[China sees first drop in number of impoverished counties](#)

With 28 counties casting off poverty this year, China shortened its list of poorest counties for the first time in more than 30 years, a concrete step toward delivering on the country's goal of completely eliminating poverty by 2020.

An anti-poverty official said Wednesday that 26 more counties will soon announce their withdrawal from the list after Lankao and Jinggangshan had the "impoverished" label removed at the beginning of the year.

Southwest China's Chongqing and Tibet and northwest China's Xinjiang each saw five counties removed from the list of the poorest. The rest come from regions including Hebei, Henan and Jiangxi.

Xia Gengsheng of the Leading Group Office on Poverty Alleviation and Development under the State Council said that since the first group of 331 poorest counties was included on the list in 1986, the number had been on the rise.

Although some areas managed to rid themselves of poverty, more fell into the impoverished category.

A county can be removed from the list if less than 2 percent of its population lives below the poverty line, defined as a per capita annual income of 2,300 yuan (348 U.S. dollars) at 2010 prices. In western regions, counties must have less than 3 percent of people living in poverty to be removed from the list.

At the end of 2016, there were 832 impoverished county-level regions across China.

Xia said the 28 counties went through rigorous evaluation, including assessments from third-party institutions and then examination by both central and local governments.

"Another 100 or so counties filed withdrawal applications this year," Xia said.

But removal from the list does not mean poverty relief efforts will fade away, according to Xia, who promised continued favorable policies, subsidies and financial support to ensure stable development of those areas in the transition period.

Poverty reduction has been high on the government's agenda and various means have been adopted, including e-commerce, relocation and improved infrastructure.

More than 60 million people have been lifted out of poverty in the past five

years in China, with the percentage of the country's population in poverty dropping from 10.2 to less than 4.

The country aims to eradicate poverty by 2020 by lifting the remaining 55 million rural poor out of poverty.