



# The Impact of Tea Price Fluctuation on the Income Gap Between Urban and Rural Residents in China

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**Abstract.** Based on China's practice, this paper analyzes the impact of tea price fluctuations on the urban-rural income gap, proves relevant research hypotheses, and analyzes its impact mechanism. The study found that technological progress can reduce the cost of tea prices, thereby increasing farmers' income. Based on the conclusions of this paper, it further proposes measures such as guiding production, improving production technology, enhancing brand image, and extending industrial chains to increase farmers' income and narrow the urban-rural income gap.

**Keywords:** tea price, income gap between urban and rural residents, technological progress, price causes.

## 1 Introduction

Since the reform and opening up, China's economy has made remarkable achievements, and the income level of residents has been significantly improved, but the problem of urban-rural income gap is also gradually highlighted. Although China has now got rid of absolute poverty, relative poverty still exists between urban and rural areas. According to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2022, the per capita disposable income of urban residents is 49283 yuan, and the per capita disposable income of rural residents is 20133 yuan. The gap between the two is huge. Therefore, solving the income gap between urban and rural areas is the most important part of the current Chinese economy.

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A feasible way to narrow the income gap between urban and rural areas is to find effective ways to improve the income of rural residents. Many studies believe that increasing the price of agricultural products is the key to helping rural residents to increase their income. The income sources of rural residents in China are mainly food crops and cash crops. Most of the research on the price of agricultural products mainly focuses on grain crops, most of which are the basic food that determines people 's livelihood, and their prices are not easy to change greatly. Therefore, the research on the price of grain crops has no strong policy implications on how to narrow the urban-rural income gap. Comparatively speaking, it is also of great significance to study the impact of price fluctuations of cash crops on people 's livelihood, but there is little literature on the impact of price fluctuations of cash crops on urban-rural income gap.

The existing literature has also found that economic crops such as tea and coffee can affect the income of rural residents. Based on China 's practice, this paper analyzes the impact of tea price fluctuations on the urban-rural income gap : first, it analyzes the correlation between the national tea price changes and the urban-rural income gap by means of the characteristics of the national tea price changes and the urban-rural income gap ;secondly, through theoretical analysis, this paper puts forward the analysis perspective and research hypothesis of the relationship between tea price fluctuation and urban-rural income gap. The third is to prove the relevant research hypothesis in combination with real cases ;finally, influence mechanism is analyzed.

## **2 Literature Review**

The academic research on how to effectively reduce the urban-rural income gap includes many aspects, and analyzes its influencing factors and solutions from different dimensions.

First of all, education is a key factor to improve future income, so many scholars study the impact of education on income. Cai Wenbo ( 2019 ) mentioned strengthening investment in rural education, optimizing the urban and rural allocation of higher education resources, and promoting the gradual narrowing of the urban-rural income gap. Wang Wenjing ( 2019 ) ' s research shows that the enrollment expansion policy of colleges and universities has indeed increased the opportunities for Chinese residents to receive higher education, promoted a significant increase in the rate of

return on education between urban and rural areas, and helped to narrow the gap in the rate of return on education for urban residents. Moreover, Zhou Zhengling ( 2022 ) uses CPFS data to calculate the occurrence of education mismatch in urban and rural areas in China. Excessive education will lead to wage punishment, while insufficient education will bring wage premium effect. The income effect of education mismatch has urban-rural differences. Yao Fengmin and Li Zhifeng ( 2020 ), based on the panel data of per-student education financial investment and urban-rural income gap in 31 provinces and municipalities ( autonomous regions ) from 2007 to 2017, show that :China 's current ordinary higher education and ordinary junior high school education education funding is proportional to the urban-rural income gap ;The investment in education funds for ordinary primary school education, ordinary high school education and secondary vocational education is inversely proportional to the urban-rural income gap. Chen Feng ( 2020 ) studied the relationship between urban-rural education and cultural consumption gap, urban-rural education consumption gap, urban-rural higher education percentage gap and urban-rural income gap. The results show that these three variables have a positive and significant relationship with urban-rural income gap. At a significant level of 5 % -10 %, the gap between urban and rural education and cultural consumption and the percentage gap between urban and rural higher education can affect the urban-rural income gap.

Second, the gravity of the city attracts more rural residents to work in the city, which is also the focus of urban-rural income gap research. For example, Chen Hailong ( 2020 ) pointed out that the impact of inter-provincial population urbanization migration on the regional income gap between urban and rural areas is affected by the difference in urbanization level. With the increase of urbanization level, Cross-provincial urbanization migration weakens to the regional convergence effect of urban-rural income gap. Chen Yang ( 2018 ) mentioned that population migration will stimulate the overall economic development of the country, increase per capita GDP, weaken the household registration system and the urban-rural dual economic structure, and gradually improve the quality of life of rural residents, thus narrowing the income gap between urban and rural residents. Song Jian and Wang Jing ( 2018 ) analyzed the impact of population migration and household registration urbanization on the urban-rural income gap. The results show that there are significant absolute convergence and conditional convergence in the urban-rural income gap across the country and in cities of different sizes. The absolute convergence rate of large cities is higher than that of small and medium-sized cities and megacities, while

the conditional convergence rate of small and medium-sized cities is higher than that of megacities and megacities.

Third, urbanization is also a driving force to gradually reduce the urban-rural income gap. Ding Qingshen and Sun Jiaying ( 2019 ) mentioned that urbanization is negatively correlated with urban-rural income gap. The higher the urbanization, the lower the income gap between urban and rural areas, and the overall trend of urbanization is increasing year by year. He Fucai and Li Huai ( 2016 ) showed that the regional differences in living costs between urban and rural residents has a large impact on the actual income gap between urban and rural residents. By analyzing the impact of aging and urbanization on the income gap between urban and rural residents, Fu Yujia ( 2019 ) found that with the deepening of aging, the income gap between urban and rural residents also showed an increasing trend. At the same time, the implementation of the new urbanization policy has a certain impact on narrowing the income gap between urban and rural areas, but it has a lag. Based on the dual perspectives of economic growth and urbanization, Liu Guanchun ( 2017 ) shows that there are differences in the availability of financial services between urban and rural residents, resulting in a direct impact of the financial structure on the urban-rural income gap. Financial structure affects economic growth and urbanization through credit allocation function, and then has an indirect impact on urban-rural income gap.

In addition, the most relevant literature to this study is the perspective of agricultural product prices, exploring the impact of agricultural product prices on rural residents ' income. For example, Liu Xiaoli and Pan Fanghui ( 2019 ) applied the PVAR model to quantitatively analyze the dynamic equilibrium relationship among agricultural product prices, rural labor transfer and farmers ' income in the whole country, eastern, central and western regions. The impact of agricultural product prices on farmers ' income shows a decreasing trend with the increase of average agricultural product prices in the eastern, western and central regions, indicating that the income effect of agricultural product prices conforms to the law of marginal decline. The analysis of Liao Shanshan ( 2016 ) shows that there is a negative correlation between the price fluctuation of agricultural products and the growth of farmers ' income. At the same time, the lag term of farmers ' income growth, the level of rural financial development, the status of rural industrial structure, the level of rural human capital, the level of fiscal expenditure for supporting agriculture, and the level of urbanization are significantly positively correlated with farmers ' income growth, while rural fixed asset investment is significantly negatively correlated with farmers ' income growth.

income growth. Chen Wangsheng ( 2018 ) shows that the price of agricultural products is directly proportional to the income of farmers. The higher the price of agricultural products, the higher the income of farmers ; and vice versa. Analyzing the price of agricultural products and increasing farmers ' income should be the main task of relevant departments. The rise and fall of agricultural product prices may bring about fluctuations in farmers ' income.

To sum up, the price of agricultural products is the key factor affecting the income gap between urban and rural residents, but the current research focuses on the price of food crops. This paper takes tea as the representative to study the impact of tea price fluctuation on the income gap between urban and rural residents, in order to make up for the shortcomings of current research.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 Status Quo Analysis

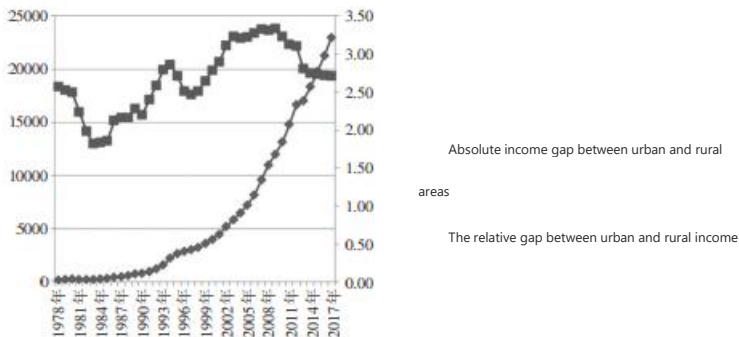


Fig. 1. Income gap between urban and rural residents in China

Ding Qinglan 's ( 2019 ) article mentioned that the income gap between urban and rural areas increased by 22,754 yuan from 1978 to 2017. In terms of relative gap, it can be roughly divided into five stages : the gap narrowing stage ( 1979-1985 ), the fluctuation rising stage ( 1986-1994 ), the gap narrowing stage again ( 1995-1997 ), the gap widening stage ( 1997-2009 ), and the urban-rural gap slightly declining stage ( 2010-2017 ). On the whole, it is the key period to narrow the income gap between urban and rural areas. There is a negative correlation between tea price and

urban-rural income gap, that is, with the increase of tea price, the income gap between urban and rural residents is shrinking.

### 3.2 Theoretical Analysis

First, we analyze the general mechanism that affects tea prices. Tea is an economic crop, and its price is mainly affected by two aspects. On the one hand, in the post-financial crisis period, as the basis of hundred prices, the price rise has led to a more obvious trend of inflation and CPI fluctuation to a certain extent. On the other hand, the tea market has particularity and monopoly. Farmers can sell different kinds of tea. At this time, farmers are sellers. When providing products, farmers do not have advantages as sellers due to seasonal and geographical constraints, so as to obtain lower returns. On the other hand, as a kind of consumer goods, farmers have a certain pricing power, which is different from other agricultural products, and different prices can be set according to the finished products of tea.

The fluctuation of tea price mainly has two effects : first, it changes the cost of living of urban residents, and second, it affects farmers ' income. As an important consumption material and an important input in the production of non-agricultural products, the price rise of tea not only increases the living cost of residents, especially urban low-income groups, but also promotes the overall price rise through the effects of cost transfer and wage rise. More importantly, because the price of tea directly affects the income of farmers, it is related to the improvement of rural residents ' income and the narrowing of the income gap between urban and rural areas. Therefore, increasing the price of agricultural products per unit product will be of great significance to narrow the income gap between urban and rural areas.

However, the reasons for the fluctuation of tea prices are also different. Therefore, in the process of analyzing the impact of tea prices on the income gap between urban and rural residents, we must also consider the heterogeneity of its existence : first, insufficient production capacity. If the price of tea rises as a luxury product, it is due to the lack of production capacity. It is not of great significance to increase farmers ' income ; second, demand-driven, if tea is a broader general consumer goods, its price rise is driven by market demand, in line with the general law of market supply and demand, rising can promote the increase of farmers ' income ; third, rising costs, farmers put machinery and equipment, fertilizers and pesticides, as a means of production, prices rise, most of the benefits are not obtained by farmers, urban

industrial producers to obtain, the rise does not promote urban and rural income narrowing. Therefore, we should make a concrete analysis of the impact of different causes of tea price rise on urban-rural income gap.

### **3.3 Study Hypothesis**

Based on the above characteristic facts and theoretical analysis, this paper proposes the following research hypotheses :

#### **3.3.1.Hypothesis 1**

. Tea price has a non-linear impact on the urban-rural income gap : within a certain range of increase, the increase in tea price is conducive to narrowing the urban-rural income gap ; when the increase is too fast, it will widen the income gap between urban and rural areas.

The rise in the price of agricultural products has become an important manifestation of today 's inflation. Like many developing countries, in order to promote the industrialization strategy, China 's agricultural prices have been kept down for a long time to subsidize industry. Therefore, the rise in tea prices is likely to release long-term accumulated price distortions, increase farmers ' income levels, and thus reverse urban-rural income imbalances and inequalities.

Of course, if the price of tea products rises too fast and exceeds the affordability of industrial enterprises, it may lead to an increase in the cost of industrial products, including agricultural input data, thereby compressing the benefit space of farmers. Therefore, the price of tea should rise within a certain range, without affecting the price of the overall cost. In the case of constant cost, increasing the price of tea will increase the income of farmers, thus reducing the income gap between urban and rural areas.

#### **3.3.2.Hypothesis 2**

. The interest bias caused by the rising prices of agricultural products driven by different causes is different, and the impact on the urban-rural income gap is also different.

First, technology shock. From the reality of China, the imbalance between supply and demand caused by the absolute attenuation of agricultural technology may no longer appear, and the increase in tea prices is more likely to be caused by relative

technological lag, that is, compared with industrial production technology, agricultural technology progress lags behind. Especially when the rapid progress of industrial technology drives the expansion of industrial industry and stimulates the demand for agricultural products, agriculture is difficult to effectively connect due to the relative lag of technology, which often forms the pressure of price rise. At this time, the rise in the price of agricultural products is more the result of the relative shortage of agricultural output, reflecting the constraints of the increase in farmers' output, which is not conducive to narrowing the urban-rural income gap.

Second, demand pull. The supply and demand gap caused by demand will form the pressure of tea product price rise. At this time, the price rise of tea products is the result of the relative shortage of supply and the balance of supply and demand in the product market. If the demand for tea products is normal consumption demand, farmers can benefit from it, which can reduce the urban-rural income imbalance. When the demand for tea increases, its consumption level will increase, and farmers' income will increase, thus reducing the urban-rural income gap.

Third, rising costs. From the perspective of factor supply, farmers are the labor factor of agricultural production, and the means of agricultural production are material input. However, in agricultural production, urban enterprises provide most of the means of production. If the cost of agricultural material input drives the price of agricultural products to rise, the benefits brought by the rise in the price of agricultural products may be obtained by urban residents, which is not conducive to the narrowing of the urban-rural income gap.

## 4 Case Analysis

In order to prove the research and construction of this paper, we selected three case areas for analysis, focusing on the analysis of the relationship between tea price and income, the reasons for the change of tea price and the influence of heterogeneity.

Technological progress will lead to rising prices and thus increase farmers' income. In Baoshan Village, Jingnan Town, the counterpart poverty alleviation unit helped the village to build a tea processing plant. The tea industry chain has been initially formed and has become an administrative village with a complete industrial chain of tea planting, processing, color selection, packaging and sales. The registered 'Green Baofeng' brand has also won the title of 'Jingnan Ten Best Tea', and the added value of the whole village's tea has increased by 1.8 million yuan. The



introduction of the Furongbai Orchard Project has enabled the resources of Guanting Village in Jingnan Town to become assets, farmers to become shareholders, and poor households to become employees, driving 5 poor villages and 86 poor households in the surrounding areas out of poverty. More than three million yuan of tea processing machines invested by the enterprise are also open to the surrounding villagers. Villager Zhong Chunxiang made tea green into tea, and increased income by more than 20,000 yuan in one year. This case shows that technological progress can benefit farmers and narrow the income gap between urban and rural areas.

Shuangyan Village in Zhushan County, Hubei Province has become the largest early spring tea planting base in Majiadu Town, which is inseparable from He Yong, the chairman of Shuangyan Tea Planting Cooperative in Zhushan County and the tenth CPPCC member of Zhushan County.

He Yong led the villagers to the road of professional tea planting. He created a 'cooperative + base + farmers' business model, attracting more than 30 poor households to join the cooperative. The villagers rely on 500 acres of tea gardens to embark on a new road of unified planting, unified management and unified sales of 'Baotuan' tea. In order to expand the tea industry, serve the local tea farmers and improve the efficiency of tea production, He Yong invested more than 400,000 yuan to establish a standard tea processing workshop, and purchased a tea cylinder water-removing machine for 290,000 yuan. The speed of the tea cylinder water-removing machine to De-enzyming fresh leaves is 10 times faster than that of the ordinary machine, and the tea brewed by the processed tea is bright.

On the poverty alleviation ledger, it is recorded that in a short period of 17 days from April 4 to 21, 2017, poor households in Yang Dagen only sold fresh leaves with an income of 4840 yuan, and more than 30 other poor households had an average income of about 3500 yuan. I have followed He Yong for 3 years, and the annual income of tea picking and tea making is more than 10,000 yuan. In the off-season, I can also take into account other agricultural work. A group of poor households in Shuangyan village said happily. At present, in the tea garden, the daily average of more than 150 people picking tea; in the tea processing workshop, more than 60 people process and sell fresh leaves every day. Before and after the annual Qingming, cooperatives process and purchase more than 10,000 kilograms of fresh leaves, directly driving the surrounding farmers to increase their income by nearly one million yuan. Therefore, improving production technology can not only increase the quality and quantity of tea, but also increase farmers' income.

In addition, Huang Zhong was a soldier in Baixi Village, Longtang Township, Anhua County, Hunan Province. After his retirement, he worked hard and made a career through hard work. After success, he returned home to lead his fellow villagers to get rich together. The cooperative adopts the model of 'cooperative + base + farmer' to provide production, supply and marketing integration services for members. It adopts unified supply of seedling fertilizer, unified technical guidance, and guaranteed price recovery to encourage members to cultivate tea trees on barren slopes. The development of cooperatives has led local villagers to get rid of poverty and become rich. At present, there are 106 cooperative development members, with a base area of more than 5,000 acres and an average annual income of more than 10,000 yuan. Huangzhong has transferred 820 mu of land, paid 160,000 yuan of land transfer fees every year, provided more than 100 jobs, and driven 206 households of 750 poor villagers out of poverty, achieving an annual income increase of more than 2,000 yuan. Therefore, the use of appropriate skills and techniques can increase the income of rural residents.

Through the above three cases, we can find that there is a close relationship between farmers' income and tea price. In particular, by investing more advanced production equipment and extending the tea production chain in the tea production process, the price of tea products can be driven up and the income level can be improved more effectively.

## 5 Mechanism Analysis

On the basis of the case study, the paper further explores how the increase in tea prices brought about by technological advancement and its resulting income-boosting effect on farmers occurs.

Cost is the basis of price formation, the formation of commodity prices is in the cost of a certain premise, by the market supply and demand to decide. Tea commodity price formation is no exception. The production cost of tea includes: the production cost of fresh tea leaves + the processing cost of tea, but at the same time will also be affected by different types, different regions, different business models, the cost of production is different.

The basis of tea price formation is production cost. Manufacturers and farmers price according to production cost, and the purpose of tea producers' sales is to make profits. Take tea farmers' own production as an example. With the joint production

contract responsibility system as the basic agricultural system, the tea farmers in the mountainous areas contracted the barren mountains, and the tea garden also implemented the family management of small farmers, and began the tea production chain of small farmers with family as the unit of tea garden production, fresh leaf processing and self-export. This model of small farmers is priced at cost : tea garden planting management cost + fresh leaf picking cost + tea manual processing cost. Thousands of households of tea farmers, especially in the main producing areas of tea, due to the cost of management technology, artificial picking skills, time spent and labor wages are different, and the degree of processing and packaging is different, so that the price of tea is significantly different, and the price of tea is various. Farmers based on production cooperatives, if technological progress or lower management, will make the price unchanged, reduce costs, thereby increasing farmers' income.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the real data, this paper finds that the price and income gap have a 'shift' relationship. Through theoretical and case analysis, it is concluded that technological progress can reduce the cost of tea price and increase farmers' income. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following suggestions can be made to increase farmers' income and narrow the urban-rural income gap.

First, guide production. The supply elasticity of tea is larger than its demand elasticity, and there is a certain degree of imbalance between supply and demand. At the same time, due to the production cycle of tea, it is difficult for tea farmers to adjust the production structure in a timely and flexible manner to adapt to changes in consumer demand, and tea farmers have unclear understanding of the market and blindly follow the trend of planting. The government should carry out appropriate guidance and education to help tea farmers grow rationally, correct the blindness and lag of market regulation, and avoid the sharp increase and decrease of tea in the market, so as to achieve stable tea prices.

Second, improve production technology and reduce management costs. At present, leading enterprises and tea cooperatives are the carriers, Speed up the popularization and application of tea garden robots, Improve the level of mechanized production of tea garden, Efforts to reduce the operating costs of tea garden, Significantly improve the efficiency of tea gardens. The existing low-efficiency tea gardens were transformed to continuously improve the level of tea tree improvement and new

product cultivation. Through scientific seedling raising technology, the quality of tea produced is more stable and the structure of tea varieties can be optimized.

Third, enhance the brand image. Build a tea brand evaluation system guided by the government and industry organizations, with leading enterprises as the main body and certification institutions as the support. Strict brand formulation, access, use, management, establish and improve the brand protection system, as a link to integrate the tea industry resources, promote the coordinated development of regional public brand and enterprise brand, enhance the overall efficiency of the industry. It is necessary to set up a special agency to promote the gold brand that has passed the quality certification by using a variety of platforms and methods to build a strong national tea brand image. It is necessary to effectively integrate the resources of Anxi tea industry, gather and form a more powerful tea economic complex, and enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of tea products.

Fourth, extend the industrial chain. First, deep processing of tea. Accelerate product research and development, and promote the continuous emergence of deep-processed products represented by tea food, tea drinks, and tea health products; it enriches the products of tea plant component extract, tea powder and tea concentrate, medical and health care products and other field products, and provides a broader world for the deep processing of tea industry. Second, broaden the scope of the industry. Produce tea sets, tea clothes, tea furniture as the representative of the industry around the expansion of products, tea clothes as an important direction of tea consumption to expand the field of clothing; on the one hand, the tea set industry can promote consumption upgrading by continuously collocating with the quality of tea products. On the other hand, it can derive a faster and more standardized way of tasting tea. Tea packaging industry should strengthen the research and development of new products to help tea product innovation. Third, develop a new production mode of 'planting tea-making tea-teahouse-tea manor'. Many tea growers sell their tea after preliminary processing after harvest, without fully tapping the potential value of tea. Tea farmers can be encouraged to build a modern tea manor with the characteristics of traditional tea culture and local folklore, which integrates planting, processing and sales, and organically combines tourism with tea industry. If the scale of a single family of tea farmers is small, the surrounding tea farmers can be encouraged to join, gradually radiating the whole village tea farmers, so that the village tea farmers can work together to jointly operate the tea manor model dominated by tea management and supplemented by tourism.

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