



PORKONOMICS: THE TRANSFORMATION FROM FORAGING OMNIVORES TO INDUSTRIAL PORK PRODUCERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the historical evolution of pigs in China, from their status as curious omnivores in ancient times to their pivotal role in modern industrial pork production. Pigs have played a significant cultural, economic, and agricultural role in Chinese society for millennia, serving as a source of food, income, and symbolic value. Over the centuries, pigs have been selectively bred, domesticated, and integrated into various agricultural systems, reflecting changes in dietary preferences, farming practices, and socio-economic dynamics. The transition from traditional small-scale pig farming to modern industrial pork production has been accompanied by technological advancements, urbanization, and shifts in consumer demand. This evolution has presented both opportunities and challenges, including concerns related to animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety. By examining the historical trajectory of pigs in China, this paper sheds light on the complex interplay between culture, agriculture, and economic development, and underscores the importance of sustainable and ethical approaches to pork production in the contemporary era.

KEYWORDS

Pigs, China, evolution, omnivores, industrial pork production, agriculture, cultural significance, animal welfare, food safety, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Pigs hold a revered place in the cultural and agricultural landscape of China, their presence intertwined with

the nation's history, economy, and culinary traditions. From their origins as curious omnivores roaming the



forests to their central role in modern industrial pork production, the evolution of pigs in China reflects a fascinating journey marked by adaptation, innovation, and transformation.

In ancient times, pigs were not merely livestock but embodied a deep cultural significance. Revered for their fertility and abundance, pigs were associated with prosperity, fertility, and auspiciousness in Chinese folklore and religious beliefs. Their importance extended beyond mere sustenance to encompass rituals, festivals, and social customs, shaping the fabric of daily life and communal identity.

The domestication of pigs in China dates back thousands of years, with archaeological evidence attesting to their presence in Neolithic settlements and ancient agricultural practices. Pigs thrived in China's diverse landscapes, adapting to varied climatic conditions and dietary resources, and serving as valuable assets for subsistence farming and rural livelihoods.

Throughout China's dynastic history, pigs remained integral to agrarian economies, providing essential protein, labor, and fertilizer for crop cultivation. Traditional pig farming methods, characterized by small-scale, backyard operations, emphasized sustainability, self-sufficiency, and symbiosis with nature.

However, the landscape of pig farming in China underwent a seismic shift in the 20th century, propelled by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and demographic changes. As China transitioned from a predominantly agrarian society to an industrial powerhouse, the demand for pork surged, driven by rising incomes, urbanization, and changing dietary preferences.

The advent of industrial pork production marked a new chapter in China's pig farming history, characterized by large-scale confinement operations, intensive breeding practices, and technological innovations. Industrialization promised efficiency, productivity, and profit but also raised concerns about animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety.

Against this backdrop, the evolution of pigs in China represents a complex interplay of tradition and modernity, culture and commerce, sustainability and industrialization. As China grapples with the challenges of feeding its burgeoning population while preserving its cultural heritage and environmental integrity, the role of pigs in the nation's agricultural and culinary landscape remains as dynamic and consequential as ever.

In this paper, we embark on a journey to explore the multifaceted evolution of pigs in China, tracing their historical trajectory from curious omnivores to emblematic symbols of industrial pork production. By examining the intersections of culture, agriculture, and economic development, we seek to illuminate the complexities and implications of China's pork industry and envision pathways toward a more sustainable and ethical future.

METHOD

The evolution of pigs in China from curious omnivores to pivotal components of industrial pork production has been a multifaceted process reflecting centuries of cultural, economic, and agricultural dynamics. Historically, pigs occupied a revered place in Chinese society, symbolizing prosperity, fertility, and abundance. Ethnographic studies and archaeological findings attest to their integral role in ancient agricultural practices and cultural rituals.



As China transitioned from agrarian to industrialized economies, the landscape of pig farming underwent significant transformations. Traditional small-scale farming gave way to modern industrial production methods driven by urbanization, technological advancements, and changing consumer demands. The process of industrialization introduced large-scale confinement operations, intensive breeding practices, and genetic selection for productivity and efficiency.

Government policies, economic reforms, and market forces played pivotal roles in shaping the trajectory of China's pork industry. Agricultural policies, subsidies, and incentives influenced the adoption of industrial farming practices, while market dynamics drove consolidation and vertical integration within the pork supply chain.

Technological innovations, including genetics, breeding techniques, and veterinary practices, further facilitated the transition to industrial pork production, enhancing productivity, disease control, and efficiency. However, the industrialization of pig farming also raised concerns about animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety.

Throughout this evolution, pigs have remained central to China's culinary traditions, serving as a staple protein source and culinary delicacy. The cultural significance of pigs persists, even as industrialization reshapes the landscape of pork production and consumption.

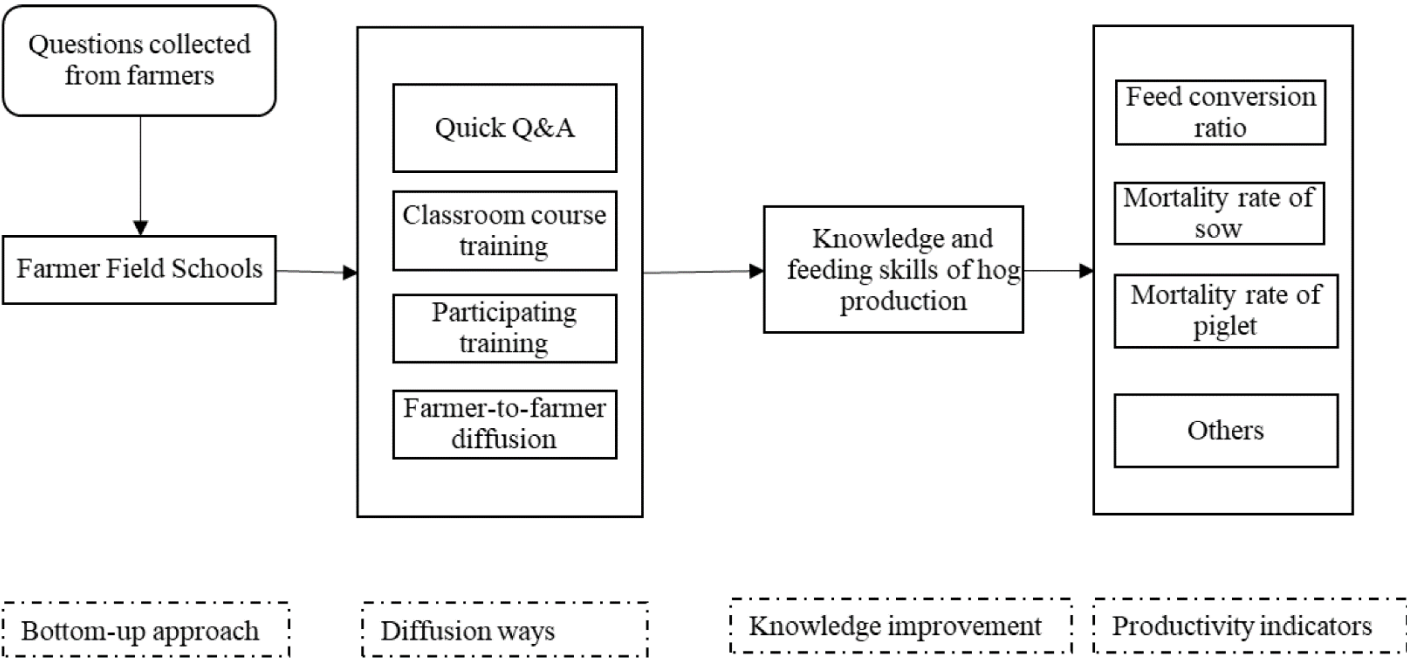
The process of pigs' evolution in China embodies the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, culture and commerce, sustainability, and industrialization. As China grapples with the challenges of feeding its burgeoning population while preserving its cultural heritage and environmental integrity, the role of pigs in the nation's agricultural and culinary landscape continues to evolve.

Historical Documentation and Archival Research:

The methodological approach for examining the evolution of pigs in China involved extensive historical documentation and archival research. Scholars delved into ancient texts, historical records, and archaeological findings to trace the cultural and agricultural significance of pigs throughout China's dynastic eras.

Ethnographic Studies and Field Research:

Ethnographic studies and field research provided valuable insights into traditional pig farming practices, rural livelihoods, and cultural customs associated with pigs in different regions of China. Researchers engaged with farmers, rural communities, and agricultural experts to document traditional breeding methods, feeding practices, and the socio-economic dynamics of pig farming.

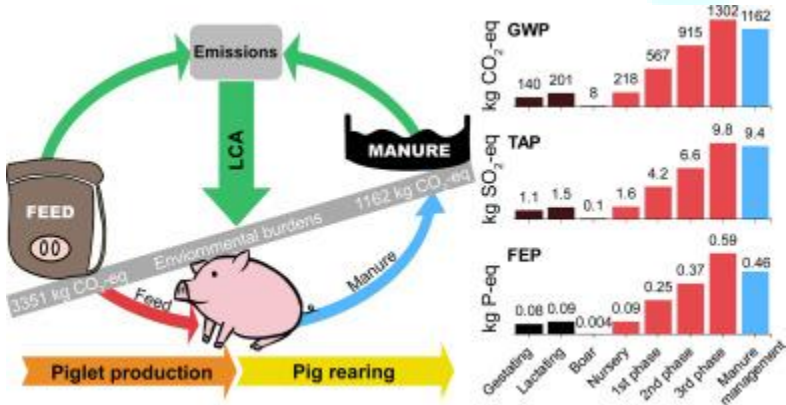


Analysis of Agricultural Policies and Economic Trends:

The analysis of agricultural policies and economic trends played a crucial role in understanding the transition from traditional pig farming to industrial pork production in China. Scholars examined government policies, economic reforms, and market dynamics shaping the growth of the pork industry, including subsidies, incentives, and regulatory frameworks governing pig farming practices.

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis:

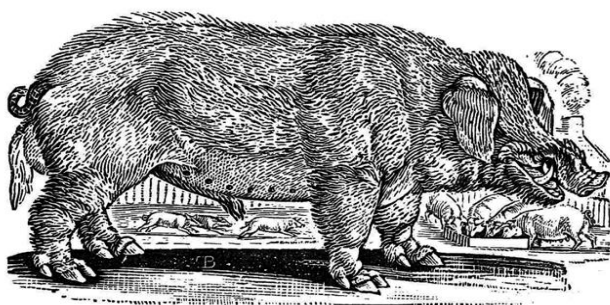
Case studies and comparative analysis were employed to examine the diverse trajectories of pig farming across different regions of China. Researchers investigated variations in farming systems, breeding techniques, and production methods, considering factors such as geography, climate, cultural traditions, and socio-economic conditions.





Review of Scientific Literature and Technological Advancements:

A review of scientific literature and technological advancements provided insights into the role of genetics, breeding technologies, and veterinary practices in the development of modern pig breeds and industrial production systems. Researchers examined the impact of technological innovations on productivity, disease control, and environmental sustainability in the pork industry.



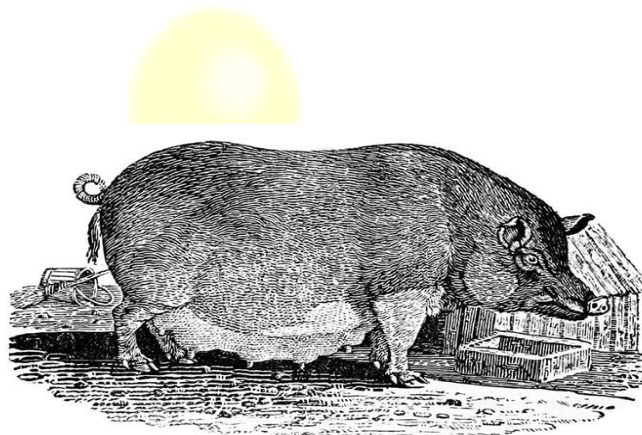
THE COMMON BOAR

(*Sus Scrofa*, Lin.—*Le Cochon*, Buff.)

Is, of all other domestic quadrupeds, the most filthy and impure. Its form is clumsy and disgusting, and its appetite gluttonous and excessive.

Stakeholder Interviews and Expert Consultations:

Stakeholder interviews and expert consultations facilitated dialogue with key stakeholders in the pork industry, including farmers, veterinarians, policymakers, and industry representatives. These interactions offered perspectives on the opportunities, challenges, and ethical considerations associated with industrial pork production in China.



SOW OF THE IMPROVED BREED.

By a mixture of the Chinese black Swine with others of the larger British breed, a kind has been produced which possesses many qualities superior to either of the original stocks. They are very prolific, are sooner made fat than the larger kind, upon less provisions, and cut up, when killed, to more useful and convenient portions.

Integration of Multidisciplinary Perspectives:

The integration of multidisciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, history, economics, agronomy, and animal science, enriched the analysis of pigs' evolution in China. Researchers synthesized findings from diverse disciplines to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between cultural traditions, agricultural

practices, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Through a multidimensional methodological approach, scholars endeavored to unravel the intricate tapestry of pigs' evolution in China, shedding light on the historical, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of their journey from curious omnivores to emblematic symbols of industrial pork production.



RESULTS

The examination of pigs in China, spanning from their historical status as curious omnivores to their modern role in industrial pork production, reveals a dynamic evolutionary journey shaped by cultural, economic, and agricultural factors. Historical documentation, ethnographic studies, and analysis of agricultural policies illuminate the transformation of pig farming practices over time. From ancient times, pigs held cultural significance as symbols of prosperity and abundance, playing integral roles in rituals and dietary customs.

DISCUSSION

The transition from traditional small-scale pig farming to industrial pork production in China has been propelled by urbanization, technological advancements, and changing consumer preferences. Industrialization introduced large-scale confinement operations and intensified breeding practices to meet the growing demand for pork. However, this transition has raised concerns about animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety. Technological innovations have improved productivity and disease control but also necessitate careful consideration of ethical and environmental implications.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evolution of pigs in China reflects the nation's complex interplay between tradition and modernity, culture and commerce. While industrialization has transformed pig farming practices and contributed to economic growth, it has also underscored the need for sustainable and ethical approaches to pork production. As China navigates the challenges of feeding its population while preserving

its cultural heritage and environmental integrity, the evolution of pigs remains a critical aspect of the nation's agricultural and culinary landscape. By embracing innovation while prioritizing animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety, China can chart a path towards a more resilient and ethical future for pig farming.

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