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Policies

Action plan puts measures in place to ensure national food security

[China daily, 12-04-2022] China released an action plan recently on expanding the planting of soybean and oil crops at State-owned farms to ensure national food security and the supply of important agricultural products, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

This year, the country will plant more than 973,300 hectares of soybeans and 300,000 hectares of oil crops including rapeseed, sunflower and peanuts at State-owned farms, and the yield of soybean and oil crops is expected to increase by 2 percent, the plan said.

State-owned farms are being urged to develop and utilize scientific crop rotation and combined planting of soybeans, corn and cash crops in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning, while promoting strong seed varieties and advanced agricultural machinery, according to the plan.

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China calls for efforts on spring farming

[Xinhua, 19-03-2022] China will make all-out efforts to ensure that spring farming proceeds in good time, while implementing COVID-19 epidemic control, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The ministry will guide farmers to optimize the planting structure by stabilizing the growth of the staple grains and corn, as well as expanding soybean and oil production, according to a circular issued by the ministry.

China aims to ensure that the grain output for 2022 stays above 650 billion kg, according to this year's government work report.

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All-out efforts under way on summer grain production

[Xinhua, 23-03-2022] China has released 1 million tonnes of national potash fertilizer reserves to meet production needs during this year's spring farming period, according to the country's top economic planner.

The move is part of China's efforts to secure a summer grain harvest in the face of challenges and difficulties in the sector due to autumn floods during the sowing period last year.

China aims to ensure that the grain output for 2022 stays above 650 billion kg, according to this year's government work report.

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China to strengthen regulation on seed production

[GOV.CN, 04-03-2022] China will strengthen regulation on seed production and operation, in order to create a healthy and orderly environment for the domestic biobreeding industrialization, according to a regulatory plan on agricultural genetically modified organisms (GMOs) by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

According to the plan, the ministry will ramp up regulation on seed production bases and seedbed-like fields, implementing more frequent testing during the seedling stage, in a bid to prevent the production of illegal genetically modified seeds.

Moreover, the ministry will strengthen the sampling of genetically modified components during seed processing, and strictly punish illegal processing, so as to prevent the illegal seeds from entering the market.

The plan also states that the ministry will improve the management and step up the validation of genetically modified varieties including soybean, corn and cotton.

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China rolls out policies to support grain production for 2022

[MARA, 28-03-2022] The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Finance of China unveiled a series of policies to boost grain production this year on March 25, 2022.

In 2022, China will adopt a package of policies that incorporates subsidies, rewards and financial support:

- subsidy for fertility conservation of arable lands and one-off subsidies for grain farmers to help them cope with increasing expenditure caused by price hikes of agricultural inputs;
- support for developing additional 100 million mu (6.67 million hectares) of high-standard farmland;
- subsidies for maize, soybean and rice production and appropriate raise for the minimum purchase price for rice and wheat;
- subsidy for maize-soybean intercropping;
- support for grain and oilseed farming services to lower cost and increase efficiency;

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Nation adopts steps for sound grain output

[China daily, 21-04-2022] China will adopt a number of policy steps for sound agricultural production in the spring to ensure a bumper harvest and stable supply of major agricultural products, according to a decision made at the State Council's executive meeting.

The meeting noted that stable production and supply of grains and other important agricultural products serve as an anchor for overall economic and social stability, especially in keeping consumer prices stable and ensuring people's essential needs. This is particularly important given the growing uncertainties in the international food market and high inflation

The task of ensuring grain acreage and output for the whole year will be assigned to governments at every level. Those who fail to fulfill their duties will be held to account.

The meeting emphasized the need to ensure normal agricultural activities. Prompt actions will be taken to help migrant farmers return home for farming, facilitate the availability of agricultural supplies in rural areas, ensure the mobility of agricultural machinery, and make the services of agricultural technicians more accessible to farmers.

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Draft law to protect fertile black soil

[China daily, 26-04-2022] A draft revision of the Law on the Protection of Black Soil has highlighted the role black soil plays in safeguarding national food security and the importance of strengthening punishment for violating related regulations.

It was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for second review during a session held from April 18 to 20 in Beijing.

The draft revision added that black soil should be used in the production of grain, sugar, oil crops, vegetables and other agricultural produce. Fertile black soil is to be designated for

permanent basic cropland and mainly used for grain production, according to the revised draft.

The black soil in Northeast China is rich in humus—an accumulation of organic carbon—and the region accounts for a quarter of China's grain output, according to a white paper released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

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Smart legislation makes Huangshan tea greener

[China daily, 22-04-2022]Huangshan is a major tea production area, known for green tea varieties like Huangshan Maofeng. Tea gardens produced 40,000 metric tons of dried tea leaves in 2020, according to the city government.

Although the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides in the agriculture sector had been limited in recent years, the situation had not been fundamentally changed until the implementation of a specific regulation in 2019.

Early in 2018, the standing committee of Huangshan people's congress organized for legislators and experts to survey the rural area in preparation for targeted legislation, according to Bao Zhouming, an agriculture official of the city.

By the end of the year, the Huangshan Pesticide and Herbicide Safety Administration Regulation had been passed by the standing committee, with enforcement beginning on July 1, 2019.

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Protect China's food security against geopolitical risks

[China daily, 12-04-2022] The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict is expected to further rock global food markets.

Given the complex and volatile international situation, China should take all measures to continue to be self-sufficient in food production and supply, and import only to meet the people's demand for different types and varieties of foods.

- China should increase farmers' incentives, so they are encouraged to grow more grains and earn more profits.
- China should strengthen its market mechanism and increase its fertilizer reserve to tide over any potential crisis.
- China should intensify high-tech development and apply it to the agricultural sector to boost efficiency.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China details efforts to boost agricultural production

[Xinhua, 18-03-2022] China's top economic planner has detailed tasks to boost agricultural production, urging efforts to stabilize grain output, expand the planting of soybean and oilseed crops, and ensure the supply of farm produce.

Primary agriculture production areas should improve their comprehensive grain production capacity, said a National Development and Reform Commission circular. The main sales areas should effectively stabilize and increase grain self-sufficiency rates, while regions where agriculture production and sales are balanced should ensure basic self-sufficiency.

Vigorous efforts should be made to expand the planting of soybean and oilseed crops to support coordinated development between grain and oilseed crops production, said the circular.

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China food security: Beijing moves to ‘revitalise’ seed industry

[SCMP, 26-04-2022] China has taken another step towards unclogging a bottleneck in national food output by expanding the number of accredited seed breeders, as the country pushes for self-sufficiency in the face of rising geopolitical uncertainty.

For the first time since 2013, China has enlarged its list of state-sponsored seed breeding and production bases, adding 116 to the existing 100 hubs already operating, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The government hopes the national bases will supply more than 80 per cent of the seeds needed for crop production by 2025, up from more than 70 per cent in the 2016-20 period, the ministry said in a statement earlier this month.

China’s high dependence on imported seeds, the limited crop yields from domestically produced seeds and a lack of innovation in the sector has set off alarm bells among some policymakers in Beijing.

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Scientists improve crop yield forecast by machine learning

[CAS, 22-04-2022] Winter wheat yields in north China can be better predicted by a new hybrid forecast model powered by machine learning, according to a study by the Institute of Atmospheric Physics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Developed by Chinese and American scientists, the new model was applied to north China over the subseasonal-to-seasonal period.

The results of the study indicate that the hybrid model generally outperforms conventional models, with one metric that tells how far the prediction values are from the real values, decreasing by 30 percent to 55 percent compared with conventional models.

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China holds first cellular agriculture forum to embolden cultivated meat progress

[Green queen, 26-04-2022] A new cultivated meat industry association, the China Cellular Agriculture Forum, held its first event last week and was attended by approximately 30 companies within the cultivated sector. Key on the agenda? To help create a sustainable, secure animal protein future in China using cellular agriculture.

The forum involved multi-stakeholder discussions around the progression of regulatory frameworks, consumer acceptance of cultivated products, and best practices for those operating in the sphere. Looking ahead, the group hopes to orchestrate a country-wide effort to further cultivated science and lay foundations for a successful domestic market.

China-based cultivated meat startups have recognised the need to work together to progress the sector’s framework. The forum allowed multiple interests to come together and agree that a synergistic way of working will be the fastest way to bring products to market.

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Agricultural sector key to carbon goals

[China daily, 28-03-2022] Villages can potentially save a great deal of energy and significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions as environmentally friendly agriculture develops amid rural vitalization efforts.

Zhao Lixin, a deputy to the National People's Congress, the nation's top legislature, said carbon emissions in agriculture mainly come from methane and nitrous oxide from rice fields, fertilizers, and gas emissions and feces from animals.

Reducing intensity, increasing carbon sequestration, and using renewable energy as a substitute can be ways to achieve carbon peaking and carbon neutrality in the agricultural sector and rural areas, said Zhao, who is also director of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences' Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development in Agriculture.

A road map for reaching peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality in the agricultural sector and rural areas should be created, Zhao said.

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Ministry tightens screws on soil polluters

[China daily, 25-04-2022] China will tighten supervision over sources of soil pollution, as it works to avoid new cases of contamination, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

Last year, the ministry instructed local authorities to check for potential sources of pollution among almost 15,000 key businesses.

A major concern of the campaign is ensuring companies have the basic facilities and mechanisms in place to prevent dangerous substances from leaking. Facilities for emergency response are another major focus, and officials were instructed to look into whether companies are able to identify potential risks in time and take action accordingly.

The first national attempt to screen for soil pollution hazards revealed that the performance of companies in many regions was poor, and some were found to only be going through the motions, adding that many companies have yet to become aware that it is more cost efficient to identify and tackle soil pollution early, than pay to fix problems later.

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China to work on tackling rural wastewater issues

[China daily, 22-04-2022] China plans to ensure that 40 percent of domestic sewage in rural areas is being treated by 2025, to help address problems cause by accumulations of black and malodorous water, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

Treatment facilities will be built in densely populated areas, while in those with more scattered populations, efforts will be made to promote the safe reuse of wastewater for agriculture.

Where conditions permit, the government will task companies possessing the correct expertise with treating wastewater on scale.

The other viable approaches the ministry plans to introduce include outsourcing rural and urban business as a package to companies, and combining environmental treatment projects with industrial development.

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China reports first human case of H3N8 bird flu

[Reuters, 27-04-2022] China has recorded its first human infection with the H3N8 strain of bird flu, but the risk of its spread among people is low, the health authority said.

The variant was found in a four-year-old boy from the central province of Henan province who showed fever and other symptoms on April 5, the National Health Commission said in a statement on Tuesday 26 April.

The child had been in contact with chickens and crows raised at his home, it added in a statement.

The H3N8 variant is common in horses and dogs and has even been found in seals. No human cases of H3N8 have been reported, said the NHC.

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China to approve first GMO corn traits developed by Syngenta

[Reuters, 29-04-2022] China plans to approve GMO corn traits developed by Syngenta Group for the first time, the agriculture ministry said.

China also plans to approve an herbicide-tolerant variety developed by Hangzhou Ruifeng Bio-Tech Co Ltd, and another corn product owned by China National Seed Group, a unit of Syngenta Group, the notice said.

Beijing has given safety approval to a few other domestic GMO corn traits already, and proposed overhaul of the country's seed rules to pave the way for GMO crop approvals as part of an effort to prepare for commercial cultivation of the grain.

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Trade and Business

China self-sufficient in commodities

[China daily, 30-03-2022] There's rising concern about possible shortage of grain, oil, meat, eggs, milk, vegetables and fruits in China because of continuous rise in their prices globally owing to the impact of COVID-19 and geopolitical tensions.

Many countries have even imposed restrictions on the export of wheat and other grains, after grain prices increased significantly in the international market this year. However, such concerns are unfounded in China, where grain prices have seen a moderate rise. The country can produce 95 percent of the grain the population needs. Whatever grain China imports is not for plugging demand and supply gaps, but for ensuring variety.

China attaches great importance to its food security. Preferential policies and measures targeting agriculture over the past years have helped China ensure sufficient capability to deal with possible external risks and challenges.

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China Q1 pork output hits highest in three years

[Reuters, 18-04-2022] China posted its highest quarterly pork production in more than three years during January through March, reflecting a boost in breeding following a disease-led decline.

China produced 15.61 million tonnes of pork in the first three months of the year, up 14% from a year earlier, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed. It was the highest quarterly production since the final quarter of 2018.

China's pork output reached 52.96 million tonnes last year, just below the 53.4 million tonnes produced in 2017, as production made a rapid recovery from a devastating outbreak of African swine fever that swept the country in 2018 and 2019.

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China capable of ensuring grain security

[Xinhua, 21-04-2022] China is capable of ensuring its grain security, agricultural officials and experts said on 20th April at the China Agricultural Outlook Conference 2022.

China has abundant grain stocks and its production and supply of major agricultural products are stable, Ma Youxiang, vice minister of agriculture and rural affairs, said at the conference. He said China is confident in its ability to cope with uncertainties in the external environment.

The country's grain output has exceeded 650 million tonnes for seven consecutive years, with its per capita grain output reaching 483 kg last year, Ma said, noting that there are also sufficient supplies of major agricultural products, including meat, eggs, milk, fish and vegetables.

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NE China's Heilongjiang vows to ensure grain output of over 75 billion kg in 2022

[GB, 24-04-2022] Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province pledged to ensure grain production of over 75 billion kilograms with a cultivation area of 218.5 million mu (14.6 million hectares), compared with 218.2 mu in 2021(14.5 million hectares), to ensure national food security and supply of primary products, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the province said.

As the province is China's leading soybean production base with a cultivation area that makes up more than 40 percent of the country's total, the department has set the target of additional 10 million mu (666,666 hectares), planted with soybean this year, compared with the 9 million mu (600,000 hectares) of the country's requirement.

Moreover, the province will increase grain output by 1.3 billion kilograms from last year.

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China's corn planting facing delays as lockdowns leave farmers stranded

[Reuters, 13-04-2022] Planting of corn in one of China's major producing areas could be delayed as many of the region's millions of farmers struggle to return home from temporary city jobs because of strict coronavirus lockdowns.

Any delay to planting could hit output in the world's No. 2 corn producer, where corn prices are already hovering at record levels, and government support for soybeans also threatens to reduce growing of the grain.

China's northeastern provinces, its bread basket, have endured weeks of restrictions on movement, with the toughest measures in Jilin province where COVID-19 cases soared in early March.

With the critical time for sowing grain fast approaching, some farmers remain stuck and are getting increasingly worried, despite recent government pledges to tackle the issue.

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China's alternative protein market sees rapid expansion

[SCMP, 8-04-2022] China's alternative protein market is expected to see rapid expansion, with a growing number of start-ups, owing to increasing interest from consumers and investors amid Beijing's policy support to diversify the country's protein sources and meet its carbon neutrality goals.

The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, especially China, is one of the most critical regions for transforming the global protein market, according to a report released last week by the Good Food Institute (GFI), an international network of non-profit organizations that promote plant- and cell-based alternatives to animal products.

China is also on the leading edge of hybrid products, according to GFI. These combine ingredients from plants, microbes, and cultivated animal cells to create new alternative proteins that could change existing consumer expectations for taste, price, functionality, and variety, the report says.

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China's middle class increasingly choosing seafood as pork consumption declines

[Seafoodsource, 18-04-2022] A structural decline in China's pork consumption, being driven by the country's changing demographics as well as health concerns and rising incomes, will benefit the seafood industry, according to a research consultancy focused on agricultural commodities and publicly listed agricultural and food firms.

However, the firm found seafood is facing a battle with beef to become the protein of choice among the fast-growing, higher-spending Chinese middle class.

Average Chinese per capita pork consumption hit a peak of 42 kilograms per person in 2014 – up from 11.7 kilograms in 1981 - but that figure has since slid to below 40 kilograms, despite a dramatic drop in pork prices upon the recovery of the national hog herd from late 2021 in the wake of a devastating African swine flu pandemic.

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Chinese develop their taste for Scotch whisky

[China daily, 15-04-2022] Chinese consumers' evolving taste for high-end spirits pushed their spending on Scotch whisky to a record high over the past two years despite disruption to the trade caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Latest figures from the Scotch Whisky Association show that since 2019, the Chinese mainland has recorded the strongest growth for whisky produced in Scotland, with the total value of this market last year reaching 198 million pounds (\$258 million), a rise of 123 percent compared with two years ago.

Global exports of Scotch grew to 4.51 billion pounds last year, with the mainland one of the key emerging markets contributing to such growth, which rose by nearly 85 percent in 2021 alone, making it the fifth-largest export market by value, according to the association.

Every second last year, 44 bottles of Scotch were shipped from Scotland to some 180 markets worldwide.

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China's appetite grows for ready-made dishes

[CEN, 13-04-2022] The rising popularity of the "prefabricated food" industry has galvanized investors into the field in recent years.

Meituan Maicai, an online grocery platform in China, reported that sales for prefabricated food in 2021 increased by four times compared with the previous year.

The growing trend has fueled the business of ready-to-eat food makers and bodes well for the long-term market.

China's current market size of prefabricated food is about 300 billion yuan (47 billion U.S. dollars), with the potential to expand to a trillion yuan in the next six to seven years and more than 3 trillion yuan in the long run, according to a report released by Shenzhen-based research firm AskCI Consulting.

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Eight consumption trends of staple foods in China

[JD.COM, 14-04-2022] A report, based on JD Super's shopping data from 2019 to 2021, identified Chinese consumers' eight consumption trends of these product categories as the following:

1. Sales of staple foods with low fat, low sugar and of grain variety increased significantly.
2. Organic foods rise in popularity.
3. Agricultural products with the national geographical indication(GI) are favored by Chinese consumers.
4. New instant food categories are becoming trendy.
5. New types of cooking oil are gaining traction.
6. People from China's Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Liaoning provinces consumed the most cooking oil in the year 2021, with Liaoning being the fastest-growing province in spending on this category. Additionally, Guangdong, Beijing, and Jiangsu are the top three provincial-level regions that showed the highest demand of staple foods.
7. There's the great market potential for these categories in the lower-tier cities (third to fifth-tier cities) in China as the report data revealed strong demand momentum in both staple foods and condiments in these areas.
8. Household users are the main spenders on staple foods.

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New civil society initiative aims to 'green' China-Brazil agriculture trade

[Dialogo Chino, 29-04-2022] Since 2003, when China first became a net food importer, the gap between its imports and exports has continued to widen. By 2019, it had become the world's largest importer of agricultural products. Today, the quality, availability and accessibility of agricultural products increasingly define China's food security situation.

In this scenario, China has the potential to exercise leadership in making its agriculture trade more environmentally sustainable, echoing the top-level discourse of "ecological civilisation" and China's subscription to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, launched at COP26 climate talks in November.

Through research, analysis and project implementation, the Global Environmental Institute (GEI), has developed its role in joining forces to tackle deforestation.

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China's food giant enhances supply to Beijing amid COVID-19 resurgence

[Xinhua, 30-04-2022] China's leading food trader COFCO has enhanced its food supply to Beijing and ramped up production at nearby plants to ensure sufficient supplies and stable prices in the Chinese capital amid the latest resurgence of COVID-19 infections.

The company has delivered more than 29,000 tonnes of staple food to the Beijing market in April, including rice, flour, noodles, edible oil, meat and dairy products.

A special team has been formed to ensure Beijing's food supply, and efforts have been made to increase product inventory, optimize plans for production and transportation, and enhance relevant distribution, according to the company.

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