

**Notification of Ministry of Agriculture on Exploration of  
China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems  
(China-NIAHS)**

To all Provinces, Autonomous Regions, Municipalities, Cities, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps:

China has many brilliant farming cultures with long histories. As a consequence of the great natural and cultural differences in different areas, China has created a wide variety of important agricultural heritage systems with unique characteristics and high economic, social and ecological values. These systems have been developed by the diligent and wise practice of generations of Chinese farming people utilizing the unique and diverse natural conditions of China. These systems show the harmony between man and nature, and contain high historical and cultural values. However, with the rapid economic development and urbanization of modern China, and the accelerating implementation of new technology, some important agricultural heritage systems are in danger of being abandoned due to the lack of effective protection. To strengthen the exploration, conservation, inheritance, and utilization of these important agriculture heritage systems, the China Ministry of Agriculture has decided to launch an exploration project on China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (China-NIAHS). We hereby list the relevant issues as follows:

**1. Fully understand the significance of China-NIAHS**

The exploration, conservation, inheritance, and utilization of the significant agricultural heritage systems are an important measure to be included in the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. This measure can not only propagate and enhance the identity and pride of China's national culture, but also promote sustainable agricultural development. Regarding agricultural heritage systems as important historical, cultural, and landscape resources for leisure agriculture, NIAHS can enhance agricultural development, increase local people's

income, and protect inheritance traditions.

(1) It is an important measure to comply with the decision of the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to carry out this project. The decision of Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on several issues concerning the deepening of cultural restructuring to promote the development and prosperity of socialist culture proposes to re-evaluate and recognize the fine traditions of China's cultural heritage systems. Exploration and elucidation of the value of these fine traditional cultures, together with maintaining the basic elements of national culture, promotes the outstanding traditional culture as a new morale to encourage people to move forward in a new era, while recognizing the past. Farming culture is an important part of our traditional culture. According to the decision of the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, exploring and strengthening the traditional farming cultures is a crucial measure to promote agricultural and rural cultural development and prosperity.

(2) It is an important measure to protect and propagate Chinese Culture to carry out this project. China's farming culture has a long history with rich content. It is the foundation of Chinese culture. The wisdom, derived from long time practices of production and daily life of Chinese people, is the basis of Chinese development today. It is very important to explore the essence of this important heritage in depth and demonstrate its dynamic protection, in order to propagate the essence of the farming culture, to convey its excellent philosophy to the public, and to promote public awareness of the heritage of their national culture.

(3) It is a basic demand of sustainable agricultural development to carry out this project. Traditional farming culture contains a wealth of production experience, traditional technology, and harmonious development ideas, which can provide many lessons and advanced concepts to modern agriculture. Strengthening agricultural heritage can promote the combination of heritage and innovation; thus, enhance the comprehensive, coordinated sustainability of modern agriculture.

(4) It is an important measure to enrich leisure agriculture and enhance local people's income to carry out this project. Many of our important agricultural heritage systems are both agricultural production system and cultural and landscape resources. Based on the principle of protection, exploring agriculture heritage can combine agricultural traditions with the development of leisure agriculture. This can provide resources, finances, and labor for the development of leisure agriculture, together with promoting local economic and social development while increasing the income of local people.

## **2. The target of China-NIAHS**

To carry out the work of exploring China-NIAHS, we must regard exploration, protection, inheritance and utilization as the core activities. We need to select and identify China-NIAHS, and continue to explore their historical value, and the cultural and social functions of China-NIAHS. Based on effective protection, this work combines well with the development of leisure agriculture, by exploring ways and methods for dynamic inheritance, and then achieving the unity of the cultural, ecological, social and economic benefits. This will gradually form a dynamic protective mechanism for China-NIAHS. Finally, it makes a positive contribution for the prosperity of agriculture and rural culture, and contributes to the development of modern agriculture and increases farmers' income. From 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture will explore and identify a number of China-NIAHS every two years.

## **3. The relevant standard conditions of China-NIAHS**

China National Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (China-NIAHS) are defined as “Remarkable land use systems and landscapes which are rich in Chinese significant biological diversity, traditional knowledge and technology systems, and unique ecological and cultural landscape evolving from the co-adaptation of a community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for agricultural inheritance, sustainable development, agricultural function expansion”.

China-NIAHS are living, adaptive, comprehensive, dynamic, strategic,

multi-functional and endangered. They contain a long historical origin, unique and rich biological resources, a well practiced knowledge and technology system, the aesthetics and cultural values of Chinese rural communities, as well as a strong demonstration capability. Specific standards are in Annex I.

#### **4. China-NIAHS Declaration Procedures**

(1) County governments are in charge of the declaration, which means that they must write the declaration reports and prepare all the declaration materials according to the format in Annex II, and then all of the materials must be sent to the Leisure Agricultural Administrative Departments in their provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, cities, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

(2) County governments are responsible to audit and report on their local agriculture heritage system for the Leisure Agricultural Administrative Departments in all the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, cities, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. According to the requirements of the declarations and the declaration situation, the local government must select the best agricultural heritage system. For the selection process, it must include the core processes, such as an expert audit and selection criteria. All the declaration materials have to be in the uniform format and must be submitted to the Leisure Agriculture Department, Village Enterprise Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, all together. For all the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, cities, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, no more than two candidates are allowed to be submitted.

(3) All the leisure agricultural administrative departments must submit all the declaration materials, including paper materials (in triplicate) and electronic versions of CD (two copies) to the Leisure Agriculture Department, Village Enterprise Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, before September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. (In order to easily trace the materials, it is better to choose EMS of China Post to send the materials)

#### **5. The identification and management of China-NIAHS**

(1) Ministry of Agriculture will invite some experts to comprehensively assess all

the candidate agriculture heritage systems. After strictly assessing and choosing the best agriculture heritage systems, the declaration result will be put on the website (<http://www.agri.gov.cn>) for about 7 days. After that, the Ministry of Agriculture will issue a document to identify the “China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems” .

(2) For the identified China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, they can make use of the unique logo, which can be seen in the Annex III. Conversely, other units and individuals cannot use the logo without authorization.

(3) The county governments, where the China-NIAHS is located, are not only in charge of the declaration, but are also in charge of protection. In the core areas of the heritage systems, the eye-catching logos and signs must be set up three months after getting the certification of China-NIAHS, and the logos and signs must include the words, “China-NIAHS”, the logo of “China-NIAHS”, and their instructions. Furthermore, the heritage systems must be protected, inherited, exploited and used in the strict accordance with the published protection and development plans and guidelines.

(4) If any units or individuals want to use the name, concept and logos of the authorized “China-NIAHS”, they must report to the government of the heritage sites to get approval. Otherwise, they can’t use any of these.

(5) The Leisure Agriculture Administrative Departments in all the provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, cities, and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, must manage, serve and supervise their local China-NIAHSs. For the authorized heritage systems, if they have made great changes or the local government or the departments do not meet the requirements of management, the leisure agriculture administrative departments must push the local county government to improve their management. They also must report to Village Enterprise Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture on time, that is, according to the timeline stated.

(6) The Ministry of Agriculture must dynamically manage the China-NIAHS. If

they have made great changes or the local government or the departments do not meet the requirements of management, they must adjust and improve their management in good time. If their management still can't meet the requirements; the Ministry of Agriculture can cancel their certification of "China-NIAHS". Their local county governments are responsible for removing the related logos, and also to supervise the relevant units and individuals to stop using the related names, concepts and logos.

## **6. The related work requirements**

(1) To strengthen the organization and leadership. All of the leisure agricultural administrative departments must explore and recommend the agriculture heritage systems that can work as an important measure to implement the spirit of the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. According to this note, all of the departments must make up a workplan, improve work measures, implement work responsibilities, and work hard to successfully achieve the program goals.

(2) To strengthen the policy support. During the processes of searching the agriculture heritage systems, all the leisure agricultural administrative departments must combine their work with researching and exploring the related support policies of "China-NIAHS". Then, they also must broaden their work ideas; strengthen service methods, and innovative work methods, in order to form a good mechanism to promote the protection and succession of the "China-NIAHS".

(3) To strengthen the propaganda/promotion. To keep abreast of the processes of exploration and recommendation, constantly summarize and promote the good experiences and practices, strengthen the typical propaganda, and finally create a favorable public environment.

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**Annex:**

Annex I. Standards for China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems  
(China-NIAHS)

Annex II. Format for Proposals of Candidate Systems for the China Nationally  
Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (China-NIAHS)

Annex III. The logo of China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems  
(China-NIAHS)

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## **Annex I: Standards for China Nationally Important Agriculture Heritage Systems (China-NIAHS)**

### **1. Concepts and Characteristics**

China Nationally Important Agriculture Heritage Systems (China-GIAHS) are unique forms of agricultural production created and inherited by human beings in the long-term collaborative development process between human beings and their surrounding environment. These systems have rich agricultural biodiversity, employ traditional and technical knowledge, and form unique ecological and cultural landscapes. Thus they have important scientific value and practical significance in the heritage of China's agriculture traditions, and for the sustainable development of agriculture. These merits are reflected in the following six characteristics:

(1) Active. These systems have a long history, and still have strong production and ecological functions. They form an important and secure foundation for the livelihoods of farmers' and promote harmonious rural development.

(2) Adaptable. With changes in natural conditions and the socio-economic development and technological progress of China, these systems adjust their structures and functions to meet the growing human survival and development needs, of many local communities.

(3) Composite. These systems include not only traditional agricultural knowledge and technology in a general sense, but also the traditional agricultural landscape with a long history and rational structure, as well as agricultural biological resources and rich biodiversity.

(4) Strategic. These systems have strategic importance in coping with economic globalization, global climate change, biodiversity, ecological integrity and food security. They also address the major issues of poverty by promoting sustainable development of agriculture and rural ecological civilization.

(5) Versatile. The functions of these systems include food security, supply of raw materials, employment income, ecological protection, tourism and leisure, cultural heritage preservation, and the base for scientific research.

(6) Endangered. For irreversible policy and technical reasons, rapid socio-economic development causes change in these systems which can result in reduced agricultural biodiversity, the loss of knowledge of traditional agricultural technology and agro-ecological degradation of the environment.

## **2. Basic standards**

### **(1) Historical standards**

① Historical origin. This means the original location of system should be the main place for agriculture activity and related technologies. If they are from outside, there should have been significant improvements.

② History length: These systems and their related knowledge, technology, and landscapes, must have existed in China for at least 100 years.

### **(2) Systemic standards**

① Substances and products. This refers to the direct products from the system. Such outputs support food security, livelihood security, and the supply of raw materials and the well-being of local residents. The basic requirement is a product with special characteristics and significant geographical features.

② Ecosystem services. The values of the system in genetic resources and biodiversity protection, soil and water conservation, climate regulation and adaptation to insect pest control, nutrient cycling etc. The basic requirement is that it should have at least two major ecological values.

③ Technical knowledge and system maintenance. This refers to the knowledge and technology in respect to the use of biological resources, planting, breeding, soil and water management, landscape conservation, product processing, insect pest control, avoiding natural disasters etc. and important values in ecological agriculture and circulation of agricultural development, as well as scientific study. The basic requirement is that the system has sound knowledge and technology, important scientific values and practical significance.

④ Landscape and aesthetics. This embodies the surviving wisdom of man and nature and the creation of magnificent landscapes with important ecological characteristics, giving a high value for the development of leisure agriculture and rural tourism. The basic requirement is that it has high aesthetic value and some potential for the development of leisure agriculture.

⑤ Spirit and culture. The system has great cultural diversity, playing an important role in social organization, spiritual, religious and philosophical, life and art, having a higher value in cultural heritage and building a harmonious society. The basic requirement is that it has rich cultural diversity.

### **(3) Persistent standards**

① Natural adaptation. The system should have high resilience to climate change and natural disasters through self-regulation mechanisms. The basic requirement is that the system has the ability to recover by itself.

② Human Development. The system demonstrates its versatility through the ability to meet the growing demand for food, employment, income, etc. The basic requirement is that the system should have the ability to guarantee the basic livelihood security of people in the region.

### **(4) Endangered standards**

① Trends. The changes of the system in the past 50 years and future trends, including the richness of species, the traditional use of technology, landscape stability, and cultural expressions form an adaptive and stable production base. The basic requirement is that there is a decreased trend of the richness.

② Stress factors. The number and intensity of the main factors that affect the health of the system (such as climate change, natural disasters, biological invasions and other natural factors and urbanization, industrialization, new agricultural technologies, alien culture). The basic requirement is that the system is affected by many negative factors and is coping.

### **3. Secondary standards**

#### **(1) Demonstration standards**

① Participation. For system recognition and participation of residents, there is a need for publicity and feedback. The basic requirement is that there is more than 50 percent of residents supporting the agricultural heritage protection plan.

② Accessibility. This refers to the accessibility and traffic conditions of the system. The basic requirement is that it is not difficult to enter.

③ Reliability: This refers to the promotion and application of local technology and knowledge for other regions. The basic requirement is that the special elements of the system have promotional value.

#### **(2) Supportability standards**

① Organization construction: This refers to the involvement of the leading agencies and regulatory bodies of agricultural heritage protection and development. The basic requirement is that there is a fixed management department and personnel.

② System Construction: the completion status of “Management Approaches for the Conservation and Development”, includes clear policies and measures for monitoring

as well as incentives. The basic requirement is that the “Management Approaches for the Conservation and Development” of the system should be worked out and be clear.

③ Preparation of Planning: the completion of preparation for the “Conservation and Development Planning” for the system, including changes to the agricultural heritage, status and value system analysis, clear conservation goals, action plans and security measures. The basic requirement is that the preparation is completed and approved by experts and agreed to by local authorities and villagers.

**Annex II:**

**Format for Proposals of Candidate Systems**

**For The**

**China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems**

**(China-NIAHS)**

**SUMMARY INFORMATION**

a. Name of the system
b. Location of the system
c. Main characteristics and values of the system
d. Requesting agency/organization
e. Responsible agency/organization, governmental counterparts, technical support partners and others

**1. Description of the proposed China-NIAHS**

- (1) Location, including the geographic coordinates of the system and the administrative area it covers.
- (2) Natural conditions, including the climate, soil and ecological environment of the system.
- (3) Socio-economic conditions, including the economic structure and its development level, populations, and ethnic composition.

**2. Characteristics of the proposed China-NIAHS**

Summarize the outstanding features of the system in terms of their relevance to global concerns in agricultural development and ecosystems management and their cultural and agricultural heritage values. This should include information on the following items but not limited to:

- (1) Origin and evolution history.
- (2) Characteristics of Agriculture. Including the crops that local farmers cultivate

and animals they breed, and their varieties.

(3) Landscape Characteristics.

(4) Technology system. Including the agriculture technologies, water and soil resource management technology, and control technology for diseases, pest, and weeds etc.

(5) Knowledge system. Including traditional knowledge for biodiversity conservation, water and soil resource management, and village regulations and agreements.

(6) Cultural characteristics. Including local farming culture, festivals, customs, food, clothes, local architecture, and their relationship with the system.

(7) Creativity of the system. Including the sustainable utilization of natural resources, harmony between human beings and nature.

(8) Peculiarity of the system. Indicating the peculiarity of the system by comparing it with other similar types of systems.

### **3. Function and values of the proposed China-NIAHS**

Indicate the function and values of the system by describing the important services and products provided by the system at local, national and global levels. Please pay attention to:

(1) Livelihood services. Including the services provided by the system for food security, livelihood security, housing, fuel/energy, health and related needs.

(2) Environmental services. Including the importance of the system in genetic resources and biodiversity conservation, soil and water conservation and restoration, climate regulation (micro and macro) and adaptation, carbon sequestration, diseases and pests control, nutrient cycling, etc.

(3) Social and cultural services. The cultural value of the system in social organization, including spirituality, livelihood creativity, art, and the

maintenance of a harmonious local society.

- (4) Agricultural multi-functions. Including multi-functions of agriculture in increasing employment and income, developing leisure agriculture, ensuring the ecological security and promotion of scientific research.
- (5) Including the importance of the system for the construction of ecological civilization, the construction of new socialist countryside, and the sustainable development of agriculture.

#### **4. Threats and Challenges**

- (1) Main threats
- (2) Main challenges
- (3) Development prospects

#### **5. Policy and Development Relevance**

- (1) Measures that have been taken
- (2) Proposed measures

#### **6. Annexes**

- (1) Maps and pictures
- (2) Media documents
- (3) Certification materials (awards, certifications, and scientific studies)
- (4) Protection and development planning

#### **7. Commitment letter**

The specific format is as follows:

##### **Commitment Letter**

We solemnly promise to conserve China-NIAHS \*\*\*\*\* and its related biodiversity, knowledge system, cultural diversity and agricultural landscape. We will protect it by formulating long-term protection and development plans, by using dynamic protection, adaptive management and sustainable utilization, and by further

improving the living standards of local people.

Commitment Signature

(Signed by the main leader of the County People's government)

(Stamped by the County People's government)

Year-Month-Date

(When the commitment letter was signed)

**Annex III: The logo of China Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (China-NIAHS)**

