

Exploring a Typical Regional Model for Rural Industrial Revitalization: Using Shimen Township as a Case Study

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Abstract: Implementing the strategy of rural revitalization and embarking on the path of socialist rural revitalization with distinctive Chinese characteristics are essential steps in addressing existing gaps in agricultural and rural modernization. These steps aim to swiftly increase farmers' incomes, enhance agricultural production capabilities, foster high-quality rural economic development, and rectify issues related to uneven development. Revitalizing rural areas and alleviating poverty among the majority of farmers represent major decisions made by the state regarding the "three rural issues." This paper conducts an analysis and discussion centered on Shimen Township in She County within the context of the agricultural and rural development revitalization strategy. The objective is to identify prevailing challenges and propose relevant solutions.

Keywords: Rural industrial revitalization; Farmers; Geographical model; Shimen Township

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1. Introduction

The implementation of the rural revitalization strategy serves as an effective means to address the loss of rural talents, land, capital, and other critical factors, representing a necessary response to the multifaceted challenges faced by rural areas. However, it is important to acknowledge that rural issues can manifest differently across various regions, underscoring the need to explore tailored rural revitalization strategies that facilitate the execution of these initiatives and foster integrated urban-rural development ^[1]. Within the context of China's development, the urban-rural divide remains stark, with rural areas experiencing significant underdevelopment. Among those affected most profoundly by this imbalance are farmers.

In light of the strategic backdrop of rural revitalization, this paper takes Shimen Township in She County, Anhui Province as an illustrative case study. It aims to analyze the current developmental status, existing constraints, and potential pathways for optimization in order to contribute to the high-quality development of Shimen Township.

2. Geographical development model

The rapid economic and social development, coupled with synchronized industrialization and urbanization, have led to significant transformations in interpersonal dynamics. By employing a scientific and rational approach to harness the multifunctional aspects of space, it is possible to optimize the utilization of regional areas and facilitate the diverse fulfillment of societal needs. This reorientation steers rural areas towards accommodating multifaceted demands, as they inherently possess objective attributes encompassing production, habitation, economic activities, culture, ecology, and more ^[2].

Effectively situating the roles of rural areas, establishing a harmonious urban-rural relationship, realizing the complementary functions of both spheres, demonstrating the functional worth of rural regions, and fostering the revitalization and development of rural economies tailored to local conditions represent essential strategies for implementing the rural revitalization initiative and comprehensively advancing rural reform.

3. The development status of Shimen Township

Situated at the northern base of the Baiji Mountain Range, which serves as the headwaters of the Bailang River, Shimen Township in She County boasts a picturesque landscape characterized by majestic mountains, verdant forests, abundant bamboo groves, and briskly flowing clear streams, making it an ideal destination for leisure tourism. This region is relatively resource-rich, featuring 227 hectares (3,421 mu) of tea plantations with medium and high yields, yielding an annual tea production of 80 tons, including nearly 20 tons of renowned teas such as Maofeng and Longjing. Additionally, moso bamboo cultivation and timber production are distinctive industries within the township, encompassing a vast expanse of approximately 1,000 hectares (15,000 mu) of moso bamboo groves.

In recent years, Shimen Township has embraced the philosophy of “green water and green mountains are gold mountains and silver mountains,” emphasizing the harmonious interplay between cultural and economic benefits, the fusion of tradition and modernity, and the balance between conservation and development. Capitalizing on the synergy between the breathtaking natural landscape and the ancient Huizhou cultural heritage, the township has leveraged its traditional ancient villages as a foundation, diligently crafting the brands of “idyllic Huizhou” and “foggy drizzling Huizhou” countryside. This ongoing endeavor seeks to continually explore innovative avenues to transform the “green water and green mountains” into “golden mountains and silver mountains.”

To facilitate these transformations, Shimen Township has introduced bamboo product processing facilities to handle the preliminary processing of existing raw bamboo, enabling residents to easily market their moso bamboo. Drawing inspiration from successful development models in more advanced regions, the township has initiated the bamboo forest carbon sink project, fostering the growth of the moso bamboo carbon sink economy and establishing an innovation hub for advancing the “two mountains” concept in She County.

3.1. Prioritizing ecological livability in rural areas and embracing green development principles

The Shimen Township government has augmented its financial commitment to foster the construction of ecological civilization in rural areas, channeling dedicated financial support to bridge the urban-rural divide. They have championed the promotion of green agriculture development by harnessing innovative energy sources like biogas and solar energy. Their focus extends to bolstering the overall enhancement of rural environments, encompassing waste management, ecological restoration of disused mines, domestic wastewater treatment, and other essential infrastructure initiatives.

Presently, Shimen Township boasts substantially improved infrastructure, with the successful completion of water and sanitation enhancement projects. The enhancement of the rural habitat environment is being actively pursued, leading to significant improvements in areas such as villages, rivers, ponds, ditches, residential surroundings, rural roadways, and major intersections, all of which have undergone comprehensive cleaning and refurbishment efforts. The township is steadfast in adhering to the concept of prioritizing ecological development and has proactively raised funds to support forestry-based ecological projects. In terms of financial oversight, the township government has streamlined approval processes, established disbursement timelines, reinforced monitoring and management, and enhanced the efficiency of financial fund utilization.

The cornerstone of ecological industry green development lies in source prevention and control, and Shimen Township has devised a comprehensive program for reducing pesticide and fertilizer usage while enhancing their efficiency. They utilize the national pesticide information management system to standardize the management of high-quality tea plantations, implementing systematic controls^[3]. The distribution of sticky yellow boards to the populace has aided in achieving the goal of substituting organic fertilizers over 800 hectares (12,000 mu) of land, resulting in a remarkable 90.4% coverage of green prevention and control measures within tea plantations.

Furthermore, the Shimen Township government actively mobilizes diverse organizations to participate in rural ecological civilization development and opens avenues for financing. These organizations not only offer insights and recommendations for ecological environment construction but also actively raise funds to support these initiatives. Simultaneously, the government encourages college-educated youths to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship endeavors, vigorously providing employment and entrepreneurship services for rural youth. They have devised a series of preferential policies aimed at incentivizing college graduates to return to their hometowns for employment, thereby bolstering the willingness of these individuals to contribute to their local communities.

3.2. Strengthening the advancement of rural spiritual civilization with the civilized countryside as a cornerstone

The concept of a “civilized countryside” carries substantial benefits, including the augmentation of industrial market competitiveness, the realization of eco-friendly production and living, the provision of essential support for grassroots-level governance, the promotion of grassroots-level civilization, and the establishment of a robust foundation for social harmony and stability. The Shimen Township government has intensified its efforts to preserve traditional culture^[4]. Leveraging the distribution of cultural relics and monuments, and considering their cultural and historic significance, they have expanded the scope of designated protection units at all administrative levels. Moreover, they have delineated protection responsibilities for ancient trees associated with cultural relics that fall outside the purview of established protection and construction control zones, thereby ensuring comprehensive safeguarding measures^[5].

4. Challenges in the development of the model for rural industrial revitalization in Shimen Township

4.1. Limited industrial strength and the need for enhanced market competitiveness

The revitalization of rural industries hinges on meeting market demands, leveraging natural resources, harnessing modern technology, capital, and talent, and upgrading the structure and resource allocation within rural industries. This transformation paves the way for the transition to modern agriculture, encompassing the dissemination of contemporary agricultural knowledge among farmers, which forms the foundational

framework for rural revitalization ^[6]. However, Shimen Township grapples with several issues in both governance and practical implementation.

From an industrial interest standpoint, Shimen Township lacks a comprehensive and scientifically informed industrial plan, impeding effective development. Traditional agriculture faces inherent challenges such as relatively low income, small-scale operations, limited product diversity, a lack of collective endeavors, meager processing and transformation capabilities, subpar product quality, and inadequate promotional efforts. These factors collectively contribute to limited capital attraction ^[7]. While the digital economy has spurred the emergence of digital agriculture in more developed regions, rural industries in remote areas continue to rely heavily on traditional agricultural practices, characterized by minimal technological integration. Digital technologies remain underutilized, with the government not actively promoting new agricultural techniques. Leading agricultural enterprises predominantly concentrate on traditional agricultural products. Locally initiated enterprises among villagers suffer from product homogeneity, insufficient promotion, inadequate brand recognition, a lack of market competitiveness, minimal integration with secondary and tertiary industries, and unequal footing in market competition ^[8]. Enhancing farmers' capability to initiate and nurture their businesses and nurturing new entrepreneurial entities can lead to increased income for farmers and provide a valuable labor force for industrial development.

4.2. Shortage of human resources and the need to boost development momentum

Agricultural professionals are grappling with diminished enthusiasm for their roles. Special funds allocated for agricultural technology are insufficient, resulting in a lack of financial support for agricultural technicians engaged in specialized tasks. Consequently, many individuals associated with rural agriculture prefer office-based roles, as they lack incentives to conduct on-site inspections in rural areas ^[9]. This issue persists due to the absence of effective institutional mechanisms to compel government personnel to engage in agricultural work.

The government's attention to talent development is notably inadequate. Investments in talent development remain meager, with township leaders primarily relying on personal connections with successful expatriates who have launched businesses abroad to support hometown development efforts. The capacity of rural grassroots organizations to nurture talent is limited. The government tends to overlook local rural entrepreneurship, often favoring the idea of attracting so-called major corporations to foster local growth. Consequently, many young entrepreneurs who return to their hometowns encounter insufficient support and eventually depart, disheartened by the experience.

Township party cadres face challenges in organizational proficiency. They often work tirelessly without respite, juggling numerous responsibilities related to poverty alleviation and environmental protection. Due to a dearth of long-term strategic awareness, these cadres struggle to organize themselves effectively and contemplate how to excel in industrial revitalization ^[10]. Vital considerations, such as industrial development planning and talent attraction strategies, are often overlooked.

5. Development strategies for a model rural industrial revitalization in Shimen Township

5.1. Nurturing distinctive industries

Leveraging the unique attributes of the Shimen Township area, a multifaceted approach has been devised, promoting the integrated development of retirement, tourism, and vacation sectors. Recent years have witnessed the widespread emergence of innovative rural forms, particularly retirement and leisure activities coupled with rural tourism. These avenues not only create numerous employment prospects for rural residents but also

offer opportunities for older and more vulnerable individuals to secure employment. In addition, villagers can augment their income by renting out properties, freeing them from economic uncertainties. This integration of primary, secondary, and tertiary rural industries not only forges connections between urban and rural development factors but also empowers rural residents to experience economic growth in their own backyard.

5.2. Emphasizing contextual relevance for enhanced vitality in rural distinctive industries

Building upon Shimen Township's geographical advantages, there is a continuous commitment to cultivating and expanding high-efficiency agricultural ventures that align with the region's natural conditions and resources. This entails a meticulous selection of industries and species based on factors such as natural conditions, available resources, existing industrial foundations, and inherent strengths. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are strategically chosen and aligned with Shimen Township's geographical endowments, transforming them into industrial strengths and product excellence.

Harnessing cultural resources is another focal point, driving the vigorous development of Shimen Township's distinctive cultural industries. By leveraging regional advantages such as unique cuisine, specialized crafts, red tourism attractions, and the historical "red ancient road," brand recognition is cultivated through targeted promotional efforts. This "focus effect" ensures that each distinctive local cultural industry becomes a powerful catalyst for rural revitalization.

5.3. Promoting innovative approaches

The development of rural industries is intricately linked to the cultivation of distinctive agricultural products. Elevating the regional cultural worth of these distinctive products, introducing innovative methods for their dissemination, and establishing regional brands represent pivotal initiatives for industrial advancement and serve as potent tools for prosperity ^[11].

To this end, the Shimen Township government should periodically conduct training in new media marketing. They should embrace inventive promotional techniques and mediums, harnessing platforms like TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and live streaming sessions with social media influencers. These live broadcasts should offer real-time insights into the growth, production, and packaging processes of distinctive products. Local enterprises can collaborate with popular online influencers through platforms such as Taobao and TikTok to jointly promote their products through live commerce. This collaborative approach can stimulate engagement, drive local e-commerce enterprises, and encourage live commerce initiatives in farming and breeding bases. This strategy aims to establish multiple online product bases, nurture rural social media influencers, support various specialized industries, and ultimately expand the sales channels for agricultural and sideline products.

5.4. Cultivating regional brands for distinctive products

The Shimon Township government's creation of product brands can reduce expenses and propel the growth of related industries ^[9]. Firstly, brand development must be driven by market demand. The Shimen Township government should diligently study market requirements, integrating local characteristics to shape a brand image that aligns with mainstream values, garners recognition, and resonates with the public. Agricultural products often find themselves embroiled in price wars, but to transcend this competitive landscape, they should shift focus towards emphasizing product value. This entails moving up the value chain, offering distinctive qualities, and commanding premium prices. Secondly, the Shimen Township government should construct a rural brand anchored in the ethos of integrity and sincerity. Employing creative cultural thinking, they can infuse the brand with charisma that resonates with consumers, creating a warm and heartfelt connection with the product. Capitalizing on the unique attributes of rural areas, they should enhance the visibility of several

derivative products to forge a stronger brand identity.

6. Conclusion

In contrast to the historical underpinnings of rural enterprise development in the past, there have been profound transformations in the fundamental conditions, human capital, objectives, tasks, operational mechanisms, and primary constraints associated with rural industries development. The prevailing trend emphasizes certain factors such as a shorter industrial chain for agricultural products, limited deep processing of agricultural and livestock goods, a low degree of digitization in rural industries, inadequate internationalization avenues for agricultural products, and the drive for elevating the quality of rural industry development ^[12]. Central to the pursuit of high-quality rural industry development is innovation, serving as the cornerstone of progress.

At the grassroots level, it is observable that rural enterprises that have reached a certain scale are actively embracing innovation, often cultivating unique technological systems. In addition to technical support aimed at ensuring product quality, these well-developed enterprises consistently allocate resources towards research and development, attract talented individuals to join their ranks, and foster an environment conducive to innovation-driven growth, thereby attaining sustainable development.

While economic development may vary across regions, adhering to the principle of fact-based decision-making and harnessing the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of local communities can lead to the formulation of rural industrial revitalization models tailored to the local context. Such approaches can steadily expand opportunities for rural labor migration, ensuring stable employment prospects that, in turn, contribute to the enduring growth of farmers' incomes. In the broader context of rural revitalization, the revitalization of rural industries, as the foremost component among the "five revitalizations," holds the key to effectively implementing the rural revitalization strategy. It represents the fundamental prerequisite for addressing the challenges of internal and sustainable development in rural areas. Therefore, comprehensive advancement in rural revitalization, aligned with the leadership of the Party Central Committee under the guidance of the General Secretary, is essential to expedite the realization of a robust agricultural nation.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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