

'Year of Pulses' closes with call to build on strong momentum among farmers, private sector – UN

10 February 2017 – Although the International Year of Pulses has helped raise awareness globally of the many benefits of pulses, such as beans, lentils and chickpeas, gains must be further strengthened to achieve the international community's new development goals, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said today.

"It is essential to maintain the momentum," FAO's Deputy Director-General Maria-Helena Semedo told the Year's official closing ceremony today, which was hosted by Burkina Faso, according to a news release.

Realizing that pulses – defined as edible dried seeds of plants in the legume family – are "small but powerful allies" in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN General Assembly designated 2016 as the International Year and nominated FAO to lead implementation.

Since the Year's launch, connections have been fostered among key actors from farmers' organizations to the private sector to facilitate information exchange and policy dialogue on the production, trade and consumption of pulses.

Leaders in policy and research have tackled the top pulse issues at several international forums, and national committees have been established. A technical pulses database was created, a cookbook featuring recipes from international chefs was published, and the official multilingual website, with over half a million visits, promoted a rich array of information on pulses.

Though the Year has now officially closed, there has been a sound call to keep the momentum alive and continue activities beyond 2016.

"Training programmes on the value of pulses should be supported, particularly for schoolchildren, farmers and extension workers. Policies and programmes should focus more on pulse producers, particularly small-holder farmers and young people," Ms. Semedo said, noting that FAO will carry on working with stakeholders from governments to family farmers to promote pulses.

Pulses are packed with minerals such as iron, zinc and folate and have been an important part of diets around the world for centuries.

Pulses are a valuable ingredient in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

The plants contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. They add

large amounts of beneficial nitrogen to the soil and require little fertilizer. Growing pulses with other crops enhances soil fertility, improves both crops' yields, and contributes to a more sustainable food system.

In addition, pulses have a very low water footprint compared to other protein sources, can be grown in very poor soils, and help reduce the risk of soil erosion and depletion. For poor farmers, growing pulses contributes to stable livelihoods, additional income and improved nutrition.

Burkina Faso's President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, said: "To better cope with the triple problem of soil fertility management, reducing the adverse effects of climate change and the issue of food security, producing and consuming pulses is a great opportunity, especially for the most vulnerable people."

Overall, global pulse production has been slowly but steadily increasing. In 2014, global production reached 77 million tonnes, up 21 million metric tonnes since 2001.

[Over 1,600 crocodile skins seized in S. China](#)



Crocodile skins seized by coast guards are on show in Fangchenggang City, South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Feb. 7, 2017. [Photo: China News Service/ Wang Lidan]

More than 1,600 pieces of crocodile skins and 500 kilograms of what appears to be crocodile meat were seized in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, coast guards said Thursday.

During a patrol Tuesday, a group of coast guards boarded a boat around 3 a.m., which was carrying a number of large polystyrene boxes. Upon inspection, the boxes contained what appeared to be 1,609 crocodile skins, each around 1.4 meters long, and 506 kilograms of crocodile meat.

The boat and its owner have been detained. A suspect caught said he was hired by a buyer in the city to receive the goods from a port in Vietnam.

Crocodiles are under state protection in China and are also classed as endangered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Crocodile skin is the upmarket of consumer goods because of its small quantities and luxurious quality. The smuggling of alligator skins is emerging as the high-end leather market flourishes.

Crocodile skins are often used for luxury handbags.

The investigation continues.

[Jail sentences for selling data on 200,000 newborns](#)

Eight people involved in stealing, selling and buying information of more than 200,000 newborns have been sentenced for infringing citizens' personal information.

The Pudong New Area People's Court said yesterday that the defendants included two former employees of the city's Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The eight were sentenced from seven to 27 months, and were ordered to pay penalties ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 yuan (US\$290 to US\$730).

One of the accused, surnamed Han, 41, was working in the city-level Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and another surnamed Zhang, 50, was working for the district-level authority. In 2014, Zhang persuaded Han to steal information of newborns from the center's database to help his friend promote infant health products, promising a commission fee.

From the beginning of 2014 to July last year, Han illegally downloaded the information from the system and sent the details to Zhang via e-mail twice a month. Each time information on about 5,000 newborns was given. Zhang then sold the information to another of the accused, surnamed Fan, who was in the infant health products business. According to the court, Han, Zhang and Fan stole personal information on more than 200,000 newborns.

Moreover, Fan sold more than 250,000 pieces of information to another of the defendants, surnamed Li, who sold on the information to two of the accused, surnamed Huang and Wang. All three were also involved in infant health products. Wang's ex-driver, surnamed Wu, also stole information of more than 70,000 newborns.

All eight confessed their guilt to the court, returned their illegal income and paid the penalties imposed.

[Shanghai ranks No. 4 of world's top-30 cities](#)

Shanghai is the highest of five Chinese mainland cities at No. 4 in the list of the world's 30 most dynamic cities, according to the Global City Momentum Index released Thursday by real estate services provider JLL.

Beijing, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Nanjing are the other four Chinese cities that appeared in the fourth annual list, ranking 15th, 22nd, 26th and 29th, respectively, according to the index, which monitors 134 major business hubs across the world and tracks the rate of change of a city's economy and commercial real estate market.

The most dynamic cities are able to embrace technological change, absorb rapid population growth and strengthen global connectivity, JLL said.

"Shanghai has strong ambitions to continue its growth and explicitly aims to become a global center for both financial services and technological innovation," said Joe Zhou, head of research for JLL China.

"For now, Shanghai's real estate market remains one of the world's most dynamic markets, with strong demand being driven by the growth of domestic firms."

Asian cities made up half of the top 10, with Bangalore in India replacing London to take the top spot for the first time.

"Our research showed that the Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the globe's 30 most dynamic cities and real estate markets, highlighting the rise of commercial cities such as Bangalore and Ho Chi Minh City as major hubs of commerce," said Megan Walters, head of research for Asia Pacific at JLL.

41.2 pct of Chinese hold urban hukou in 2016

China's registered permanent urban residents rose to 41.2 percent of the total population in 2016, after easing of "hukou" (household registration) policy, the Ministry of Public Security announced Thursday.

In 2015, only 39.9 percent of the population held urban status and the current urbanization drive is aiming for 45 percent by 2020.

At a video conference held on Thursday, the ministry of public security called for a more reasonable points system and for registration in most cities for students and migrant workers to become easier still.

The government is gradually bringing the unregistered population into the hukou system, including orphans, second children born illegally during the one-child policy and the homeless.

Last year, more than 1.43 million people formerly without hukou were registered, the ministry said.

Various benefits such as health care and education are based on hukou, and are supposed to be in line with long-term places of work and residence.