

Contents

Policies	1
Land contract rights	1
China expands water conservation through tax reform	1
China must make polluters pay for waste treatment: legislator	1
China earmarks 7.5 billion dollars for environment protection	2
Vice premier stresses food safety	2
Political advisors offer suggestions to China's grain pricing reform	2
China to subsidize grain transportation and storage facilities	2
Tax benefits to boost real economy	3
China cuts import tariffs on food, drugs and apparel.....	3
China ties important to Britain especially after Brexit: British economic secretary	3
Science, Technology and Environment	4
China releases first land cover atlas	4
China to improve water conservation	4
China's war on pollution roils world's top pig farming sector	4
Technology realizes agricultural sustainable development in NE China	5
China national gene bank to build new research base in central China.....	5
Chinese internet giants launch alliance to combat wildlife cybercrime	5
Four Chinese sites selected as global agricultural heritages	6
Company from Zhuhai assembles agricultural drone factory in Brazil	6
Trade and Business	6
China pig herd shrinks further in October: agriculture ministry.....	6
China's pig farmers go north, upending world's top meat, grain market	7
China's demand for imported pork to rise as Beijing closes small domestic producers	7
British pork in spotlight in Shanghai	7
NI pork exports to China commence	8
China to buy another 12 mln t of US soybeans in 2017/18 in \$5 bln deals.....	8
China trade could be pioneer US beef producer's meat and drink.....	8
JD.com inks deal to import US beef, pork.....	9
Chinese cheese maker buys Brownes Dairy	9
COFCO sees China's soybean imports hitting 100 mln T in 17/18.....	9
Alibaba goes offline with \$2.9 billion stake in China's top grocer.....	9
Fast food behemoth eyes big expansion	10
China's Hunan Dakang aims to expand Brazil business from soy to beef.....	10

Policies

Land contract rights

[China daily, 02-11-2017] A draft revision of the Rural Land Contract Law was recently submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, for review. The revised law aims to further safeguard farmers' interests and rights to use contracted land.

If the draft is passed by the country's top legislature, the current round of rural land contracts will be extended for another 30 years. This will provide farmers with stable expectations for the future.

General Secretary Xi Jinping said in the report he delivered to the opening session of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, that the government will consolidate and improve the basic rural land management system, advance reform of the rural land system, and improve the system by separating ownership rights, contract rights, and management rights for contracted rural land.

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China expands water conservation through tax reform

[Xinhua, 30-11-2017] Taxation will play a larger role in China's drive to conserve more water as a water resource tax program is expanded.

Starting 1 December, nine provincial regions, including Beijing, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia will begin using a new water resource tax, following trials in north China's Hebei Province.

The tax is levied on the use of surface and ground water, with higher rates on enterprises that consume a lot of water.

Water use exceeding quotas or in overexploited areas will be met with tax rates up to four times more, while use for agricultural purposes will see a reduction or exemption. The use of water that has come from sewage treatment facilities will also have favorable rates.

The taxation will prevent unreasonable use by consumers like ski resorts and car washes, said an official with the Ministry of Finance (MOF).

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China must make polluters pay for waste treatment: legislator

[Reuters, 02-11-2017] China needs to improve law enforcement and make polluters pay to treat billions of tonnes of rural, industrial and household waste, the country's top legislator said in a report to parliament late on 1 November.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), said China generates nearly 4 billion tonnes of waste a year from livestock and poultry as well as 200 million tonnes of household waste in large and medium-sized cities.

Rural waste is "an even weaker link", he said, with basic environmental infrastructure seriously insufficient. He added that 57 percent of villages lacked basic disposal and treatment systems while nearly 40 percent of animal waste isn't properly disposed of or utilized.

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China earmarks 7.5 billion dollars for environment protection

[Xinhua, 23-11-2017] China has set aside 49.7 billion yuan (about 7.5 billion U.S. dollars) for supporting environmental protection this year, an official said 23 November.

So far, 39 billion yuan has been handed out for air, water and soil pollution control, said You Yanxin, an official with the planning and finance department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, at a press conference.

According to You, 16 billion yuan of the central financing is reserved for supporting air pollution control efforts in 13 provincial-level regions in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the neighboring areas, the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River Delta.

The central government has also earmarked 8.5 billion yuan for combating water pollution and 6.5 billion yuan for soil pollution control.

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Vice premier stresses food safety

[Xinhua, 29-11-2017] Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang has called for more efforts to improve food safety.

Despite improvements, there are still many problems in the industry, he noted, with some local authorities still lagging in agricultural standardization and food safety in the catering sector.

Mechanisms and supervision methods should improve the ability to manage food safety, the vice premier said.

According to a guideline released last month, a product quality traceability system will be complete by 2020, targeting food, medicine, special equipment, dangerous materials and rare earth.

The system will provide information regarding sources, destinations and accountable persons to reinforce product quality and safety, the guideline said.

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Political advisors offer suggestions to China's grain pricing reform

[Xinhua, 16-11-2017] China's political advisors met Thursday 16 November to discuss ways to reform the country's grain pricing system.

The bi-weekly consultation session was chaired by Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The advisors put forward proposals including measures to reform the country's minimum procurement price system by making it more flexible and letting the market play a more decisive role in the pricing of grain.

Measures should also be taken to improve ways to subsidize the grain growers in order to prevent a drop in their income, they suggested, while saying reforms should also be conducted on grain procurement and storage enterprises.

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China to subsidize grain transportation and storage facilities

[Reuters, 24-11-2017] China plans to subsidize grain transportation and storage facilities in the latest push by Beijing to modernize the world's largest agriculture sector.

Beijing will subsidize projects upgrading or building facilities to load and receive grains along main railways and ports for major waterways including the Yangtze and Pearl rivers, a document issued by China's National Development and Research Commission (NDRC) said on Friday 24 November.

Inadequate transportation capacity for grain has caused backlog in the north and spiked prices in the past, while poor storage facilities are a major cause of grain losses in China.

China, which aims to improve its grain logistics system and boost grain storage capacity by 2020, will also subsidize grain facilities that offer storage, processing, trading and quality inspection services, the NRDC document said.

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Tax benefits to boost real economy

[ECNS, 07-11-2017] Tax incentives will be expanded in China to reduce costs for agriculture-related and small-scale businesses, encouraging bank lending to support real economy development, according to a joint announcement on 6 November by the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation.

Small and micro-sized enterprises, with monthly sales of 20,000 to 30,000 yuan (\$3,050-\$4,575), will be exempted from value-added tax from the beginning of next year until the end of 2020, the announcement said.

During the same period, those enterprises that borrow money from financial institutions need not pay the stamp tax, which usually costs 0.005 percent of the loan contracts.

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China cuts import tariffs on food, drugs and apparel

[Reuters, 24-11-2017] China on Friday 24 November said it will cut import tariffs on consumer products ranging from meats and whisky to deodorant and cashmere clothes, as part of a drive to lower costs and help stimulate consumer spending at home.

The move, which takes effect on Dec. 1, will see deep cuts to import tariffs on 187 imported products. High taxes on imports have traditionally pushed up the price of foreign brands in China and caused consumers to spend more overseas.

After the cut, tariffs on the consumer products - which include food, health supplements, pharmaceuticals, garments and recreational products - will average 7.7 percent, down from the current 17.3 percent, the Ministry of Finance said on its website.

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China ties important to Britain especially after Brexit: British economic secretary

[Xinhua, 22-11-2017] Britain will attach great importance to its economic ties with China after Brexit, and looks forward to further cooperation with China in areas such as green finance and the Belt and Road Initiative, a senior British official said Wednesday, 22 November.

"The relationship between the UK and China is absolutely important. It is one we take extremely seriously," Britain's Economic Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Barclay said in an interview with Xinhua, ahead of Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond's scheduled official visit to China to take part in the China-UK economic and financial dialogue in December.

There is a lot of areas of common interest between Britain and China, which would yield more cooperation in different fields, Barclay said. The UK with its expertise in financial services, for example, he said, could partner with China to help deliver investment in green finance.

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Science, Technology and Environment

China releases first land cover atlas

[Xinhua, 15-11-2017] China has published its first land cover atlas, Land Cover Atlas of the People's Republic of China (1:1,000,000), according to the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth (RADI) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

The atlas, in both Chinese and English, provides a comprehensive look at land-surface conditions across China, and records its land cover changes in 1990, 2000, and 2010, a period witnessing rapid economic growth, said the RADI.

Land cover refers to the observable natural and artificial objects on the surface of the Earth.

Land cover changes over time can be regarded as indicators of the natural environment, ecosystem, economic development, and people's livelihoods, said the RADI.

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China to improve water conservation

[Xinhua, 04-11-2017] China should do more to improve water conservancy and water resource saving, Premier Li Keqiang said on 3 November in a written message to a meeting.

Water conservancy infrastructure is key to supply-side structural reform in agriculture and the good of farmers, read the message.

The country must optimize the water conservancy network and step up disaster prevention and mitigation, despite the progress of the past five years, Li said.

The problem of unbalanced and inadequate water conservancy must be addressed, vice premier Wang Yang said at the meeting.

The country has been hit by frequent floods and droughts, partially because of underdeveloped water conservancy facilities.

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China's war on pollution roils world's top pig farming sector

[Reuters, 05-11-2017] When Zhang Faqing received a letter from the government last December ordering him to close his pig farm on the outskirts of Beijing with just two weeks notice, he thought it was a joke.

After local officials visited his farm in Zhoucun village a few days later to reinforce the message, the 47-year old realized it was no laughing matter.

He is among hundreds of thousands of small pig and poultry farmers across the country that have been forced to close as Beijing has waged a three-year campaign to clean up the world's biggest livestock sector.

In the long term, the policy will reshape the nation's scattered livestock industry with a whopping 1.1 billion pigs squeezing out smallholders and boosting the share of industrial-scale farms as the government aims to develop more modern and efficient agriculture.

“Pig farming in China will gradually develop into a semi-monopolistic structure, with major companies dominating the market and competing with each other,” said Zhu Zengyong, a researcher at the Agricultural Information Institute of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

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Technology realizes agricultural sustainable development in NE China

[China Daily, 06-11-2017] Straw-overlaying technology is helping to regain the fertile black topsoil of NE China and maximize the natural cycle between straw and soil in farmlands.

The black soil in NE China produces great amounts of rice and grain but the predatory farming of the past dozens of years has decreased the amount of productive land and lowered its quality.

Research on straw overlaying technology was started in 2007 by institutes such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences and China Agricultural University.

The technology has been applied on several farms in NE China and topsoil deterioration has been reduced.

In addition, farmers also began to try green and organic agricultural products which have larger output and higher value.

As the soil recovers, farmers have started to plant many other kinds of crops like broom-corn, rye and sweet potatoes.

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China national gene bank to build new research base in central China

[Xinhua, 13-11-2017] Genome sequencer BGI has reached agreement with Wuhan City to build an agriculture research and training center there.

Run by BGI, a national gene bank went into operation in September 2016.

In addition to the gene bank in Shenzhen, BGI has a 20,000-square-meter standard laboratory and more than 20 life sciences research platforms in Wuhan, with cooperation arrangements with 120 hospitals in central China.

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Chinese internet giants launch alliance to combat wildlife cybercrime

[TRAFFIC, 22-11-2017] Internet companies based in China on 22 November announced the formation of a new alliance to combat wildlife cybercrime. The move was initiated by three China-based internet giants - Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent (BAT).

Due to the magnitude of the challenge in addressing wildlife cybercrime—with hundreds of millions of users and the scale of illegal wildlife trade online—the three internet giants—BAT—chose to go beyond their individual efforts to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities and form an industry-wide partnership to take action against wildlife cybercrime.

The establishment of the alliance was supported by Chinese government authorities including the State Forestry Administration (SFA), CITES Management Authority, Cyberspace Administration, National Forest Police Bureau, China Customs, Fishery Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the State Administration for Industry & Commerce.

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Four Chinese sites selected as global agricultural heritages

[CSNC, 26-11-2017] The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) convened a meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) at its headquarters in Rome on November 24, 2017.

During the meeting, two Chinese sites - the Zhagana Farming, Forestry and Animal Husbandry Compound System in Gansu Province and the Huzhou Mulberry Dyke Fishpond System in Zhejiang Province - were formally designated as GIAHS sites.

Meanwhile, the four rice terrace areas in south and east China (in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hunan, Fujian, and Jiangxi Provinces) and the Xiajin Ancient Mulberry Wood in Shandong Province were approved in principle, which means they require only an expert's final confirmation before gaining official designation.

The four additions will bring China to 15 GIAHS sites, the most of any country worldwide.

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Company from Zhuhai assembles agricultural drone factory in Brazil

[Macauhub, 17-11-2017] Chinese company Zhuhai Yuren Agricultural Aviation has signed a protocol of intent with the government of Mato Grosso for the construction of a factory of unmanned agricultural aerial vehicles (“drones”) in that Brazilian State, reported newspaper Mato Grosso Economico.

The signing of the agreement took place on 8 November in Beijing, during a forum promoted by the State Government, in which Governor Pedro Taques presented investment projects to approximately 150 Chinese entrepreneurs.

The Mato Grosso Investment Forum, promoted by the State government through Desenvolve MT, made it possible to submit projects needing investment such as the Processing and Export Zone of Mato Grosso, the technological park and the concession of airports and roads.

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Trade and Business

China pig herd shrinks further in October: agriculture ministry

[Reuters, 15-11-2017] China's pig herd shrank in October by the most in close to two years, said the agriculture ministry on Wednesday 15 November, amid a crackdown on farm pollution that has forced hundreds of thousands of farms to close in the past year.

The world's largest pig herd contracted by 6.6 percent, the sow herd fell 5.3 percent in October from a year ago,

Both sow and hog herds have registered a year-on-year drop each month since at least the start of 2016, but the pace of shrinkage has accelerated since July this year, as efforts to comply with new environmental regulations gather pace.

Hundreds of thousands of mainly smaller pig farms have closed in recent months, as local governments rush to enforce the tough new standards by December.

Under those standards, livestock production is banned near water sources or major population areas. Farms in other areas must meet high standards on treatment of animal waste.

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China's pig farmers go north, upending world's top meat, grain market

[Reuters, 22-11-2017] China's largest pig farming companies and new entrants are racing to build vast, modern hog farms in the north-eastern cornbelt, expanding the world's biggest pork market and upending traditional trade flows in meat and grain.

Many more companies, including the country's biggest pig farmer, Guangdong Wen's Foodstuff Group Co Ltd, are building farms in the area, suppliers and sources say, adding to China's annual \$1 trillion pork market.

Some researchers expect output in the northeast to hit nearly 120 million pigs a year, almost double the 69 million head produced in the area by Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia provinces last year.

Temperatures go well below freezing in the winter in China's northeast, but the area is sparsely populated and allows for setting up large farms that would not be possible in more crowded parts of the country.

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China's demand for imported pork to rise as Beijing closes small domestic producers

[SCMP, 26-11-2017] WH Group, the world's largest pork producer, said it expects Chinese demand for imported pork from the US and Europe to keep increasing amid China's national push to close smaller slaughterhouses and pig farms.

China consumes almost half of all pork produced globally each year, or about 31kg per person. Per capita consumption on the mainland is expected to rise above 33.4kg by 2024, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Beijing last year began issuing decrees to selected cities and provinces to shut pig farms and slaughterhouses that did not meet environmental standards, as part of its ongoing national push to modernise the agricultural industry.

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British pork in spotlight in Shanghai

[Pigsite, 01-12-2017] The pork supply chain and quality British pork took centre stage at one of the biggest food and hospitality shows in China in November.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) attended FHC China 2017 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre from 13 -15 November, as part of its ongoing work to develop relationships with the all-important Chinese market.

For the first time, AHDB Pork moved from the Great British Pavilion to the dedicated Meat Hall to take advantage of the increased footfall over the three days.

AHDB has identified China as a key market for UK pig meat exports and it is already the UK's biggest customer outside the EU, importing 40,000 tonnes of UK pork and 36,000 tonnes of UK offal in 2016.

There is particular benefit to the industry in exporting the so-called 'fifth quarter' – products that have limited domestic demand in the UK but are prized in the Chinese market.

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NI pork exports to China commence

[Farmers Journal, 24-11-2017] The deal has taken five years to conclude, but Northern Irish officials announced on 24 November that a deal worth an estimated £10m to export NI pork to China had been officially put in place.

Chief veterinary officer Robert Huey welcomed the news: “This is a ringing endorsement for our rigorous standards, which guarantee high-quality, safe and wholesome pork.

“Because we place a clear emphasis on traceability at the heart of production and processing, we are gaining a global reputation for delivering a joined up, safe and efficient food supply.”

China is one of the world’s biggest importers of pork, and Huey also commented he hopes the relationship can be built upon in the future, with the addition of NI poultry and beef products to the Chinese market.

Mainland UK pork processors received Chinese approval in August this year, and the announcement of a new trade deal outside the EU will come as welcome news to farmers as Brexit approaches.

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China to buy another 12 mln t of US soybeans in 2017/18 in \$5 bln deals

[Reuters, 09-11-2017] The United States soybean industry has signed two letters of intent with Chinese importers covering a \$5 billion purchase of an additional 12 million tonnes of soybeans in the 2017/18 marketing year.

The non-binding agreements, disclosed by the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) in a statement, are among a series of trade deals announced during the visit of U.S. President Donald Trump to Beijing. China is the world's top soybean buyer, and the United States is its second supplier after Brazil.

In the first agreement, signed on Nov. 8, the China Chamber of Commerce of Foodstuffs and Native Produce said it intended to purchase 8 million tonnes of U.S. soybeans worth \$3.4 billion.

A second agreement signed on Nov. 9 between grains trader ADM (ADM.N) and China's COFCO for intent to purchase 4 million tonnes of soybeans worth \$1.6 billion, said the USSEC.

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China trade could be pioneer US beef producer's meat and drink

[Xinhua, 06-11-2017] Though it is the home of U.S. billionaire investor Warren Buffett, Omaha was little known to Chinese a few months ago.

But now this city in the midwestern Nebraska state is poised to become a household name in China since its Greater Omaha Packing company sent about 40 boxes of its products to China on June 14, soon days after the United States and China reached a deal to re-open Chinese markets for U.S. beef as part of their 100-day action plan to boost bilateral economic cooperation.

That was the first export of U.S. beef to China in more than 13 years. China banned U.S. beef in December 2003 after the mad cow disease struck U.S. cattle. Before the ban, the United States used to be China's top foreign supplier of beef.

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JD.com inks deal to import US beef, pork

[MEAT+POULTRY, 08-22-2017] JD.com, China's largest retailer and e-commerce company, signed agreements Nov. 8 to purchase \$1.2 billion of US beef and pork over the next three years. The company will purchase beef from The Montana Stock Growers Association (MSGA) and Cross Four Ranch and pork from Smithfield Foods Inc., owned by Shanghai-based WH Group. The agreements are part of a commitment by JD.com to purchase \$2 billion of US goods over a range of categories over the next three years.

The beef will be imported to China from Miles City, Montana-based Cross Four Ranch and other MSGA members. JD.com will sell the products directly to its 258 million Chinese customers on its e-commerce platform. The agreement contains commitments to import a minimum of \$200 million of beef during the three-year term.

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Chinese cheese maker buys Brownes Dairy

[Farm Weekly, 21-11-2017] WA's oldest milk and dairy products company Brownes Dairy has been sold to a company backed by a Chinese consortium including one of China's largest cheese makers.

The purchase price has not been disclosed but has been described as "fair" by Brownes' managing director Tony Girgis.

It is understood the deal is essentially complete and has not triggered government concerns about foreign ownership, although the official Brownes' announcement on Tuesday 21 November stated finalisation was still some weeks off.

The new owner is Australia Zhiran Co Pty Ltd, a private company first registered in Balcatta in May.

It is backed by a consortium of Chinese investors including private investment firm Changchun Lianxin Investment Consulting Company, founded in Shanghai in 1986, and dairy manufacturer Ground Food Tech Co Ltd, established in 1988 with headquarters in Changchun, the capital of Jilin province in north-east China.

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COFCO sees China's soybean imports hitting 100 mln T in 17/18

[Reuters, 15-11-2017] China will import 100 million tonnes of soybeans in 2017/18, a senior executive at COFCO Corp forecast on Wednesday 15 November, topping official U.S. and Chinese estimates for intake by the world's top importer of the oilseed.

Yanchuan Li, deputy general manager of the oilseeds processing division for COFCO, said he expects soymeal demand in 2018 in China to remain at a "high rate of growth".

His estimate for imports is above both the 95.97 million tonnes estimated by China's Agriculture Ministry and the 97 million tonnes forecast by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Alibaba goes offline with \$2.9 billion stake in China's top grocer

[Reuters, 20-11-2017] Internet giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd said on Monday 20 November it would invest HK\$22.4 billion (\$2.87 billion) for a major stake in China's top hypermart operator, Sun Art Retail Group Ltd, part of a wider push into offline retail.

As part of an alliance with Auchan Retail S.A. and Ruentex Group, Alibaba would buy the stake from Ruentex while Auchan Retail would boost its stake, the three companies said in a joint statement.

The alliance would target opportunities in China's \$500 billion food retail sector, as Alibaba races to build big-data capabilities in the offline retail market where roughly 85 percent of sales are made.

Alibaba has invested upwards of \$9.3 billion in brick-and-mortar stores since 2015. It has launched many un-staffed concept shops in the past year, including grocery and coffee stores.

The \$474 billion firm is taking more risks to secure offline, rural and overseas buyers as China's urban e-commerce market shows signs of saturating, including purchasing extensive infrastructure which it had previously avoided.

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Fast food behemoth eyes big expansion

[China Daily, 22-11-2017] US fast food giant McDonald's plans to open more than one restaurant every day in China over the next five years to attain its goal of having 4,500 restaurants in the country by 2022, according to a top official.

The restaurant chain, which has about 2,500 outlets in the country, will become more agile and flexible to fulfill the growth potential that exists in smaller cities on the mainland.

More touchscreens, table services and delivery services will be available in the restaurants across China, as "fast" and "convenience" are redefined. By the end of 2018, some 90 percent of existing 2,500 stores will become renovated into "restaurants 2.0 version" with digital devices facilitating mobile ordering, payment, and service ratings and feedback.

Consumers in lower-tier Chinese cities are now willing to spend in a Western style fast food chain and the lower rental and labor costs ensures good profit margins for operators, according to data from consultancy firm McKinsey.

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China's Hunan Dakang aims to expand Brazil business from soy to beef

[Reuters, 29-11-2017] Since 2016, Dakang has gained capacity to handle around 5 million tonnes of grains per year by partnering with two firms that barter goods and services for soybeans and corn in the two largest producing states in the country, Mato Grosso and Paraná.

After Dakang integrates those acquisitions, a process expected to take three years, the company will look for targets in the beef industry, Chairman Ge Junjie said in an interview.

The company would aim to acquire beef slaughterhouses that are already approved to export to China, Ge said.

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This issue is compiled by Yuelai Lu of SAIN Secretariat (UK). If you have any further enquiries, please contact: y.lu@uea.ac.uk; for more information about SAIN, please visit: www.sainonline.org/English.html