Quantitative Evaluation of Rural Logistics Policy Texts and Pathways for Improving Implementation Effectiveness

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Abstract: Rural logistics acts as a bridge linking farmers who are spread across different locations with broader markets. However, simply introducing policies does not always lead to dependable services at the local level. To explore this issue, this study gathered 127 policy documents issued at both national and local levels between 2013 and 2025. Each document was classified according to its issuing organization, the types of policy tools it employed, and the goals it aimed to achieve. A composite index based on the entropy-weighting method was then developed, covering four major dimensions and twelve specific indicators across 30 provincial-level regions, so as to track how implementation performance changed over time. The findings indicate a clear division of responsibilities: central government bodies define broad strategies, multiple agencies often coordinate to release joint documents, and local governments tailor these measures to their own circumstances. The composition of the tools is less balanced. Supply-side instruments account for most coded measures, whereas instruments that create or stabilize demand are uncommon. The index rises over the study period, with the strongest improvement in basic infrastructure; digital adoption, cold-chain reach, and coordination improve more slowly and remain uneven across regions. These findings suggest that the next stage should not simply add further infrastructure programs. Policy design needs a larger demand-side component, lower-cost access to digital and low-altitude logistics, workable benefit-sharing across participating organizations, cold-chain facilities located closer to production areas, and a monitoring process that links observed results to subsequent policy adjustment.

Keywords: Rural Logistics; Policy Text Quantification; Implementation Effectiveness; Policy Tools; Urban-Rural Integration

1. Introduction

Rural logistics has moved closer to the center of rural-development policy since 2022 because it determines whether agricultural products can leave producing areas efficiently and whether consumer and production goods can reach villages at an acceptable cost. Recent measures have expanded village express services and online sales channels for agricultural products. The inclusion of low-altitude activities in development planning in 2024 also opened a possible, although still experimental, route for serving sparsely populated or mountainous areas. These changes make implementation a more pressing question than the number of policy documents alone: the practical issue is whether different instruments remove the bottlenecks faced by local logistics networks.

The current research primarily focuses on the measurement of rural logistics and regional economy, as well as the coordinated development between urban and rural areas. This has resulted in a rich empirical analysis framework. Deng Lijun's thorough analysis of the core influencing factors of rural economic development in China provides a fundamental analytical perspective for understanding the supporting role of rural logistics in rural economic growth [1] (Deng Lijun, 2023). Then, regarding the quantitative measurement of the coordinated development level of urban and rural logistics and the development level of rural logistics in regions, Jia Xianmin [2], Li Zhaolei [3], and others further clarified the differentiated characteristics and actual shortcomings of rural logistics development in different regions. Li Xiangrong [4] believes that the synergy level between agricultural product e-commerce logistics and rural economy is also an important influencing factor of rural logistics, so Yu Heng [5] aimed to explore its driving factors, reveal the coupling and coordination mechanism of

urban and rural logistics networks and rural e-commerce, and clearly clarify the internal logic of the integration and development of rural logistics and rural industries is an important process.

The innovation of rural logistics models under the empowerment of digital technology has become a research hotspot in recent years. The academic community has formed a series of practice-oriented achievements around the application of technology and model optimization. In recent years, scholars have fully explored the impact path of digital technology on the integrated development of the logistics industry and modern agriculture. The construction of a rural e-commerce logistics information platform based on big data (Wang Qinmei, 2024) [6] and the integration model and sustainable development path of rural smart logistics networks are important processes (Wang Ping, 2025) [7], fully highlighting the core enabling role of digital technology in the upgrading of the rural logistics system (Liu Sizhe, 2026) [8]. Zhang Shurong et al. [9] based on the survey data of rural areas in Hubei Province, deeply analyzed the driving mechanism of farmers' deep participation in the "Internet + Rural Logistics" model, providing practical references for the localized development of rural logistics.

More recent work extends the discussion to green operations, emerging productive capacity, and low-altitude delivery. He et al. compare pathways for green logistics [10], while Zhang relates green logistics to rural development [11]. Lin et al. analyze combinations of policies associated with emerging productive capacity [12]. Studies of low-altitude rural e-commerce logistics and the development of the modern logistics industry add a technological perspective [13,14]. Taken together, these studies broaden the range of available solutions, but they also raise a policy-design question: which instruments are capable of moving a technology from a pilot site into regular rural service?

Policy-text research offers tools for answering that question. Wang et al. combine text mining with a PMC-index framework to evaluate rural elderly-care policies along theme, instrument, and quality dimensions [15]. Analyses of facility-agriculture policies [16] and national cultural-strategy documents [17] likewise show how a document corpus can be used to reconstruct changes in emphasis and policy combinations. These approaches are useful for rural logistics, provided that counts of policy statements are kept analytically separate from evidence of implementation.

The rural-logistics literature therefore explains many links among infrastructure, technology, e-commerce, and regional development, but it says less about whether the mix of policy instruments corresponds to observed implementation. Existing assessments commonly examine a single technology or measure development outcomes without connecting them to the agencies, tools, and objectives contained in the policy corpus. This leaves two related issues unresolved: whether the instrument portfolio is internally balanced and whether improvement occurs evenly across the main dimensions of rural logistics.

We address these issues in two stages. First, 127 documents issued during 2013-2025 are coded by issuer, policy tool, and objective to describe the structure and evolution of policy supply. Second, an entropy-weighted index is calculated for 30 provincial-level regions using observable indicators of infrastructure, operating efficiency, digitalization, and coordination. Reading the two sets of results together allows us to distinguish a dense policy supply from a well-performing implementation system and to identify where the two do not align.

2. Quantitative Analysis of Rural Logistics Policy Texts

2.1 Policy Selection and Data Sources

This article uses keywords such as "rural logistics", "rural logistics", "agricultural product logistics", "delivery to villages", and "integration of urban-rural logistics" as search terms. Through official websites of the Chinese government, the policy document database of the State Council, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Transport, as well as academic databases like CNKI and Wanfang, it screens relevant policy texts that were issued from 2013 to 2025. The screening criteria are as follows: First, the policy content directly targets core points such as the construction of rural logistics systems, infrastructure improvement, innovative operational models, and policy support; second, the object of policy formulation is national ministries and commissions, provincial governments, and relevant functional departments, which have authority and execution

momentum; third, the forms adopted by the policies include laws and regulations, planning outlines, implementation plans, notifications, and opinions. Applying these rules produced 127 documents for 2013-2025: 58 national-level texts and 69 local texts. The inclusion rules were used to prevent documents that merely mentioned logistics from inflating the frequency counts.

2.2 Analytical Dimensions

(1) Issuing entity. Each document was coded as a single-agency or joint issuance. The first group includes documents released separately by commerce, transport, postal, and other responsible departments; the second includes documents signed by several ministries or by authorities at different administrative levels. This variable is used as an observable indication of how concentrated policy supply is and how often coordination is formalized at the document-issuance stage.

(2) Policy tool. Coded provisions were assigned to supply-side, environmental, or demand-side instruments. Supply-side instruments place resources directly into the system, for example infrastructure investment, funds, training, technology extension, and information services. Environmental instruments alter the conditions under which organizations operate through planning, standards, taxation, finance, and related rules. Demand-side instruments attempt to create a market or a stable service order through procurement, demonstrations, consumer subsidies, or market opening. Coding the operative provision, rather than the document title, reduced ambiguity where one document contained several kinds of intervention.

(3) Policy objective. Six objectives were distinguished: infrastructure, operating efficiency, digital transformation, cold-chain logistics, stakeholder coordination, and urban-rural integration. A provision could be assigned according to its immediate intended result. The yearly distribution of these codes was then compared to determine when policy attention shifted from network coverage toward service quality and organizational or technological upgrading.

2.3 Results of the Quantitative Analysis

Of the 58 national documents, 32 (55.2%) were jointly issued and 26 (44.8%) were issued by one ministry (Figure 1). Commerce, transport, and postal authorities participated in 28, 25, and 21 documents, respectively; counted by departmental participation, these three groups represent 77.6% of national policy supply (Figure 2). The local sample contains 41 provincial and 28 municipal documents. Anhui, Zhejiang, and Guangdong, all with comparatively active rural e-commerce, appear more frequently in the corpus. The figures support a national-local division of work, but they should not be read as proof of equally strong execution: document density is visibly higher in eastern regions than in central and western regions [3].

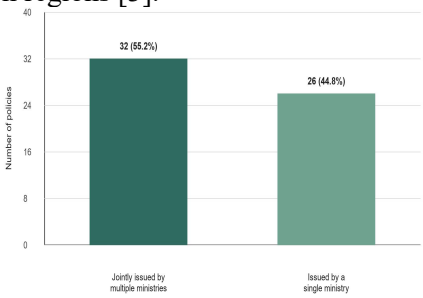

Figure 1. Distribution of National-Level Policy-Issuing Entities

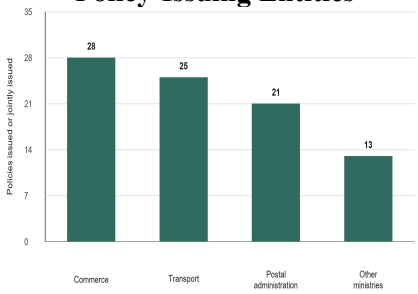

Figure 2. Policy-Supply Intensity of Major Administrative Departments

The coding produced 1,075 identifiable policy-tool occurrences across the 127 documents. Supply-side instruments account for 628 occurrences (58.3%), environmental instruments for 356 (33.2%), and demand-side instruments for 91 (8.5%) (Figure 3). Thus, provisions that supply facilities, funds, skills, or information occur almost seven times as often as provisions intended to create demand.

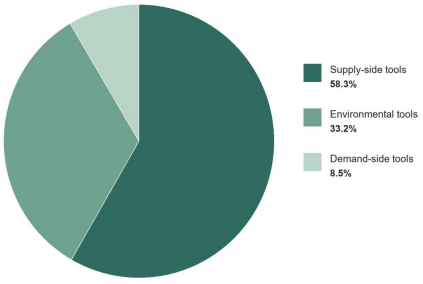

Figure 3. Overall Distribution of the Three Policy-Tool Categories

The imbalance is also visible within each category (Figure 4). Among supply-side instruments, infrastructure appears 215 times (34.2%), followed by funding at 156 (24.8%) and technology extension at 112 (17.8%). Training and information services, with 89 (14.2%) and 56 (8.9%) occurrences, receive less attention. Environmental instruments are led by planning guidance (128; 36.0%) and regulatory standards (95; 26.7%); tax incentives (72; 20.2%) and financial support (61; 17.1%) are less frequent. On the demand side, coding was heavily concentrated in demonstration projects (42 occurrences, 46.2%) and public procurement (28 occurrences, 30.8%). Consumer subsidies (13 occurrences, 14.3%) and market opening (8 occurrences, 8.8%) were used only rarely.

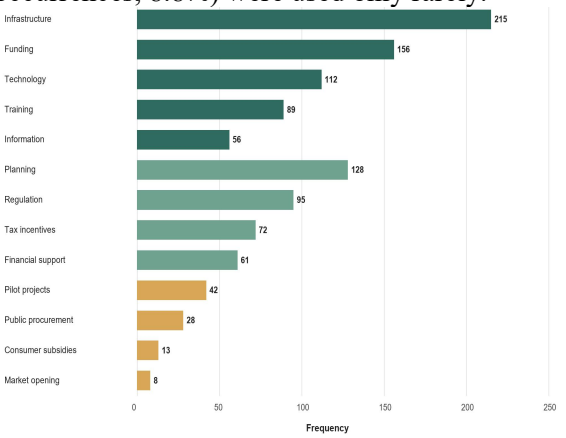

Figure 4. Internal Composition of the Three Policy-Tool Categories

This result indicates that there is a significant structural imbalance in China's rural logistics policy tools: supply-oriented policy tools hold a dominant position, environmental-oriented policy tools come second, while demand-oriented policy tools are severely lacking. The policy supply focuses mainly on infrastructure construction and capital investment, but the policy support for market demand cultivation and consumption guidance is insufficient, making it difficult to fully stimulate the internal driving force of market entities.

The objective codes change across the three periods. Infrastructure and urban-rural integration dominate in 2013-2015, accounting for 42.3% and 28.5% of objectives, respectively. In 2016-2020, operating efficiency (31.2%) and digital transformation (25.7%) move to the foreground as Internet-enabled logistics expands. Cold-chain logistics (29.8%) and stakeholder coordination (26.3%) become the two largest categories in 2021-2025; low-altitude delivery and digital agricultural commerce also begin to appear. Policy attention has consequently moved from physical access toward the quality and organization of services, although the movement is not matched by an even distribution of instruments or regional capacity.

3. Evaluation of Rural Logistics Policy Implementation Effectiveness

3.1 Construction of the Evaluation Index System

To compare policy implementation over time, we organized twelve observable indicators under four first-level dimensions: infrastructure, operating efficiency, digitalization, and coordination capacity (Table 1). The index uses panel observations for 30 provincial-level regions from 2013 to 2025. Indicator weights were estimated by the entropy method so that indicators with greater cross-sectional and temporal variation contribute more to the composite score. Cost, time, and loss indicators were treated as negative indicators before normalization; the remaining indicators were treated as positive. The resulting score is a comparative index rather than a direct estimate of a single policy's causal effect.

Table 1. Evaluation Index System for Rural Logistics Policy Implementation Effectiveness

First-Level Indicator	Weight	Second-Level Indicator	Weight	Definition
Infrastructure	0.32	Paved rural-road ratio (%)	0.12	Share of paved rural roads in total rural-road mileage
Infrastructure	0.32	Village logistics-outlet coverage (%)	0.1	Share of administrative villages with a logistics outlet
Infrastructure	0.32	Rural cold-storage capacity (10,000 m^3)	0.1	Total cold-storage capacity in rural areas
Operational efficiency	0.28	Agricultural-product logistics cost ratio (%)	0.1	Logistics cost as a share of agricultural-product sales
Operational efficiency	0.28	Average rural express-delivery time (days)	0.09	Time from collection to delivery in rural areas
Operational efficiency	0.28	Postharvest fruit and vegetable loss rate (%)	0.09	Loss between harvesting and sale

Digitalization	0.22	Rural Internet penetration (%)	0.08	Share of rural residents using the Internet
Digitalization	0.22	Digital logistics-platform adoption (%)	0.07	Share of logistics firms using digital platforms
Digitalization	0.22	Drone-delivery coverage (%)	0.07	Share of administrative villages covered by drone delivery
Coordination capacity	0.18	Integrated passenger-freight-post routes	0.06	Number of integrated rural transport and postal routes
Coordination capacity	0.18	County-level joint-distribution centers	0.06	Number of county-level common distribution centers
Coordination capacity	0.18	E-commerce logistics partners	0.06	Number of logistics firms cooperating with e-commerce platforms

3.2 Evaluation Results

Overall performance analysis. According to the evaluation results obtained through the entropy method, as shown in Table 2, from 2013 to 2025, the comprehensive score of the implementation effectiveness of rural logistics policies in China rose from 0.32 to 0.68, with an average annual growth rate of 8.7%. This indicates that the implementation of the policies has achieved remarkable results. The score for infrastructure level increased the most significantly, rising from 0.21 to 0.75, with an average annual growth rate of 12.3%. This suggests that policies such as "delivering parcels to villages" and "construction of rural roads" have been highly effective in improving the basic conditions of rural logistics. A trend line graph is plotted based on the sub-index scores of each year (Figure 5).

Dimensional performance analysis. (1) Operational efficiency: The score increased from 0.25 to 0.62, with an average annual growth rate of 7.9% from 2013 to 2025. The average delivery time for rural express delivery shortened from 4.2 days to 1.8 days, and the logistics cost rate for agricultural products dropped from 28.5% to 19.2%. However, there was a significant regional difference, with the logistics cost rate for agricultural products in the eastern region remaining at 15.3%, while it was still as high as 26.7% in the remote areas of the central and western regions. (2) Digitalization level: The score rose from 0.18 to 0.53, with an average annual growth percentage of 9.5%. From 2013 to 2025, the rural internet penetration rate increased from 20.3% to 68.7%, and the usage rate of digital logistics platforms rose from 12.5% to 45.8%. The digital supply chain construction promoted by e-commerce giants such as Alibaba and JD achieved remarkable results. Pinduoduo adopted the "small farmers + large market" model to reduce intermediate links, and Suning's "Logistics Cloud" project utilized big data to optimize logistics routes. However, the digital transformation of rural logistics still faces problems such as high technical application costs and unqualified farmers' operational capabilities. (3) Collaborative ability: The score rose from 0.15 to 0.48, with an average annual growth rate of 8.3%. The number of integrated passenger, freight, and postal transportation routes across the country exceeded 12,000, and there were over 3,800 shared distribution centers at the county level. Anhui Chizhou utilized the "Jiaoyongkuai" cooperation model to launch 22 postal routes operating in a bus-like manner, with a total mileage exceeding 806 kilometers and an average daily assistance in transporting 970 pieces of mail. The transportation efficiency of the postal mainline was significantly improved, and the rate of next-day delivery of imported standard express items in the Yangtze River Delta region reached 95% in 2024. However, there were still issues such as incomplete collaborative mechanisms and inappropriate profit distribution. In the agricultural product uplink process, the profit margin of logistics enterprises was less than 8%, while e-commerce platforms achieved a channel sharing rate of over 25%, leading to a situation where "the platform makes a lot of profits, logistics struggles to hold on, and farmers' profits are minimal".

Table 2. Scores for Rural Logistics Policy Implementation Effectiveness

Dimension	2013	2017	2021	2025
Overall effectiveness	0.32	0.45	0.59	0.68
Infrastructure	0.21	0.34	0.54	0.68
Operational efficiency	0.25	0.35	0.47	0.62
Digitalization	0.18	0.26	0.38	0.53
Coordination capacity	0.15	0.22	0.31	0.48

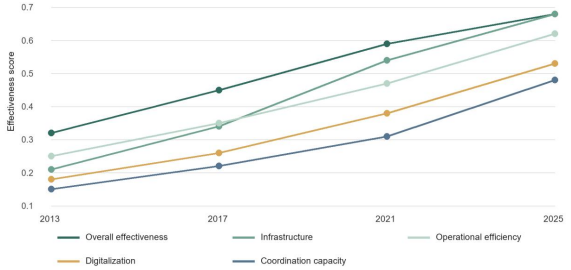

Figure 5. Trends in Rural Logistics Policy Implementation Effectiveness, 2013-2025

3.3 Major Implementation Constraints

The structure of policy tools is unbalanced, and the supply of demand-oriented tools is insufficient: As analyzed earlier, the proportion of demand-oriented policy tools is only 8.5%. The cultivation of market demand and consumption guidance policies are lacking, making it difficult to stimulate the collaborative motivation of logistics enterprises, e-commerce platforms, and farmers. In some regions, the phenomenon of "policy enthusiasm but market coldness" has emerged.

The balance of regional policy implementation is poor, and the implementation effectiveness in the central and western regions is poor: The comprehensive score of rural logistics policy implementation effectiveness in the eastern region is 0.75, while in the central and western regions it is only 0.52. The main reason is weak infrastructure, insufficient capital investment, and lagging technology promotion.

The implementation effectiveness of digitalization and cold chain logistics policies is poor: Although the score of the digitalization level indicator has increased, the usage rate of rural logistics digital platforms has always been less than 50%, and the coverage rate of new distribution methods such as drones is only 18.3%; The support for cold chain logistics policies mostly focuses on the construction of cold storage facilities, but there is a 10 - 15 kilometer spatial gap between the cold storage and the main agricultural production areas, and the imperfect cold chain system in green logistics development is an important bottleneck.

There are defects in the policy coordination mechanism, and the collaboration efficiency among departments is poor: Rural logistics is related to multiple departments such as commerce, transportation, postal services, and supply and marketing. However, in the policy formulation and implementation, there is a phenomenon of "each department managing its own area", lacking unified coordination means, causing resource waste and policy conflicts. In some regions, there is even a strange phenomenon of "storage is idle and useless, while sorting becomes congested".

4. Pathways for Improving Implementation Effectiveness

The process for improving the implementation efficiency of rural logistics policies is illustrated in Figure 6.

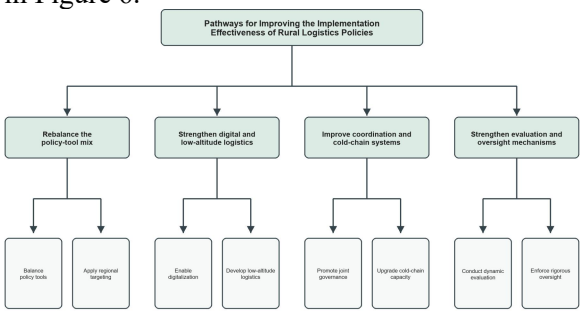

Figure 6. Pathways for Improving Rural Logistics Policy Implementation Effectiveness

4.1 Rebalance the Policy-Tool Mix

Adjust the proportion of supply-oriented, environmental-oriented and demand-oriented policy tools, fill the weak links in the demand side, expand the scope of government's purchase of rural logistics services, provide operational subsidies to logistics enterprises in remote areas, implement rural logistics consumption subsidy measures, and stimulate local logistics market demand. The eastern region focuses on developing digital transformation and model innovation as well as environmental and demand-oriented tools; the central and western regions increase the inclination towards supply-oriented tools such as infrastructure construction and capital investment, and use fiscal transfer payments to narrow regional gaps. At the same time, establish rural logistics special loans, adopt tax incentive strategies, and promote a coordinated pattern of "supply guarantee, environmental optimization, and demand stimulation".

4.2 Enhance the Capabilities of Digital Technologies and Low-Altitude Logistics

Increase policy support for the digitalization of rural logistics. Provide a 30% financial subsidy for the purchase of intelligent warehousing and automated sorting equipment. Strive to achieve a rural 5G coverage rate of over 95% by 2027, promote the regular operation of drone delivery in mountainous areas, establish a low-altitude flight management system, and develop small-

scale distribution equipment suitable for rural scenarios. The government takes the lead in integrating resources and builds a national rural logistics digital platform, enabling real-time sharing of supply sources, transportation capacity, and warehousing. Promote the combination model of "e-commerce + base + logistics + farmers", and use big data to optimize logistics routes.

4.3 Enhance the Coordination and Cold Chain Systems

Establish a provincial-level leadership team for rural logistics development, coordinate the functional divisions of multiple departments, build a consultation and information sharing system, incorporate rural logistics into the local performance assessment system, and by 2025, achieve full coverage of the integration of passenger and freight logistics in county areas. Together, build village-level comprehensive service stations, improve the rationality of supply chain benefit distribution, requiring e-commerce platforms to return 5% - 10% of profits to logistics enterprises and farmers, and cultivate large-scale leading enterprises to enhance collaborative efficiency. Provide 50% subsidies for the construction of small pre-freezing warehouses in major agricultural product production areas, improve the "county - township - village" cold chain network; popularize low-cost preservation technologies, implement tax exemptions for the purchase of refrigerated vehicles, and formulate cold chain operation standards and traceability systems. The correlation analysis of rural logistics and the delivery system indicates that green low-carbon and emergency supply guarantee are the weak links in current policy coordination. In subsequent policy formulation, the connection of these two dimensions should be strengthened.

4.4 Establish Dynamic Evaluation and Oversight Mechanisms

Evaluation should close the loop between a funded measure and the next policy decision. A compact indicator set can track platform use, cold-chain reach, delivery reliability, environmental performance, and user experience alongside construction totals. Periodic review should distinguish an incomplete project from an asset that is complete but little used. Third-party checks and user feedback can supplement administrative reporting, particularly for service continuity and satisfaction. Where outcomes remain weak, the response may be to redesign the instrument, reallocate resources, or discontinue the measure; adding another project of the same type should not be the default.

5. Conclusions and Future Research

5.1 Conclusions

The document coding and implementation index lead to three conclusions. First, rural logistics policy is supplied through broad national direction, frequent joint issuance, and local adaptation, yet its instruments are concentrated on the supply side. Demand-side measures are scarce, and the density of policy activity differs by region. Second, the implementation index improves from 2013 to 2025, with the largest absolute gain in infrastructure. Improvement is slower and less even in platform adoption, cold-chain continuity, and coordination, especially in central and western areas. Third, the mismatch between installed capacity and sustained use is the central policy problem revealed by reading the two analyses together. More effective implementation requires region-specific combinations of instruments, lower barriers to routine digital use, viable sharing of costs and returns among organizations, cold-chain investment closer to production, and evaluation results that alter subsequent decisions.

5.2 Future Research

This study has three limitations that also indicate the next research steps. The sample contains fewer municipal and county documents than national and provincial texts, so subsequent work should extend collection at those levels. The entropy-weighted index depends on available indicators and records association rather than the causal effect of a particular policy. Quasi-experimental designs could be used where implementation timing or eligibility rules create a credible comparison group. Finally, low-altitude logistics, rural industrial integration, and the digital inclusion of smallholders deserve separate field evidence, because policy texts reveal intended action but not how rural users and operators respond in practice.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the 2023 General Humanities and Social Sciences Project of the Shaanxi Provincial Department of

Education, 'Research on Improving the Rural Logistics Service System' (Project No. 23JK0031); This research was supported by the 2026 Shaanxian Philosophy and Social Sciences Project "Research on the Optimization of Green Logistics Distribution Routes and Policy Coordination in the Context of the Integration of Lianding Economy and Hub Economy in Shaanxian" (Project Number: XYSKND-202638).

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