

The evaluation of people's living level of China

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The quality of people's lives in China, especially in rural, has improved further and more rapidly over the past ten years thanks to the late veteran leader Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policies.

Amid enhanced production and increased social wealth, rural and urban residents' actual income, consumption level and overall quality of life have improved remarkably, particularly in housing condition. In addition, their cultural life has been enriched, physical education and public health undertakings have further developed and people's level of health has continued to rise. It is of great significance for people to enjoy a comfortable life in a nation like China that accounts for one-fifth of the world's population. Among production sectors, the supply of consumer goods has exceeded demand since 1994. As the scale of economy develops, the cost of commodity production has gradually decline. Increasingly fierce competition has helped fuel the market, with a variety of tantalizing goods in department stores. Coupons once used for the formerly limited supply of goods were eliminated in the eight years ago. The markets now have just about everything people would expected to find.

At the same time, increases in actual income have been important in raising people's living standards. People now have more surplus money for durable consumer goods.

Savings deposits have also seen rapid increases. The accumulation of wealth has helped lay a foundation for people to improve their living standard materially and culturally. In the past, many Chinese had to save money for several months or years to buy a color TV or other household electrical appliance. Now, the price of such goods is equivalent to one or two month's salary for a cadre or other worker. People have surplus money to build or purchase houses.

In rural areas, poverty-relief programs have been accelerated over the past eight years. Now, the proportion of the rural poverty-stricken population has been reduced to less than one-20th of China's total population.

Table 1 Per capita living expenditure of rural households (yuan)

Year	1985	1998
Food	183	849
Clothing	30	98
Residence	58	240
Household facilities	17	82
Medicines and medical services	7	68
Transportation and communication	6	61
Cultural and education	13	160
others	4	33

Table 2 Per capita consumption of major consumer goods in rural household

Year	1985	1998
Grain(unprocessed) (kg)	257.45	249.28
Fresh vegetables (kg)	131.13	108.96
Edible oil (kg)	4.04	6.13

Pork , beef and mutton (kg)	10.97	13.20
Poultry (kg)	1.03	2.33
Eggs (kg)	2.05	4.11
Fish and shrimp (kg)	1.64	3.31
Sugar (kg)	1.46	1.10
Liquor (kg)	4.37	6.98
Cotton cloth (m)	2.54	0.32
Chemical fiber cloth (m)	2.50	1.57

Table 3 Number of durable consumer goods owned per 100 rural household at the year-end (unit)

Year	1985	1998
Bicycle	80.46	137.15
Sewing machine	43.21	65.82
Clock	37.32	79.03
Wristwatch	126.32	154.55
Electric fan	9.66	111.59
Washing machine	1.9	22.81
Refrigerator	0.06	9.25
Motorcycle	0.1	13.52
Sofa	13.07	82.53
Wardrobe	53.37	85.41
Desk	38.21	82.71
Radio set	54.19	28.19
Black and white TV set	10.94	63.57
Color TV set	0.8	32.59
Radio cassette player	4.33	32.26
Camera	0.01	2.22