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Policies

China achieves bumper summer grain harvest

[Xinhua, 15-07-2023] China has seen another year with a bumper summer grain harvest despite the impact of adverse weather, official data showed 15 July.

The country's summer grain output totaled 146.13 million tonnes this year, down 0.9 percent or 1.27 million tonnes year on year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

China's summer grain sown area has grown for three consecutive years, rising to 26.61 million hectares in 2023. Over 23 million hectares of wheat were sown, up 0.4 percent year on year.

However, the grain yield per unit area recorded a mild decline, falling 1.2 percent year on year to 5,491.8 kg per hectare this year.

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China releases plans to spur consumption

[China daily, 31-07-2023] China on 31 July unveiled plans to stabilize spending on big-ticket items, spur service-related consumption and expand consumption in rural areas, as part of broader efforts to bolster a sustained recovery in consumption and consolidate the recovery trend.

According to the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, the plans detail a total of 20 measures, including easing restrictions on car purchases, boost spending on new energy vehicles, supporting inelastic demand as well as demand for upgraded housing, and promoting the consumption of household appliances and electronic products.

More efforts will be made to step up the construction of charging infrastructure for NEVs, promote the purchase of NEVs in rural areas, encourage the replacement of old household appliances with new ones, and bolster the consumption of green and smart home appliances, said the plans.

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Action plan to boost China's rural-region commerce

[China daily, 16-08-2023] A three-year action plan released by the Chinese government will inject new economic vitality into the nation's vast rural regions through efforts to boost local commerce activities.

At a government press conference, officials of multiple ministries spoke of the measures and targets under the plan, seeking to strengthen the commerce system across the nation's counties to improve rural farmers' income and upgrade their consumption trends.

The action plan also encourages rural areas rich in cultural and tourism resources to enrich tourism products for leisure, farmhouse entertainment, and self-driving tours to attract more urbanites to the countryside.

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China proposes 8 tasks to ensure food security

[Xinhua, 28-08-2023] China has proposed eight tasks to ensure national food security, including strengthening the country's food security system and capacity-building, increasing support for agricultural protection, and accelerating the construction of a modern food industry and circulation system, according to a recent report from the State Council.

The report said that efforts would be made to implement a strategy of sustainable farmland use and the innovative application of agricultural technology to increase farmland productivity.

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China to accelerate development of deep-sea, far-sea mariculture

[MARA, 03-08-2023] China will accelerate its development of deep-sea and far-sea mariculture as it makes efforts to safeguard the nation's food security by filling up its "blue granary," a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs official has said.

Developing mariculture in deep-sea areas is conducive to increasing high-quality marine fishery food supplies, and to accelerating the upgrading of mariculture while protecting the marine ecological environment, according to the ministry.

Surging demand for marine products and a continuous decline in offshore cultivated areas mean the deep-sea and far-sea mariculture industry has great development potential, the ministry said.

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China to upgrade power grid in rural areas

[Xinhua, 14-07-2023] China will launch nationwide projects to upgrade the power grid in rural areas to improve power supply and promote rural revitalization, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

By 2025, the rural power grid structure will be stronger, with power supply capacity and quality steadily improved, said a guideline issued by the NDRC and two other departments.

By 2035, a safe, reliable, and intelligent modern rural power grid system will be basically formed. The country will support the development of renewable energy in rural areas, the document said.

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Science, Technology and Environment

Scientists ID genes foiling rice breeding

[China daily, 27-07-2023] Chinese crop scientists have pinpointed a pair of genes that have played an outsized role in impeding two distant relatives in the rice family from crossbreeding.

The discovery has laid the groundwork for creating next-generation, super-high-yield rice crops and has provided a boon to China's efforts to curb its reliance on food imports, experts said.

The finding also marks a major breakthrough in humanity's protracted struggle to overcome reproductive isolation, an evolutionary phenomenon that has hindered efforts to pool well-performing genes through hybridization.

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Quality seeds and arable lands key to food security

[China daily, 08-08-2023] The central authorities recently stressed safeguarding the country's food security, highlighting the importance of the protection of farmland and self-reliance in seeds.

The slowdown in global grain production, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and other geopolitical risks have brought great uncertainty to global food security. At the same time, extreme

weather events have become more frequent in China in recent years. The floods this summer will have an impact on agricultural production.

Whether it is out of the need to stabilize the food supply chain or strengthen agricultural disaster prevention and reduction, the nation should strive to protect arable land and realize self-reliance in seeds.

The central government has implemented a series of policies and measures in this regard, effectively protecting the country's seed resources, improving its seed breeding capacity, promoting the modernization of agriculture and enlarging the area of high-standard farmland.

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Experts defend safety of GMO products

[China daily, 04-08-2023] A host of experts and officials have recently defended the safety of genetically modified food, as China seeks to bolster public acceptance of GMO products and invest more in technology-driven crop breeding.

An article published by the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs in April said that food and animal feed produced with genetically modified raw materials are as safe as ordinary products and do not cause infertility in humans or animals.

The article, released by the ministry's science education department, said before being made commercially available in China the products undergo lengthy safety vetting in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

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China pledges more efforts to develop modern facility agriculture

[MAR, 21-07-2021] China is planning to take further action to develop modern facility agriculture, as part of efforts to diversify the food supply, an official told a press conference.

Modern facilities should be applied in industries such as planting, husbandry, fishery and logistics, and relevant guidelines have been issued, said Zeng Yande, an official with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Zeng noted that fiscal and financial support should be given to develop facility agriculture, and market vitality should also be stimulated.

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High-tech employed to keep black soil fertile in China's grain barn

[Xinhua, 03-08-2023] A Modern Ark 60 remote-sensing aircraft has just completed an aerial "scanning" mission, conducting a health check of the black soil in China's major agricultural province of Heilongjiang.

With lidar and hyperspectral imaging technology on board, the aerial mission gathered data over an area of 900 square kilometers that is mainly used for the production of three major crops: soybeans, corn and rice.

The data will be analyzed in combination with data captured in a post-harvest observation in October last year and another observation made in April this year.

The observations have been undertaken under the "Black Soil Granary" program launched in July 2021, which aims to boost black soil conservation and modern agricultural development.

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China launches satellite dedicated to disaster management

[China daily, 13-08-2023] China launched a satellite early on Sunday morning dedicated to natural disaster prevention and mitigation, according to the China National Space Administration.

The remote sensing satellite, Land Surveyor 4A, was carried into orbit on a Long March 3B rocket that blasted off at 1:26 am from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Southwest China's Sichuan province, and soon entered its preset geosynchronous orbit, the administration said in a news release.

Its users include the Ministry of Emergency Management, Ministry of Natural Resources, China Meteorological Administration, as well as Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

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China activates Level III emergency response for major agricultural disasters

[MARA, 31-07-2023] China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said Sunday July 30 that it has initiated a Level III emergency response for major natural disasters in agriculture, as typhoon-triggered heavy rainfall hits parts of North China, in areas between the Yellow River and the Huaihe River.

According to the requirements of emergency response, Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Shandong, Henan and other provinces and cities are required to strengthen emergency response duties; closely monitor and evaluate the disaster situation; implement flood control and disaster relief measures; clear and dredge ditches in advance; check, repair and reinforce planting and breeding facilities; investigate potential safety hazards; and prepare emergency drainage machines and tools.

China has a four-tier flood-control emergency response system, with Level I being the most severe.

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China steps up efforts to protect 'granary' amid extreme weather

[GT, 09-08-2023] Chinese farmers and analysts said that while the country's Northeast region, which accounts for more than one-fifth of the national grain production and is known as "China's granary," recently suffered from severe rainstorms and flooding, the impact on overall grain production will likely be limited, dismissing foreign media hype of potential "widespread crop failures."

Recent extreme weather in some parts of China has raised concerns about food supply. However, the country is well-equipped to mitigate the impact of extreme weather on its grain market, thanks to the Chinese government's unwavering focus on food security in recent years, farmers and analysts said. Extreme weather has become frequent in the summer season, but this year's impact will not be so extreme as in previous years, they said.

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Species beginning to recover in Yangtze

[China daily, 29-08-2023] Rare and endangered fish species such as the Yangtze sturgeon, a fish under first-class State protection in China, are being discovered more frequently in the Chongqing section of the Yangtze River than two years ago, according to a report released by the municipal government on Aug 16.

Monitoring of 133 local fish species shows that biodiversity in that area of the Yangtze River Basin is beginning to recover, with the number of rare fish species and aquatic resources increasing.

Stretching over 6,300 kilometers, the Yangtze has rich biodiversity, but overfishing and pollution have threatened aquatic life and depleted fish stocks.

On Jan 1, 2021, China imposed a 10-year fishing ban in the Yangtze's pivotal waters to help reverse the trend.

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China's water, soil erosion area declines in 2022

[Xinhua, 20-08-2023] China's water and soil erosion area decreased last year amid the country's efforts to restore the ecological environment, according to the Ministry of Water Resources.

The country's water and soil erosion area stood at 2.65 million square km in 2022, down 20,800 square km, or 0.78 percent, compared with 2021, according to the results of national monitoring of soil and water loss.

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Trade and Business

China works to minimize flood impact, ensure vegetable supply

[Xinhua, 14-08-2023] China's agricultural authority has stepped up efforts to help the country's flood-ravaged regions minimize the impact on vegetable cultivation and ensure a stable supply.

Local authorities should promptly initiate drainage measures for flooded vegetable fields, and implement targeted measures to support autumn sowing, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said in a statement on its website.

The move came after heavy rainfall lashed parts of north China, regions along the Yellow River and Huaihe River as well as northeastern provinces, flooding crops and damaging vegetable planting facilities.

The ministry urged vegetable producing areas in the country's southern provinces to increase vegetable growing on idle fields this winter, while asking those in northern regions to better use farming facilities such as greenhouses to increase the local supply of fresh vegetables.

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China sees rapid development in rural e-commerce

[China daily, 15-08-2023] Since 2014, China has witnessed rapid development in rural e-commerce, driven by the country's increased support for this sector, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

By the end of last year, China's rural internet users exceeded 300 million, a ministry official told a press conference.

The country's online retail sales in rural areas surged from 180 billion yuan (\$25.08 billion) in 2014 to 2.17 trillion yuan in 2022.

E-commerce has brought farmers closer to the market and promoted entrepreneurship and employment in rural areas.

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Chinese procuratorates crack down on food safety violations by online platforms

[Xinhua, 17-08-2023] Chinese procuratorial organs have handled 5,800 cases related to food safety violations by online platforms in a series of special operations nationwide over the past three years, the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) said.

These cases, spanning from July 2020 to June 2023, involved offenses such as operating unlicensed online food delivery platforms, conducting business activities beyond the authorized scope, and poor storage of food during distribution, the SPP said.

Procuratorates in the country will launch a campaign on the supervision of livestream promotions and the sale of food and medicine in the next stage, according to the SPP.

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China remains the world's largest meat importer despite recent declines

[USDA, 27-07-2023] China has been the world's largest meat importer since 2019. Despite recent reductions in imported meat volumes, the country remains in the top spot.

Issues such as disease, tougher laws addressing environmental issues, and an exodus of small-scale farmers have constrained China's meat supply, boosting domestic prices and incentives to import.

As China's most consumed meat, pork tends to dominate its meat supply and demand. Meanwhile, beef imports have been on the rise. Longer beef production cycles, lack of grazing land, and chronic disease have constrained China's cattle production, preventing it from meeting domestic demand.

China's meat consumption showed signs of peaking after 2014, but statistical model projections show that consumption will continue to grow through 2031 based on trends such as dietary change and moderate growth in Chinese income and prices.

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Germany wants deeper China agricultural trade ties, eyes end of pork ban

[SCMP, 10-07-2023] China and Germany should deepen agricultural collaboration amid worsening climate change issues and global supply chain disruptions, said German diplomats, who are also hoping Beijing will relax its pork import ban.

Germany has the social responsibility to share the experiences and expertise of its highly-digitised agriculture sector, while China plays an important role due to its size and population, said Hendrik Barkeling, head of the economic department and minister counsellor at the German embassy in Beijing.

Friederike Dorfler, agriculture and food counsellor at the German embassy in Beijing, said that China is one of the most important countries for German exports outside the European Union.

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Australian barley tariffs to be scrapped by China after long-running trade dispute

[ABC, 04-08-2023] China has dropped its 80 per cent tariffs on Australian barley, after a long-running and high-profile trade war between the two nations.

The tariffs were introduced in May 2020 after Beijing accused Australia of selling the grain below the cost of production and subsidising farmers.

The tariffs set off a trade war between the two nations and were widely considered to be a form of retaliation for Australia's call for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19.

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China resumes beef imports from South Africa

[China daily, 18-08-2023] China has agreed to resume beef imports from South Africa, recognizing some regions in South Africa as Foot-and-Mouth-Disease (FMD)-free zones and allowing these regions to export beef products to China, the General Administration of Customs announced Friday 18 August.

According to the announcement, the resumption was revealed by the General Administration of Customs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in a joint statement on Thursday 17th August, and became effective on the same day.

The two departments earlier imposed a ban on South African beef imports because of an FMD outbreak in South Africa.

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Commerce Ministry clarifies scope of drone export controls

[China daily, 31-07-2023] Enforcing export controls on high-performance unmanned aerial vehicles with specific military attributes is a common international practice, a commerce official said.

The official's comments came after the Ministry of Commerce announced export control measures on Monday July 31 for certain types of drones and a number of drone-related equipment, such as lasers, communication equipment, hyperspectral cameras and anti-drone systems.

These measures will come into effect on Sept 1, and all other civilian drones not listed are prohibited from being exported for military purposes, according to public notices released by the ministry.

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