Grain Production Is the Primary Task on the Agricultural Front
People's Daily Editorial – Front Page 11-04-1953

Over the past three years, under the leadership of the Communist Party and the people's government, Chinese farmers have made great efforts to increase grain production. As a result, our country's grain output has not only returned to pre-Anti-Japanese War levels, but in some areas has even surpassed them. China has transformed from a grain-importing country into a grain-exporting one. Thanks to this increased production, the living conditions of urban and rural residents have seen considerable improvement.

However, it would be entirely mistaken to think that the grain problem in China has been fully and finally resolved. First, the so-called pre-Anti-Japanese War level was, in fact, a very poor one—reflecting the productivity of a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. We have no reason to be content with merely exceeding that low baseline. Second, most Chinese farmers lived in poverty, often enduring periods of food scarcity. Today, with better living conditions, their demand for grain has increased. Likewise, with the development of agricultural production, the need for livestock feed and commercial fertilizer has also grown. Moreover, as the urban and industrial populations rapidly expand, the demand for grain rises further. Yet our arable land area cannot be quickly increased in a few years to meet this growing need. Third, following land reform, the dispersal of land holdings has led to a resurgence of small-scale, self-sufficient peasant farming, which may reduce the amount of surplus grain available for the market and affect urban food supply. Fourth, our agricultural output is still heavily constrained by natural conditions. Although three years of good harvests have given farmers some ability to withstand natural disasters, we have yet to build up the reserves needed to withstand major ones—reserves that are critical during the economic construction period. Without them, the balance between sectors of the national economy could be disrupted, putting development efforts at risk.

All these points show clearly that the grain issue remains urgent, unresolved, and in need of continued attention. To ignore it would be a serious political mistake.

To solve this problem, long-term planning and determined effort to increase production are essential. We must establish a clear policy: increasing grain production should be the top priority on the agricultural front for the coming years. Everyone must understand the critical importance of securing more and better grain. In recent years, some leadership bodies, rural work cadres, and farmers have come to prioritize the production of cash crops, thinking this is the only way to support industry and raise farmers' incomes. This view is clearly one-sided. Of course, increasing the output of cash crops is necessary—not only for industry but also for agriculture itself. However, this must be achieved by increasing yield per unit of land, not by expanding the area planted with cash crops at the expense of grain crops.

It must be emphasized: the main task of agricultural production in China—past, present, and for years to come—should be increasing grain output. In a country with such a large population, and where agriculture is not yet mechanized, eliminating the gap between grain production and demand will take years of hard work. Until then, grain will likely remain a tense and pressing issue.

As Stalin once said in his political report to the 16th Congress of the CPSU during the first Five-Year Plan: "In rural economic matters, we face several issues: (1) securing raw materials, which depends on an adequate supply of cheap grain in those regions; (2) improving animal husbandry and resolving the meat supply problem, which again depends on ample grain and fodder; (3) fully resolving the grain issue—it is the main issue of rural economics and the key to solving all other problems."

Similarly, at the beginning of China's own economic construction, if we shift our focus away from grain production toward cash crops, it would clearly be a mistake.

Given that China's rural economy still largely consists of smallholder farming, we cannot force farmers to increase grain production through administrative commands. Instead, we must rely on economic policies and political persuasion that farmers can accept. In recent years, the government's policy of encouraging cash crops allowed many farmers to profit, which naturally led to great enthusiasm for growing them. Now that our national cotton production can meet the needs of the textile industry and civilian use, the government has adjusted grain pricing for 1953—setting a fair ratio between cotton and grain prices and seasonal price differentials—and has modestly raised grain prices. This will help guide farmers back toward grain production.

All levels of leadership should publicize this new price policy widely. They should explain to farmers how increasing grain production benefits both the country's economic development and their own livelihoods. Farmers should be encouraged to keep cotton planting areas at 1952 levels—neither increasing nor drastically reducing them—and shift their focus to improving yields per acre. This publicity work must be completed before spring plowing and sowing.

At the same time, we must intensify leadership over grain production, strictly prevent any decrease in grain-sown acreage, and ensure that 100% of the grain sowing plan is completed. We must also support farmers in raising grain yields per unit area through agricultural loans, technical guidance, and other means. With the right price policies, proper economic assistance, and effective persuasion, we can lead farmers to achieve this crucial grain production goal.

Current projections suggest China's grain supply is adequate. Continued increases in production will allow us to build up reserves, ensuring the smooth implementation of our industrialization plans and preventing unforeseen difficulties.

To support this effort, we must also use our existing supply of commercial grain wisely. Grain departments should focus all efforts on the proper transportation and distribution of grain. Although the country holds enough commercial grain to meet market demand, it is unevenly distributed—by type and location. If coordination is poor, supply tensions could still arise. Thus, grain authorities must concentrate needed grain in strategic locations, first ensuring supplies for large and medium-sized cities and industrial areas, and then allocate grain to cash crop regions and food-deficient areas. We have the ability to resolve seasonal food shortages in these areas. The idea of hoarding is mistaken. The real issue is whether grain officials can understand and meet local market needs, formulate sound transport plans, and properly manage regional price differences and wholesale-retail margins.

If we do all these tasks well—and simultaneously strengthen market oversight to prevent illegal speculation during peak seasons—we can fully stabilize the grain market.

In support of production and stockpiling goals, it is also beneficial to promote grain conservation among consumers, especially urban residents. In recent years, a growing trend has emerged of demanding overly refined rice and flour, leading to increased consumption. While it is natural for citizens to want better food, it is even more critical for the state to maintain adequate reserves. Consumers should consider year-round needs, not just daily meals. Over-refining also reduces nutritional value. Statistics show that if, per 100 jin of rice or wheat, we could extract just 2 more jin of rice or flour, it would feed 6 million people for a year. That's a massive gain. Therefore, based on current milling technology, we should reduce processing precision to conserve raw grain, boost output, and increase reserves.

Given regional differences in grain quality, it may be hard to set one national processing standard. But setting regional standards—based on conservation, nutrition, and local dietary preferences—is both necessary and feasible.

In the past three years, we've achieved successive bumper harvests, dramatically improving China's grain situation. This year, we must work even harder to secure yet another good harvest and fulfill—or surpass—the state's grain production targets. So long as we keep winning victories on the agricultural front, we can provide a solid material foundation for China's large-scale economic development.