CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

FOOD SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This article examines Chinese agribusiness activity in the Russian Far East in the context of food security in China and Russia following COVID-19 (2020) and the Ukrain Crisis (2022), both of which disrupted global food supply chains, particularly for corn, soy, and grain. After Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine, China resumed food imports from the U.S. to offset the loss of Ukrainian supplies, while demand for Russian agricultural products surged in China, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The Russian Far East, with its geographic proximity and logistical advantages, gained strategic importance in this context. Drawing on field research conducted in Primorsky Krai, Amur Oblast, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast (2014–2019, 2022–2023), this study assesses the risks and opportunities of Chinese agribusiness in the region for Russia. Findings indicate that production capacity and infrastructure limitations prevent the Russian Far East from fully substituting for Ukrainian corn or American soy in the Chinese market. However, the region's advantages—shorter supply routes and favorable conditions for GMO-free soybeans and rice—reinforce its role in China's premium food supply. For Russia, growing Chinese demand for crops supports regional economic development, though investment in dairy and meat industries remains crucial for national food security. Given China's strategic focus on food security, agricultural cooperation enhances cross-border economic ties and fosters deeper collaboration between Russian and Chinese agribusinesses, ultimately strengthening bilateral economic relations and regional prosperity in the Russian Far East.

Keywords:

Russia; China; Russian Far East; food security; Chinese farmers; food supply chains; agriculture; Chinese market

Introduction: Research Design and Methods

According to the report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization[1], food insecurity and climate change are, more than ever, the two major global challenges humanity is facing, and climate change is increasingly per-

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[1] *Moiseley B.* Food insecurity and climate change are the two major global challenges humanity is facing // CFC High-level Panel of Experts. 01.12.2022. URL: https://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/insights/news-insights/news-detail/food-insecurity-and-climate-change-are-the-two-major-global-challenges-humanity-is-facing/en (accessed: 01.02.2025).

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ceived as one of the greatest challenges for food security[2]. However, international processes also impact food security. China serves as a notable example. Since 2018, the country has faced disruptions in trade flows essential for its food security due to the trade war with the United States, which has adversely affected its agricultural imports [Zhang Hongzhou 2020]. Since 2022, following the onset of the hostilities in Ukraine, China has also experienced disruptions in the supply of certain types of agricultural products, primarily corn, from regions affected by military actions [Li Wei 2023]. These developments highlight that food security is an integral aspect of international processes and can be effectively analyzed within the framework of International Relations.

Russia-China economic relations are oftentimes analyzed in terms of energy trade. However, agricultural trade also plays a significant role in bilateral relations, a topic extensively covered in the literature [Aleksandrova 2017; Makarov 2017; Rau 2018][3]. Scholars typically examine whether Russia can meet China's agricultural demands and whether the expansion of trade with China poses risks to Russia's own food security.

Another dimension of research focuses on the activities of Chinese farmers and agricultural enterprises in Russia, primarily explored through anthropological studies [Ryzhova 2014; Humphrey 2018; Koreshkova 2021; Ivanov 2023]. Scholars examining these issues typically focus on the activities of the Chinese farmers in Russia, but devote less attention to their contribution to food security and local development [except for Zhou 2016][4]. Given this, the author aims to integrate both approaches by examining the activities of Chinese farmers in Russia, particularly in the Russian Far East. By analyzing current trends, this study explores their impact on food supply in both countries.

The research question is as follows: *how have recent trends in the international and domestic policies of Russia and China influenced the activities of Chinese farmers in Russia and the food security of both countries?* The answer to this question is particularly relevant from a practical perspective, as it can inform the development of long-term socio-economic programs for the region. In this context, special attention is accorded to the historical dimension, which provides a comprehensive analysis of Chinese farmers in Russia while preserving the crucial contextual background.

In order to collect information on this topic in 2022 – 2023, the author undertook two field trips to the Russian Far East (the Jewish Autonomous Region: Leninsky and Smidovichsky Districts in 2022 and Primorsky Krai: Pogranichny, Khankaysky, Chuguevsky and Khasansky Districts, and Amur Oblast: Blagoveshchensky region in 2023). The results were triangulated with field trips to various regions of the southern Far East carried out earlier (in 2014 in the Jewish Autonomous Region and Primorsky Krai, 2017 in the same place, 2019 in Primorsky and Khabarovsk Krai, the results of which are published in [Zuenko 2015; Zuenko, Sonin 2017; Zuenko et al. 2019]). The field research employed participant observation methods and semi-structured interviews with key market participants, including

[2] In this article, the author defines food security as the state of the economy of a country in which citizens have physical, economic and social access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food products necessary for an active and healthy life and corresponding to their usual diet. Understanding the characteristics of food security in China is based mainly on the works of Russian researcher Lyudmila Boni [2022; 2024]. The provisions of the official doctrine of food security of the Russian Federation were also taken into account (approved by the President of Russia in 2010): http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/economic/document108/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[3] *Kortunov A.* Significance of China-Russia Food Security Cooperation Goes Beyond Bilateral // Russian International Affairs Council. 24.10.2023. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/significance-of-china-russia-food-security-cooperation-goes-beyond-bilateral/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[4] *Donellon-May G., Zhang Hongzhou.* The Sino-Russian Land Grain Corridor and China's Quest for Food Security // Asia Society Policy Institute. 08.05.2024. URL: https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/sino-russian-land-grain-corridor-and-chinas-quest-food-security (accessed: 01.02.2025).

employees of Chinese corporations COFCO and Beidaihe, as well as officials from rural administrations in Primorsky Krai and the Jewish Autonomous Region competent enough to provide reliable information about the situation in the area. A total of 12 interviews were conducted in July-August 2023 and September-October 2024 (the names of the informants are not disclosed by agreement with them)[5].

Also, materials of the author's previous research projects on agriculture in the Far East written in collaboration with an international group of researchers from China, Russia and Poland were actively used in the work on the article, including Fu Yijin et al [2020a, 2020b], Gudaj et al. [2020a, 2020b].

To examine the situation of Chinese farmers in the Russian Far East, the author utilized both published and unpublished materials. Published sources included data from official government reports and media outlets, with only the most authoritative and verified sources selected by the author, who lived and worked in the region for an extended period and, in some cases, personally advised journalists[6]. Unpublished materials (not 'for internal use'), such as reports from the Primorsky Krai administration and the "Far East Development Corporation," were obtained through interviews with officials from these institutions.

The research follows a structured approach to addressing the outlined objectives. First, it examines food security in China and Russia's role in ensuring it. Next, it analyzes the presence of Chinese farmers in the Russian Far East, adding a historical perspective to contextualize the challenges they face. A comparative analysis of Russian and Chinese perspectives on the contribution of these farmers to the food security of both countries follows, identifying key trends shaping their activities. The study then concludes with an assessment of how these trends impact both Chinese farming in the region and broader food security dynamics.

Given the compact format of the research article, the comprehensive discussion of all relevant aspects of Chinese farmers in the Far East, as well as comparative insights from other regions, is beyond scope. In this regard, we refer readers to consult other studies that analyze theoretical approaches to the study of Chinese land use [Ryzhova 2014], the impact of Chinese farmers on migration processes [Ivanov 2014], agricultural trade between Russia and China [Zuenko 2024], and Chinese local administations' attitudes toward farmers operating in Russia [Cui Xueqin 2010; Cui Yong 2013]. Additionally, comparative perspectives on Chinese agricultural expansion in other regions can be found in [Brautigam, Xiaoyang 2009; Brautigam, Stensrud 2012; Lagerkvist 2014][7].

Food Security in China

China is the world largest producer and consumer of agricultural products. And while the country has achieved significant economic success, the food culture of its population has been changing rapidly over the past few decades. People are consuming increasing amounts of animal-based products, primarily meats, while the proportion of dairy products in the everyday diet of Chinese people has also risen significantly [Boni 2022: 80]. Crop products, which have been the foundation of the Chinese diet for centuries, remain in high demand, with rising quality standards [Fukase 2015].

As a result, China has become the dominant player on the global agricultural market. It accounts for 90% of agricultural production in East Asia, including nearly all corn, 90% of rice, and 80% of wheat produced in the subregion. China also leads the region in fish pro-

[5] The study was designed and conducted in line with established best practices. Following methodological guidelines, participants were clearly briefed on the research objectives and how their qualitative data would be processed and managed. Information fact-checking procedures were conducted afterwards.

[6] *Zakharov A., Napalkova A.* Why Chinese Farmers Have Crossed Boarder Into Russia's Far East // BBC News. 01.11.2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50185006 (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[7] *Nunez Salas M.* China's Investments and Land Use in Latin America. Miami: MIU Press. 2022. 30 p. URL: https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/jgi_research/49 (accessed: 01.02.2025).

duction (90%), pork (56%), and poultry (28%) [Bulatov 2023: 82]. However, despite its vast production capability, China remains one of the world's largest net food importers, importing significant quantities of products in which it is the global leader (rice, wheat), or a top producer (corn).

Beijing views this situation as a challenge. The 2019 white paper "Food Security in China" set a target of 95% of rice, wheat and corn consumption through domestic production [Boni 2022: 81]. The goal of achieving food self-sufficiency was reiterated in the "No. 1 Central Document" for 2024 – the first guideline of the year issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. The document, which traditionally focuses on agricultural and rural development, specifically underscored the importance of soybean and other oil crops production for 2024.

Still, several obstacles hinder the achievement of this goal. First, there is a shortage of cropland available for expanding production. The rapid growth of initiatives aimed at improving public welfare has further reduced agricultural land, as former rural areas are increasingly converted into residential developments and industrial facilities. As a result, despite having the world's largest population – approximately 20% of the global total – China has access to only 7% of the world's cropland [Wang Haoran et al. 2024].

Second, Chinese agriculture faces significant challenges due to climate change, water shortages, and the dewatering of formerly fertile areas. Third, the net cost of food production in China continues to rise, driven by increasing wages and related expenses, such as fertilizers, POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants), and equipment. In contrast, many countries experience either declining production costs or slower cost growth. As a result, without government support, Chinese farmers would operate at a loss and struggle to compete with foreign suppliers. To implement its food independence policy, the government has expanded agricultural financing while introducing tariff rate quotas on crops.

While China has nearly exhausted all avenues for significantly increasing agricultural production, external crises have further exacerbated this situation.

China's food security suffered a significant blow due to a trade war initiated by the United States in 2018. In response to President Donald Trump's sharp tariff increases on Chinese imports, Beijing imposed retaliatory tariffs on 659 items produced in the United States, including soybeans and other essential agricultural goods. This disrupted established trade flows, wreaking havoc in global markets and forcing existing supply chains to regroup.

Beyond trade conflicts, China's food security has also been affected by epidemic outbreaks in industrial farming, such as the 2018–2019 African swine fever epidemic, which led to pork shortages. Additionally, a rising number of droughts and natural disasters continue to pose ongoing challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic further strained China's agricultural sector by paralyzing global trade – most notably the shipping industry – leading to disruptions in fertilizers, animal feed, and food disruption for two consecutive years.

In response, China intensified its efforts to secure food supplies, which involved stockpiling food products in massive reserves. In 2021, China accounted for half of all the food products purchased globally. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2022, China's state-managed food reserves held 69% of the world's corn reserves, 60% of its rice, and 51% of its wheat[8].

Among Chinese crop fields, the Northeast China Plain, which borders Russia, is considered nation's breadbasket. In 2023, grain and oil crop production in Heilongjiang province – the eastern region with the longest Russia – China border – was estimated at 77.8 million tons (11.2% of China's total production), with cultivated area of 14.7 million hectares (12.4%

[8] *Donellon-May G., Zhang Hongzhou*. What Do We Really Know About China's Food Security? // The Diplomat. 07.02.2023. URL: https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/what-do-we-really-know-about-chinas-food-security/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

of the country total), making it the country's leader in both indicators[9]. Major crops in the region include corn, soy, and rice.

Northeast China is also home to key processing facilities for agricultural raw materials, particularly non-genetically modified soybeans. This makes the region one of the most active in seeking agricultural cooperation with Russia. At the same time, significant volumes of Russian agricultural products are shipped by sea to ports of eastern and southern China. While Russia's overall contribution to China's food security remains moderate, it is nonetheless noteworthy.

Russia's Contribution to Food Security in China

Since 2016, Russia has been the leading grain exporter in the world. According to Russian Federal State Statistics Service, in 2023, the Russian grain harvest amounted to 142.6 million tons, including 92.8 million tons of wheat (more than 10% of the total global production), and the country exported more than 80 million tons (over 28% of global exports)[10]. In 2023–2024, the total output of Russian agricultural enterprises was estimated at approximately 18 million tons of barley (about 12% of global production) and 13 million tons of corn (about 1% of global production). However, it is worth noting that many countries allow their farmers to grow higher yield genetically modified (GM) corn, which is not the case for Russia. The latter exported 4.5 million tons of barley (approximately 14% of global exports) and 5.3 million tons of corn (2.8% of global exports)[11].

At present, Russia exports wheat to over 100 countries. Ten Middle Eastern nations account for approximately one-third of Russia's exports; six North African nations make up 20% of its exports; three South Asian countries account for another 20%; and Central Asian countries receive approximately 7.5%. Other regions each import less than 5% of Russia's wheat exports. The top ten importers are Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Syria, Sudan, and Libya[12].

As we can see, China is not among the major importers of Russian grain. This can be attributed to differences in consumer preferences. Russia primarily produces wheat, which is in high demand in the Middle East and the Maghreb states. However, China is more interested in soybeans and corn, mainly grown in Russia's Far East.

When speaking about the Russian Far East, it is essential to consider its location and fundamental characteristics. According to the Russian government's definition, the Russian Far East (Far Eastern Federal District) consists of eleven federal subjects: three krais, two republics, four oblasts, one autonomous oblast, and one autonomous district. It encompasses all of Russia's eastern territories, stretching from Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia to the Pacific Ocean, and shares land borders with China, Mongolia, and North Korea.

As a remote region, the Russian Far East has always been highly dependent on the central government subsidies and on other parts of the country for consumer goods – including agricultural products. It has never been particularly food self-sufficient, and fresh produce became even more valuable in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Russian Far East has a population of approximately 8 million people and covers an area of 6.95 million square kilometers, resulting in population density of just over one person per square kilometer, making it one of the

[9] China's largest grain-producing province sees bumper harvest this year // PRC State Council Information Office. 12.12.2023. URL: http://english.scio.gov.cn/pressroom/2023-12/12/content_116873340.htm (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[10] Results of Imports and Exports of Agricultural Products in the Russian Federation for 2023 // GrainRus. URL: https://grainrus.com/en/news/articles/results-of-imports-and-exports-of-agricultural-products-in-the-russian-federation-for-2023/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[11] *Reidy S.* Focus on Russia // World-grain. 21.10.2024. URL: https://www.world-grain.com/articles/20608-focus-on-russia (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[12] Calculated according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). URL: https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/wheat/reporter/rus (accessed: 01.02.2025).

most sparsely populated regions in the world. Most of its territory consists of taiga, tundra, and polar areas, rendering agriculture impractical in many regions. The main agricultural zones are located in the southern part of the Far Eastern Federal District, where the majority of the population and infrastructure are concentrated. The two most significant crop-producing areas are the Suifen-Khanka meadows in Primorsky Krai and the Zeya-Bureya Plains in Amur Oblast. These regions have optimal conditions for cultivating soybeans, rice, corn, and runner beans, closely resembling the agricultural environment of the Northeast China Plain. Additionally, they provide good access to animal feed, making them suitable for cattle and pig farming.

However, due to the region's short growing season and underdeveloped supply chains, there remains a constant unmet demand for fresh fruit and vegetables in the Russian Far East. As a result, these products are imported for most of the year, primarily from China and Central Asia.

For decades, Chinese companies have steadily expanded their investments in foreign agricultural and food assets. Their primary aims are to generate profits for Chinese investors while ensuring national food security. China's foreign direct investment (FDI) in agriculture is concentrated in developing countries across Asia, along with select developed nations, including Singapore, New Zealand, the United States, and Australia. The sparsely populated Russian Far East (Russian Far East), which shares an extensive border with China, is considered as one of Beijing's key "targets" for investment in agriculture.

Rise of 'Chinese Farmers in Russia' Phenomenon

In the early 1990s, Chinese farms and greenhouses began to appear in the countryside and near urban centers of the Russian Far East, along the increasingly liberalized border with China. Chinese workers were first hired by state and collective farms to compensate for the local labor shortage[13], while Soviet enterprises in other sectors of the economy historically hired workers from Vietnam and North Korea. Chinese workers soon began leasing plots of farmland, where they cultivated vegetables, mostly for the local market. This was made possible by China's rapid population growth, the low cost of hiring Chinese workers, and the fact that Russian government was more lenient in economic regulation at the time, especially in the peripheral parts of the Russian Federation. Chinese workers played a crucial role in sustaining the local agricultural sector during that time. As profits increased, word-of-mouth and active corporate recruitment expanded in China, setting off a chain of migration and a so-called farming rush for Russian land, as reported by Chinese media outlets [Zhou Jiayi 2016].

Furthermore, Chinese businesses, which generated substantial profits from cross-border trade in the border areas of Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces, began investing in agriculture in the border areas of the Russian Far East. These investments were often based on personal ties between Chinese and Russian partners, forged through mutual cross-border trade. Therefore, most success stories of Chinese agrarian entrepreneurship originated in the 1990s, and since then, no other group has rivaled the success of businessmen from small border towns in Heilongjiang – specifically Dongning County and Heihe City[14].

One such success story is the company Armada, which, according to one local official, spread "like an octopus spreads its tentacles up and down the territory of Primorsky Krai." Armada is part of the Chinese Huaxin Corporation, which is based in Dongning, and has now expanded its business beyond agriculture into real estate development in Vladivostok and

[13] In 1988, the Suifenhe Municipal Government signed the first contract for vegetable cultivation with Baranovsky State Farm (Barano-Orenburgskoye village in Pogranichny municipal district) in Primorsky Krai.

[14] Dongning duie nongye kaifa quanguo lingxian [Dongning is the National Leader of Development of Agricultural Cooperation with Russia.] // Heilongjiang Jishi, 31.12.2013. URL: http://hlj.ce.cn/sy/gd/201312/31/t20131231_1283433.shtml (accessed: 01.02.2025).

Ussuriysk. At the height of its operations in 2013, the company had seven branch offices in Primorsky Krai, and its farmlands covered an area of approximately 40,000 hectares (around 10% of all croplands in Primorsky Krai at that time). An example of a local leading agribusiness in a less economically developed area is the company Urmi from Smidovichsky District in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. It is registered as a limited liability company, with 100% foreign capital and is owned by the Chinese national Lü Qingwen from Jiamusi City in Heilongjiang province. The company has operated in Russia since the early 2000s, and has become one of the region's largest soybean producers. It leases approximately 3,000 hectares of land from Russian farmers for soybean cultivation[15].

After 2014, with the weakening of the Russian ruble (which made Russian products cheaper for Chinese customers), cross-border agriculture became highly attractive for large-scale Russian agribusinesses, which began investing heavily in agricultural production in the Russian Far East with a view of accessing the Chinese market. The largest of these new players is the Rusagro Group, a major Russian agribusiness conglomerate. In recent years, Rusagro has aggressively expanded into the regional market by purchasing land and leasing plots at higher-than-average rates. As a result, landowners who had previously rented their land to Armada at lower rates shifted their business to Rusagro. This led to Armada losing its land leases and eventually exiting the agricultural sector.

This marked a turning point in the presence of Chinese agrarian capital in the region. Whereas in the past, individual farmers and small Chinese-owned companies dominated the sector, the most influential player from China today is the state-owned COFCO Corporation. It opened an office in Vladivostok and announced plans to build infrastructure for the storage and transportation of crops – but not for cultivation. It has since become a major purchaser of agricultural products from the Russian Far East for the Chinese market[16].

Primorsky Krai and Amur Oblast are the leading regions in agricultural production in the Russian Far East, yet the nature of Chinese involvement varies. In the early 2000s, approximately 25% of Primorye's croplands were cultivated by Chinese- and Korean-owned businesses, but the situation changed significantly in 2014–2019 due to the arrival of large-scale Russian agribusinesses, and the devaluation of the Russian ruble [Zuenko et al. 2019]. In 2019, for example, around 66,700 hectares of croplands (14% of the total) were cultivated by companies with Chinese capital, primarily for soybeans production[17]. Chinese involvement in pig farming has also declined. However, Chinese farmers remain dominant in vegetable and rice production due to their specialized expertise and willingness to engage in this labor-intensive and low-profit sector.

In Amur Oblast, the situation differs due to the historical protectionism of local elites towards domestic producers, and the elimination of foreign labor quotas, which were reduced to zero from 2010 onwards. When hiring Chinese became legally impossible, Chinese companies showed little interest in operating locally or competing with regional producers. At present, Chinese entrepreneurs operate in Amur Oblast, but exclusively as buyers of soybeans crops[18].

However, Primorsky Krai and Amur Oblast are the most developed and densely populated areas of the Russian Far East, both with a small but stable labor force reserve. In contrast, the situation in the neighboring Jewish Autonomous Oblast is markedly different, character-

[15] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023).

[16] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector, Russian citizen hired in Chinese company (2023).

[17] *Zakharov A., Napalkova A.* Why Chinese Farmers Have Crossed Boarder Into Russia's Far East // BBC News. 01.11.2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50185006 (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[18] However, according to conclusions of BBC journalists Andrei Zakharov and Anastasia Napalkova, companies with Chinese capital in agriculture of Amur Oblast cultivate approximately 118,000 hectgares (9% of all croplands).

ized by a severe labor shortage, compounded by harsh climatic conditions, and terrain largely unsustainable for agriculture. As a result, large-scale Russian companies are absent in the oblast, while Chinese capital and labor forces dominate.

According to official statistics, the total area of croplands leased by Chinese farmers increased from 27,000 hectares in 2014 to 59,000 hectares in 2019, accounting for 36.5% of all croplands in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, primarily used for soybeans production[19]. At the same time, croplands of a comparable or even larger size are cultivated unofficially by the Chinese via the practice of informal sub-leasing of land. Russian landowners formally register as farm operators but, in reality, lease their land to Chinese farmers, merely collecting rent while exerting no real control over their "subordinates." According to a speech by the former Governor of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast Alexander Levintal, Chinese businesses control (or, at least, controlled in the recent past) approximately 80% of all croplands in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast[20].

Agriculture in other regions of the Russian Far East remains underdeveloped due to specific climatic conditions and challenging terrain. In Khabarovsky Krai, despite ambitious plans to foster pig farming and crop farming with the involvement of Chinese capital[21], few Chinese entrepreneurs have shown sufficient interest in making investments.

Soy is the most profitable crop in the Russian Far East, and due to the stable demand from local manufacturers (from soybean sauce, tofu, mayonnaise, soybean additives to sausage and other meat products) there is little necessity for exports[22]. However, customs statistics indicate that most soybean crops from the Far East are exported to China [Zuenko 2024]. Vegetables cultivation near major cities (Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Birobidzhan, Ussuriysk, etc.) is also profitable, though these crops primarily serve local markets.

Almost all interviewed experts agree that dairy and livestock breeding in the specific climatic and demographic conditions of the Russian Far East is not particularly profitable or requires substantial investment. Nonetheless, several Chinese-owned pig-breeding farms operate in Primorsky Krai, with some facilities housing between 6,500 and 10,000 pigs. Prospects for cattle and pig farming are tied to the potential lifting of Chinese related exports embargo. In 2019, the embargo on milk exports was lifted, and during the Eastern Economic Forum, ambitious plans were announced to build a large-scale cattle farm in Khorolsky District of Primorsky Krai to supply the Chinese dairy manufacturer Mengniu in Heilongjiang Province[23]. However, the primary Chinese investor, Zhongding Dairy, had previously announced similar plans, which never translated into concrete agreements[24].

Chinese farmers sell their products both in China and in local markets. Based on previous research on Chinese investment in overseas agriculture, particularly the work of Brautigam and Stensrud (2012), there is insufficient evidence to suggest that Chinese companies in the Russian Far East operate primarily to ensure

[19] 89,900 hectares, according to estimates by Zakharov and Napalkova.

[20] Levintal: Kitaytsy kontroliruyut 80% sel'hozugodiy EAO [Levintal: Chinese Control 80% of Croplands of Jewish Autonomus Region] // EAOMedia. 22.06.2015. URL: https://eaomedia.ru/news/445017/?from=35 (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[21] *Rudenko Y.* Kitayskaya ekspansiya: rayon Lazo riskuet stat' Chayna-taunom [Chinese Expansion: Lazo Rayon Is in Peril of becoming a Chinatown] // DVHAB.RU. 08.05.2018. URL: https://www.dvnovosti.ru/khab/2018/05/08/82520 (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[22] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023).

[23] *Diatlovskaia E.* Agroholding Vladimira Evtushenkova i kitayskaya Mengniu vlozhat 45 mlrd rubley v molochnye fermy [Agroholding of Vladimir Evtushenkov and Chinese Mengniu Corporation to invest 45 Bln Roubles in Dairy Farms] // AGROInvestor. 03.09.2019. URL: https://www.agroinvestor.ru/companies/news/32345-afk-sistema-i-mengniu-dairy/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[24] *Ivanova D.* Kitayskie investory namereny razvivat' molochnoe zhivotnovodstvo v Primor'e [Chinese Investors Intend To Develop Dairy Farming In Primorye] // Primorsky Krai Government Official Website. 19.12.2017. URL: https://primorsky.ru/news/137796/?type=special (accessed: 01.02.2025).

China's national food security. Instead, their activities appear to be driven mostly by commercial interests. Moreover, available data indicate that Chinese involvement in the region's agricultural sector has been gradually declining. Earlier the rise of Chinese farmers in the Russian Far East, beginning in the 1990s, was driven by labor shortages, cross-border trade ties, and lenient regulations, leading to significant Chinese dominance in vegetable and soybean cultivation. However, the landscape shifted after 2014 due to the ruble's depreciation, the entry of large Russian agribusinesses, and stricter labor policies, reducing Chinese agrarian influence in regions like Primorsky Krai and Amur Oblast. While Chinese capital remains strong in labor-scarce areas like the Jewish Autonomous Oblast — where informal leasing practices persist — overall engagement has declined, with state-owned COFCO now focusing on trade rather than cultivation. Despite early successes, Chinese agricultural involvement in the region appears to be receding, with profitability and market dynamics favoring Russian producers and export-oriented operations rather than large-scale Chinese farming expansion.

Challenges for Chinese Agriculture Business and Ways to Resolve Them

Since the early 1990s, three main factors have driven the competitiveness of Chinese agricultural businesses in the Russian Far East: 1) access to a Chinese labor force; 2) proximity to the vast Chinese markets; and 3) availability of low-interest loans from Chinese banks.

The key to the success of Chinese agricultural businesses appears to lie in state support, at least according to the strong belief among the experts interviewed. This support is provided through access to low-interest loans from banks in China, as well as the possibility of direct financial assistance from the Chinese government. The conceptual framework for financing Chinese companies investing abroad was established under the "Going Out" policy adopted in China in the early 2000s. Agricultural investments abroad were designated as a high priority by the Chinese state. For instance, according to Chinese media sources, Xinyu from Mudanjiang (Heilongjiang province) claimed to have received 120 million renminbi (approximately $16.7 million) in 2013 and 270 million renminbi (approximately $30.7 million) in 2014 in financial support for its "Novaya Druzhba" ("New Friendship") project in Khorolsky District, Primorsky Krai[25]. These are substantial figures. However, most of this investment seemingly vanished without ever materializing into a large-scale agricultural enterprise in Russia.

However, it is misleading to regard Chinese agricultural companies as a homogenous entity. As Zhou Jiayi has noted, Chinese agricultural businesses in the Russian Far East operate in four distinct forms: 1) individuals migrating to Russia as farm workers and wage laborers, hired by Chinese agencies or intermediaries, with no evidence of state support for this type of migration; 2) "family farms" – a term that, according to Zhou, does not refer to family-based labor but rather to modern, professional, and entrepreneurial farms of moderate to large-scale that have become targets for state support [Zhou Jiayi 2016]; 3) large-scale enterprises (i.e. Huaxin-Armada) which do not exclusively hire Chinese workers, but also employ locals and may have business interests in other industries; 4) and state-owned farms – for example, the state-owned Beidahuang Group, one of China's largest agribusiness companies (headquartered in Harbin), had opened nine branches in Russia, operating 28 farms, three "dragon head" enterprises, and over 30 projects, ranging from grain production and processing and livestock breeding to timber harvesting.

As Chinese agricultural businesses have evolved, subsidiaries of large-scale state-owned companies (e.g. COFCO) have emerged as industry leaders. Another notable trend is the gradual decrease in the use of Chinese labor,

[25] *Lu Hongjie, Guan Xianchang*. "Xin Youyi" dazao zhong'e nongye hezuo shengjiban ["New Friendship" Project Raises Level of Sino-Russian Cooperation in Agriculture] // Heilongjiang Daily. 06.07.2014. URL: https://www.gov.cn/govweb/xinwen/2014-07/06/content_2713129.htm (accessed: 01.02.2025).

which has been a strategic decision by major companies like COFCO, positioning themselves primarily as buyers and processors rather than producers. For smaller farms, however, this shift poses a competitive challenge[26].

The preference of Chinese companies to hire their compatriots is often attributed to their perceived "better working characteristics" – such as discipline and diligence – compared to Russian or post-Soviet Central Asian workers. Yet the actual reasons are economic. As Sergei Ivanov [2014] highlights, hiring Chinese workers is not necessarily cheaper – considering wages and recruitment-related expenses – but it is more convenient for employers since Chinese seasonal workers are willing to work overtime, endure poor living conditions, and do not expect social benefits or career advancement, making them a more flexible labor force from a business perspective. Moreover, hiring Chinese seasonal workers enables companies to operate without investing in production and social infrastructure. For instance, Chinese greenhouse farmers typically live in makeshift summer huts near workplaces, eliminating the need for companies to provide comfortable dormitories for workers and their families. This cost-cutting measures explain why even Russian farms continue to hire Chinese workers, despite the requirement to engage Chinese recruitment agents for their employment.

Reducing quotas for Chinese workers to zero, as in the case of Amur Oblast[27], will likely decrease the activity of Chinese agricultural enterprises, particularly small ones. However, local authorities in several regions are not able to afford such protectionist measures. For example, in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast there is no viable alternative to Chinese farmers and buyers of crops. Similarly, in Primorsky Krai, the reduction of quotas to zero in 2020 posed a serious challenge for certain districts struggling to recruit local workers, such as Mayskoe and Oktyabrskoye villages in Khankaysky District. It also impacted certain spheres of agriculture where Chinese farmers comprise the majority of workforce, notably in greenhouse vegetables and rice production.

Furthermore, hiring workers from China has become increasingly difficult, not only due to the protectionist measures introduced by the Russian authorities, but also because of rising incomes in China and the decline in seasonal workers' wages in Russia, following the depreciation of the Russian ruble. For example, the average monthly salary for seasonal workers in planting was 25,000–30,000 rubles, equivalent to 5,000–6,000 renminbi (approximately $730–870) before 2014, but by 2025, it had dropped to 2,000–2,500 renminbi (approximately $280–330)[28]. Local farmers offer Russian seasonal workers 700–1,200 rubles per day, which translates to a comparable monthly wage[29].

In practice, it is relatively straightforward for a villager who is a Russian citizen to secure employment in a city that offers a salary commensurate with their qualifications, such as car park attendant, shop attendant, or taxi driver. Due to this ease of access to such positions, farmers are reluctant to offer villagers permanent employment, opting instead to hire them only during planting and harvesting seasons[30]. Consequently, it is not surprising that only the poorest and least skilled villagers agree to "seasonal" work in the fields. In contrast, Chinese agricultural workers, including seasonal laborers, are generally well-skilled, have experience of working in specific climates, and are modest in their daily lives. According to the experts interviewed, challenges in hiring foreign work-

[26] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2024).

[27] *Gvozdovskaya E.* Kakie otrasli Amurskoy oblasti ostanutsya bez migrantov i kak eto povliyaet na ekonomiku i rynok truda [Which sectors of the Amur Region will be left without migrants and how will this affect the economy and labor market] // Amur Pravda. 05.12.2024. URL: https://ampravda.ru/2024/12/04/kakie-otrasli-amurskojj-oblasti-ostanutsja-bez-migrantov (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[28] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2024).

[29] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2024).

[30] Of course, skilled workers such as machine operators, who earn 50,000–70,000 roubles, are excluded.

ers may hinder the region's agricultural development. However, this is a natural process, and companies must adapt by developing production and social infrastructure.

A salient concern for Chinese investors pertains to the limitation on the land-use rights of foreigners. Primarily, Article 15, paragraph 3 of the Land Code promulgates a prohibition on the possession of a land by foreign nationals and legal entities in border areas, as delineated in Presidential Decree No. 26 (2011). Second, Article 3 of the Federal law "On the Turnover of Agricultural Land" (2002) prevents foreign citizens, foreign legal entities, and Russian legal entities with predominant foreign participation in respect of this category of land. A new wave of restrictions was initiated in the second half of 2015, after the announcement of plans to rent large areas of land in Zabaykalsky Krai to Chinese investors for 49 years [Kulintsev et al. 2020]. In response, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation has proposed amendments to the law "On Agricultural Land Transactions." These amendments include limitations on the maximum term of the lease of land by foreigners, which was set at 10 years (following deliberations, this period was extended to 15 years). Additionally, the proportion of land within a municipality that can be owned by a foreign entity was capped at 5%. Despite the absence of official promulgation of these initiatives, still the discourse surrounding these proposals has the potential to yield similar outcomes.

Amid these constraints, Chinese farmers have resorted to various informal practices to circumvent the restrictions. First, land can be allocated to Russian "figureheads": the Chinese farmer is officially registered as an employee, yet in reality he possesses the land through a "sublease" agreement, or he utilizes the land based on a verbal agreement with the landlord. According to interviews with farmers, most Chinese citizens work as seasonal workers only in the formal sense, and in reality, they sublease the land, using their Russian partners only as an intermediary in their relations with the authorities[31]. Another variation of this scheme involves leasing land from a Russian citizen who has a personal relationship with the Chinese citizen, who, in reality, is the actual owner of the farm. Second, Chinese farmers may cultivate land without any legal basis, with local regulators in the know. These farmers may possess a fictitious lease contract, or indeed have no documents at all, having concluded an oral agreement with the land's administrative body[32]. Third, the land in question can be a land plot owned by multiple individuals, yet cultivated in practice and appropriated by Chinese citizens, de facto, with no legal basis. This practice became possible due to the restructuring of collective farms in the early 1990s, when former "collective property" was divided between villagers, and some areas were left empty due to the unwillingness of their owners to cultivate them (sometimes these "owners" are not even aware of their own "property"). However, this scenario is becoming less prevalent as the value of the land rises and its ownership is more clearly defined [Zuenko, Sonin 2017].

Besides, a considerable number of farms that are officially registered in the Russian Federation are, in practice, owned and managed by Chinese nationals. This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including the presence of Chinese individuals within the Russian Federation who are connected to Russian individuals through personal relationships or familial connections. Alternatively, Chinese citizens can acquire Russian citizenship and thus register their business in the conventional manner, while still managing their agricultural operations in a manner consistent with Chinese cultural practices.

Similar situations of informal land use by Chinese farmers have been documented in other countries. These occurrences stem from the disorder and ambiguity inherent in the agricultural sector of the host country, rather than from the deliberate actions of Chinese-

[31] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023).

[32] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023). This information was later confirmed by other oral reports obtained as a result of interviews.

owned firms [Lagerkvist 2014]. These informal practices enable Chinese farmers to utilize the land, yet they concomitantly engender adverse effects for the Chinese sector in general. This is a pivotal factor in comprehending the phenomenon. Official statistics become so unreliable that are no longer trusted, and there is a prevalent belief that Chinese farmers are expanding into the eastern regions of Russia. This fosters anti-Chinese sentiments and complicates the discourse on the merits and drawbacks of Chinese agricultural enterprises.

Russian Perspective: Balance Between Risks and Opportunities

As reflected in the media and, subsequently, in public opinion, the prevailing sentiment in Russia is one of opposition to the Chinese presence in local agriculture. A notable segment of the population, specifically local officials in municipalities, have expressed support for Chinese investors, citing their role as reliable contributors to the maintenance of local infrastructure. The interviewees further noted that Chinese farmers' involvement in agriculture is not limited to the provision of capital; they also bring technologies that have proven effective in enhancing agricultural productivity. This simple knowledge has already had a positive impact on Russian agriculture, which has been in a state of decline since the 1990s. For instance, in Smidovichsky District (Jewish Autonomous Oblast), the harvests of individual soy producers have increased significantly compared to the Soviet period. In the early 1990s, for example, a yield of 8 centner per hectare was common. However, recent advancements in agricultural practices, particularly the adoption of Chinese technologies, have led to a substantial increase in productivity, with yields reaching 26–30 centner per hectare[33].

According to official conclusions, Chinese farmers are eager to meet the state's requirements, and regulatory oversight by local and federal authorities in agriculture, veterinary medicine, phytosanitary, and migration control has become the norm. While challenges persist in these domains, it is inaccurate to assert that Chinese farmers frequently disregard regulations to a greater extent than their Russian counterparts.

A prevalent stereotype posits that Chinese farmers prioritize profit maximization over environmental sustainability. Some respondents acknowledge that Chinese farmers in Russia face uncertainty regarding their future prospects due to unpredictability of regional policy and electoral changes. This leads them to prioritize immediate financial gain, often at the expense of long-term soil health and environmental stewardship. While case studies prove this thesis to a certain extent, they do not provide definitive evidence. The widespread use of herbicides and pesticides, frequently criticized among Chinese farmers, is not typically profitable due to the high cost of chemicals and the official restrictions on their import from China. While this problem, indeed, exists and authorities are responsible for maintaining strict control over farmers' activities, the level of concern in the media does not accurately reflect the extent of the problem.

Another pervasive stereotype disseminated by the media asserts that Chinese migrant workers frequently engage in illicit activities, including unauthorized use of land. During our field research, we observed numerous instances of this phenomenon. However, in the majority of cases, these actions were not deliberate, but rather a consequence of challenges in complying with regulations at the individual level and the inadequate design of directives issued by authorities. For instance, the Federal Migration Service (FMS) mandates that migrant workers reside at the address officially registered, a regulation that is difficult to enforce in practice. This is primarily due to the reluctance of Russian families to cohabitate with Chinese migrant workers, and vice versa, as well as the preference of Chinese workers to reside in modest huts near the fields, which offers greater convenience and enhanced security for crops and workers[34].

[33] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023).
[34] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2023).

We believe that Chinese capital and "seasonal workers" in rural areas are beneficial to the Russian Far East. A substantial number of local officials and Russian farmers (though not all) endorse this viewpoint, despite the alarmist discourse prevalent in the Russian media and the xenophobic sentiment expressed by the general public. The symbiotic combination of Chinese capital, technology, managerial expertise, foreign capital, and advanced machinery has been identified as a catalyst for positive change. Yet, it is crucial to acknowledge the unique role of Chinese "seasonal workers" in the broader context of labor specialization. While there are valid criticisms regarding the potential exploitation of labor and environmental impact, these can be mitigated through the implementation of long-term leasing arrangements for arable land by Chinese farmers.

Chinese Perspective: Prospects for Chinese Business and Food Security

In 2023, Russia's total soybean production was estimated at 6.6 million tons (approximately 1.5% of global production). However, similar to the corn, Russian soybeans are non-GM products. According to the Rosstat data, the Russian Far East accounts for 2.3 million tons of this figure (36% of all Russia's total harvest)[35]. Given the country's lack of a significant processing industry, proximity to the Chinese market, and the high quality of Far Eastern soybeans, the crop plays a critical role in Russia–China trade.

But could soybean production in the Russian Far Eastern be increased? The rising price of soybeans in recent years has made it the dominant crop in the Russian Far East, sometimes leading to the neglect of crop rotation practices. In some regions, such as Jewish Autonomous Oblast, soybeans account for up to 92% of the total cropland.

In terms of yield, the Russian Far East produces an average of 1.3 tons of soybeans per hectare. This gap is due to several factors, including the use of more fertile seeds, systemic crop rotation on the fields (soy–corn), longer and regular land preparation periods, extensive fertilizer application, and a longer history of soybean cultivation, dating back to the Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation of Manchuria in the 1930s. Thus, theoretically, soybean production in the Russian Far East could be increased by 30% on existing croplands.

As for expanding the cropland, there is a common misconception among locals and officials that approximately 1 million hectares of undeveloped land are available for cultivation. In reality, large-scale cropland expansion is currently impractical. These lands are widely dispersed across the region and would not yield a good crop without costly land reclamation efforts [Ivashina et al. 2023].

Thus, a combination of increasing yields through the adoption of Chinese agricultural techniques and limited cropland expansion could boost total soybean production to 2.5 million tons per year, of which about 2 million tons could be exported to China[36], bearing in mind that China's total soybean demand is 120 million tons per year.

Another key issue in Russian Far Eastern agriculture is regular crop rotation. A soy–corn rotation system has already contributed to increased corn production in the region. Corn yields in the Russian Far East are relatively high, averaging 6 tons per hectare. If the expected soybean yield increases, along with a

[35] *Shokurova E.* Dal'niy Vostok dolzhen uvelichivat' eksport produktsii pererabotki soi [Far East should increase export of processed soybean products]. Agroinvestor // 11.09.2023. URL: https://www.agroinvestor.ru/regions/news/41004-dalniy-vostok-dolzhen-uvelichivat-eksport-produktsii-pererabotki-soi/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

[36] Author's calculation based on current proportion of the region's production, internal consumption and export to China (see for example statistics for 2021-2022: Soja v mire i Rossii: proizvodstvo, vnutrennee potreblenie, vneshnjaja torgovlja [Soybeans in the world and Russia: production, domestic consumption, foreign trade]. Moscow: Eastern Center for State Planning, 2022. P. 18, 21, 22. URL: https://vostokgosplan.ru/wp-content/uploads/soja-v-mire-i-rossii-proizvodstvo-vnutrennee-potreblenie-vneshnjaja-torgovlja.pdf (accessed: 25.03.2025).

30% (or greater) expansion of the corn cultivation, then total grain and oil crop production in Primorsky Krai could rise to 1.4–1.5 million tons, generating an additional 600,000-700,000 tons of agricultural output[37].

Soybean dominate the crop plans of Amur Oblast and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. Still, high humidity in these regions contributes to wheat diseases (most notably Fusarium infection). With proper crop rotation, wheat and barley are preferable alternatives, rather than corn. If corn acreage in Amur Oblast were expanded to at least 70% of total grain production (while maintaining existing soybean acreage and adopting the abovementioned yield-improving techniques), corn output could increase from 150,000 tons to 750,000 tons in the region. Thus, the most optimistic forecast for corn production in the Russian Far East would be approximately 1 million tons per year, half of which could be exported to China[38].

When assessing the scale of Russia–China grain and oil crop trade, Siberian crop production must also be considered – as well as potential cropland expansion and yield improvements. Nevertheless, even under the most optimistic scenarios, Russia's ability to export grains to China remains significantly lower than that of the United States and Brazil.

All the while, Russia holds a key advantage over these competitors: it produces non-GM soybeans, which are highly valued in premium markets. Non-GM soybeans are grown only in Russia, Northeast China (primarily Heilongjiang Province), and the Korean Peninsula. These soybeans maintain their high market value, even in small volumes, and will remain in demand regardless of global price fluctuation.

As previously discussed, grain and oil crop trade between Russia and China originated when Chinese agribusinesses began investing in and cultivating cropland in the Russian Far East, relying on a Chinese labor force. However, the depreciation of the Russian rouble and regulatory interventions by federal officials—notably Oleg Kozhemyako, who served as Governor of Amur Oblast (2008–2015) and has been Governor of Primorsky Krai since 2018 – entailed a massive withdrawal of Chinese labor from the region[39].

By 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent border closures nearly cut off Chinese workers from Russian agriculture. That said, some Chinese businesses, such as Elena, Urmi, and Legend-Agro, continue to operate in the Russian Far East, with small groups of Chinese seasonal workers having returned to the fields. However, major exporters to China are now Russian companies. Large Chinese firms, including the state-owned COFCO, have shifted from production to purchasing, becoming grain buyers rather than direct cultivators.

Despite these changes, field studies suggest that Chinese businesses remain interested in maintaining a stake in the Russian Far Eastern agricultural sector. Yet, this interest is driven not by China's "food security strategy" but by profit motives. A key trend in recent years has been the replacement of small Chinese farmers by large Chinese corporations such as COFCO and Harbin Beidahuang Corporation, with the latter being the largest cropland holder, represented in Russia by its subsidiary Legend-Agro. This transition has made the sector more regulated and transparent, reducing informal agricultural practices. However, the most significant shift has been the increasing reliance on Russian labor and the declining use of Chinese workers.

* * *

Russian crop production is not primarily geared toward exports to China, but it does enjoy strong demand. Meanwhile, the rising prices of grain and oil crops in the 2010s–2020s have contributed to the socioeconomic development of rural areas in the Russian Far East. Although the potential for an increased agri-

[37] Interview data from an informant in the agricultural sector (2024).

[38] Author's calculation (see footnote 36).

[39] V Primor'e ogranichat rabotu migrantov v lesozagotovke i vyrashhivanii ovoshhej [In Primorye, migrants' work in logging and vegetable growing will be restricted] // Primamedia, 15.10.2022. URL: https://primamedia.ru/news/1377775/ (accessed: 01.02.2025).

cultural output is limited, trade growth remains possible, fostered by the potential development of cross-border transport and logistics infrastructure in the Russian Far East.

The aforementioned challenges related to land use and the involvement of foreign entities in Chinese agribusiness operations have led to the spread of informal practices, which, in turn, fuel alarmist sentiments in Russia. These concerns have negatively impacted the activities of Chinese agribusinesses and broader food security discussions. Nevertheless, Chinese agricultural companies have played a positive role in the development of both the local agricultural sector and the broader economy of the Russian Far East. They provide jobs, generate tax revenues for rural areas, supply local markets with food, and facilitate the exchange of agro-technologies and innovations with local farmers.

There are also negative aspects, though they are not of critical concern. The most significant issue is the lack of crop rotation and the dominance of monocropping, particularly soybean cultivation. Moreover, medium-sized Chinese agribusinesses struggle to compete with large Russian agricultural corporations, which entered the market in the 2010s. Meanwhile, large Chinese corporations seek to collaborate with Russian companies as buyers, rather than invest in their own crop production.

The existing production assets and infrastructure in the Russian Far East are unlikely to supplant the U.S. soybean imports and Ukrainian corn supplies in China. However, the region retains key advantages in agriculture, including shorter transport routes, favorable climatic conditions for growing non-GM soybeans and rice of premium crop quality. These factors position the Russian Far East as an important supplier of high-value agricultural products to China.

While stable demand for locally produced crops is crucial for economic growth in the Russian Far East, the region's food security requires investment in dairy and meat production facilities. Crop farming in the Russian Far East – primarily soybean, corn and rice – does not play a central role in ensuring global or even national food security, due to the logistical challenges of transporting goods to consumers in western Russia. Still, it holds significant potential for the Chinese market.

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КИТАЙСКИЙ АГРОБИЗНЕС НА ДАЛЬНЕМ ВОСТОКЕ РОССИИ

АНАЛИЗ СКВОЗЬ ПРИЗМУ ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ И ГЕОПОЛИТИКИ

ИВАН ЗУЕНКО
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Резюме

В данной статье рассматривается деятельность китайского агробизнеса на Дальнем Востоке России – прежде всего, в контексте продовольственной безопасности после COVID-19 (2020) и обострения «украинского кризиса» (2022), двух событий, которые в значительной степени нарушили глобальные цепочки поставок продовольствия, особенно кукурузы, сои и пшеницы. Так, после начала СВО Китай был вынужден возобновить импорт продовольствия из США, чтобы компенсировать потерю поставок с Украины, в то время как спрос на российскую сельскохозяйственную продукцию резко вырос в Китае, на Ближнем Востоке и в Центральной Азии. Российский Дальний Восток с его географической близостью к Китаю в этом контексте приобрел стратегическое значение. Отдельный интерес вызывает деятельность в регионе китайского агробизнеса. Опираясь на полевые исследования, проведенные в Приморском крае, Амурской области и Еврейской автономной области (2014–2019, 2022–2023), автор делает ряд выводов о положении китайского агробизнеса в регионе, имеющихся проблемах и тенденциях в их деятельности (главной из которых является постепенный отход от производства в пользу крупнооптовых закупок продукции, выращенной российскими компаниями). Анализ показывает, что ограничения производственных мощностей и инфраструктуры не позволяют российскому Дальнему Востоку полностью заменить украинскую кукурузу или американскую сою на китайском рынке: как с использованием китайского агробизнеса, так и без него. Однако преимущества региона – более короткие пути поставок в Китай и благоприятные условия для сои и риса без ГМО – делают его стратегически важным на карте торговли продовольствием в контексте китайского рынка. Учитывая стратегическое значение для Китая вопросов продовольственной безопасности, можно предположить, что спрос на сельскохозяйственную продукцию Дальнего Востока России сохранится и в будущем, что будет способствовать развитию региона и укреплению двухсторонних торгово-экономических связей.

Ключевые слова:

Россия; Китай; Дальний Восток России; продовольственная безопасность; китайские фермеры; цепочки поставок продовольствия; сельское хозяйство; потребление в Китае