

China's No1 Central Document 2021 - Speed up the Modernisation of Agriculture and Rural Areas

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China unveiled its "No 1 Central Document" for 2021 on 21st February, stressing efforts to comprehensively push forward rural revitalization and accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

2021 marks the beginning of China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), therefore the Document not only detailed the activities for this year, but also charted the roadmap for the next five years.

The main themes of the No1 Central Document for 2021 include consolidating and extending the achievements of poverty alleviation, pushing forward rural revitalization, accelerating the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, advancing rural basic infrastructure construction.

These themes are in consistence with those in previous years' documents and relevant policies (see Table 1 and 2), but the No 1 Central Document in 2021 brings in more urgent issues such as boosting seed industry, promoting green development, protecting and improving arable land quality, and leveling up rural industry.

The 2021 and 2025 Targets

The 2021 targets

Maintaining food security and comprehensively pushing forward the rural revitalization are the two broad tasks in 2021.

To strengthen food security, China will further intensify the supply side reform in agriculture, stabilize the grain sown area and achieve the output over 650 million ton, steady the development of pig industry, further improve the quality of agricultural products and food safety.

To push forward the rural revitalization, China will consolidate the achievement of poverty alleviation, launch the plan for agricultural and rural modernization, scale up rural basic infrastructure construction, and improve rural living environment.

The 2025 targets

By 2025, China aims to achieve major progress in the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, including the modernization of agricultural infrastructure, improvement in rural living facilities and basic public services.

Achieve further consolidation of the agricultural foundation, secured supply of food and important agricultural products, optimized agricultural production structure and regional layout, the quality, efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural production significantly improved. 500 pilot zones for modern agriculture will be set up by 2025.

Achieve significant progress in rural construction, stimulate rural development momentum, and improve the happiness and security for farmers. The tap water coverage rate will reach 88 percent in rural regions by 2025.

Integrate Poverty Alleviation Achievement with Rural Revitalization

The rural revitalization strategy was proposed as a key move for the development of a modernized economy at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017.

The aim of the rural revitalization strategy is to build rural areas with thriving businesses, pleasant living environments, good social etiquette and civility, effective governance, and prosperity.

Following the “complete victory” in eradication of absolute poverty in rural China, the No 1 Central Document 2021 points out that the government will shift the resource allocation to focus on the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas.

The No 1 Central Document 2021 also outlined some specific measures, include:

- A five-year transition period will be set for counties that have shaken off poverty to gradually shift toward comprehensively promoting rural vitalization;
- Consolidating poverty alleviation achievements, preventing relapse into poverty;
- Promoting rural revitalisation in previous poor regions through the production of agricultural specialties, creating jobs and implementing the “work for aid” programs;
- Constantly monitoring and supporting low-income rural residents, providing them with employment opportunities and social security.

Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas

Modernization of agriculture has been a priority for China in the 13th FYP period (2016-2020). The No 1 Document in 2021 introduced new priorities into the subject. Boosting seed industry, advancing green development and protecting the quantity and quality of arable land will be the new priorities in 2021 and the coming years. The Document also addressed the importance of strengthening the support provided to modern agriculture by science, technology and equipment, boosting rural industry and establishing agricultural modernisation demonstration zones.

Boosting the seed industry

Seeds are regarded as foundation for China’s agriculture modernisation. At the 2020 annual Central Economic Work Conference, one of the eight key tasks proposed for 2021 is to effectively resolving the problems of seeds and arable land. China has taken “storing grain in the earth and storing grain in technology” as the core to ensure the long term food security.

Seed industry development has been a priority for Chinese government for a decade. In 2012, Chinese government released the “National Modern Crop Seed Industry Development Plan (2012-2020)”, seed industry development was also highlighted in the previous years’ No 1 Central Documents (see Table 1 and 3).

To boost China’s seed industry, the No1 Central Document 2021 has outlined the following actions:

- Strengthen the protection, development and utilization of agricultural germplasm resources;
- Speed up the survey and collection of crop, livestock and poultry germplasm resources; Construct national crop, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture germplasm bank

- Long-term and stable support to basic research and key R&D projects;
- Carry out livestock and poultry genetic improvement plan;
- Promote the industrial application of biological breeding;
- Strengthen the intellectual property rights protection;
- Support commercialization of breeding systems;
- Accelerate the breeding base construction.

Arable land protection and improvement

In China's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010), keeping the arable land over 120 million ha (1.8 billion *mu*) was first made as a "red line" in order to secure the food production. Since then, the 120 million ha "red line" has been kept as a priority target for arable land protection for Chinese government.

Protecting and improving arable land quality has also become an emphasis of Chinese government, with particular focus on the black soil in northeast provinces which is China's breadbasket (see Table 2 for the relevant policies).

In May 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) established the Cultivated Land Quality Monitoring and Protection Center to oversee the arable land quality in China through regular survey and evaluation.

The No 1 Central Document 2021 outlined the following specific measures on arable land protection:

- Take measures "with teeth" and implement the most stringent farmland protection system;
- Resolutely curb the "non-agricultural" use and "non-graining" cultivation on arable land;
- Prioritize the utilization of arable land, ensure the permanent basic farmland is mainly used for grain production, especially the staple grains;
- Strictly control the conversion of arable land and permanent farm land into forest land, horticulture land and other types of land use;
- Strengthen the supervision of land use right transfer, and ensure that the quantity of arable land is not reduced and the quality is improved;
- In 2021, build 6.7 million ha (100 million *mu*) and high-yield and high-standard farmland;
- Strengthen the supervision and law enforcement of arable land protection.

Agriculture green development

The agriculture green development has been promoted in China in the last five years. In 2015, the government proposed zero growth of fertilizer and pesticides use by 2020; in 2017, the government released the "Guideline for Innovating Institutional Mechanism and Promoting Agricultural Green Development" (see Table 2). The aim of the green development is to harmonise the carrying capacity of resource and environment with agricultural production,

Recognising the importance of green development in China's long term sustainability of agriculture and food security, it is the first time that the green development becomes an independent chapter in the No1 Central Document 2021.

The specific measures outlined in the No 1 Document this year include:

- Carry out the national black soil protection project, promote conservation tillage;

- Improve the cropland fallow rotation system;
- Promote the reduction and efficiency enhancement of chemical fertilizers and pesticides;
- promote green products and technologies for the prevention and control of crop pests and diseases;
- Strengthen the recycling of livestock and poultry manure;
- Promote the comprehensive utilization of straw and the recycling of agricultural film and pesticide packaging, strengthen the R&D and promotion of degradable agricultural film;
- Establish demonstration counties for control and prevention of nonpoint source pollution;
- Strengthen the supervision on farm products quality and food safety;
- Develop green products, organic products, and protected geographical indications (GIs) products, pilot the certification system for agricultural products;
- Strengthen the conservation of aquatic biological resources, promote fishery law enforcement, implement ten-year fishing ban on Yangtze River;
- Develop water-saving agriculture and dry-land farming.
- Control the desertification, soil erosion and soil pollution, protect groundwater and prevent over-exploitation;
- Carry out large scale territory greening programme;
- Protect and restore grassland ecosystem.

Development of modern rural industry system

Development of agricultural and rural industry is the foundation for rural revitalization. In May 2019, the government released the “Guidelines to Establishing System Mechanism and Policy Framework for Integrated Urban-Rural Development”. In June 2019, the State Council went further by releasing the guideline on promoting rural industry revitalization that calls for efforts to develop rural industries with unique local features, and gives full play to the decisive role of the market in allocating resources, conserve natural resources and protect the environment.

The Government also issued policies and guidelines for the development of specific sectors of the rural industries, these included the sustainable development of rural tourism, boosting the dairy industry and improving the quality and safety of dairy products, enhancing the development of intensive processing of agricultural products.

China also makes great effort to promote the digitalization of rural and agricultural development and upgrading of agricultural mechanisation (See Table 2).

In 2021, the No 1 Central Document outlined the following activities to establish China’s modern rural industry system:

- Develop agricultural whole-supply chain industry and related standards system, promote standardised production;
- Develop agricultural specialties initial and deep processing;
- Establish modern agricultural industrial parks, leading agricultural industrial counties, and rural industrial clusters;
- Enhance agricultural marketing and distribution system;

- Develop agricultural and rural tourism and associated facilities;
- Build demonstration parks of integrated rural primary-secondary-tertiary industry development, build 500 modern agricultural demonstration zones by 2025.

Rural Construction

In 2021, China will make effort to achieve significant progress in rural construction. This will include:

- Advancing rural village planning
- Protect traditional villages, traditional residential houses, and the villages and towns with historical values, enhance the protection of cultural heritages in the rural areas;
- Constructing rural public basic infrastructure, such as road, water supply facilities, gas/electricity network, broadband connection and digital service facilities;
- Improving the public services in the rural areas, including education, vocational training, health and insurance services;
- Improving rural living environment, including sanitation facilities, sewage treatment, and garbage collection;
- Promote and facilitate rural consumption, speeding up the construction of cold chain logistic and storage facilities;
- Prioritize the investment in the rural areas, establish the long-term financing mechanism and develop financing tools and products for agriculture and rural areas.

The Headline Contents of No 1 Central Document 2021

Opinions on comprehensively promoting rural revitalization and accelerating the modernization of agriculture and rural areas¹

General requirements

- Guiding ideology
- Target tasks

Consolidate the outcomes of poverty alleviation and effectively integration with rural revitalization

- Establish a transitional period for convergence
- Continue to consolidate and expand the outcomes of poverty alleviation
- Continue to promote rural revitalization in poverty alleviated areas
- Strengthen normalized assistance for low-income rural population

Accelerate the modernization of agriculture

- Improve production capacity for staple grains and other key products
- Solve the constraints to seed industry
- Resolutely maintain the red line of 120 million ha of arable land
- Strengthen modern agricultural technology and equipment support

¹ See the full text in Chinese at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-02/21/c_1127122068.htm

- Construct a modern rural industrial system
- Promote the green development of agriculture
- Promote the construction of a modern agricultural management system

Vigorously implement rural construction actions

- Speed up rural village planning
- Level up rural public infrastructure
- Implement a five-year action to improve the rural living environment
- Improve the level of basic public services in rural areas
- Promote rural consumption
- Integrate urban and rural development at the county level
- Prioritize the investment on agriculture and rural areas
- Deepening rural reforms

Strengthen the Party's leadership

- Strengthen the working mechanism of the party secretary at all levels to promote rural revitalization
- Strengthen the construction of the party committee's rural work leading group and work organization
- Strengthen the spiritual civilization initiatives in rural areas
- Improve the implementation mechanism of rural revitalization assessment

Implementation of No 1 Central Document 2021

Following the publication No.1 Central Document on 21 February, MARA released the implementation plan² on 25th February. The implementation plan outlined the following 7 tasks with 34 specific activities:

1. Ensure grain and key agricultural supplies

- (1) Ensure good grain harvest, achieve grain output over 650 million tonnes;
- (2) Stabilise pig, livestock and poultry production, ensure that pig product returns to normal;
- (3) Promote quality development of fishery sector;
- (4) Coordinating cotton, oilseeds, and sugar development;
- (5) Strengthen disaster prevention and mitigation;
- (6) Enhance the international cooperation.

2. Improve technical support, consolidate the foundation of agricultural production

- (7) Build high standard farmland;
- (8) Win the battle to boost seed industry;
- (9) Advance agricultural mechanisation;
- (10) Strengthen technical support and services;

² See the full text in Chinese at: http://www.moa.gov.cn/govpublic/FZJHS/202102/t20210225_6362310.htm

(11) Speed up smart agriculture development

3. Promote agriculture green development, improve agri-environment

(12) Promote green production methods

(13) Fully implement the 10-year fishing ban in Yangtze River

(14) Strengthen the arable land quality improvement initiatives

(15) Enhance agricultural waste recycling

(16) Enhance the safety and quality of agricultural products

4. Develop rural industries, modernise supply chain

(17) Build whole supply-chain agricultural industry

(18) Strengthen the development of agricultural products circulation system

(19) Establish agricultural modernisation demonstration parks

(20) Sustain the development of rural industry in the poverty alleviation areas

5. Further rural construction and environmental improvement

(21) Launch the five-year action to improve rural living environment

(22) Improve rural basic infrastructure and public services

(23) Improve rural governance

6. Implement key rural reforms

(24) Perfect the rural land contracting system

(25) Steadily and cautiously proceed rural homestead system reform

(26) Complete the village collective property right reform

(27) Nurture family farms and cooperatives

(28) Develop the specialised and socialised agricultural services

(29) Deepen the state farms reform

7. Support measures

(30) Improve the mechanism for advancing rural revitalization

(31) Establish the implementation mechanism for the 14th Five-Year Plan

(32) Strengthen the human resource development for the rural revitalization

(33) Expand the rural investment

(34) Strengthen the rule of law in rural areas

Table 1. The Key Themes of China's No 1 Central Document

Year	Key themes
1982	Confirmation of the household contract responsibility system
1983	Promote comprehensive development of agriculture, forestry, livestock, fisheries and side-line business; develop cooperative business and private business
1984	Promote the development of commodity production and get rid of poverty; extend land contract period to over 15 years
1985	Grain market reform, abolished unified purchase and sales, replaced them with contract purchase
1986	Take agriculture as foundation of national economy, relay on science and technology, and increase the investment to maintain the stable agricultural growth, further reform rural economy
2004	Boost farmers' incomes, adjusting agricultural structure, increasing jobs for farmers, enhancing rural investment, and advancing agriculture-related science and technology
2005	Strengthening rural work and improving the overall production capacity of agriculture
2006	Constructing a socialist new countryside, abolish agricultural tax
2007	Developing modern agriculture and steadily promoting the construction of a socialist new countryside
2008	Fortifying the foundation of agriculture, establishing the long-term mechanism to support agriculture, strengthening agricultural S&T services system
2009	Promoting steady development in agriculture and sustained increases in farmer income, further increase the direct subsidies
2010	Speeding up coordinated urban and rural development, improving agricultural support policy system and allocating resources to rural areas, improving rural public services
2011	Accelerating development of water conservation, improving farmland irrigation
2012	Accelerating S&T innovation to strengthen the supply of agricultural products
2013	Speeding up the modernization of agriculture, strengthening the vitality of rural growth
2014	Deepening rural reform to accelerate agricultural modernization
2015	Reinforcing reform and innovation to accelerate agricultural modernization
2016	Accelerating agriculture modernization, strengthening innovation-driven development, transforming agricultural development methods
2017	Supply side reform and cultivation of new momentum driving agriculture and rural development
2018	Implementation of the Strategy of Rural Revitalization, enhancing the quality of agricultural development, advancing rural green development
2019	Prioritise rural and agriculture development, decisively win the battle of poverty eradication, maintaining supply of agricultural products, enhancing rural industry and increase farmers' incomes, improving rural environment
2020	Winning the battle of poverty eradication, addressing the weakest links in agriculture and rural areas; effective supply of key agricultural product, increasing farmers' incomes

Table 2 Recent Policies on Rural Revitalization and Agricultural Modernisation³

	Date	Issued by
Rural Vitalization		
The 19 th CPC National Congress Report	2017	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
Opinions on the Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy	2018	CCP, State Council
Guidelines for Implementation of Rural Vitalization Strategy and Accelerating the Agricultural Transformation	2018	MARA
Rural Vitalization Strategic Plan (2018-2022)	2018	CCP, State Council
Science and Technology Supporting Action Plan	2018	MARA
Arable Land Quality Protection and Improvement		
Action Plan for Arable Land Quality Protection and Improvement	2015	MARA
Outline of Northeast Black Soil Protection Plan (2017-2030)	2017	MARA, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and others
Action Plan for Conservative Cultivation of Black Soil in Northeast China (2020-2025)	2020	MARA, Ministry of Finance (MoF)
Prevent “non-grain” use of arable land and stabilize food production	2020	State Council
Boost seed industry		
National Modern Crop Seed Industry Development Plan (2012-2020)	2012	State Council
National Medium and Long-term Development Plan for the Protection and Utilization of Crop Germplasm Resources (2015-2030)	2015	MARA, NDRC and others
National Catalogue of Livestock and Poultry Genetic Resources	2020	MARA
National Waterfowl Genetic Improvement Program (2020-2035)	2020	MARA
Opinions on Strengthening the Protection and Utilization of Agricultural Germplasm Resources	2020	State Council
Agricultural Modernization and Green Development		
National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan (2015- 2030)	2015	MARA and others
The Action Plan for Zero Growth in Fertilizer Use by 2020	2015	MARA
National Agricultural Modernization Plan (2016-2020)	2016	State Council
The Guideline for Innovating Institutional Mechanism and Promoting Agricultural Green Development	2017	CCP, State Council
Five Actions to advance Agriculture Green Development	2017	MARA
Technical Guidelines for Agriculture Green Development (2018-2030)	2018	MARA
Soil Pollution Prevention Law	2018	National People's Congress
Opinions on Accelerating the Prevention and Control of Pollution by Plastic Mulching Film	2019	MARA, NDRC and others

³ For more details of the relevant policies, see: SAIN Information Sheet No 6 “[China’s Agricultural Modernization - Policy Framework](#)”; SAIN Information Sheet No 21 “[China’s Rural Vitalization and Agriculture Green Development - Policy Framework and Action Plans](#)”; SAIN Information Sheet No 24 “[Status of China’s Cultivated Land Quality in 2019](#)”; SAIN Information Sheet No 28 “[China’s Priorities for Agricultural Development and Rural Revitalization During the 14th Five-Year-Plan\(2021-2025\) Period](#)”, available at: [http://www.sainonline.org/SAIN-Website\(English\)/zhishiku2/Information%20Sheet.html](http://www.sainonline.org/SAIN-Website(English)/zhishiku2/Information%20Sheet.html)

Rural Industry		
Guideline for Promoting Rural Industry Vitalization	2019	State Council
Rural Industry Development		
National Rural Industry Development Plan (2020-2025)	2020	MARA
Guideline for Advancing Agricultural Mechanisation and Upgrading and Transformation of Agricultural Machinery Industry	2018	State Council
Policy Measures to Enhance Fine and Deep Processing and High Quality Development of Agricultural Products	2018	MARA
Digital Rural Development Strategy	2019	CCP, State Council
Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of Cold Chain Facilities for Storage of Agricultural Products	2020	MARA

Table 3. Seed industry in the No 1 Central Document 2013 - 2020

2013	Promote the projects on high-quality seeds breeding, speed up the construction of crop seed production bases and demonstration sites for introducing new varieties
2014	Strengthen R&D on molecular breeding, speed up the development of modern seed industry
2015	Make key progress in biological breeding, promote the construction of three national breeding and seed production bases in Hainan, Gansu and Sichuan provinces
2016	Speed up the development of modern seed industry, enhance the independent innovation capability of the seed industry, ensure the national seed security.
2017	Speed up variety improvement, speed up the breeding of high-quality, high-yield and tolerant new varieties suitable for mechanized production.
2018	Accelerate the development of modern seed industries, enhance independent innovation capabilities, and build a high-standard national southern breeding base (Nanfan base).
2019	New seed promotion, advancing biological breeding, carry out joint research on rice, wheat, maize, soybeans, and improved varieties of livestock and poultry
2020	Support the dissemination of high yield soybean varieties, carry out the independent seed innovation programme and agricultural germplasm protection/utilization programme.

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