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Policies

China to speed up agri modernization through reforms

[Xinhua, 01-02-2014] China will step up reforms and innovation to speed up agricultural modernization in 2015, according to a key policy document released by the Party and government on Sunday.

As the Chinese economy, under the "new normal," shifts from high-speed to medium-to-high-speed growth, it has become a key issue to continue consolidating the position of agriculture as the foundation of the economy and to further increase farmers' income, said the document.

The "No. 1 Central Document" refers to the first major policy document of each year released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council.

This is the 12th consecutive year in which the document has focused on agriculture and rural issues.

The document listed 5 aspects and 32 points for detailed government work on reforms related to the "three rural issues", agriculture, rural areas and farmers.

According to the document, China will strive to transform the development mode of agriculture, boost policies that benefit farmers, push forward the building of new socialist countryside, deepen rural reforms and strengthen rule of law in dealing with rural issues.

Highlighting the role of agriculture, the document said a strong agricultural sector is the prerequisite of a strong China.

Instead of mainly pursuing high output and relying on resources consumption, China should put equal emphasis on quantity, quality and benefits, and attach importance to competitiveness, technological innovation and sustainable growth, it added.

The goal is to blaze a modern agriculture development path featuring high efficiency, product safety, resource saving and environment friendliness, said the document.

Click [here](#) for details

China renews safety certificates for local GMO rice

[Reuters, 05-01-2015] China, the world's top rice producer and consumer, has renewed biosafety certificates for its own genetically-modified (GMO) rice, but large-scale production may be years away.

The agriculture ministry has extended approval of two varieties of pest-resistant rice for another 5 years after the certificates, which were first granted in 2009, expired last year, according to an official website (www.agrogene.cn).

Beijing has been reluctant to allow commercialisation of GMO rice because of public concerns over health risks, although the government still encourages research in the sector.

China, the world's top buyer of GMO soybean, is amending its food-safety law to enforce labelling of GMO food amid rising public concern over food safety.

Beijing last month granted approval for imports of a type of genetically-modified corn developed by Syngenta AG developed GMO corn as well as two strains of GMO soybean.

Click [here](#) for details

Hukou reform needs to balance residents' interests

[China Daily, 06-01-2015] The State Council has finished soliciting public opinions about the draft regulation on the household registration system, which is expected to reform the

decades-old hukou system and grant those migrating from rural to urban areas equal access to public services in towns and cities. Comments:

It is common sense that the migrant population needs equal social services; the question is, who will pay? The central government needs to make clear how much contribution it will make to cover the additional costs, so that local authorities will support the reform instead of curbing it for their own interests. By *Qiao Xiaochun, a professor in demographic studies at Peking University*

The new regulation on the residence permit, by promising to offer nine equal public services and six conveniences to the migrant population, represents huge progress. However, more needs to be done to better coordinate interests among the regional authorities and different groups of residents. By *China Youth Daily*

Resources such as education, medicine and housing are already limited in cities especially the metropolises; the permanent residents might be unsatisfied if their new neighbors get more. This problem must be solved to rally wide support for the reform. By *Bian Xiuquan, a law professor at China University of Political Science and Law*

Local governments rely too much on selling land as a revenue source. When the realty market withers, heavily indebted local governments will fail to provide enough public services to residents; therefore the reform on residence rights involves more than expected, and it will be a long process. By *Zhang Juwei, a researcher on labor economy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,*

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China to boost potato cultivation

[Xinhua, 06-01-2015] China is boosting potato acreage to transform the crop into the country's fourth staple food after rice, wheat and corn, said Yu Xinrong, vice minister of agriculture, at a seminar on Tuesday, 6th January.

It is time for potatoes to become a staple food, given China's rapid urbanization, and they can diversify the dinner table, said Wan Baorui, director of China's state food and nutrition consultant committee.

The potato has been grown for about 400 years in China and now covers 5 million hectares in China, according to the Ministry of Agriculture. Acreage will expand to 10 million hectares in the future to better safeguard the country's grain supply, according to the ministry.

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Chinese dairy farmers struggling

[Xinhua, 08-01-2015] In the rural areas of north China's Hebei Province, local farmers have started feeding pigs something unusual: fresh cow's milk.

The farmers are not trying to make the pigs healthier. Their new diet is a result of a severe dairy industry slump across north China, where plummeting milk prices have fueled a rush among local farmers to sell milk at extremely low prices, however possible, including selling to local pig farmers.

To recover their costs, some dairy farmers are feeding the milk to calves, or simply throwing out the nutritious liquid. Some have even killed their cows to prevent further losses.

The downturn has come as a surprise to many. In late 2013, China's dairy products saw a price hike following a production decrease caused by disease and individual farmers leaving

the industry. Milk prices jumped to more than 5 yuan (0.8 U.S. dollars) per kilogram in December 2013 from 3.4 yuan per kg a year earlier.

The dairy boom sent ripples of excitement through the sector, with farmers purchasing large numbers of dairy cows at high prices to boost production.

But the boom proved to be a flash in the pan. In March 2014, foreign milk prices began to fall drastically due to overproduction. Many dairy companies resorted to cheap overseas sources and limited purchases from domestic suppliers, causing dairy prices to dip to new lows.

Click [here](#) for details

Gov't digs into soil pollution problem with proposal for new standards

[Caixin, 27-01-2015] After nine years of debate, a draft of a plan to improve China's standards for controlling land pollution was released by the Ministry of Environmental Protection on January 14.

The standards, which have been released so the public can comment, would add more chemicals to the list of those monitored and put stricter requirement on pollutant levels, especially for farmland.

Land pollution has become one of the public's top concerns, but plans to update national soil quality standards have run into obstacles. The current standards base the maximum levels of major kinds of pollutants on the land's designated purpose and include a mechanism for monitoring pollution.

Environmental experts have long complained that the standards, which took effect in 1996, are outdated. A land pollution survey, released in April 2014 after eight years work, indicated that 16.1 percent of the country's land contains excessive levels of pollutants. Nearly one-fifth of tested farmland was found to be heavily polluted.

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Planting the seeds of agricultural reform

[Caixin Editorial, 28-01-2015] For the country to avoid the middle-income trap, the central government must address the problems besetting rural areas and farmers.

After the publication last week of China's preliminary economic data for 2014, much fuss was made over the greater contribution of the services sector to overall growth. However, one equally important statistic was overlooked.

According to the figures, agriculture's share of gross domestic product fell to 9.2 percent from 9.4 percent in 2013 (this figure was itself revised down from an initial estimate of 10 percent), and the downward trend is likely to continue.

This is an indisputable outcome of the country's economic restructuring. Meanwhile, the numbers accentuate the unfair treatment of rural and urban areas in official policy, and the so-called "san nong problem" – the three rural issues of agricultural industry, farmers' livelihoods and countryside concerns.

This is because the cheap farm labor that has given growth such a boost has by now been exhausted, absorbed by its industries. The country has reached the famed Lewis Turning Point.

How Beijing deals with its san nong problem will determine whether the country can escape the middle-income trap that awaits it. Thus, we eagerly await the release of the "No. 1 central

document," the leadership's annual policy paper that is expected this year to continue focusing on the san nong problem, as it has for the past 11 years.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China aiming to triple patents by 2020

[Reuters, 03-01-2015] China is aiming to triple the number of patents it files by 2020 as Beijing looks to boost the country's high-tech economy in areas from agriculture to pharmaceuticals, according to a notice from the central government.

China is targeting 14 invention patents per 10,000 habitants by 2020 compared to four in 2013. It published 629,612 patents in 2013, over 200,000 more than the United States, according to a Thomson Reuters study in December.

Beijing wants to become a bigger player in high technology industries as the country grapples with slower growth and rising costs for its manufacturing base. This is likely to raise a challenge to global players operating in China and abroad who have typically dominated in more innovative sectors.

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Chinese biologists discover molecule behind bamboo flowering cycle

[BioScholar, 02-01-2015] A team of Chinese biologists has discovered the molecule responsible for the coordination of the different genes involved in the mass flowering cycles of bamboo, a key food for panda bears.

The research could help explain the mass flowering of bamboo, a process that has raised more questions than answers and is especially sensitive in China since the plant is the food for pandas, China's national symbol.

Chinese scientists have found a ribonucleic acid (RNA) molecule called 'dla-miR18' which they think plays a central role in the coordination of the more than 200 genes suspected of participating in the mass flowering cycles of bamboo.

"The performance of dla-miR18 is very eye-catching. After flowering, its level can increase to 100 times its pre-flowering level," the director of the study, Guo Zhenhua, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Kunming Institute of Botany.

The scientists' findings were published in *Plant Molecular Biology Reporter* late last year.

Reference: DOI: 10.1007/s11105-014-0808-z

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Chinese government backs further studies of genetically modified crops

[SCMP, 06-01-2015] The government has renewed permits allowing scientists to grow three varieties of genetically modified rice and corn in China, more than three months after they had expired, suggesting the technology has the continued backing of the authorities.

GM rice cannot be sold as food in China, with the government saying it has to be sure that new strains are safe, but the country already imports huge amounts of genetically modified soya beans, mainly from the United States.

The permits issued by the Ministry of Agriculture allow two scientific research groups to produce two types of pest-resistant rice and a type of high-yield corn for five years, according to a report by the Communist Party mouthpiece *People's Daily*.

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China to boost support for NGOs that sue environment polluters

[Bloomberg, 08-01-2014] China, the world's biggest carbon emitter, will provide more support to non-governmental organizations that sue polluters.

The nation will work to reduce court charges for NGOs in public non-profit environmental litigation, according to a statement on the website of China's Supreme People's Court. Defendants will be required to pay court costs when plaintiffs win lawsuits, the statement said.

The world's second-biggest economy has struggled to combat pollution, a byproduct of its rapid growth and an increasing leading cause of social unrest.

China's biggest changes to its environmental protection laws in 25 years became effective on Jan. 1. The amended law outlines plans to punish polluters more severely as leaders work to limit contaminated water, air and soil.

Chinese courts should report litigation to relevant environmental-protection authorities within 10 days after they accept the case, according to the interpretation.

NGOs using litigation for profit will face punitive actions from authorities that manage their registration, it said.

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700 green NGOs can pile pro bono lawsuits, official estimates

[Caixin, 08-01-2015] Some 700 non-governmental organizations are eligible to launch pro bono lawsuits over violations of environmental law, a Ministry of Civil Affairs official says.

Liao Hong, a vice director of the ministry's Administration of Non-Governmental Organizations, made the comments at a press conference on December 6 in response to a judicial interpretation of the revised Environmental Protection Law. The changes have for the first time given NGOs the legal status required to take violators to court via suits lawyers handle for free or at a reduced charge for the public good.

Liao said the country has 569,000 licensed NGOs, and about 7,000 are registered as groups campaigning on behalf of the environment. One-tenth of them meet the criteria for filing lawsuits on behalf of the public, he said.

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China's aquaculture sector can tip the balance in world fish supplies

[Stanford, 08-01-2015] China's booming aquaculture industry relies increasingly on fishmeal made from wild-caught fish. This practice depletes wild fish stocks and strains fragile ocean ecosystems, but a new Stanford-led study offers a more sustainable path.

In a new paper in *Science* a research team led by Stanford postdoctoral scholar [Ling Cao](#) and Professor Rosamond Naylor offers the clearest picture to date of China's enormous impact on wild fisheries. The study also presents a more sustainable alternative to the current practice of using wild-caught fish to feed farm-raised fish.

China is the world's leading producer, consumer and processor of fish, contributing one-third of the global supply. China's fish production has tripled in the past 20 years, and about three-quarters of its supply now comes from fish farms. Yet the industry still places huge pressure on wild fisheries through its demand for fishmeal and fish oil made from wild-caught species. How China develops its aquaculture and aquafeeds sector can thus tip the balance of global seafood availability.

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Scientists reveal first genetic map of Tibetan barley on PNAS

[Xinhua, 13-01-2015] Scientists from a genomics organization in south China's Shenzhen City have published the draft genome of Tibetan highland barley in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), the organization said.

The achievement will help cultivate better strains of Tibet's staple food and increase yield, according to the BGI Tech Solutions in Shenzhen.

The research assembled 3.89 billion of the estimated total of 4.5 billion base pairs of the chemicals that make up DNA in the barley genome, and included 39,197 protein coding genes, said BGI.

A genome is the full complement of an organism's DNA, complex molecules that direct the formation and function of all living organisms. The size of an organism's genome is measured by the number of bases it contains -- base pairs being the building blocks of DNA.

Highland barley has been grown on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau for nearly 4,000 years. It makes up 70 percent of all cereal crops in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, home to the world's leading barley production base and center for barley diversity research.

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China's renewable energy use ranks top in the world

[China Daily, 17-01-2014] China's renewable energy generation capacity reached 430 million kilowatts by the end of 2014, accounting for 32 percent of the country's total power capacity, said Shi Lishan, deputy director general of the New and Renewable Energy Department of the National Energy Administration during the fifth session of the International Renewable Energy Agency Assembly held in Abu Dhabi.

According to Shi, China's renewable power generation was 1.2 trillion kilowatt-hours in 2014, accounting for 22 percent of the country's total power consumption in the last year.

China became a member of IRENA in January 2013, a milestone in international efforts to double the share of renewable energy worldwide by 2030.

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2 die from human H7N9 in E China

[Xinhua, 17-01-2014] Two patients infected with the H7N9-strain of avian flu have died in east China's Fujian Province, the local health and family planning commission said on Friday.

In total, 15 cases have been confirmed in the province since the beginning of the year, according to the commission.

Another human infection was reported in neighbouring Jiangxi Province on Friday.

Besides Fujian and Jiangxi, Shanghai Municipality and Zhejiang Province have reported human cases of H7N9 this winter.

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Qinghai to promote Kekexili's bid for world heritage status

[China Daily, 26-01-2015] Tibetan antelopes were targeted by poachers because they produce the finest wool in the world, known as shahtoosh, a Persian word which means "king of wool". Beginning in the late 1980s, shahtoosh shawls became high fashion accessories in Europe and the United States, which fueled a black market. The result was that by 1997, the number of Tibetan antelopes dramatically fell from 200,000 to 20,000.

To save Tibetan antelopes from extinction, the Chinese government set up the Kekexili Nature Reserve in 1995, and upgraded it to a state-listed reserve in 1997. Due to China's anti-poaching efforts, no armed poaching has been reported since 2006 in Hoh Xil and the population of Tibetan antelopes in this region has grown to around 60,000, according to statistics provided by Kekexili Nature Reserve Administration Bureau.

Kekexili's bid for world heritage status will enhance its reputation as a world ecological brand, attract more volunteers to engage in ecological protection and lead to economic and social development with ecological protection in mind.

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China plans national park at major riverheads

[Xinhua, 27-01-2015] China plans to build a national park in the Sanjiangyuan region, the cradle of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers in northwest China's Qinghai Province.

A guideline for the park has been completed by a design institute under the State Forestry Administration. The park will cover more than 30,000 square kilometers, including the rivers' sources in Madoi, Zhidui and Zadoi counties. If the plan is given the green light, construction can begin as early as the end of this year.

At an average altitude of 4,000 meters on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Sanjiangyuan region is a paradise for herders and wildlife, such as the Tibetan antelope.

Hoping to repair the fragile ecological system, China established the Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve in 2000. Five years later, a 7.5 billion yuan (1.2 billion U.S. dollars) ecological conservation project was launched in the region.

Thanks to the efforts, the forest coverage rate in Sanjiangyuan increased from 3.2 percent in 2004 to 4.8 percent in 2012, and is expected to reach 5.5 percent by 2020.

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Trade and Business

UK appoints first Agriculture and Food Counsellor in China

[Defra, 18-01-2014] The UK's first Agriculture and Food Counsellor in China has been appointed to help increase our growing food and drink exports to the country.

The new role, made possible with significant funding from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), will help British firms tap into China's growing interest in speciality foods - a market expected to be worth a potential £39 billion this year.

Karen Morgan, based in the British embassy in Beijing, will represent the interests of UK businesses already exporting quality British food and drink produce to China, and firms looking to open new trade links. The role will involve identifying opportunities for new markets and further developing our excellent relationship with key Chinese authorities.

Our world leading food and drink businesses are steadily building their share of the lucrative Chinese market with a record £215 million worth of produce exported in 2013, up from £136 million in 2012 – this new appointment is expected to see these figures grow further.

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Partnership brings together best in food safety standards

[China Daily, 01-01-2015] China's Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment is to work with the US Pharmacopeial Convention, a global health organization that sets standards for medicines and food ingredients, on developing lab-based training courses for food safety.

The courses will become part of the World Bank's Global Food Safety Partnership, an initiative dedicated to improving the safety of food in middle-income and developing countries by promoting a globally-coordinated and locally-driven food safety approach through effective international collaboration on food safety.

In response to the growing number of legal cases involving food fraud, USP recently launched a guidance document on how companies and regulators could protect themselves against cases, particularly those involving ingredients.

This guidance is to serve as a common reference point to food fraud discussions.

More cooperative activities, such as knowledge sharing and impactful conversations should be made in future to address food safety and fraud issues.

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Chinese food group digests rest of Weetabix

[Sky News, 06-01-2015] One of China's biggest food companies is to take full control of Weetabix, the UK's second-biggest breakfast cereal producer, after its minority shareholder triggered an option to sell its remaining shares.

Sky News understands that Bright Food, which bought a 60% shareholding in Weetabix in 2012, is poised to acquire most of the 40% of the company it does not already own.

Lion Capital, the private equity group which has held a stake in Weetabix for a decade, exercised a put option to sell its stake to Bright Food in recent weeks, according to insiders.

Once completed, the transaction will hand full ownership of brands such as Alpen, Ready Brek and Weetos to Bright Food, reflecting a growing trend of takeovers of prominent Western brands by Chinese companies.

Lion Capital and Weetabix declined to comment.

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Hebei farmers dumping milk they can't sell as industry adjusts

[Caixin, 07-01-2015] Big companies buying less from independent farms in wake of 2008 scandal, meaning some are throwing their product out.

Farmers in the northern province of Hebei have started dumping milk in recent months because dairy companies have been buying less of their product as the industry adjusts in the wake of the 2008 melamine scandal.

Farmers said that starting in November dairy companies were buying only four-fifths of their daily output, The Beijing News reported.

Prices of raw milk have fallen from 5 yuan per kilogram in February 2014, to about 3.3 percent now. Farmers are also having to pay more for feed.

More imports of low-priced dairy products due to free-trade agreements would also hurt domestic farmers.

China cut tariffs on dairy products from New Zealand in 2013 as part of a bilateral free-trade agreement signed in 2008. The cost of baby formula from New Zealand has fallen from 55,000 yuan per ton at the beginning of 2014 to around 19,000 yuan.

China imported 1.5 million tons of dairy products in the first nine months of 2014, 36.5 percent more than during the same period of 2013, National Bureau of Statistics data show. It imported 246,400 tons of milk, a 70 percent increase.

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Chinese food companies find room to grow in Australia, NZ

[China Daily, 15-01-2014] Companies based in China are investing in Australia and New Zealand's agricultural sectors as they pursue a larger foothold in these lucrative markets through favorable policies offered by bilateral free trade agreements.

As China and Australia announced the practical conclusion of negotiations on an FTA in November, the new trade agreement has benefited Australia's agriculture and services industries in particular, as well as leading to growth in Chinese investment in the country.

Zhejiang Tianma Bearing Group Co, a bearing manufacturer, is planning to build a wine sales network in Australia next year. Its main target is China's domestic market.

The company announced in November that Chinese and Australian regulators had approved an A\$18 million (\$14.62 million) acquisition of two pasturelands, the Balfour Downs and Wandanya stations in Western Australia. The total area of these two grazing lands is 634,000 hectares.

China now imposes 12 to 25 percent tariffs on Australian beef, but these levies will be phased out within nine years under the pact. Tariffs on Australian wine will be dropped by 2018.

Australia shipped A\$200 million worth of wine to China in 2013, with a customs duty rate of 14 to 30 percent per bottle.

Australian beef accounted for 53 percent of China's beef imports in 2013. The agribusiness research department of the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd has forecast that the total value of Australian beef shipped to China will reach A\$130 billion by 2030.

New Hope Group, a Chengdu-based maker of animal feed and foodstuffs, in November announced plans to invest A\$500 million in Australia's food and dairy sectors. It acquired a majority stake in Queensland beef processor and exporter Kilcoy Pastoral Co, the fourth-largest Australian beef processor, in 2013.

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Finland to export pork to China

[Xinhua, 17-01-2014] The Finnish meat industry is authorized to export pork to China, the country's Agriculture Ministry confirmed on Friday.

Atria and HKScan, two Finnish companies, have gained permits to export pork to China, according to local media reports.

Finnish Agriculture Minister Petteri Orpo said the meat exports to China may, in the long term, offset the losses caused by import restrictions levied by Russia.

Exports to China will be viable despite the costs of the long transportation chain, local media reported.

Markku Hirvijarvi, a director from Atria, said the decision was "a very positive message", Finnish national broadcaster Yle reported.

Last summer, Chinese officials toured Finland and inspected slaughterhouses and meat processing facilities.

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Chinese mainland to promote agriculture, fishery cooperation with Taiwan

[Xinhua, 20-01-2015] Chinese mainland will take active measures to create favorable conditions to expand agriculture and fishery cooperation with Taiwan, a senior official said Tuesday.

The mainland will earnestly study the suggestions raised by Taiwan farmers and fishermen and actively address their concerns, Zhang Zhijun, head of the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, made the remarks while meeting with Taiwan farmers and fishermen.

The mainland boasts a huge market and abundant opportunities and can well accommodate businesses and commodities from Taiwan, he said.

"We hope Taiwan compatriots can seize the opportunity," he said.

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Apple export deal with China opens up new markets for U.S. growers

[MLive , 27-01-2015] U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said all U.S. apple growers should benefit from a new trade agreement that opens the Chinese market to all varieties of fresh U.S.-grown apples even though the agreement may also open Chinese-grown fresh apples to American consumers.

Vilsack said he also expects to see greater exporting opportunities for U.S. apple growers as new trade agreements are forged with Cuba.

The agreement reached over the past weekend opens up the Chinese market for all varieties of fresh apples to all U.S. growers. Previously, China only allowed golden delicious and red delicious apples from Washington into its borders.

The new agreement has the potential to increase U.S. fresh apple exports, valued at more than \$1 billion in 2013, by about 10 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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Chilean dairy cows shipped to Tianjin

[29-01-2015] More than 7,100 dairy cows imported from Chile were shipped to North China's Tianjin on Wednesday, making the South American country the fifth to export dairy cows to China after Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay and Romania.

The shipment of 30,000 cows was the first to be exported by Chile to China according to a bilateral agreement signed last year. Chinese dairy farmers and dairy companies are enthusiastic about investing in well-bred dairy cows as domestic supply cannot meet demand.

Affluent Chinese have a high demand for quality dairy products, and many opt for expensive foreign brands. The domestic industry was hit hard by a 2008 scandal over melamine-tainted baby formula and has been working to win back consumers' trust.

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