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Policies

Internet Plus strategy sets development direction

[China Daily, 01-07-2015] The State Council issued guidelines on the Internet Plus campaign recently, pinpointing the key fields of the integrated development of Internet and traditional industries.

The State Council, China's cabinet, clarified the ten key fields in implementing the Internet Plus strategy, including collaborative manufacturing, modern agriculture, smart energy, inclusive finance, public services, efficient logistics, e-commerce, convenient transportation, green ecology and artificial intelligence.

The decision makers of the central government pledged to clear up all the unreasonable regulations and policies obstructing the Internet Plus development, and lower the threshold of market access for the Internet Plus products and services.

According to the guidelines, China will establish open sharing platforms to promote the integration of traditional industries and the Internet, encouraging enterprises, especially small and medium-sized businesses to go online.

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China unveils "Internet Plus" action plan to fuel growth

[China Daily, 04-07-2015] China unveiled an "Internet Plus" action plan, aiming to integrate the Internet with traditional industries and fuel economic growth.

China's "Internet Plus" action plan will integrate mobile Internet, cloud computing, big data and the Internet of Things with modern manufacturing, to encourage the healthy development of e-commerce, industrial networks, and Internet banking, and to help Internet companies increase their international presence.

According to the action plan, China will push forward the integration of the Internet and traditional industries, fuel its expansion from consumption industries to manufacturing.

The action plan maps development targets and supportive measures for key sectors which the government hopes can establish new industrial modes by integrating with Internet, including mass entrepreneurship and innovation, manufacturing, agriculture, energy, finance, public services, logistics, e-commerce, traffic, biology and artificial intelligence.

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China sees record summer grain output, but concerns remain

[Xinhua, 22-07-2015] China's yields of summer grain reached a record high in 2015 after 11 straight years of increase, but problems are still clouding the world's most populous country.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said last week that the country's summer grain output hit 141.07 million tonnes this year, up 3.3 percent from that of 2014.

But problems remain. The first is inadequate grain storage capacity.

About 35 million tonnes of grain are lost or wasted in China every year in the course of storage, transportation and processing.

Overuse of water and chemical fertilizers are another concern.

The "No.1 Central Document", the first major policy document of each year released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, stressed in February that the central government will strive to transform the development mode of agriculture and boost policies that benefit farmers.

In the long run, the goal of modern agriculture development lies in high efficiency, product safety, resource saving and environment friendliness.

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Surging grain imports spurring officials to rethink policies

[Caixin, 31-07-2015] Increasing grain imports caused by lower prices abroad have prompted officials to rethink their stances on the country's agricultural sector, a senior rural affairs official says.

"Ministers are expressing many views in State Council meetings," said Chen Xiwen, deputy director of the Rural Affairs Leading Group, a major Communist Party decision-making body.

One proposal being aired in the cabinet is for the government to reduce subsidies paid to farmers for planting grain and instead pay them to grow other crops, he said. Another is for the government to convince farmers to find other work so production can be done on a larger, hopefully more competitive scale.

Chen said he likes an approach that has been tried in the eastern province of Shandong, where farmers are entrusting their land to cooperatives that provide planting services. The model is aimed at increasing production and improving efficiency.

Leadership must consider any changes carefully because the country has 600 million farmers, and any new policies would have a huge effect, Chen said. The country must also continue to stick to its policy of grain self-sufficiency, he said.

China imported more than 20 million tons of grain last year, official data show. The figure was 16.29 million tons in the first six months of this year, an increase of two-thirds from the same period last year. This is happening even as domestic grain production yields have increased for 11 straight years and a huge reserve has been stockpiled. Last year, total grain output hit more than 607 million tons.

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Strategy outlined to prevent, treat soil pollution

[China Daily, 14-07-2015] The Chinese environmental authority is to propose an action plan for prevention and treatment of soil pollution.

This follows publication of an air pollution control action plan in September 2013 and a water pollution control action plan in April.

Both of these set out achievement goals and key areas for action and the responsibilities of government, companies and society.

"We have submitted a draft of the (soil pollution) action plan to the State Council and we are waiting for approval," Li Ganjie, vice-minister of environmental protection, said at a symposium in Beijing on Saturday. The two-day symposium had the theme "2015 International Year of Soils".

The key tasks facing the ministry in the next five years include controlling pollution of arable land and urban development land through detailed investigations and by setting up an effective system.

Zhang Taolin, vice-minister of agriculture, said: "China already struggles to feed 19 percent of the world's population with only 8 percent of the arable land. What makes matters worse is that scarce arable land is under the threat of pollution."

"We should protect our arable land just like protecting pandas," he said.

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China strives for eco-friendly farming

[Xinhua, 25-07-2015] China will cap fertilizer and pesticide use and better water conservation in the next five years as it pushes for greener agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture said on Saturday, 25th July.

By 2020, the utilization rate of irrigation water should rise to 55 percent from the current 52 percent level, and the use of fertilizer and pesticide should be capped, said Agricultural Minister Han Changfu during a working conference held in Chengdu.

He said manure and waste, agricultural films and crop straw resources should be managed properly to achieve eco-friendly farming.

Currently, one cubic meter of water only produces a kilogram of grain harvested in China, lower than the average of 1.2-1.4 kilograms in advanced countries.

China has seen a record summer grain output for 12 straight years this year, but problems including soil acidification and hardening are raising costs while reducing yields.

Official statistics showed that at least 16 percent of China's soil contains more pollutants than national standards allow; less than one third of fertilizers and pesticides are absorbed by crops; less than two thirds of plastic film is recycled; less than half of livestock and poultry waste is processed; and straw burning is still widespread.

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China says retired officials can be punished for pollution

[Reuters, 01-07-2015] Even officials who have retired will be held accountable and punished for pollution which occurred under their watch, state media said.

Facing mounting public pressure, leaders in Beijing have declared a war on pollution, vowing to abandon a decades-old growth-at-all-costs economic model that has spoiled much of China's water, skies and soil.

But forcing growth-obsessed local governments and powerful state-owned enterprises to comply with the new laws and standards has become one of its biggest challenges.

Beijing has repeatedly promised to strengthen monitoring and law enforcement, and a new environmental law in force since Jan. 1 gives it the clout to impose unlimited fines and jail sentences on repeat offenders.

Under new guidelines on environmental monitoring, it is officials in senior positions who will be held accountable for whether or not the environment is being protected, state television said on its main evening news.

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China to pour money into six manufacturing sectors

[Xinhua, 30-07-2015] China will boost investment to foster technological progress in six manufacturing industries between 2015 and 2017 as the country tries to upgrade its manufacturing sector and lift economic growth, the top economic planner said Thursday.

The six sectors include railway equipment, ocean engineering equipment, industrial robotics, new-energy vehicles, **modern agricultural machinery** and medical equipment, said Zhao

Chenxin, deputy director of the policy studies department under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), at a press conference.

The investment is part of China's ambitious plan to enhance the competitiveness of its manufacturing sector by encouraging innovation in an effort to boost economic growth.

The blueprint, titled "Made in China 2025," comes as the country's factories struggle with sluggish demand, increasing competition from other developing countries and a slowing domestic economy.

To step up investment, the NDRC last year pledged to speed up construction of seven major projects, including power grids, transportation, water conservation and environmental protection. The investment totaled 3.3 trillion yuan (539.2 billion U.S. dollars) at the end of June, Zhao said.

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Science, Technology and Environment

Farming is driving force in drying soil in Northern China

[Purdue U, 09-07-2015] An important agricultural region in China is drying out, and increased farming may be more to blame than rising temperatures and less rain, according to a study spanning 30 years of data.

A research team led by Purdue University and China Agricultural University analyzed soil moisture during the growing season in Northern China and found that it has decreased by 6 percent since 1983.

The optimal soil-moisture level for farmland is typically 40 percent to 85 percent of the water holding capacity, and the region's soil is now less than 40 percent and getting drier. If this trend continues, the soil may not be able to support crops by as early as 2090, said study leader.

The team obtained direct observations recorded at 40 monitoring stations set up by the Chinese government within agricultural plots, and used available data of fertilizer use and crop types since 1983. The team also used satellite remote sensing of water content on the soil's surface and terrestrial water storage, meteorological observations and measurements of river discharge in their analysis.

Fertilizer causes plants to grow larger and increases the number of leaves per plant. This leads to increased transpiration of water. In addition, fertilizer use may aggravate soil compaction and soil salinity, which reduces the water holding capacity of soil and, consequently, reduces available soil water, researcher said.

While the increased use of fertilizer is not the only factor involved, the researchers found that it served as a broad diagnostic of the level of agricultural intensification. Other agricultural practices may also play a part in drying the land.

A paper detailing the results was published July 9 in Nature's Scientific Reports journal.

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China's demographics create challenges

[China Daily, 24-07-2015] Country's size, population shifts mean more vulnerability to problems from climate change

China, with its large population concentration in coastal areas and an increasingly aging society, could be facing a bigger challenge than other countries in coping with the crisis

brought by climate change, says Georgina Mace, ecosystem professor at University College London.

A recent study led by Mace indicated that governments across the world have failed to grasp the risk that population booms in coastal cities pose as climate change continues to cause rises in sea levels and extreme weather events. Mace is director of the UCL Centre for Biodiversity and Environment Research.

Mace says population growth in coastal areas can lead to big increases in exposure to extreme weather. The biggest direct effect of projected climate change is heat waves. The number of people dying from extreme heat could increase twelvefold by the end of this century, as a result of global warming combined with increasing numbers living in affected areas.

The report, drawn up by experts from UK, the United States, China and India, demonstrated risks triggered by climate change, including extreme weather and social instability, and also stressed the potential impact on coastal areas caused by rising sea levels

"The reason we chose to work with China is very much because of the population factor. The eastern coastal region is highly populated, and the sea level is rising. That could be a big challenge," says David King, the UK foreign secretary's special representative for climate change, who led the project.

Mace and her research group recommended that big engineering projects, including sea walls to prevent flooding or wells in areas prone to drought, should be combined with natural ecosystem-based approaches such as re-establishing flood plains, planting vegetation and protecting coastlines with mangrove forests.

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Chinese scientists reveal molecular mechanism regulating grain length of rice

[MoA, 09-07-2015] A team of Chinese scientists cracked the mystery of how copy number variants (CNVs) on Chromosome 7 (GL7) locus contributes to grain size diversity and quality in rice (*Oryza sativa* L.).

The findings were published in online scientific journal Nature Genetics on July 6, 2015. The academic thesis describes the study jointly carried out by scientists from the China National Rice Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The research findings have laid theoretic foundation for the molecular design of the grain size and the breeding of high-yield and high-quality novel varieties of rice.

The study on American long-grain japonica rice varieties show that the GL7 encodes a protein homologous to *Arabidopsis thaliana* Longifolia proteins which regulate longitudinal cell elongation. Further genetic study suggests that tandem duplication of a 17.1-kb segment at the GL7 locus leads to upregulation of GL7 and downregulation of its nearby negative regulator in gene expression levels, which results in an increase in grain length and the improvement of grain appearance quality due to decreased chalkiness and chalky kernel percentage. Thus, the complex genetic regulatory mechanism for grain length is revealed for American long-grain japonica rice.

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China's carbon growth rate in decline

[Xinhua, 13-07-2015] Despite the continued increase in global carbon emissions in China, the growth rate of carbon emissions has been "in a steady decrease" since 2005, and was near zero in 2014, according to a new climate report.

The report, commissioned by Britain's Foreign Office, was written by experts from Britain, China, the U. S. and India. It gives a detailed assessment of the progress made in reducing carbon emissions, and various threats posed by global warming.

Several factors have played key roles in bringing down the carbon growth rate in China, including better energy efficiency in major sectors, development of renewable energy, and concern for air pollution, the report said.

The Chinese government is fully aware of the challenges, and is very keen to have a detailed analysis of the impact of climate change, said Prof. David King, the leading author of the report and Britain's climate change envoy.

China has recently announced its plans to cut carbon dioxide emission per unit of GDP by 60 to 65 percent from the 2005 level by 2030.

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Vertical farms springing up in cities

[China Daily, 18-07-2015] One of the most promising fields in agriculture these days enables growing tons of crops and vegetables indoors in layers, stacked in racks, in existing underutilized warehouses and multistory buildings. It is called vertical farming, and an increasing number of investors believe the new concept could transform the agricultural business in China and the rest of world.

Howard Brin, manager of the China chapter of the Association for Vertical Farming told China Daily that they have had success in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces, and that a couple of real estate companies are interested in investing in the new farming project.

Under the current technology, the vertical farming costs around \$10,000 per square meter, according to a Columbia University think tank that was involved in the conceptual creation of vertical farming. A high-quality farm of its kind could run into the billions of dollars to build, far more costly than the traditional farming costs Chinese are used to.

Still, vertical farming is a long way from replacing regular farming.

Nevertheless, it is still a good opportunity for investors, especially as the crops and vegetables produced in the vertical farms can be sold at much higher prices according to other countries' practices.

Investors, mostly real estate developers that are forward thinking have begun to get involved in the industry.

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National Service Center for Technology Transfer in Agriculture launched

[MoA, 10-07-2015] The National Service Center for Technology Transfer in Agriculture kicked off on July 7th, 2015. Zhang Taolin, Vice Minister of Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), attended the inauguration ceremony.

Zhang emphasized that the National Service Center for Technology Transfer in Agriculture shall focus on the goal of production mode transfer and structure adjustment in agriculture and agricultural modernization. Efforts shall be enhanced to improve the top-level design and

systematic planning, forming synergy among agricultural research, education and extension institutions, agricultural enterprises, related intellectual property management institutions and venture capital, integrating national resources of agricultural research results, so as to provide a basic platform for technology transfer to bridge the two sides of supply and demand, and facilitate safe and smooth transaction. System innovation and guidance should be improved to promote the open and fair trading of the technology and further adaptation after transfer with the full-chain all-factor services. Market-oriented approach shall be adopted to standardize transaction services and maximize effectiveness, and optimize the allocation of technology, capital, management and other modern market factors, while promoting the integration and coordination of the industry, education, research and application.

The National Service Center for Technology Transfer in Agriculture is a comprehensive service institution for national agricultural technology transfer created on the basis of optimization and integration of the existing agricultural technology property right trading platforms. It will focus on the needs of the national strategy of agricultural modernization and provide transfer services across the whole value chain, with emphasis on agricultural research results collection and confirmation, evaluation and assessment, publicity and promotion, transaction services and mass innovation.

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Int'l potato research center established in Beijing

[Xinhua, 28-07-2015] An international potato research center was established on Tuesday, 28th July in Beijing as experts from the potato industry gathered for the 2015 Beijing World Potato Congress.

The International Potato Center - China Center for Asia and the Pacific (CCCAP) is aimed at boosting scientific research and industrial development in the potato industry.

China's agriculture minister Han Changfu saw the center as a sign of the country's opening-up and expanding international cooperation in the industry.

"We believe the center will bring new opportunities to the potato industry in China and the Asia-Pacific region and contribute to global food security and anti-poverty efforts," Han said at the founding ceremony.

The 2015 Beijing World Potato Congress opened on Monday, 27th July in Beijing's Yanqing County, attracting more than 800 delegates from 37 countries. Organized by the World Potato Congress, the triennial event has been held eight times in various countries.

China is boosting potato acreage to make the crop the country's fourth staple food after rice, wheat and corn, in an effort to boost food security amid dwindling farmland.

The country will consume 50 billion kg more food in 2020 than it did in 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture forecast in January. With a shortage of farmland in China, the ministry stressed that it is difficult to improve the yield efficiency of wheat and rice but easier with potatoes.

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International Seminar on Potato Staple Food and Industry Development held in Beijing

[MOA, 30-07-2015] The Seminar emphasized that potato has been considered as the 4th staple after rice, wheat and corn in the world and China. Both potato farming acreage and output in China took about a quarter of respective global figures in 2014. China has become the world's largest potato producer and consumer. Yet, its annual per capita consumption

merely stood at 41.2 kg in 2014. Promoting potato staple food aims at developing diversified staple products to improve food portfolio and dietary structure.

The theme of the Seminar was "green, safety, nutrition and health", calling for accelerating the breeding of potato varieties suitable for processing into staple, developing a number of quality potato production bases, promoting advanced processing technologies, and providing support to leading enterprises of relevant industry. The Seminar pledged to foster a new pattern coordinating development between potato and other crops.

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Sino-UK remote sensing satellite constellation launched

[Xinhua, 11-07-2014] Three one-meter resolution optical Earth observation satellites were successfully launched early Saturday, according to operator Twenty First Century Aerospace Technology Co. Ltd. (21AT). The satellites, which will form the DMC3/TripleSat Constellation, were launched from a site in India as part of a Sino-UK cooperation project.

The satellites were developed by UK-headquartered Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd. (SSTL), which is the world's leading small satellite company and part of the Airbus Group. 21AT, a commercial Earth observation satellite operator based in Beijing, provided the imaging capacity of the three satellites and dubbed the Constellation "Beijing-2".

The Chinese company will manage the satellites' operation, including observation and control, and data reception and production, as well as related services.

The satellites' very high resolution imager was designed and manufactured by SSTL, and will provide one meter ground sampling distance (GSD) in panchromatic mode, and four meter GSD in multispectral mode.

Once the three satellites are fully operational, in three months, 21AT will start its data services, the constellation will offer a huge amount of data for sectors such as land resources management, farming resources survey, environmental monitoring and urban management.

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Biotech research to be established by China in Pakistan

[PT, 12-07-2015] Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong has said that China would establish Bio-Tech Research Laboratory in Pakistan under a joint venture programme to promote agriculture sector in the country.

The lab would offer excellent opportunities to carry out joint study and research and also enhance maximum cooperation between scientists of both countries, he said.

He called for maximum cooperation between the two countries in the fields of science, technology, agriculture and power sector.

Ambassador Sun visited a Chinese Cotton Ginning Company and Multan Cotton Research Station. The Chinese Company aims to build a cotton industrial chain in Multan. The Multan Cotton Research Station is part of the China-Pakistan Joint Bio-Tech Laboratory.

The Research Station has bred 16 cotton varieties of antivirus, heat and drought tolerant species. The Ambassador said, Chinese side would like to seek the possibility to expand the agriculture cooperation between the two countries.

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China's COFCO in talks to raise stake in grain trader Nidera

[Reuters, 09-07-2015] China's food giant COFCO is ready to increase its stake in Dutch grain trader Nidera, speeding up a deal which will help its transformation into a global agricultural trader, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The state-run company acquired 51 percent of Nidera in February last year. Two sources said discussions were now underway for COFCO to increase its stake by buying at least a further 15 percent.

COFCO has embarked on an aggressive expansion into international grain trading, having invested \$2.8 billion in 2014 via joint ventures with Noble Group agribusiness and Nidera, after taking substantial stakes in the companies.

Sources say it is now looking to build on those steps, integrating operations of the three entities, ahead of plans to eventually list all of COFCO's, Noble's, and Nidera's agricultural assets together.

The move would catapult COFCO into the select "ABCD" stable of companies dominating global agricultural trade: Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge, Cargill and Louis Dreyfus.

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Food producer COFCO looks to expand global reach

[China daily, 20-07-2015] With two major acquisitions closed in October 2014, COFCO is building across five continents.

COFCO is the first Chinese food corporation to achieve the scope of 'from farm to table' operation in China, from planting and financing farmers to processing, manufacturing and more.

The acquisition of two major grain traders is COFCO's major step toward globalizing its food chain to secure resources. In North America, the deals provided COFCO a handful of grain elevators in Chicago and Milwaukee.

China has transformed from a large exporter of agricultural commodities to a major importer over the last two decades. Urbanization and changing dietary habits in China are the main reasons behind the transformation.

In response to China's Going Global policy, COFCO was no longer satisfied with exclusive importing. Last year, it acquired Dutch grain trader Nidera BV and 51 percent of Noble Group's agriculture unit, gaining resources to establish fully integrated value chains across the globe.

Aware of the globalization trend, COFCO ensures China's food supply and safety through securing global resources.

Technology also has been motivating COFCO to evolve. Once a food importer and exporter, COFCO is now directly serving consumers on a daily basis online.

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Agricultural firms see big gains from trade initiatives

[ECNA, 02-07-2015] The farm sector in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will export more agricultural technology to countries in Central Asia as the Belt and Road Initiative is further implemented, officials and experts said.

"The geographical and the natural conditions in Xinjiang are very similar to Central Asia. The initiative has created an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us to pitch our seeds, machinery

and fertilizers to those countries," said Bao Zhenxing, deputy director of the administrative committee of the Xinjiang Changji National Agricultural Sci-Tech Park.

The park has established a western region agricultural research center, in a partnership with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, which will pursue cooperation between China and Central Asian countries.

The park's agricultural exports to Central Asian countries rose 40 percent last year to \$14.77 million. The total agricultural exports of Xinjiang reached 3.27 billion yuan (\$533.65 million), up 11.9 percent year-on-year, the Xinjiang Daily reported in February. A majority of the agricultural exports in the region went to Central Asian countries.

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Pork exports to China boost Britain's economy

[Xinhua, 03-07-2015] Pigs will fly, the old saying goes, and for Britain, pork exports to China have given the economy a boost, government environment secretary Elizabeth Truss announced.

Global pork exports from Britain have rocketed 44 percent in the last five years generating almost 334 million U.S. dollars a year for the British economy, the minister said.

Truss said the pork industry was given a significant boost after the British government opened up pork trade with China in 2012. The exports to China are now worth 47 million dollars each year.

Visiting the country's biggest pork exporter, Cranswick Country Foods in the Hull (Northern England), Secretary Truss praised the industry for grasping export opportunities and leading the way in new Chinese markets, setting a gold standard for the rest of the UK food industry.

She said exports of British pork around the world are up from 149 million pounds in 2010 with China being by far the biggest international export market for British pork.

In January, Truss visited China to discuss opening up the market further for British exports and expanding the number of British plants that can export pork to China.

The new UK Agriculture and Food Counsellor, Karen Morgan, has been tasked with driving greater access to China's growing food market.

This paves the way for the dairy industry where British dairy products are in growing demand. Dairy exports to China are now worth over 37 million dollars and infant milk formula and processed cheese could present an opportunity for British producers to diversify.

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Chinese, Dutch firms meet to expand cooperation on agriculture, food

[China daily, 08-07-2015] More than 200 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from China and the Netherlands gathered Tuesday for their first-ever match-making party designed to help expand bilateral cooperation in agriculture and the food industry.

The SMEs, including about 150 Dutch and 60-plus Chinese firms from a wide range of sectors such as seed cultivation, greenhouse technology, automation technology, dairy production, aquaculture and biological control, reached agreements on 196 cooperation intentions during the gathering in this biggest European port city.

The Chinese SMEs came mainly from China's biggest agricultural provinces like Henan, Jilin and Inner Mongolia.

The Bank of China, the organizer of the event, also joined the match-making talks. It took the opportunity to promote its cross-border yuan financing products and offered consultation services to both Chinese and Dutch SMEs.

It was the fourth SME match-making event initiated by the Bank of China since last year. The previous ones took place in Germany, Malaysia and France.

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Australia signs live cattle export deal with China

[Xinhua, 20-07-2015] Australian Minister of Agriculture Barnaby Joyce has announced a breakthrough in live cattle export trade negotiations with China on Monday, 20th July.

Joyce said the Australian and Chinese veterinary authorities were in the process of formalizing agreement on animal health certification requirements, which would allow the industry to begin to prepare the commercial and Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) arrangements for trade to commence.

The deal with China opens a "massive market" too big for Australia to meet the demand immediately.

"We would not be able to supply what they want immediately. We will build up to those numbers over eight to ten years. Ultimately, they want around about a million head a year. We couldn't supply that now," Joyce was quoted by newspaper.

Joyce expected the live cattle trade with China would be worth up to AU\$2 billion (\$1.48 billion) in ten years' time.

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China becomes principal destination for Argentinean meat exports

[Xinhua, 29-07-2015] China has become the principal destination for Argentina's meat exports, taking 35 percent of the total, according to Argentina's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

In a press release on Monday, the ministry said that "in June, Argentina exported a total of 5,058 tons of beef to China, worth a combined 26,546,176 U.S. dollars."

"This year, China replaced Chile as the main market for our beef exports, claiming 17,051 tons, or 35 percent of the 48,426 tons we exported by the end of June," said the report.

Chile, which received 10,051 tons, ranked second, followed by Israel, Russia, and Germany.

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Zambia eyes Chinese investment in tapping into agriculture potential

[Xinhua, 19-07-2015] Zambia's Agriculture Minister Given Lubinda has urged Chinese investors to tap into the potential of agricultural sector in the southern African country, saying an array of incentives are waiting for them.

Lubinda said Zambia has abundant arable land which has remained unexploited due to constraint funds and out-dated production capacity, and the country was only using 15 percent of its 42 million hectares arable land.

The government, he said has put in place an ambitious program of opening up more than 1.5 million hectares of land in the next two years for agricultural purposes and has selected 10 areas where it intends to develop farming blocks with each block having a land space of not less than 100,000 hectares.

Besides the 10,000 hectares of land free for investors for up to 99 years, Lubinda said other incentives include tax free for a period of five years if a company invests more than 500,000 U.S. dollars, reduced electricity tariffs for investors in the sector as well as reduced income tax.

"We are hoping that the Chinese government can facilitate for Chinese investors to come and invest, we are hoping that the Chinese government can also put resources available to investors to come and invest in Zambia," he added.

The minister further called for the promotion of joint ventures between Zambian and Chinese investor.

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