

China's Ministry of Agriculture Listed the First Group of Valuable Agricultural Cultural Heritage

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Agricultural cultural heritage refers to a unique agricultural production system that was created during the coexistence between human beings and the environment in which they lived in and has been preserved since its creation. The production system consists of rich agro-biodiversity, traditional knowledge and technology systems and unique ecological and cultural landscape. On May 21, 2013, the MoA (Ministry of Agriculture) published the first group of valuable agricultural cultural heritage of China ahead of the 8th "Day of Cultural Heritage".

China's long-standing agricultural culture is the foundation of the Chinese civilization. With a unique and diversified natural endowment, the Chinese nation created via its diligence and wisdom various kinds of traditional agricultural production systems that featured notable characteristics and unified economic and ecological values. Those system not only promoted agricultural development, livelihood of common people and social progress. It also gave birth to the splendid Chinese civilization, which as agricultural cultural heritages, deserved careful protection and preservation. However, as a result of lack of systematic and effective protection, some of those valuable agricultural cultural heritage were faced with risks of being damaged, forgotten and even abandoned during the progress of rapid economic development, accelerated urbanization and supplication of modern technology.

An inheriting system of fine traditional culture was proposed at the 18th CPC National Congress to carry forward fine traditional Chinese culture. As the agricultural cultural heritage is an important traditional cultural heritage, it is within the responsibility of agricultural authorities at all levels to search and protect it. In a bid to strengthen the search, protection, preservation and utilization of China's valuable agricultural cultural heritage across the country, then formulated Identification Criteria for Valuable Agricultural Cultural Heritage of China and started as planned to search for valuable agricultural cultural heritage in 2012. According to the philosophy of "protecting the heritages during research and inheriting them during utilization", efforts were made to explore the historical value, cultural and social function of those heritage in a bid to show to the public the essence and fine philosophical thoughts embedded in them while seeking methods and approaches to establish a dynamic protection mechanism for China's valuable agricultural cultural heritage, with an eye to unifying its cultural, ecological, social and economic benefits.

Authorities at the local levels attached great emphasis on the nationwide search by actively searching for valuable agricultural culture heritage on their own. Based on the Identification Criteria for Valuable Agricultural Cultural Heritage of China, along with strict review and appraisal by experts organized by the MoA, 19 traditional agricultural systems including Xuanhua vineyard of Hebei Province (out of over 40 applications submitted by local governments and provincial leisure agriculture administration authorities) were first listed as

valuable agricultural cultural heritage. Among those listed, there were four rice planting systems, namely, Lianhe Terrace of Youxi Country, Fujian Province, Wannian Rice Planting Cultural System of Jiangxi Province, Ziquejie Terrace of Xinhua Country, Hunan Province; and Hani Rice Terrace System of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province; four distinctive agricultural systems, namely, Aoqan Dry Farming Agricultural system of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Kuandian Traditional Ginseng Planting System of Liaoning Province, Xinghua Traditional Riverside Field Agricultural System of Jiangsu Province and Karez Agricultural System of Turpan of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; Six agricultural complex systems, namely, Qingtian Rice-Fish symbiotic System, Fuzhou Jasmine Planting and Tea Culture System of Fujian Province, Yangbi Walnut-Crop Complex System, Pu'er Ancient Tea Field and Tea Culture System of Yunnan Province, Dongxiang Rice-Fish-Duck Symbiotic System of Congjiang Country, Guizhou Province and Zhagana Agriculture-Forestry-Husbandry Complex System; and five distinctive orchards, namely, Xuanhua vineyard of Hebei Province, Nanguo Pear Planting System of Anshan City, Liaoning Province; Kuaiji Mountain Torreta Tree Area of Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Province, jiaxian Ancient Jujube Orchard of Shaanxi Province and Sichuan Ancient Pear Orchard. With a long history, all of them have unique products, rich biological resources, complete knowledge system and high aesthetic and culture values, featuring dynamism, adaptability and complexity while being of strategic value, multi-functional and on the verge on extinction.

Containing the philosophical thinking that human beings are an integral part of nature and representing vitality and creativity of Chinese nation, the Chinese agricultural culture that has run through traditional Chinese culture is considered as the essence of wisdom of all nations and treasure of human civilization. As specific measures taken by the agricultural system to implement the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress, search, protection, preservation and utilization of those cultural heritage have not only promoted agricultural culture and people's sense of recognition and pride for their national culture while boosting agricultural sustainable development, but also made good use of those valuable agricultural cultural heritage as important sources of history, culture and landscape to enrich development of leisure agriculture so as to sustain the development momentum, add job opportunities and income for farmers living in those heritage areas and preserve those agricultural cultural heritage while making use of them.

In addition, the MoA which was initiated in 2013 is the second round of search for valuable agricultural cultural heritage in China.

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