

## East China unique bean curd popular overseas

Despite the Spring Festival holiday, workers in a flavoring company in eastern China's Zhejiang Province continue to package their fermented bean curd products.

The preserved bean curd, or "furu" in Chinese, is a traditional flavoring for food. Red or white in color, the unique fermented bean curd in Shaoxing city started being exported more than a century ago.

Last year, Shaoxing exported 1,233 tonnes of fermented bean curd products with a total value of 2.86 million U.S. dollars, up 11.6 percent and 11.3 percent respectively. Hong Kong is the major importer, while Europe and North America are emerging markets.

With soybeans the main material, the traditional craft of Shaoxing fermented bean curd has a set of complicated procedures and strict requirements on temperature and humidity in production. Large bean curd pieces for export need to be sealed in pots for one to two years for post-fermentation.

"A local yellow rice wine is used in the process, contributing to the special flavor," said Xie Xiaoben, deputy general manager of Xianheng Foodstuff in Shaoxing.

"No nitrite is produced during the processing," Xie added, dispelling concerns.

The basic processing craft for fermented bean curd has not changed much in a century.

"More and more westerners like the bean curd," said Ren Mingxing, an entry-exit inspection and quarantine official in Shaoxing.

There has never been any food safety problem with the exported bean curd, which has won overseas trust for Chinese products, according to Ren.

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## edges – Andy McDonald

**Andy**

**McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary**, commenting on reports that reforms to the rail fare system will be trialled this May, said:

"It's welcome news that simplifying fares will be trialled but it is clear that this is just tinkering around the edges.

"Privatised rail has created a fragmented system with a jumble of operators offering a complicated array of fares for passengers to navigate.

"Passengers don't want to shop around for tickets, they want to get from A to B for the cheapest price. This is why Labour will bring our railways back into public ownership, creating an integrated national network with simple and affordable fares for all."

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## Jurassic Coast map drains the sea to reveal geology

Scientists from the British Geological Survey (BGS) and University of Southampton have published a seamless onshore-offshore bedrock geology map of the eastern half of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

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## Press release: Charity payment after water company permit breach

The Environment Agency has accepted an Enforcement Undertaking which will see Northumbrian Water pay £375,000 to charities in the North East after it breached environmental permitting regulations.

The offer also includes actions for Northumbrian Water to improve its operations and infrastructure.

It follows a sewage pollution incident involving West Wylam pumping station,

investigated by the Environment Agency on 18 February 2015.

A blockage upstream of the pumping station resulted in raw sewage overflowing into Park Burn, a tributary of the River Tyne, breaching its permit.

Investigations showed significant water quality impact at Park Burn, with sewage odour and litter visible, and ammonia and suspended solid levels above accepted levels. Surveys indicated there had been no significant impact on the invertebrate population in the burn, and there was no impact on the Tyne, due to the river size and flow of the river.

Northumbrian Water carried out an immediate clean-up of the polluted area after it was reported to them.

## **Wide range of measures**

The Environment Agency is making better use of the wide range of measures that are available to bring sites back into compliance as quickly as possible. Along with prosecutions, it uses enforcement notices, stop notices and civil sanctions to either improve performance or stop sites from operating.

The Environment Agency's use of civil sanctions is in line with recent legislation extending their availability for more offences.

Civil sanctions such as these can be a proportionate and cost-effective way for businesses to make amends for less serious environmental offences. The company must offer to restore or remediate the harm caused by the incident, and demonstrate they will change their behaviour and ensure future compliance with legislation.

## **Proportionate response**

Fiona Morris, Environment Manager with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

We will always take forward prosecutions in the most serious cases and while we did initially consider prosecution, the company submitted an EU which we subsequently accepted.

We felt it to be a more proportionate response that would benefit the environment – achieving more than if the company had been convicted and fined.

We work hard to protect people and the environment, and a clear regulatory framework with agreed standards and targets has helped to drive major environmental improvements over the last few decades.

We're continuing to improve our approach to ensure that we remain a fair and proportionate regulator.

The actions offered in the accepted EU, require Northumbrian Water to:

- Make donations to Tyne Rivers Trust (£134,500), Northumberland Rivers Trust (£59,500), Wear Rivers Trust (£48,500), Tees Rivers Trust (£58,500).
- Make a donation of £74,000 to Groundwork towards the Land of Oak and Iron Project.
- Make improvements to site operations and infrastructure, including updated sewerage records, an updated process for asset planning and management and refurbishment of West Wylam pumping station, as well as an accelerated programme of planned upgrades to sewer infrastructure in the area.
- Further inspections and surveys of the impacted area.
- Pay Environment Agency costs.

Failure to comply with an EU may result in the offender being prosecuted for the original offence.

[See the full list of the most recent enforcement undertakings](#)

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## **John McDonnell MP responds to Resolution Foundation Report**

**John**

**McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor**, commenting in the Resolution Foundation report out today, which shows that Britain is on course for the biggest increase in inequality since Thatcher, said:

"This report is damning of the unfair economic policies of this Chancellor, as the gap between working families and a wealthy few gets wider, with the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer. It demonstrates to us all once again that the economy under a Tory government will be rigged for those at the top, with poor and middle income households facing their worst Parliament for income growth since the 1960s.

"Labour called on the Government at the Autumn Statement to end the unfair cuts to in work benefits, whilst they were going ahead with tax giveaways to a wealthy minority, but Philip Hammond chose to carry on with the work of his predecessor.

"It is becoming clearer by the day that working families will be forced to pay for a Tory Brexit that favours the rich

and not the rest of us, as our country faces its biggest rise in inequality since Margaret Thatcher.

“The next Labour government would rewrite the rules of our economy in favour of working families, with a real living wage expected to be £10 an hour by 2020, and proper investment to ensure no one and no community is left behind.”