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# Chinaâ??s rural development accelerates with clusters, parks, and rising consumption

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Chinaâ??s rural economy maintained solid momentum in the first quarter of 2026, supported by gains in food processing, rural tourism, and deeper industrial integration, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Value-added output from large-scale agri-food processing enterprises rose 6.8% year-on-year between January and March, underscoring continued strength in the sectorâ??s industrial base.

Rural tourism and leisure activities also saw robust expansion, fueled by holiday-driven consumption and rising demand for experiential travel. The ministry noted a growing trend of young entrepreneurs launching guesthouses, cafÃ©s, and other lifestyle-oriented businesses in rural areas, signaling a shift toward service-led rural economies.

Structural upgrades continued across agricultural regions, with authorities supporting the development of 40 specialized industrial clusters, 50 modern agricultural industrial parks, and 200 agriculture-focused towns so far this year. Officials said these initiatives are designed to strengthen supply chains and promote regional specialization.

Looking ahead, policymakers pledged further support for rural industries, including the cultivation of local brands, expansion of leading agribusiness firms, and extension of agricultural value chains. Additional measures will target rural entrepreneurship through improved access to funding and land resources.

On the income side, rural residents recorded a 5.4 per cent real increase in per capita disposable income in the first quarter, outpacing urban income growth by 2.2 percentage points, highlighting a narrowing urban-rural income gap.

Fixed-asset investment in the primary sector surged 15.9 per cent year-on-year, driven by spending on high-standard farmland and infrastructure upgrades. Meanwhile, rural retail sales of consumer goods rose 3.1 per cent, reflecting gradual improvements in consumption capacity and retail infrastructure in the countryside.

Overall, the data points to a broad-based recovery in rural China, with policy support and structural reforms increasingly shaping a more diversified and consumption-driven rural economy.