

**CHINA**

**The consequences of China’s booming demand for Seafood**

The country is putting restrictions on its domestic fishing fleet, but its distant water fleet has been growing to compensate.

Seafood consumption per capita in China has recently surpassed pork, according to China’s Ministry of Agriculture, and that has repercussions for ocean ecosystems in the country and beyond.

Several factors are responsible for shifting Chinese diets in a different direction. Incomes have risen, for instance, so people can afford seafood, which is typically pricier than other meats, says Yvonne Sadovy, a professor of biological sciences at the University of Hong Kong. Its priciness also makes it a status symbol, she says, and it regularly shows up on the menu at banquets and weddings. Also, public health campaigns are encouraging Chinese people to choose lower fat proteins. Plus, food production scandals have led people to view wild foods as healthier, she adds.

And the Chinese really love seafood, says Peter Redmayne, president of Sea

Fare Expositions, a US-based business that organizes an annual seafood trade show in China. Citing a proverb, he adds, “Without fish there is no dinner.”

Due to these factors and China’s population of nearly 1.4 billion, the country consumed more seafood in 2013 than the next nine countries combined. One-fifth of the global catch volume goes to satiating its demand for wild-caught fish. Intensive fishing in Chinese waters over the past few decades has dramatically reduced fish stocks. And other human activities have fueled the decline as well, destroying half of China’s coastal wetlands, 57 percent of mangroves, and 80 percent of coral reefs, all critical fish spawning, nursing, and feeding grounds. A 2017 paper summarized the issue: “Some large marine ecosystems, most notably in the Bohai Sea, have been degraded to the point of becoming dead zones.”

To turn this around, China’s most recent five-year plan calls for several fisheries and ocean management reforms that are in line with President Xi Jinping’s agenda for an “eco-civilization” that would shift Chinese society toward sustainable development.

The reforms are ambitious. But they may not be realized. The 2017 paper, which outlines the past four decades in

Chinese fisheries management, points out that institutional barriers—inadequate data, monitoring constraints, lack of an appropriate institutional structure, insufficient enforcement, and widespread indiscriminate fishing practices—have rendered impotent fisheries protections dating back to 1982.

Echoing these concerns is a seafood metrics report that ranked China 25th of 28 countries surveyed on a fisheries governance index, rating low in efficiency and effectiveness in research, management, enforcement, and other areas.

Enforcement, at least, may be improving. This year’s annual summer moratorium on all inland and ocean fishing started in May and will run to September, the longest period yet, says Mark Godfrey, a contributing editor for the newswire Seafood Source. He lives in China and covers the country’s fisheries extensively. The Ministry of Agriculture, which oversees the moratorium, has funded patrol boats and encouraged the police to arrest people.

**MEXICO**

**Michoacan Mango production value surpasses 833 million pesos**

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (Sagarpa) from Michoacan, stated through the Agri-Food and Fisheries Information Service (SIAP) that the mango from Michoacan’s production value had surpassed the 833 million pesos in Michoacan alone.

Sagarpa stressed that the mango had achieved this value because the area had increased by three thousand hectares, which were worked during the agricultural year 2017. Thus the state increased its production area from 20,200 hectares to 23,201 hectares.

Michoacan, which produced more than 150 thousand tons of mango (i.e. 18% of the national production in 2017), is the 5th largest supplier of this tropical fruit and 5th biggest exporter of Mexican mango, thanks to the phytosanitary





measures with which it carries out its production and having orchards that have been certified as pest-free.

Sagarpa in Michoacan, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), stated that in the last three years the Entity had positioned itself as the leading state in the production of organic mango, as it currently has 3,500 hectares devoted to this production and producers plan to double this area.

The idea is to have 6 to 7 thousand hectares to meet the requirements of international markets, as the organic mango sells for 50% more than the conventional fruit.

### **PERU**

#### **Peruvian food exports to Russia could reach \$150 million in 2019**

The Association of Peruvian Exporters (Adex) have projected that their country's food exports to Russia might total \$150 million in 2019, thanks to the joint efforts of private and public sectors trying to capitalize on Peru's participation in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Head of Adex, Juan Varillas, claims that the presence of Casa Peru and the Casa Peru Trailer will be key factors that should contribute to the exports. These two initiatives are part of a campaign, led by the Exports and Tourism Promotion

Board (PromPeru), to promote the exports from the Andean country, such as Peruvian flagship products like pisco, coffee, cacao, and quinoa, that will all be showcased at both of the promotional platforms.

Peruvian food shipments to this country amounted to \$33.30 million between January and April 2018, up by 41% over the similar period last year. Among the most demanded fruit and vegetable goods were pomegranates, grapes, mangoes and avocados.

According to andina.pe, Casa Peru was opened by the Peruvian Ambassador to Russia, Luis Benjamin Chimoy, on Monday. At the ceremony, Adex's First Vice-Chairman Max Alvarado and Pisco Committee Head William Urbina were present as well, as was PromPeru Communications and Country Image Director Isabella Falco.



### **PHILIPPINES**

#### **Training GCTCV 218 Banana farmers**

The Philippine Department of Agriculture of the Davao Region will continue training banana farmers who received GCTCV 218 banana seedlings in good agricultural practices. This is particularly important because this variety has different production protocols compared to traditional Cavendish bananas.

In an earlier interview with Filipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association executive director Stephen Antig said that a group of banana growers from Santo Tomas complained that the fruits produced by the GCTCV 218 were not of good quality.

Antig earlier clarified that they had already told the banana growers that there might be a slight difference in taste and shape. He said it will only be a matter of market acceptance.

Sunstar.com.ph describes how Regional High Value Crops Development Program Coordinator Melani Provide supported Antig, saying that only the Chinese market had had complaints. All other countries that imported GCTCV 218 bananas, like Japan, had not.

She added that it is a challenge to get the proper production protocol for GCTCV 218 carried out by the Philippine farmers, as it differs from the Cavendish banana protocol. Provide said the GCTCV 218 requires more care. "If only the farmers would really strictly follow the proper protocol of taking care of the variant, we think their Chinese market will really accept their bananas."



### SPAIN

#### Melon supply available all year round

Marked by the weather both at origin and at destination, the off-season melon campaign has gone through some ups and downs. "At the beginning of the campaign, the good weather at destination gave consumption a boost and accelerated the demand, but ahead of the middle of the campaign, there was a long period of low temperatures which caused demand to drop, while production continued at the same level," says Jordi Martí, Commercial Director of CMR Group. "Right now, the demand for melons is greater than the supply, mostly due to the on-going rainy season at origin," he added.

CMR works with the most popular melon and watermelon varieties from different origins and is able to supply the fruit year-round. When it comes to melons, they mainly work with the Piel de Sapo, Yellow, Galia, Charentais and Cantaloupe, while the watermelon market is supplied with both traditional and seedless varieties.

The firm has its own plantation in Brazil managed by its subsidiary CMR



Brazil. This is mainly used to grow melons and watermelons during the off-season campaign, from October to April. That fruit is marketed under the brands COSARICA (for premium products) and COSARICA STAR. During the 2017 campaign, CMR Group sold a total of 13,900 tonnes of melons and 4,300 tonnes of watermelons.

The production is both GRASP and GLOBAL GAP certified, although the company is working on implementing other certifications. "We have qualified workers in charge of the entire production and sorting process, which allows us to guarantee a stable supply throughout the

campaign. We keep all processes, from production to marketing, under control at all times, which is highly appreciated by our customers, who sell the melons both under our brands and their own," says Jordi Martí.

### THE NETHERLAND

#### Pepper harvest robot Sweeper in action

During a successful live demonstration the public saw De Tuindershoek a machine, matching the bright yellow peppers on the plants. There's a mechanical sound and flashes appear. Shortly after a gripper moves toward one of the ripe fruits and a sawing sound follows next. The pepper falls into the gripper to eventually end up in the receptacle. In less than 30 seconds, the job is done and a next harvest movement is ready to start.

Years of research preceded the development of the harvest robot. It might offer a solution to important topics: helping out growers when labour is scarce and expensive, and the demand for a product grown safe and hygienic.

We're not quite there yet, but so far many steps have been taken. For example, thanks to deep learning the robot was able to speed up the harvest. Based on visual data and the deep learning technique, the robot could practice in a digital crop. It's an important topic: with the many leaves and the unpredictable growth of a pepper plant, finding the ripe fruits and cutting them in the right way is a challenge for the robot.





Right now the Sweeper manages to harvest a pepper over four times faster than its predecessor from the CROPS-project. In an average 24 seconds a bell pepper can be harvested and in ideal laboratory circumstances even a speed of 15 seconds can be made. "For safety matters we keep it kind of slow. There's still a lot to be gained in terms of speed", the developers explain. "The most time-consuming action currently is moving the picked fruit to the collecting bin on the robot. We expect this component to be sped up quite easily."

The Sweeper-project is supported by the Horizon 2020-program with the European Union. The funding will end in November of this year and commercial implementing will become a priority after.

Project partners Bogaerts Greenhouse Logistics is expected to play a role in this as well as the other partners (Wageningen University, Ben Gurion University, Umeå University & the Proefstation voor de Groenteteelt) and of course grower André Kaashoek with Kwekerij de Tuindershoek. Current expectations are the Sweepers will be in commercial greenhouses within three years.

### USA

## Agriculture officials hope to rid South Florida of oriental fruit fly

The state and federal agricultural officials are on a mission to stop the Oriental fruit fly as this fly is a threat to many of the fruits grown in Florida, like banana, mango and avocado. That is why. During a routine trap inspection, USDA workers detected couple of Oriental fruit flies.

Although only three male flies were found, officials warn there could be others. They ask Floridians to not give away any homegrown fruits and vegetables because they might be infested. The pest has been detected several times in Florida since 1964, and each time it has successfully been eradicated. According to local10.com, the Agriculture Department is hoping to eliminate the pest completely by Labor Day.



## Dropcopter releases pollination results

Drone AG start-up, Dropcopter, based in California and central New York, recently made headlines as the first company to successfully pollinate almonds, cherries and apples using drones.

The company has been conducting studies on supplemental drone pollination since 2015. Now the company has released results from its 2018 third party, studies which report a massive increase in almonds and cherries as well as surprising developments for apples.

Depending on environmental conditions which dictate the effectiveness of bees, the company has demonstrated an effective increase of 25% to 60% pollination set (cherries and almonds). It means that in cold weather and during bee shortages there's a viable alternative to dependency on insect pollination.

Their recently publicized apple trials show more complex, but intriguing results. Apples are not grown in the same way that almonds are. If an apple orchard sets too much fruit, it requires the grower to hand thin the less desirable apples; a significant increase in labour cost.

What Dropcopter's controlled apple trial has shown is that the artificial cross-pollination of the "King blooms" has increased the size of the crop to be harvested with bigger fruit leading to better price.

### VIETNAM

## Fruit exports to China growing fast

Vietnam have begun to change their opinion of China as a low-end market. It has opened several new markets for fruit exports, but China is still the main export market for fruit from Vietnam. Production areas and traders in Vietnam are well aware of this and highly value the Chinese market.

The main market for Vietnamese agricultural products in China is Guangxi, with its population of 58 million people. The value of Vietnamese export through Lang Son Province to China reached 3 billion USD in 2017, which is an increase of 22% in comparison with 2016. Agricultural products counted for 2.4 billion USD or 80% of that export value, which is an increase of 120% in comparison with 2016.

Vietnam exported 3 million tons of agricultural products through Lang Son Province to China in 2017. The majority of that export volume consisted of fruit. The main export fruit was dragon fruit with an average annual export volume of 400-500 thousand tons. Next came longan and lychee, with a combined export volume that increased from 277 thousand tons in 2015 to 362 thousand tons in 2016, but dropped again to 222 thousand tons in 2017 as a result of poor harvests. ♦