

10 - 12 July 2026

Helsinki, Finland

From Pastoral Tradition to Performance Industry: Cultural and Economic Dimensions of Sustainability in China's Modern Equestrian Sector

Ming Dong

Youth Riders Safety Network, China

Abstract

Historically associated with pastoral livelihoods, military mobility, and rural cultural identity, equestrianism in China has undergone significant transformation in the context of urbanization and sports industrialization. This paper investigates the cultural and economic implications of this transition, examining how equestrian practice has evolved into a capital-intensive performance industry embedded within global sport markets.

Through a socio-economic case study of an elite show-jumping stable, this research analyzes operational cost structures, agricultural dependencies, environmental resource intensity, and institutional governance mechanisms. The study proposes an integrated evaluative framework—the Equestrian Sustainability Index (ESI)—to assess economic resilience, feed efficiency, transport intensity, and animal welfare stability within competitive training systems.

The findings indicate that contemporary equestrian systems represent a cultural-industrial hybrid, bridging historical livestock traditions with globalized performance economies. While industry growth stimulates regional economic clustering and employment, it also intensifies agricultural resource demand and environmental externalities. Sustainable governance strategies, including localized feed production and structured resource reporting, are essential to maintaining both ecological integrity and socio-cultural legitimacy.

By situating equestrian development within broader social science discussions on modernization, rural transformation, and institutional change, this study contributes to understanding how traditional animal-based practices adapt to globalized economic structures while confronting sustainability challenges.

Keywords: Equestrian Industry, Sustainable Development, Agricultural Economics, Socio-Economic Transformation