



CHINA

China steps up 'green channel' to supply food for locked-down, virus-hit Wuhan

China has told farmers to step up vegetable production, opened roads for delivery trucks and is punishing those trying to profit in order to keep feeding residents of the locked down the city of Wuhan at the center of the new coronavirus outbreak.

Authorities cut most transport links to the central Chinese city last week to try to halt the spread of the flu-like virus. Thousands of cases have been reported in China, with a small number in countries including the United States, Thailand, and Singapore.

The unprecedented move prompted people in the city of 11 million to rush to supermarkets to stock up on instant noodles, vegetables and whatever else they could put their hands on.

Residents say there has yet to be an acute shortage of food, although shelves are cleared quickly when goods arrive.

Shouguang, the country's biggest vegetable production base, in the eastern Shandong province, has been asked to deliver 600 tons of fresh vegetables to Wuhan every day in the next 10 to 15 days, said an official in Sunjiayi, one of Shouguang's villages.

Sunjiayi, whose main crop is cucumbers, was tasked with sending 60 tons in less than seven hours. "We got the order from our city government and we immediately contacted our farmers, asking them to pick cucumbers overnight and bring their harvest to us before 6 a.m.," said the official, who only gave her surname, Li, by phone. "We sent 70 tons in the end," she said. "We are waiting for the next order."

China's largest food and agricultural firm, COFCO Group, and China Grain Reserves Corp. (Sinograin) Group have stepped up supplies of rice, meat and cooking oil to Hubei province.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs issued a notice urging related departments to coordinate to maintain ample supplies of vegetables and stable prices. Areas like Xinjiang are also sending supplies.

UAE

Food Village opens in Dubai Terminal 3

KFC, Panda and McDonald's are among the global brands found in the newly opened Food Village in Dubai International Airport's Terminal 3. Travel food and beverage specialist HMSHost is behind the opening of the 1,720m² (18,515ft²) facility, which includes 14 new restaurants and bars. A further four concepts are scheduled to open in the airport's Terminals 2 and 3.

In addition to global brands, the Food Village features Qfta, which specializes in wraps; Taste of India, notable for its Indian street food culture; and Flour & Stone, which offers flats bread, tarts, and other sweet treats. The Food Village also features Pop-top, offering gelato and Italian coffee, and food-cart style mobile outlets.

Australian dining and food retailer Jones the Grocer Express will offer its award-winning all-day cafe menu as well as a selection of artisan cheese and charcuterie boards and a grab-and-go food counter. Freshly made Indian wraps will be available from Roti Bhai.

In addition, HMSHost recently opened three new outlets in Terminal 3, Concourse A: Bottega Prosecco Bar and Craft Beer; an additional branch of Jones the Grocer Express; and Comptoir Libanais, marking the Lebanese restaurant chain's first store outside Europe.

Eugene Barry, Dubai Airports' EVP commercial, said, "Dubai Airports has enjoyed a successful partnership with HMSHost for a number of years, and our partnership has evolved as customer expectations and travel behavior has developed. The addition of these 14 new food concepts supports our strategy to not only be the world's busiest international airport, but also the world's best for customer experience."

EUROPEAN UNION

EU food exports to Japan soar after enforcement of free trade pact

Food exports from the European Union to Japan increased sharply in the February to November period immediately following the entry into force of their free trade agreement last year, the European Commission said recently.

Exports of different beverage items to Japan in the 10-month period rose 17.3 percent from a year before while butter exports surged 47.8 percent, according to European Commission data released ahead of the Feb. 1 anniversary of the FTA taking effect.

The data also showed that the overall EU exports to Japan gained 6.6 percent while imports from Japan increased 6.3 percent, suggesting goods traded between the world's third-largest economy and the bloc has become robust since the launch of the free trade pact that covers nearly 30 percent of the global economy in terms of gross domestic product.

According to the European Union, its exports to Japan have expanded at an average pace of 4.7 percent over the past three years through 2018. The latest data suggest it is almost certain that exports from the European Union to Japan grew at a higher rate in 2019.

Among other items exported to Japan, shipments of pasta swelled 14.9 percent in the 10-month period to November last year, while those of pork and cheese rose 12.6 percent and 7.0 percent, respectively. Exports of milk and cream shot up 120.7 percent from a year before, while exports of items other than food such as baby clothing and electric machinery also increased.

GERMANY

German farmers plant less winter wheat, more rapeseed

Germany's winter wheat sown area for the 2020 harvest has been reduced by 7.1pc in the year to about 2.83 million hectares, according to the national statistics office. Farmers had turned to other crops such as rapeseed, data from the agency said.

German winter rapeseed sowings for 2020, crop have been expanded by 11.8pc on the year to about 952,000 hectares, it said.

Germany's rapeseed sowings for the 2019 crop were the smallest area in 22 years and the harvest suffered from the summer heatwave, cutting yields and reducing the oil content of seeds. The 2018 rapeseed crop had also suffered from a heatwave.

The agency's rapeseed estimate is above the 1.9pc increase in planted area to 873,000 hectares forecast in November by the German oilseeds industry association UFOP. "Despite the German rapeseed crop suffering two reduced harvests in a row because of heatwaves and droughts, it looks like a lot of farmers have decided to take a chance on rapeseed again," one German grain trader said. "Wheat prices are also not looking attractive," the trader said.

Sowing conditions in the autumn were generally good. Germany had largely escaped the repeated rain seen in other west European countries which prevented farmers in other areas carrying out their planting intentions.

Germany is the European Union's second-largest wheat producer after France and a major exporter. It is one of the EU's largest producers of rapeseed, Europe's most important oilseed for edible oil and biodiesel production. Germany's sowings of winter barley, used for animal feed, were cut by 1.0pc to 1.33 million hectares, the agency said.

Plantings of rye and other minor winter grains were increased by 5.6pc to 670,000 hectares. The area used for the feed grain triticale was cut by 3.8pc to 344,000 hectares.

INDONESIA

Indonesia gears up for regional initiatives to boost food system

State officials together with representatives of the private sector and civil society gathered on in Jakarta to discuss the challenges facing Indonesia in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. The national authorities in these sectors are preparing to attend the FAO's 35th Asia Pacific Regional Conference (#APRC) in Bhutan in February, where several new regional initiatives will be promoted.

Asia and the Pacific region are changing rapidly because of economic growth, structural transformation, emerging technologies, and urbanization. Growing urbanization is leading to fundamental changes in food systems and food envi-



ronments affecting consumers' food choices and how farmers connect with markets. In addition, Asia-Pacific is home to 479 million of the world's undernourished, while overweight and obesity continue to rise among children and adults.

The FAO Regional Conference is traditionally a forum to address current and emerging regional trends and challenges. "The 2020 event will be an opportunity to highlight examples of innovations that are improving food systems and benefiting family farmers across the region", said Stephen Rudgard FAO Representative in Indonesia in the sidelines of the meeting.

The Indonesia Government is planning to engage in FAO's new "Hand in Hand" Initiative, focusing on enhancing the potential of disadvantaged areas and groups of population in line with the UN's commitment to "leave no one behind". Hence, the Initiative targets the most vulnerable, and especially in poorer population groups, territories, and countries. It is evidence-based and relies on detailed analysis using multi-dimensional geospatial data and information.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference is held once every two years, and the 35th session will convene in Bhutan on 17 – 20 February. The Minister of Agriculture Syahrul Limpo is scheduled to attend and will lead the regional launch of UN Decade of Family Farming at the Asia Pacific Regional Conference.

ITALY

Italy contributes to help relieve drought-affected people from hunger

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has welcomed a €500,000 (US\$ 610,000) contribution from the Italian Government to provide food to people affected by the drought in Zambia.

Drought and prolonged dry spells have left 2.3 million people severely food insecure and in need of humanitarian food assistance.

"In the context of the current crisis,



the Italian emergency contribution confirmed in December 2019 is crucial to WFP. The funds will enable WFP to procure around 340 MT of pulses to cover the food needs of about 99,000 people for an entire month, helping WFP ensure that the people residing in the areas most affected by the drought can receive the immediate assistance they need," said Jennifer Bitonde, WFP Country Representative in Zambia.

"At the same time, WFP will continue to work to strengthening communities' resilience to future climatic shocks under its five-year Country Strategic Plan (2019-2024)," she added.

About 1.1 million people are expected to receive WFP's support, while the remaining 1.2 million will be assisted by the Government and other partners, with whom WFP is working and closely coordinating.

PHILIPPINE

The Philippines lifts restrictions on importing food from Fukushima

Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin said his country had lifted restrictions on Japanese food imports imposed following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, due to a lower risk of radioactive contamination.

Locsin said during a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi

in Manila that the Philippines had eliminated the need for radiation test results for shipments of some types of seafood and agricultural products from Fukushima and surrounding areas. "I look forward to safe Japanese food reaching many of the people of the Philippines," Motegi told a joint news briefing after the meeting.

The Southeast Asian country had required radiation testing of beef and vegetables from Fukushima and Ibaraki, as well as fishery products from the two prefectures along with Tochigi and Gunma following the March 2011 triple meltdowns at the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant that were triggered by a powerful earthquake and tsunami.

A total of 54 countries and regions implemented measures following the crisis. The announcement by the Philippines brings the number with them still in place to 20, with the United States, China, and South Korea among countries that maintain some restrictions, according to the farm ministry.

Motegi and Locsin also agreed to step up security cooperation, with an eye to countering China's militarization of artificial islands in disputed parts of the South China Sea, as well as economic cooperation, including infrastructure development. Following the meeting, the two signed an agreement for Japan to provide a low-interest loan of up to ¥4.4 billion (\$40 million) to reinforce major bridges in Manila. ◆