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Policies

China to make agriculture sector greener

[Xinhua, 26-07-2018] China will push forward the green development of its agricultural sector by strengthening environmental protection and pollution control, an official said Thursday 26 July.

"The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has prioritized rural environmental protection amidst rural economic development," Liao Xiyuan, head of the ministry's technology and education division, said at a press conference.

In the future, China will also step up building an environment protection policy system for agriculture and rural areas to ensure lasting effects, including mechanisms for green development, pollution control, and financial input, he said.

To pursue green development, China will introduce policies on a negative list for investment in the sector, implement crop rotation, and recycle livestock excrement, according to the official. China would also promote the innovation of agricultural technology to save more resources and energy.

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China's environment ministry approves new plan to tackle rural pollution

[Reuters, 24-07-2018] China's environment ministry has approved a new plan to tackle growing pollution threats in its vast countryside, and will strive to clean up contaminated rural land and drinking water and improve waste management, it said on Tuesday 24 July.

The new plan, approved "in principle" by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, also mandates cuts in fertilizer and pesticide use and improved recycling rates throughout the countryside.

China is in the fifth year of a "war on pollution" designed to reverse the damage done by decades of untrammled economic growth, but it has so far focused primarily on air quality along the industrialized eastern coast, especially around the capital Beijing.

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New standards for soil pollution released

[China Dialogue, 06-07-2018] China has upgraded its national safety standards for soil for the first time since 1995, reports Legal Daily.

The new standards differentiate between agricultural and construction land, with the former focussing on the safety of edible agricultural products, and screening for levels of cadmium, mercury, arsenic, lead and chromium in the soil.

For construction land, the standards address the health of those working in construction and in close proximity to the soil. They also consider the long-term consequences of exposure to toxins and carcinogens.

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China releases guidelines on expanding imports

[Xinhua, 09-07-2018] China on Monday 9 July publicized guidelines on expanding imports for balanced foreign trade, with policy incentives detailed in several areas.

China should keep exports stable while at the same time further expand imports, according to the guidelines, which were approved and released by the State Council.

China will optimize the structure of imports to support upgrading production and consumption, with tariff cuts in certain products and clean-up of unreasonable price mark-ups, the guidelines said.

Policy incentives will be given to imports of daily consumer goods, medicine, and equipment for rehabilitation and elderly care.

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Vegetable oil labels must avoid touting non-GM status

[China Daily, 06-07-2018] Edible vegetable oils should not be labeled as free of genetically modified ingredients if GM versions don't exist, the State Administration for Market Regulation ordered on Wednesday 4 July.

The order aims to regulate the labeling of edible oil and put a stop to misleading labels, the administration said.

For example, a popular oil product sourced from peanuts is labeled as non-GM, even though there are no GM peanuts anywhere in commercial production at home or abroad.

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The joint statement between Royal Society and the Chinese Academy of Sciences on genetic technologies

[RS, 25-07-2018] In March 2018, the Royal Society hosted the first of three policy dialogues with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. These dialogues bring together scientists and policymakers from the UK and China to discuss important scientific topics with policy relevance. The first of these focused on shared priorities for the research and regulation of genetic technologies as applied to plants, animals and microorganisms.

As an output from the dialogue, the two Academies have prepared a joint statement on these shared priorities and principles for the regulation of genetic technologies.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China's food security threatened by drastic drop in crop varieties

[GT, 19-07-2018] Over 70 percent of food crop varieties has disappeared in six regions in China, including Central China's Hubei and Hunan provinces, which agricultural experts fear may threaten China's food security.

The native food crop varieties in 375 counties of six provinces and cities have shrunk from 11,590 in 1956 to 3,271 in 2014, according to a national food crops meeting on Wednesday 18 July in Changsha, capital city of Hunan Province, the Science and Technology Daily reported Thursday 19 July.

A survey of 830 counties in 12 provinces found that disease-resistant varieties have rapidly disappeared. For example, about 94 percent of local rice varieties in Hunan has disappeared.

China conducted its third national food crops survey in 2015 to support the development of unique agricultural products. The survey looked into food crops in 2,228 counties in China in five to six years and saved food crop resources in 665 counties, according to the Science and Technology Daily report.

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China's livestock transition: Driving forces, impacts, and consequences

[CAS, 19-07-0218] China's livestock population almost tripled between 1980 and 2010, from 142 million to 441 million livestock units (LU). Most of the increase is due to the increase of landless industrial system, which has expanded 74 times, from 3.6 million to 247 million LU.

The livestock transition in China has been propelled by demand and wealth, but has also been greatly facilitated by subsidies, deregulation policies, and weak environmental regulations. The policies include: liberating production rights – change from collective management to privatize animal production; abolishing "meat coupons" – the national meat quota supply system; as well as RMB 10 billion in annual direct subsidies since 2007.

China's importation of either animal-sourced foods or of livestock feed will have an impact on the development of the livestock production sector as well as associated global environmental burdens, since China may need to import 0.5 to 8.4 times of global total traded animal products or 0.7 to 1.4 times of traded feeds in 2010, depending on types of animal products or feeds.

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Farm size affects agricultural chemical use

[Xinhua, 03-07-2017] The size of a farm is an important factor that affects the amount of agricultural chemicals it uses in China, recent research shows.

Conducted by researchers from Zhejiang University, Wuhan University, Stanford University as well as University of Melbourne, the research was based on data from 20,000 households from the China Rural Household Survey Database being built by Zhejiang University.

The research shows that agricultural chemicals are often used inefficiently on small farms, and moderately expanding the farm size can help alleviate agricultural chemical overuse in China.

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How is China reshaping its farms with the internet?

[CGTV, 02-07-2018] China is reshaping its agricultural industry with the use of the Internet and other digital technologies, the country's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said.

While the use of Internet is common in cities, it takes the government big efforts to apply the information technology (IT) in farms.

According to data from China Internet Network Information Center, only 34 percent of people living in rural China have access to Internet, while 69 percent of urban people have an online presence.

It's hard to grasp the vast business opportunities brought by the Internet if you are not even connected. That's why the Chinese government is pushing mobile carriers to teach farmers use the phone network.

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The smartphone - China's latest farming tool

[Xinhua, 10-07-2018] Smart greenhouses with watering and fertilizing controlled via mobile phone are all the rage in east China's Jiangxi Province.

In a demonstration greenhouse covering 5,000 square meters in the city of Yingtan, most work is done by a system of perforated plastic pipes combined with sensors to monitor temperature, air humidity, mineral content and water content of the soil.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs wants smart phone applications to be widely used in agriculture and has set up demonstration bases to help farmers get familiar with the latest gizmos.

Even in the most remote areas, technology is ubiquitous, with 96 percent of China's villages connected to the Internet. On average, each rural household has three mobile phones.

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Inside China's 'smart vegetable farm'

[Mailonline, 06-07-2018] In what could be the future of agriculture in China, a company in Anxi, Fujian province, has been developing a smart farm that enables vegetables to grow efficiently in an automated environment.

The firm's latest expansion project - a 5,000-square-metre (53,819-square-foot) indoor farm - has been under development for the past two years and was finally unveiled.

Eight to 10 tonnes of vegetables are produced every day on the farm, which is almost the size of a football pitch. That amount of vegetables would be enough to feed nearly 36,000 people, according to Sanan Sino-Science, the company behind the project.

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The national vegetable standards center established

[Xinhua, 13-07-2018] The National Vegetable Quality Standards Centre was established on the 12 July in Shouguang, Shandong.

Shandong is a traditional major vegetable production province, and Shouguang is the country's largest vegetable production and distribution centre.

The Centre will be built into the platform for multiple purposes, including vegetable standard system research and development; nurturing the standardization professionals; demonstrating, promoting and application of various standard; and deepening standard exchange for international cooperation. The Centre will also synthesis the successful standardization models, and promote these models throughout the country to improve the overall improvement of the vegetable industry.

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China plans to build up to 200 national parks

[ECNS, 12-07-2018] China plans to establish 60 to 200 national parks, covering approximately six to nine percent of the country's total land area, said Tang Xiaoping, deputy director of the national park management office, at the State Forestry and Grassland Administration on 11 July.

This year, China started drafting a series of standards for the creation of national parks and the standards will follow three principles—geographical integrity, representation at the national level, and potential benefits to residents, Tang said.

The country has about 60 to 200 candidate regions that may meet the standards, and about 50 locations will be on a priority list, according to Tang.

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China's ozone levels hit record high in June

[Reuters, 18-07-2018] Concentrations of lung-damaging ozone hit a record high in China in June, rising 11 percent from the same month last year, environment group Greenpeace said on 18 July, citing official data.

Despite China's four-year battle against air pollution, ozone has become "an emerging health threat", Greenpeace said. Average levels in the capital Beijing stood at 120 micrograms per cubic meter in June, around double the rates in ozone hotspots like California and Mexico City.

China's environment ministry warned on Tuesday 17 July that it expected ozone pollution to be particularly high in the region surrounding Beijing over the next 10 days.

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UK environment lawyers to train Chinese judges

[Times, 03-07-2018] ClientEarth, a campaigning group, is to hold a week-long programme of seminars for more than 300 judges in China. Senior judges and environmental experts will exchange experiences of environmental cases from their jurisdictions.

Over recent years China has established more than 600 environmental courts at all levels of the judiciary. They deal with environmental disputes including criminal cases such as wildlife poaching or illegal logging, civil cases involving personal or environmental damages from pollution, and administrative cases where the government is violating laws causing damage to the environment.

Last week the Supreme People's Court announced that it would establish two international courts to settle disputes in the government's "belt and road initiative", a development programme that aims to link China with western countries.

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China shares water-saving agriculture experience with Arab countries

[GT, 17-07-2018] China has opened a training class on water-saving agriculture for experts from Arab countries in Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, aiming to share China's advanced technology and experience in the region and further serve the Belt and Road initiative.

The International Training on Model Agricultural Water-saving Technology in China and Arab Countries opened on Sunday 15 July in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia, the China News Service (CNS) reported.

The training was hosted by the College of Resources and Environmental Science under Ningxia University and the China-Arab States Technology Transfer Center.

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What we can learn from China's fight against environmental ruin

[Eco-business, 13-07-2018] A good news story about China's environment is something you don't hear every day. But a major review published on 11 July in [Nature](#) has found that China has made significant progress in battling the environmental catastrophes of the past century.

From 1998, China dramatically escalated its investment in rural sustainability. Through to 2015, more than US\$350 billion was invested in 16 sustainability programmes, addressing more than 620 million hectares (65 per cent of China's land area).

While the context of China's path to sustainability is unique, other countries can learn from its experience. Nations must commit to sustainability as a long-term, large-scale public investment like education, health, defence, and infrastructure.

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Trade and Business

Imported food gains popularity in China

[Xinhua, 28-07-2018] Chinese consumers' demand for imported food has been growing steadily as the standard of living in China improves, according to a statement from the General Administration of Customs.

China's total food imports amounted to 58.28 billion dollars last year, up 25 percent year-on-year, while the annual average growth rate over the previous five years was 5.7 percent, data from the administration showed.

The European Union remained China's largest supplier of food, followed by the United States, New Zealand, Indonesia and Canada. Meat, oil, dairy, and seafood were among the most popular food imports in China.

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China's largest agricultural machinery producer taps into global market

[Xinhua, 20-07-2018] YTO Group Corporation, a leading agricultural machinery manufacturer based in central China's Henan Province, saw its exports of high- and medium-horsepower tractors go up by 51 percent and 113 percent respectively last year, with profitability in international market exceeding that in the domestic market for the first time.

In recent years, as the domestic agricultural machinery manufacturing industry has increasingly matured, exports have become a key to YTO's development. The group has been actively tapping into markets in countries and regions along the Belt and Road as the initiative progresses steadily.

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China-owned Syngenta plots growth in challenging home market

[Reuters, 24-07-2018] A year on from Syngenta's \$43 billion purchase by ChemChina, the seed and chemical giant is leveraging its new status as a Chinese company to grow its tiny share of the highly fragmented China market.

The former Swiss firm is targeting growth through acquisitions in the \$17 billion Chinese seed market, where access is restricted for foreign players, as well as new products and collaborations in technology.

It hopes its edge in the world's second-biggest farm inputs market will help it catch bigger global rivals in seeds, Monsanto and DowDuPont in the wake of a round of consolidation in the agricultural products sector.

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China backs \$15bn tech fund to compete with Japan's SoftBank

[FT, 01-07-2018] China Merchants Group has teamed up with a London-based firm to launch a new Rmb100bn (\$15bn) technology investment fund with aim of becoming China's answer to the near-\$100bn Vision Fund created by Japan's SoftBank.

The state-owned conglomerate, along with other unnamed Chinese groups, has pledged to invest up to Rmb40bn of the fund, in what would be a huge pool of capital primarily designed to target investments in Chinese technology companies.

The “China New Era Technology Fund” will also look at deals globally, a move that may draw scrutiny from Western governments, which have become increasingly concerned and outspoken about Chinese deal making in their technology sectors.

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China soybean crusher Sunrise files for bankruptcy after debts pile up

[Reuters, 23-07-2017] Chinese soybean crusher Shandong Sunrise Group has filed for bankruptcy after failing to repay its debts, according to a court filing, highlighting the problems facing the sector from shrinking demand for animal feed and tight credit.

Shandong Sunrise is headquartered in Rizhao, China’s major crushing hub in eastern Shandong province.

The bankruptcy follows falling demand for animal feed after pig farmers in China, the world’s biggest pork consumer, began culling their herds because of falling meat prices. Crushing companies reduce soybean seeds to both oil and meal.

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Dairy farmers cheesed off by low prices

[Caixin, 10-07-2018] Raw milk prices have dropped to their lowest point since 2012, further threatening the revenue of Chinese dairy farmers already facing tough competition from imports.

The average price that dairy companies paid producers for raw milk at the end of June fell to its lowest since December 2012. The amount of raw milk imported by China from all countries nearly doubled from 2012 to the first quarter of the year.

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International flower show opens in Yunnan

[Xinhua, 13-07-2018] An international flower show to boost industry exchange opened 13 July in China's prominent flower export base Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province.

The 2018 China International Family Garden Flower Show and the 18th China Flower Retail Industry Conference are held during the same period.

Kunming accounts for 70 percent of the domestic flower market. Dounan flower market, the biggest in Kunming, sold 6.5 billion flowers to more than 50 countries and regions in 2017.

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Santander to help UK firms trade in China

[Express, 08-07-2018] The bank is to take 15 UK-based small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that produce mother and baby products to Shanghai to network and do business.

The delegation will attend the Children Baby Maternity Expo, which is taking place on July 25 to 27, as well as meet with local retail groups such as Kidswant and local banks.

The SMEs will also visit a laboratory that provides certification inspection and quarantine for food and drinks, equipment, and clothing services in China.

The bank has so far completed 25 trade missions this year, putting it on track to beat its 43 in 2017.

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Trade war and Brexit open door for UK grain sales to China

[Bloomberg, 25-07-2018] The global trade war and Brexit uncertainty could give U.K. wheat and barley exporters the chance to break into the Chinese market.

Britain hasn't sold barley to the world's top importer in almost two decades and shipped very little wheat there in 10 years, but that could soon change.

A delegation of Chinese grain companies came to the U.K. last month to assess production and storage facilities, the AHDB's Cohen said. That was followed by a U.K. trade visit to China to meet grain companies including food giant Cofco International Ltd. to understand Chinese import requirements.

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China to hit more sugar imports with extra tariffs from August 1

[Reuters, 16-07-2018] China will levy extra tariffs on out-of-quota sugar imports from all origins starting from Aug. 1, the Commerce Ministry said on Monday, 16 July just over a year after introducing hefty penalties on top growers including Brazil and Thailand.

In May last year, the government hit major exporting nations with penalties on sugar shipments after years of lobbying by domestic mills. It still exempted 190 smaller producing countries and regions, mostly in Southeast Asia and South America, like in the Philippines and El Salvador.

That list of exempt countries has now been cancelled, the Commerce Ministry said in a Monday statement. "Protective measures will be uniformly applied to all out-of-quota sugar imports," it said.

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China wants to boost agricultural imports from east Europe

[Reuters, 07-07-2018] China wants to import more agricultural products from central and eastern Europe, its Premier Li Keqiang told a summit of those countries' leaders on Saturday as he seeks to boost business ties and investments in the region.

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China expanding agricultural cooperation with Belt and Road countries

[Xinhua, 11-07-2018] China is enhancing agricultural cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road, expecting to make a greater contribution to global agricultural development and economic growth.

"China will offer policy and financial support to food trade and infrastructure construction, aiming at encouraging Chinese grain enterprises to cooperate with Belt and Road countries," said Zhang Wufeng, head of the State Grain and Reserves Administration (SGRA).

According to a national action plan under the framework of Belt and Road released in 2017, provinces in western China will cooperate with Central Asia in grain, animal husbandry and cotton, while northern provinces will work with the Russian Far East on grain and vegetables, and southern provinces will grow grain and tropical cash crops in collaboration with Southeast and South Asian countries.

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China will reimburse tariffs costs for soybeans bought for state reserves

[Reuters, 09-07-2018] China will reimburse buyers for the cost of the 25 percent tariff on soybean imports from the United States if the cargoes are for state reserves, Bloomberg reported on Monday, citing unidentified sources.

The United States and China slapped tariffs on \$34 billion worth of each others' goods starting from July 6 including a range of U.S. farm products.

State reserve buyers will pay the additional tariff before it is later reimbursed by the government, according to Bloomberg citing people familiar with the matter.

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Government focus on growing China agriculture exports

[ACRR, 27-07-2018] Australia is working to increase its meat exports to China, describing the People's Republic as "a good friend" despite recent trade tensions between the two nations.

Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said he had sent specialist agricultural envoys to China in a bid to advance a 2016 free trade agreement on Australian imports and set aside technical barriers around meat exports to China.

Australia's relationship with its largest trading partner has soured since Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull late last year cited Beijing's meddling as justification for new laws against foreign interference, prompting Beijing to accuse Australia of maintaining a "cold war mentality".

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