

China scientists develop diseases and insects resistant rice

A new rice variety, developed with genome-wide breeding chip technology, will be grown in northeast China's Helongjiang Province, China National Seed Group announced Saturday.

The new variety is expected to be the first disease and insect resistant, and high-yield rice in the country, the company said at the signing ceremony with Rongzhong Capital Investment Group in Wuhan city, central China's Hubei Province.

"The use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers have caused environmental and food safety problems," said Zhang Qifa with Chinese Academy of Sciences. "But the genome-wide chip helps develop a new variety to cope with the problem."

In May 2012, scientists from China National Seed Group, Peking University and Huazhong Agricultural University selected more than 40,000 useful gene markers in countless gene data and developed the first genome-wide breeding chip in the world.

"It helped to improve the diseases and insects resistance of the current rice variety," said Zhou Fasong, leading scientist at China National Seed Group. "We have been identifying the genes in the past five years, and recently finally developed the new breed."

The new rice variety will be cultivated in Heilongjing Province in April.

China unveils first strategic plan for territory development



Farmers are seen busy working on farmland as the plowing and sowing season comes along, in Yongning County, northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Feb. 29, 2016. (Xinhua/Wang Peng) (File photo)

China has issued its first strategic plan for territory development and preservation, outlining the protection of arable land reserves and islands.

The plan, issued by the State Council Saturday, demands the retaining of 1.825 billion mu (about 121 million hectares) of arable land by 2030 and reiterates the red-line of holding 1.865 billion mu by 2020.

Urban areas must occupy no greater space than 116,700 sq km by 2030, according to the plan.

The timetable also suggested that the country create 1.2 billion mu of high-standard farmland and bring an additional 940,000 sq km of eroded soil under control.

China, the world's third largest country by size, has a landmass of 9.6 million sq km and nearly 3 million sq km of maritime area.

The plan calls for enhanced restoration of ecology on the nation's islands, serving as base points of territorial sea and the environment-friendly development of uninhabited islands.

It also said that infrastructures on islands with development plans, and remote ones, must be improved as a major task in protecting the natural resources and environment of islands.

The plan said that development of tourism projects on remote islands would be encouraged, and the ocean economy would own a greater share of the country's growth.

China will establish 10 to 20 demonstration zones during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020) to test ocean economy policies, according to the country's top economic planner.

By 2030, the country will get closer to becoming a maritime power given its enhanced ability in oceanic development and protection, according to the plan.

The nation had more than 11,000 islands by the end of 2015, with Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong having the largest number, according to the State Oceanic Administration survey.

Since 2010, the nation repaired damaged islands with 3.6 billion yuan (about 525 million U.S. dollars) from the central budget, 2.6 billion yuan from the local budget and 300 million yuan from enterprises, in a total of 169 projects.

The plan also envisions better water quality in the country's rivers and lakes, so that 75 percent of water in major drainage basins is of good quality by 2030.

China's Tianjin issues air pollution alert

North China's Tianjin Municipality issued a yellow alert for air pollution and activated emergency response measures on Saturday.

According to the city's environmental protection bureau, the Air Quality Index (AQI) reading passed 200 around noon, with the PM2.5 reading exceeding 150 micrograms per cubic meter.

Emergency measures included banning heavy trucks in the downtown area and suspending dusty construction site work.

The bureau said that increased coal consumption, unfavorable weather conditions and fireworks were to blame for the smog.

The smog will disperse Sunday, the bureau said.

Beijing, which is adjacent to Tianjin, issued a blue alert for air pollution on Friday.

Hangzhou, a city in east China's Zhejiang Province, which banned fireworks displays in its six main districts, reported improved air quality over the Spring Festival week.

On midnight Jan. 28, the Lunar New Year's Eve, the traditional time to set off fireworks, the PM2.5 density was 42 micrograms per cubic meter, the lowest in five years.

China takes fight against child abduction online

China's Ministry of Public Security announced Saturday that 611 missing children were found last year, following the launch of an app in May.

During the period, 648 updates on missing children were posted. Of the 611, 27 had been abducted and 358 had run away from home, according to the ministry.

A new version of the platform that went live in November has expanded its reach through cooperation with other popular mobile apps, such as Amap, Taobao, Baidu, QQ and Didi Chuxing.

Users near where a child disappears receive push notifications, including photos and descriptions. The scope of these push notifications will be expanded over time.

China's grain heartland cultivates more high-yield fields

Central China's Henan Province added 7.55 million mu (around 500,000 hectares) of high-yield farmland in 2016, as the grain base modernizes its agriculture, according local officials on Saturday.

The province, which produces a tenth of China's grain, plans to upgrade 63.69 million mu of farmland by 2020, according to the local high-yield grainfield office.

So far, about 53.57 million mu has been upgraded to high-yield, 84.1 percent of the overall target. In 2016, the provincial government spent 9.94 billion yuan (1.44 billion U.S. dollars) on the project.

Agricultural machinery and professional fertilizing methods are used to support the endeavor.

The province also established an information system which contains information on location of the fields and agricultural knowledge enquiry points, soil conditions and meteorological conditions.