

Osservatorio internazionale

Agricultural Policy of XXI Century in China*

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As a part of the social credit system, China Ministry of Agriculture is framing a regulatory system to incorporate credit mechanism into its regulations to restrain farmers and traders. A nationwide platform enables information transparency; a 29-ministry memo realizes a joint law enforcement; and multiple trial cities provide valuable experiences and new ideas.

Agricultural certification is an imported invention and China refines it into a “3 product, 1 origin” system. Different certification rules will be applied to pollution-free food, green food and organic food; and the geographical indication certification is what we can learn from EU practices. China needs reputable brands in agricultural field and it requires a strict post supervision on certificated products. A bridge-wise testing and evaluation team with science and regulatory professionals is in dire need.

Agriculture has undergone a tortuous development during the past more than seven decades since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The adoption of reform and opening up in 1978 started a new chapter in the Chinese history. And it is based on the agricultural reform and opening up that agricultural policies and regulatory policies for agricultural products in the 21st century have been put forward. This paper briefly reviews the reform and development of agricultural policies in China over more than 40

years. The market-based reform of agricultural products is the backdrop of China’s agricultural policies, including the reform of domestic markets and the opening up of agro-products. Having entered a new phase of agricultural development since the beginning of the 21st century, China has been adjusting and improving agricultural policies facing with new challenges. Besides, in the context of the recently promulgated Revision of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Quality and Safety of Agricultural Products, this article intends to introduce China’s main regulatory policies for agro-products, mainly covering the risk assessment system, the monitoring system, the traceability system and the credit system of agricultural product quality and safety.

1.- Background of China’s Agricultural Policies

As China embarked on the course of reforms with innovations in the rural land system, market reforms started in agriculture. Progressively, reforms moved forward from rural areas to urban cities, from agriculture to industry and service sector.

In terms of the variety, starting with agricultural and sideline food, the reform gradually pushed towards the staple agro-products with strategic importance. Initially, only vegetables, fruits, aquatic products and some livestock products were allowed to be traded in local markets. It was not until the mid-1980s that the geographical restrictions on market trading were gradually relaxed when rural markets were mainly in the form of periodic local fairs. Later on, step by step, market reforms were pushed to coarse grains, major livestock products, sugar crops, oilseeds, soybeans,

(*) This paper has been prepared for the Seminar organized by the Accademia dei Georgofili in Florence, September 7, 2021, on the occasion of the Summit of Agriculture Ministers of the G20; the proceedings of the Seminar are published at <https://www.georgofili.net/articoli/i-georgofili-in-occasione-del-vertice-dei-ministri-dellagricoltura-del-g20/10942>

cotton and the three major staples (rice, wheat and corn), and accelerated from the early 1990s onwards.

As to staple agro-products such as grain, cotton, oilseed and sugar, China started the market reform by adopting a dual-track system. Grain is a suitable example here, as it took quite a long time to realize its marketisation. In 1985, China practiced a dual-track system of grain procurement after abolishing the unified procurement system. The main elements of the reform were: to constantly lift the negotiated price of grain procurement to promote the development of grain markets and increase farmers' income, while gradually reducing the state order and increasing the negotiated purchase. Consequently, in 1990, over 30% of grain was traded privately, with the rest by semi-commercial state-owned grain enterprises. That being said, as grain production continued to rise and exceeded 500 million tons in 1996, the price began to decline and national stocks soared. In 1998, to protect farmers' interests, the Chinese government launched a controversial reform in the grain distribution system by practicing "the Three policies", including opening up grain purchase from farmers at protective prices; selling grain at a price higher than the purchasing price to make profits; ensuring a fund to be used by the Agricultural Development Bank only for grain purchasing. However, three years later, the policies began to be relaxed due to difficulties, and were officially discarded in 2004, indicating the completion of the market reform of grain. For other agricultural products, an integrated national market had been established much earlier thanks to the smoother reform process with less intervention.

Although the opening up of agricultural products somewhat lagged behind the reform of the domestic market, China stepped up in opening up of agriculture. The opening up of agro-products could mainly be reflected in the following two aspects: relaxation of entry conditions and permits for import and export trade, and reduction of import tariffs. With the loosening control of imports and exports by state-owned enterprises,

tariffs on agricultural imports were gradually reduced. The average tariff rate dropped to 24% in 1998 and 21% in 2001 from 42% in 1992, which was further reduced to 11% owing to China's accession to WTO in 2001. After that, China cancelled export subsidies on agricultural products. The opening-up of agriculture has contributed to the gradual integration of China's agricultural markets with international markets. In the pre-market-reform period, for example until the 1990s, the nominal protection rate (i.e. the percentage of gap between domestic and international prices for the same quantity) for many agricultural products was either 30% to 80% or -60% to -20%. However, with the advancement of market reforms, by the beginning of 21st century (2002-2005), the domestic agricultural market had largely caught up with the international market and the price gap did not exceed a maximum of 20%. Besides, the reforms had a positive impact on the restructuring of domestic agricultural production and trade. For example, on the one hand, there are growing exports of labor-intensive agricultural products, showing an increase in China's exports of labor; on the other hand, more land-intensive products are imported from outside, which equals the increase in imports of water and soil resources, which are in short supply.

2.- *Challenges and Policies in a New Era*

Although China has entered a new stage in agricultural development since the beginning of the 21st century, some long-accumulated problems are becoming increasingly serious. Among them, the biggest challenges China is faced with in agricultural development are to ensure farmers' income, food security and agricultural sustainability. Firstly, while farmers have seen their incomes grow over the past 40 years, in most times, urban residents' incomes increase even faster, leading to the widening income gap. By 2003, the urban-rural income ratio reached above 3:1 for the first time, and continued to rise in the ensuing years. How to accelerate farmers' income growth and

narrow the rural-urban divide has become the top priority of the central government's rural work since 2004. Secondly, since 2004, China has transformed itself from a net exporter of food into a net importer and its growth of imports was significantly faster than that of exports, with the food self-sufficiency rate falling to 94.5% in 2015. Once again, food security has become a great concern for the government, and another big challenge for agricultural development since the beginning of the 21st century. Thirdly, China has achieved continued rapid growth of agriculture over the past decades at the expense of environmental resources. Many agricultural areas are faced with many challenges such as shrinking groundwater, declining soil fertility, worsening agricultural source pollution, and mounting ecological and environmental pressures. Since the beginning of the 21st century, agricultural sustainability has become a question that must be answered.

In response, the Central Government introduced strong policies and measures from 2004 onwards. The Government's concern for the development of agriculture and rural areas is best reflected in its "No 1 central document", which has been refocused on the issues relating to agriculture, rural areas, and farmers since 2004, with a series of major policies to benefit agriculture and farmers. In terms of ensuring food security and increasing farmers' incomes, the most important policies fall into the following four aspects: (1) the nationwide abolition of agricultural taxes in 2004; (2) the launch of direct agricultural subsidies in 2004, which has been increasing year by year thereafter; (3) the launch of the market-support policies for staple agricultural products in 2004, including the minimum purchase price policy for rice and wheat in 2004, temporary purchase and storage policies for corn, soybeans and rapeseed in 2008, cotton and sugar in 2011 and 2012 respectively; (4) the government's increased financial investment in agriculture and rural areas since the beginning of the 21st century, especially in agricultural infrastructure construction and agricultural science and technology advancement.

There has been much controversy over the actual effect of the market-supporting policy on staple agro-products. While raising farmers' income, the policy has also generated many problems, especially the supply-side structural ones caused by the temporary purchase and storage policies for corn. Firstly, although it boosted corn production, the expansion of corn area reduced the production of soybeans and other agro-products. Second, there was a serious inversion of domestic and foreign prices of corn, with the price gap reaching a peak of over 40% by 2015, which greatly affected the production of downstream industries such as the animal husbandry and corn processing industry. Third, stockpile of corn increased dramatically, with stocks exceeding production for the year at the end of 2015. Fourth, there was a sharp increase in the import of corn substitutes (sorghum, barley, cassava, etc.), with the total import volume reaching around 40 million tons in 2015. Likewise, grain, oil, cotton and sugar crops also encountered similar problems in some period in the past.

In recent years, initial success was achieved in the new round of agricultural reforms. In regard to agricultural subsidies, after a period when the total amount remained largely unchanged from 2012 to 2014, the government began to reduce four types of subsidies in 2015, shifting some of its subsidy spending to optimize production methods and improve productivity. The other three subsidies except for the one for purchasing agricultural machinery were combined into a comprehensive support subsidy in 2016. With respect to agricultural market policies, starting in 2014, the government substituted the temporary purchase and storage policy with the base price policy for soybeans, which was also discarded in 2017. The temporary storage policies for rapeseed and sugar were abolished in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In the case of corn, the government implemented a market reform of "delinking subsidies from prices" in 2016. which had an immediate impact: prices of corn plummeted and production gradually decreased, leading to the narrowing price gap and shrinking imports of all corn

substitutes.

In recent years, the government has made great efforts to promote the sustainable development of agriculture. In terms of water resources, the government has increased funds for constructing water conservancy facilities and promoted demand-side reforms in water pricing and water market construction. In view of arable land resources, the government has practiced the strategy of “sustainable farmland use” and the farmland protection system, and emphasized conservation tillage. As for agricultural technology, the government has put forward the strategy of “innovative application of agricultural technology”, and increased spending on advancement of agricultural science and technology. In terms of environmental protection, the government has carried out the zero-growth plan for chemical fertilizer application by 2020, and promoted environmental improvement and ecological conservation in rural areas. Certainly, these policies and measures will play a positive part in promoting the sustainable development of agriculture.

3.- Major Regulatory Policies on Agro-products

As the main law for agricultural supervision, the Law on the Quality and Safety of Agricultural Products (LQSAP) provides a foundation for the basic oversight system of agricultural products. The revision of LQSAP was approved by the Standing Committee of the State Council on September 1st, 2021. Currently, China’s main regulatory policies for agricultural products include the risk assessment system, the supervision system, the traceability system, and the credit system of agricultural products quality and safety.

3.1. The Risk Assessment System

As a basic legal system launched by LQSAP, the risk assessment system of agricultural product quality and safety is also a common international practice in quality and safety management of agro-products, and is critical to scientific, precise

and whole-process supervision of agricultural product quality and safety. After more than 10 years of development, starting from scratch, China has made positive progress in undertaking agricultural product quality and safety risk appraisal, building its teams, and strengthening its capacities.

3.1.1. Risk assessment teams basically established

In 2007, China set up the 1st National Expert Committee on Quality and Safety Risk Assessment of Agricultural Products, and began to plan risk assessment work from the perspective of top design and academic consultation. The year 2012 saw the establishment of the 2nd Committee to meet actual work demands. Since 2011, 105 professional and regional laboratories of risk assessment at ministerial level and 148 experimental stations have gradually been established and accredited. At present, a scientific, efficient and coordinated system of risk management with a rational layout, orderly division of labor, has been initially formed, with the national institution of quality and safety risk assessment playing the leading role, ministerial-level laboratories as the main body and experimental stations in major production areas as the support. As the system further improves, the talent team in institutes for agri-food standards and testing technology has also grown rapidly, among which 30 provincial academies of agricultural sciences have set up quality standard institutes. There are now 45 different jobs relating to quality safety and nutrition quality assessment in the modern agricultural industrial technology system.

3.1.2. Risk assessment works continuously carried out

From 2011 to 2013, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) organized a mapping exercise to identify potential problems and hazards of agri-food. In 2013, it started a special project on quality and safety risk assessment for agro-pro-

ducts, targeting those with high potential risks, problems and social concerns. The targets were mainly focused on the “vegetable basket” and “rice bag”, covering 17 major areas (vegetables, fruits, citrus, tea, edible mushrooms, grain and oil crops, livestock and poultry products, raw milk, aquatic products, special agro-food, the harvest, storage and transport of agricultural products, environmental factors of product quality and safety, plant growth regulators, pathogenic microorganisms, nutrition evaluation, etc.). In terms of the assessment process, a working procedure has been established, from on-site research, sampling and verification, to result analysis, consultation and judgment, and report preparation. Based on China’s circumstances and agricultural reality, risk assessment tasks can be conducted under a relatively mature and stable working mode, instead of by “touching the stones to cross the river” like before.

3.1.3. High-quality fruits harvested progressively

Through years of risk assessment work, the risk assessment team has initially mapped out the overall situation and risk level of the quality and safety of agro-products in China. A plethora of risk hazards and salient problems have been identified in a timely manner, providing strong support for government supervision. Many standards, protocols and regulations have been formulated, providing scientific guidance for agricultural production. More scientific articles have become accessible, which has greatly raised consumers’ awareness of food safety. At the same time, the risk assessment units harvested a lot of high-quality scientific research fruits, driven by the risk assessment projects. For example, when conducting a follow-up assessment of aflatoxin contamination in peanuts, the oil crops risk assessment team figured out its varieties, distribution mode and dynamic changes. They developed targeted antibodies and highly sensitive detection technologies, produced a series of detection kits and held many invention patents home and abroad. These high-quality, internationally competitive results

have greatly supported the government regulation, industrial development, consumers’ safety and emergency response, and also facilitated the growth of the research team itself.

3.1.4. Quality and safety of agro-products greatly improved

The work of quality and safety risk assessment takes “production” and “management” into account, focusing on the possibility, origin, seriousness and control of the risks. From the perspective of all links, all elements and the whole industrial chain, it has improved the quality and safety level of agro-food and agricultural quality and efficiency. Taking tea exports as an example, there is a demanding international standard of maximum amount of pesticides for certain tea product. Through risk assessment, the team presented scientific residue test data and reports, which promoted the adjustment of the relevant standards by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, contributing to the growth of China’s tea industry.

3.2. The Supervision System

Food safety risk monitoring plays an extremely important role in the global food safety governance system, as an important means for governments to identify potential problems, strengthen law enforcement and oversight, enhance risk prevention and control, protect consumers’ health and promote industrial development. According to the LQSAP, the government has established the food quality monitoring system, and agricultural administrative departments of the governments at or above the county level have formulated and implemented monitoring plans to ensure the quality and safety of local agricultural products. Since 2001, China has carried out routine monitoring of pesticide residues in vegetables and clenbuterol hydrochloride in pigs in five pilot cities, including Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Shouguang, and initiated the Hazard-free Food Action Plan. After 20 years of development, China has established a risk monitoring system in which

product monitoring is the main focus, supplemented by factor monitoring, with ministerial and provincial monitoring as the mainstay, supplemented by city and county monitoring. The establishment of China's agricultural risk monitoring system has greatly helped to improve the quality and safety of agricultural products and protect consumers.

During the regular monitoring and inspection, to make results more scientific, objective and accurate, and use the results more efficiently, six innovative systems have been established and executed: off-site sampling, random sampling, retesting and proficiency testing, analysis and consultation, reporting and notification, and punishment.

To ensure more objective regular monitoring and less possible interference in the sampling and testing, off-site sampling inspection has been practiced since 2004. All quality inspection institutes undertaking regular monitoring tasks do not involve in local inspection but carry out off-site random sampling test, which effectively avoids possible intervention during the working process and ensures the objectivity and impartiality of the monitoring work.

The random sampling system was implemented for regular inspection in monitoring cities, production bases and markets to obtain more representative results. The prefecture-level cities to be monitored each quarter are randomly selected by the sampling system. The quality inspection agency undertaking regular monitoring tasks applies for a list of cities to be monitored three days before the task is carried out. Upon arrival at the city, the sampling inspectors receive a list of production bases and markets within the areas two times larger than its jurisdiction from the agricultural authority, and randomly select monitoring sites from it.

To improve the quality of regular monitoring and get more accurate results, a re-inspection system and a proficiency testing system have been practiced since 2005, with seven re-inspection technical units and three proficiency testing units appointed. After the regular monitoring work, the technical unit carries out on-site inspection and randomly selects a certain proportion of samples

for re-examination to ensure the accuracy of the results. Each year, the proficiency testing units organize all task-bearing units to join inspection capability verifications of pesticide and veterinary medicine residue, and determine whether the unit is qualified for regular monitoring tasks in the following year based on the results.

Since 2009, a regular monitoring results consultation system has been built up to strengthen data research and judgment, situation analysis and information sharing of the results. After the completion of regular monitoring work in the three sectors of plantation, livestock and poultry products and aquatic products, specialists are organized to examine the reliability of the data, the correctness of the results, and make judgment whether the reports and charts are standard and scientific, and point out serious problems, risks and hidden dangers in each sector. The Research Centre for Agricultural Products Quality Standards of the MARA invited technical experts and supervisors to conduct comprehensive analysis and judgment on the monitoring results of the three sectors, analyze in depth the major problems found in the monitoring process, discuss the causes and the pattern of variation in trends, and formulate an analysis report on the results of each quarter, which offers a major prerequisite for determining the focus of quality and safety supervision of agro-products and grasping the overall agricultural development of the country.

For quality and safety problems and potential dangers detected through monitoring, national agricultural departments promptly inform the relevant departments and local departments and urge localities to strengthen quality and safety oversight over agro-food and strictly abide by the regulations on preharvest interval and withdrawal period. For regions with prominent problems, by way of sending compliant letters to provincial governors and notice circulations, local agricultural administrative departments are urged to strengthen safety supervision, seriously investigate and tackle the regions and products with serious problems, and strictly control the entry of substandard agricultural products into the con-

sumption chain to guarantee the safety of agricultural product consumption.

In carrying out their work, regular monitoring units promptly inform local agricultural departments of information on high-risk unqualified samples found through monitoring. The regions concerned immediately conduct supervision and sample survey of problematic products, crack down on the application of prohibited agricultural and veterinary drugs and other illegal acts. Substandard agricultural products are prevented from entering the consumption chain to ensure the safety of agricultural product consumption.

3.3. The Traceability System

3.3.1. Regulations and polices enacted

In 2015, the Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China was amended. In accordance with it, the government established a whole-process safety traceability system for food, and the China Food and Drug Administration, in conjunction with the agricultural departments under the State Council and other relevant departments, developed a collaborative mechanism for the whole-process safety tracing of food. In the same year, the General Office of the State Council issued Opinion on Accelerating the Construction of a Tracing System for Important Products. The system takes the primary responsible entities and traceable management at its core, using traceability codes as a carrier to promote traceability management and market access, thereby realizing the goal of covering the entire journey of agro-products from farm to table. In 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) issued the Announcement of the Ministry of Agriculture on Accelerating the Construction of Quality and Safety Tracing System for Agricultural Products, proposing to strengthen top design and overall arrangement, improve regulations, systems and technical standards, establish a national information platform of quality and safety traceability management, and accelerate the construction of a quality and safety traceability system for agro-

products, which is unified and authoritative, clearly defined, coordinated and efficient. In 2021, under the guidance of the Revision of LQSAP, a whole-process tracking system of the agricultural products quality and safety will be established to guarantee mandatory traceability for high-risk agro-products.

3.3.2. Standards formulated

Along with the quality and safety tracing work, relevant standards have been formulated. At the national level, regulations such as Traceability in the Feed and Food Chain — General Principles and Basic Requirements for System Design and Implementation and Tracing Management Requirements for Food Cold Chain Logistics have been promulgated, and corresponding national standards have been issued specifically for traceability requirements for edible agricultural products such as aquatic products, fruits and vegetables, and tea. As for industrial standards, the MOA, in conjunction with the construction of the tracing system for quality and safety management of aquatic and agricultural products, has issued the General Rules for Quality and Safety Traceability Operation Procedures for Agricultural Products and the tracing procedures for vegetables, fruits, tea, animal meat, grains and aquaculture products. Considering the actual need of building a traceability system for meat and vegetable circulation, the Ministry of Commerce has issued the Coding Rules of the Tracing System for Meat and Vegetable Circulation, and Chinese Herbal Medicine Circulation Tracing System Terminology Specification. At the local level, some provinces and municipalities have also introduced local standards for traceability, such as Hebei's Technical Specification for Origin Traceability for Fruit Quality and Safety, Beijing's Food Traceability Coding Rules for the Olympic Games, and Anhui's General Rules for Traceability Requirements for Agricultural Products. In order to strengthen the guidance and coordination of the standardization of traceability of important products, in 2017, the General

Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, the Ministry of Commerce and other 10 departments jointly issued the Guiding Opinions on Standardizing Major Product Traceability, proposing that by 2020, a unified traceability system for major products should be basically built, featuring mutual synergy, wide coverage, clear focus and reasonable structure.

3.3.3. Supports from departments

The Ministry of Agriculture has established the national quality traceability system in the planting industry, one for animal identification and epidemic diseases, one for aquatic product quality and safety management, and one for agricultural product quality and safety. Based on that, in 2016, the department officially launched the construction of national information platform for agricultural product quality and safety tracing management which features high level of openness, interconnectivity and shared information. Also, special guidance has been issued to ensure that the safety traceability system was built in a unified manner. Up to date, the MOA has been experimenting with the platform in Sichuan, Shandong and Guangdong. Since 2010, the Ministry of Commerce has supported 58 pilot cities on the construction of a traceability system for the circulation of meat and vegetables, and 18 pilot provinces and municipalities for the circulation of Chinese herbal medicines, which has actively promoted the digital management of meat, vegetables and herbal medicines. Since 2016, the State Food and Drug Administration has issued the Opinions on Improving the Traceability System for Food and Drug Production and Operation and the Announcement on Issuing the Several Provisions on the Establishment of the Food Safety Traceability System by Food Production and Operation Enterprises to improve the traceability system.

3.3.4. Implementation in local areas

In response to the actual needs of local supervi-

sion, provinces, like Beijing, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia and Fujian, have all established local quality and safety traceability system of agro-products. Besides, distinctive traceability models have been formed, such as the entity management model in Zhejiang, and the graded and integrity management model in Xiamen. Some provinces and municipalities have also introduced special management measures for quality tracking. For instance, in 2015, Shanghai promulgated the Measures for Food Safety Information Tracing Management, which kept track of information of 10 categories of food and edible agricultural products like grain, livestock products and aquatic products, production process (containing planting, farming and processing), circulation (including sales, storage and transport) and catering service link in this city administrative. In 2017, Fujian Province issued the Measures for Food Safety Information Traceability, which stipulated that the safety information traceability system featuring one code for one product, shall be applied for food and edible agricultural products in this region within the entire process from farm to table.

4.-The Credit System

4.1. Framework of the credit system initially formed

The credit system is the foundation for credit rating work. Hence, it is significant to improve the regulations and evaluation guidelines for building the quality and safety credit system to guide local credit rating work. The MARA has set up a leading group for the construction of the credit system of agricultural product quality and safety, and issued the Guidance on Accelerating the Construction of Credit System of Agricultural Product Quality and Safety, which focuses on agriculture and agricultural product production and sales to promote the construction of the credit system in depth, improve credit information records, strengthen the integrity responsibilities of enterprises and industries,

and establish a sound mechanism for the operation of the credit system. Also, the Notice on the Establishment of Credit Files of Agriculture and Agricultural Products Production and Operation were issued to promote those counties with high-quality agro-products to take the lead in establishing credit files of agriculture and agricultural products production and sales entities. The department drafted regulations, including the Measures for Credit Information Collection of Agricultural Products Quality and Safety, Measures for Application Management of Agricultural Products Quality and Safety Credit Information, and Measures for Agricultural Products Quality and Safety Credit Management, and initially established the institutional framework of the agricultural products quality and safety credit system.

4.2. Quality and safety credit information shared

Promoting credit information collection in an orderly manner is the starting point of credit rating work. In order to accelerate the improvement of credit information collection and sharing in agricultural safety, the MARA has opened a credit channel on its official website for agricultural product quality and safety, and regularly updates credit information such as administrative licenses and penalties to the national credit information sharing platform. As of September 2020, 216,000 pieces of credit information have been shared with the public. The list of the defaulters provided by relevant departments is embedded into the working systems of the comprehensive office in charge of agricultural administrative approval and agricultural financial project management, so that information of defaulted entities can be automatically compared, alerted, intercepted and punished.

4.3. System for punishing dishonesty initially established

For a long time, the problem of “difficulty in punishing” defaulters has been of great concern to the

society and strongly complained by the people. For this, joint punishment measures have been put forward by various ministries and commissions. Specifically, defaulters will get punished in the form of restrictions in setting up financial institutions, engaging in civil and commercial events, enjoying preferential policies and securing important positions. The MARA, together with 29 ministries and commissions including the Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Public Security, signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on Jointly Punishing Seriously Dishonest Production and Distribution Entities and Relevant Personnel in the Field of Agricultural Supplies. Memorandums of joint discipline have also been signed to cooperate with relevant departments regarding defaulting individuals and enterprises. To refine the disciplinary measures for dishonest conduct, the department drafted the Measures for the Management of the Entities of Joint Discipline for Serious Dishonesty in Agricultural Supplies, which clarified the principles of blacklist management, identification criteria, scope of information collection, joint disciplinary measures, as well as the procedures for identification, publication, submission and removal from the blacklist.

4.4. Progress made in credit system trial

In recent years, a number of cities and counties, such as Shanghai Pudong, Shaanxi Ankang, Shandong Feicheng, and industry associations like the China Association of Pesticide Development and Application, have taken the lead in building a credit system for agricultural product quality and safety. To be specific, Shanghai Pudong District Agricultural and Rural Committee has conducted a three-year trial with the credit system of agricultural product quality and safety. Through encouraging credit, evaluating credit scientifically and intelligently, opening credit information to the public and fully utilizing credit, the committee has been optimizing the oversight mode of agricultural product quality and

safety, and building an agricultural zone with the safest products and the most popular area gathering agricultural brands. In addition, Agricultural and Rural Bureau of Ankang City in Shaanxi Province takes agricultural product quality and safety credit system as a powerful grip to strengthen the innovative oversight of agricultural products quality and safety. Through combining big data and intelligent supervision, it has strengthened the supervision of agricultural production and operation entities. A series of systems such as “red, yellow and black” list, rewards for complaint reporting, commending trustworthy and punishing dishonesty have also been established to enhance business entities and industries’ awareness of integrity and responsibility. Consequently, the credit system of agricultural product quality and safety has been established at the city, county and town levels. By fully relying on the intelligent supervision platform, the credit file information platform and the credit service platform for financial inclusion, Agricultural and Rural Bureau of Xiangshan County in Zhejiang Province has broken the data barriers, improved credit management and joint punishment mechanisms, and gradually formed a credit oversight model featuring subject coverage, scientific evaluation, dynamic supervision and incentive plus punishment.

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural policies always take a grand debut as the first legal document issued by the Communist Party of China for many years. The arable land minimum of 300 million acres is a red line that any local government cannot break for whatever the reason, even though the population is declining. Market-oriented reform is the biggest challenge for the transition from an ancient planning system to a modern market-oriented one. The state government puts a lot of efforts in combining the segmented local markets into a uniform, nationwide market and encouraging international trading to fulfill its promise when being a WTO player. In the new era, the new policies are designed to protect rural income, food security and agricultural sustainability.

A risk management system shall be well established to guarantee the safety and quality for agricultural products, which needs a competent, cooperative team, continuous monitoring and evaluation of products, high-quality academic and practical work products and a visible improvement on safety and quality management.

China is exploring an effective monitoring system on agricultural safety, and government agencies at provincial level take a primary role on product and hazard potential monitoring. A major direction

of effort is to obtain reliable data, and local governments utilizes cross-province check, random inspection, re-checking system, panel analysis, reporting and sanction measures to guarantee food safety and secure accurate data.

A farm to table safety commitment requires an advanced traceability system, and agricultural product is a priority. The goal is to set up a national platform, develop standards, enable technologies and reach a consensus on its value. Plenty of standards have been made covering cold-chain food, seafood, fruits, tea leaf, meat, poultry, grain etc., and among all of them, some are mandatory rules including safety parameters but others are about quality, coding or terms. China Ministry of Agriculture is working with the state AMR/FDA on legal and institutional improvement, and at the same time, encourages provincial governments to make local rules given the diversity in culture, economy and technology.

Da molti anni le politiche agricole hanno un ruolo centrale all'interno delle scelte del Partito Comunista Cinese. Mantenere in coltivazione almeno 300 milioni di acri di terra (un acro corrisponde a circa 4.046 mq.) è una linea rossa che i governi locali non possono oltrepassare per alcuna ragione, anche se la popolazione è in declino. La riforma orientata al mercato è la sfida maggiore per il passaggio dal precedente sistema di pianificazione risalente a uno moderno orientato al mercato. Il governo statale si impegna a fondo per collocare in un mercato nazionale uniforme i mercati locali, tra loro segmentati, e favorisce il commercio internazionale per mantenere gli impegni assunti quale protagonista della WTO. Nella nuova era, le nuove politiche mirano a proteggere il reddito degli agricoltori, la sicurezza ali-

mentare (food security) e la sostenibilità delle attività agricole.

All'interno di questa prospettiva è necessario un sistema di gestione del rischio ben definito, finalizzato a garantire la sicurezza e la qualità dei prodotti agricoli, che ha necessità di strutture di controllo competenti e cooperative, monitoraggio e valutazione continui, contributi scientifici di elevato livello, e di un miglioramento visibile della sicurezza e della gestione della qualità.

La Cina sta sperimentando un efficace sistema di monitoraggio sulla sicurezza agricola (agricultural safety) e le agenzie governative a livello provinciale hanno un ruolo primario nel monitoraggio dei prodotti e dei potenziali pericoli. Uno dei principali obiettivi è quello di ottenere dati affidabili, e i governi locali utilizzano controlli interprovinciali, ispezioni casuali, sistemi di riconrollo, analisi di panel, rapporti e misure sanzionatorie per garantire la sicurezza alimentare e dati accurati.

Un impegno per la sicurezza dai campi alla tavola richiede un sistema di tracciabilità avanzato e il prodotto agricolo costituisce una priorità centrale in questo sistema. L'obiettivo è quello di creare una piattaforma nazionale, sviluppare standard, abilitare tecnologie e raggiungere un consenso sul suo valore. Sono stati elaborati molti standard, che riguardano alimenti della catena del freddo, frutti di mare, frutta, foglie di tè, carne, pollame, cereali ecc. Alcuni di questi standard sono cogenti, ivi inclusi i parametri di sicurezza (safety), ma altri riguardano la qualità, la classificazione o la comunicazione nel mercato.

Il Ministero dell'Agricoltura cinese sta lavorando con l'AMR/FDA statale per il miglioramento del quadro di riferimento disciplinare ed istituzionale e, allo stesso tempo, incoraggia i governi provinciali ad introdurre regole locali, considerata la diversità di culture, economia e tecnologia.