



UK-China
Sustainable Agriculture
Innovation Network

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Season's Greetings from SAIN Secretariat

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Policies

Census shows China moving towards scale farming

[Xinhua, 15-12-2017] China is steadily moving towards scale farming with increased use of large machinery and equipment as the government has been pushing for the development of modern agriculture, an official census showed.

By the end of 2016, China had 3.98 million households engaged in scale farming, according to results of the country's third national agricultural survey.

The number of agricultural businesses came in at 2.04 million, more than five times the number seen a decade ago. The number of farmers cooperatives in China reached 910,000, accounting for 44.6 percent of all agricultural businesses.

Such households and businesses worked on altogether 28.6 percent of the country's total arable lands by the end of 2016, according to the data.

Accompanying the growth of scale farming is the increasing use of machinery. The survey showed that the number of combine harvesters in China reached 1.14 million, jumping 105.3 percent from a decade ago.

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Agricultural survey results should be effectively utilized

[GoV.CN, 17-12-2017] Premier Li Keqiang urged all departments to fully utilize results of the third national agricultural survey, as the results were reported to the State Council executive meeting chaired by Premier Li on Dec 13.

He looked through the report documents carefully at the meeting, calling all government departments to fully analyze the statistics listed, compare them with data from the second survey 10 years ago, and reveal the country's changes in economic and social sectors.

He said it concerns all departments, not just one or two units, and the data should be a reference when they make policy decisions.

The registered rural population still makes up most of China's population, and agriculture and rural areas are still the top priority for government work, the Premier said.

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China to expand rural land ownership reform

[China daily, 02-12-2017] China will expand its rural land ownership reform to more counties in the next year in its latest effort to bolster agriculture and the rural economy.

A total of 300 counties will be covered in the pilot program, up from current 129, Vice-Agricultural Minister Ye Zhenqin said.

Ye said local governments can also promote the program to more places based on their own conditions. "The reform should be basically completed by the end of 2021," he said.

China initiated the reform in 2014 to grant farmers more rights to benefit from collective land in villages. The pilot program, as a significant link in the country's rural revitalization strategy, has been expanding.

The question of how to efficiently exploit rural land remains a pressing issue in the world's most populous country, where food security and the well-being of rural residents are high priorities.

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China's grain output climbs in 2017

[Chia daily, 08-12-2017] China's grain output saw a mild increase in 2017 as per unit yield climbed, official data showed Friday 8 December.

The country's grain output stood at about 617.9 million tonnes in 2017, up by 1.66 million tonnes, or 0.3 percent, compared with last year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

This was the second highest output in history.

Grain planting area shrank by 815,000 hectares, while the per unit yield was up by 54 kilograms per hectare, or 1 percent year on year.

The growth in output came despite a reduction in output of high-yield grain, indicating progress in the supply-side structural reform in the agricultural sector.

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China reduces corn planting area amid excessive stock

[Xinhua, 18-12-2017] China's corn planting area is expected to be reduced by 1.33 million hectares in 2017 as the country seeks to address excessive corn stock, according to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

The reductions mainly concentrate in areas with low and unsteady output, including the country's arid northwest and desertified regions in the southwest.

Years of support for corn farmers has left China with a substantial stockpile. In 2016, China's corn output stood at around 220 million tonnes, while stocks amounted to 230 million tonnes.

To balance the market, China has been pushing for agricultural reform since 2016, urging farmers to adjust their mix of crops to stop blind expansion and focus on sustainable development, particularly in the corn industry.

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China stresses modern agriculture development

[Xinhua, 13-12-2017] China's State Council 13 December called for more efforts to foster new types of agricultural businesses in the country.

Projects will be launched to support diverse business entities that integrate different industries and link to the Internet Plus strategy, said a statement released after a State Council meeting.

Training plans will be started to cultivate new types of professional farmers to spur entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas to lift more people out of poverty, the statement said.

The State Council also promised preferential financial, tax, land and power use policies to encourage businesses to process agricultural products.

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1 million new farmers to be trained in China in 2018

[GT, 15-12-2017] China plans to train more than 1 million "new professional farmers" in 2018 for the development of modern agriculture in the country, a senior agriculture official said Friday 15 December.

The country will also enhance policy and financial support in the sector, and encourage the integration of agriculture and the Internet, Vice-Agricultural Minister Ye Zhenqin said at a press conference in Beijing.

China is home to 14 million farm professionals, news site people.cn reported.

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China to expand pilot reform in ecological damage compensation

[Xinhua, 17-12-2017] China will expand a pilot reform to nationwide starting next year, obliging polluters to repair the environment or pay a compensation.

The decision was contained in a document issued Sunday 17 December by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council.

By 2020, China aims to establish an efficient comprehensive damage compensation system to protect and improve the country's ecosystem.

Under the system, individuals or companies that cause environmental damage shall have to help restore the environment. If the damages are beyond restoration, they must pay for losses, a process that will be managed by local governments as non-tax revenue.

China has launched a series of campaigns to fight pollution and environmental degradation, as authorities rectify practices that boost economic growth at environmental cost.

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China no longer willing to pay environmental cost

[China daily, 18-20-20-17] Given the fact that more than half of the country's rivers and lakes have been seriously polluted and vast stretches of farmland have been contaminated with toxic heavy metals in some provinces, the country can no longer afford to let polluters get away with their dirty deeds.

Getting industry to pay to clean up its mess has been long overdue. Now the environmental damage compensation mechanism that has been successfully trialed in Chongqing municipality and Jilin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Hunan, Guizhou and Yunnan provinces since 2015, is to be rolled out across the country on Jan 1, which means polluting companies and individuals will have to repair the damage they do to the environment or else pay compensation.

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China marks centenary of national agricultural association

[Xinhua, 12-12-2017] Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the China Association of Agricultural Science Societies (CAASS) on Tuesday 12 December to unite the country's agricultural scientists and technicians to achieve more for national revival.

As a time-honored academic mass organization in agriculture, the CAASS has witnessed and promoted China's contemporary sci-tech development in agriculture, Xi said.

China is seeking further development through the rural revitalization strategy, supply-side structural reform, pursuing green agriculture, and implementing targeted poverty reduction measures, all of which present new demands for China's agricultural science, technology and talent, according to Xi.

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Science, Technology and Environment

British GM plant biologist receives Chinese honour

[Fruitnet, 15-12-2017] A British plant biologist involved in the creation of a genetically modified tomato in the 1980s has been awarded one of China's highest academic honours for his contribution to science.

Retired professor Don Grierson, who spent over 40 years at the University of Nottingham, has been made a foreign member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

He was awarded the prestigious honour in recognition of his international work in plant biology that has spanned four decades, as well as his ongoing contribution to the enhancement of agricultural and plant science in China.

In the 1980s his laboratory was involved in creating a genetically modified tomato, which softened and deteriorated more slowly. A tomato puree made from these tomatoes was the first genetically modified food to be sold in the UK and approved for sale on both sides of the Atlantic.

He is now a part-time professor at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, and a visiting professor at Shanxi Agricultural University in Taigu, Shanxi Province.

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Sinochem launches intelligent farming platform

[Xinhua, 03-12-2017] The Sinochem Group has launched an intelligent agricultural platform in east China's Anhui Province, which the major producer of chemicals and fertilizer hopes will help make farming work easier.

An online-offline combination, it can provide a wide range of services ranging from seed selection to soil detection and machinery training.

The platform, the first of its kind by Sinochem, has started operation in Anhui's Lujiang County. The province is one of the country's major grain-producing regions.

Sinochem is seeking to restructure its agricultural unit, shifting its focus from sales of agri-materials to agri-technology solutions.

Sinochem plans to promote the platform nationwide by building more than 50 technical service centers by the end of the next year.

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China uses less pesticide: official

[Xinhua, 04-12-2017] China's pesticide use has dropped in the past three years amid a campaign to ensure zero growth in pesticide use by 2020, an official said Monday 4 December.

Zeng Yande, head of the crop production department of the Ministry of Agriculture, said the ministry tightened market access and punished unlicensed companies as well as the makers and sellers of fake pesticides this year.

Besides the drop in pesticide use, China has also raised the efficiency of pesticide use and stepped up the use of biological pesticides, Zeng said.

China's average annual pesticide use in 2012-2014 rose 9.2 percent from the 2009-2011 level, weighing on production costs and food safety.

In early 2015, the ministry started a campaign to ensure zero growth in pesticide application by 2020.

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China to boost competitiveness in AI

[Xinhua, 14-12-2017] China has moved to forge new competitive advantages in artificial intelligence (AI), with goals to allow home grown businesses to take on global rivals by 2020.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) on Thursday 14 December released an action plan to substantially improve the emerging technology in the next three years, eyeing breakthroughs in basic research and wide application in multiple areas ranging from smart automobiles to robots and drones.

AI and manufacturing will be deeply integrated, according to the document.

Platforms of intelligent connected vehicles will be reliable and safe enough to support highly automated driving, and large-scale production and application of smart robots used for household and public services will be achieved.

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Chinese foresters win UN award

[Xinhua, 06-12-2017] Forest rangers in northern China's Saihanba Forest Farm recently received a prestigious UN environment award.

On Tuesday 5 December, Saihanba afforestation community in Inner Mongolia scooped the UN Champions of the Earth Award for its outstanding contribution to restoration of degraded landscapes.

After decades of hard work, Saihanba is now a vast forest covering about 93,000 hectares and an important ecological shield for Beijing and Tianjin.

Every year the forest in Saihanba purifies 137 million cubic meters of water and delivers half a million tons of oxygen.

Erik Solheim, executive director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), hailed Saihanba community for its pioneering innovation, saying that cost effective grassroots initiatives could reclaim degraded landscapes.

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Acid rain caused by air pollution in China ‘may be causing fatal landslides’

[Independent, 14-12-2017] Air pollution is such a serious problem in China that it may be triggering landslides, a study suggests.

Poor air quality is linked to around 4,000 deaths there every day but in a new study, geoscientists found there was a previously overlooked threat resulting from pollution.

“The pollutants may also be causing fatal landslides,” wrote Dr Ming Zhang and Dr Mauri McSaveney, the authors of a new study published in the journal *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*.

The scientists suggest acid rain resulting from air pollution could weaken layers of rock and trigger landslides. Rain can become acidic when gases released by burning coal dissolve in it, forming sulphuric acid and nitric acid.

Due in part to its extensive mountains, China is a particularly landslide-prone country.

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China strives to enhance environmental protection

[Xinhua, 11-12-2017] China will advance green development, strive to solve outstanding environmental problems and strengthen protection of the eco-system, Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli said Monday, 11 December.

"China attaches great importance to the construction of ecological civilization," Zhang told an annual conference of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and

Development (CCICED), a non-profit international advisory body approved by the Chinese government.

"China is putting the building of ecological civilization into a five-sphere integrated plan, which is an important step toward the building of a beautiful China and has contributed China's wisdom to solving global environmental problems and the building of a beautiful world," Zhang said.

The five-sphere integrated plan focuses on coordinated economic, political, cultural, social and ecological advancement.

Zhang said the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China had made "a new important plan for the construction of China's ecological civilization in the new era."

Zhang said China would establish a green, low-carbon and recycling economic system.

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China's food stores attract a new wave of snackers and e-shoppers

[FT, 0712-2017] The sight of shoppers pushing supermarket trolleys among a crowd of Shanghainese chowing down seafood at a communal table is somewhat jarring. But this is a branch of Hema — one of 20 stores opened by Chinese ecommerce pioneer Alibaba in an effort to reimagine food shopping as more than a weekly chore carried out under the glare of fluorescent lights in a retailing shed.

Hema is a hybrid of ecommerce and physical shopping, calculated to appeal to a generation of Chinese consumers who live life through their smartphones. Visitors can pull live crabs out of a large tank before browsing the aisles for packaged goods. They scan items as they go and pay for them via the Alipay app that has become a popular alternative to cash in China.

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A Chinese company is developing facial recognition for organic chickens

[Quartz, 15-12-2017] If you live in a city but still want to look deep into the eyes of your dinner, you're in luck. Thanks to blockchain technology being developed by Chinese insurance tech company ZhongAn Online, people will soon be able to use facial-recognition technology to track organically farmed chickens they've pre-purchased. They will also be able to monitor their bird's movement in real-time through GPS tracking bracelets attached to birds' legs. Welcome to the brave new world of farm-to-table eating in the 21st century.

ZhongAn is billing the program—called "GoGo Chicken"—as a way for health-conscious city slickers to follow the life cycle of their food, giving them an illusory experience of being just a little less displaced from a food system that is increasingly out of sight of most. Right now only 100,000 birds have been outfitted with GPS bracelets, but the Shanghai-based company plans to incorporate about 23 million birds into project over the next three years, pushing the Internet of Things onto Chinese farms.

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E-commerce help bridge rural-urban gap

[Xinhua, 11-12-2017] E-commerce has allowed poor farmers to quickly achieve a more prosperous life, as the country pursues a rural revitalization strategy to speed up the modernization of rural areas.

Among the 17 major cities in coastal Shandong Province, Heze is one of the most underdeveloped. The city, famous for its peony cultivating industry, has witnessed a boom in "Taobao Villages" in recent years.

Taobao, the major e-commerce platform of Alibaba, is a leading enterprise in the rapidly growing sector. To be nominated as a "Taobao Village" requires annual transactions of more than 10 million yuan and more than 100 online shops located in the village.

The number of Taobao Villages in the area administered by Heze has risen from only two in 2013, to 168 this year, making up two-thirds of the total in the province. Heze has become one of the cities with the most Taobao Villages nationwide.

The boom in e-commerce in rural areas has encouraged many young people working in cities to return to their hometowns and open start-ups.

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Quarter of Chinese villages have e-commerce distribution sites

[Xinhua, 14-12-2017] One in every four Chinese villages had e-commerce distribution sites by the end of 2016, official data showed Thursday 14 December, reflecting an improved logistics network in rural areas.

By the end of 2016, 99.7 percent of villages had access to electricity, while 11.9 percent could use natural gas, according to results of the country's third national agriculture census.

A total of 91.3 percent of rural towns had centralized water supply, and 90.8 percent had centralized garbage treatment, while 53.5 percent of villages had finished or partly finished toilet renovation projects.

China's agriculture census has been conducted every 10 years since 1996 to collect information on rural production, infrastructure, public services and living conditions.

The third census involved 5 million census takers, more than 200 million rural households and over 3 million businesses and other market entities.

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Trade and Business

China should develop its cheese market: agricultural official

[Xinhua, 13-12-2017] A Chinese agricultural official said Wednesday 13 December that China should encourage growth in the cheese market to develop its milk industry.

"Efforts should be made to develop dry dairy products like cheese to improve milk product structure and boost the milk industry," Vice Agriculture Minister Yu Kangzhen said.

China's per capita cheese consumption remains around 0.1 kg each year, far lower than the global average of 2.6 kg, according to the Dairy Association of China.

The country produced 37.12 million tonnes of milk and 29.93 million tonnes of dairy products last year, ranking third after the United States and India, according to the association.

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Former PM takes on UK-China investment role

[BBC, 16-12-2017] The former UK prime minister will take charge of a £750m (\$1bn) fund to improve ports, roads and rail networks between China and its trading partners.

The government said working with China's Belt and Road Initiative would create jobs and boost trade links.

It comes after Chancellor Philip Hammond's two-day trip to China.

The Belt and Road Initiative was first unveiled in 2013, but this year China's President Xi Jinping pledged £96bn (\$124bn) for the scheme.

The Chinese government said it would invest tens of billions of dollars as part of an ambitious economic plan to rebuild ports, roads and rail networks linking China and its trading partners.

A statement from the Treasury also detailed progress on allowing British banks and insurers to access the Asian superpower's bond and insurance markets.

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IBM & Walmart launching Blockchain Food Safety Alliance in China with Fortune 500's JD.com

[Forbes, 14-12-2017] In further move to apply Blockchain technology for food traceability to support offline and online consumers, IBM, Walmart and Nasdaq-listed Chinese retailer JD.com together with Tsinghua University National Engineering Laboratory for E-Commerce Technologies have announced a Blockchain Food Safety Alliance collaboration to improve food tracking and safety in China.

That initiative is designed to bring the requisite efficiency, transparency and authenticity to food supply chains around the world. The solution from 'Big Blue' is global - reflecting the global nature of supply chains.

IBM will provide its Blockchain Platform and expertise, while Tsinghua University will act as a technical advisor sharing its expertise in the key technologies and the China food safety ecosystem. IBM and Tsinghua will collaborate with Walmart and JD to develop, optimize and roll out the technology to suppliers and retailers who join the alliance.

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Scottish tech firm brings Chinese craft beer to UK

[China daily, 06-12-2017] Britons can now sip on craft beer brewed in China, following an import deal between Edinburgh-based online drinks platform Flavourly and Beijing brewer Panda Brew.

The deal is believed to involve the largest ever amount of Chinese craft beer imported into the United Kingdom, with 10,000 bottles of Panda Brew made available to British drinkers.

China is the largest beer market in the world. In 2015, Chinese drinkers guzzled 54 billion liters – more than double that of the United States, the second-biggest market, according to the UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Panda Brew was founded in 2013 and its range of craft beers is now sold in 60 cities across China. Six varieties are now available for next-day delivery in the UK through Flavourly, which is an online platform that sells and distributes imported craft beers and gins.

Earlier this year, Scottish craft brewer Innis & Gunn announced a deal with Chinese beer importer Dxccl International to distribute its beer brands in the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau.

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China's CITIC closes \$1.1 billion Brazil takeover, sees more ahead

[Reuters, 12月1日] China's CITIC Agri Fund said on Friday it had completed its \$1.1 billion acquisition of Dow Chemical Co's corn seed business in Brazil, a potential vehicle for future purchases in Latin America.

CITIC plans to rename the business LP Sementes Ltda and have its Yuan LongPing High-tech Agriculture Co run it.

CITIC Agri Fund, which is partly owned by Chinese conglomerate CITIC Ltd, has about \$2.65 billion available for takeovers after paying \$1.1 billion to Dow, General Manager Shi Liang told Reuters after a news conference in Ribeirão Preto, Sao Paulo state.

Beyond seeds, Shi said the main areas the fund is looking at are animal genetics, veterinary products such as vaccines, and crop protection products.

Chinese companies invested \$14 billion in deals in Brazil in the first nine months of 2017, already making it the second-biggest year since the Brazilian government began tracking such data in 2003.

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Northern Ireland eyes China for post-Brexit certainty

[China daily, 04-12-2017] Northern Ireland, once an industrial powerhouse, wants closer ties with China to safeguard against uncertainty as the United Kingdom prepares to leave the European Union.

On 2 December, more than 100 provincial and municipal leaders from China gathered in Belfast, the province's capital, for the third UK-China Regional Leaders Meeting, a gathering created during President Xi Jinping's state visit to the UK in October 2015, at the start of the "golden era" of relations between China and Britain.

Following the meeting, the Northern Ireland executive office signed agreements with the local governments of Liaoning and Hubei provinces to strengthen collaboration in areas including trade, investment, education, research, and development. Newry and Mourne district also signed similar agreements with the city of Changchun, the capital of Jilin province.

In 2014, the Northern Ireland executive office opened a branch in Beijing.

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Canada expands agri-food market access in China

[CNW, 07-12-2017] Trade is a priority for the Government of Canada as a key driver of the economy, helping to creating new market opportunities for Canadian businesses, including for Canada's farmers and food processors.

Ongoing efforts by the Government of Canada to strengthen trade ties with China, and help Canadian farmers by creating growth in the agricultural sector.

China is Canada's second largest trading partner and was China's fourth-largest supplier of total agri-food and seafood products in 2016, Canada exported more than \$6 billion in agri-food products to China in 2016.

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