

Food Consumption in Rural China: Dynamics and Implications ¹

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Abstract

The increase in consumer income in developing countries induces changes in the composition of food consumption. Such changes have important implications for policy makers and for food marketers. For a large developing country such as China, changes in food consumption have even much greater implications, not only for China itself but also for the rest of the world, due to the sheer size of its population. As a result of its rapid economic growth and the resulting increase in consumer income, expansion and diversification of food consumption in China have been most notable in the past two decades. It is believed that there is considerable latitude for food consumption growth and China will become one of the fastest-growing markets for food products in the coming years. Using household-level survey data of representative provinces, this study examines the changes in the proportion of food consumption expenditure out of total household expenditure and identifies patterns of change in food consumption in rural China by region and by income group. Major factors that affect consumption behaviour in rural China are investigated. Implications of the changes in China's rural food consumption are discussed.

¹ Paper to be presented to the International Conference on "China in the New Era: Strategies for Sustainable Economic Growth and Business Responses to Regional Demands and Global Opportunities", to be held in RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, 2-3 October 2003.