产生促进城市内需以及城乡内需联动的倍增效应。可以说，促进城乡融合发展，缩小城乡消费差距，消除乡村发展短板，可以有效激发农村内需，并通过城乡内需的有机衔接和融合促进城乡经济循环，实现城乡内需的倍增。新时期中国扩大农村内需的潜力主要体现在以下几个方面。

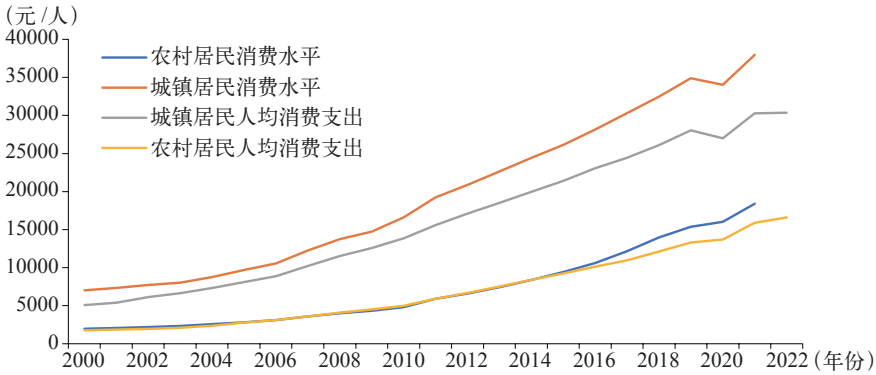


图1：2000~2022年城乡居民消费水平及人均消费支出变动情况

资料来源：根据国家统计局公布数据整理。

（一）农村居民消费支出增速将持续高于城镇居民

居民消费取决于收入及其增长情况。近年来，中国城乡居民收入相对差距不断缩小，包含镇区和乡村地区的县乡消费活力逐步显现，县乡消费市场加速发展。2021年，镇区和乡村消费品零售额

分别达10.8万亿元和5.9万亿元，2013~2021年年均分别增长10.4%和9.8%，增速分别高于城区消费品零售额2.3个百分点和1.7个百分点（国家统计局，2022）。[①]但城乡居民消费差距仍然十分明显。2021年中国城乡居民的消费水平之比为2.06:1，农村居民消费水平落后城镇居民约11年；2022年城乡居民的人均消费支出之比为1.83:1，农村居民人均消费支出同样落后城镇居民约11年。[②]2022年乡村人口占总人口的34.8%，但乡村消费品零售额仅占全国的13.5%（国家统计局，2023）。相比城镇居民，农村居民消费内容以弹性较低的食品和生活用品为主，随着收入的增长，改善生活质量的食品和生活用品消费稳步增长，同时弹性较高的文化娱乐、医疗保健、生活服务等消费迅速增长。农村居民消费既具有应对冲击的稳定性，也具有较高的边际消费倾向，表现为消费支出占可支配收入的比重及消费支出增速明显高于城镇居民。2012年到2022年，城镇居民消费支出占可支配收入比重从70.9%下降到61.7%，而农村居民消费支出占可支配收入比重从79.5%增加到82.6%，同期农村居民人均消费支出增速明显高于城镇居民且表现出更稳健的韧性。2020年和2022年，受新冠肺炎疫情和经济形势影响，城镇居民人均消费支出分别比上一年下降6.0%和1.7%，而同期农村居民人均消费支出仅在2020年下降0.1%，2022年仍保持了2.5%的增速。2012年到2022年，农村居民人均消费支出增速比城镇居民平均高3.6个百分点（见表1）。未来一个时期，只要城乡居民收入保持合理增速，农村居民消费支出仍会保持明显高于城镇居民的增速。据测算，随着农村居民收入增长，预计每年可新增2万亿元左右的消费需求（乔金亮，2023）。

表1：2012~2022年城乡居民人均可支配收入和人均消费情况

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
居民可支配收入	城镇增速%	9.6	7.0	6.8	6.6	5.6	6.5	5.6	5.0	1.2	7.1	1.9
	农村增速%	10.7	9.3	9.2	7.5	6.2	7.3	6.6	6.2	3.8	9.7	4.2
	城乡比值	2.88	2.81	2.75	2.73	2.72	2.71	2.69	2.64	2.56	2.50	2.45
居民消费水平	城镇增速%	7.1	5.7	5.9	6.9	5.6	4.0	4.7	4.6	−4.6	9.9	—
	农村增速%	8.1	9.4	10.9	12.7	10.8	10.8	12.4	7.0	1.8	13.5	—
	城乡比值	3.17	3.06	2.92	2.78	2.65	2.50	2.32	2.27	2.12	2.06	—
居民消费支出	城镇增速%	7.1	5.3	5.8	5.5	5.7	4.1	4.6	4.6	−6.0	11.1	−1.7
	农村增速%	10.4	9.2	10.0	8.6	7.8	6.8	8.4	6.5	−0.1	15.3	2.5
	城乡比值	2.57	2.47	2.38	2.32	2.28	2.23	2.15	2.11	1.97	1.90	1.83

注：表中增速为实际增速。

资料来源：根据国家统计局网站（http://www.stats.gov.cn）公布的数据整理。

[①] 镇区和乡村合计的消费品零售额占社会消费品零售总额的比重由2012年的34%提高至2021年的38%。

[②] 根据国家统计局公布的数据，2021年城镇居民消费水平37995元、农村居民消费水平18434元，按照当年价格，2021年农村居民消费水平比2011年城镇居民消费水平19218元低4.1%；2022年城镇居民人均消费支出30391元、农村居民人均消费支出16632元，按照当年价格，2022年农村居民人均消费支出比2012年城镇居民人均消费支出17107元低2.8%。

（二）加快建设农业强国蕴藏着巨量投资需求

中共二十大报告就加快建设农业强国作出部署，明确提出全方位夯实粮食安全根基，构建多元化食物供给体系。同时，还强调推动现代服务业同先进制造业、现代农业深度融合。实现由农业大国向农业强国跨越，需要全面改善和提升农业现代化基础，大力推进高标准农田、设施农业建设以及农业全产业链设施、装备和科技升级（魏后凯，2022）。这将会形成巨量的农业投资需求。全方位夯实粮食安全根基，主要抓手是实施新一轮千亿斤粮食产能提升行动，着力点在耕地保护和提升、种业振兴和科技自立自强。其中，以高标准农田建设为主的耕地保护和提升形成的投资需求最多。到2022年底，中国已建成10亿亩高标准农田。中共二十大报告提出，逐步把永久基本农田全部建成高标准农田。中国划定的永久基本农田为15.5亿亩，意味着今后要新增建设高标准农田5.5亿亩。目前，中央财政对高标准农田建设的补助标准约为1000元/亩，各省（自治区、直辖市）结合财政情况对高标准农田建设给予配套资金，使建设投资标准逐步达到3000元/亩[③]。按这个标准测算，把永久基本农田全部建成高标准农田，仅新增建设部分至少形成投资需求1.65万亿元。如果考虑到已建成高标准农田的维护和升级，以及社会对农田建设的投入，实际投资远大于新增建设的投资需求。高标准农田只是农田建设的一个方面，还包括耕地保护、地力提升、水利水电、设施升级等多个方面。实施种业振兴行动，完善农业科技创新体系，实现高水平农业科技自立自强，都会形成政府财政投入撬动的大量社会投资。

贯彻大食物观，构建多元化食物供给体系，主要是通过发展设施农业，向山水林田湖草沙挖掘食物供给潜力。现代设施农业是资本密集型产业，会激发大量的社会投资需求，包括粮食和蔬菜等作物育秧环节的集中设施化，蔬菜、林果等作物的设施化，畜禽养殖、水产养殖、食用菌种植的设施化，以及深海养殖设施化等。设施农业投资以社会投资为主，投资需求远大于耕地保护和农田建设的投资需求。农业强国的核心竞争力来源于全产业链的综合实力。目前，农业全产业链的基础设施综合配套仍是短板，集中在标准化生产基地、烘干仓储、冷链物流、精深加工等方面。这些也是未来农业高质量发展蕴藏的投资需求潜力。据测算，未来5到10年，仅高标准农田、设施农业等投资需求就有近15万亿元。

（三）建设宜居宜业和美乡村持续释放巨量建设投资需求

中共二十大报告提出“统筹乡村基础设施和公共服务布局，建设宜居宜业和美乡村”。中共十八大以来，国家把公共基础设施建设重点放在农村，以美丽乡村、人居环境整治、绿色发展等为

[③]《全国高标准农田建设规划(2021~2030年)》提出“全国高标准农田建设亩均投资一般应逐步达到3000元左右”，各地可因地制宜合理确定亩均投资水平，支持有条件的地区适度提高亩均投资标准。目前，多个省份确定的补助标准为1500元/亩，其中广东提出亩均投资要逐步达到3000元左右，广西提出从2023年起地方财政投入每年亩均增加200元，实现在2030年前财政投入达到亩均3000元的补助标准。

抓手，投入大量财政资金、撬动大量社会投资，改善乡村宜居宜业环境，使乡村面貌发挥巨大变化。如脱贫攻坚期间，中央财政累计投入1.4万亿元，支持脱贫任务重的25个省份完善医疗卫生体系，到2021年底全国有乡镇卫生院3.5万个，村卫生室59.9万个，实现了县乡村全覆盖（顾天成、董瑞丰，2022）。目前，农村基本实现村村通电、通硬化路、通客车、通光纤和4G网络，一些县域乡村已基本具备与城镇相当的生活条件。但相比城市基础设施和公共服务完备程度，农村基础设施和公共服务仍不健全。2022年底召开的中央农村工作会议明确提出，要瞄准“农村基本具备现代生活条件”的目标，提高乡村基础设施完备度、公共服务便利度、人居环境舒适度，实现乡村由表及里、形神兼备的全面提升，让农民就地过上现代文明生活。对照“农村基本具备现代生活条件”的目标，将“和”和“美”作为基本要求推进乡村建设全面提升，需要新一轮更全面更深入的乡村建设投资（见表2）。这些投资既包括对已有建设成果的巩固提升，如道路、水电、通信、网络等公共基础设施，未来主要是查漏补缺、优化升级和管护利用；也有补短板、强弱项、增功能，如养老、教育、医疗、文化、营商、就业等公共服务体系完善及配套设施改善提升；还有促进城乡融合发展，推动城市公共服务、生活服务和产业服务向乡村延伸，如城乡产业链各环节科技装备和配套服务，县域教育、医疗卫生、养老服务等共同体或联合体建设，市政管网、供电、供气、电信、邮政等城乡统筹建设和改造提升。

表2：全面推进乡村振兴投资需求集中的重点领域

重点领域	投资方向
粮食和重要农产品稳产保供	新一轮千亿斤粮食产能提升行动；扩种大豆油料；水稻集中育秧和蔬菜集约化育苗，粮食烘干、农产品产地冷藏、冷链物流设施，老旧蔬菜设施改造提升，畜禽规模化养殖场和水产养殖池塘改造升级；饲草料生产基地，草原畜牧业，生态渔业，现代海洋牧场，食用菌和藻类产业
农业基础设施和科技装备	新建和改造提升高标准农田，农田集中连片整理，小田并大田；大中型灌区建设和现代化改造，抗旱备用水源，农田水利设施；农业防灾减灾能力建设；农业关键核心技术攻关；种业振兴行动；先进农机研发推广；智慧农业；农业绿色发展
乡村产业高质量发展	农产品加工业提升行动；农产品仓储保鲜冷链物流设施建设工程；现代乡村服务业，包括电子商务和快递物流配送体系，餐饮购物、文化体育、旅游休闲、养老托幼、信息中介等生活服务；优势特色产业集群，乡村休闲旅游精品工程，预制菜产业；农村创业创新园区和孵化实训基地；“一县一业”强县富民工程
村庄规划和风貌提升	以乡镇为单元的全域土地综合整治，传统村落集中连片保护利用示范，农村人居环境整治提升五年行动，庭院和村庄绿化美化
乡村基础设施	农村规模化供水工程建设和小型供水工程标准化改造，农村电网巩固提升，农村危房改造和抗震改造，现代宜居农房建设示范，数字乡村发展行动，农业农村大数据应用，村庄小型公益性基础设施提升
乡村公共服务	加强农村防疫、教育、医疗、社会保障、养老托育等公共服务体系建设。乡镇区域养老服务中心，日间照料、互助养老、探访关爱、老年食堂等养老服务
县域城乡融合	中心镇市政、服务设施；城乡学校共同体、紧密型医疗卫生共同体、养老服务联合体；县域供电、供气、电信、邮政等普遍服务类设施城乡统筹建设和管护；市政管网、乡村微管网等往户延伸

资料来源：根据《中共中央　国务院关于做好2023年全面推进乡村振兴重点工作的意见》《农业农村部关于落实党中央国务院2023年全面推进乡村振兴重点工作部署的实施意见》《国家乡村振兴局关于落实党中央国务院2023年全面推进乡村振兴重点工作部署的实施意见》整理。

以“农村基本具备现代生活条件”为目标的乡村建设潜在投资需求以十万亿元计。以农村养老服务为例，区域养老服务中心需做到乡镇全覆盖，居家养老服务设施需做到行政村全覆盖[④]。据调查，乡镇区域养老服务中心，具备集中养老和医养结合功能，在现有基础上改造需要200万到500万元，新建需要500万元以上；以行政村为单元的居家养老服务设施，提供日间照料、文娱活动、助餐助洁等服务，在现有基础上改造需要10万元左右，新建需要20万元以上，兼具集中养老、医养结合功能则需要50万元以上。[⑤]

（四）乡村产业高质量发展激发城乡居民新消费需求

供给是创造需求、引领需求的关键因素。随着乡村产业质量提升和新产业新业态发展，农村居民的就地就近消费需求会被激发，城市居民下乡消费选择迅速增多，潜在消费需求也会被激发出来。农村居民消费需求的新增长点集中在优质农产品及其加工产品上，以及由于生活质量提升带来的餐饮购物、文化体育、旅游休闲、养老托幼、医疗保健等方面。城市居民消费需求层次明显高于农村居民，对农村产品和服务的消费需求会明显增长，并引领带动农村居民消费升级。城市居民消费结构处于迅速升级过程中，受人口老龄化和农民工市民化影响，对农村产品和服务的消费需求从食品供给、休闲旅游和文化传承等拓展到更多领域。城市居民对食品和农产品的需求增长，更多集中在特色产品、功能产品、文化产品上，更加注重体验式、定制式、融合式的消费形式，更多融入农村休闲旅游、文化体验、健康养生等消费场景中，从而改变对食品和农产品的消费形式，如城市居民对“预制菜”消费迅速增多，到农村采摘、购买农产品也迅速增多。未来，农村在城市居民服务消费中的不可替代作用进一步凸显，休闲旅游、居住生活、健康养老、文化传承、创业就业等服务需求会进一步增加。潜在需求要变成实际消费取决于农村是否存在相应产品和服务的有效供给。2023年，中央一号文件明确提出，推动乡村产业高质量发展，包括加快发展餐饮购物、文化体育、旅游休闲、养老托幼、信息中介等现代乡村服务业，文化产业、精品旅游、乡村民宿、数字产业、预制菜等乡村新产业，共同配送、即时零售、电商直采、定制生产、中央厨房、直供直销等乡村新业态。通过乡村产业高质量发展，在激发大量产业投资需求的同时为城乡居民提供层次更高、种类更丰富的消费选择，使城乡居民对美好生活的向往逐步转换成实际消费场景，进而为城乡内需扩大提供持久动力。

二、制约中国农村内需潜力释放的主要因素

未来一个时期，中国经济发展战略机遇和风险挑战并存，经济恢复和健康发展面临需求收缩、供给冲击、预期转弱等多重压力。发挥农村作为消费市场和要素市场的重要作用，可以为社会再生

[④] 根据《中国农村政策与改革统计年报（2021年）》公布的基层组织数量，汇总乡镇数为36390个，汇总村数为535813个。

[⑤] 根据笔者对山东、河南、江苏、贵州等省的农村养老服务调研获得的案例和数据整理。

产实现良性循环提供坚实基础。但农村潜在需求向现实需求的转换面临一些制约和挑战。这也是当前乡村振兴面临的突出矛盾。

（一）农村居民收入结构性降速、稳定性不足，影响消费水平持续增长

收入持续增长是居民消费支出持续扩大的前提。近年来，农村居民收入持续增长和城乡居民收入差距缩小是农村居民消费支出增速高于城市居民的关键所在。但从农村居民可支配收入来源和结构的变化来看，存在结构性降速和稳定性不足的压力，使农村居民因收入增长而形成的潜在消费需求受到抑制。

农村居民收入增长来源主要是工资性收入。2012~2022年，农村居民人均可支配收入中工资性收入占比从37.2%增加到42.0%，工资性收入增长对农民增收的贡献达45.4%，已经超过经营净收入成为第一收入来源和增收来源。[⑥]农村居民的工资性收入主要是外出务工收入。随着农民工群体老龄化和城乡就业格局的变化[⑦]，外出务工的工资收入增速会放缓，直接影响农村居民的可支配收入增长速度。近年来，农民工群体老龄化加速，农民工就业格局呈现年轻群体加速市民化、年龄偏大群体逐步返乡，同时受大中城市就业压力趋紧影响出现就近就地就业趋势（见表3）。外出务工的平均月收入明显高于本地就业的平均月收入；因年龄原因返乡的农民工，就业机会和岗位选择少，转入灵活就业或重返务农，工资性收入会明显减少。同时，农民工就业不稳定和权益保障问题始终存在。超龄农民工就业和权益保障已经引起社会广泛关注。

表3：2012~2022年农民工工资和年龄变化情况

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
月工资（元/月）	2290	2609	2864	3072	3275	3485	3721	3962	4072	4432	4615
＃本地农民工	—	—	—	2781	2985	3173	3340	3500	3606	3878	4026
外出农民工	—	—	—	3359	3572	3805	4107	4427	4549	5013	5240
平均年龄（岁）	37.3	—	38.3	38.6	39.0	39.7	40.2	40.8	41.4	41.7	42.3
50岁以上占比（%）	15.1	15.2	17.1	17.9	19.1	21.3	22.4	24.6	26.4	27.3	29.2

资料来源：根据国家统计局发布的历年农民工监测调查报告数据整理。

经营净收入尤其是农业经营收入在农村居民可支配收入中的比重和增收贡献持续下降，但仍是农村居民收入的重要来源。2012~2022年，农村居民人均可支配收入中经营净收入占比从43.6%降低到34.6%，经营净收入增长对农民增收的贡献率为28.2%。由于农村居民的经营机会主要是农业经营，非农产业的创业机会有限，而农业经营以小农户为主，其增收空间相对狭窄。目前，农业经

⑥ 根据国家统计局公布的数据整理。

⑦ 农民工是指户籍仍在农村，年内在本地从事非农产业或外出从业6个月及以上的劳动者。2012~2022年，农民工总量从2.63亿人增加到2.96亿人，增加了12.6%，其中本地农民工（户籍所在镇域内）从0.99亿人增加到1.24亿人，增加了25.3%；外出农民工（户籍所在镇域外）从1.63亿人增加到1.72亿人，增加了5.5%；跨省流动农民工从0.76亿人减少到0.71亿人，减少了6.6%。

营收入只是少部分规模经营主体和服务主体的主要收入来源；非农产业经营收入只是少部分农村工商企业、小微主体、创业者的主要收入来源。随着乡村产业振兴的顺稳推进，农村居民将获得大量的产业参与机会，具有广阔的增收潜力，但目前农村居民特别是小农户的参与机制尚不健全、利益联结机制仍在探索（芦千文、孔祥荣，2022）。把乡村产业振兴的机遇转换成农村居民增收机会仍面临许多难题。持续扩大农村居民消费水平，需要从构建持续增收机制入手，多种渠道开辟农村居民增收来源，为激发农村消费市场潜力奠定物质基础。

（二）农村居民社会保障短板尚待补齐，影响消费结构提档升级

面对外部冲击，相比城市居民，农村居民消费支出保持稳定性和持续增长的主要原因，一是农村居民收入水平低导致消费内容以弹性较低的基本生活开支为主；二是社会保障短板导致农村居民对弹性较高的生活改善型、发展型消费支出，如养老托幼、休闲娱乐、技能培训等处于较低水平（见表4）。社会保障短板使农村居民将收入更多用于预防性储蓄，从而制约消费结构的升级。目前，农村居民生活已经处于全面小康状态，以衣食住行为主要内容的生活消费基本趋于稳定，生活改善型、发展型消费才是未来农村居民消费需求的增长点。受限于农村居民的社会保障短板，农村居民对生活改善型、发展型消费需求潜力大，但消费意愿、支付能力较低，尚难以转化为现实消费需求。由于农村居民家庭处于城乡两栖状态，在农村就业创业，不管是从事农业生产经营还是非农产业就业创业，均很少参与社会保障。在城镇就业创业的农村户籍人员，与城镇职工相比，参与社会保障的比例也较低。[8]2012~2022年，农民工参加工伤保险的比例由24.0%增加到30.9%，同期全国就业人员中参加工伤保险的比例由24.8%增加到39.7%。[9]

表4：2018~2022年城乡居民消费支出结构及变化

		城镇居民					农村居民				
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
消费支出金额（元/人）		26112	28063	27007	30307	30391	12124	13328	13713	15916	16632
消费支出结构（%）	#服务性消费	46.5	48.2	44.5	46.4	45.2	38.3	39.7	37.8	38.6	38.2
	#食品烟酒	27.7	27.6	29.2	28.6	29.5	30.1	30.0	32.7	32.7	33.0
	衣着	6.9	6.5	6.1	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.4	5.2
	居住	24.0	24.2	25.8	24.4	25.2	21.9	21.5	21.6	20.8	21.1
	生活用品及服务	6.2	6.0	6.1	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.6
	交通通信	13.3	13.1	12.9	13.0	12.9	13.9	13.8	13.4	13.4	13.4
	教育文化娱乐	11.4	11.9	9.6	11.0	10.0	10.7	11.1	9.5	10.3	10.1
	医疗保健	7.8	8.1	8.0	8.3	8.2	10.2	10.7	10.3	9.9	9.8
	其他用品及服务	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.7	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.8

资料来源：根据国家统计局网站（http://www.stats.gov.cn）公布的数据整理。

[8] 根据《2014年全国农民工监测调查报告》，农民工“五险一金”参保率为工伤保险26.2%、医疗保险17.6%、养老保险16.7%、失业保险10.5%、生育保险7.8%、住房公积金5.5%。

[9] 根据国家统计局公布的数据整理。

农村居民中市民化的部分人员，主要是农村居民家庭的部分成员，以农民工为主要群体。农村居民家庭中的非市民化成员要为市民化成员分担买房等市民化成本。这使得农村居民要将相当部分收入用于预防性储蓄或为市民化筹资，从而影响到对生活改善型、发展型消费支出。城乡人口流动格局使老年人口越来越集中在农村，年龄越高集中在农村的比例越高。受分摊市民化成本以及子女成家、隔代照护等影响，农村老人储蓄少、收入低，普遍具有务工就业需求。目前，城乡养老保障水平差距明显，农村老人难以获得基本养老保障服务。农村年轻群体普遍外出务工，农村老人中空巢老人、独居老人迅速增多，亟须日间照料、助餐助洁、关怀探访、医疗护理等服务。但受限于农村老人的支付能力，迫切需要的养老服务难以转化为市场服务供给。由农村社会保障短板引发的农村居民消费结构将在一定程度上限制在基本生活开支范围，体现美好生活的生活改善型、发展型消费需求难以顺利转化为现实需求。只有破除农村社会保障短板，优化农民市民化成本分摊机制，才能将农村居民的潜在消费需求充分地激发出来。

（三）面向城市居民的产品和服务供给发展不足，影响下乡消费总量

农村提供的产品和服务被农村居民消费的只是一部分，还有一部分被城市居民消费。随着乡村产业振兴深入推进，部分产业领域的消费对象主要是城市居民，如休闲旅游、科普农业、健康养生等。城市居民美好生活向往的很多内容需要在农村实现。在大城市周边，城市居民下乡养老、休憩、创业等迅速增多，已经成为乡村产业振兴的重要驱动力。但在大部分地区，农村面向城市居民的产品和服务供给尚没有发展起来，导致城市居民下乡消费的选择少、黏性弱，限制了城市居民对农村产品和服务的消费需求，弱化了城市居民消费对乡村产业发展的带动力。发展面向城市居民的乡村产业，提供优质产品和服务，吸引更多城市居民下乡消费甚至生活和就业创业，在激发农村内需潜力的同时可以更好地促进各类要素下乡，夯实乡村产业高质量发展基础。

国家在农村开展了大量的公共服务设施建设，其中部分是按照城市标准建设，超过农村居民需要或者不适应农村居民的现阶段需求，造成了公共服务设施的闲置。通过向城市居民提供服务盘活利用这部分闲置设施，既能推动城市公共服务向乡村延伸，带动城市居民下乡消费，也能改造提升农村公共服务，发展相应服务产业，解决农村就业难题。典型领域是农村养老服务设施。农村居民养老服务需求以居家养老服务为主，但国家在农村建设养老服务设施以集中养老为主，不少功能齐备、设施先进的集中养老场所因此闲置。在具备条件的地区，探索闲置或未充分利用的农村集中养老服务设施向城市居民开放，引入城市养老服务运营主体或模式，就能在盘活利用农村集中养老服务设施的同时提高农村养老服务供给质量，释放城市居民对农村养老服务的消费需求，加快发展农村养老产业，进而影响农村居民养老理念，为解决农村养老难题提供新的可能路径。

田园生活是很多城市居民的向往。支撑城市居民田园生活的是一系列具体的产品和服务及其

在农村的消费场景。可以通过发展面向城市的乡村产业，让美好田园生活变成现实消费场景，吸引城市居民下乡消费，从而持久地扩大农村内需，创造更广阔的乡村产业发展空间。如乡村人文古迹、历史文化与游戏场景融合，为城市青年人员沉浸式体验提供现实载体。

（四）乡村产业发展层次低、供给弱，造成新时期工农“剪刀差”

城乡经济循环是国内经济大循环的基本构成，是使社会再生产实现良性循环的关键支撑。一直以来，农村作为廉价要素供给方和重要消费市场，为城镇化、工业化进而为国民经济发展提供了驱动力。在新时期，破除城乡二元结构进入深化改革阶段，城乡产业体系方面的差距凸显出来，成为城乡经济良性循环的瓶颈和阻碍。城乡经济良性循环表现为城乡要素和产品双向流动的动态均衡。目前，在城乡发展差距明显存在的情况下，城乡要素和产品仍处于以单向流动、自我循环为主的分离状态，城乡内需的联动作用无法发挥。重要原因是城乡产业体系的互联互通难以实现，城乡产品和服务的质量标准不统一，联通城乡的产业链、供应链薄弱环节多，阻碍了农村产品和服务顺利进入城市或成为城市居民的选择，限制了乡村产品和服务供给提升对城乡内需的引领和创造作用。农业产业方面，由于农村的农产品加工和流通产业不强，面向城市居民的农产品和食品供应以初级产品为主，农业生产的要素供应、农产品的精深加工、农业产业链的服务支撑多集中在城市，不利于农村的要素积累和农民分享产业链增值收益。

农业现代化是乡村产业的根基，但非农产业才是乡村产业振兴的主要空间。目前，乡村非农产业迅速发展，城市产业正向乡村梯度转移，但农村非农产业主体散、弱、小问题突出，很多是家庭作坊、简易工厂，生产流程、产品质量难以达到工业化要求，存在明显的城乡产品标准不统一、质量不一致问题，导致供给的产品和服务不能“进城”，只能在农村内部由农村居民消费。其关键原因是城乡产业体系尚未实现有效衔接，城市的产业规范、行业标准、工商管理等服务体系尚未延伸覆盖农村，很多农村产品和服务的供给处在市场监管之外。

一直以来，遇到经济增长压力采取的扩大内需措施基本是推动城市工业品下乡，而不是推动农村产品和服务进城，且下乡的工业品质量与城市消费的工业品质量差距明显。这就形成了以廉价要素、初级产品“进城”，以现代要素、工业制品“下乡”的新时期工农“剪刀差”。扩大农村内需必须从有效衔接城乡产业体系入手，深入推进供给侧结构性改革，提高乡村产业发展质量，使乡村产业更好融入城乡经济循环体系，为城乡居民创造更多更丰富的产品和服务供应，为城乡居民在农村空间范围内实现美好生活提供消费载体。

（五）乡村基础设施建设收入转化能力不足，影响投资扩张需求成效

农村具备现代生活条件的突出短板是基础设施。这些设施建设是农村现代化的重要内容，是

公共财政投入乡村建设的主要领域。公共财政投资转化为居民收入形成内需倍增效应是扩大内需的重要举措。但农村基础设施建设财政资金投入的使用效率不高，建设质量不高，对农村居民的收入转化不多。虽然，农村基础设施建设蕴藏着巨量的投资需求，但这些问题的存在既影响了依托基础设施的城乡居民消费，也限制了基础设施投资的内需倍增效应。目前，农村基础设施的公共财政投资项目沿用了城市基础设施建设管理办法，设置了严格的申报竞争程序、招投标流程和资质门槛要求。虽然各地优化了流程管理和资质要求，为小微企业设置一定比例的参与范围，鼓励农民合作社、乡村企业主体参与基础设施项目建设，但大部分农村市场主体难以参与到基础设施项目建设中，中标主体多数是城市大型企业集团。一部分由大型企业集团直接建设，当地农村主体和居民参与机会少，农村居民获得的就业机会和收入均较少；一部分则采取层层转包、分级发包的做法，最终由农村的主体参与实际建设。大量公共财政投资消耗在程序、流程和层层转包过程中，实际用于基础设施建设的资金有限。据某地区典型调查，高标准农田建设资金实际用于农田的仅有50%左右。[⑩] 这使得农村基础设施建设出现两个明显的问题，一是部分基础设施建设质量不达标、不实用，重建设轻管护，难以充分发挥对乡村产业振兴和农民美好生活的支撑作用；二是农村居民在基础设施建设中获得的参与机会和就业机会少，后期管护参与的积极性不足，增收空间也较小。可见，农村基础设施建设投资，既没有完全转变为农村内需，也由于对农村居民的直接增收和间接增收作用较弱，削弱了投资的内需倍增作用，淡化了公共财政投资对农村经济增长的促进作用。除了基础设施外，农村还有大量的产业设施建设，其中很多是财政资金或特惠政策撬动的社会投资，仍会存在类似问题。全面推进乡村振兴，必然要投入巨量的公共财政用于乡村建设。需要重视其对农村居民增收的促进作用，提高投资的收入转化能力，更好发挥投资扩大内需的倍增作用。

三、城乡融合视域下扩大农村内需的战略路径

持续扩大农村内需，应在城乡融合视域下，围绕农村居民持续增收和生活提质，畅通城乡经济循环通道，破除城乡二元制度和发展差距对农村内需的制约，依靠全面推进乡村振兴、提高农村产品和服务供给质量持续释放内需潜能，并采取多元化路径和组合式政策工具，建立起扩大农村内需的有效制度体系，推动农业农村现代化融入国内经济大循环。具体而言，要以加快推动农村现代化为主攻方向，建设宜居宜业和美乡村，优化基础设施建设、管护和运营机制，创新公共服务供给机制，面向城乡居民需求高质量发展乡村产业，增强乡村建设投资、产业发展的富民增收作用，有效满足城乡居民美好生活需要，提升农村作为消费市场和要素市场的关键地位，为乡村振兴注入强劲动能。

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⑩ 笔者与该地区农业农村部门具体负责高标准农田建设工作的工作人员访谈得到的数据。该数据与笔者在其他地方的调研情况基本一致。

（一）顺应城乡两栖演变，拓展农民持续增收渠道

有效启动农村市场、切实扩大农村消费的关键是促进农民持续稳定增收，尽快缩小城乡收入差距。农民收入渠道有工资性收入、经营净收入、财产净收入和转移净收入。国家已经采取了一系列强有力措施推动农民收入增长。2023年中央一号文件提出了促进农民就业增收和农业经营增效、赋予农民更加充分的财产权益等政策措施。在落实好这些政策措施的同时，应顺应农村居民城乡两栖格局的演变趋势，针对农民工群体老龄化和就业格局的动态变化和返乡下乡人员迅速增多，推动城乡在就业创业、社会保障等方面的有效衔接，为农村居民持续增收创造条件。一是把农村居民在城市就业创业纳入城市的就业创业服务和保障体系；二是大力支持农村创业，针对不同群体推出差异化创业扶持措施，如重点支持青年群体创新型创业，培育新型农业经营主体和服务主体、发展农村新产业新业态新模式，重点支持老年群体生计型创业，千方百计增加老年群体收入；三是重点发展劳动密集型和吸纳灵活就业、老年就业的产业，满足留守妇女、老年群体的就业需求；四是加快补齐农村居民的社会保障短板，提高农民的就业、养老、医疗、教育等保障水平；五是全面深化农村改革，尤其是土地制度和农村集体产权制度改革，打通资源变资本、资本变财富的渠道，拓宽农民财产性收入渠道，大幅度提高财产净收入所占比重及其对农民增收的贡献率。

（二）优化城乡市场格局，推动农村消费市场升级

释放城乡居民在农村消费潜力的关键是形成有效匹配的城乡市场格局，满足城乡居民的美好生活需求。要以满足城乡居民美好生活需求为导向，优化调整城乡市场格局，补齐农村市场短板，建立城乡统一的内需体系，缩小城乡居民消费差距，才能持续推动农村消费总量扩大、结构升级，增强农村消费拉动国民经济增长的作用。一是推动城市产品质量监管、行业生产标准等向乡村延伸，建立城乡统一的市场监督管理服务体系，尽快实现消费品在城乡的质量统一，让农村居民享受优质消费品；二是推动城市工业品下乡，要注重加强质量监管，避免下乡产品质量要求降低的情形；三是以农村基本具备现代生活条件为目标，增加农村在养老托幼、休闲娱乐、特色产品、功能食品、教育健康、文化体育等方面的供给数量和质量；四是积极发展网络消费，科学引导农村住房消费，持续改善农村消费条件，创新消费场景，引导和鼓励城市居民到农村消费，带动农村居民丰富消费内容、提升消费档次；五是清除抑制消费的各种障碍，促进农村消费潜力的全面释放。例如，在基础设施建设方面，要着力完善农村流通体系，健全农产品流通网络，加快补齐冷链物流短板，强化县域乡镇商贸设施和到村物流站点建设；在消费环境优化方面，要加强消费维权宣传，加大市场监管力度，健全消费者维权机制，规范农村市场秩序，依法打击假冒伪劣、虚假宣传、价格欺诈等违法行为；在消费金融发展方面，要健全消费信用体系，鼓励金融机构创新更多个性化的农村消费信贷产品，不断提升农村消费金融服务的质量和效率。

（三）坚持富民增效导向，优化乡村建设投入机制

建设农业强国和宜居宜业和美乡村，需要以公共财政投入撬动大量社会投资。推进农村现代化，实施乡村建设行动，应在打基础、利长远、补短板、调结构的基础设施建设上不断加大力度，以增强财政投入撬动社会投资和扩大内需作用为目标，优化调整乡村建设投入机制。一是建立政府财政资金稳定增长机制，确保各级财政用于农业林业水利等事务支出增长速度高于一般公共预算支出增速，各地区土地出让收益主要用于农业农村，做到取之于农、用之于农；二是增强财政政策与金融政策的协同效应，充分发挥财政资金的引导作用，鼓励和吸引更多社会资本参与乡村建设，完善乡村发展环境，提高乡村发展对市场主体吸引力，增加乡村建设和乡村发展投资总量；三是在城乡基础设施互联互通、农村基础设施适用性等方面着重开展工作，提高基础设施建设质量和可用性，发挥基础设施推动乡村全面振兴的作用；四是根据农村市场主体特点，调整基础设施建设项目管理机制，使农村基础设施主要由农村主体和农村居民参与建设，最大限度发挥对农村居民增收的促进作用。2020年11月，国家发展和改革委员会等九个部门联合发布了《关于在农业农村基础设施建设领域积极推广以工代赈方式的意见》。2023年1月，国家发展和改革委员会发布《国家以工代赈管理办法》，明确“能用人工尽量不用机械”要求。2023年中央一号文件提出“在政府投资重点工程和农业农村基础设施建设项目中推广以工代赈，适当提高劳务报酬发放比例”。要将这些政策导向尽快落实到位。

（四）面向城乡美好生活，推动乡村产业高质量发展

按照城乡居民美好生活需要发展乡村产业，可以发挥供给创造需求、引领需求的作用，为城乡居民美好生活提供有效载体。目前，乡村产业发展政策以支持农业现代化和农村一二三产业融合为主，着力打造现代农业产业链、供应链。未来，应在坚守保障粮食等重要农产品稳定安全供给底线任务的前提下，着重面向城乡居民美好生活需要，调整和升级农村产业体系，丰富乡村经济形态，完善乡村市场体系，打造联通城乡的产业链、供应链，推动更多产业和产业环节留在乡村，健全城乡产业互联机制，畅通城乡消费和要素循环通道，实现城乡经济良性循环。要将农村生活性服务业作为战略性产业进行培育，注重统筹城乡居民生活服务需求，加快发展餐饮购物、文化体育、旅游休闲、养老托幼、信息中介等生活服务，推进农村生活服务供给侧结构性改革，不断提升生活服务质量，为城乡居民提供更多消费新选择。推进城乡联通的县域商业服务体系建设，完善县乡村电子商务和快递物流配送体系，推动冷链物流服务网络向乡村下沉，发展共同配送、即时零售等新模式，为城乡居民消费升级创造便利条件。

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Expanding Rural Demand from an Urban-Rural Integration Perspective: Potentials and Pathways

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Abstract: *The countryside is both a priority and a challenge in China's efforts to increase domestic demand. The growth of rural demand is essential in strengthening urban-rural and broader domestic economic circulations. The consumer spending of rural households will expand faster than that of urban households if their incomes grow at a reasonable rate. China's efforts to become an agricultural powerhouse and to create a livable countryside is expected to turbocharge investment demand, and quality-oriented rural industrial development will unleash more urban and rural consumer demand. However, barriers to urban-rural integration have stifled rural consumer demand. These barriers are reflected in the deceleration and instability of the growth of income of the urban and rural households, social security gaps for rural residents, insufficient rural industrial development, insufficient rural supply capacity, and insufficient rural infrastructure revenues, as well as an undersupply of goods and services for rural residents. Rural consumer demand should be increased for the betterment of life for urban and rural residents under urban-rural integration. The government should adopt a combination of policy paths and instruments to increase rural incomes and boost rural demand, upgrade the rural consumer market, and encourage investment in rural development. Agriculture and the countryside should effectively integrate into the broader domestic economic circulation to smooth urban-rural economic circulation.*

Keywords: *Strategy to expand domestic demand, rural demand, urban-rural integration, rural modernization*

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Domestic demand has emerged as a driver of China's domestic economic circulation in the new development stage. According to the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), "Domestic circulation should be made more robust and reliable through a combination of strategies to expand domestic demand and deepen supply-side structural reforms." A prominent contradiction in China's economic performance is insufficient aggregate demand, which has a negative impact on the stability and sustainability of domestic circulation. As evidenced by disparities in consumption and living standards between urban and rural areas, the urban-rural divide limits the potentials of rural demand and impedes demand-driven economic circulation. China aspires to create a modern socialist country in all respects, and the countryside presents the greatest challenge and opportunity for achieving this goal. The same holds true for domestic demand, with rural demand

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representing a priority and a strategic problem. As a unique aspect of China's urbanization, rural migrants leave their families in the countryside to work in cities and return to the countryside from time to time. This makes the countryside an essential consumer market and rural demand a major component of China's domestic demand. Urban-rural integration will smooth factor flow and stimulate the potentials of rural consumption, which is of great importance in fostering new relations between industry and agriculture and between urban and rural areas and in promoting high-quality development driven by domestic circulation. Currently, the potentials of rural consumption have been limited by lack of rural demand, by an undersupply of rural consumer goods and services, and by supply-side contradictions. Under urban-rural integration, we should adopt a combination of policy paths and instruments to expand rural demand, reshape urban-rural economic circulation, and enhance the broader domestic circulation.

1. Great Potentials of China's Rural Demand in the New Era

Rural demand encompasses consumer spending by both urban and rural residents, as well as government and corporate investments in the countryside. Rural demand and urban demand are both indispensable components of national economic circulations. The integration of rural and urban demand is key to integrated urban-rural development. China's urban-rural divide and gaps have resulted in a split between rural and urban consumer demand, restricting consumer spending in the countryside by both rural and urban residents. In China, consumer spending by urban residents far outstrips that by rural residents. Urban-rural income gaps have led to a deep divide between urban and rural household consumption (Fig. 1). In the new era of countryside revitalization and urban-rural integration, China's urban-rural consumption gaps and rural development shortfalls indicate the potential for huge rural demand. For one thing, rural households have seen their incomes rise at a faster pace than the incomes of urban households, allowing them to give full play to their consumption potentials. The countryside will offer rural consumers the greatest potential to catch up with their urban peers. Rural revitalization and environmental improvement will provide urban and rural residents with more consumer choices and uplift urban and rural consumption, thereby generating a multiplier effect of demand growth. Rural demand can be stimulated by integrating urban and rural development, narrowing urban-rural consumption gaps, and reducing rural development deficits. The connection between urban and rural demand will facilitate economic circulation and boost demand across cities and the countryside. In the new era, the following factors may contribute to the expansion of China's rural demand:

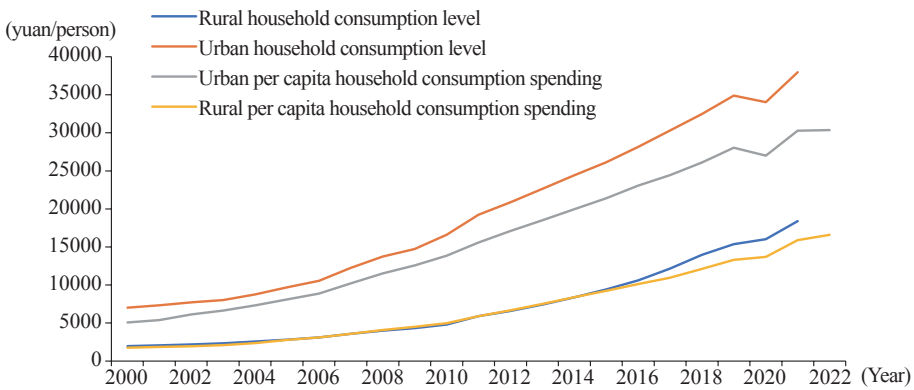


Figure 1: Change in Urban and Rural Household Consumption and Per Capita Consumer Spending, 2000-2022

Source: Compiled based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

1.1 Rural Consumer Spending Expected to Grow Faster than Urban Consumer Spending

Household consumption is dependent on household income and its growth. In recent years, consumer vitality at the county and township level - including their countryside - has been on the rise amid a shrinking income gap between cities and the countryside. In 2021, the retail volumes of consumer goods in counties and townships and their countryside reached 10.8 trillion yuan and 5.9 trillion yuan, respectively, with annual average respective growth rates of 10.4% and 9.8% between 2013 and 2021, 2.3 and 1.7 percentage points higher than the retail volumes of urban consumer goods (NBS, 2022)[1]. However, significant disparities in consumption between urban and rural households still exist. In 2021, the ratio between urban and rural household consumption levels was 2.06:1, and the rural household consumption level lagged behind the urban household consumption level by approximately 11 years. In 2022, these figures were 1.83:1 and 11 years[2]. In 2022, 34.8% of China's total population resided in rural areas, but the rural retail volume of consumer goods accounted for only 13.5% (NBS, 2023). Unlike urban residents, rural residents spend the majority of their income on income-elastic food and daily necessities. Rising incomes are accompanied by a steady increase in spending to improve the quality of life, as well as a surge in spending on more income-elastic categories such as culture, amusement, healthcare, and life services. Rural household consumption is both shock-resistant and characterized by a high propensity to consume, as evidenced by the fact that their consumption spending makes up a greater proportion of disposable income and grows faster than that of urban residents. Between 2012 and 2022, urban household consumption as a percentage of disposable income fell from 70.9% to 61.7%, while this figure rose from 79.5% to 82.6% for rural household consumption. During the same period, rural households' per capita consumption spending grew significantly faster than that of their urban counterparts. It is anticipated that growth in rural household income will generate an annual consumption demand of 2 trillion yuan (Qiao, 2023).

Table 1: Urban and Rural Household Disposable Income and Consumption Per Capita, 2012-2022

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Household disposable income	Urban growth rate (%)	9.6	7.0	6.8	6.6	5.6	6.5	5.6	5.0	1.2	7.1	1.9
	Rural growth rate (%)	10.7	9.3	9.2	7.5	6.2	7.3	6.6	6.2	3.8	9.7	4.2
	Urban-rural ratio	2.88	2.81	2.75	2.73	2.72	2.71	2.69	2.64	2.56	2.50	2.45
Household consumption level	Urban growth rate (%)	7.1	5.7	5.9	6.9	5.6	4.0	4.7	4.6	-4.6	9.9	--
	Rural growth rate (%)	8.1	9.4	10.9	12.7	10.8	10.8	12.4	7.0	1.8	13.5	--
	Urban-rural ratio	3.17	3.06	2.92	2.78	2.65	2.50	2.32	2.27	2.12	2.06	--
Household consumption spending	Urban growth rate (%)	7.1	5.3	5.8	5.5	5.7	4.1	4.6	4.6	-6.0	11.1	-1.7
	Rural growth rate (%)	10.4	9.2	10.0	8.6	7.8	6.8	8.4	6.5	-0.1	15.3	2.5
	Urban-rural ratio	2.57	2.47	2.38	2.32	2.28	2.23	2.15	2.11	1.97	1.90	1.83

Note: Growth rates in this table are actual growth rates.

Source: Compiled based on data from the website of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (http://www.stats.gov.cn).

[1] The combination of township and rural retail volumes as a share of total retail volume rose from 34% in 2012 to 38% in 2021.

[2] According to NBS data, China's urban and rural household consumption levels stood at 37,995 yuan and 18,434 yuan, respectively, in 2021. By the current-year price, the rural household consumption level in 2021 was 4.1% lower than the urban household consumption level of 19,218 yuan in 2011. In 2022, the urban per capita household consumer spending stood at 30,391 yuan, and the rural per capita household spending reached 16,632 yuan. By current-year price, the rural household per capita consumer spending in 2022 was 2.8% smaller than the urban household per capital consumer spending of 17,107 yuan in 2012.

1.2 Huge Investment Demand for China's Development into an Agricultural Powerhouse

The Report to the 20th CPC National Congress outlined plans for transforming the nation into an agricultural powerhouse and pledged to increase food security and develop a diversified food distribution system. It also called for the integration of contemporary services, advanced manufacturing, and modern agriculture. To develop into an agricultural powerhouse, China must improve agricultural modernization, strive to increase high-standard farmland, develop protected agriculture, and upgrade agricultural facilities, equipment, and technology (Wei, 2022). Those endeavors will generate a substantial demand for agricultural investments. China has launched a new round of 50 billion kg grain capacity initiatives with a focus on the protection and improvement of arable land, revitalization of the seed industry, and technological independence. Among these priorities, the protection and improvement of arable land will generate the greatest investment demand. By the end of 2022, China had constructed 1 billion *mu* (66.67 million hectares) of high-standard farmland. As stated in the Report to the 20th CPC National Congress, steps should be taken to convert all permanent basic farmland into high-standard farmland. China has designated 1.55 billion *mu* of permanent basic farmland, leaving 550 million *mu* of high-standard farmland to be developed. The central government has stipulated an allowance of 1,000 yuan/*mu* for the construction of high-standard farmland with matching funds from various provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities based on their fiscal conditions to gradually increase the construction investment standard to 3,000 yuan/mu[3]. To convert all basic farmland to high-standard farmland, new construction alone will generate an investment demand of at least 1.65 trillion yuan. Taking into account the maintenance and improvement of existing high-standard farmland as well as private farmland investment, the actual investment far exceeds the investment demand for new construction. Standardized farmland is only one aspect of farmland development. Other aspects include the protection of arable land, the development of soil fertility, irrigation, and hydropower, and improvement of the infrastructure. A substantial amount of private investment is expected to be catalyzed through the implementation of the seed industry revitalization initiative, the improvement of the agri-technology innovation system, and the self-reliance of agri-technology.

We should adopt a holistic approach to food and build a diversified food supply system. Food supply potentials from mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, grassland, sand land, the sea, and cities should be exploited through the development of protected agriculture. As a capital-intensive industry, modern protected agriculture will unleash a tremendous demand for private investment in agricultural facilities, including facilities for the sprout cultivation of grains, vegetables, fruits and other crops, livestock and poultry, aquaculture, edible fungus planting, and deep-sea farming. The demand for investment in protected agriculture - most of which is private investment - far outweighs the demand for investment in the protection of arable land and the construction of farmland. The core competitiveness of an agricultural powerhouse boils down to the comprehensive strengths of complete industrial chains. Currently, China's development of complete agricultural industrial chains has been hindered by a lack of agricultural facilities, particularly standardized production centers, warehouses with drying equipment, cold chain logistics, and intensive processing. These shortfalls also represent investment demand potentials for future high-quality agricultural development. It is estimated that a total of 15 trillion yuan needs to be invested in the construction of high-standard farmland and protected agriculture in China over the coming five to ten years (Tang, 2023).

[3] According to the *National Plan for High-Standard Farmland Construction (2021-2030)*, the average investment for each *mu* (0.067 ha.) of high-standard farmland should gradually reach 3,000 yuan or so. Various localities may set local investment standards reasonably to support qualified regions to raise the investment standard per *mu* where appropriate. Currently, many provinces have set the allowance standard at 1,500 yuan/*mu*. Among them, Guangdong Province has planned to increase investment per *mu* to around 3,000 yuan, and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region plans to raise the local fiscal allowance per *mu* by 200 yuan each year from 2023 with the goal to increase fiscal investment to 3,000 yuan before 2030.

Table 2: Priority Areas for Countryside Revitalization Investment

Priority area	Scope of investment
Stable production and supply of grains and key agricultural products	New round of 50 billion kg grain capacity improvement plan; expansion in the cultivation of soybean oil; centralized sprout cultivation of rice and intensive cultivation of vegetable seedlings, food drying, in site refrigerated storage and cold-chain logistics of agricultural produce, renovation of obsolete vegetable facilities, and upgrade of poultry farms and aquatic breeding ponds; feed manufacturing centers, pasture animal husbandry, ecological fishery, modern marine ranching, and edible fungus and algae farming.
Agricultural infrastructure and technological equipment	Construct and improve high-standard farmland, and consolidate small farmland plots into large and contiguous ones; build and modernize large and medium-sized irrigation areas, backup water sources for drought relief, and irrigation works; develop agricultural disaster prevention and reduction capabilities; achieve breakthroughs in critical agricultural technologies; revitalize the seed industry; develop advanced agricultural machinery; promote smart and green agriculture.
High-quality development of rural industries	Upgrade the agricultural processing industry; construct agricultural warehousing, fresh-keeping and refrigeration logistical facilities; develop rural modern services, including e-commerce and parcel delivery logistical distribution systems, as well as life services such as catering, shopping, culture, sports, tourism and recreation, elderly care, nursery and kindergarten, and information intermediaries; develop advantageous industry clusters, rural recreational tourism projects, and the pre-made food industry; construct rural innovation parks and incubation training centers; implement the "one industry for each county" project for countywide prosperity.
Improvement of village planning and landscape	Carry out township-wide land consolidation and rehabilitation, and implement contiguous protection and development demonstration programs for traditional villages, as well as a five-year campaign to improve human habitat in the countryside and beautify courtyards and villages through afforestation.
Rural infrastructure	Construct large rural water supply works and renovate small water supply works to meet standards, improve the rural power grid and decrepit rural houses, and carry out earthquake resistance retrofitting, modern livable rural house models, digital countryside development initiative, agricultural and rural big data applications, and improvements of small public-interest infrastructures in villages.
Rural public services	Enhance public services such as rural epidemic control, education, healthcare, social protection, elderly care, nurseries and kindergartens. Build township-wide elderly care service centers and provide elderly care services such as day care, mutual assistance, care visits, and canteens for the elderly.
County-wide urban-rural integration	Municipal and service facilities in central towns; the creation of urban-rural school communities, close healthcare communities, and elderly service communities; urban-rural coordinated development and maintenance of the countywide power supply, gas supply, telecom, postal service and other universal services; the extension of municipal pipelines and rural micro-grids to individual households.

Source: Compiled based on the *Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Comprehensively Advancing the Priorities of Rural Revitalization for 2023*, the *Opinions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Countryside on Implementing the Key Priorities of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council for Advancing Rural Revitalization for 2023*, and the *Implementation Opinions of the National Administration for Rural Revitalization on Implementing the Key Tasks for Rural Revitalization Identified by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council for 2023*.

1.3 Huge Investment Demand for the Construction of a Beautiful Countryside in Which to Live and Work

The Report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC calls for "coordinating the layout of rural infrastructure and public services and constructing a beautiful rural environment in which to live and work." Since the conclusion of the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the Chinese government has invested large sums of fiscal funds to stimulate private investment and make the countryside an attractive place in which to live and work through implementation of the livable countryside, human habitat improvement, and green development programs. These efforts have transformed the countryside. During the poverty alleviation campaign, the central government invested a total of 1,400 billion yuan to enhance healthcare in 25 provincial-level regions with arduous poverty alleviation tasks. By the end of 2021, there were 35,000 township health centers and 599,000 village clinics across the nation, completing the coverage of health services at the county, township, and village levels (Gu and Dong, 2022). The overwhelming majority of Chinese villages have access to the power grid, asphalt roads, bus service, optical fibers, and 4G network. Some localities enjoy living conditions comparable to those of cities. Nonetheless, rural infrastructure and public services remain insufficient. The central rural work conference held in 2022 pledged to enhance rural infrastructure, public service convenience, and

livability and provide modern and civilized living conditions in the countryside. It will take a broader round of investments to build a harmonious and beautiful countryside. Some investment projects are designed to consolidate existing progress in the construction of public infrastructures such as roads, utilities, telecom, and the internet, while future work will consist of identifying gaps, making enhancements, and performing maintenance. Other investment projects that seek to foster integrated urban-rural development involve the extension of urban public services, life services, and industrial services to the countryside. Such projects include, for example, the provision of equipment and auxiliary services of urban and rural industrial chains, the development of countywide education, healthcare, and elderly service communities or consortiums, and the integrated urban and rural construction and upgrade of municipal pipelines, power supply, gas supply, telecommunications, and postal services.

Investment opportunities in rural revitalization projects to deliver modern living conditions in the countryside could go into the tens of trillions of yuan. For example, when it comes to providing care for the elderly in rural areas, it is important that regional elderly care centers cover all townships and that home-based elderly care services cover all administrative villages[4]. A survey estimates that it costs between 2 and 5 million yuan to retrofit a township elderly care service center with nursing and healthcare functions, and that it costs over 5 million yuan to build a new one. It costs around 100,000 yuan to retrofit a village-level home-based elderly care service facility with daycare, culture and entertainment, dining and cleaning assistance services, or more than 200,000 yuan to build a new one. The cost would exceed 500,000 yuan for a village-level elderly care center with healthcare services[5].

1.4 New Urban and Rural Household Consumption Demand Arising from High-Quality Rural Industrial Development

Supply is a crucial factor that drives demand. Industrial development and the emergence of new business models in rural areas will unleash rural residents' local consumption demand and encourage urban residents to spend more in the countryside. The rural household consumption demand is predominantly for agricultural products and processed goods, catering, shopping, culture, sports, travel and leisure, and elderly and childcare, all of which reflect an increase in the standard of living. With higher consumer demand, urban residents are likely to buy more goods and services from the countryside, which will help improve rural consumption. Urban consumer demand for rural goods and services is expected to change from food supply to leisure travel and cultural experiences, suggesting an upgrade in urban consumption. This transition is accelerated by an aging population and the urbanization of migrant workers. The increase in urban household demand for food and agricultural products is driven by specialty, functional and cultural products, as well as experiential, customized, and integrated forms of consumption, which are typically associated with rural leisure travel, cultural experience, health and wellness, and other consumption modes. Changes are occurring in the traditional consumption of food and agricultural products, as evidenced by a rapid increase in the urban population's consumption of pre-made foods and farm harvesting excursions. The countryside is an irreplaceable component of urban consumption, which will only increase in the future. The demand for rural services such as leisure travel, housing and life services, health and elderly care, cultural experiences, entrepreneurship, and employment, is increasing among urban residents. Whether the potential demand is converted into actual consumption depends on the availability of relevant products and services in rural areas. Modern rural services, new rural industries, and new rural business models are considered indispensable to high-quality rural industrial development in the No. 1 Central Government Document of 2023. These modern rural services include catering, shopping, culture, athletics, travel and leisure, elderly and child

[4] According to the *Annual Statistical Report on China's Rural Policy and Reform (2021)*, there were a total of 36,390 townships and 535,813 villages across the nation.

[5] Compiled based on case studies and data obtained from rural elderly care surveys in Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, and Guizhou provinces.

care, as well as intermediary information services. Included among the new rural industries are the culture industry, boutique tourism, rural bed and breakfast services, the digital industry, and pre-made foods. New business models in rural areas include joint distribution, real-time retail, e-commerce direct procurement, made-to-order products, central kitchens, and direct supply and marketing. In addition to stimulating the demand for industrial investment, high-quality rural industrial development will improve and expand consumer choices for both urban and rural residents. Once materialized into actual consumption, the desire of urban and rural households for a better life will provide an enduring impetus for the expansion of urban and rural demand.

2. Key Constraints to China's Rural Demand

In the foreseeable future, China's economic development will be confronted with strategic opportunities, risks, and challenges, and economic recovery and development will face multiple pressures of dwindling demand, supply disruptions, and weakening expectations. As a major consumer market and factor market, the countryside provides a firm foundation for economic circulations. However, the transformation of rural potential demand into actual demand is hindered by a number of constraints and challenges, posing significant obstacles to rural vitalization.

2.1 Structural Deceleration and Instability of the Growth of Rural Household Income Impede the Growth of Consumption

Continuous income growth is a prerequisite for sustained growth in household consumption spending. In recent years, rural households have seen their consumption spending grow at a faster pace than that of their urban counterparts due to rural income growth and the narrowing of the urban-rural income disparity. However, rural households face structural deceleration and instability in the growth of their disposable income, which stifles their potential consumption demand stemming from income growth.

The principal source of income growth for rural residents is wage income. From 2012 to 2022, the proportion of wage income to rural disposable income per capita increased from 37.2% to 42.0%. Wage income contributed 45.4% to farmers' income growth, exceeding net operating income as the primary source of income and income growth[6]. Migrant labor provides the majority of wage income for rural households. With the aging of migrant workers and changing rural and urban employment markets[7], the growth of migrant wage income and rural residents' disposable income is expected to slow. While the younger generation of migrant laborers has settled in cities, the older generation has begun to return to the countryside. As job opportunities in large and medium-sized cities become scarcer, some inhabitants prefer to find employment in their own communities (Table 3). Migrant workers earn much higher incomes than locally employed workers. Migrant workers of middle age who return to the countryside face fewer employment opportunities, and their wage income will decrease significantly if they switch to flexible employment or farm work. The issues of job insecurity and labor rights continue to plague migrant workers. The employment and labor rights of older migrant workers have garnered considerable public attention.

Net operating income - particularly agricultural net operating income - has consistently declined as a percentage of rural household disposable income, but it remains a significant source of rural household

[6] Compiled based on NBS data.

[7] Rural migrant workers refer to rural registered residents who are locally employed in non-farming work or have migrated elsewhere in search of jobs for no less than six months. Between 2012 and 2022, rural migrant workers in China increased from 263 million to 296 million persons, up 12.6%, and local migrant workers (with household registration in local townships) increased from 99 million to 124 million, up 25.3%; outgoing migrant workers (with household registration outside local townships) increased from 163 million to 172 million persons, up 5.5%; cross-provincial rural migrant workers decreased from 76 million to 71 million, down 6.6%.

income. From 2012 to 2022, the proportion of net operating income to rural household income per capita decreased from 43.6% to 34.6%, and net operating income contributed 28.2% to farmers' income growth. The majority of rural business opportunities stem from agriculture, while opportunities outside of agriculture are scarce. Most agribusinesses are managed by smallholders and have modest potential for income growth. As a result, few business and service operators rely on agricultural production as their primary source of income. On the other hand, only a few rural enterprises, small and micro businesses, and entrepreneurs derive the majority of their earnings from non-farming operating income. Under these conditions, it is expected that the revitalization of rural industries will increase rural residents' access to well-paying industrial jobs. For this reason, efforts are being made to develop participation and profit-sharing mechanisms for rural residents, particularly smallholders (Lu and Kong, 2022). Nonetheless, rural populations have challenges that must be overcome before they can reap the benefits of industrial development in their communities. There should be systems put in place to increase rural residents' incomes and materialize the full potential of the rural consumer market.

Table 3: Wage vs. Age of Rural Migrant Workers, 2012-2022

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Monthly salary (yuan/ month)	2,290	2,609	2,864	3,072	3,275	3,485	3,721	3,962	4,072	4,432	4,615
# Local migrant workers	--	--	--	2,781	2,985	3,173	3,340	3,500	3,606	3,878	4,026
Outgoing migrant workers	--	--	--	3,359	3,572	3,805	4,107	4,427	4,549	5,013	5,240
Average age (years)	37.3	--	38.3	38.6	39	39.7	40.2	40.8	41.4	41.7	42.3
Share of migrant workers aged above 50	15.1	15.2	17.1	17.9	19.1	21.3	22.4	24.6	26.4	27.3	29.2

Source: Compiled based on the monitoring and survey report data of rural migrant workers published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) over the years.

2.2 Rural Social Security Shortfalls Impede Upgrade of the Consumption Structure

Despite the external shocks, rural household consumption spending is projected to increase steadily due to the following reasons: First, with modest incomes, rural household consumption is dominated by inelastic daily necessities; second, as a result of social security gaps, rural residents have an insufficient demand for more income-elastic consumption spending to improve living standards and pursue personal development, such as elderly and child care, recreation and entertainment, and skills training (Table 4). The lack of social security expenditures has prompted rural residents to spend a larger portion of their incomes on precautionary savings, limiting their ability to spend on consumption. Consumption on the improvement of living standards is the future growth driver of rural household consumption demand due to the relative prosperity of rural inhabitants and the stable level of consumption on clothing, food, and travel. Concerns about social security have prevented rural residents from engaging in consumerism, despite their enormous potential demand for better living standards and personal development. Rural households migrate from the countryside to urban areas in search of jobs or business opportunities. However, seldom do rural workers or business owners, whether in the agricultural or non-agricultural sector, participate in social security. A lesser proportion of rural employees in cities participate in social security than urban employees[8]. From 2012 to 2022, the percentage of rural migrant employees who

[8] According to the *National Monitoring and Survey Report for Rural Migrant Workers, 2014*, rural migrants' social security participation rates were 26.2% for work injury insurance, 17.6% for medical insurance, 16.7% for pension insurance, 10.5% for unemployment insurance, 7.8% for birth insurance, and 5.5% for the housing provident fund.

participated in work injury insurance rose from 24.0% to 30.9%, which still pales in comparison to the national average, which rose from 24.8% to 39.7% during the same time period[9].

The majority of rural residents who have settled in cities are migrant workers from rural households. Other members of rural households who stay in the countryside still have to pay for their family members to settle in cities, even though they are not moving with them. As a result, rural residents must set aside a large portion of their incomes to purchase homes in urban areas, leaving them short of funds for consumption spending to better their living conditions and pursue personal development. Since the young have migrated to the cities, there is a growing number of elderly people left in the countryside. The proportion of elderly people residing in rural areas is greater among older age groups. Rapid increases in the number of elderly people living alone or without family care emphasize the need for day care, dining assistance, care visits, and medical care. Profit-driven companies lack the motivation to provide healthcare services to rural elderly people with modest means. Due to insufficient social protection in rural areas, rural household consumption has been somewhat limited to basic living expenses, as evidenced by the unmet consumer demand for higher living standards and personal development. The only way to activate such demand is to strengthen social protection in rural areas and equitably distribute the costs associated with rural residents relocating to urban areas.

Table 4: Urban and Rural Household Consumption Structure, 2018-2022

		Urban residents					Rural residents				
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Amount of consumption spending (yuan / person)		26,112	28,063	27,007	30,307	30,391	12,124	13,328	13,713	15,916	16,632
Composition of consumption spending (%)	# Service consumption	46.5	48.2	44.5	46.4	45.2	38.3	39.7	37.8	38.6	38.2
	# Food, tobacco and alcohol	27.7	27.6	29.2	28.6	29.5	30.1	30.0	32.7	32.7	33.0
	Clothing	6.9	6.5	6.1	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.4	5.2
	Housing	24.0	24.2	25.8	24.4	25.2	21.9	21.5	21.6	20.8	21.1
	Daily necessities and services	6.2	6.0	6.1	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.6
	Transportation and communication	13.3	13.1	12.9	13.0	12.9	13.9	13.8	13.4	13.4	13.4
	Education, culture and entertainment	11.4	11.9	9.6	11.0	10.0	10.7	11.1	9.5	10.3	10.1
	Healthcare	7.8	8.1	8.0	8.3	8.2	10.2	10.7	10.3	9.9	9.8
	Other goods and services	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.7	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.8

Source: Compiled based on data published by the NBS website (http://www.stats.gov.cn).

2.3 Insufficient Development and Supply of Rural Goods and Services for Urban Residents

Rural residents consume only a portion of the products and services provided by the countryside, while the remainder is consumed by urban residents. With the vitalization of the countryside, industries such as leisure travel, popular science agriculture, and health and wellness, are targeting urban consumers. Many aspects of a better life sought by city dwellers may be realized in rural areas. Increasing numbers of urban residents who reside in the suburbs for elderly care, relaxation, or doing business have become key forces in the revitalization of the countryside. In most rural areas, however, there is an absence of products and services designed for city dwellers. Urban residents' demand for rural

[9] Compiled based on NBS data.

products and services is diminished by poor consumer choices, resulting in poor consumer stickiness, which limits their contributions to rural development. The countryside should offer desirable products and services in order to entice city dwellers to consume and even settle there. This will increase rural consumption potentials, attract more production factors, and support the high-quality development of rural industries.

The government has constructed extensive public service facilities throughout the countryside, some of which are unused because they are designed according to urban standards and exceed the requirements of rural residents. Making these unused facilities accessible to urban residents may extend urban public services into the countryside, encourage urban residents to consume in the countryside, enhance rural public and private services, and create jobs. Facilities for elderly care services are one example. The majority of elderly care services requested by rural residents are in-home services. However, most rural elderly care facilities built by the government are centralized nursing homes. As a result of the supply-demand mismatch, many well-equipped nursing homes are currently vacant. It is recommended to make idle or underutilized nursing homes available to urban residents and to introduce urban elderly care service operators or business models in order to maximize the use of elderly care facilities in the countryside, improve the quality of rural pension services, unleash urban household consumer demand for rural pension services, and promote the rural elderly care industry. The development of elderly care services in rural areas will transform rural residents' perceptions of elderly care and potentially provide a solution to the dilemma of care of the elderly in the countryside.

The pursuit of an idyllic way of life is shared by many city dwellers. It is made possible by a number of goods and services, as well as their rural consumption. To make a pastoral lifestyle a reality for city dwellers, it is recommended to develop rural industries. This will encourage urban residents to shop in rural areas, thereby increasing rural consumption and economic growth. For example, the combination of rural cultural heritage, history, and gaming experience may provide urban youth with venues for an immersive experience.

2.4 Insufficient Rural Industrial Development Leading to Industry-Agriculture "Price Scissors" in the New Era

Urban-rural economic circulation is an essential part of domestic economic circulation and a pivotal aspect of economic health. Over the years, the countryside has provided inexpensive factors of production and a large consumer market as propelling forces for China's urbanization, industrialization, and economic development. However, urban-rural economic circulation is impeded by the disparities between urban and rural industrial systems, despite intensifying efforts to bridge the urban-rural divide. Dynamic equilibrium for the two-way flow of urban and rural factors and goods is indicative of thriving urban-rural economic circulations. Nonetheless, urban and rural factors and goods are still subject to a one-way flow and discrete self-circulations due to the existence of disparities in urban and rural development, hindering synergy between urban and rural consumption. The lack of interconnection between urban and rural industrial systems, inconsistent product and service quality standards, and weaknesses in urban and rural supply chains prevent rural products and services from entering cities or becoming the preferred options of urban residents, thereby limiting the extent to which an increasing supply of rural products and services contributes to the creation of urban and rural demand. Lacking competitive agricultural processing and distribution businesses, the countryside mainly provides primary agricultural products and food to urban residents. The urban concentration of factor supply for agricultural production, intensive agricultural processing, and agricultural supply chain services is detrimental to rural factor accumulation and the distribution of value-added dividends among farmers.

Agricultural modernization is a requisite for rural industries, and non-farm industries are the vehicle for rural revitalization. China's rural non-agricultural industries are expanding, and urban industries are relocating to the countryside. However, many of these rural non-agricultural businesses are sporadic,

small, and uncompetitive. Large numbers are family-owned or basic workshops with haphazard production methods and low-quality goods and have significant disparities in quality and standards. As a result, some rural products and services are unable to enter urban markets, and have to be consumed locally by rural residents. The disconnection between urban and rural industrial systems - as well as the absence of urban industry standards, administration of industry and commerce, and other public services in the countryside - are among the primary causes of this inability to enter the urban market. Consequently, the provision of numerous rural goods and services is not subject to market supervision.

Whenever economic development has faced pressures, China has implemented policy initiatives to expand domestic consumption by selling industrial goods manufactured in cities to the countryside, as opposed to selling rural goods and services to cities. In addition, there is a significant disparity in quality between industrial products sold in rural areas and those available in cities. In the modern era, the flow of inexpensive factors of production and primary products to urban areas and the marketing of modern factors of production and industrial finished commodities to rural areas has resulted in "price scissors" between industry and agriculture. Any policy initiative intended to increase rural demand must integrate urban and rural industrial systems, intensify supply-side structural reforms, and enhance the quality of rural industrial development. By integrating urban and rural economic circulations, rural industries will produce more plentiful and diverse goods and services allowing urban and rural residents to experience a better quality of life in the countryside.

2.5 Lackluster Growth in Investment-Driven Demand due to Insufficient Income Generation from the Construction of Rural Infrastructure

Infrastructure remains a significant barrier to providing modern living conditions in China's rural areas. The construction of infrastructure is a vital component of rural modernization and a focal point of fiscal investment in rural development. The multiplier effect of fiscal investment on household income is essential for boosting domestic demand. However, the use of funds for the construction of rural infrastructure is inefficient, the quality of the construction is inadequate, and the benefits for rural household income growth are modest. Despite the tremendous demand for investment in the construction of rural infrastructure, these issues have impacted urban and rural household consumption and limited the demand multiplier effect. Similar to the administrative procedures for urban infrastructure construction projects, stringent project application, competitive bidding, and qualification requirements have been adopted for rural infrastructure construction projects financed with public funds. Some localities have modified procedures and eligibility requirements to establish a certain participation rate for small and micro businesses and to encourage farmers' cooperatives and rural businesses to participate in infrastructure development. However, the majority of rural market entities find it difficult to participate in infrastructure projects, most of which are allocated to urban-based construction conglomerates. Rural businesses and inhabitants are either left with meager profits and employment opportunities, or they are exploited by subcontracting practices. In the latter instance, substantial amounts of public funds are wasted in the process of subcontracting. In one locality, only about 50 percent of funds allocated for the construction of high-quality farmland were actually used to construct farmland[10]. The problems are twofold: First, some projects are of substandard quality, impractical and poorly maintained, and cannot support countryside revitalization and the improvement of rural living standards; second, infrastructure projects provide rural residents with very few opportunities for participation and employment, disincentivizing them from participating in infrastructure maintenance and leaving them with little room for income growth. Clearly, rural infrastructure improvements have not adequately stimulated

[10] This figure was obtained during the authors' interview with local officials responsible for high-standard farmland construction, and is consistent with the findings of our survey elsewhere.

rural demand. The meager income growth for rural residents has impeded the multiplier effect of investment and diminished the effectiveness of fiscal investments in driving rural economic growth. Issues similar to those arising with infrastructure exist in the construction of industrial facilities in rural areas, the majority of which are financed by public funds or private investors under policy preferences. Revitalizing the countryside requires massive financial investments. It is essential that these investments help increase rural incomes and consumption.

3. Strategic Pathways for Expanding Rural Consumption under Urban-Rural Integration

In urban-rural integration, constraints on rural consumption should be eased by increasing rural household incomes and living standards, smoothing urban-rural economic circulations, and bridging the urban-rural divide. A combination of policy instruments should be adopted to improve the quality of rural products and services, integrate agriculture and the countryside into domestic economic circulations, and establish an institutional system to increase rural consumption. The government should accelerate rural modernization, create a harmonious and attractive rural environment, and improve the construction, operation, and maintenance of infrastructure. It should provide innovative public services, foster high-quality rural industries for urban and rural residents, and increase the income growth effect of rural construction investment and industrial development. Rural income growth and prosperity are crucial for unlocking consumer potential and stimulating rural growth.

3.1 Broadening Avenues for Income Growth for Rural Residents

Income growth is essential for stimulating the rural market and expanding rural consumption. For rural residents, income sources include wage income, net operating income, net property income, and net transfer income. Numerous policy initiatives have been implemented by the government to increase rural incomes. The "No. 1 Central Document" of 2023 identifies policy initiatives to promote rural employment and income growth, improve agricultural efficiency, and strengthen farmers' property rights. In addition, there should be greater urban-rural coordination regarding employment, entrepreneurship, and social protection in order to create jobs for rural residents and returning migrant workers. First, urban employment and business start-up service and protection systems should include rural residents who are employed or launching a business in the city. Second, rural entrepreneurship should be supported by implementing group-specific entrepreneurial support measures. Priority should be given to supporting youth innovation and entrepreneurship, nurturing new types of agribusinesses and service organizations, and establishing new industries and business models in rural areas. Support should be extended to the elderly who are self-employed for subsistence so as to increase their income by any means possible. Third, the government should develop labor-intensive industries, as well as those that employ freelancing women and elderly rural residents. Fourth, it is crucial to close the voids in social security for rural residents and improve their employment, pension, healthcare, and education. Fifth, rural reforms, particularly reforms of land and rural collective ownership systems, should be deepened to allow resources to be transformed into capital and capital into wealth, to broaden property incomes for farmers, and to increase the share of net property incomes and their contribution to the growth of farmers' income.

3.2 Optimizing the Urban-Rural Market Layout and Upgrading the Rural Consumer Market

It is impossible to unlock the potentials of rural consumption without a reasonable urban-rural market layout that meets the needs of both urban and rural consumers. In order for rural consumption to expand, improve, and contribute more to economic development, we must optimize the urban-rural market layout, compensate for rural market deficiencies, harmonize urban and rural market systems, and

reduce disparities in urban and rural household consumption. First, urban product quality management and manufacturing standards should be extended to the countryside to establish an integrated urban-rural market supervision system, allowing rural residents to enjoy decent-quality consumer goods. To avoid poor quality, urban and industrial products sold in rural areas should be subjected to the same level of quality control as those in urban areas. To modernize living standards in the countryside, there should be more and better elderly and child care facilities, recreation and entertainment, specialty products, functional foods, education and health, culture and sports facilities. Fourth, measures should be taken to develop online consumption, steer rural housing consumption, promote innovative consumption, encourage urban residents to consume in the countryside, and encourage rural residents to diversify and upgrade their consumption. Fifth, in order to maximize rural consumption, barriers to consumption must be removed. Infrastructure construction should ameliorate the rural distribution system, particularly for agricultural products, bolstering cold chain logistics and the construction of countywide township commercial facilities and village-level logistical stations. To improve consumption, it is necessary to increase public awareness of consumer rights, intensify market supervision, strengthen consumer right systems, regulate rural market order, and crack down on counterfeit goods, false advertising, price fraud, and other illegal activities. Efforts should be made to improve the consumption credit system, encourage financial institutions to customize rural consumption credit products, and provide better and more efficient rural consumer financial services.

3.3 Promoting Affluence and Efficiency and Optimizing Mechanisms for Investment in Rural Construction

Fiscal investment is needed to catalyze private funding in order to build the country into an agricultural powerhouse with a harmonious and appealing living environment in the countryside. Much more investment in rural infrastructure is needed to prepare for future growth and address current shortfalls. The government should increase fiscal investment, while at the same time improving the mechanism by which rural development is funded and in this way stimulate private funding. First, the government should steadily increase fiscal spending on agriculture, forestry, and water resources at a faster rate than the growth rate of general public budgetary expenditure, and land transfer revenues in various localities should be used primarily for agriculture and rural development. Second, fiscal and financial policies should be coordinated in order to use fiscal investment as a catalyst for more private funding and to make rural development more attractive to market entities. Third, priority should be given to urban-rural infrastructure connectivity and rural infrastructure suitability in order to enhance the quality and availability of infrastructure development, thereby giving play to the role of infrastructure in revitalizing rural areas. Fourth, changes must be made to infrastructure project administration in order to encourage the participation of rural market entities and maximize the effect on the growth of rural residents' income. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and seven other departments issued the *Opinions on Promoting Welfare-to-Work Schemes through Agricultural and Rural Infrastructure Construction Projects* in November 2020. In January 2023, the NDRC enacted the *Administrative Measures for National Welfare-to-Work Schemes*, which mandates that "Manpower should be used whenever necessary instead of machinery." The No. 1 Central Document of 2023 calls for "Promoting Welfare-to-Work Schemes in major government-invested key projects and agricultural and rural infrastructure projects and moderately increasing the share of labor compensation." These policies need to be put into place without delay.

3.4 Advancing High-Quality Rural Industrial Development for Better Living Standards

Thriving rural industries will pave the way for the realization of better living standards for both urban and rural residents and prompt growth in demand. The current rural industrial development policy

is focused on supporting the modernization of agriculture, integrating primary, secondary and tertiary rural industries, and developing modern agriculture supply chains. To ensure food security, we should upgrade the rural industrial system, create diverse rural economic forms, and improve the rural market systems. More industries, supply chains and business activities should take root in the countryside. Urban and rural consumption and factor flow should be smoothed to strengthen economic circulations. Rural life services should be supported to meet the demand of both urban and rural residents for life services such as catering, shopping, culture and sports, travel and leisure, elderly and child care, and intermediary information services. Supply-side structural reforms will improve the quality of life services in the countryside and offer urban and rural consumers more choices. It is advised to develop an integrated urban and rural commercial service system, improve rural e-commerce and logistics, cascade cold chain transportation services to the countryside, and develop new business models such as joint distribution and real-time retail to facilitate consumption upgrade.

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