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Policies

Circular economy gets 5-year regulator boost

[China daily, 08-07-2021] China's top economic regulator unveiled a new development plan to spur the circular economy in the next five years.

The plan's goal is to increase efficiency of utilization of resources and foster high-quality development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), the National Development and Reform Commission said.

Commenting on the plan, experts said the new plan is of great significance as it will promote resource conservation and recycling in China, help ensure national resource security and aid China in honoring its pledge to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060.

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China flags import diversification, greater scrutiny of foreign investment in latest five-year commerce plan

[SCMP, 09-07-2021] China will further diversify agricultural and energy imports, boost trade with Russia and step up scrutiny of foreign investment over the next five years, the commerce ministry said in a new five-year plan.

Unlike the ministry's previous five-year plan, the latest focuses on controlling risks associated with imports and, in particular, called for more diversification in farm goods and energy.

The plan also noted the need to boost domestic consumption as part of the central government's "dual-circulation" strategy, which focuses on growing the domestic market to offset an increasingly unstable external environment.

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China eases environmental regulations for small hog farms

[Reuters, 12-07-2021] China will no longer require small pig farms to get environmental approval from the government before breeding pigs as the country seeks to rebuild its hog herd following a disease outbreak, the agriculture ministry said.

The move, which will reduce costs and red tape for small farmers, comes as China tries to lure them back into pig production. A deadly African swine fever virus wiped out around half of the country's huge pig herd during 2018 and 2019 and hit small farmers particularly hard.

"For pig breeding projects with annual output of less than 5,000 pigs, the environmental impact registration form shall be filed online, without requiring environmental impact assessment approval," the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

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Revised regulation to better manage hog slaughtering

[GOV.CN, 24-07-2021] The revised regulation for hog slaughtering will go into effect on Aug 1, 2021.

The regulation will be effectively connected with the Food Safety Law and the Law on Animal Epidemic Prevention.

The revised regulation will enhance full-process management, tighten epidemic prevention and control, and promote solid implementation of responsibilities of hog-slaughtering enterprises.

To ensure quality in hog slaughtering, the regulation established a system for entry checks, quality management, recording of outbound pork products, product recalls, and risk monitoring.

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Seed Law draft revision looks to boost protections for new plant varieties

[China daily, 18-08-2021] A draft amendment to the Seed Law was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, for first review on 17 August, aiming to improve protections for new plant varieties and encourage breeding innovation.

The protections, ranging from the authorized varieties' propagation material to harvested material, will cover production, processing, market permission, sales, import and export, and storage, he said.

To encourage breeding innovation and resolve the homogenization of seed varieties, the revised draft establishes a system of essentially derived varieties that are distinct from, but retain the basic characteristics of, the original varieties.

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Digitalization seen as key to future of rural vitalization

[China daily, 09-08-2021] Digital agriculture, the practice of integrating advanced technology into farming, is driving China's rural vitalization, according to experts.

Huang Jikun, a member of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs' rural vitalization advisory committee, said that digital technology is bound to play a bigger role in the country's steps toward rural vitalization and agricultural modernization.

The push toward digital agriculture is the result of a plan released in January last year aimed at improving smart agriculture and providing support for rural vitalization in the years leading up to 2025.

Jointly released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Cyberspace Administration of China, the plan proposed building a basic data system for rural areas to facilitate targeted management and services.

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Govt to raise agricultural insurance premium subsidies

[GOV.CN, 07-07-2021] The Chinese central government will raise subsidies for agricultural insurance premiums in more pilot areas, and the subsidy policy is following international rules.

Subsidies will be provided to crop-growing farmers who buy full-cost insurance or income insurance. The former covers various costs of agricultural production, including that of seeds, land and labor, and losses from natural disasters. And the later covers losses due to price and output fluctuations, according to the ministry.

The application scope of two types of agricultural insurance relating to planting rice, wheat and corn will be expanded to cover 500 counties with high crop yields in 13 major grain-producing provinces this year.

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China stresses disaster prevention for bumper autumn harvest

[GOV.CN, 17-08-2021] China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs on Aug 17 stressed targeted disaster prevention and mitigation measures in different areas to secure a bumper autumn harvest.

While the autumn grain area this year increased and the crops are growing well currently, the biggest threat to the harvest is meteorological disasters, said the ministry.

China will likely see more frequent extreme weather conditions in August and September, with more regional rainstorms, floods and droughts, forecasts from the country's meteorological authorities said.

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China issues guidelines to improve scientific, technological achievements evaluation system

[GOV.CN, 02-08-2021] China will improve the evaluation system for scientific and technological achievements, and accelerate their transformation into real productive forces, according to a guideline issued by the General Office of the State Council on Aug 2.

The quality of scientific and technological innovation, their achievements in applied technology, and their contributions to economic and social development should be the core of evaluation, the guideline said.

Considering that scientific and technological achievements have multiple uses and value, evaluation standards with multi-level, differentiated criteria should be adopted, to improve the standardization of evaluation.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China has 128 mln hectares of arable land with improved ecosystem

[GT, 26-08-2021] Results of China's third national land survey released on 26 August show that China reached the goal of arable land conservation of 120 million hectares.

As of December 31, 2019, the total area of arable land reached 1.91 billion mu (127.86 million hectares), reaching the goal of cultivated land conservation of 120 million hectares set in the state plan.

However, the amount of cultivated land decreased by 7.53 million hectares over the 10 years since China's second national land survey, which was conducted between 2007 and 2009.

The survey result shows positive effects have been made in ecological improvement with the total area of woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, rivers and lakes with strong ecological functions being increased by a total of 17.33 million hectares over a period of 10 years.

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China achieves important breakthrough in halving rice growth cycle

[GT, 22-08-2021] China has achieved an important breakthrough in harvesting rice in controlled conditions only 60 days in a plant factory, halving the traditional growth cycle of more than 120 days in field condition, which provides a new approach to accelerate crop breeding, according to media reports.

The experiment was carried out jointly by the Institute of Urban and the China National Rice Research Institute Agriculture, under the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

The rice used in trial was a dwarf variety provided by Qian's team, which has a shorter plant size and high space utilization, making it suitable for multi-layer and three-dimensional cultivation in a plant factory environment, per media reports, citing Yang Qichang, the executive director general of Institute of Urban Agriculture.

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China breeds giant rice plant with twice the grains

[The Times, 30-08-2021] For a country that had the worst famine in history only 70 years ago, and whose people can be fined for leaving food on their plate, China has long obsessed over how to feed its 1.4 billion people.

Now, in what has been called a breakthrough for national security, scientists have developed a rice plant that grows twice as tall and produces almost twice as many grains as ordinary varieties.

According to researchers the first crop has been grown in Changhong, outside the southwestern city of Chongqing, population 31 million, to much success. In a press conference held in fields of ordinary and super rice, Chen Yang Piao, of China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Centre, said: "You can tell right away which one is taller. This is the first year we are growing it . . . it's been successful so far." He said that it yielded more than 800kg per "mu", or 0.16 acres, compared to 470kg per mu for conventional varieties.

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From eyebrow beans to 'lost' rice: Community seedbanks are protecting China's crops

[phys.org, 06-07-2021] In an effort to combat dwindling crop diversity across China (the Ministry of Agriculture found that of 11,590 grain crop varieties planted in the country in 1956, only 3,271 varieties remained in 2014), the government has bolstered its system of national genebanks, plus issued recent policy recommendations. These are making positive steps towards large-scale conservation; however, there has been relatively little attention given to the role of the country's 260 million farmers who have saved, used, and contributed to the evolution of diverse, local crops for centuries.

The services provided by China's community seedbanks have been documented for possibly the first time by an article recently published in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*. Twenty-seven seedbanks were surveyed to understand their ability to meet a wide range of needs, with positive implications for climate resilience, improved farmer livelihoods, and increased food security.

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Record algal green tide swamps Chinese port city of Qingdao

[SCMP, 20-07-2021] China's eastern port city of Qingdao is experiencing the region's worst ever algae infestation, with more than 1,700 sq km (656 square miles) of coastal area blanketed by the "green tide".

Qingdao has suffered from algae for 15 years. It normally appears from late spring and lasts for three to four months, damaging the marine ecosystem as the algae deprive other organisms of algae.

More than 1 million tonnes of algae are expected to be removed from coastal waters, state-backed China News reported.

By last week, Qingdao authorities had sent more than 12,000 vessels to collect some 450,000 tonnes of algae.

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China's national carbon market to start trading in July

[Xinhua, 14-07-2021] China's national carbon emissions trading market will commence trading this month, with all preparatory work ready, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said.

The first batch of trading will be among the power companies, and market participants will be expanded to include other industries afterward.

The ministry will roll out regulations on the trading, and improve relevant standards and management schemes while expanding the trading varieties and methods, Zhao said.

The carbon trading market is expected to be an important scheme for China to realize the goal of peaking carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

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COP15 to be hosted in two phases

[China daily, 21-08-2021] The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, Yunnan province, will be held in two phases from Oct 11 to 15 and the first half of 2022.

The decision was made by the 14th Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and has been ratified by the Chinese government, according to Chinese officials.

Themed "Ecological Civilization-Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth", the key United Nations summit on biodiversity conservation, commonly known as COP15, was originally scheduled to be hosted by China in October.

The event will review the post-2020 biodiversity framework and set new global biodiversity targets for 2030.

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China to ensure success of UN biodiversity meeting in Kunming

[Xinhua, 20-08-2021] China will continue to work to ensure the success of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), which will be convened in two parts this year and next year in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

The first part of the COP15, including an official opening and a high-level segment, will take place both online and offline on Oct. 11-15, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

The second part, to be held in-person in the first half of 2022, will see broad and deepened negotiations towards an ambitious and practical post-2020 global biodiversity framework, said the ministry.

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Experts focus on biodiversity as COP15 approaches

[Xinhua, 16-07-2021] Experts home and abroad set sights on biodiversity protection during a parallel session held at Eco Forum Global Guiyang 2021 in southwest China's Guizhou

Province, calling upon governments and citizens to cherish Mother Nature as their most precious asset.

Considering the severity of the problem, guest speakers and scholars at the sub-forum appealed for joint action to better protect the earth's ecosystems and expected the approaching 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) to help chart the course of preserving biodiversity while achieving sustainable development.

COP15 is set to determine whether biodiversity loss will peak by 2030, and core issues will include political commitments, pragmatic approaches and technologies, as well as possible capital investment.

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Standard carbon emission accounting system is goal for working group

[China daily, 31-08-2021] China has set up a carbon emission statistical accounting working group, marking the latest step in the country's efforts to realize the national goals of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

The group's purpose is to accelerate the establishment of a unified and standardized carbon emission statistical accounting system, and coordinate carbon emission statistical and accounting work across regions and industries, the country's top economic regulator said on Tuesday.

According to the National Development and Reform Commission, the group will be jointly led by the NDRC and the National Bureau of Statistics. Other backers include the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Finance and other department and associations.

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The underappreciated role of agricultural soil nitrogen oxide emissions in ozone pollution regulation in North China

[Nature, 18-08-2021] Intensive agricultural activities in the North China Plain (NCP) lead to substantial emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) from soil, while the role of this source on local severe ozone pollution is unknown. A group of researchers from Peking University and other universities use a mechanistic parameterization of soil NO_x emissions combined with two atmospheric chemistry models to investigate the issue. They find that the presence of soil NO_x emissions in the NCP significantly reduces the sensitivity of ozone to anthropogenic emissions. The maximum ozone air quality improvements in July 2017, as can be achieved by controlling all domestic anthropogenic emissions of air pollutants, decrease by 30% due to the presence of soil NO_x. This effect causes an emission control penalty such that large additional emission reductions are required to achieve ozone regulation targets. As NO_x emissions from fuel combustion are being controlled, the soil emission penalty would become increasingly prominent and shall be considered in emission control strategies.

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Chinese technology essential for Brazilian agriculture

[Xinhua, 13-08-2021] The development and advancement of Chinese technology can benefit Brazilian agriculture with improvements in the quality of its products and sustainability that helps the environment, industry insiders have said in Rio De Janeiro.

In a news conference entitled "Technology, Agricultural Development and Relations with China" and held by the Brazilian Center of International Relations on Wednesday, industry insiders highlighted the importance of Chinese technology for the agricultural industry in Brazil.

According to Malu Nachreiner, the general director of agriculture division at Bayer in Brazil, the South American country can take advantage of these advances in Chinese technology, especially when it comes to sustainability.

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Resolve to green the Belt and Road

[China daily, 09-08-2021] The Chinese government issued a policy on July 16 encouraging Chinese businesses to integrate green development throughout the whole process of overseas investment and cooperation. The document, titled "Green Development Guidelines for Overseas Investment and Cooperation", was jointly issued by the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

The guidelines recommend that Chinese enterprises "follow international green rules and standards" in overseas activities, particularly in countries where local standards are insufficient. The guidelines encourage the practice of environmental impact assessments in accordance with internationally accepted standards—a clear move to promote green development. By including the three environmental aspects of pollution control, ecological protection and climate change, the guidelines break new ground by aligning Chinese overseas investment with the Paris Agreement.

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Trade and Business

China to actively expand cross-border e-commerce pilot zones

[Xinhua, 12-07-2021] China's Ministry of Commerce (MOC) pledged to actively expand the integrated pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce to cultivate new competitive edges in foreign trade.

The MOC promised to formulate guidelines for the protection of cross-border e-commerce intellectual property rights, optimize the list of cross-border e-commerce retail imports, and facilitate the return and exchange management of cross-border e-commerce import and export.

Since 2015, China's State Council has established 105 cross-border e-commerce pilot zones in five batches. The new business model has become a vibrant force driving China's foreign trade growth.

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China's food industry continues expansion in production, sales

[Xinhua, 29-08-2021] China's food industry reported stable expansion in terms of production and sales in the first seven months of the year, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) showed.

The value-added industrial output of food manufacturers rose 9.1 percent year on year in the January-July period, and that of agricultural by-product processors went up 10 percent, according to MIIT.

In the first seven months, retail sales of the food industry witnessed robust growth, with that of grain, oil and food up 10.6 percent from a year earlier to 929.07 billion yuan (about 143.24 billion U.S. dollars).

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Gansu's fertile terraces supply vegetables to China, rest of world

[China daily, 18-08-2021] In the highlands of Gansu province, locals have transformed barren land into green terraces by cultivating vegetables, with the produce being sold to more than 20 cities nationwide and some overseas markets, thus helping farmers improve living standards.

With abundant sunshine and sharp temperature differences between day and night, Lanzhou has advantages in terms of natural conditions to plant vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, bamboo shoots and celery.

Utilizing gradual gradients and rolling hills in the region for cultivation, various kinds of vegetables are sowed successively at different elevations, and the vegetables get harvested at different times.

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Branding key to modern agricultural development

[China daily, 30-08-2021] The name of Dangshan, a county in the eastern province of Anhui, is a well-recognized public brand for suli, or crisp pears, the region's main agricultural product. Now, local authorities want to build more competitive individual brands.

Local officials said the county has been seeking a path to industrialization that will ensure the sector's continued prosperity.

Official data show that Dangshan is home to more than 60,000 "ancient" trees, which are defined as those with a history of more than 100 years.

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Livestreaming farmers earn millions from fruit on China's TikTok

[Bloomberg, 07-07-2021] Farmers and agricultural vendors in remote provinces sell goods directly to urban consumers via interactive livestreams and bite-sized videos. Revenues generated by rural content creators on ByteDance Ltd.'s Douyin - TikTok's Chinese twin -- have grown 15-fold year-on-year, the company reported.

The number of farmers broadcasting in China is huge and growing fast. More than 100,000 farmers streamed 2.52 million sessions on Alibaba Group's Taobao Live in the year ended in March. Douyin's agricultural content creators with more than 10,000 followers rose sixfold in 2019-20 from the year before.

To transport their produce, farmers still have to rely on the logistics arms of big e-commerce companies like JD Logistics or Alibaba's Cainiao, or use specialists such as SF Express.

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China to add 10.85 mln t of grains storage capacity

[Reuters, 12-07-2021] China will add 10.85 million tonnes of storage capacity to its already massive grains stockpiling programme, official media reported on Sunday.

Sinograin, the country's state grains stockpiler, will start building 120 storage facility projects located in 18 provincial administrations this year, reported huanqiu.com.

China has over 650 million tonnes of grains storage capacity, state media reported in April.

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China lowers estimates of 2020/21 soybean imports on falling crush margins

[Reuters, 12-08-2021] China has lowered its estimates of soybean imports in the year 2020/21 following a decline in crush margins, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said in its monthly crop report.

China's 2020/21 soybean imports were seen at 98.6 million tonnes, down 1.84 million tonnes from last month's estimates, as the crushing volume of soybeans has fallen since July because of declining margins, the report said.

Importers also delayed purchases of the oilseed as the market expected prices of the new crop to fall in response to a bumper U.S. harvest, the ministry said.

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China intensifies efforts to ease fluctuations in hog market

[Xinhua, 06-08-2021] Chinese authorities on 6 August released guidelines on advancing sustainable and healthy development in the hog industry, detailing tasks to avoid drastic fluctuations in the market and ensure stable supplies.

In the coming five to 10 years, China will see cyclical market fluctuations effectively alleviated and pork supply security capabilities increased, with an aim to maintain the market's self-sufficiency rate at around 95 percent, according to the guidelines jointly released by government agencies including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

After the African swine fever dealt a heavy blow to hog production and pork prices, authorities have taken a slew of measures, including handing out subsidies to encourage scale farming, to stabilize prices of the staple meat in China.

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2021 China dairy top 20 summit held in Hefei

[MARA, 19-07-2021] The 2021 China Dairy Top 20 (D20) Summit was held in Hefei, Anhui Province on July 18, 2021.

The D20 summit called for measures to be taken as below:

- strengthening the development of a high-quality milk supply base by genetic improvement of dairy cows and supply of high-quality fodder and hay;
- enhancing comprehensive and broad supervision along the entire chain to further improve the quality and safety of dairy products;
- supporting companies to increase the proportion of milk supplied from their own bases, and encouraging dairy farming-related recreation and sightseeing and other value-added services; and
- further optimizing dairy supply structure by accelerating the development of cheese and other dried dairy products adapted to the taste of Chinese consumers, and improving compatibility between the supply and demand of dairy products, and intensifying international cooperation and exchanges in dairy industry.

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China launches national pilot zone to develop premium wine in Ningxia

[MARA, 12-07-2021] Ningxia National Open Development Comprehensive Pilot Zone for Grape and Wine Industry was inaugurated on July 10, 2021 in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Vice Minister Ma Youxiang addressed the ceremony.

The Pilot Zone is to be developed jointly by the MARA, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and the People's Government of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (NHAR).

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Plant-based seafood hits the tables in Shanghai

[China daily, 25-08-2021] Plant-based food company Green Monday launched a new product series called OmniSeafood, which features "fish" and "crab meat" made from soybean and peas, in Shanghai on Aug 23.

The new series includes frozen meals containing plant-based fish fillet, crab cake and tuna, and is now being sold at their restaurant Green Common at Raffles City Changning. Distribution of these products to supermarket chains will begin in the fourth quarter this year.

Green Monday, which was recently ranked eighth on Fortune's 20 Most Socially Impactful Companies in China list, presently sells plant-based products in more than 20 countries and regions.

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