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Exploring Ways to Deepen Sino-Russia Agricultural Cooperation Under New Circumstances¹

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Abstract

Research objective. This paper analyzes the foundation, existing problems and future development trend of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation under the new situation.

Research methods. Data analysis and comparative research were used in this paper.

Research content. Russia has abundant land and poor labor resource but China has contrary situations. Which not only provides favorable conditions for agricultural trade, but also breeds huge potential for agricultural cooperation. As China and Russia continue to expand the opening of the agricultural product market, agricultural trade has gradually become a new bright spot in the economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. The development of agricultural cooperation between China and Russia has the advantages of obvious geographical advantages, strong complementarity of agricultural resources, and continuous improvement of cooperation policy planning. At the same time, there are practical difficulties such as low scale and level of agricultural cooperation and imperfect agricultural cooperation infrastructure.

Conclusion. The agricultural cooperation between China and Russia is to optimize the allocation of resources and is in line with the common interests of the people of two countries. The agricultural cooperation between China and Russia shows the continuous improvement of cooperation policies and plans, the increasing variety of agricultural trade, and the continuous expansion of agricultural cooperation areas and regions. In the future, the two countries will strengthen communication between the government and the people at all levels, strengthen the construction of agricultural infrastructure, strengthen Sino-Russian cooperation in agricultural science and technology, coordinate agricultural preferential policies and promote further agricultural cooperation between two countries.

Keywords: China, Russia, Agricultural cooperation, Agricultural policy, the path to explore.

Introduction

Agricultural cooperation is an extension of agricultural product trade, it is to expand product trade to the production field and form a whole-industry chain trade. China and Russia are geographically adjacent to each other and have very good natural conditions for agricultural cooperation and trade in agricultural products. The longest border line between China and Russia is located in the adjacent areas of Chinese Heilongjiang Province and the eastern part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Northeast China is an important grain base in China and its grain output accounts for more than 20% of the country's total grain output.

Russia has a vast area of arable land and fertile land, and has excellent conditions for developing agriculture. It is one of the most potential agricultural powers in the world. The total area of agricultural land in Russia can reach 381 million hectares and the per capita arable land area is 0.84 hectares, which is three times the average per capita arable land in the

world. Before 2000, Russia was a net importer of grain, with an average annual net import of 3 million tons [1]. The EU was Russia's largest source of agricultural imports, accounting for more than half of Russia's total agricultural imports. After the Ukrainian crisis broke out, in order to respond to sanctions from EU and the United States and protect national security, Russia has implemented an "import substitution" policy since October 2014, prohibiting the import of EU-related agricultural products, and actively developing domestic agricultural products to replace European dairy products, fruit, vegetables, cheese and meat. Under the policy of import substitution, the average grain yield in Russia has continued to increase, and the planting area and total output have increased year after year, which not only meets the domestic market demand, but also provides a large surplus for exports. In 2020, Russia's total grain output is 133 million tons and the grain export value is 49 million US dollars. At present, Russia has become an exporter of major agricultural products such as wheat, vegetable

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oil and sugar in the world grain market. Wheat export ranks first in the world and plays a pivotal role in the global grain trade. Russia exports agricultural products to 150 countries and regions around the world [2].

Judging from the current situation of Sino-Russian agricultural product trade and agricultural cooperation. It is a good development trend but there are also some problems. It is necessary to find more convergence points and explore more convenient ways to expand the agricultural product trade and agricultural cooperation between the two countries.

Adjustment of Russian Agricultural Policy. In order to maintain the sustainable and stable development of agriculture and effectively deal with the food security problems caused by the COVID-19, relevant Russian departments have focused on the overall goal of agricultural export, national support for agricultural development, grain export control measures, agricultural insurance mechanism and agricultural science and technology development and construction. As well as strengthening the management of planting seeds and other aspects of the policy has been adjusted.

Adjustment of the overall target of agricultural exports. Facing the negative impact of the epidemic on the economy and the devaluation of the ruble and the severe world food security situation, Russia has postponed the target of reaching \$45 billion in agricultural exports in 2024 to 2030, which was proposed in the “New May Decree” in 2018. But new measures are planned to compensate for some of the cost of creating a modern enterprise that processes agricultural products.

Adjustment of national funding for agricultural sector support. Under the pressure of economic downturn, the Russian government has to cut the budget of various government departments and the agricultural sector is no exception. National support for the agricultural sector in 2021 will be reduced by 17 billion rubles compared to 2020. However, the financial support for priority development areas and key support directions remains unchanged, such as subsidies for dairy cattle breeding, agricultural insurance funds and the support for small businesses.

Strengthen grain export control, stabilize domestic market prices and maintain the level of domestic food security. In order to ensure national food security, to deal with food inflation and to curb excessive price increases, the Russia government has successively introduced some measures to restrict grain exports, including imposing a temporary export embargo on soybeans and rapeseed and formulating grain export tariff quotas and wheat export taxes.

Active change of the mode of agricultural development. Speed up the process of digital construction, make full use of new technologies, new means and new methods in order to improve production and management efficiency and expand the scale of online sales.

Status quo of Sino-Russian Agricultural Cooperation. Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation is an important area of bilateral economic and trade cooperation. It has become a new growth point of bilateral economic and trade cooperation and an important foundation for the two countries to jointly ensure food security. The agricultural cooperation between China and Russia has strong complementarity. The scale of cooperation is gradually expanded and the modes of cooperation are increasingly diversified. Obviously the cooperation potential is huge.

From the perspective of the commodity structure of Sino-Russian agricultural trade, the main agricultural products exported from China to Russia are processed products such as fruit, vegetables, fresh frozen fish, crustaceans and mollusks. And the main agricultural products exported from Russia to China are soybeans, fresh frozen fish, Edible oils and feeds. The commodity structure of agricultural trade between the two countries can meet the diversified needs of their respective markets. Since 2001, Sino-Russian agricultural trade has shown a general trend of continuous growth. Trade has grown from \$0.8 billion in 2001 to \$5.55 billion in 2020 [3]. In 20 years, Sino-Russian agricultural trade has increased seven times. According to the data from the General Administration of Customs of China, 520,000 tons of soybean will be imported from Russia in 2021 with a year-on-year increase of 30.4%. Russia ranks sixth among China's soybean import sources. In June 2019, China and Russia jointly signed the “Development Plan on Deepening Sino-Russian Soybean Cooperation” and put forward the goal of importing 3.7 million tons of soybeans from Russia by 2024. In July of the same year, the General Administration of Customs of China issued an announcement that the soybean production area imported from Russia was expanded from the 5 states (districts) in the Far East to the entire territory of Russia and shipping and other transportation methods were added [4].

Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation is mainly concentrated in Russia's Amur Region, Khabarovsk Territory and Primorsky Territory. With the increasing development of cooperation between China and Russia in various fields, China's investment in Russia has continued to expand to the hinterland of central and western Russia and Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation projects have been launched in Volgograd, Penza and other places. The past agricultural planting cooperation in the adjacent areas of China and Russia has laid a solid foundation for cooperation. For example, more than 90% of the agricultural cooperation projects between Heilongjiang Province and Russia are concentrated in the Amur Region, Primorsky Territory, Jewish Autonomous Region and Khabarovsk Territory in the Far East Russia. Chinese investment is mainly concentrated in renting arable land and developing agricultural resources. By establishing an agricultural cooperation demonstration zone in the Far East Russia. China and Russia have strengthened the integration of resources on both sides, effectively promoting the organic integration of China's advantageous production factor endowments. Such as agricultural technology, agricultural machinery manufacturing and labor resources with Russia's rich natural resource endowments. Meanwhile they will promote the sound development of bilateral cooperation in grain production, fruit and vegetable planting, animal husbandry and agricultural product processing.

New Opportunities for Sino-Russian Agricultural Cooperation. The Sino-US trade friction has promoted the rapid development of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation. On the one hand, China needs to improve the level of food security through agricultural opening and “going out” strategy. On the other hand, agriculture is becoming a new engine for Russia's economic growth and the agricultural export. New strategy and measures are required in agricultural resource development and agricultural export. Under the newest world situation, the interests of China and Russia in the field of agricul-

ture are deeply linked. And the relationship between China and Russia will create more opportunities for deepening agricultural cooperation.

The strategic cooperative relationship between China and Russia has continued to deepen, laying a political foundation for cooperation in the Russian Far East. In September 2018, President Xi Jinping signed the “China-Russia Cooperation and Development Plan in the Russian Far East (2018–2024)” during his visit to Russia to attend the 4th Eastern Economic Forum [5]. In September 2020, the Russian government officially approved the “National Outline for the Development of the Far East before 2024 and the Vision for 2035”, planning Sino-Russian “Far East-Northeast” cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative, energy, Arctic waterways, industry, agriculture, forestry and other fields [6]. In 2021, China and Russia will take the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation as a new starting point. A series of new achievements have been made in strategic cooperation and all-round pragmatic cooperation between the two countries. Among them, agricultural products and agricultural cooperation have become the “new growth core” of Sino-Russian economic and trade development. In September 2021, at the 6th Eastern Economic Forum, the two sides expressed their strong support for the economic and trade cooperation between the Russian Far East and Chinese Northeast. And China and Russia proposed the goal of achieving a bilateral trade volume of 200 billion US dollars by 2024.

The cooperation between China and Russia is obviously complementary, adding momentum to the trade of agricultural products between the two countries. From 2014 to 2020, China opened import licenses for various agricultural products to Russia [7]. In 2021, the Russian and China agreed to allow the export of pork, peas, millet, rye flour, whey and milk powder, wheat and barley to the whole Russia-wide import agreement, canceling the trade in animal feed and medicinal materials limit. Russian companies are optimistic about the Chinese super market and take the initiative to promote products. Russian food is known as affordable and high-quality in Chinese market. In 2020, Russian beef was allowed to be exported to China and the development is very rapid. In 2021, Russia will export 20,000 tons of beef to China with a year-on-year increase of 20 times.

Multiple preferential policies have created favorable conditions for economic and trade exchanges between the two countries. The Russian government has established special economic zones such as advanced development zones and free trade ports in the Far East to attract domestic and foreign investment and support export-oriented industries. Through a series of preferential measures, it has attracted a large number of foreign investment including China.

While China and Russia are developing traditional bulk commodity trade, with the development of information technologies such as the Internet and the Internet of Things, cross-border e-commerce has become a new trend of economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia as a new mode of business circulation. Harbin, Heihe, Suifenhe and other northeastern cities have established cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zones. And relevant preferential policies have driven cross-border e-commerce cooperation between China and Russia [8].

In recent years, many achievements have been made in the construction of cross-border transportation facilities between China and Russia. The Heihe-Blagoveshchensk highway bridge was completed and qualified for goods passing; the first cross-river railway bridge between China and Russia was connected [9]. “Binhai No. 1” and “Binhai No. 2” International transport corridor transit transport cooperation continues and “Binhai No. 2” will carry out a feasibility study for unmanned corridors; Russian Railway plans to modernize the Baikal-Amur Railway and the Trans-Siberian Railway by 2023. They are the main lines of the Far East Railway [10]. The improvement of the level of infrastructure connectivity between China and Russia will greatly reduce the time and cost of goods transportation between the two places and drive the development of the Russian Far East.

New Challenges Facing Sino-Russian Agricultural Cooperation. With the deepening of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation, from the perspective of the current situation of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation, the two sides have a certain dislocation due to different policies and different concepts of product marketing, which brings a lot to the Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation challenge.

Trade protection policies restrict the scale of Sino-Russian agricultural trade. There are policy differences between China and Russia in terms of food security and agricultural product import and export management. China’s staple food security is based on domestic self-sufficiency, and the proportion of imported grains such as wheat, corn and rice in the total domestic supply is controlled within 5%. Import quotas and quality management systems are implemented for imported grains. The main purpose of import is to stabilize domestic supply and improve supply structure. The entry of Russian wheat and other grains into the Chinese market needs to follow relevant systems and procedures. It mainly includes three restrictions: First, the landing processing restrictions. For wheat, barley, corn, rice, sunflower seeds, rapeseed, soybeans and other products, they need to be processed in designated processing plants before they can be shipped out. And most of them are agricultural products that are limited to exporting and reselling of labor services to Russia and there are still difficulties and obstacles in large-scale imports. The second is import quota restrictions, and tariff quota management is implemented. The tariff within the quota is 1% and the extra quota is 65% [11]. Therefore, in the absence of import quotas, the import cost is huge and the product has no competitive advantage. Third, there are restrictions on the qualifications of importing enterprises. Chinese enterprises should engage in imported grain trade business.

In order to ensure sufficient domestic food supply and prevent price rises in agricultural products and food markets, Russia has further protected and developed its deep-processing industry of agricultural products and Russia has frequently adjusted its agricultural export policies, adding more uncertainty to trade. In addition, the two countries also set up some “obstacles” in terms of non-tariff policies [12].

The Customs Order No. 248, “Regulations on the Administration of Registration of Overseas Manufacturers of Imported Food of the People’s Republic of China”, which came into effect on January 1 2022, stipulates that all imported food manufacturers must register with the Chinese Customs. The qualifications of export enterprises have put forward higher

requirements and standards. Therefore, the trade policies implemented by the two countries also restrict the economic and trade development of the two countries.

Multiple market factors affect the level of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation. Although the quality of agricultural products and food products exported from Russia is good, they are not stable enough and lack awareness of brand marketing. Taking Russian soybean oil as an example, the color of the oil varies from batch to batch, and the packaging is simple, the bottle is easily squeezed and deformed and there is no leak-proof pull ring [13]. For the products exported to China, Russian enterprises lack Chinese market-oriented thinking. Also they are not good at marketing and cannot improve the added value of products. At the same time, there is a lack of awareness of brand protection and product fraud is common, which seriously affects the brand promotion of Russian green food in the Chinese market.

The transportation, logistics, warehousing and other agricultural infrastructure and supporting facilities in Russia are not perfect, the port hardware facilities are backward, the work efficiency is not high and the production and processing capacity is insufficient, etc. Which restrict the sustainable and rapid development of Sino-Russian agricultural trade.

At present, the main entities participating in Russian agricultural investment are mainly private enterprises, lack of large enterprises to participate in cooperation, the main body and economic form are relatively single, their own anti-risk ability is poor, lack of financial support, it is difficult to form a scale, the Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation lacks leading and driving of large enterprises [14].

Corporate financing is difficult. Agricultural production is different from other investments, overseas enterprises have a slow recovery rate and a long period of investment and they can only rely on applying for Russian commercial loans or domestic bank loans. There are not many financing channels [15]. China's policy subsidies for overseas agricultural development enterprises are far from meeting the capital needs of enterprises, while the interest rate of Russian commercial loans is relatively high and the production costs of overseas enterprises have risen accordingly. Domestic and foreign factors have caused the financing difficulties of enterprises. Especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19, small and medium-sized overseas agricultural development enterprises not only faced the dilemma of suspending production, but some enterprises were even unsustainable due to the broken capital chain. Even ignoring the irresistible factors such as the suspension of production caused by the epidemic prevention and control. The difficulty of financing overseas agricultural development enterprises is still one of the most important practical problems facing Chinese agricultural development enterprises that invest and set up factories in Russia.

Suggestions on Russian Agricultural Cooperation. In June 2021, the heads of state of China and Russia jointly issued a joint statement on the 20th anniversary of the signing of the "Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation, stating" Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, China needs a strong and successful Russia. China and Russia regard each other as a priority for cooperation partner. Based on the above analysis of the opportunities and challenges of Russian agricultural cooperation under the new situation, it is suggested that the agricultural investment and trade en-

terprises in Russia should cooperate in the following aspects.

Strengthening the communication between the government and the people at all levels. The inexhaustible driving force of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation comes from the people and the final result is also to benefit the people of the two countries. In response to some voices questioning the Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation in the private sector, it is necessary to promote the construction of a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness and justice. It is necessary to strengthen the communication between the Chinese and Russian governments, establish an effective intergovernmental consultation mechanism, further strengthen the mutual trust and friendship between the two peoples from the government and the non-governmental level and pay attention to mutual doubts and concerns in the agricultural cooperation between the two countries. If necessary, actively build a model project for agricultural cooperation, create a favorable public opinion environment for the two countries to carry out agricultural cooperation, and reduce obstacles to cooperation.

Actively participate in the construction of agricultural infrastructure in Russia. The construction of agricultural infrastructure in Russia is relatively backward and the development of agriculture-related supporting industries such as logistics, warehousing and transportation systems is seriously lagging behind that of China. Due to insufficient technology and equipment, there is a serious waste of agricultural products, which is particularly significant in the Russian Far East. Since the implementation of the strategy of developing the eastern part of Russia, the demand for investment in agricultural infrastructure construction has become increasingly strong. China has rich experience in agricultural infrastructure construction and management, so China and Russia can carry out good cooperation in this field. With the help of investment and financing platforms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Construction Fund, Chinese enterprises or Russian enterprises can be actively encouraged to participate in the agricultural infrastructure in the Russian Far East through loans from the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, the Silk Road Fund and the BRICS Development Bank. It will provide good infrastructure conditions for the large-scale and deep-level agricultural cooperation between China and Russia.

Strengthening Sino-Russian Cooperation in Agricultural Science and Technology. China and Russia are highly complementary in agricultural science and technology and agricultural machinery and equipment and agricultural science and technology cooperation in various forms and channels is conducive to the optimal allocation of agricultural resources between the two countries. Strengthening Sino-Russian agricultural science and technology cooperation is an important way to increase the agricultural output and trade volume of agricultural products in the future. The governments of the two countries should take agricultural science and technology cooperation as a breakthrough to promote the research and development and innovation of agricultural science and technology cooperation between the two countries, carry out in-depth exchanges of high-level technical personnel in agriculture and promote the import and export of agricultural technology and advanced agricultural equipment between China and Russia, so as to achieve mutual benefit. On the basis of strengthening the theoretical exchanges of agricultural science and technology between the two countries, more and more mature agricultur-

al production technologies should be introduced and implemented and after digestion and improvement. They will take root. We should focus on the introduction and transformation of agricultural scientific and technological achievements, so that the people of the two countries can see the economic benefits brought about by cooperation as soon as possible.

Coordinate Sino-Russian agricultural preferential policies and laws. Policies and laws remain unchanged for a relatively long period of time. Even if they change, they will not change much. This requires adjustment and coordination of relevant laws and policies according to the actual national conditions of China and Russia in order to provide a favorable business environment for bilateral agricultural cooperation. First, by strengthening the two-way communication at the high-level government level, it will help to negotiate and resolve the policies, laws, regulations and other related issues encountered in agricultural cooperation with Russia, so that overseas agricultural development will move towards an orderly, standardized and large-scale development path under the guidance of the government. The second is to establish an effective liaison mechanism with Russia through the establishment of specialized agencies, strengthen communication with local public departments, conduct unified leadership and consultation on foreign-related agricultural work and help solve foreign-related problems. The third is to truly implement the strategic idea of “going out”, collect and provide investment information, legal policy advice, and overseas investment risk warnings from domestic and overseas sources

to overseas agricultural development enterprises. Fourth, the government has introduced supporting policies to reduce business operating costs. Actively provide policy support to overseas development enterprises in the purchase of large agricultural machinery, handling of labor cards, training of laborers, construction of storage facilities for grain and other agricultural products, subsidies for grains, improved varieties, comprehensive subsidies and strive to allow enterprises to enjoy preferential policies.

Conclusion

China and Russia are friendly neighbors. Due to obvious geographical advantages and complementary advantages in agricultural resources, sino-Russian agricultural cooperation is a wise move to optimize the allocation of resources, which conforms to the common interests of the two peoples. The current Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation shows the continuous improvement of cooperation policies. The continuous increase in the types of agricultural products trade and the continuous expansion of agricultural cooperation fields and regions. This is the result of the joint efforts of the two countries. Although the current scale and level of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation is not high and the agricultural cooperation infrastructure is not perfect, it is possible to promote Sino-Russian cooperation by enhancing communication at all levels by actively participating in the construction of Russian agricultural infrastructure and strengthening Sino-Russian agricultural science and technology cooperation.

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Исследование пути углубления китайско-российского сельскохозяйственного сотрудничества в новых условиях

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Аннотация

Цель исследования. В статье анализируются основы, настоящее положение, существующие проблемы и будущие направления развития китайско-российского сельскохозяйственного сотрудничества в новой ситуации.

Методы исследования. В статье используются методы анализа данных и сравнительного исследования.

Содержание исследования. Россия обладает большой территорией и малыми людскими ресурсами, а в Китае обратная ситуация. Это не только обеспечивает благоприятные условия для торговли сельскохозяйственной продукцией, но и создает большой потенциал для сельскохозяйственной кооперации обеих стран. Поскольку Китай и Россия продолжают расширять открытие рынка сельскохозяйственной продукции, торговля сельскохозяйственной продукцией постепенно становится новым значительным этапом в экономическом и торговом сотрудничестве между двумя странами. Китайско-российское сельскохозяйственное сотрудничество имеет очевидные географические преимущества, хорошую взаимодополняемость сельскохозяйственных ресурсов и постоянное улучшение политики. В то же время существуют практические трудности, такие как низкий масштаб и уровень сельскохозяйственного сотрудничества и несовершенная инфраструктура сельскохозяйственной кооперации.

Выводы. Китайско-российское сельскохозяйственное сотрудничество направлено на оптимизацию распределения ресурсов, что отвечает общим интересам двух народов. Планы китайско-российского сельскохозяйственного сотрудничества постоянно совершенствуются, виды торговли сельскохозяйственной продукцией постоянно обогащаются, сферы и регионы сельскохозяйственного сотрудничества постоянно расширяются.

Ключевые слова: Китай, Россия, сельскохозяйственная кооперация, сельскохозяйственная политика, путь углубления сотрудничества.

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