

# The Pastoralized Representation of Rural Life in Short Videos

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**Abstract:** Short videos often present rural life through natural scenery, traditional food, family gatherings, and slow daily routines. These images create a peaceful and attractive countryside, but they show only part of rural reality. This paper examines how rural life is turned into a pastoral image through visual selection, editing, music, repeated story forms, and platform preferences. It discusses how physical labor is made pleasant to watch while fatigue, risk, unstable income, and production costs receive less attention. It also explains how pastoral content responds to viewers' need for emotional comfort and supports advertising, livestreaming, tourism, and product sales. Repeated images of fields, old houses, handmade food, and close families can reduce rural diversity and make certain lifestyles appear more authentic than others. Ordinary workers, migrant families, caregivers, low-income households, and people facing illness or limited public services are less visible. This selective representation may lead viewers to treat hardship as simple living and heavy labor as a personal choice. The paper argues that rural short videos can retain their visual appeal while giving more space to labor conditions, modern rural life, different social groups, and the boundary between daily experience and commercial performance.

**Keywords:** rural life; short videos; rural labor

## 1. Introduction

Rural life has become a common subject in short videos. Many creators record farming, cooking, house repairs, family meals, local customs, and seasonal changes. These videos often use clear images, soft music, and a slow rhythm. Fields are clean and open. Food is prepared by hand. Family members sit together and share meals. Daily work appears calm and orderly. The countryside is presented as a place where people can stay close to

nature and live without too much pressure (Williams; Bell).

This type of content gives viewers a pleasant visual experience. Short videos about rural life may offer a temporary break from busy work, crowded spaces, and repeated daily tasks. Viewers can watch crops being harvested, vegetables being washed, firewood being cut, or meals being cooked from beginning to end. These scenes create a feeling of stability. They also make rural life appear more direct and meaningful (Luo; Qian). The work has a visible

result, and each activity seems to follow a natural rhythm.

Yet this image does not fully show how rural life is experienced. The countryside is not only made up of beautiful scenery, traditional food, and quiet family moments. Rural residents also face heavy labor, uncertain income, changing family relations, care duties, and limited access to some public services. Agricultural work can be repetitive and physically demanding. Bad weather, unstable prices, and production costs may directly affect a household's livelihood. These parts of daily life are less suitable for attractive short-video scenes, so they are often reduced or left outside the frame.

The problem is not that pastoral rural videos are completely false. Most of the scenes may come from real activities and real places. The difference lies in selection and arrangement (Luo; Zhao). A creator decides what enters the camera, how long it remains on screen, and what is removed during editing. Hours of work may be reduced to a few smooth movements. Conflict may be replaced by quiet background music. A difficult living condition may be presented as a simple lifestyle. Through this process, some parts of rural life become highly visible, while other parts become difficult to see.

The pastoral image also depends on familiar ideas about the countryside. Rural space is often linked with nature, tradition, family warmth, honest labor, and simple personal relations. These ideas help viewers understand a video quickly. A field, an old house, a wood-burning stove, or a family dinner can immediately produce a rural feeling. When the same images appear repeatedly, they form a stable way of representing rural life. The countryside is no longer shown as a changing social space. It becomes a symbol of peace, emotional comfort, and escape.

Short-video platforms support this form of representation (Nieborg and Poell). Videos need to attract attention within a limited time. Beautiful scenes, clear emotions, and simple stories are easier to watch and share. Complex questions about work, income, education, health care, or population movement are harder to explain in a brief video. Content that creates comfort may also receive more

positive reactions than content that presents long-term problems. Creators may continue using the same visual style because it is familiar to viewers and easier to connect with advertising, tourism, food sales, and personal branding.

Pastoral representation can affect how viewers understand rural people and rural space. Heavy labor may be viewed as relaxing manual activity. Limited material conditions may be treated as a free choice to live simply. Social difficulties may be hidden behind beautiful landscapes. Viewers may admire rural life without understanding the work and pressure that support the images they enjoy. They may also expect rural residents to remain traditional, peaceful, and close to nature, even though rural communities include modern technology, business activity, migration, personal ambition, and different ways of living.

## 2. The Construction of a Pastoral Rural Image

Short videos do not simply record rural life as it happens (Luo). They select certain places, people, and activities, then arrange them into a clear visual story. A creator may film a field at sunrise, an old house surrounded by trees, food being prepared over a fire, or a family eating together. These scenes are real, but they are only part of daily life. Camera position, editing, music, and spoken narration shape how viewers understand them.

Many rural videos follow a similar rhythm. The video begins with a quiet natural scene. It then moves to a simple activity such as collecting vegetables, feeding animals, or preparing a meal. The work is shown through several short and smooth shots. The final part often presents finished food, a clean room, or a family gathering. The process appears complete and satisfying. Problems rarely interrupt the story. Rain may make a scene more beautiful, but it is less likely to be shown as a threat to crops. An old house may create a warm atmosphere, but the cost of repair or the lack of modern facilities is often left out.

Music also changes the meaning of rural scenes. Soft music can make physical work appear calm. Natural sounds such as running water, bird calls, chopping

wood, and boiling soup create a sense of closeness and peace. These sounds reduce the feeling of effort. They direct attention to the beauty of the action rather than the pressure behind it. A long day of work can be turned into a few minutes of pleasant viewing.

Storytelling gives these images a simple emotional direction. A video may show a person returning home, cooking for elderly parents, repairing a family house, or continuing a traditional craft. The story often connects rural life with belonging, care, and personal freedom. Work is given a clear purpose. Family relations appear warm. The natural environment seems stable. Rural life is presented as an answer to stress rather than a social setting with its own problems.

### 2.1 Natural Scenery and Visual Beauty

Natural scenery is one of the most common parts of rural short videos. Mountains, rivers, farmland, forests, sunsets, and animals appear again and again. These images quickly tell viewers that the story takes place in the countryside. They also create a strong contrast with crowded streets, office buildings, traffic, and indoor work.

The camera often avoids ordinary or unattractive spaces. It may focus on a clean field while leaving nearby waste, unfinished buildings, or damaged roads outside the frame. A traditional house may be filmed from an angle that shows wooden doors, stone walls, and plants, while electrical wires, storage areas, and modern equipment remain less visible. This does not mean that the image is false. It means that the scene has been carefully chosen.

Light plays an important role in this process. Sunrise and sunset give fields and houses a warm colour. Mist makes mountains appear quiet and distant. Rain creates clear sounds and soft images. Snow can turn an ordinary village into a clean and silent space. These natural conditions are often filmed because they add emotion to the picture. Midday heat, strong wind, mud, insects, and poor visibility are less attractive and receive less attention.

Filters and colour adjustment make the image more stable. Green fields become brighter. Wooden

furniture looks warmer. Smoke from a stove appears soft rather than irritating. Food looks fresh and carefully prepared. The visual style gives different videos a similar appearance, even when they come from different places.

The repeated use of these images turns nature into the main sign of rural life. Viewers may begin to understand the countryside mainly through landscapes, old houses, animals, and seasonal plants. Other parts of rural space become harder to notice. Schools, clinics, factories, shops, delivery stations, construction sites, and public transport are part of rural life too, but they do not fit the pastoral image as easily. Modern houses and digital equipment may appear, but they are often placed behind traditional objects or natural scenery.

This visual choice can make rural life look separate from modern society. The countryside appears to exist outside fast communication, market pressure, and changing forms of work. Yet many rural households use online platforms, machines, delivery services, and modern business systems. Some people work in nearby towns or travel between different places. These activities are common, but a video built around natural beauty may not include them.

### 2.2 Slow Living and Emotional Comfort

Pastoral rural videos often present daily activities as part of a slow and peaceful life. Cooking, planting, washing clothes, collecting firewood, feeding animals, and making handicrafts are filmed in detail. Each movement appears careful and controlled. The viewer sees hands cutting vegetables, water running over fruit, dough being shaped, or smoke rising from a stove. These small actions create a calm rhythm.

The actual time required for the work is rarely clear. Planting and harvesting may take many hours. Cooking with firewood involves preparation, smoke, heat, and cleaning. Caring for animals requires repeated work every day. Handicrafts may need long practice and may not bring stable income. Short videos remove much of this time. The most

attractive moments remain, while waiting, failure, repetition, and fatigue disappear.

Editing makes the work appear smooth. A creator can move directly from gathering ingredients to presenting a finished meal. Broken tools, bad weather, spoiled food, and physical discomfort can be removed. The viewer receives a complete process without experiencing its delay or difficulty. Work becomes easy to watch because its unpleasant parts are no longer visible.

The slow rhythm also meets an emotional need. Many viewers experience pressure from work, study, family duties, and constant online information. A rural video offers a brief space where tasks seem clear and life appears less crowded. There are no urgent messages, meetings, traffic jams, or public competition. A meal can be prepared without hurry. A person can spend time in a field without being interrupted. The video does not need to state that rural life is peaceful. The order of the images already creates this feeling.

This emotional effect depends on distance (Williams; Qian). Viewers can enjoy rural work without taking part in it. They see the beauty of cutting wood but do not feel the weight of the tools. They watch crops being harvested but do not face the risk of low prices or bad weather. The screen turns difficult work into a form of rest for people who are not doing it.

The idea of slow living may also hide different forms of pressure. Rural residents can face long working hours, care duties, unstable income, and limited choices. Agricultural work follows the needs of crops and animals, not personal leisure. Some tasks cannot be delayed. A quiet image does not mean that the person in it has more free time. The video may show a slower visual rhythm while the real work remains demanding.

### 2.3 Family Life and Moral Simplicity

Family meals and close personal relations are also common in rural short videos. Parents cook for children. Young adults return home to care for older family members. Neighbours share food or help with farm work. Several generations sit at the same

table. These scenes connect rural life with emotional warmth and trust.

Food often carries much of this meaning. A meal is not shown only as something to eat. It represents care, memory, and family connection. A parent prepares a familiar dish. A child helps collect ingredients. Older family members wait at the table. The final meal gives the video a clear emotional ending. Daily work leads to shared happiness.

This type of story presents the rural family as stable and united. People seem to understand their duties without conflict. Older family members are respected. Younger members are willing to stay, return, or help. Neighbours are friendly and honest. Personal relations appear direct because money, status, and competition seem less important.

Family life is often more complicated. Care work may fall mainly on women or older family members. Young people may disagree with their parents about education, work, marriage, or where to live. Some family members may spend long periods away from home. Older residents may live alone. Money and property can create tension. These issues are difficult to place within a short and comforting story, so they receive less space.

The image of moral simplicity can also create fixed expectations. Rural residents may be expected to appear honest, modest, hardworking, and close to family. A person who wants a different lifestyle may not fit this image. Young people who leave, seek higher income, or prefer modern forms of work may seem less “rural” than those who farm, cook traditional food, or remain in an old family house.

Some creators build a stable online identity through these moral images (Liu and Fan; Duffy). They appear as caring children, skilled workers, patient parents, or friendly neighbours. Viewers form trust through repeated stories. This trust can support product sales and commercial promotion. Food, clothing, household goods, and local products are placed inside family scenes. The emotional value of the family then becomes part of the product’s appeal.

The warmth shown in these videos can be real. Shared meals, family care, and neighbourly help are

important parts of rural life. The problem lies in treating them as the whole picture. Family closeness can exist together with conflict, duty, pressure, and unequal work. When only warm moments remain on screen, rural people are turned into moral symbols rather than shown as individuals with different needs and choices.

### 3. The Weakening of Rural Labor

Labor is a central part of rural life. Crops need to be planted, managed, and harvested. Animals need regular care. Food preparation can take many hours. Houses, tools, and roads need repair. Some families also run small shops, process local products, take temporary jobs, or work through online platforms. These activities require time, skill, and physical effort.

In many short videos, rural labor remains visible, but its meaning changes (Zhao; Luo). Work is often shown as a pleasant activity that fits naturally into the landscape. A person cuts vegetables beside a clean wooden table. A farmer walks through a field under soft light. Grain is spread across a yard in an orderly pattern. Handmade food is prepared through a series of close-up shots. The images are clear and attractive. The body moves smoothly, and each task appears to have a simple result.

This type of presentation turns labor into something that can be enjoyed visually. The viewer notices the colour of the crops, the sound of tools, the movement of hands, and the finished product. The pressure carried by the worker becomes less visible. Heavy work looks calm. Repeated work looks meaningful. Dirty work looks clean. The video keeps the parts that are easy to watch and removes many parts that would break the pleasant rhythm. Rural labor is also placed close to nature. Farming is shown through sunlight, soil, rain, plants, and seasonal change. This can make agricultural work appear free from rules and outside control. Yet rural workers do not simply follow a peaceful natural rhythm. They often work according to weather, market demand, delivery dates, animal needs, and family duties. They may have little control over when work begins or ends. A sudden change in

weather can destroy crops. A fall in market price can reduce months of work to a financial loss.

The body is important in rural labor, but the physical cost is not always shown. Repeated bending, lifting, cutting, carrying, and standing can cause pain and injury. Heat, cold, dust, smoke, chemicals, and machines can create health risks. These pressures may not appear in a short video because they do not fit the image of calm rural life. A worker may smile at the camera even after many hours of work. The video shows the action but does not show how the body feels.

Skills are also simplified. Farming, food processing, animal care, and craft production depend on knowledge built through practice. Workers need to judge weather, soil, temperature, timing, materials, and product quality. A short video may present these tasks as easy because it only shows a few clear steps. Viewers see a skilled person completing the work but may not understand the years of experience behind each movement. Labor is made attractive, while its knowledge and difficulty receive less attention.

The weakening of labor does not mean that work disappears from the screen. It means that labor loses part of its social and economic meaning. It becomes a visual activity placed between natural scenery and family meals. It helps create a rural atmosphere, but it is less often treated as the main source of income, pressure, risk, and personal identity.

#### 3.1 The Aesthetic Editing of Hard Work

A short video usually presents only a small part of a much longer work process. Several hours or even several months can be reduced to a few minutes. Planting, growing, harvesting, cleaning, processing, and cooking may appear as a smooth sequence. The breaks between these stages are removed. Viewers see crops enter the soil and later appear as finished food, but the long period of care in between receives little space.

Editing changes how effort is understood. Repeated actions can be cut into a few attractive movements. A worker may carry many loads, but the video shows only one. A large area may take hours to

clear, but viewers see several quick cuts followed by the finished result. The worker's tiredness does not grow on screen because time has been compressed. The camera also selects which details remain visible. Clean hands, bright crops, and well-arranged tools are easy to film. Mud, sweat, damaged skin, smoke, and waste may be kept outside the frame. A kitchen appears warm and traditional, while the heat and poor air are harder to feel through the screen. A field appears open and peaceful, while insects, dust, and long exposure to the sun receive little attention.

Failure is another part of labor that often disappears. Crops may not grow as expected. Food may be spoiled during preparation. Animals may become sick. Tools may break. Handmade products may not meet the required standard. These moments take time and create loss. They can also make a video feel uncertain or unpleasant, so creators may remove them during editing.

The result is often given more attention than the process. A finished meal, a full basket, a repaired house, or a harvested field offers a clear ending. It gives the viewer a feeling of order and completion. Real labor does not always provide such an ending. A harvest may be followed by storage, transport, sales, and payment problems. Repair work may continue for weeks. Family members may still have other duties after the meal is finished.

Close-up shots can make manual work appear careful and artistic. The camera follows a knife cutting food, hands shaping dough, or tools carving wood. These images show control and skill. They also separate the action from the worker's full body. The viewer sees the hands but not the bent back, tired legs, or repeated strain. Labor becomes a group of beautiful details rather than a complete physical experience.

Sound editing has a similar effect. The sound of chopping, washing, grinding, and frying can create a strong sense of order. Unpleasant sounds may be reduced. Machines, traffic, shouting, coughing, and background noise can be removed. Music can cover the sound of effort. The worker's breathing and signs of tiredness become difficult to hear.

Some videos use speed changes to make work more attractive. Slow motion highlights water, smoke, grain, or movement. Fast motion removes waiting and repetition. Both methods change the actual pace of labor. Slow motion gives a task visual beauty, while fast motion makes a long process appear easy. The time experienced by the worker is replaced by the time designed for the viewer.

This editing style also shapes expectations about rural workers. They are often shown as patient, skilled, and satisfied with physical work. Anger, boredom, pain, or frustration may damage the calm image. Workers who complain about difficult conditions may not fit the expected story. Their labor is accepted as part of rural life, while the need to improve working conditions receives less attention.

### 3.2 The Disappearance of Economic Pressure

Rural labor is closely connected with income, but money is often absent from pastoral short videos. Viewers may see a family planting vegetables, raising animals, making food, or producing handicrafts. They are rarely told how much the work costs, how much it earns, or whether the income is stable.

Agricultural production involves many expenses. Seeds, feed, fertilizer, tools, fuel, machines, transport, storage, and packaging all require money. Some households rent land or borrow money for production. A successful harvest does not always lead to a good income. Prices may fall before products are sold. Transport costs may rise. Some goods may be damaged or remain unsold.

These details are difficult to include in a video based on beauty and comfort. Numbers, contracts, debt, and market changes do not create the same visual effect as fields, food, and family meals. They can also disturb the idea that rural life is simple and self-sufficient. A video may show people collecting food from their own land, giving the impression that they need little cash. In daily life, households still need money for education, health care, housing, transport, communication, and family support.

Rural households may depend on several sources of income. Family members can work in farming, local businesses, construction, factories, delivery services, tourism, or online sales. Some may work away from home and send money back. Older family members may care for children or manage farmland. This mixed form of livelihood is common, but it is difficult to fit into a clear pastoral story.

Short videos often place the land at the centre of family life. The family appears to live mainly from crops, animals, and handmade products. Work outside the village may not appear because it breaks the visual unity of the account. Factory work, temporary jobs, and long travel do not match the image of a stable life close to nature.

The income earned through the video itself may also remain unclear. A creator may receive money from advertising, livestreaming, product sales, tourism promotion, or platform rewards. The rural scene is then not only a record of daily life. It is also part of a business. A meal may help sell local food. A house repair may support tourism. A family story may build trust before a product is introduced.

This commercial income can change the work shown on screen. Some activities may be repeated because viewers enjoy them, not because they are part of ordinary daily life. A creator may cook large meals, rebuild old rooms, collect seasonal foods, or perform traditional crafts to maintain attention. Rural labor is then linked with content production. The worker is also a performer, editor, seller, and account manager.

Content work has its own pressure. Creators need to film regularly, respond to comments, study popular styles, arrange product links, and maintain a stable public image. A video may appear slow and peaceful, while its production follows strict schedules and sales goals. The emotional comfort enjoyed by viewers may depend on work that is fast, repeated, and uncertain.

Not every rural creator earns a stable income. Popular accounts receive greater visibility, while many smaller accounts struggle to reach viewers. Equipment, travel, editing, and product preparation create costs. Platform rules can change. Traffic can

fall without warning. Sales may depend on seasonal demand or short periods of attention. These risks are rarely visible in the final video.

Debt and financial dependence also receive little space. A household may need loans for farming, housing, medical treatment, or business activity. Family members may disagree about spending and work choices. Young adults may leave because local income is too low. Older residents may continue heavy work because they lack other support. These situations do not fit the image of a quiet and satisfied rural family.

When economic pressure is removed, rural work can appear to be a personal lifestyle choice. Farming seems to offer freedom. Handcrafting seems to provide meaning. Living with fewer goods seems voluntary. For some people, these experiences may be real. For others, limited choices and financial pressure shape the same activities. The image of simple living can hide the difference between choosing a modest life and having few ways to improve one's conditions.

#### **4. Platform Logic and the Popularity of Pastoral Content**

Pastoral rural videos fit the basic form of short-video platforms. They use clear images, simple actions, and direct emotions. Viewers can understand them without much background information. A field, an old house, a cooking fire, or a family meal can quickly create a rural setting. The story is usually easy to follow. A person collects ingredients, prepares food, finishes a task, and shares the result with family members.

This form works well on a small screen. Natural scenery, bright food, handmade objects, and repeated movements are easy to show through close-up shots. These scenes remain clear even when a video is short. More complex rural issues are harder to present in the same way. Questions about income, public services, migration, education, or care duties need explanation. They may involve several people and a long period of time. A brief video cannot easily show their causes and effects.

Pastoral content also creates a clear emotional response. Viewers may feel calm, warm, or satisfied after watching a meal being prepared or a field being harvested. The story usually has a complete ending. Food is placed on the table. A damaged room is repaired. Vegetables are collected. Family members sit together. This sense of completion makes the video easy to enjoy.

Platform recommendation can strengthen this style (Nieborg and Poell; Liu and Fan). Videos that receive likes, comments, shares, and longer viewing time may reach more users. Creators notice which scenes attract attention and repeat them in later content. Other creators may follow the same form. Popular images then appear across many accounts, even when the people and places are different.

This does not mean that platforms directly require creators to show rural life in a pastoral way. The influence is less direct. Creators learn from traffic results, viewer comments, and successful accounts. They adjust titles, images, music, and story forms. Content that is easy to recognize and emotionally pleasant has a greater chance of being watched. Difficult rural experiences may receive less attention because they demand more time and may make viewers uncomfortable.

The short-video account also needs a stable identity. Viewers often follow an account because they expect a certain type of content. An account known for quiet rural cooking may lose part of its audience if it suddenly presents family conflict, debt, or failed farming. The creator may continue showing calm scenes to protect the account's image. Rural life is then shaped by what viewers already expect to see.

#### 4.1 Emotional Attraction

Pastoral videos often attract viewers who feel tired or pressured. Daily life may involve long working hours, study tasks, family duties, traffic, noise, and constant messages. Short videos cannot remove these pressures, but they can offer a brief emotional break. A quiet rural scene creates distance from the viewer's immediate surroundings.

The countryside is often presented as a place where time moves slowly. People work with their hands.

Meals are prepared from basic ingredients. Tasks have clear beginnings and endings. A person can collect vegetables, wash them, cook them, and sit down to eat. This order differs from work that continues through messages, documents, meetings, and changing demands.

Pastoral videos also reduce the amount of information that viewers need to process. The story does not contain many characters or complicated events. The visual meaning is direct. Green fields suggest calm. Cooking suggests care. Family meals suggest closeness. Soft music guides the viewer's feelings. The video can be understood without careful thought.

Many viewers are not only watching rural life. They are also imagining another way of living. The rural home becomes a place where work has visible value, food is fresh, family members stay close, and daily time can be controlled. This imagined life may be more important than the actual conditions of the place being filmed.

The emotional appeal often depends on contrast. Office work is linked with screens, deadlines, and repeated communication. Rural work is linked with soil, food, tools, and nature. Crowded living is placed against open land. Social competition is placed against simple family relations. The video does not need to show both sides directly. Viewers bring their own pressure into the scene and read the countryside as its opposite.

This contrast can make rural life look free from anxiety. Yet rural residents may face pressure from weather, prices, debt, health, and family duties. Their work may also be uncertain and difficult to control. These pressures are not always visible because the viewer mainly uses the video as a form of emotional rest.

Comments often help maintain this image. Viewers may write that they want to leave their jobs, return home, grow vegetables, or live a simple life. Such comments tell creators which feelings are valued. Later videos may place more attention on quiet mornings, slow cooking, and family meals. The imagined countryside becomes clearer through repeated contact between creators and viewers.

Nostalgia can increase the emotional effect (Boym; Qian). Some viewers connect rural scenes with childhood, older family members, holidays, or food from the past. Old houses, wood-burning stoves, handmade tools, and local dishes can bring back personal memories. The video may present a place the viewer has never visited, but its objects still feel familiar.

Nostalgia does not reproduce the past in full. It selects warm details and weakens discomfort. Poor housing, difficult travel, limited goods, and heavy family duties may be forgotten. The remembered countryside becomes cleaner and safer than the life that people once experienced. Short videos support this selective memory through careful images and gentle music.

#### 4.2 Repeated Content Forms

Many pastoral rural videos use similar scenes. Creators collect vegetables, wash food in clear water, light a fire, cut meat, prepare dough, feed animals, repair old houses, or sit down for a family meal. These scenes have become familiar signs of rural life. Repeated forms make videos easy to understand. Viewers know what kind of story they are watching from the opening image. A basket in a field suggests harvesting. Smoke rising from a kitchen suggests cooking. An old room filled with dust suggests repair. The video does not need a long introduction. These scenes also provide clear visual changes. Raw ingredients become a finished dish. An empty field becomes full of crops. A damaged house becomes clean and usable. A pile of wood becomes furniture or tools. Such changes give the video a simple structure. The viewer can see progress and wait for the final result.

Cooking is especially common because it combines labor, family, memory, and visual pleasure. Food has strong colours and clear textures. Cutting, washing, mixing, frying, and serving create many small actions that work well in short clips. A finished meal also offers a natural ending. It can bring family members together and add emotional warmth.

House repair follows a similar form. An old building is shown before work begins. Dust, broken walls, and unused furniture create a sense of loss. The creator cleans, paints, repairs, and arranges the space. The finished house often keeps traditional features while becoming more comfortable. This story turns rural space into something that can be recovered through personal effort.

Seasonal activities also provide repeated content. Spring planting, summer harvesting, autumn food preparation, and winter family meals create a regular cycle. Creators can return to the same type of story each year. Seasonal change gives the account variety without changing its basic image.

Successful forms are easy to copy. A creator can study popular videos and use similar camera angles, music, titles, and editing. The location and person may change, but the story remains familiar. Repetition lowers the risk of producing content that viewers do not understand or enjoy.

Copying does not always mean direct imitation. Creators may use the same general form while adding local food, clothing, dialect, or landscape. These details create difference within a stable model. The content looks personal, but its structure is widely shared.

Repeated forms can reduce the range of rural representation. Creators may focus on activities that already receive attention. Ordinary work that lacks a clear visual result may be ignored. Meetings, paperwork, transportation, medical care, study, and long periods of waiting are less suitable for this style. They may be common in rural life, but they do not produce the same visual satisfaction.

Repetition can also turn tradition into a performance. Some tools, clothes, cooking methods, or customs may be used mainly because they look rural on screen. Modern equipment may be removed from the scene even when it is used in daily work. A creator may choose a wood fire instead of a modern cooker because the older method matches the account's image.

Viewers may begin to judge rural content through these familiar signs. A video without old houses, handmade food, animals, or fields may not be seen

as truly rural. Modern rural life becomes harder to represent because it does not match the visual form that platforms and audiences already recognize.

### 4.3 Commercial Use of Rural Images

Pastoral images can support many forms of business. Creators may sell food, agricultural products, clothing, household goods, or handmade objects. They may promote tourism, local restaurants, guesthouses, and cultural activities. Some use livestreaming, advertising, and paid cooperation to earn income.

The rural image adds meaning to a product. Fruit is not only presented as food. It is shown as something collected from a clean field by a hardworking family. A handmade item is linked with patience and tradition. A local dish is connected with family memory and natural ingredients. The story gives the product emotional value.

Trust is important in this process. Viewers may follow a creator for a long time before buying anything. They watch family meals, farm work, seasonal activities, and daily routines. This repeated contact creates a feeling of familiarity. The creator may appear honest, simple, and close to ordinary life. Product promotion then feels less like formal advertising.

Family members can become part of the account's commercial identity. An older parent may represent tradition. A young creator may represent skill and care. Children may add warmth. Neighbours may show trust and local connection. Their relationships help support the image behind the products.

Tourism promotion also uses pastoral scenes. Quiet villages, traditional houses, local food, and natural landscapes can attract visitors. A place is presented as a refuge from busy life. Visitors are invited to experience slow meals, farm work, local customs, and peaceful surroundings.

Tourism may change the space being represented. Houses can be repaired for guests rather than local residents. Traditional activities can be arranged according to visitor schedules. Everyday work may become a performance. The rural setting still looks

natural on screen, but parts of it are planned for consumption.

Commercial needs can limit what creators show. An account selling food needs viewers to trust the cleanliness of the environment. An account promoting tourism needs the village to appear safe and attractive. Family conflict, pollution, poor facilities, or failed production may damage this image. Such issues may be hidden even when they affect daily life.

Creators may also avoid political or social questions because these topics can divide viewers and weaken commercial cooperation. Calm rural scenes are safer for brands. They are easy to connect with food, home products, travel, and lifestyle goods. Complex discussions about inequality, labor rights, or public services do not offer the same commercial value.

The creator's personal image must remain stable. A person known for patience, family care, and simple living may need to perform these qualities in every video. Anger, tiredness, or disagreement can conflict with the account's identity. Daily life becomes partly organized around the needs of content production. Commercial work may also change the rhythm of rural activities. A creator may harvest early to match a sales campaign, cook a dish again for filming, or repeat a family scene because the first version did not look good. The video presents natural daily life, but the activity may be arranged around cameras, product links, and posting schedules.

Livestreaming makes this link more direct. Rural products are shown together with stories about land, family, and local life. Viewers are encouraged to buy not only because of price or quality, but also because the purchase seems to support a family or community. Emotional connection becomes part of the sales process.

This form of business can create real opportunities. It may help local products reach more buyers and give creators a new source of income. It can also place pressure on people to maintain an ideal rural image. The countryside must remain beautiful, the family must remain warm, and the creator must remain sincere. Parts of life that do not support this image are more likely to stay outside the frame.

## 5. Context Loss and Unequal Visibility

Pastoral short videos do not invent a false countryside, but they present a selective one. By focusing on calm and beautiful scenes, they leave out many aspects of rural life. As a result, a few images begin to represent the whole.

Rural life is shaped by employment, education, healthcare, transport, and family movement. These factors influence daily choices but are difficult to show in short, visually appealing clips. Long hospital trips, unstable jobs, or caregiving pressures do not fit the simple rhythm of cooking or farming scenes.

When these contexts are missing, rural life appears as a matter of personal choice. Returning home, growing food, or continuing farm work may seem voluntary, while economic or social pressures remain hidden. Many rural residents rely on diverse jobs, migration, or external income, but these realities are often excluded.

Education and healthcare are also simplified. Children appear carefree, while schooling pressures and family sacrifices are overlooked. Older people may seem active and healthy, while illness and care needs remain unseen. Distance and limited services are similarly downplayed.

This selective framing makes rural life appear self-contained and peaceful, reducing complex social issues to personal lifestyle choices. As a result, broader structural problems become less visible.

### 5.1 The Simplification of Rural Diversity

Rural areas vary widely in geography, economy, and culture (Halfacree). However, pastoral videos often repeat a narrow set of images—fields, traditional houses, handmade food, and close families—creating a standardized rural aesthetic.

Local differences become decorative rather than meaningful. Despite variations in culture or environment, the narrative remains similar: gathering, cooking, and sharing. Modern elements such as machinery, infrastructure, or digital work are often minimized to preserve a sense of simplicity.

This simplification also affects how people are portrayed. Rural residents have diverse goals and lifestyles, but videos tend to highlight limited roles—returning youth, hardworking farmers, caring women, and skilled craftsmen. Other experiences, such as uncertainty, migration, or non-traditional work, receive less attention.

Cultural practices are often reduced to visual symbols, detached from their deeper meanings. Over time, these repeated images create a standard of what “authentic” rural life should look like, influencing both viewers and creators.

As a result, different rural realities are compressed into a single narrative, making it harder to recognize varied local challenges or needs.

### 5.2 The Marginalization of Ordinary Residents

Visibility in short videos is uneven. People with appealing settings, skills, or stories are more likely to be featured, while ordinary daily life is often overlooked.

Many rural residents engage in repetitive or less visually striking work, such as commuting, caregiving, or temporary labor. These activities are essential but rarely appear on screen. Older people, low-income households, and those living alone are often simplified into symbolic roles or excluded entirely.

Migrant workers and separated families are also underrepresented. Videos may show moments of reunion but not the long periods of absence. Similarly, children’s emotional experiences and the burden on caregivers are often hidden.

Care work, especially by women, is frequently romanticized. It is presented as natural and fulfilling, while its demands and inequalities remain unexamined. People with disabilities or those facing hardship are rarely included, as they do not fit the idealized image.

Access to technology and time also shapes who can create content, giving certain voices more influence. Others appear only as background figures, without control over how they are represented.

### 5.3 The Risk of Romantic Judgment

Pastoral videos can lead viewers to interpret rural hardship through a romantic lens. Difficult conditions may appear peaceful, and limited resources may seem like chosen simplicity.

This perspective can blur the difference between voluntary lifestyle choices and economic necessity. Poverty may be seen as moral strength, and hard labor as meaningful or even desirable, while underlying challenges are ignored.

Self-sufficiency is often idealized, overlooking the external support and constraints involved. Similarly, family duty and care work are praised without acknowledging their pressures or inequalities.

Such representations can shape judgments about rural residents. Those who leave or seek change may be seen as less authentic, while traditional roles are reinforced as ideals.

Romantic views can also reduce attention to public needs. Issues like infrastructure, healthcare, and education may seem less urgent when rural life is framed as naturally fulfilling.

In some cases, charity-focused content simplifies complex problems into emotional stories, emphasizing individual kindness over structural solutions.

Overall, pastoral imagery makes hardship easier to accept by presenting it as beautiful or meaningful. A more balanced understanding requires separating aesthetic appeal from actual living conditions and recognizing the diversity and complexity of rural life.

## 6. Toward a More Balanced Representation of Rural Life

A more balanced rural image does not require creators to remove beauty from short videos. Natural scenery, family meals, traditional food, and quiet moments are real parts of rural life. The main issue is whether these scenes are treated as the whole picture. Rural videos can remain attractive while giving more space to labor, change, conflict, and personal choice.

Creators do not need to turn every video into a report on social problems. Small changes in filming and narration can add useful context. A cooking video can mention how the ingredients were produced and how much work was involved. A harvest video can include weather risks, production costs, or sales difficulties. A family story can show that members have different duties and views. These details help viewers understand that peaceful scenes are part of a wider daily life.

Balanced representation also requires less dependence on fixed rural symbols. Old houses, wood fires, fields, and handmade food should not be the only signs of rural life. Machinery, online business, transport, local factories, schools, clinics, and modern homes are also common parts of rural communities. Their presence does not make rural life less authentic.

Rural residents should be shown as people with different goals. Some want to remain in their hometowns. Some leave for work or study. Some return after living elsewhere. Others move between several places. They may value family and tradition while also seeking higher income, privacy, modern housing, and wider choices. These wishes do not conflict with rural identity.

A balanced image should also allow positive and difficult experiences to appear together. A family can enjoy a shared meal while facing financial pressure. Agricultural work can provide satisfaction while causing physical strain. A village can have beautiful scenery while lacking convenient services. Showing these conditions together does not weaken the emotional value of the video. It makes the story more credible.

### 6.1 Restoring Labor and Daily Detail

Rural labor can be shown more fully without making videos long or difficult to watch. Creators can keep some repeated actions, waiting time, mistakes, and failed attempts. These details help viewers see that the finished result depends on time and effort.

A farming video does not need to show every hour of work. It can include short scenes of preparing

tools, checking weather, dealing with damaged crops, or cleaning after the task. A cooking video can show smoke, heat, washing, and preparation instead of moving directly from raw ingredients to a finished meal. A repair video can mention material costs, delays, or work that had to be done again.

Physical pressure also needs more attention. Rural work often involves lifting, bending, standing, and repeated movement. Heat, cold, dust, and machines can affect the body. Showing tiredness, rest, protective equipment, or help from other workers can make labor appear more complete. Workers do not need to smile through every task to make the video attractive.

The knowledge behind rural labor should also be made visible. Farming, animal care, food processing, and craft work are not simple because they look smooth on screen. Workers make judgments about timing, weather, materials, temperature, and quality. A short explanation of these choices can show the skill behind the action.

Income and production conditions can be included in simple language. Creators may explain that prices change, some products remain unsold, or certain costs reduce earnings. Exact financial records are not always needed. Basic information can prevent viewers from treating rural production as an easy and stable source of income.

Failed work also has value as content. Crops may be damaged, food may not turn out well, tools may break, and sales may be lower than expected. These experiences are common. They can show how people adjust their plans and solve problems. A story does not need a perfect result to hold viewers' attention.

Daily detail can also show that rural work is shared unevenly. Cooking, cleaning, farming, selling products, filming, and caring for family members may be done by different people. Showing who performs each task makes hidden labor easier to notice. It also avoids placing all family work under a general image of warmth and cooperation.

## 6.2 Expanding the Range of Rural Stories

Rural short videos can include more subjects than farming, cooking, and house repair. Education, care work, local employment, small businesses, transport, healthcare, and public services also shape rural life. These topics may not produce the same visual beauty, but they contain clear human stories. Education stories can show how children travel to school, how families manage study costs, and how young people make choices about further education. Such videos can also include teachers, local learning spaces, and the role of older family members in childcare. This gives rural childhood more depth than scenes of outdoor play.

Care work deserves more direct attention. Looking after children, older people, and family members with illness or disability takes time. Much of this work happens indoors and repeats every day. Videos can show its practical demands instead of presenting it only as family love.

Local work is another useful subject. Rural residents may run shops, repair machines, drive vehicles, work in factories, manage delivery stations, or sell goods online. These jobs show the connection between rural communities and wider markets. They also challenge the idea that rural residents depend only on farming.

Young people should not be limited to stories of successful return. Some are uncertain about work. Some move between cities and hometowns. Some want to return but cannot find suitable jobs. Others prefer to build their lives elsewhere. These choices can be shown without judging one path as more loyal or authentic.

Older residents also need more varied roles. They are not only keepers of tradition or people waiting for care. Some continue working, take part in local business, use digital tools, care for grandchildren, or make decisions about family property. Others face loneliness, illness, or reduced mobility. Their experiences should not be reduced to a single image of peaceful old age.

Family relations can be shown with more honesty. Family members may care for one another while disagreeing about work, money, marriage,

education, or where to live. Including small disagreements does not mean presenting rural families as unhappy. It recognizes that close relationships also contain negotiation and pressure. Changes in rural communities are also worth recording. New roads, modern houses, machinery, tourism, online sales, and population movement change daily life. Some changes create opportunities, while others bring new problems. These stories can help viewers see rural areas as active social spaces rather than places fixed in tradition.

### 6.3 Maintaining Clear Boundaries Between Life and Performance

Rural short videos often mix daily life with performance. A real activity may be repeated for the camera. A family meal may be arranged to fit a posting schedule. Traditional tools may be used because they look better on screen. These choices are common in content production, but viewers may not know where ordinary life ends and staged content begins.

Creators can make this boundary clearer through simple explanations. They can state when a scene has been recreated, when an activity was arranged for filming, or when several days of work have been edited into one video. This information does not reduce the value of the content. It helps viewers understand how the story was made.

Commercial cooperation also needs clear labels. When a video promotes food, tourism, household goods, or local products, viewers should be able to identify the commercial purpose. Product promotion should not be hidden inside family care, poverty stories, or claims of personal sincerity.

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The use of family members requires care. Older people and children may attract attention because they create warmth or emotional interest. Their presence should not be treated only as a way to increase traffic or sales. They need to understand how they are being filmed when possible, and their private lives should not be exposed without limits. Creators should also avoid staging hardship for emotional effect. Poverty, illness, aging, and family separation can bring sympathy and attention. Repeated filming may turn a person's difficulty into content for viewers. Help provided during filming may be useful, but the person should not lose control over how their life is presented.

Editing can change the meaning of speech and action. A short clip may make a family disagreement look more serious or make an ordinary moment appear highly emotional. Titles and music can push viewers toward a judgment that the people in the video did not intend. Careful editing is needed when real relationships and personal difficulties are involved.

Account identity should not force creators to perform the same rural life every day. A person known for calm cooking may also face tiredness, business pressure, or family change. Allowing the account to show these shifts can reduce the gap between the public image and daily experience.

Viewers also need basic awareness of content production. A beautiful rural video is not a direct window into a complete life. It is a selected and edited version of events. Recognizing this does not require viewers to reject the video. It allows them to enjoy the image without treating it as full evidence of how rural people live.

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