



Development of Urban Modern Agriculture Gathering Momentum in China

Zhen Zhong

Assistant Professor

School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development
Renmin University of China

Modern urban agriculture is a new form of agriculture which stemmed from the development of modern cities. It started in China in the 1990s. Since the start of the 21st century, more and more cities have cultivated urban agriculture with distinctive features in the course of industrialization and urbanization, which has played an important role in supporting balanced and sustainable urban development, accelerating the formation of a new pattern of integrated urban and rural development and exploring the way of simultaneously achieving industrialization, information, urbanization and agricultural modernization.

The No.1 Central Document of 2012 stressed the need to “strengthen the emergency support function of urban agriculture” and the National Plan on Modern Agricultural Development (2011-2015) issued by the State Council expressly proposed to list “multifunctional agricultural areas in the suburbs of big cities” as the “first areas” to achieve agricultural modernization, marking that the development of modern urban agriculture has been formally elevated to the national strategic level.

To further implement the deployment of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council and accelerate the development of modern urban agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture stressed mechanism innovation and made efforts in improving coordination and guidance with a focus on the goals of “four first times”. In this way the Ministry has provided strong support to the good start of the development of modern urban agriculture during the 12th five-year plan period.

First, to have a clear idea of development, the first meeting for on-site exchanges on modern urban agriculture was held. In April 2012, the MoA held the national meeting for on-site exchanges on modern urban agriculture in Shanghai- The meeting brought together the main leaders of agriculture (livestock or fishery) authorities from 50 cities, government leaders from 22 cities and the relevant persons in charge from 14 ministries. At the meeting, the participants shared the practice and experience in the development of modern urban

agriculture in recent years. They deepened the understanding of the importance of modern urban agriculture and proposed the general idea and key tasks of the development of modern urban agriculture in the future.

Second, to make innovations in the working mechanism, the MoA carried out a general survey on modern urban agriculture jointly with universities for the first time. In July 2012, the Department of Market and Economic Information of the MoA formed seven research groups totally consisting of over 50 members in cooperation with the MoA Key Laboratory for Urban Agriculture (South) and conducted special surveys on the various key areas and sectors of modern urban agriculture in 13 large and medium-sized cities across China. The survey helped to further find out the current development of modern urban agriculture in China, broaden the intellectual and talent support needed by the development of modern urban agriculture and create a new situation where governmental department, universities and research institutes work together to promote the development of modern urban agriculture.

Third, to strengthen monitoring statistics, the monitoring indicators system for modern urban agriculture was developed for the first time. Exploration and researches were carried out in the statistics system of modern rural agriculture, and a monitoring indicators system was initially established. The system has 17 indicators and covers five aspects including the production, quality and safety of the “vegetable basket” products. The construction and application of the indicators system will provide timely and effective data support for the relevant authorities to develop supportive policies for modern urban agriculture, for the large and medium-sized cities to develop their local plans on the development of modern urban agriculture development, and for the agricultural authorities at all levels to guide agricultural production and operations.

Fourth, to strengthen the guidance on work, the guidance on the development of modern urban development was for the first time. In August 2012, the MoA issued the guidance on accelerating the development of modern urban agriculture, which explicitly proposed to accelerate the formation of a national agricultural productivity layout with positive interaction between the suburbs of cities and the production areas of competitive and unique agricultural products and further refined the objectives and specific measures for the development of modern urban agriculture in the next five years.

The MoA coordinated with many press media under the CPC Central Committee and ministries, including the Daily website, Farmers' Daily and China Agricultural Information Network, to wide report the development of modern urban agriculture across China and created a special journal for the exchanges on modern urban agriculture. These efforts have helped form a sound environment where the development of modern urban agriculture receives care and support from the whole society.

Date submitted: Oct. 29, 2014

Received, edited and uploaded: Nov. 4, 2014