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Voluntary Public

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China - Peoples Republic of

Post: Guangzhou

ATO Director delivers Food Security Presentation

Report Categories:

Export Promotion Programs

Market Promotion/Competition

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

Summary: On October 24, ATO Director delivered a presentation on China's nearly 34 years of agricultural reform during the U.S. Consulate's Public Affairs weekly forum. The presentation reached an audience of about 60 members of public and the focus of the presentation was on a historic review of agricultural policies and incentives within the Reform as well as an overview of areas of China's agricultural production mechanism that remain vulnerable and require additional reform. The presentation was part of a greater discussion on China's food security.

General Information:

On October 24, ATO Director and staff delivered a presentation on China's nearly 34 years of agricultural reform during the U.S. Consulate's Public Affairs weekly forum. The presentation reached an audience of about 60 members of the public and the focus of the presentation was on a historic review of agricultural policies that impact today food security situation in China. The Director

explained the process of transformation from a planned to a free market economy which is arguably still undergoing major changes and adjustments. The presentation also covered the major policies that served as drivers of the Reform and the incentives it created. An important aspect of the presentation was the United States' role throughout the process. For example, agricultural cooperation projects as well as capacity building programs and scientific exchanges have vastly contributed to increasing China's agricultural productivity and efficiencies. Many of these contributions have had long term positive effects that are an inextricable part of the 34 years of the U.S.-China diplomatic relationship.

Some of the topics that were most of interest to the audience in attendance were the discussion on present day challenges to agricultural productivity given the current land tenure, marketing practices, household incomes, and technological capital in the countryside. The audience acknowledged that there is a humungous gap between rural sector's development and that of the urban sector and questioned how China would begin to use biotechnology to benefit their livelihoods. Other questions that came up during the presentation were regarding the role urbanites have with the countryside. One audience member asked whether it was possible to pool financial resources to develop farming clubs similar to the U.S. urban farms where average members take turns cultivating the land as a hobby that brings greater consciousness to the farmers' present-day struggles.

The topic of biotechnology was not met with as much resistance as previously encountered. Though the knowledge base for biotechnology was limited, some audience members felt like advances in science and technology that benefit humanity can bring benefits especially to those in the developing world. Another audience member asked why the United States only exported food containing GMOs and consumers organic products. These comments revealed false information that is being disseminated on the internet by pseudo-intellectuals and non-profit organizations in the business of scarring the public into believe there is a conspiracy against Chinese farmers.

For the most part, the audience understood the main points of the presentation. As China's leadership moves turns another page in history, greater reform will aim at reconciling the biggest social and political paradox China's agricultural sector is facing today: how to improve the quality of live for those farmers, while maintaining affordable supplies of food for the masses (living in cities).