

CHINA'S FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SAFETY

Jane DU

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Executive Summary

1. In January 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the implementation of the “strictest” measures to ensure food safety of the public; Xi considered it “a major test of the governing ability to give Chinese people a satisfactory explanation on food safety”. He reiterated the issue again in March 2016 at the annual session of the National People’s Congress.
2. China’s food security has metamorphosed into a much more complex set of challenges. First is the elimination of hunger and undernourishment, which still affect well over 100 million people in China. The ability of Chinese agriculture to fulfil food self-sufficiency remains a core challenge for the 13th Five-Year Plan (FYP).
3. Second is the changing dietary, from a semi-vegetarian to an animal-product-dominant diet, of the Chinese population, raising the need for animal feed and the grain sector to increase feed grain supply, mainly maize. Such needs have crowded out other food crops in the sown area, with a shrinking acreage devoted to rice and wheat.
4. To protect the supply of feed grain for dietary transition while taking into account the basic needs for grain rations, the government is contemplating measures to restrict all other industrial use of grain. A re-emphasis on the “red-line” for arable land allocated for major staple food crops is once again expected to be stressed and strictly followed.
5. Third is improving food safety, which has newly emerged as a priority goal in recent food policies. The Chinese government has committed to implementing effective and timely measures to address food safety problems through monitoring and legislative mandates.

6. The passing of the 2009 Food Safety Law is a policy response to the 2008 “melamine incident”. A major revision to this law was recently adopted in April 2015.
7. In the 12th FYP (2011-2015), the Chinese government had set national food security standards to support the establishment of regulatory systems. The 13th FYP (2016-2020) provides a blueprint for a unified set of national food safety standards and a science-based food safety regulatory mechanism.
8. China has succeeded in achieving a very high degree of self-sufficiency in its grain requirements. Further grain output growth lies in higher grain yields, facilitated by the adoption of new technologies and supported by the rural land protection system. With agricultural technology significantly raised, food security is largely a nonproduction issue.
9. In the face of newly emerged food supply and safety challenges, China is going ahead with innovative legislative and regulatory actions, including reforms on the use of arable land and food safety regulatory system. Gradual improvements are anticipated in the 13th FYP.