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Policies

China's new economic strategy to rely on domestic market is not a closed-door policy

[SCMP, 12-08-2020] China's new economic strategy of "dual circulation" is focused on competition and opening up, and not intended to sever ties with other parts of the global economy, according to economists and government advisers.

The new economic strategy announced by President Xi Jinping two months ago intends for China to lean towards its domestic market for growth and technological advancements and is widely perceived as Beijing's inward-looking response to a hostile outside world.

But while the process of economic liberalisation should be increased in preparation for a long-term technology and economic rivalry with the United States, the plan also includes lowering barriers for investors and a motivation to secure regional trade pacts.

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China pursues economic self-reliance as external risks grow

[Reuters, 05-08-2020] The country's leaders have proposed a so-called "dual circulation" model of growth to steer the economy, the sources said, which would prioritise "internal circulation" to boost domestic demand and be supplemented by "external circulation". No details have been given on the strategy.

Policy insiders and government advisers said the emphasis signals a strategic shift to local demand and technological development although domestic supply chains would be built partly with the help of foreign investment.

China had already been trying to rebalance its economy towards consumption-led growth from exports and investment. Last year, total exports and imports accounted for 32% of gross domestic product (GDP), down from a peak of 64% in 2006, according to government data.

The "dual circulation" strategy could become a key priority in the government's 14th five-year plan (2021-2025), which is expected to be discussed and endorsed by top leaders at a key Communist Party conclave in October, policy sources said.

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China revises list of technologies banned, restricted for export

[CGTN, 29-08-2020] China has revised the catalogue of technologies that are subject to export bans or restrictions, the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said on 28 Aug.

The revised catalogue, released jointly by MOFCOM and the Ministry of Science and Technology, deleted four items prohibited from export, including microbial fertilizing and caffeine production technologies, MOFCOM said in an online statement.

The catalogue also removed five items subject to export restrictions, including Newcastle disease vaccine technology and information security firewall software technology.

A total of 23 items subject to export restrictions were added to the catalogue while technical parameters of 21 items were revised.

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China mulls draft revision to animal epidemic prevention law

[Xinhua, 08-08-2020] Chinese legislators on 8 August began deliberating a draft revision to the animal epidemic prevention law.

Markets engaged in the trading of animals and animal products are required to meet epidemic prevention standards while complying with the supervision and inspection of agriculture and rural affairs authorities, read the draft revision.

Local governments at the county level and above are allowed to ban live poultry and livestock trading within certain areas, according to the draft.

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Xi stresses stopping wasting food, promoting thrift

[Xinhua, 11-08-2020] Chinese President Xi Jinping has stressed resolutely putting an end to wasting food and called for promoting thrift.

Calling the issue of food waste shocking and distressing, Xi highlighted the need to maintain a sense of crisis regarding food security, especially amid the fallout of the COVID-19 epidemic, despite the fact that China has scored consecutive bumper harvests.

Xi stressed enhancing legislation and supervision, taking effective measures, and establishing a long-term mechanism to stop food waste.

Xi has attached great importance to food security and repeatedly called for promoting the social custom of practicing thrift and opposing waste. He has emphasized the need to stop food waste on many occasions.

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Strict supervision sought to end food waste among officials

[Xinhua, 28-08-2020] China's top anti-graft authority has asked disciplinary and supervisory bodies at all levels to keep a close eye on waste of food among Party and government officials and work to stop it.

Efforts to practice thrift and end food waste are an important part of the campaign to address the problems of formalities for formalities' sake, bureaucratism, hedonism, and extravagance, according to a circular issued by the Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission, which was made public Friday 28 Aug.

Leading Party and government agencies as well as officials are the major targets of the campaign, the circular said, asking anti-graft authorities to strengthen routine supervision.

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Saving food is traditional Chinese virtue

[China daily, 27-08-2020] President Xi Jinping's "Clean Plate 2.0" campaign has turned public focus on China's food security, with some people fearing that the COVID-19 pandemic and the floods across southern China may reduce food production and supply.

But the fact is China's summer harvest increased 0.9 percent year-on-year in 2020, with output reaching to 142 million tons, according to the news conference of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs on Wednesday. Crops to be harvested in the fall are also in good health.

The novel coronavirus outbreak and the severe floods in the southern region will certainly have an impact on China's agricultural output, but it will not be significant. Barriers set up in the early stage of the pandemic for a short while, which hampered transportation of fertilizers and seeds, have been lifted.

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Chinese political advisors contribute insights on water use

[Xinhua, 21-08-2020] Chinese national political advisors contributed suggestions on efficient water use and water conservation at a bi-weekly seminar held by the top political advisory body.

Wang Yang, chairman of the CPPCC, presided over the meeting.

It is necessary to put water conservation first, and accelerate the transformation from extensive and inefficient water use to economical and intensive use for the sustainable development of the Chinese nation, Wang stressed at the seminar.

Revolving around the implementation of the guiding principle for water governance, 11 political advisors and academics contributed their wisdom from the perspectives of legal and policy support, a supervisory system, and the role of market mechanisms,

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Govt streamlines environmental rules to help service sector recovery

[China daily, 28-08-2020] Authorities have streamlined environmental impact assessment procedures for some service industries hurt by the COVID-19 epidemic, and enhanced supervision and penalty on cheating in assessment reports.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment said that by July, about 76,000 projects, mainly small and micro businesses in the service sector such as catering and entertainment, have been exempted from filing their environmental impact assessment registration form.

But it doesn't mean that authorities are easing environmental supervision on these projects, as the inspection and management would be carried out at the same time or after their businesses resume.

By July, the ministry had also shortened assessment procedures for 13,374 projects from industries such as equipment manufacturing, agricultural product processing and transportation.

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China cracks down on agriculture-related crimes

[Xinhua, 20-08-2020] China's Ministry of Public Security has vowed to crack down on illegal acts and crimes related to agriculture to safeguard food security and secure agricultural production.

The ministry has launched a special campaign to combat these crimes, such as the production and sale of counterfeit and low-quality agricultural materials, illegal occupation of agricultural land, and polluting the environment.

The ministry will also enhance cooperation with authorities in agriculture, rural affairs, market supervision, and ecological environment protection to improve the working mechanism.

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Science, Technology and Environment

Assessment of growth in social groups for sustainable agriculture and land management

[Cambridge Core, 07-08-2020] A group of international authors, led by Prof Jules Pretty of University of Essex, published the findings of a global assessment of growth in social groups for sustainable agriculture and land management.

Until the past half-century, all agriculture and land management was framed by local institutions strong in social capital. But neoliberal forms of development came to undermine existing structures, thus reducing sustainability and equity. The past 20 years, though, have seen the deliberate establishment of more than 8 million new social groups across the world. This restructuring and growth of rural social capital within specific territories is leading to increased productivity of agricultural and land management systems, with particular benefits for those previously excluded. Further growth would occur with more national and regional policy support.

In China, there are 2.2 million rural cooperatives; a quarter of all villages have WUAs, and these have reduced maintenance expenditure whilst improving the timeliness of water delivery and fee collection; the concept of Science Technology Backyards was established which is an innovation deployed to increase the sharing of knowledge and skills between scientists and farmers.

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Chinese researchers release rapeseed gene transcriptome database

[Xinhua, 04-08-2020] A gene transcriptome database, consisting of reference transcripts from over 100,000 rapeseed genes, was released by Chinese researchers, according to the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS).

A research team from the Oil Crops Research Institute under the CAAS has decoded the transcription information of the rapeseed genome and constructed a landscape of the whole transcriptome of rapeseed genes with an advanced sequencing technique and its self-developed bioinformatics tools.

Containing about 1.2 billion bases and over 100,000 genes, the rapeseed genome lacked a reference transcriptome database owing to the technical restrictions previously, which restricted the research on the functional genes of rapeseed, said the team.

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China to expand clinical trials of African swine fever vaccine

[Xinhua, 18-08-2020] China's domestically developed vaccine against the African swine fever is in progress and clinical trials of the vaccine will be expanded soon, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The vaccine, developed by Harbin Veterinary Research Institute under the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), has completed environmental release tests, which showed no clinical abnormal symptoms and no pathological changes among vaccinated pigs, according to the institute.

Since April, clinical trials of the vaccine have been carried out in three breeding bases in Heilongjiang Province, Henan Province and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Around 3,000 pigs received the vaccine.

So far, vaccinated piglets have grown normally and developed with no obvious adverse effects, with the immunization rates of the vaccination groups of varying doses all reaching above 80 percent, according to Tang Huajun, president of the CAAS.

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Breakthroughs in tech lift soybean production

[China Daily, 25-08-2020] Technological breakthroughs have resulted in an increased output of soybeans in China in recent years, and further progress is expected to improve domestic supply, said a top expert.

With the adoption of new technologies, per-hectare production of soybeans in China reached more than 1.9 metric tons last year, an increase of 83 percent since 1978.

Last year, total soybean production in China exceeded 18 million tons — a historic high and an increase of 13 percent compared with the previous year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Although the soybean is native to China, the country has relied on imports, mostly from Brazil and the United States, to meet increasing domestic demand for edible oil and animal protein.

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Plastic film mulching increases crop yield

[Xinhua, 13-07-2020] The use of plastic film mulching in the past decades has increased crop yield and water use efficiency in China, according to a recent study.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the China Agricultural University found that the use of plastic film mulching increased crop yields by an average of 45.5 percent, and improved water use efficiency by 58 percent in China. The use of plastic film mulching had a significant effect on areas where annual precipitation is less than 400 millimeters.

The study also noted that plastic film mulching may lead to the accumulation of plastic film residue in the soil, which can reduce soil fertility in some cases. Recyclable or degradable films could be options in the future.

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Promising new wrap could replace plastic

[China Daily, 24-08-2020] A Chinese research team is developing a new technology for food packaging that is expected to be ecologically friendly and pose no threat to people's health.

The team used alginate, an extract from brown algae, rather than plastic, to make food wrappers.

The food wrapper can achieve 100 percent degradation in 6 to 12 months, without any environmental pollution, it is also safe for people. It can endure temperatures ranging from -80 to 120 C, said the research team.

Most of food wrappers in the market are made from plastic, which is potential threat to human health.

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China receives data from newly-launched mapping satellite

[People's daily, 28-07-2020] Remote sensing satellite ground stations in China have received data from the newly-launched mapping satellite Ziyuan III 03, sources with the Chinese Academy of Sciences said.

The high-resolution Ziyuan III 03 satellite will provide data for the country's land resources investigation, natural disaster prevention, agriculture development, water resource management, environmental survey and urban planning.

Since January 2012, when China launched the Ziyuan III 01, the ground stations have received 897 terabytes of data from the mapping satellites, providing a long-term and stable acquisition of China's high-resolution surveying and mapping data.

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China speeds up its development of “unmanned economy”

[People’s Daily, 19-08-2020] Unmanned economy is enjoying rapid development driven by new technologies. Statistics indicate that China is now home to 16,000 unmanned retailing enterprises and 56,000 industrial robot enterprises, and the two sectors both witnessed a growth of over 30 percent this year.

In Shanghai’s Changning district, robot chefs are cooking tasty meals for customers, and lines are winding outside an unattended coffee shop where great drinks are prepared full-automatically in a 2.5-square meter glass room.

Unmanned economy is also energizing industry and agricultural production, helping them lower cost and improve efficiency.

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Chinese researchers design device for urban rooftop farming

[Xinhua, 22-08-2020] Chinese researchers have designed a new device that can increase the effectiveness of urban rooftop farming, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

Rooftop farming can make full use of urban spaces and supply farm produce to local consumers, reducing the cost of packaging and transportation.

Researchers from the South China Botanical Garden under the CAS designed a two-layer hydroponic planting device with a reflector. The device adopts energy-saving and low-cost methods by introducing sunlight to the bottom layer with the reflector to promote the growth of vegetables at the bottom layer.

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Protected plant list updated

[China daily, 24-08-2020] Earlier this month, the State Forestry and Grassland Administration began to solicit public opinion on the upcoming revised content of the "National Key Protected Wild Plants List". This is the first major revision of the list since its implementation in 1999.

According to the notice issued by the administration, the list includes a total of 468 species and 25 categories of wild plants, of which 53 species and two categories are under primary protection, and 415 species and 23 categories are under secondary protection. On the basis of the first batch of the list, 55 species were deleted, 296 species and 17 categories were added. Two species were upgraded from national secondary protection to national first-level protection, while 18 species and two categories of first-level protection were downgraded to secondary level.

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Trade and Business

Bumper summer grain harvest helps China guarantee food supply

[People’s daily, 22-08-2020] China’s summer grain output reached a record high of 142.8 billion kg this year, 1.21 billion kg more than that of the previous year.

This year's summer grain harvest has witnessed a higher quality of grain, with the proportion of first and second-grade wheat increasing and the planting area of strong gluten and weak gluten wheat accounting for 35.8 percent of the nation's total wheat planting area, which represents a year-on-year increase of 2.8 percentage points.

So far, China has basically finished early rice harvest and seen a clear upward trend in output.

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China strives for food safety amid COVID-19

[Xinhua, 01-08-2020] Committed to ensuring food safety, China has redoubled efforts to bring safe and healthy food to dining tables in the country amid the global COVID-19 outbreak, rolling out measures to improve supervision of imported and home-produced food.

As COVID-19 continues to spread globally, cluster outbreaks have been reported in several overseas food-processing enterprises, putting cold-chain products under close scrutiny of Chinese authorities.

In response to COVID-19, the country has clamped down on illegal wildlife trade and consumption, and tightened supervision of the food industry, covering employees, environment and logistics.

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China food security: there's no crisis, but supply risks are growing as farmers hoard grains

[SCMP, 07-08-2020] Prices of wheat and corn are rising sharply in the world's most populous country, raising fresh questions about whether China's food supply is truly safe amid a rising dependence on grain imports, shrinking arable land and disruptions caused by natural disasters.

The latest evidence came via a decline in the state purchase of summer harvests of wheat – an important grain for Chinese households. According to data released by China's National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration (NFSRA), China's state grain reserve system purchased 41 million tonnes (45 million short tons) of fresh wheat from June 1 to July 31, a drop of 17.2 per cent from a year ago.

Industry insiders said that many farmers have decided to hoard grains – instead of selling them to the government – as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

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China food security: country faces 'grain supply gap of 130 million tonnes by 2025'

[SCMP, 18-08-2020] China will face a domestic grain supply gap of about 130 million tonnes by the end of 2025, pointing to growing reliance on imports to feed the world's most populous country, according to a new report from a government think tank.

The forecast, which was released on 17 August, comes amid heightened concern about food security in China, which has been ignited by anecdotal reports of grain shortages and calls by President Xi Jinping to cut back on food waste.

China's domestic supply of three staple grains – wheat, rice and corn – is expected to fall short of demand by 25 million tonnes by the end of 2025, meaning there will be a rising dependence on imports, the Rural Development Institute at the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) found.

While it noted China had established a national grain security system and that overall supply was sufficient

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China's soybean imports will keep increasing

[China Daily, 27-08-2020] China's soybean imports will continue to rise in the coming months as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trade is limited, and the purchases of soybeans from the United States will be ramped up, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said.

The country imported over 55.1 million metric tons of soybeans from January to July, up 17.6 percent year-on-year.

In July alone, 10.1 million tons of soybeans were imported, a 16.8 percent increase from last July, according to Tang Ke, head of the ministry's market and economic information department, who cited data from the General Administration of Customs during a news conference.

Disruptions caused by the pandemic on supply chains and port operations have been limited so far. On the contrary, the spread of the novel coronavirus and low oil prices have dampened global demand for soybeans, thus creating a favorable environment for expanding soybean imports, according to Tang.

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China's rural online retail sales expand 5 pct in H1

[Xinhua, 01-08-2020] China's e-commerce sector expanded steadily in rural areas during the first half of the year, with rural online retail sales rising 5 percent year on year to 766.85 billion yuan (about 109.86 billion U.S. dollars), according to the Ministry of Commerce.

E-commerce has played a positive role in facilitating poverty alleviation and boosting rural vitalization, the ministry said.

The country's online sales of agricultural products totaled 193.77 billion yuan, rising markedly by 39.7 percent year on year.

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China raises corn demand outlook on faster pig herd recovery

[Reuters, 12-08-2020] China's agriculture ministry slightly raised its outlook for corn and soybean consumption on 12 August, as recovery of the pig herd grew faster than expected.

Corn demand for animal feed in the 2020/21 crop year was seen up 2.3% on last month's forecast to 183 million tonnes but industrial demand is lower as high corn prices reduced profits at processors.

Overall demand would reach 288 million tonnes, said the monthly Chinese Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates (CASDE), up 0.9% overall.

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China's pork imports expected to drop in 2021

[Pork Business, 14-08-2020] China's record pork imports of 4.3 million metric tons in 2020 is expected to drop by 14% in 2021 to 3.7 million metric tons due to increasing domestic supplies, USDA said in its most recent Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) report.

Overall swine production and slaughter in China will hit record lows in 2020 as African swine fever (ASF) continues to leave its mark on China's hog industry. Since the first ASF case reported in August 2018, China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) has reported 171 ASF outbreaks to the World Organization for Animal Health, as of March 20, 2020. However, in the first half of 2020, only 16 outbreaks were reported.

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China's chicken production continues to surge, reducing appetite for imports

[Reuters, 17-08-2020] China's chicken producers are pushing ahead with aggressive expansion plans despite a slump in demand due to the coronavirus, reducing reliance on imports amid recent fears about the safety of foreign meat.

The world's No. 2 poultry producer is expected to produce a record 14.85 million tonnes of chicken meat in 2020, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, a substantial increase over last year's 18% rise to 13.75 million tonnes.

The significant expansion is boosting demand for key feed grains like corn and soybeans, traders in China say, while pushing down poultry prices.

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Chinese shoppers wary of frozen food imports after virus found

[Reuters, 14-08-2020] Chinese shoppers expressed dismay at news that traces of the coronavirus had been found on imported frozen food, with some saying they would avoid the products.

Two cities in China found the virus in frozen chicken wings imported from Brazil and shrimp from Ecuador, raising public concern even though the World Health Organization downplayed the risk of the virus entering the food chain.

A Shanghai resident said he would go for more local foods now. "I won't choose imported products, because right now the epidemic situation abroad is more serious than in China."

The coronavirus emerged in China late last year but the country is seen to have largely brought it under control, with the focus shifting to prevent localised outbreaks and cases imported from abroad.

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North China builds smart logistics park for agricultural products

[Xinhua, 28-08-2020] The construction of a smart cold-chain logistics park for agricultural products has begun in Baoding, north China's Hebei Province, according to the Hebei-Xinfadi Group.

The logistics park project is designed to ensure the safe and stable supply of agricultural products to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, said the group.

With a total floor area of 631,200 square meters, the integrated cold-chain logistics park will provide cold storage for up to 500,000 tonnes of agricultural products.

The planned investment is 3.67 billion yuan (about 534.35 million U.S. dollars). The project will serve the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and will be put into operation in August 2021.

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Crayfish breeding a booming business in Jiangxi county

[China daily, 28-08-2020] Shunned as an invasive species, crayfish are becoming a popular delicacy and a major revenue source for farmers.

In addition to attracting food lovers from surrounding areas, the booming crayfish breeding industry has also attracted investors from across the country.

Now Pengze, a county in Jiangxi Province, has developed an industry cluster on crayfish, including breeding, processing, cooking, selling, and tourism.

Buoyed by growing demand of eating crayfish in winter, another company in Pengze, named Pengze Kaichen Agriculture Technology Co Ltd, is harnessing its technology to breed crayfish in winter to fill the market gap.

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Argentina and China renew US\$ 18 billion swap

[Merco Press, 07-08-2020] The central bank of Argentina announced it will renew a currency cooperation agreement with the People's Bank of China to swap US\$ 18.2 billion worth of each other's currencies.

Analysts said the renewal of the currency swap hints at growing agricultural trade between the two countries.

Argentina is a major exporter of agricultural products, such as soybeans; and in the currently tense relationship between China and the US, a swap agreement could be a sign of expanding China's sources of buying agricultural products.

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