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Policies

China to accelerate agricultural modernization

[Xinhua, 01-07-2014] More effort will be made to speed up China's agricultural modernization, ensure the nation's food security and increase farmers' incomes, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang said on Tuesday.

China will modernize its farms to support sustainable and healthy development of the economy and society, Wang said at a seminar in Harbin, capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province.

China should bolster the development of large-scale farming, improve agricultural infrastructure, enhance technology in agriculture, strengthen agricultural resources and environmental protection, said Wang.

It should also improve labor productivity, global competitiveness and the sector's capability for sustainable growth, deepen reforms and establish an innovation system in rural areas, he stressed.

Click [here](#) for details

Top court advocates new green tribunals

[China Daily, 04-07-2014] China's top court supports hearing environmental and resources cases without regard to the administrative regions where such cases occur, aiming instead to let nature dictate the jurisdictions in a bid to prevent judicial intervention by local governments.

A guideline issued by the Supreme People's Court on improving trials involving the environment and resources encourages grassroots courts to set up environmental tribunals based on the location of habitats.

"It means the upcoming tribunals will tackle cases that happen in similar ecological areas instead of administrative regions," said the top court's spokesman, Sun Jungong.

Ecological areas have no clear boundary, while an environmental dispute usually involves people living in different areas, "so we have to change our current mentality to deal with related cases", Sun said.

Cross-regional tribunals can also be helpful in solving environmental disputes effectively, he added.

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China: Govt to promote food safety liability insurance

[Asia Insurance Review, 14-07-2014] China's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will promote a food-safety liability insurance programme in high-risk industries, such as those involving dairy and meat products. A draft amendment to the Food Safety Law has been reviewed by the national legislature for this purpose.

According to the draft amendment, a regulation on the liability insurance programme will be jointly formulated by the FDA and the China Insurance Regulatory Commission, reported the China Daily.

Mr Chen Xu, deputy director of legal affairs for the FDA, said that the draft amendment to the food safety law did not make the food safety liability insurance programme compulsory because legislators took costs into consideration. "A compulsory programme would increase

costs for food companies, and ultimately the costs would be transferred to consumers," he said.

There are suggestions for tax incentives to be given to enterprises which choose to acquire food safety liability insurance.

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Evaluation shows IFAD-China partnership mutually beneficial

[IFAD, 18-07-2014] Development projects in China supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) between 1999 and 2013 were generally successful in reaching their targets for household income, food security and agricultural productivity, according to the country programme evaluation presented yesterday in Beijing.

During the period 1999 - 2013, IFAD's Executive Board approved loans for 13 projects amounting to around US\$434 million, or around 40.5 per cent of total project costs. Each of the projects was designed to support integrated rural development in remote locations or in areas with few resources. Since 2005, operations have focused largely on agricultural production and marketing as well as rural infrastructure development.

The evaluation concluded that the IFAD-China partnership is mutually beneficial. Although the per capita income in the country has risen, around 150 million rural people still live on less than US\$1.25 per day. Income inequality persists and market reforms need to be intensified further.

The evaluation underlined that more resources must be allocated to enhancing non-lending activities (knowledge management, policy dialogue and partnerships) as well as to South-South and triangular cooperation.

China is the second largest recipient of IFAD's assistance. Since the approval of the first loan in 1981, IFAD has financed 27 agriculture and rural development projects and programmes in the country, corresponding to a total project cost of US\$1.94 billion. IFAD's financial contribution has been around US\$775 million.

The full evaluation report will be released in September 2014.

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China vows zero tolerance for GM rice

[Xinhua, 29-07-2014] Chinese authorities have vowed zero tolerance and harsh punishments for illegal sales and growing of genetically modified (GM) crops days after media exposure of GM rice on sale at a supermarket in central China.

"The ministry will punish any companies or individuals who illegally grow or sell GM grains, and there will be no tolerance for these practices," said a statement sent to Xinhua on Tuesday by the office in charge of GM food safety with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

China Central Television (CCTV) found GM rice, which is illegal to sell or grow commercially in China, on sale in a supermarket in Wuhan, capital city of central Hubei Province, the broadcaster reported on Saturday.

CCTV commissioned tests on five packs of rice picked at random from the supermarket's shelves. Three were found to contain a GM variety.

CCTV also found evidence that GM rice was being sold in neighboring Hunan, Anhui and Fujian provinces.

While working to develop modern biotechnology, China has taken a wary approach to GM crops, fearing possible risks.

It has allowed several GM crops to be grown, including cotton, peppers, tomatoes and papayas, and has authorized imports of GM soybeans and corn.

However, it does not allow commercial production or sale of GM grains, including rice, although the authorities have approved the experimental planting of two strains of pest-resisted GM rice.

The safety certificates issued for this experimental planting in 2009 expire this year, and commercial production is yet to be started.

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Reforming *hukou* will unify rights of migrants

[China Daily, 31-07-2013] Chinese migrant workers living in cities will gradually have full access to schools and hospitals where they work, a significant move to improve social equality between rural and urban residents.

Under guidelines to create a unified household registration system, known as *hukou*, the dual-household system that has divided people into urban or agricultural households since the 1950s will be phased out. In its place, a system of residence permits will be set up to allow qualified migrants to enjoy urban services.

The guidelines said basic public services - including education, healthcare, social insurance, employment, aged care and housing - will be expanded to migrants' children.

According to a national plan in speeding up urbanization, the country intends to subsidize vocational training for all rural migrants by 2020.

The guideline also said the expansion of the country's megacities including Beijing and Shanghai will be limited.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China's summer grain output at record high

[Xinhua, 14-07-2014] China's summer grain output hit a record high of 136.60 million tonnes in 2014, up 3.6 percent from last year, said the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The total planting area for summer grain crops expanded 0.1 percent from the previous year to 27.6 million hectares, the NBS data showed.

China's summer grain crops, mainly wheat and early-season rice, usually account for about 20 percent of its annual grain output. Autumn grain crops, which include corn and middle- and late-season rice, account for the remaining 80 percent.

NBS senior analyst Huang Jiakai pointed out that climate conditions had been very favorable to wheat production this year, resulting in a higher per-unit yield of wheat.

The latest bumper harvest of summer grain may help ease concerns about China's ability to feed its 1.3 billion people amid soaring cereal imports in recent years.

Though cereal imports rose to more than 14 million tonnes in 2013, that accounted for less than 2.6 percent of the country's cereal output, according to the ministry of agriculture. In 2013, the country's grain self-sufficiency rate stood above 97 percent.

China also has a "red-line" guarantee that the amount of land dedicated to arable farming shall never shrink to less than 120 million hectares.

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Sustainability concerns behind China's bumper harvest

[China Daily, 19-07-2014] China reaped a record harvest this summer, but experts are nevertheless worried about growing water scarcity and soil degradation behind the agricultural success.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced earlier that the country's yields of summer grain crops, mainly wheat, grew 3.6 percent from last year to 136.6 million tons in 2014.

However, the feat cannot hide shortcomings in farming, including overuse of water, chemical fertilizer and excessive reclamation, in large parts of rural China, said Li Guoxiang, a rural development researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The major areas producing summer crops, which account for about 20 percent of the country's annual grain output, are located in North and Northwest China. These vast arid lands are plagued by over-pumping of underground water due to drought, Li said.

As the country is struggling to feed its 1.3 billion people, with a grain self-sufficiency rate of 97 percent in 2013, its chase for ever-higher production goals may worsen the resource shortage and environmental problems, he warned.

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Survey shows Chinese upset about food safety

[China daily, 24-07-2014] About 80 percent of survey respondents said they are upset about the food safety situation in China, according to a poll released on Thursday, amid media exposure of expired meat supplied to several international fast-food giants in the country.

Nearly 60 percent of respondents said the stage of production and processing bears the highest potential food safety risk, while a quarter of those polled thought it is the stage of raising plants and breeding livestock.

The results are part of a survey conducted by the Beijing research company Horizon Research and Horizonkey, which polled more than 3,166 residents aged 18 to 60 in 20 cities including the four first-tier cities — Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

Although most respondents said China's food safety is worrying, more than half believe the situation is improving, according to the survey. More inhabitants from first-tier cities than their counterparts from second-tier cities feel that way, it said.

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China's arid north feeds water-rich south

[China Daily, 08-07-2014] Booming demand for food in China's southern and eastern cities is worsening water shortages in arid northern provinces, adding to the country's environmental problems, new research shows.

"Consumption in highly developed coastal provinces is largely relying on water resources in the water-scarce northern provinces, such as Xinjiang, Hebei and Inner Mongolia, thus significantly contributing to the water scarcity in these regions," an international group of researchers wrote in the latest edition of the journal Environmental Science and Technology.

"Rich coastal provinces gain economic profits from international exports at the expense of ecosystem quality in the less developed regions," the researchers from the University of Maryland and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis concluded ("Virtual Scarce Water in China" June 2014).

Rain and snowfall is concentrated in south and southwestern China, as well as along the east coast, which should be the most favorable regions for agricultural production.

But these provinces have experienced the fastest industrialization and urbanization since reform and opening in 1979. Large amounts of farm land have been converted to industrial and residential use.

In response, much of the country's agricultural production has been pushed north and inland to regions with much less rain.

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China to roll out seven pilot markets for trading water rights

[Reuters, 24-07-2014] China has picked seven provinces to host pilot markets for trade in water rights, as the government battles a spreading water crisis that threatens to curtail economic growth and hurt food production.

The move is the latest sign that China aims to use market-based mechanisms to handle growing environmental problems. It has already launched seven pilot markets to cut emissions of climate-changing greenhouse gases, and plans to roll out a national scheme later in the decade.

The provinces of Gansu, Guangdong, Henan, Hubei, Inner Mongolia, Jiangxi and Ningxia will draw up rules for their water markets and have them approved by October, the Ministry of Water Resources said on its website.

"We will attempt to make progress in ... policy framework building in the next two to three years, and use the experiences to model a national trading system," the ministry said.

The provincial governments will issue water rights under the scheme, and recipients who use less than they receive can sell the surplus in the market. It remains unclear whether rights will be issued to companies or local governments.

The pilot regions will study how water rights can be distributed and how to register usage rights.

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China needs to import more food to ease water, energy shortages: official

[Reuters, 28-07-2014] China should boost imports of food so it can dedicate more of its scarce water supplies to energy production, especially in arid but coal-rich regions like Xinjiang and Ningxia, a senior environmental official said on Monday.

Mu Guangfeng, the head of the environment impact assessment office at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, told a conference China should open up further to overseas food supplies and put stricter limits on the consumption of water for agriculture in areas like Xinjiang.

He said China, the world's top manufacturing nation, sends thousands of ships to overseas ports and many of them return empty. Filling them with grain would be an ideal solution.

"We cannot skip over energy, and if we open up our minds a little, can we not further restrict agricultural water use in places like northern Shaanxi and then break a taboo by using the space on our ships to buy grain from overseas?" he said.

Mu's comments reflect a wider debate among policymakers about the best use of China's increasingly scarce water resources as industrial and agricultural demand soars.

China is already the world's top importer of soybeans, and has slowly introduced foreign corn into the domestic market.

But it remains reluctant to allow large-scale imports of staples such as wheat or rice, and has vowed to keep its total food self-sufficiency rate at around 95 percent, despite proposals from researchers that the figure could be relaxed.

"I believe that increasing imported food will help protect China's freshwater, and give ecologically fragile coal-producing regions the ability to recover more quickly," said Mu.

"Some people say we can't import food, but what about energy? More than 60 percent of our oil is imported, and nearly 50 percent of our natural gas," he added.

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China hit by 500-plus invasive species

[Xinhua, 25-07-2014] China has become one of the countries hardest hit by invasive species, threatening its biodiversity and agricultural production, authorities said on Friday.

A total of 529 non-indigenous species have invaded the country since the 1980s, said Wang Yanliang, a Ministry of Agriculture official in charge of ecological and resources protection, at a meeting about invasive species in Chongqing Municipality.

Since the 1980s, China has seen fast growth in the number of introduced species that have adversely affected the ecosystem, he said. Over the past decade, more than 20 such species have wreaked havoc on farmlands, wetlands, forests, rivers, islands, and urban residential areas.

Chongqing Municipality, located in mountainous southwest China, boasts a rich ecology. Over the past four years, however, more than 50 non-indigenous species have dominated an area of two million hectares in the city.

China has established a research center to tackle the problem and issued a catalogue of dangerous exotic species prohibited by the country.

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China adopts stricter pesticide residue standard

[Xinhua, 31-07-2014] A stricter standard on pesticide residue for farm produce in China will take effect on Friday.

The new standard includes 3,650 indices detailing the maximum allowable residue for 387 pesticides on 284 types of food, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Health and Family Planning Commission, which jointly issued the standard.

Compared with the current standard that took effect in 2012, the new standard contains 1,357 new indices covering 65 new pesticides and 43 new types of food.

The standard covers vegetables, fruits, grain, edible oil, sugar, soft drinks, nuts, eggs and meat. It includes juice and preserved fruits for the first time.

Of the indices, about 67 percent relate to vegetables, fruits and tea, which are more prone to pesticide contamination.

A total of 1,999 indices in the new standard have international references set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, founded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, and 1,811 match or exceed the strictness of the international standards.

Pesticide residue has been a prominent food safety issue in China, with pesticide misuse scandals repeatedly hitting headlines.

In 2012, apple growers in east China's Shandong Province were accused of wrapping fruits with pesticide-coated paper to ensure a good appearance. Last year, Shandong farmers were also found to be using toxic pesticide when growing ginger.

The stricter standard is expected to give regulators more leverage to fight malpractice.

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China hailed for creativity: Global Innovation Index

[Xinhua, 19-07-2014] China has been singled out for its embrace of economically innovative thought leadership during the release of the latest Global Innovation Index (GII) Friday, on the sidelines of the B20 and G20 Trade Minister's meetings in Sydney.

While Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Sweden, traditional big-hitters in the innovation space, topped this year's Index, Francis Gurry, Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) praised Chinese leadership and responsiveness in the economically anxious global climate.

Gurry told Xinhua that the world's fastest growing economy had sought, and achieved new levels of inspiration that would benefit itself and "the rest of the world in years to come."

"Innovation is the basis of competition in the global economy. This underlines the importance of measuring capacity to innovate through the Global Innovation Index and of China's strategy to move from Made in China to Created in China."

The GII executive summary noted that alone among the BRICS, China "seems on track to enter the top 25 in the GII", "China ranks second in innovation efficiency in 2014 on a global basis and is improving steadily along many dimensions of the GII."

The index lauded China's "impressive" second position in the Knowledge and Technology outputs pillar and shows decent improvements in the Creative outputs pillar, ranking the first in Creative goods exports.

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A quiet revolution in Asia: rising rural wages

[AES, 07-2014] Quietly but steadily something remarkable is happening in Asia. Rural wages are rising. What's more in several countries including China and India, the rise has accelerated since the mid-2000s. For example, in Bangladesh the average (male) rural wage rose in real terms by 45% between 2005 and 2010, in India by 35% between 2005 and 2012, and in China by 92% between 2003 and 2007.

What explains these rises? A preliminary cross-country regression suggests the strongest driver is demographic: across Asia growth of the rural work force is slowing. Indeed, in some countries it is now shrinking: examples include South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and — most notably — China. Part of this stems from migration out of rural areas, but much comes

from the major falls in fertility seen in Asia during the 1980s and 1990s. The next driver is growth of manufacturing — and urban jobs in general — that presumably affects the rural wage through competition for labour.

It is unlikely that the drivers of slower population growth and expansion of manufacturing will stop in the near future, so we may expect rural wages to continue to rise. If so, three rather momentous implications may follow:

- Higher rural wages should soon end mass poverty in Asia.
- Costs of production of food will rise.
- Higher rural wages will help push up manufacturing wages and costs.

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New Centre of Excellence for Plant and Microbial Science

[BBSRC, 14-07-2014] Scientific partnerships between the UK and China are being strengthened with the establishment of a £12M centre for plant science and microbiology spanning the two countries. The joint John Innes Centre/Chinese Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence in Plant and Microbial Science will enhance research to support the agricultural technology and microbial genetics agendas of both countries.

This new agreement is the most advanced partnership between the UK and China of its kind and was developed with support from BBSRC, from which the John Innes Centre receives strategic funding.

Scientists working within the new Centre of Excellence, a collaboration between the John Innes Centre (JIC), the Shanghai Institute of Plant Physiology and Ecology (SIPPE) and the Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology (IGDB), will investigate challenges facing agriculture and human health. These include increasing crop yield and resistance to disease as well as developing the use of plants and microbes for the production of health-promoting natural products

Funding for the new Centre of Excellence was provided by BBSRC and JIC in the UK and by the two Chinese institutes in the partnership: IGDB and SIPPE. BBSRC will contribute £2M over the next five years to the Centre. JIC is contributing £1M over the next five years. IGDB and SIPPE will together contribute in the region of £9M over the five years.

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Education exchanges beneficial to Britain, China: British ambassador

[People's Daily, 02-07-2014] Britain and China have seen significant step forward in exchanges in the education sector in the past years, British Ambassador to China Sebastian Wood said in Beijing.

"For many years, the Chinese students have been the largest group among all foreign students in the UK," the ambassador told Xinhuanet in an exclusive interview, adding that the number is continuously increasing every year.

More than 100,000 Chinese students went to Britain for further study in 2013, compared with 16 in 1973 when the two governments started student exchange programs. China has become Britain's largest country of origin for international students.

Meanwhile, the British government also attached great importance to promoting education exchanges between the two countries, he stressed.

The British Council has launched a flagship program, called Generation UK, in 2013, which aims to boost the number of British students participating in study and internship program in China. The program is expected to see around 80,000 British students flock to China by 2020.

Talking about how to keep up the teaching quality with the rise in the number international students in the UK, the ambassador expressed his confidence in the British educational system.

"I think that the British education is a very strong brand and has very strong reputation internationally," he said, "We have independent quality assurance systems and bodies which look at university courses in the UK and assess them for their quality. We have also got encouraging international survey data."

The ambassador also noted British government provides working opportunities to Chinese graduates in the UK.

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Trade and Business

China to kick off annual agricultural trade fair in Sept

[Xinhua, 25-07-2014] China will hold an annual trade fair for agricultural product processing industries from Sept. 6-8 in Zhumadian City, Henan Province in central China, organizers announced on Friday.

Co-sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the Henan Provincial Government and held since 1998, the event is the country's only national trade fair in the agri-product processing sector.

The upcoming fair is expected to attract participants from nearly 5,000 enterprises. Participants from 21 countries and overseas regions including the United States, France and Argentina will also attend the fair, according to officials at a press conference.

The 2014 trade fair will feature agricultural product exhibitions and trade, negotiations, project launches and agricultural tourism.

MOA Chief Economist Yang Shaopin told the press conference that the event is intended to serve as a platform for economic cooperation between China's different regions and aid the country's efforts to upgrade its agricultural product processing sector.

Henan, a leading Chinese province for grain, livestock and poultry output, is also home to a number of major brands in the sector and remains the country's biggest producer of instant noodles and quick-frozen food.

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China's rural areas outpace cities in online shopping

[China Daily, 03-07-2014] Growth in online shopping in counties and villages has outpaced those in cities, becoming a new engine that is further driving China's domestic consumption, according to research from Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, the country's largest e-commerce group.

It said in its first county-level economy and e-commerce forum in its headquarters in Hangzhou on Thursday that the overall online shopping market in China reported a growth of 50 percent year-on-year in 2013. The growth rate of online transactions in counties and villages in the same year was 13.6 percentage higher than that of cities'.

Apart from those who enjoy shopping online, an increasing number of businessmen in China's counties and villages are making a living on the Internet by setting up their online stores.

Counties and villages in East China still enjoy an edge in e-commerce, thanks to the advanced manufacturing bases in coastal China.

However, the online transactions generated by counties and villages in North China, Central China and South China, have shown stronger growth momentums, accounting for 30 percent of the overall online transactions made by counties and villages in China.

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China's Yili among global dairy top 10

[China Daily, 12-07-2014] The 2014 annual Rabobank survey of the world's largest dairy companies highlights the 20 giants in the dairy industry.

Yili Group outperformed its peers in Asia, and became the only Asian player among the global top 10 dairy companies, with the best ever record in the Chinese dairy industry, according to Yili.com.

In analysing Yili's marching up to the global top 10, Tim Hunt, an analyst of Rabobank, attributed it to two parts. The enormous market potential brought by Chinese economic growth enables players in newly emerging markets with substantial capital and impetus to participate, he said.

On the other side, for consumers across the world, products and services that are "made in China" are indispensable in everyday life.

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GM scandal hits China's rice sales

[Xinhua, 29-07-2014] A central Chinese city has reported reduced rice sales since a supermarket was exposed selling illegal genetically modified (GM) rice.

Sales staff at several supermarkets in Wuhan, capital of Hubei, said rice sales dropped suddenly this week following a China Central Television report on Saturday that accused a local supermarket of selling rice that contained GM varieties.

"Customers keep asking whether it is GM rice," said one saleswoman at Zhongbai, a local supermarket chain.

China has not approved commercial planting or sales of GM rice and the Ministry of Agriculture on Tuesday promised zero tolerance for sales and cultivation of GM crops.

Hubei has launched an investigation following the media exposure.

Though many scientists have defended the safety of GM technology, sales remain controversial in China, with many consumers complaining of not being well enough informed.

"I'm not against GM products, but being kept in the dark. You should let consumers decide whether to eat GM products," said a shopper surnamed Wang.

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South Africa close to starting yellow-corn exports to China

[Bloomberg, 01-07-2014] South Africa, the continent's biggest corn producer, is close to starting its first exports of the yellow variety of the grain to China, according to the biggest organization representing local farmers of the crop.

Talks between the governments are in the final stages, Grain SA Chief Executive Officer Jannie de Villiers said in a June 25 interview. His association is liaising with South Africa's Agriculture Department.

The government "is in full support of it," he said. "They have gone through the whole process of doing pest-risk analysis and submitted all the paper work to the Chinese so they can approve of our maize," he said, using the local term for corn.

South African yellow-corn exports more than doubled to 1.2 million metric tons in the season ended April 30 from a year earlier, the Crop Estimates Committee said on April 29. Shipments of the grain almost quadrupled to a 14-year high in the 2011 season after traders found new markets from Japan to Spain for a surplus that followed a bumper crop. Local farmers may produce 13.9 million tons of white and yellow corn this season, the biggest harvest since 1981, when the nation had an output of 14.1 million tons, the committee said.

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Nestlé and Northeast Agricultural University cooperate in dairy farming management

[China Daily, 09-07-2014] Nestlé and the Northeast Agricultural University signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on Wednesday. With the Dairy Farming Institute as the main carrier, the two parties will jointly carry out a comprehensive range of in-depth cooperation in science and technology, centering on the establishment of demonstration bases, practical technology and management talent training, student training and internships, among other aspects.

Nestlé has always been adopting a long-term, sustainable model in the development of its dairy business in China. Nestlé started building the Dairy Farming Institute in 2012 in Shuangcheng, Heilongjiang, and this is in line with the call by the national "12th Five Year Plan" to promote the modernization of the dairy industry, whereby the Institute aims to fully cooperate with local government, investors, dairy farmers and relevant parties, to equip dairy practitioners with professional skills and knowledge of modern breeding and sustainable farm management.

The Institute is expected to be ready by end of 2014 and start enrolling students, as construction work is nearing completion. And this cooperation with the Northeast Agricultural University is a needed preparation for the implementation of training.

According to the memorandum of cooperation, Nestlé and the Northeast Agricultural University will jointly establish a school-enterprise cooperation platform that consolidates local and internationally renowned university experts as well as well-known enterprise resources from home and abroad within the industry, to jointly develop practical techniques of international advanced level and dairy farm management training bases, provide talents and technical support for the establishment of large, medium and small standardized dairy farms that are suitable for China's national conditions, different regions and management models, jointly develop and promote new technologies and new achievements of the industry.

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Pizza Express sold to Chinese firm Hony Capital for £900m

[BBC, 12-07-2014] The restaurant chain Pizza Express has been sold to a Chinese firm for around £900m, following "considerable interest" in the business.

The UK Gondola Group confirmed the sale to private equity firm Hony Capital.

There are 436 Pizza Express restaurants in the UK along with 68 internationally - including 22 in China - employing more than 9,000 workers.

Chief executive Richard Hodgson said expansion in Asia was a "key part" of future growth strategy.

The sale was a "very positive development at an exciting time for the business", he said.

Pizza Express already has 12 restaurants in Hong Kong and nine in Shanghai, as well as outlets in India, Saudi Arabia and Bali.

The sale comes as The Gondola Group - which also owns UK pizza chains Zizzi and ASK Italian - opened the first Pizza Express restaurant in the Chinese capital Beijing earlier this year.

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A touch of class for farming

[China Daily, 11-07-2014] Hunan company takes agricultural education to Cameroon and beyond to help increase the yield of crops in Africa

A Chinese program through which thousands of Africans have learned modern farming techniques will be expanded into Cameroon this year, the company behind the initiative says.

The education push, which is being financed by the Chinese government and run by the rice producing giant Long Ping High-Tech Agriculture, is the latest sign that the Hunan company is considering a research or commercial based venture in Cameroon.

The education program aims to bring Chinese expertise in seed growing and modern cultivation techniques to local people.

Similar programs in Zambia and Liberia have allowed Long Ping to develop and employ a skilled local workforce for commercial farming operations. The company also provides training in Nigeria and Ethiopia, where it is testing crop suitability and market potential with smaller, research-based operations.

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China, Cuba jointly launched Crop and Animal Farming Demonstration Park in Cuba

[MOA, 25-07-2014] Chinese Agriculture Minister Han Changfu and his Cuban counterpart Rodríguez Rollero signed the Framework Agreement on Cuba-China Crop and Animal Farming Demonstration Park between the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Cuba and the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China on July 22, 2014.

The signing of this document officially initiated the development process of this Demonstration Park in Cuba.

The establishment of the Demonstration Park is identified in light of the plan for agricultural cooperation signed between the two ministries in 2012. Under the Framework Agreement, bilateral cooperation will focus on the following areas:

Firstly, develop a core zone under Los Naranjos Genetics Company in Artemisa Province of Cuba to conduct cooperation in demonstration on feed crop production, improvement of feed formulation, beef and dairy cattle farming as well as improvement of beef and milk processing techniques;

Secondly, establish the Moringa Science & Technology Cooperation Center at the Tropical Crop Research Institute of Yunnan in China and the Institute of Pasture and Forage of the Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba to carry out research collaboration in Moringa cultivation and feed improvement;

Thirdly, set up the Sericulture S&T Cooperation Center at the Sericultural Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (SRICAAS) and the National Sericulture Project Team of Cuba to develop cooperation in mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing and related product development; and

Fourthly, conduct high-yield demonstration for rice, kidney bean and corn at project sites.

In the next five years, the Chinese side will provide a part of agricultural inputs and equipment to the Cuban side for demonstration activities and send Chinese experts to Cuba by 50 person times, and invite 100 Cuban officials or experts to China for training or collaborative research.

Moringa is high in protein, and rich in vitamins and minerals. It is of multi-function for its values in vegetable, nutrition additives, feed and health care. As a major component of the agricultural partnership, the cooperation in Moringa wins great attention from the leaders of both countries.

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Chinese companies sign up to 100-year Australian-Sino food partnership

[Xinhua, 31-07-2014] Mining billionaire Andrew Forrest has reportedly signed up three of China's biggest food companies to join his radical push to revive Australia's farm sector and position the nation as China's largest supplier of agricultural products over the next 100 years.

Forrest, who has long championed an Australian-Chinese food partnership, said he would like to see a time when Australia was seen "as China's friendliest, largest, most reliable, highest quality, most competitive, most efficient food and agricultural products supplier."

Forrest told The Australian newspaper that he believed it was "unprecedented" for the Chinese agribusiness giants -- privately owned New Hope Group, state-owned COFCO Group and Singapore-listed Wilmar International -- to back such an initiative.

The idea for a 100-year partnership arose from a meeting between Forrest and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing earlier this year. Forrest said Li's No. 1 concern was ensuring a safe food supply for China's 1.3 billion people.

Forrest made his fortune selling iron ore to China as the founder of Pilbara miner Fortescue Metals Group, but in recent years he has turned his attention to philanthropy and agribusiness.

In May, he acquired Western Australia's largest beef processor, Harvey Beef, which is the state's only accredited exporter to China.

The Australia-Sino 100-Year Agricultural and Food Safety Partnership, known as ASA 100, will comprise 50 members from each country who will meet annually. Members will include federal, state and territory ministers, major food producers and distributors from Australia and China.

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Shanghai meat supplier for McDonald, KFC suspended for safety concerns

[Xinhua, 20-07-2014] Shanghai food and drug administration has suspended the operation of a food company suspected of supplying stale meat to McDonald and KFC outlets.

Earlier on Sunday the administration had ordered that all meat products supplied by Shanghai Husi Food Co., Ltd should be taken off shelf for safety concerns.

Local media reported the company reprocessed meat products that had outlived their shelf life and supplied them to transnational fast-food chains including McDonald, KFC and Pizza Hut.

Reporters who managed to enter Husi workshops said they saw clear evidence that stale beef and chicken were repackaged after processing and their shelf life was prolonged for another year.

Investigators sent by Shanghai food and drug administration arrived at the company's facility in an industrial town in Jiading District at 7:30 p.m., but were stopped by security guards at the main entrance.

The two sides argued for more than an hour, until the investigators called police.

Shanghai Husi Food Co., Ltd, a member of the U.S. OSI Group, was a solely foreign-funded company with a registered capital of 50.47 million yuan.

In a "commitment to customers", posted at Husi's Shanghai plant, the company promised "hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP)", a systematic preventive approach to food safety, and "routine sample microbe test".

Yang Liqun, general manager of deep processing with OSI China, said the company has a strict quality control system and will cooperate in the investigation.

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Yum says China food safety scare hurting KFC, Pizza Hut sales

[Reuters, 30-07-2014] Yum Brands Inc on Wednesday said a television expose showing improper meat handling by one of its Chinese suppliers caused "significant, negative" damage to sales at its KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants over the past 10 days.

"If the significant sales impact is sustained, it will have a material effect on full-year earnings per share," Yum said in a regulatory filing.

Shares in Yum, which counts China as its No. 1 market, tumbled 6.1 percent in extended trading, down \$4.45 (£2.63) to \$68.55.

The latest food safety scandal to rock China came as Yum's restaurant sales there had just begun recovering from a slide last year due to an avian food outbreak and a food safety scare.

After an undercover local TV report that alleged workers at Shanghai Husi Food Co Ltd used expired meat and doctored food production dates, regulators closed the factory on July 20. The plant is part of OSI Group LLC, a U.S. food supplier. Police have detained five people including Shanghai Husi's head and quality manager.

Yum immediately terminated its global relationship with OSI, which was not a major supplier to the company.

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