

Be Strong, Wuhan!
Be Strong, China!

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Policies

China bans wildlife trade nationwide due to coronavirus outbreak

[Reuters, 26-01-2020] China banned wildlife trade nationwide in markets, supermarkets, restaurants, and e-commerce platforms due to the coronavirus outbreak, the country's market watchdog, agricultural ministry, and forestry bureau said in a joint statement.

Any places that breed wildlife should be isolated, and the transportation of wildlife should be banned, said the statement.

The ban will take effect from Sunday, 26 January.

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China to release vegetable reserves to ensure supply

[Xinhua, 31-01-2020] China will release winter and spring vegetable reserves in major northern cities to ease the shortage of supply amid the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Major cities in north China should strengthen local market monitoring and release vegetable reserves in a timely manner to ensure residents' daily consumption needs, according to a circular released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce.

In the meantime, it is necessary to supplement the vegetable reserves through the procurement from out-of-town production bases and conduct local off-peak purchasing, said the circular.

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China reveals plan to cut plastic use by 2025

[Xinhua, 19-01-2020] China on 19 January released an ambitious plan to ban or significantly reduce the production and use of environmentally-unfriendly plastic products in the next five years to contain pollution.

The country will gradually ban or restrict the production, sales and use of certain plastics while promoting their degradable, recycle-friendly alternatives, according to a document issued by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

By 2025, China expects to effectively control plastic pollution, substantially reduce the amount of plastic waste in landfills of key cities, establish a complete plastics management system and make progress in the development of alternative products, said the document.

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China issues plan for digital agricultural, rural development

[ECNS, 20-01-2020] China on 20 January unveiled a plan to push forward the digitalization of its agricultural development and rural governance, amid the country's solid steps toward rural vitalization.

The 2019-2025 development plan was jointly released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission.

Digital technology will see faster integration with systems involving agricultural industry, production and operation, with the proportion of agricultural digital economy greatly increased, according to the plan.

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China plans to issue biosafety certificates to domestic GM soybean, corn

China's agriculture ministry said on 30 December it plans to issue biosafety certificates to a domestically grown, genetically modified (GM) soybean crop and two corn crops, in a move toward commercializing GM grain production in the world's top market.

China will grant the certificate to SHZD32-01 soybean developed by Shanghai Jiaotong University, provided there is no objection during a 15-day period soliciting public opinion, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said in a statement.

If approved, it will become China's first GM soybean crop to receive such a certificate, a first step toward commercialized production.

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China to strengthen fight against environmental pollution in 2020

[Xinhua, 14-01-2020] China's top environmental watchdog has reiterated its ambition to fight environmental pollution in 2020, as positive results have been reaped through efforts to clean up the environment in the past year.

"Practice has proved that the current direction and path of pollution control are correct and should be adhered to and improved in the long run," said Li Ganjie, minister of ecology and environment.

China will officially launch its national green development fund in 2020, amid efforts to improve the economic policy system for ecological and environmental protection.

2020 marks the year to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the final year of the 13th Five-Year Plan, and the decisive year in the battle against pollution, Li said.

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China to curb farming near rivers in push to reverse water pollution

[Reuters, 17-01-2020] The government is planning to restrict farming that encroaches on major rivers, restore wetlands and ecosystems and tackle excess water consumption in its 2021-2025 five-year plan, said Zhang Bo, head of the water department at the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, speaking at a news briefing.

With per capita water resources only a quarter of the global average, China has made the restoration of contaminated supplies a priority. Zhang said the government would now take ecological value into consideration as well as economic value.

Beijing has been drawing what it calls "ecological protection red lines" that make areas off-limits to agriculture and industry. But with water demand still on the rise, it must strike a balance between bolstering economic growth, maximizing agricultural output and protecting its rivers.

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Extend benefits to farmers to bridge rural-urban divide in a better way

[China daily, 23-01-2020] Governments at various levels should take measures to make it easier for farmers to become urban residents, in order to realize the central government's 2020 objective of turning 100 million farmers into urban residents, the National Development and Reform Commission said at a news conference in Beijing.

Statistics show that by the end of last year, 60.6 percent of China's population lived in cities — 1.02 percentage points more than in 2018 and 5 percentage points higher than the global

average. And yet the urbanization rate in China, more importantly its quality, is low compared with developed countries.

Although hundreds of millions of rural residents have moved to the cities in recent years, many are migrant workers, which means they still have a rural hukou (household registration) and thus do not have access to public welfare programs in the cities. For example, it is difficult for them to get their children admitted to a school in a city, as schools have a fixed number of seats. Also, they cannot get subsidized medical care or pensions.

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Science, Technology and Environment

Chinese drone maker targets farms in Japan, South Korea and Australia

[NIKKEI, 24-12-2019] China's XAG, a smaller rival of drone maker DJI Technology, said it will accelerate expansion in key foreign markets including Japan, South Korea and Australia as it sees opportunity in raising productivity in the farming industry, which faces an acute labor shortage.

In a recent interview with the Nikkei Asian Review, XAG co-founder Justin Gong said he expects sales from abroad to grow to half the group's revenue from the current one-fifth over the next two to three years. The company, whose core business is developing drones and drone technology for agricultural purposes, partnered with German pharmaceutical Bayer in 2018 to break into Japan and had planned to open 100 service locations in Australia this year.

The Japan Coast Guard plans to stop using Chinese-made drones due to security concerns, a move that could weigh on peers led by DJI. However, XAG sees continued opportunity in foreign commercial markets.

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China's Beidou navigation system to provide unique services

[GPS Daily, 28-12-2019] China will provide unique services to global users with the Beidou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) after its construction is finished in 2020, an official said.

Along with basic positioning, navigation and time services, the BDS will provide six categories of special services that distinguish it from other systems, said BDS spokesperson.

In precise point positioning, the BDS will provide users in China and surrounding areas with decimeter-level dynamic positioning and centimeter-level static positioning, meeting the demand for high-precision service in fields like land surveying and mapping, agriculture and automatic driving.

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China to step up meteorological efforts in support of agriculture, poverty relief

[Xinhua, 11-01-2020] The China Meteorological Administration (CMA) named improving weather services for agricultural causes and poverty relief as one of its key tasks for 2020.

To promote rural vitalization and help eradicate absolute poverty, the country will step up the building of a modern meteorological system that serves agricultural development, said the CMA during an annual work conference opening Saturday.

The country will improve monitoring and early warning of meteorological disasters in rural areas while beefing up weather services for poverty-stricken regions.

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China's major grain producer to further reduce pesticide use

[ECNS, 17-01-2020] Heilongjiang province, China's major grain producer, plans to further reduce the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides on farmland in 2020 to boost green agriculture and food security.

Farmland featuring reduced chemical use will be expanded to 3 million hectares in 2020 from last year's 2.67 million hectares, according to the government work report delivered at the ongoing annual session of the provincial People's Congress.

In 2019, Heilongjiang in Northeast China has reduced the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides by 15,200 tonnes and over 2,000 tonnes, respectively, compared with the previous year.

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China province promotes conservational tillage to protect black soil

[Xinhua, 26-01-2020] Authorities in northeast China's Jilin Province are promoting conservational tillage to protect black soil, one of the most suitable soils for growing crops.

Jinlin governor Jing Junhai has proposed in this year's government work report to increase the total area of conservational tillage to more than 1.2 million hectares from the current level of 667,000 hectares.

Straw mulching is a major method developed by Chinese agriculturalists to promote conservational tillage. It can effectively increase the fertility of black soil while reducing air pollution caused by straw burning.

Jilin has 7 million hectares of black soil, accounting for 23.3 percent of the total black soil area in China. It is also a major grain producer, ranking the fifth among provincial-level regions in the country.

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Chinese study finds aromas help plants resist cold weather

[Xinhua, 04-01-2020] Aromatic plants not only have a sweet smell but also a strong tolerance to cold weather. A new Chinese study found that adding a floral scent to tea plants may help them withstand low temperatures.

Cold weather is an environmental stress factor that can limit the distribution, survival and growth of various plants. But the study published in the scientific journal *New Phytologist* says that increasing the concentration of aromatic substances in tea plants can enhance their resistance to cold temperatures.

Researchers from east China's Anhui Agriculture University have discovered that nerolidol, an aromatic substance accumulated in tea plants in cold weather, can be converted into a type of glucose by a key gene UGT91Q2. As the glucose is produced, it feeds the plant and is then gradually converted into other nutrients that promotes plant survival and growth when the temperature drops, subsequently enhancing the plant's cold tolerance.

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Scientists declare Chinese paddlefish is extinct

[China daily, 04-01-2020] The Chinese paddlefish, one of the world's largest freshwater fishes and native to the Yangtze River, was recently declared extinct by scientists.

Reaching up to 7 meters in length, the Chinese paddlefish might have become extinct between 2005 and 2010, according to a research paper published online by the Science of The Total Environment journal on Dec 23.

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Chinese scientists launch genome project for protists

[China daily, 03-01-2022] Chinese scientists recently launched a program to map the genomes of about 10,000 representative species of protists and establish a large-scale database of protist genetic resources.

A protist is a single-celled organism of the kingdom Protista, such as a protozoan or simple alga. More than 60,000 protist species have been described, and the number of unknown species is hard to estimate.

Protists are not only an important component of water ecosystems, but also an excellent source of food and nutrition for aquatic animals and humans. However, some toxic algal blooms in rivers and oceans may bring serious environmental problems, said the scientists.

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Tibet to push for construction of national park cluster on plateau

[Xinhua, 07-01-2020] Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region will push forward the preparation for construction of a national park cluster on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in 2020.

The cluster includes national parks built around Mount Qomolangma, Sanjiangyuan and Qiangtang, with the aim to better protect the unique ecosystem of the plateau and exploit natural resources in a sustainable way.

Construction on the cross-provincial Sanjiangyuan National Park, home to the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers, will begin in Tibet this year.

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Trade and Business

Chinese farmers, supermarkets race to supply food to locked down Wuhan

[Reuters, 29-01-2020] China has told farmers to step up vegetable production, opened roads for delivery trucks and is punishing those trying to profit in order to keep feeding residents of the locked down city of Wuhan at the centre of the new coronavirus outbreak.

Shouguang, the country's biggest vegetable production base, in the eastern Shandong province, has been asked to deliver 600 tons of fresh vegetables to Wuhan every day in the next 10 to 15 days.

China's largest food and agricultural firm COFCO Group and China Grain Reserves Corporation (Sinograin) Group have stepped up supplies of rice, meat and cooking oil to Hubei province, state media reported.

Delivery trucks carrying food are exempt from travel restrictions if they have government permits. Authorities have cracked down on cases of price hikes and publicized them to warn others.

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China's agricultural insurance market reported strong growth, RMB 3.6 trln insured

[China Knowledge, 13-01-2020] China's agricultural insurance market has reported robust growth in the past few years due to wider coverage and higher premium income, said an official with China's top banking and insurance regulator.

The insured sum in 2019 reached RMB 3.6 trln, ranking first in Asia and second in the world, said Liang Tao, vice chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC). Premiums from agricultural insurance were expected to reach RMB 68 bln, in comparison with only RMB 5.18 bln in 2007, according to Liang.

The CBIRC will continue to encourage the development of new agricultural insurance products with the application of new technology in the agriculture sector, said Liang.

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Gansu's foreign trade hits 37.99 billion yuan in 2019

[China daily, 21-01-2020] The total value of imports and exports in Northwest China's Gansu province's foreign trade was 37.99 billion yuan in 2019. In December, it was 3.6 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 28.3 percent, according to Lanzhou Customs.

In 2019, Gansu's import and export of foreign trade presented three characteristics:

- The "friend circle" of economic and trade exchanges has continued to expand.
- The speed of private enterprises in imports and exports is growing.
- The import and export of comprehensive insurance areas continued to multiply.
- The structure of import and export products continued to be optimized.

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China big pig farms tie up with small ones in \$7 billion plan to boost hog output

[Reuter, 26-12-2019] China's large pig farms are lining up with small, family-based farms in a state-initiated investment of nearly 50 billion yuan (\$7.14 billion) to boost hog productions hit hard by a deadly swine disease, the agriculture ministry said.

Fifteen leading pig farms in Beijing on 26 Dec signed 19 agreements with local governments in 16 Chinese cities such as Liangzhou of western Sichuan province and Engshi in central Hubei, to raise pigs together, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said.

These projects are expected to produce more than 22 million hogs for slaughter annually and involve 33,000 poor rural families, the ministry said, without giving a timeline.

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China's top pig producing region vows to return to normal levels in 2020

[Reuters, 27-12-2019] China's top pig producer Sichuan province pledged to produce 60 million hogs in 2020, around levels in previous years, state media reported on 27 Dec, after a deadly pig disease decimated the country's massive pig herd.

The southwestern province will allocate the pig output target to the districts and counties within the region, in the form of "letter of responsibility," Xinhua news reported.

To reach the target, the local authorities will also give 300 yuan (\$42.89) of subsidy for every newly added sow, and subsidize companies that restart deserted pig farms or build new ones, part of an overall effort to boost pig production, Xinhua reported.

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China's swine fever crisis will impact global trade well into 2020

[Forbes, 28-12-2019] China's outbreak of African swine fever was more devastating than expected in 2019.

The virus, which is harmless to humans but deadly to pigs, has wiped out more than one third of the country's hog population and sent pork prices skyrocketing. China's inflation reached a nearly eight-year high in November after pork prices soared 110% year-on-year. Li Defa, who heads the College of Animal Science and Technology at China Agricultural University, estimated the swine fever has caused more than \$140 billion in direct losses.

Now the Chinese government is saying hog inventories have bottomed out and are starting to rise.

But despite the alleged turnaround in the swine fever crisis, experts estimate China's pig farming industry will take years to recover, while Beijing will continue to ratchet up pork imports.

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Argentina looks to capitalise on China's swine fever crisis

[Dialogo Chino, 29-01-2020] Unlike its neighbour Brazil, Argentina is not a global pork powerhouse, consuming 95% of the six million pigs it produces each year domestically. However, China's swine fever crisis and a surge in investment look set to transform the industry amid concerns over biosecurity and the climate impacts of huge upscaling.

Major Latin American producers like Mexico and Brazil stepped in. The first shipment of pork from Argentina arrived in China in 2019, is also getting in on the act. As a country with ample land and grains for pig feed, Argentina has significant potential to increase production and looks set to sign a US\$27 billion investment deal with China this year. The plan could enable the annual production of 100 million pigs in the next eight years.

AAPP and Biogenesis Bagó, a biotechnology company that focuses on animal health and which has a strong presence in China and Southeast Asia, are working to upgrade the China-Argentina pork trade.

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This issue is compiled by SAIN Secretariat (UK). If you have any further enquiries, please contact Yuelai Lu at: y.lu@uea.ac.uk; for more information about SAIN, please visit: www.sainonline.org/English.html

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