

Exploring the Implementation Path of Promoting Rural Revitalization through County Urban Rural Integration

-- Taking Huaiyuan County, Bengbu City as an Example

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Abstract

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes the strategic importance of "accelerating the construction of a new development pattern and promoting high-quality development", emphasizing the need to "adhere to urban-rural integrated development and smooth the flow of urban-rural factors". County level urban-rural integration is an effective path to promote rural revitalization and common prosperity. This project starts from the perspective of urban-rural integration, taking Huaiyuan County, Bengbu City, Anhui Province as the research area and a single administrative village as the research object, to explore the implementation path of county-level urban-rural integration. Based on the research results, propose optimization strategies for rural development, and provide relevant policy recommendations for the planning and construction of rural revitalization in Huaiyuan County.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization; County Level; Urban-rural Integration.

1. Introduction

In 2017, the General Office of the State Council issued several opinions on county-level innovation driven development, supporting county-level comprehensive innovation centered on scientific and technological innovation, and taking the implementation of the innovation driven development strategy as an important measure to create new engines of development and cultivate new driving forces for development. In 2020, at the Central Rural Work Conference, Xi Jinping pointed out that "counties should be regarded as an important entry point for the integration of urban and rural development, promoting the overall planning of spatial layout, industrial development, infrastructure, and other county-level areas, and managing the urban-rural relationship well, designing and promoting it together." This pointed out the goal and direction of promoting the integration of urban and rural development and rural revitalization at the county level from a strategic perspective. The Rural Revitalization Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, implemented in 2021, regards "urban-rural integration" as one of the main chapters and specifically proposes "accelerating the development of urban-rural integration at the county level" in Article 50, providing a solid legal

guarantee for all levels and departments to promote relevant work. The "Rural Revitalization Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China" implemented in 2021 includes "urban-rural integration" as one of the main chapters in Article 50. The special proposal of "accelerating the integration of urban and rural development in the county" provides a solid legal guarantee for all levels and departments to promote related work. In 2022, the Central Office and State Office of the Communist Party of China will further clarify the goals, requirements, key tasks, and basic paths for county level urban-rural integration development and rural revitalization. It is a significant and urgent task to embark on a new journey towards fully building a socialist modernized strong country, based on grasping the basic national conditions, agricultural conditions, and urban-rural evolution laws, and to reconstruct the rural system through the integration of county-level urban-rural development, in order to comprehensively promote rural revitalization. Therefore, studying the correlation and implementation path between county level urban-rural integration and rural revitalization can not only empower rural revitalization and promote economic development, but also promote the realization of common prosperity.

2. Literature Review

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted in-depth discussions on the connotation and core of urban-rural integration development. A reasonable urban-rural relationship is achieved by improving the development capacity and motivation of rural areas, enhancing confidence in rural development, promoting urban and rural interdependence, and promoting coordinated development between urban and rural areas (Nian Meng, 2020). Milton (2018) constructed the "sharing space theory" to emphasize the effective allocation of urban-rural two-way resources, while Felsende (2013) advocated the development of rural industries to drive employment and enhance the vitality of rural development. Xu Yibo (2021) explores the relationship between urban-rural integration and rural revitalization from the perspective of rural regional functions, and grasps the spatial and regional characteristics of production, life, and ecology by constructing an evaluation system for rural regional functions, in order to analyze the path of rural revitalization.

Scholars have interpreted the core connotation, reasons for implementation, and functional positioning of county-level urban-rural integration development from different perspectives. County is the basic carrier of national economic and social development, and also an important connection point for promoting urban-rural integration and achieving common prosperity (Feng Danmeng and Wan Jun, 2022). Wu Chongqing (2021) believes that promoting the flow and integration of production factors between county towns and villages based on county resources is an important way to achieve the integrated development of rural primary, secondary, and tertiary industries and the revitalization of county-level rural areas. At the same time, as a key node between industry and agriculture, urban and rural areas, and the state and society, the county is in a unique position and has special value in promoting urban-rural development and rural revitalization (Huang Zhenhua, 2022).

Domestic and foreign scholars have conducted detailed analysis on the integration of urban and rural development and rural revitalization in county areas. Overall, it is believed that county level urban-rural integration will promote the development of rural revitalization, but its theoretical and practical relevance have not received systematic attention, and there are differences in development between different regions. Therefore, this project explores Huaiyuan County, Bengbu City, and summarizes the relationship between developing and strengthening county-level urban-rural integration and comprehensively promoting rural revitalization from both theoretical and practical dimensions. Finally, it proposes the

implementation path of developing county-level urban-rural integration to drive rural revitalization.

3. Current Situation of Urban and Rural Development in Huaiyuan County

Huaiyuan County is under the jurisdiction of Bengbu City, Anhui Province. Located in the northern part of Anhui Province, in the middle reaches of the Huai River, at the southern end of the Huaibei Plain. It borders Guzhen, Bengbu, and Fengyang to the east, Huainan to the south, Fengtai and Mengcheng to the west, and Suixi and Suzhou to the north. Between 116°45' - 117°09'E and 32°43' - 33°19'N. Huaiyuan County has a total area of 2192 square kilometers and a total population of 1.33 million. There are a total of 18 townships in the county, 1 provincial-level economic development zone, 2 provincial-level modern agriculture demonstration zones, and 1 national agricultural science and technology demonstration park. Huaiyuan is one of the top 100 counties in the Yangtze River Delta region, one of the top 100 grain producing counties in China, the largest glutinous rice production base in China, the national pollution-free vegetable production base, and one of the four major pomegranate production areas in China. There are a total of 18 townships and 362 administrative villages in Huaiyuan County. According to the data, Huaiyuan County has 1.33 million registered residence and 935000 permanent residents. It can be seen from the population data that nearly 30% of the population in Huaiyuan County is out of town, and the urbanization rate of the permanent population is lower than the provincial and municipal average. There are certain challenges in the integration of urban and rural areas in the county. In 2022, the disposable income of rural residents was 20918 yuan, while the disposable income of urban residents was 39529 yuan. The disposable income of urban residents was nearly twice that of rural residents, indicating that the gap in disposable income between urban and rural residents was too large. Currently, most residents still live in rural areas of Huaiyuan County, while the construction of infrastructure, medical services, and education in rural areas is relatively backward, and the urban-rural development gap in Huaiyuan County is too large. Specifically manifested in: (1) Economic development. At present, there is still a significant gap in urban and rural economic development. The economy of county-level cities is developing rapidly, while the economy of rural areas is still relatively lagging behind. The process of agricultural modernization is constantly accelerating, but the speed of urbanization is faster. (2) In terms of social equity. At present, there is still an imbalance in the level of social services between urban and rural areas. The social service facilities such as education, healthcare, and social security in county-level urban areas are basically complete, while rural areas lack high-quality social service resources. (3) In terms of cultural inheritance. At present, there are still significant cultural differences between urban and rural areas. County level urban culture tends towards modernization and internationalization, while rural areas still retain the influence of traditional culture.

4. The Importance of County Urban Rural Integration Development

4.1. County Towns are Important Destinations for Migrant Workers Returning Home

Many villagers choose to work outside due to economic pressure. After reaching a certain age, they have some reasons to choose to return to their hometown, such as personal factors such as rural complex. After many years away from their hometown, many people will develop a strong rural complex towards their hometown. Returning home means returning to a familiar environment, reconnecting with family and friends, and reintegrating into the community. For some migrant workers, returning home after retirement can reduce the cost of living. Working in big cities may face problems such as high rent and high prices, while living in one's hometown

is relatively low, and retirement benefits can better maintain a living standard, which is an economic factor. Pension security factors such as some migrant workers not having sufficient understanding or low trust in the pension security system in other places. In their hometown, they have a better understanding, familiarity, and trust in the local pension security system, so they choose to return home for elderly care.

4.2. County Level Urban-rural Integration Promotes Economic Development

County seat is the intersection of rural and urban areas, and achieving the integration of urban and rural development within the county can promote the transformation and upgrading of rural economy and the expansion of urban economy. By developing industries and service industries in county towns, providing more employment opportunities, increasing farmers' income, and promoting the implementation of rural revitalization strategies. Compared to cities, there are gaps in infrastructure, public services, and other aspects in rural areas. The integrated development of urban and rural areas in counties can improve the production and living conditions in rural areas. Optimize infrastructure construction, provide good public services such as education, healthcare, and elderly care, and enhance farmers' sense of happiness and gain. The county seat has resources such as talent, technology, and funds from the city, as well as abundant resources such as land and agricultural products from rural areas. Realizing the integration of urban and rural development in the county can optimize resource allocation, improve land use efficiency, and achieve efficient utilization and complementarity of resources through agricultural transformation and upgrading and rural industrial development. County level urban-rural integration development can narrow the urban-rural gap, reduce poverty and inequality among farmers. Provide more employment opportunities and development space, promote farmers' transfer of employment, increase income sources, improve social security system, enhance social stability, and achieve common prosperity and happiness for urban and rural residents. It can promote sustainable rural development and ecological civilization construction. The development of green industries such as circular economy and ecological agriculture can, to a certain extent, promote urban and rural cultural exchanges and common inheritance. Strengthen the protection and inheritance of traditional culture, promote the development of cultural industries and tourism, enable urban and rural residents to enjoy the spiritual enjoyment and practical benefits brought by culture, enhance cultural confidence and identity, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win situation between urban and rural areas. By strengthening cooperation and complementarity between counties, promoting complementary resource advantages, breaking administrative barriers, promoting equalization of public services, and achieving regional integration development.

The integrated development of urban and rural areas in the county is an inevitable requirement for the comprehensive construction of a socialist modernized country, and also the core content of the rural revitalization strategy. In the process of promoting the integration of urban and rural development in counties, attention should be paid to balanced coordination in all aspects, with the immediate interests of the people as the starting point and foothold, and through various means such as policy guidance, financial support, and technological innovation, promote the integration of urban and rural development, making it an effective way to promote sustainable economic and social development and achieve people's happiness.

5. Countermeasures for the Integration of Urban and Rural Development in County Areas

Due to the significant proportion of agriculture and rural areas in the county economic and social structure, the county economy plays a fundamental role in driving the long-term development of agriculture and rural areas. Giving full play to the urban-rural connectivity

function of county towns is an important path for the development of rural economy. The government can focus on the following aspects for construction.

5.1. Vigorously Developing Characteristic Industries and Providing Employment Opportunities

Through the development and quality improvement of the county economy, guide the upgrading of urban and rural industries, promote the transformation of agriculture from extensive to intensive, promote the optimization of village layout, and ultimately achieve reasonable population mobility. County towns have abundant employment opportunities, and the government can carry out pomegranate industry construction around Huaiyuan County towns. The production and sales of characteristic fruit pomegranate in Huaiyuan County can provide local employment opportunities, which can be achieved from the following aspects:

Planting and picking: Pomegranate planting requires farmers to invest a lot of manpower, material resources, and financial resources, and also requires regular picking based on the growth cycle of pomegranate. Therefore, the local government can provide stable employment opportunities for farmers by developing pomegranate planting and picking industries.

Pomegranate processing: The market demand for pomegranate processing products such as pomegranate juice, jam, and fresh fruit products is high and has broad prospects. We will establish pomegranate processing enterprises in Huaiyuan County to attract employment and increase the income of local residents.

Pomegranate tourism: Utilize the characteristics of pomegranate, carry out pomegranate tourism, create pomegranate brands, attract tourists, promote rural economic development and employment, and also promote the inheritance and development of Huaiyuan pomegranate culture.

Pomegranate E-commerce: By utilizing the internet and e-commerce platforms, we aim to promote the sales of Huaiyuan pomegranate to a broader market, create job opportunities through online sales, and enhance Huaiyuan's reputation and brand influence.

In short, by developing the pomegranate industry, more employment opportunities can be created, local economic growth can be driven, and the living standards of residents can be improved. Support the development of new business entities such as farmers' cooperatives and agricultural enterprises, strengthen agricultural scientific and technological innovation and support, promote agricultural industrial structure adjustment and product optimization and upgrading, and improve agricultural efficiency and competitiveness. The government and relevant departments need to increase their support and guidance for this industry, create a better business environment, and further promote the development of the pomegranate industry.

5.2. The Government Provides Relevant Policy Support

In order to promote the return of migrant workers, drive rural economic development, and promote urban-rural integration in the county, the government should attach great importance to the innovation and entrepreneurship of "urban returning" migrant workers, and help them solve basic problems such as difficulties in entrepreneurship financing, infrastructure support, bureau level skilled talents, and stable employment. For example, providing small loans, entrepreneurial support, and skill training to residents who start businesses in the urban and rural areas of Huaiyuan. These policies can provide conditions and opportunities for the return of migrant workers, and county towns have become their ideal choice for entrepreneurship and employment.

5.3. Increase the Provision of Social Security for Rural Residents

Continuously strengthen the central function of county towns and key towns and their guiding role in cracking down on village hollowing out, respond to population aging, and promote local urbanization. Compared to large cities, the social security system and public service facilities in county-level towns may be more complete. Vigorously develop the surrounding areas of cities and towns, connect cities and rural areas, promote the return of migrant workers to the surrounding areas of county towns, establish schools around the towns, improve teaching facilities, libraries, laboratories and other hardware conditions, and enhance the learning environment and students' learning experience. Encourage excellent teachers to teach in schools to provide better educational resources. Introduce information technology equipment and internet resources, provide modern educational methods and teaching resources, strengthen the application of online education, distance education and other models, and expand students' learning opportunities and educational resources. Build medical infrastructure, increase investment in medical institutions around towns, improve the level of medical facilities and equipment, and improve the functions of rural health centers, clinics, and other medical institutions. Increase efforts in health education and publicity for residents, enhance their health awareness and literacy, and prevent and control the occurrence of common diseases. Migrant workers can enjoy basic social security benefits such as local healthcare, education, and elderly care, improve their quality of life, and stay close to their rural homeland. Residents can reintegrate into the community and enjoy the humanistic emotions and cultural atmosphere of their hometown.

5.4. The Government Vigorously Promotes Inter County Cooperation

Increase support for rural financial services, carry out the construction of rural credit system, provide financial products such as loans and insurance, strengthen the infrastructure construction of transportation, water conservancy, energy, information, etc. between county and rural areas, narrow the gap between urban and rural development, and improve the production and living conditions in rural areas. Promote the development of rural economy and the increase of farmers' income, promote cooperation and complementarity between different townships and counties, break administrative barriers, strengthen resource integration and complementary advantages, and achieve complementary advantages, mutual benefit and win-win situation.

These measures need to be formulated by relevant departments and governments, and supervision and evaluation should be strengthened to ensure that the connection and integrated development between county towns and rural areas can proceed smoothly and achieve practical results. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the actual situation and take into account the needs of rural residents. Adapt measures to local conditions, implement policies according to villages, and comprehensively consider various factors to actively promote the integration of urban and rural development in the county. The tasks and challenges faced by the integrated development of urban and rural areas in the county still remain significant. To promote the integrated development of urban and rural areas in the county, it is necessary for the government, enterprises, and society to work together, adopt various forms of collaboration and cooperation, enhance urban-rural communication and interaction, and promote the common prosperity of urban and rural areas in the county.

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