



UK-China
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Policies

Environmental protection green teeth

[The Economist, 17-15-2014] At last year's annual session of the National People's Congress, China's legislature, Li Keqiang, the prime minister, said the notoriously bad air quality in Chinese cities made him "quite upset". At this year's session, in March, Mr Li went much further, saying it was time for China to "declare war" on pollution. Like the rhetoric, Chinese law is now to be upgraded to deal more stringently with polluters.

The nation's Environmental Protection Law has been amended for the first time since it was passed in 1989. The new provisions, due to take effect in January, will allow for stiffer fines against polluting companies, detention of negligent executives, protection for whistleblowers, and penalties for officials who fail to enforce laws.

Many ordinary Chinese have shown they want firmer controls. Protests over environmental problems have become commonplace, including one in the eastern city of Hangzhou on May 10th when police vehicles were overturned and dozens of people were injured. Residents were protesting against plans to build a rubbish incinerator, which they fear may emit mercury and dioxin. In April thousands protested in the southern province of Guangdong against a proposed chemical plant.

The new law has been through a wide-ranging public-consultation process that has given it more bite. One important provision allows for fines against polluters to increase daily until a violation is corrected. The previous system of one-time fines often failed to deter. Another important change was to formalise a system by which local officials are assessed on environmental performance and not just on how much they boost economic growth. And public-interest litigation by some environmental NGOs will now be permitted.

After the revisions were passed, Pan Yue, vice-minister of environmental protection, said the new legislation could yet fail to achieve its goals without ironclad implementation. "Good environmental law only gets you halfway there," he told state media.

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China inaugurates first environmental court

[China daily, 23-05-2014] A special court for environmental cases was opened on Friday in East China's Fujian province. It is the country's first such specialized judiciary organ.

The court affiliated to the Fujian Provincial Higher People's Court has recruited 12 environmental, agricultural, marine and mineral experts as technical consultants.

Entrusted by the court, the consultants can appear in court as litigation assistants to provide technical consultation and interpretation.

Wang Chengquan, deputy chief justice of the high court, said Fujian was approved as China's first "ecological civilization demonstration zone" in April to explore and pilot judicial protection of the environment.

Since 2009, several county and city-level courts in the province have experimented in setting up divisions specializing in forestry, mining, water and resources, atmosphere and water pollution cases.

Wang said the courts have explored judiciary measures of protecting and restoring the environment, which instruct violators of environmental laws to shoulder responsibility for reparations after environmental damage.

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China fights for safe rural drinking water

[Xinhua, 06-05-2014] China must work harder to ensure safe drinking water in rural areas, where about 110 million people still lack clean drinking water, the Ministry of Water Resources said Tuesday.

Resolving drinking water safety by 2015 for rural residents, including more than 15 million teachers and students in the countryside, is one of the government's priorities.

"We must make sure this goal is fulfilled," Minister of Water Resources, Chen Lei, said at a national video conference.

Since 2005, China has spent nearly 180 billion yuan (about 29 billion U.S. dollars) on drinking water projects, benefiting 410 million people.

In the coming two years, the government will build more facilities, strengthen water quality control and step up supervision.

Industrial pollution is blamed for polluting rivers and lakes during the past three decades.

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China eyes fewer, stronger crops seed companies

[Xinhua, 21-05-2014] China's crop seed companies have declined in number over the past three years due to mergers and acquisitions, and the government encourages them to become globally competitive, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The number of seed enterprises in China decreased to around 5,200 from more than 8,700 in 2011, down by 40 percent, Yu Xinrong, China's vice minister of agriculture, said at a press conference.

The number of Chinese seed companies whose registered capital exceeds 100 million yuan (16.2 million U.S. dollars) jumped to 106, up nearly 200 percent during the period, said Yu.

The combined sales volume of China's biggest 50 crop seed companies accounted for more than 30 percent of the total, and the top 10 industry leaders spent a total of nearly 600 million yuan on R&D annually, he added.

China encourages mergers and acquisitions of domestic crop seed companies and supports them to improve R&D, production, management and service capabilities to narrow their gaps with global leaders, Yu said.

China's combined crop seed export volume has surpassed 300 million dollars annually, data from the Ministry of Agriculture revealed.

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China likely to become world's biggest seed market

[Xinhua, 25-05-2014] China is likely to exceed the United States and become the world's biggest seed market with a volume of 14.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2015, said a Chinese researcher on Sunday.

China currently ranks second with its crop seed market worth 65 billion yuan (10.5 billion U.S. dollars), said Liu Xu, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences at a forum prior to the 2014 World Seed Congress, which will open in Beijing on Monday.

China's seed industry has entered a rapid development period of commercialization with more than 100 breeding enterprises, which have their own research and development capabilities, said Liu.

The seed market in the United States is worth 12 billion U.S. dollars, or 26.7 percent of the world's market, according to 2012 data of the International Seed Federation.

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Beijing boosts development of seed industry

[China.org.cn, 30-05-2014] Beijing is mulling a plan on building the National Seed Silicon Valley in its Tongzhou District, with the aim of fueling the development of the seed industry of both the city and China at large, a municipal agricultural official said at a seminar during the ISF World Seed Congress 2014.

"Advantageous resources at home and abroad will be clustered in the high-tech area to boost the development of a modern agriculture and modern seed industry for both city and country," Wu Baoxin, director of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Agriculture, said in a report.

"Beijing has brought a development plan for its seed industry into full swing," Wu said. "Between 2010 and 2015, an action plan has already been implemented to turn the city into a center for S&T innovation of China's seed industry, as well as trade and exchange in the global seed industry."

To build the city into the "capital of seed breeding," special funds worth more than 300 million yuan (US\$48.4 million) have been allocated during this period.

In the future, R&D will focus on 16 advantageous species or varieties in the four major fields, including crop farming, livestock and poultry, aquaculture and fruit and flowers.

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China to regulate GM food labelling

[Xinhua, 27-05-2014] China is to improve its regulations on labeling genetically modified (GM) food to guarantee consumer rights.

The measure was included in a guideline issued by the State Council, the country's cabinet, to boost food safety, according to a government statement issued on Tuesday.

The guideline did not give details about the stricter rule to be implemented.

GM food remains controversial in China and consumers have complained it is hard to distinguish GM food from non-GM food due to poor labeling.

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China to better police GMO in agriculture

[Xinhua, 28-05-2014] China will strengthen oversight of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the agricultural sector to ensure biosafety, the Ministry of Agriculture said in a circular on Wednesday.

Regulatory oversight of such products is important to grain safety, food safety and ecological safety, the ministry said.

It vowed to crack down on illegal spread of GMO seeds and other malpractice.

China has placed importance on the development of modern biotechnology while keeping a wary eye on possible risks that may result from the technology.

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China rebuts remarks over food security

[Xinhua, 21-05-2014] Chinese agricultural authorities on Wednesday fended off negative remarks made by a policy institute president over food security, saying China is able to feed itself.

"China poses no threat to world food security but will contribute quite a lot instead," said Bi Meijia, chief economist and spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture. "We can carry our rice bowls quite safely."

The Chinese official's comments came almost three months after Lester R. Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute, raised fresh concerns over China's demand for world grain in his latest research note Who Will Feed China?

Bi said China's grain self-sufficiency rate stood above 97 percent in 2013 and cereal imports reached 14 million tonnes, accounting for less than 2.6 percent of the country's cereal output.

His comments were in contrast to Brown, who warned in February that as China imports increasing quantities of grain, it is competing directly with scores of other grain-importing countries, such as Japan, Mexico and Egypt.

Brown said China turning to the outside world for massive quantities of grain was "forcing us to recognize that we are in trouble on the food front".

Soybean remained China's primary grain imports, which rose 8.6 percent year on year to reach 63.38 million tonnes in 2013, according to customs data.

The country's grain output gained 2.1 percent year on year to hit 601.94 million tonnes, marking 10 years in a row for increased grain production, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

China's rising grain imports in recent years were mainly driven by lower offshore prices as compared to domestic grain prices, Bi said.

"As global grain prices headed down, it's in China's interests to import an appropriate amount of grain at lower prices and follow the trend of international agriculture products," he said.

The government's emphasis on and policy support to agriculture will encourage farmers to continue growing grain production, thus further consolidate the ability for the country to feed 1.3 billion people, Bi said.

Relying more on machines, science and technology for higher grain output, China is also working to upgrade its irrigation system to make its food production sustainable, he added.

China has designated permanent cropland to observe a red-line guarantee that arable land shall never shrink to less than 120 million hectares.

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China's young migrant workers better educated: report

[Xinhua, 12-05-2014] China's young migrant workers are better educated and more willing to spend than their parents' generation, a report from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday.

A third of young migrant workers, who were born after 1980, hold a senior high school diploma or higher, 19.2 percentage points more than the older generation.

They spent an average of 939 yuan (150 U.S. dollars) per month last year, 19.3 percent higher than the older generation.

As they spend more, they send less money back home. Young migrant workers sent an average of 12,802 yuan to their families in the countryside last year, 29.6 percent less compared to the older generation.

The number of young migrant workers totaled 125.28 million last year, accounting for 65.5 percent of the rural work force born after 1980.

They prefer to work in bigger cities, with 54.9 percent seeking jobs in big and medium-sized cities, compared with 26 percent for the older generation.

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Science, Technology and Environment

Global recognition for traditional farming systems in China, Iran and South Korea

[FAO, 01-05-2014] Six traditional farming systems in China, Iran and South Korea known for their unique characteristics and approaches to sustainability have been designated [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems](#) (GIAHS) by FAO.

They include Iran's Qanat Irrigation system, an ancient network of farms that have survived for nearly three millennia; a 22-thousand-kilometer system of black stone walls built from volcanic rock in Jeju, South Korea; and the traditional Gudeuljang Irrigated rice terraces in Cheongsando, South Korea

Also on the list are a trio of sites in China: the unique Xinghua Duotian Agrosystem, famous for its method of water-land utilization; the historic Jasmine and Tea Culture System of Fuzhou City; and, the Jiaxian Traditional Chinese Date Gardens.

The sites were officially recognized during the 28-29 April meeting of the GIAHS Scientific and Steering Committee at FAO headquarters in Rome.

These new designations bring the number of GIAHS systems to a total of 31 sites located in 14 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The sites are considered models of innovation, sustainability and adaptability, delivering important benefits to the ecosystem.

The new GIAHS sites include three in China, one in Iran and two in South Korea.

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Chinese scientists claim H7N9 treatment breakthrough

[China Daily, 07-05-2014] A human blood protein has been found to be associated with the H7N9 fatality rate, according to a study by Chinese medical scientists.

The study, published in Nature Communications on Tuesday, showed that blood plasma levels of angiotensin II are higher in H7N9 patients and could be used to predict their physical deterioration.

Angiotensin II is a human protein contained in plasma, the vascular wall, heart and kidney to regulate blood pressure. It is closely linked to acute lung injury.

H7N9 patients with higher levels of angiotensin II carry more viral load, said Li Lanjuan, researcher at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a specialist in H7N9 prevention.

"It is particularly obvious in the second week of human infection. The angiotensin II level of patients in critical condition keeps going up, while that of mild cases tends to drop," Li said.

Li added the new finding could help in clinical practice. Medical personnel could adopt more effective and reliable treatment measures for patients suffering different conditions.

"This study will provide a new perspective to H7N9 pathology and potential treatment for future cases," said Ed Gerstner, executive editor of Nature Communications.

H7N9 was first reported in China in March 2013. The virus causes severe disease in humans, including acute and often lethal respiratory failure. The country has reported more than 200 human H7N9 cases.

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Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences designated as FAO Reference Center

[MoA, 12-05-2014] Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) is designated as a Reference Center for Tropical Agriculture Research and Training by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) upon the Agreement signed on May 5th, 2014.

Based on the Agreement, the newly-designated FAO reference center shall provide technical support and training in tropical agricultural sciences for FAO member countries, particularly for developing countries, and offer consulting services for policy-making, while FAO will give financial support to the Reference Center through joint activities.

It is believed that the designation will not only enhance CATAS's growing international influence, but also engage CATAS more actively in international cooperation in tropical agricultural sciences.

A FAO reference center is authorized by FAO Director-General upon competitive selection and evaluation, and its designation is valid for four years. If the Center passed the FAO mid-term and final evaluation, the agreement might be renewed for another four years.

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Water overuse threatens agriculture, industry in Hebei

[CCTV, 15-05-2014] The north China plain has always faced a shortage of water. As a result, people have been using underground water for a long time. But this continued use has severely depleted the water table, leading to a host of concerns.

It is the sowing season. Farmers in north China are irrigating the wheat field with underground water. In Hengshui city of Hebei Province, half of the city's water supply comes from the underground water table. As a result, the water level has been dropping by two meters a year.

"An underground well is between three to four hundred meters deep. Water levels underground are dropping. Therefore, in order to get more water, the wells are getting deeper. The city now has 75,000 deep wells. Three to four percent of them are being discarded every year." Ma Yingpeng with Hengshui's Water Affairs Bureau said.

For generations, farmers here in the North China Plain have used flooding methods for irrigation. This method consumes the most water. Despite the water shortage in the area, the use of this method hasn't changed.

In Jing Xian county of Hengshui, we found a deep well that became disused last year. Most deep wells use motors to pump out the water. The deeper the well goes, the more the cost.

"I have a quarter acre of land. Each time I have to water it, I have to spend four hundred Yuan. The pump often breaks when it gets deep. I may have to spend upto ten thousand Yuan to repair it." Villager Guo Huazhong from Hengshui's Jingxian County said.

"We had a 260 meters deep well. But the water it pumps out is decreasing. People can't afford the power bill, so we aren't using it anymore."

The provincial water resource department says that 90% of deep wells using motors are in rural areas. The depth of these wells ranges from 70 meters to 500 meters. In all, agricultural irrigation constitutes 70% of the total water consumption.

The north China plain is one of China's major grain production and industrial bases. The increasing depletion of the groundwater table is not only an ecological disaster waiting to happen, but could also become a threat to food security and economic development in the future.

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Food science college established in Xi'an

[ECNS, 15-05-2014] A college for food safety and food industry development was established on Wednesday through cooperation between Xi'an Jiaotong University and Hangzhou Hongsheng Beverage Group Ltd.

The Fuli Charity Foundation under Hongsheng donated 100 million yuan (\$16 million) toward building the Fuli Food Science and Engineering College at the university in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province.

"The Food Science and Engineering College will train high-end industrial professionals, support the research and development of food safety and continue to narrow the gap between food and beverage industries in China and foreign countries," said Zong Fuli, founder of the charity foundation and president of Hangzhou Hongsheng Beverage Group Ltd.

At present, China does not have a university that can train cross-disciplinary experts for the development of food science, productive equipment and processing control, which is the biggest challenge for the sustainable innovation and development of China's food industry.

"I hope the newly established college is able to help solve the challenge," said Wang Shuguo, president of Xi'an Jiaotong University.

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China's hybrid rice set for world record yield

[Xinhua, 22-05-2014] The yield of China's new hybrid rice breed has topped 1,000 kg per mu (0.067 hectare), with the country set to break the world record in rice output through large-scale planting, according to a report released on Thursday.

After supervised harvesting and weighing 13 days ago, rice breed, Longliangyou 1813, produced a harvest of 937.9 kg per mu in the country's largest southern breeding base in Sanya, Hainan Province.

Theoretically, output reached 1081.8 kg per mu as 0.1 mu of rice paddy suffered disease without any output, according to rice researchers in China.

"If the diseased rice was in normal condition, the yield would have topped 1,000 kg per mu, setting a new world record," said Guo Shoubin, chief breeding instructor of the new breed's development team.

The record yield is the achievement of the fourth phase of China's hybrid rice development program and is made possible by a new high-yield breed, advanced cultivation technology and nanotechnology-supported fertilizer, Guo said.

"Given the situation, the goal of achieving a new super rice strain with an expected yield of 1,000 kg per mu will be achieved before 2015," said Yuan Longping, "father of hybrid rice" and leader of the new breed's development team.

The new breed will be planted in large-scale breeding bases in other provinces such as Hunan to test its productivity later this year and is expected to achieve a higher yield as other regions enjoy more favorable environment for rice growth than Hainan, Yuan said.

Longliangyou 1813 was developed by Liao Cuimeng, executive president of Yuan Long Ping High-Tech Agriculture Co., Ltd., a breeding R&D center and promotion enterprise.

"The new breed is pest-resistant and highly productive, and we also designed a specific cultivation pattern for the breed to grow more quickly," Liao said.

Meanwhile, nanotechnology-based fertilizer is being used for the first time in breeding hybrid rice. Xue Helun, inventor of the fertilizer, said it can activate microbes in the soil, not only fertilizing the breed, but also the soil itself.

Nanotechnology-supported fertilizer has been used in cultivating corn and water melons, all highly productive. It can restore the soil's fertility and transform heavy metals into unharful elements, said Chen Shuyu, an agricultural expert with an academy on development and economics in Sichuan Province.

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China Exclusive: All eyes on pig exchange rate

[Xinhua, 29-05-2014] It will never get the same attention as the Chinese currency, but another exchange rate is quietly straining every nerve of the market, from policymakers to farmers: the hog-to-corn ratio.

The exchange rate is closely monitored as a critical reference and a key indicator of inflation. It is used to speculate on changes in policy in a broader context.

Pork is the staple meat in China and is a heavyweight in the basket of prices used in calculating the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The ratio of live hog sales prices at farms to wholesale corn price, calculated by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), rebounded to 5.29 on Wednesday after it fell to a five-year low of 4.6 in April. When the ratio is above 6, pig farmers can start thinking about profits.

Live pig prices have fluctuated wildly in recent years, raising concerns that volatility could bleed into monetary and fiscal policy due to the CPI weighting.

The weak pig-to-corn rate in the past year has meant Anhua Agricultural Insurance dishing out compensation of 4.1 million yuan (660,000 U.S. dollars) to 143 pig farmers in Beijing this month.

"With the compensation, I feel a little bit better," said Cao Xueyi, a veteran pig farmer who got 94,000 yuan for his loss of 1.08 million yuan last year. To help stabilize pork prices, Anhua started selling price insurance last year to offset losses incurred through pig price declines.

"Insurance of live pig prices is a very good way to protect farmers from huge losses," said Tuo Guozhu, an insurance professor with the Capital University of Economics and Business.

The NDRC has also intervened, buying frozen pork on the market for national reserves in March and May, which raised the national average hog price to 11.14 yuan per kilogram by April 30, ending 19 weeks of decline.

Oversupply has been blamed for the price decline since the beginning of this year. Farmers sold 716 million live pigs last year, 20 million more than 2012.

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FAO and Chinese partners working to unlock carbon finance for herders and grazers

[FAO, 30-05-2014] Hundreds of millions of people around the world rely on grasslands to feed the livestock which are the foundation of their livelihoods. Yet poor land management has left large swathes of the world's grasslands degraded - an environmental problem which also has direct implications for livestock-dependent communities.

To help address these concerns, FAO and the Chinese Academy of Agriculture Science (CAAS), the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and China's Northwest Institute of Plateau Biology (NWIPB) have for the past several years been working to link grasslands restoration efforts to international climate financing schemes.

Restoring degraded grasslands through more sustainable grazing practices and forage production can substantially improve animal feeds and productivity, benefiting herders and others who depend on livestock-rearing for income and food.

At the same time, restoring degraded grasslands can also trap large volumes of atmospheric carbon, mitigating climate change.

For this to happen, economic incentives are critical.

Carbon crediting schemes that pay projects for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon do exist, in theory offering farmers the potential to earn money in exchange for adopting practices that help mitigate climate change.

But participation of agriculture in carbon markets - including those involving grazing-based livelihood systems - has so far been quite small.

This challenge is now being addressed by a new methodology developed by FAO, CAAS, ICRAF and the NWIPB.

The methodology allows for either direct measurement of carbon sequestration on sustainably managed grasslands through soil sampling or computer modeling of sequestration based on soil types and farming activities. The use of modeling can substantially reduce costs of measurement.

Tested over the past several years using field data from a project site in Northern China and computer modeling, the methodology has now won approval by the non-profit Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), a voluntary greenhouse gas accounting programme used by projects around the world to verify and issue carbon credits in voluntary emissions markets.

The methodology can be applied worldwide wherever countries work to sustainably feed a growing population while lowering their carbon footprint, especially in grassland-rich countries.

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International Relations

China further tightens quality controls on milk imports

[Reuters, 01-05-2014] China will further tighten quality controls on milk imports by demanding that overseas suppliers register with the country's quality watchdog before they are allowed to import dairy products, state media said on Thursday.

Exporting companies must first meet relevant regulations in their home countries to ensure that their health standards meet Chinese rules and laws, the official China News Service said, citing China's quality regulator.

"Corporate regulation management for foreign dairy producers who import will ... guarantee that imported dairy products sold in China meet Chinese food safety rules and laws from the source," the report said.

It said that the quality watchdog had already certified 1,122 foreign dairy producers, including 41 companies which make infant milk formula. Other companies, it said, would be added in time.

Companies not registered cannot import as of May 1, the report added.

Food safety has long dragged on China's domestic milk powder makers, boosting international brands in an infant formula market set to double to \$25 billion by 2017, according to data from Euromonitor.

China has announced moves to consolidate the sector, supporting domestic "champions" who will be able to compete more strongly with global rivals.

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9th International Raspberry Meeting kicks off in Fengyang

[China Daily, 15-05-2014] On May 12, the Ninth International Raspberry Meeting kicked off in Fengyang county, Anhui province. It is the first time that the International Union of Raspberries organized such an event in China.

More than 200 delegates, including 12 IRO member country representatives, international renowned agricultural research experts, representatives from international investment and financial institutions, nursery suppliers, raspberry producers, raspberry products deep processing enterprises, and e-commerce platform vendors attended the opening ceremony as well.

Delegates from Australia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Britain, Chile, Poland, USA, and Canada, talked about their raspberry industries, specialty products, pest control, mechanization reaping, subsequent processing and product sales.

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China's demand for meat to change the face of global trade in feed grains

[SCMP, 20-05-2014] China's meat imports are predicted to skyrocket over 3,500 per cent to US\$150 billion by 2050 as consumption of chicken, pork and beef surges on the back of the rising affluence of its growing middle class.

This would raise tough questions, ranging from the impact on the environment to where to find the feed for that much livestock, analysts said.

The massive increase in China's meat imports was forecast by the Australian government's agricultural research arm, the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resources Economics and Sciences.

"The shift from a rice to meat diet has already happened in China. Even small changes in the way China consumes can have a large impact overseas," said Patrick Vizzone, Asia head of food and agribusiness at National Australia Bank.

He said that between now and 2050, China would represent more than 40 per cent of the increase in world food demand.

For instance, if China switched just 2 per cent of its pork consumption to imports, this would equal 10 per cent of the US market and three times Australia's pork production, Vizzone said.

"Ripples emanating from China appear like a tsunami overseas," he said.

A report by the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service tracked the explosive growth in China's demand for meat.

China produces nearly all of its own meat. Its output of pork, poultry, and beef rose from about 20 million tonnes in 1986 to more than 70 million tonnes in 2012, with the fastest growth from the 1980s into the early '90s, the USDA report said.

It said the USDA was projecting an increase in China's pork, poultry, and beef output to 90 million tonnes by 2023/24, an increase of about 30 per cent.

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Bright Food to buy control of Israel's largest food company

[China Daily, 22-05-2014] Bright Food Group Co Ltd said on Thursday it has signed a preliminary agreement to buy 56 percent of Israel's largest food company Tnuva from private equity firm Apax, extending a string of overseas acquisitions. A spokesman for Bright Food did not disclose how much it has agreed to pay, but Israeli news websites reported late on Wednesday the deal valued all of Tnuva, a specialist dairy produce supplier, at 8.6 billion shekels (\$2.5 billion).

When Apax and Israeli investment company Mivtach Shamir Holdings Ltd acquired control of Tnuva in 2008, the company was valued at \$989 million in total.

"Israel is a country with highly developed agriculture and animal husbandry techniques. Tnuva, as Israel's largest food company, has a long history and various products and large market share," the Bright Food spokesman said in a text message sent to Reuters.

Shanghai-based Bright Food has not yet reached an agreement with Israeli investment company Mivtach Shamir Holdings Ltd, which owns 21 percent of Tnuva, the Calcalist website said. A group of kibbutzim, or cooperative farms, own the rest of Tnuva.

In January Bright Food bought Australian dairy company Mundella Foods. It previously bought Australia's Manassen Foods, which supplies food brands to Australian retailers, and New Zealand's Synlait Milk Ltd.

Bright Food owns four listed companies including Shanghai Jinfeng Wine Co, Shanghai Haibo Co, Shanghai Maling Aquarius Co and Bright Dairy & Food Co.

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China's agricultural investment in Africa not "land grabbing": expert

[Xinhua, 17-05-2014] China's investment in African agriculture has nothing to do with "land grabbing," an agricultural expert said at a seminar on China's agricultural investment in Africa Friday.

"I think the land grabbing idea is a little hard to sustain because there has been quite a little China's agricultural investments in Africa," said Deborah Brautigam, a professor and director

of the International Development Program of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Brautigam, who has followed China's agricultural relationship with Africa for 30 years, said some farmlands that Chinese companies have bought or rented are quite old, as some were even set up in colonial period.

"So that's hard to say that's land grab. That's just normal investment and hasn't displace anybody," said Brautigam

Brautigam also said if China companies want to be more successful in investing Africa's agriculture they need to bear more social responsibilities for the local community as the local governments may not keep their promises.

"Local governments don't always have the capacity to do it. They don't have the finance to do it. They don't have the incentives to do it. So if Chinese companies want to be seen as responsible investor they are probably going to take those responsibilities themselves," she said.

Brautigam suggested Chinese companies do more on training local people and transferring technologies, as well as offering long-term jobs for local people.

She said such actions will increase the cost of China enterprises to invest in Africa's agriculture. To reduce companies' burden, the Chinese government should partner more with these companies by providing subsidies.

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Africa: China contributes to African green revolution

[All Africa, 22-05-2014] Agriculture has been identified as a priority area of development in the China-Africa strategic partnership.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang reaffirmed his country's commitment to assist Africa increase agricultural productivity and improve food security during a visit to Africa in May.

He announced that China plans to train 2,000 agricultural technicians and management personnel in Africa during the next five years.

Under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) launched in 2000, the two sides agreed to work together in boosting agricultural production in Africa and ensuring food security for its citizens.

China pledged in 2012 to increase the number of agricultural technology demonstration centres from 15 to 20.

As Africa celebrates the Year of Agriculture and Food Security, the Southern African News Features visited the Gwebi Agricultural Demonstration Centre near Harare in Zimbabwe to find out how China is contributing to the green revolution in Africa.

The Gwebi Agricultural Demonstration Centre is one of the 20 agricultural centres to be built in Africa by China. A total of 15 centres are now already operational.

Of these, seven are in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), namely in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The other demonstration centres are located in Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Liberia, Togo, Sudan, Uganda and Rwanda. The other five centres are expected to be built in countries such as Mali.

The Gwebi Agricultural Demonstration Centre project started in 2009 when the governments of Zimbabwe and China signed an agreement to build the facility.

Under the agreement, the 100-hectare centre will be managed by China between 2012 and 2015, after which the centre will be handed to Zimbabwe.

Chinese experts at the Gwebi Agricultural Demonstration Centre said the facility has strengthened the capacity of local farmers to manage their crops and farming machinery.

"Since we started operating in 2012, we have trained over 3,000 students and farmers," one of the experts, Richard Wang said.

He revealed that the centre leased farming equipment such as tractors and combine harvesters to Zimbabwean farmers as part of a programme to improve agricultural mechanisation in the country.

At least four training courses are conducted at the centre every year, each targeting 20 farmers.

The centre also conducts on-site courses in rural areas for those that cannot afford to attend the training in Harare.

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Chinese enterprise helps resolve Mozambique's food crisis

[Xinhua, 24-05-2014] Although Mozambique has emerged from the nightmare of civil war, the "Pearl of Southeastern Africa" remains troubled by serious problems, including a food crisis.

Though far apart from China, its connection with the world's most populous country is becoming tighter. It has not only found, near its coastline, porcelain relics from the Ming-era maritime voyages of Chinese trading fleets between 1405 and 1433, but also benefited from agricultural projects from the world's second largest economy.

In recent years, an increasing number of Chinese agricultural enterprises are seeking broader development overseas, with some of them figuring their way into Mozambique, where their hard work and the experience of feeding Chinese people are assisting locals in achieving self-sufficiency in food.

Lianhe Africa Agriculture Development Co. is one of them. Although the company set its foot on the Mozambican soil only less than two years ago, it has already put high-quality rice to the market in Beira, the second largest city and a major seaport and airport in Mozambique.

According to Zhou Mingzhao, Lianhe's president, the firm started to explore overseas opportunities three years ago in response to the Chinese government's call on private enterprises to go global.

After visiting some countries in South America, Southeast Asia and Africa, they picked Mozambique to promote and develop the Chinese high-yield and high-efficiency agricultural method.

The Chinese company then signed a cooperation agreement with a farm in the central province of Sofala in 2012 to start rice and cotton cultivation, processing and other operations on its 600-hectare land.

"The reason for choosing Africa is simple -- it is an undeveloped virgin land," Zhou said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

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The Myth of the 'Land Grab'

[Beijing Review, 26-05-2014] It's the kind of headline that sells magazines: "China Buys Up the World." It appeared in a November 2010 issue of The Economist, illustrated by a faceless, militaristic figure loading cars, oil barrels, power lines and various manufactured goods into a giant shopping basket. But reports of the Chinese Government buying up hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Africa to grow crops for Chinese dinner tables, or to secure political or military interests, are simply a misrepresentation of the far more complex issue of Chinese aid to Africa, said panelists at a May 16 conference sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C.

"Agriculture is part of the general framework of policies and preferences for going global, but there hasn't been a real highlighting of attention to this. I think these issues are still controversial in China in terms of how much food security should be a domestic matter that can be controlled within the borders of China and how much it should rely on global trade," said Deborah Brautigam, Professor, Director of the SAIS China Africa Research Initiative, and author of *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa and Chinese Aid and African Development: Exporting Green Revolution*.

It's easy to overestimate China's agricultural interest in Africa, Brautigam said. China has 20 percent of the world's population, but only 9 percent of the world's arable land and 6 percent of its fresh water resources. The growing middle class has increased demand for meat and soybeans that are used to feed livestock. It seems likely China would be interested in the millions of acres of uncultivated land in Africa.

Media histrionics over large-scale farming projects funded by the Chinese Government, however, are demonstrably false. Reports of "land grabbing" can be broken into five categories, according to Brautigam: media myths and false reports; aid projects that have now been privatized; construction contracts; government projects that were launched more than a decade ago; and real, current interests.

Case in point is a 2010 joint venture agreement between the China National Agricultural Development Group and the China-Africa Development Fund to carry out agricultural investment in Africa.

"This fund was mistakenly described in one medium as being a \$5-billion fund to invest in agriculture in Africa and that's far from the real story," Brautigam said. "The real story is that it is a 1-billion-renminbi fund, which is \$161 million. This is still a sizeable amount of money, but it's a small fraction of \$5 billion—and so far what they've done is to buy into existing Chinese ventures that have been around for quite a while."

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China hog revival signs fail to save Genus tie-up

[Agrimoney, 27-05-2014] Plans by Genus to exploit China's huge pork sector have taken a second knock with the ditching of a joint venture with Yunnan Shennong Agricultural Group, despite some signs of recovery in hog market conditions.

Genus, the UK-based animal genetics group, said that because of "current adverse market conditions for pork production in China", it had agreed with Yunnan Shennong Agricultural to exit a tie-up signed in February last year to build and operate a 1,000-sow operation.

The cancellation represents a further setback for plans to expand in China highlighted after a strategic review two years ago by Kiram Bitar in one of his first moves as Genus chief executive.

Genus revealed two weeks ago - as it blamed the setback to China's hog industry from a "sudden sharp drop in pork slaughter prices" for a decline in group profits - that it was delaying completion of a tie-up announced last year with another, unnamed, large pig producer.

However, it retains the working 4,250-sow Besun farm joint venture in Shaanxi province in north central China.

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Tesco and China Resources Enterprise reach retail deal

[BBC, 29-05-2014] Tesco has finalised a deal with the state-run China Resources Enterprise (CRE) to create the largest food retailer in China.

The joint venture will combine Tesco's 131 outlets in the country with CRE's almost 3,000 stores, called Vanguard. CRE will own 80% of the new chain and Tesco will have a 20% stake.

"The partnership creates a strong platform in one of the world's largest markets," Tesco chief executive Philip Clarke said in a statement.

"We can now combine our strengths to build a profitable multichannel business, offering our customers in China the best of modern retail."

According to figures from research group IGD, China is the world's biggest market for food and groceries with an annual value of more than one trillion dollars. And the market is forecast to grow by 50% over the next three years.

Tesco, the biggest supermarket chain in the UK, has been keen to tap into this potential, and has been operating in the country since 2004.

The firm has also been eyeing the Indian market - which is forecast to witness rapid growth in the coming years.

Earlier this year, it announced a joint venture with Trent Limited, part of India's Tata Group, which operates the Star Bazaar retail business in India.

Tesco said it would invest around £85m in the joint venture.

Click [here](#) for details

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