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Policies

China's No. 1 central document vows promotion of rural vitalization

[CGTN, 22-02-2022] China released its "No. 1 central document" for 2022 on 22 Feb, calling for a continuous "comprehensive promotion of rural vitalization."

The government will ensure stable and increasing agricultural production, growing incomes for farmers and tranquillity in rural areas.

Policymakers set the grain output target for 2022 at 650 million tonnes, the same as last year.

The document says an absolute no to "massive return to poverty," given the country achieved the goal of eliminating extreme poverty at the end of 2020.

E-commerce, tourism and logistics are also mentioned in the document to promote the development of rural areas.

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Highlights of China's agricultural, rural development

[Xinhua, 21-01-2022] China saw notable progress in agricultural and rural reform and development in 2021. The following are key facts and figures provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

- Grain output hit a new high of 683 billion kilograms, with grain farmland exceeding 1.76 billion mu (about 117.3 million hectares).
- Live pig production fully recovered in 2021, with stocks of breeding sows reaching 43.29 million.
- Pork production stood at 52.96 million tonnes, up 28.8 percent year on year, basically matching the level of a normal year.
- The output of beef and mutton grew by 4.1 percent, the output of milk by 7.1 percent, and the output of aquatic products by more than 2 percent.
- Vegetable production was expected to stand at 750 million tonnes, and fruit production at 290 million tonnes.
- International trade in agricultural products grew rapidly, with total imports and exports reaching 304.17 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 23.2 percent from the 2020 level.

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Food security, poverty key areas of focus in 2022

[China daily, 20-01-2022] Ensuring national food security and preventing large-scale backsliding into poverty are two major tasks of this year's agriculture and rural work, officials with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said.

China's grain output hit a record high of 683 million metric tons and the sown area reached 118 million hectares last year.

Pork production had fully reached normal level. By the end of last year, the number of breeding sows exceeded 43.29 million and the pork output was 52.96 million tons, a year-on-year increase of 28.8 percent.

To consolidate the achievements of poverty alleviation, over half of the central government's subsidy for rural vitalization were used for developing rural industries, and each county has developed two to three special leading industries.

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Grain acreage among key issues for rural areas

[China daily, 15-01-2022] Charting China's 2022 development blueprint for rural and agricultural sectors, the annual central rural work conference has once again underscored the urgent need to stabilize grain acreage and expand production of soybeans and other oil crops to ensure sufficient supplies.

The conference set the grain output target for this year at above 650 million metric tons.

The annual central rural work conference emphasized that the supply of vegetables, pork, poultry, livestock and aquatic products should be stabilized.

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Ministry issues cultivation outline, sets benchmarks for food supply

[GT, 13-01-2022] The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs issued a development outline for China's food-crop farming sector during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), which sets multiple production goals for grain crops.

The outline stressed the target for annual grain output by the end of the plan period, which it said should stabilize at more than 1.3 trillion *jin* (650 million tons), and the nation should try to surpass the milestone of 1.4 trillion *jin*.

However, the outline pointed out multiple challenges, especially the shrinking cultivated area. According to the outline, China's national cultivated land area in 2019 was 1.918 billion mu (127.87 million hectares), 113 million mu lower than 10 years earlier.

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China unveils five-year plan for agricultural mechanization

[MARA, 12-01-2022] China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) unveiled a plan for increasing mechanization in agriculture.

MARA set a series of quantitative objectives, including 75% mechanized operation in planting and harvesting; full mechanized operation in major production counties (cities or districts) for grains, cotton, oilseeds and sugar; 55% mechanized operation in ploughing, planting and harvesting in hilly and mountainous counties (cities or districts); and 50% mechanized operation in sub-sectors of protected agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and primary processing of agricultural produce.

The Plan also stresses the importance of policy support, market-based principle, innovation-driven and balanced development, and systematic planning in the advancement of agricultural mechanization.

During the 14th Five-year Plan period (2021-2025), greater efforts are required to facilitate supply-side structural reform in support of agricultural mechanization to close gaps, shore up weak links and increase synergies, MARA said.

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China aims at grain output of 700b kg by 2025

[Xinhua, 13-01-2021] China will stabilize its annual grain output at over 650 billion kg and strive to beat a target of 700 billion kg by 2025 to ensure grain security, according to a five-year plan on farming released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The country vows to keep its grain farmland above 1.75 billion mu (about 117 million hectares) by 2025, said the plan.

Planting acreage of grains should stay above 1.4 billion mu, while that of staple grains should be over 800 million mu.

Major progress should be made in the farming industry by 2025, with the country's capability of providing key farming produces boosted and green production achieved, said the plan.

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China to produce 40% more soybeans by 2025 in self-sufficiency drive

[Reuters, 13-01-2022] China said it would raise domestic soybean output sharply in the next four years, in a drive to boost self sufficiency in supply of the oilseed, according to an official document released on 13 January.

The country has set a goal to produce about 23 million tonnes of soybeans by end of 2025, up 40% from current output levels of 16.4 million tonnes, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said, releasing its 14th five-year plan on crop farming.

According to the five-year plan document, China will cultivate land specifically for growing soybeans, expand soybean-corn rotation programmes and focus on raising the yield of the oilseed during the 2021-25 period.

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China could cut soybean demand by 30 mln tonnes

[Reuters, 16-02-2022] China can reduce its soybean demand by 30 million tonnes by continuing to promote lower soymeal rations in feed and using alternative proteins, the official Xinhua news agency said on 16 February, citing unnamed agriculture officials.

China issued guidelines last year recommending the reduction of soymeal and corn in pig and poultry feed, as it sought to reduce its dependence on imported grains.

China imports almost 100 million tonnes of soybeans each year to make protein-rich soymeal for its huge livestock sector.

The portion of soymeal in feed dropped to an average 15.3% last year, down 2.4 percentage points compared with 2020, said Xinhua.

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Chinese premier stresses support for agricultural production

[Xinhua, 13-02-2022] Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stressed increasing support for agricultural production to ensure that annual grain output continues to exceed 1.3 trillion jin (650 billion kg) this year.

Li made the remarks in an instruction to a national work conference on Spring agricultural production held on Sunday in east China's Shandong Province.

Li urged precautions against plant diseases, insect pests, and extreme weather to ensure another bumper summer harvest.

Efforts should be made to ramp up support for agriculture production, guarantee agricultural supplies, keep the prices of agriculture supplies stable, and ensure the spring farming gets off to a good start, Li said.

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China helps boost global food security

[China daily, 10-01-2022] China's accumulated experience in reducing food loss and waste is being shared with the world and can help developing countries improve their ability to reduce food loss and ensure food security, experts and officials said.

China's experience shows that increasing grain output while reducing food loss and waste is a significant way to ensure national food security. In November, the country issued an action plan on saving food in multiple procedures to add "invisible" high-quality farmland.

Meanwhile, the reduction in loss and waste saves land, water, fertilizer and pesticides, and thus protects the environment and reduces carbon dioxide emissions, helping sustainable development.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China unveils top 10 agricultural science advances of 2021

[Xinhua, 12-01-2022] The Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) unveiled the country's 10 most significant advances in the field of agricultural sciences in 2021.

A study on the prevention and control of *bemisia tabaci* topped the list. The study revealed how the insect overcomes the defenses of its host, providing new ideas for the development of precise green control technology for *bemisia tabaci*.

In another study, researchers cultivated the first generation of hybrid potatoes designed using genomic big data.

Other key advances include studies on methane production, cotton fiber quality improvement, the construction of a crop yield estimation system, and the mass production of biofuels.

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China aims high in agricultural sci-tech innovation

[Xinhua, 13-01-2022] China is striving to beef up its innovation capacity in agricultural science and technology to further safeguard food security of the country, according to a five-year development guideline of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS).

The CAAS aims to achieve breakthroughs that can help improve grain yield, self-sufficiency of oil-bearing crops such as soybeans, and the utilization rate of irrigation water, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides.

China also needs self-developed technologies to reduce dependence on the import of some crops, livestock, and poultry varieties, said the CAAS.

The guideline focuses on major fields such as seeds, cultivated land, agricultural machinery, and bio-safety. It calls for boosting the construction of new key laboratories, a grain crop science center, a molecular design breeding center, a national crop germplasm resource bank, a livestock and poultry bank, and an agricultural microorganism bank.

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China strives to build agricultural sci-tech innovation system

[CGTN, 13-01-2022] China is striving to establish a modern agricultural science and technology innovation system by 2025, according to a development guideline of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) for the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

The CAAS aims to achieve breakthroughs that can help improve grain yield, self-sufficiency of oil-bearing crops such as soybeans, and the utilization rate of irrigation water, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

China also needs self-developed technologies to reduce dependence on importing certain crops, livestock and poultry varieties, said the CAAS.

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China Agricultural Development: Sanya's smart farmland empowers 'Nanfan Silicon Valley'

[CGTN, 24-02-2022] In recent years, southern China's Sanya has been actively developing smart farmland and the CRO (Contract Research Organization) business model in the seed industry, to contribute to the construction of China's seed "Silicon Valley".

The seed industry CRO model is used to outsource services to a third party, including seed breeding, farming, and breeding research.

In order to speed up the progress of Nanfan seed breeding for agricultural research and production, the test field constitutes a smart agriculture system, which uses automation and information technology to record the data in the production process. Additionally, the test field actively explores how to develop the CRO model in the seed industry. Field management and basic data evaluation are outsourced to a third party in the pre-trial stage, or in the full stage depending on the actual demands of the breeding team, so as to save time for lab research.

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China strives to make food system greener, more sustainable

[Xinhua, 20-01-2022] China will take stronger measures to improve its food and agricultural systems to make them more environmentally efficient and beneficial to rural people, an agricultural official said.

The country will endeavor to ensure food security, promote agricultural carbon emission reduction, and consolidate poverty alleviation results through rural vitalization, said Xie Jianmin, an official with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Xie made the remarks at a press conference on the release of the Rural Development Report 2021, which is jointly launched by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the China Center for Agricultural Policy of Peking University.

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Chinese biologists develop anti-disease wheat

[Xinhua, 10-02-2022] Chinese biologists have revealed the mechanism behind an anti-disease wheat mutant developed using genome-editing technology.

They used genome-editing technology to enable elite wheat varieties to resist powdery mildew, a severe crop disease, without yield losses.

Powdery mildew is one of the major wheat diseases. According to China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the disease affects about 6.67 million hectares of wheat every year in China. The yield of severely affected fields can be cut by 40 percent.

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Long-term approach needed to protect arable farmland

[China daily, 17-02-2020] China should adopt a long-term approach to protecting arable farmland to ensure the country's food security and sustainable development, agricultural experts said.

China has 127.87 million hectares of arable land, with the area having fallen by 7.5 million hectares in the past 10 years and approaching a red line, according to the results of the third national land survey, which was released in August.

Agricultural authorities at the annual work conference were urged to strictly implement measures to protect arable land and strengthen regulations governing its use.

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China takes stock of groundwater resources for first time

[CGTN, 21-01-2022] China's total storage of groundwater resources stands at about 52.1 trillion cubic meters, the China Geological Survey announced.

The country's total storage of underground freshwater is about 37.4 trillion cubic meters, and underground saltwater is about 14.7 trillion cubic meters.

China's groundwater storage increased by 36.3 billion cubic meters in 2021, noted the China Geological Survey, including a net increase of 35.7 billion cubic meters of shallow groundwater storage and a net increase of 600 million cubic meters of deep groundwater storage, compared with the previous year.

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Less surface ozone could significantly increase wheat yield

[China daily, 10-02-2022] Chinese researchers have discovered that halving ozone dose could increase wheat yields by more than 20 percent, the Science and Technology Daily reported.

The researchers assessed the relative yield loss in rice, wheat and maize due to ozone, by combining the ozone elevation experiments across Asia and air monitoring at about 3,000 locations in China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

They found that the total ozone-induced annual loss of crop production is estimated at \$63 billion in East Asia, according to a recent research article published in the journal Nature Food.

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Public more aware of wetlands protection

[China daily, 20-01-2022] China has 64 wetlands of international importance that cover 7.32 million hectares, harbor 2,258 plant species and 260 bird species, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration said in a white paper.

Forty-eight of the Chinese wetlands are in inland areas, with the rest along the coast.

The supply of water to the wetlands has increased steadily, and their water quality has also improved, the white paper said, adding that public awareness of wetlands protection has also been enhanced.

Conservation of wetlands in China is crucial, as it ranks fourth in wetland area in the world with 65.9 million hectares, 10 percent of the world's wetland areas. The country now has 899 national wetland parks after 44 opened last year.

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Trade and Business

China's agriculture and related industries take up 16.47 pct of economy in 2020

[Xinhua, 12-01-2022] The added value of China's agriculture and related industries accounted for 16.47 percent of the gross domestic product in 2020, official data showed.

The total added value of these industries stood at 16.69 trillion yuan (about 2.62 trillion U.S. dollars) during the period, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

In breakdown, farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery together constituted 48.8 percent - the largest share - of the total added value of agriculture and related industries, followed by processing and manufacturing of these products for dining purposes with a 20.9-percent share.

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Grain giants form JVs to optimize biz

[China daily, 10-02-2022] China's largest food processor and trader COFCO and China Grain Reserves Group Ltd will integrate part of their businesses and establish two joint ventures, the nation's top State asset regulator said.

Through equity cooperation, the two sides will set up a joint venture that focuses on the grain storage business, with China Grain Reserves Group taking a controlling share.

The two will also set up a joint venture that focuses on oil processing, and COFCO will have a controlling share, said the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council.

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Digital economy growth helping rural-urban economic integration

[China daily. 10-02-2022] China's central authorities recently issued a five-year (2022-25) action plan for developing the digital economy in rural areas and promoting integrated urban-rural development through overall planning and coordination.

The development of rural e-commerce has helped create a number of distinctive rural e-commerce product brands, and the sales channels of agricultural and sideline products have been greatly expanded, introducing high-quality consumer goods in the countryside and upgrading rural consumption.

At the same time, the development of digital finance in rural areas has improved farmers' payment convenience, reduced transaction costs, provided more flexible financial services for agriculture-related production and alleviated their financing difficulties.

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China rolls out favorable measures for cross-border e-commerce

[GT, 21-02-2022] In a fresh move to boost the cross-border e-commerce sector, which has bucked the global trend amid the raging pandemic, Chinese authorities have further optimized the cross-border e-commerce retail import list to add more goods, enriching the options in the domestic market to meet rising consumer demand.

Starting from March 1, a total of 29 items including ski equipment, tomato juice and golf equipment will be added to the list.

In early February, China's State Council issued a statement approving the establishment of more cross-border e-commerce pilot zones in 27 cities and regions, bringing the overall tally of pilot zones to 132, covering almost all provincial-level regions in China from coastal industrial powerhouses to inland areas.

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China ready to buy more pork for reserves to support prices

[Xinhua, 08-02-2022] China's top economic planner said that it is ready to stockpile pork, the country's staple meat, for state reserves, as an index monitoring pork prices triggered a second-level warning.

The index, the national average of pork prices against grain prices, came in at 5.57 to 1 between Jan. 24 and 28, staying in the second-level warning range for excessive drops for a third consecutive week, said the National Development and Reform Commission.

According to a work plan for stabilizing the pork market, China has introduced a three-level early-warning system to raise alarm for excessive ups and downs in hog prices.

The commission said it will work with relevant authorities to start buying pork for state reserves when necessary and guide local governments to start the pork stockpiling work.

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Farm drone maker ramps up operations

[China daily, 26-01-2022] XAG Co Ltd, China's largest agricultural drone maker, is accelerating efforts to develop drones and self-driving utility vehicles for use on farms, increase investment in research and development, and expand its footprint in global markets as part of its broader drive to build a smart farming ecosystem.

The Chinese authorities have released a guideline to promote digital technologies in rural areas, as part of their efforts to advance agricultural and rural modernization.

The guideline, jointly issued by four government departments including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, encourages the use of technologies like big data, artificial intelligence, remote intelligent agricultural machinery and online services in such areas as spring farming, vocational training and recruitment of migrant workers.

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High-yield smart fish farming ship undocks in East China

[China daily, 10-02-2022] China's first 100,000-tonnage smart fish farming ship completed its undocking and launching successfully in the eastern city of Qingdao, after nearly 400 days of construction.

The ship, coded as Conson No 1, has a length of 249.9 meters and a width of 45 meters. It was designed to carry out aquaculture operations.

With a water body displacement of 130,000 tons, the vessel has 15 farming cabins providing 80,000 cubic meters of water for high-end commercial fish such as large yellow croakers, which are expected to produce 3,700 tons a year.

A total of 50 such ships are expected to be built to form a deep-sea aquaculture industrial chain with an annual output of over 200,000 tons of high-value fish worth more than 11 billion yuan (\$1.73 billion), said Qingdao Conson Development Group.

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Consumption of low-alcohol drinks on rise

[China daily, 10-02-2022] Sales of low-alcohol drinks are on the rise in China, fueled by increasing demand from young women and some foreigners. The sector also has gained the favor of investors.

Annual sales of China's low-alcohol drinks stand at about 15 billion yuan (\$2.36 billion) to 20 billion yuan. Unlike the beer sector, with sales of 600 billion yuan annually, the scale of the low-alcohol drinks market is still quite small, accounting for only about 3 percent of the market size of beer.

By 2035, sales of low-alcohol drinks in China are forecast to exceed 250 billion yuan, with an annual compound growth rate predicted to be around 35 percent by then, according to forecast.

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Fujian aquatic products exports top nationwide

[Fujian.gov.cn, 07-02-2022] Aquatic products exports in Fujian province exceeded \$7 billion in 2021, ranking first nationwide for nine consecutive years, the provincial bureau of ocean and fisheries announced.

The province's gross ocean production was estimated to exceed 1.1 trillion yuan (\$172.84 billion) in 2021.

The province generated 8.53 million tons of aquatic products in 2021, up nearly 2.4 percent from that in 2020, and the net per capita income of fishermen was 25,800 yuan, up 6.5 percent.

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