

CHINA

Summer output of grains hits record high

By YANG WANLI
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China's summer grain output reached a historic high of 142.8 million metric tons this year despite the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the National Bureau of Statistics revealed on Wednesday.

Compared with 2019, this year's summer grain output witnessed an increase of 1.2 million tons, according to a statement released by the bureau on its website.

"The bumper harvest laid a solid foundation for this year's food supply, which gives us strong confidence in our goal to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects and win the battle against poverty," said Li Suoqiang, director of the bureau's rural affairs.

While the total area used to grow summer crops declined 0.7 percent year-on-year to 26.1 million hectares this year, the statement said the average output from each hectare of crops rose 1.6 percent, leading to the overall output increase.

Li explained that the decline in crop area is due to the adjustment of planting structure. A change in market demand led some regions to plant more vegetables instead of grain crops, he said.

1.6 percent

Year-on-year increase of the average output of summer crops per hectare this year

Moreover, Li said farmers, especially those living in the North China Plain, are encouraged to let their land lie fallow for a better harvest next year, further contributing to the decreased total area for summer crops.

Although the area declined, the average output from each hectare of crops increased thanks to good weather conditions before the summer, Li said.

Also, early surveillance and prevention work on possible losses caused by pests and crop diseases boosted the bumper harvest, according to Li.

"Facing challenges such as labor shortages because workers were advised to stay at home during the epidemic, we strengthened efforts on field management and the transfer of agricultural supplies," he said.

"On the whole, we haven't seen any big impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on grain production this summer," he added.

Summer grain is the first season of China's annual grain production, which accounts for more than a fifth of the annual grain output.

In May, Han Changfu, minister of agriculture and rural affairs, said China will not suffer a food crisis despite the ongoing pandemic due to a sufficient domestic supply.

He said China has had good grain harvests for more than a decade, and annual production of grain has remained at above 650 million tons for five years.

In June, Vice-Premier Hu Chunhua called for unremitting efforts to promote agricultural production and strive to accomplish the annual target of securing a bumper harvest.

He urged smoothing channels for procuring summer wheat and rice, and solving problems in this regard, including issues with funding and storage.

Hu also stressed promoting the construction of modern agricultural facilities and consolidating the foundations of securing stable production and supply of major agricultural products while strengthening any weak area in this regard.

Wang Xiaodong contributed to this story.

Stretching out



Art students prepare before they perform for judges at the Shandong University of Arts in Jinan, Shandong province, on Tuesday. More than 3,600 candidates applied for the university's School of Dance, and about 700 of them passed the initial online selection process and proceeded to the face-to-face test at the university. Only those who excel in both the art test and the national entrance examination, or *gaokao*, will be admitted to the university. HUANG ZHONGMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

First Yangtze porpoise born in captivity released into the wild

By YANG WANLI
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The world's first Yangtze finless porpoise bred in captivity was recently released into the wild, and follow-up tracking will identify whether it can survive, experts revealed.

The 4-year-old female mammal, named Bei Bei, was released last week into the Tian'ezhou National Nature Reserve in Shishou, Hubei province, according to Hao Yujiang, an expert from the Institute of Hydrobiology under Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Bei Bei had been reared in a net cage purpose-built within the reserve. Her parents are two wild Yangtze finless porpoises, one of whom was injured in 2008 by ice in the Tian'ezhou oxbow, an old 21-kilometers course of the Yangtze River, and was rescued by researchers from the reserve.

The Yangtze finless porpoise is one of the very few porpoise species that live in fresh water. Scientific research on the species released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in 2018 shows that its population was just 1,012 — fewer than the giant panda.

In 1990, the institute initiated the conservation of the species outside its natural habitat. Currently, there are more than 80 wild finless porpoises living in the oxbow.

According to Hao, researchers have successfully released two Yangtze finless porpoises that had been rescued. One was a Yangtze finless porpoise name A Bao, who was born in the wild, raised in captivity in the institute for seven years and sent back to the wild in 2011.

"A Bao now has a big family, with 10 grandchildren and at least two great-grandchildren," Hao said.

However, the training for Bei Bei is more challenging as she had no experience in the wild, according to Hao. Before her release, she received about two months of training aimed at helping her adapt.

"Weighing about 60 kilograms, Bei Bei is going to be mature sexually. To release her to the wild now is very important because it will



An animal worker feeds Bei Bei with frozen fish in a net cage purpose-built within Tian'ezhou National Nature Reserve in 2018. DING ZELIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

help her to mate successfully," Hao said.

Training therefore plays a crucial role in the process. According to Hao, researchers had helped her get used to the taste of fresh fish and taught her to catch them.

"It was difficult at the very beginning as she was used to the taste of frozen food. Sometimes, she was irritated and flew into a rage," he said.

Moreover, the net cage she used to live in at the reserve was replaced by an open-water area covering 20,000 square meters that was surrounded by nets.

"It will help familiarize her with the water environment in the wild," Hao said.

The Yangtze finless porpoise is found in the main Yangtze River channel in central and eastern China and in two lakes, Dongting and Poyang, which are naturally connected to the river. The porpoise's small size and cute 'smile' make it a much-loved animal in China and beyond.

Over the past 40 years, the porpoise's numbers have declined dramatically due to, among other factors, climate change and habitat loss, according to Zhang Xinqiao, senior program manager of the World Wide Fund for Nature in China.

However, he said the population of the species has shown stability in recent years as a result of joint protection from government organs, research institutes and other social organizations.

According to the institute, researchers from the reserve will monitor Bei Bei and help her if nec-

essary, and data collected on her will be constructive to breeding research and conservation of the species.

"The release was an important step to save this endangered animal. Whether it can be successfully done will provide data and experiences to the artificial breeding of the species, which will further contribute to its protection," Zhang said.

On Monday, Hao said workers in the reserve have noticed an animal, which looks "very like" Bei Bei, at a spot about 1 km from the net cage where she used to live.

The finless porpoise and the Baiji dolphin (Yangtze River dolphin), both members of the cetacea family and the only two mammals in the Yangtze, were designated as "critically endangered" on the red list of threatened species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2013.

However, in 2006 the Baiji dolphin was declared functionally extinct, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature. The destruction of the dolphin's food supply, which was mainly the result of overfishing, was central to its extinction.

The finless porpoise is widely believed to be an important indicator of the ecology of the Yangtze, which stretches over 6,300 km and boasts rich and complex terrains and climates along its basin and has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world.

Data showed that there are more than 4,300 kinds of aquatic life living in the Yangtze River Basin, including more than 400 types of fish.

In April, the country released a guideline on improving sewage treatment through the use of price leverage to improve the prevention and control of water pollution in the Yangtze.

To further preserve biodiversity along the river, China also began a 10-year fishing moratorium from the beginning of this year in 332 conservation areas in the Yangtze River Basin, which will be expanded to all the natural waterways of the country's longest river and its major tributaries no later than Jan 1.

with a huge economic loss. Dowden said the move would delay the rollout of 5G in Britain by two to three years at a cost of 2 billion pounds.

Chi Onwurah, shadow digital minister for the opposition Labour Party, said that the government's handling of Huawei had created a "car crash for the digital economy, but one that would have been visible from outer space".

In the first quarter of 2020,

China strives to aid fishermen after river ban

Authorities aim to help anglers find new jobs after fishing moratorium imposed

By WANG XIAOYU
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China is ramping up efforts to identify fishermen who give up their boats and nets in compliance with a fishing ban along the Yangtze River, and is devising targeted plans to assist them in relocating and finding new jobs.

To reverse the deteriorating ecosystem and biodiversity of the Yangtze River — whose bountiful aquatic resources have been severely depleted due to intense human activities — China has imposed a 10-year fishing moratorium in 332 conservation areas along the river since the beginning of this year.

The ban will be expanded to all natural waterways and major tributaries of the river, as well as large lakes connected to it no later than Jan 1, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

To achieve the goal, authorities must make sure all fishermen are redeployed to other sectors by the end of this year, Vice-Minister Yu Kangzhen said during a news conference held by the State Council Information Office on Wednesday.

"The scale of the ban is unprecedented as it affects more than 100,000 fishing boats and nearly 300,000 fishermen," he said. "So far, close to 80,000 boats and 100,000 fishermen have been withdrawn, and some regions, including Shanghai municipality and Jiangxi and Yunnan provinces, have finished their tasks in advance."

Yu said uneven preparedness for a full ban along the river has added pressure to the goal, and one major issue is inaccurate and incomplete information on fishermen.

"An inspection conducted this March shows that some areas have failed to set up standard files, precisely detect affected fishermen or release relevant information to the public adequately. If these basics are murky, it will be hard to continue with subsequent work," he said.

To solve the issue, local authorities are now required to close loopholes and confirm relevant information, including fishermen's family backgrounds and employment preferences, by visiting each household, according to Yu.

"The update of the database will be completed by the end of this month. Starting on Aug 1, the system will be locked and used as a reference for rolling out future policies

in terms of allocating compensation and social security plans, among other assistance programs," he said.

On July 8, the State Council released a notice that urges intensified efforts to enforce the fishing ban. The document highlights the significance of ensuring the livelihoods of former fishermen in its river basin.

Song Xin, deputy director of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security's employment promotion department, said during the news conference that redeployment of former fishermen is difficult as most of them are not young and have few other skills. The COVID-19 epidemic also worsens their prospects.

The ministry will thus put forward a slew of employment options based on their specialties and aspirations, he said.

"Former fishermen dexterous in trawling will be enlisted to help develop related industries such as rice-fish farming, aquatic products processing and leisure fishing," he said.

"Those who are willing to switch to new jobs will be introduced to work in nearby enterprises, factories or agricultural businesses. Vocational training and guidance will also be held on a large scale."

Entrepreneurship is also encouraged. Incubator bases related to the fishery industry will be supported, and former fishermen who launch startups that operate for longer than a set period will be rewarded with a one-time subsidy, he added.

For the older and long-unemployed group, local governments should propose one-on-one assistance plans and guide them to take part in patrol work.

Yu, the vice-minister, added that many fishermen depending on the Yangtze River have been living in destitute conditions for a long time due to dwindling fish stocks.

"Freshwater fish products from the Yangtze River used to account for as much as 60 percent of the nationwide total, but nowadays the river only supplies less than 100,000 metric tons of the 63 million tons produced each year across the country," he said.

"Therefore, forbidding fishing in its river basin is not only meant to revive the battered ecosystem, but also to break the vicious cycle and achieve long-term benefits for fishermen," he said.

Arctic bound



Research icebreaker *Xuelong 2*, or *Snow Dragon 2*, prepares to set sail on Wednesday from its home port in Shanghai for its first Arctic expedition. China's second icebreaker — and its first domestically built — is scheduled for a mission that will last more than two months. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Huawei: Company's future in United Kingdom now 'politicized'

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Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry advocacy group, called it a lose-lose decision. Huawei has been in the UK for two decades, and it has made a large investment in the nation.

Last month, Huawei received government approval to build a 1 billion pound (\$1.26 billion)

research facility in the UK. Officials said the facility has been envisaged as the international headquarters of the company's fiber optic communication business.

Ed Brewster, a spokesman for Huawei UK, said after Tuesday's decision, "Regrettably our future in the UK has become politicized. This is about US trade policy and not security."

The UK government conceded that the Huawei ban will come

Huawei held its position as the world's largest telecom gear maker, with a market share of 35.7 percent, followed by Ericsson and Nokia, according to market research company Dell'Oro.

The ranking came despite Washington's intensified push to persuade its allies to ban Huawei.

Philippe de Backer, federal minister for telecom in Belgium, said on Tuesday that Huawei will not be banned from Belgium's 5G

networks, according to reports from The Brussels Times.

Deutsche Telekom, Europe's largest telecom carrier, also said in a statement last week that it's committed to a multivendor strategy and that it buys from a large number of different manufacturers including Huawei.

Zhou Jin contributed to this story.

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