Understanding Food System in China: Perspective of Sustainable Production and Consumption

DUNFU ZHANG (PH.D)
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY,
SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY; SCORAI CHINA

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Introduction: The Crayfish metaphor

- Crayfish and its socio-economic implications in China
- Red swamp crayfish, which originated in Louisiana of the US, was brought to Jiangsu, China by the Japanese in the 1930s
- As the hardy crayfish was able to grow even in drainage ditches, it was considered inedible until the early 1990s, when it was repackaged as 'Nanjing little lobster'
- Since then, it has been celebrated as a popular delicacy in China
Key stakeholders

- farming
- consumption
- production
- government
A complex web of activities involving the production, processing, transport, and consumption. Issues concerning the food system include the governance and economics of food production, its sustainability, the degree to which we waste food, how food production affects the natural environment and the impact of food on individual and population health.

https://www.futureoffood.ox.ac.uk/what-food-system
Elements of food system and its actors

- Production (producer)
- Aggregation (wholesale & logistic)
- Processing (preparing and package)
- Distribution (retail)
- Consumption (consumer)

ANTHROPOLOGIST PROFESSOR SIDNEY CHEUNG'S REMARKS:

”大家消费这些东西的时候，不要再去想小龙虾是不是很脏，去反思一下我们环境的问题、农村的问题、安全的问题，以及公共卫生的问题。”

WHAT ABOUT CHINA AS A WHOLE?

”Can China Be a Clean Tiger?”(Zhang et al, 1999)
Social Context:
Industrialization and Consumption in China

*Industrialization and world factory: Made in China*

China as the most rapid growing consumer society (Li Conghua, 1997: 2-7)
The Consumer Revolution in Urban China (Davis, 2000)
China’s middle class and its increasing consumption

China's Consumption Growth Compared to Other Leading Economies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Private Consumption 2015</th>
<th>Consumption Added 2015-2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.6 ▲ 21%</td>
<td>2.3 ▲ 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>4.2 ▲ 17%</td>
<td>2.8 ▲ 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1.8 ▲ 28%</td>
<td>2.3 ▲ 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.1 ▲ 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1.3 ▲ 31%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, BCG Research

*Rounding errors apply
www.truewealthpublishing.asia
Changing food consumption in China

Fast increasing meat consumption in China

- Given China's sheer size of population and meat demand, the sustainable meat consumption in China is also a relevant topic in the global food system
Emerging threat to health & environment

Commercial feeds and additives leads to **meat** consumption related diseases

- China is experiencing a dramatic transformation in livestock breeding, from traditional household husbandry to intensive feeding. Use of veterinary drugs and feed additives in animal farming are popular.
- Industrial livestock and poultry production has undergone rapid expansion.
- Animal farms and animal waste release a wide range of pollutants to the environment.
- These pollutants negatively impact the environment and pose risks to human health (Yuannan Hu, Hefa Cheng, Shu Tao, 2017)
The link between soil pollution in China and the occurrence of "cancer villages"
How does it look when we apply food systems thinking?
References

- Yuanan Hu, et al, Public health risk of trace metals in fresh chicken meat products on the food markets of a major production region in southern China, Environmental Pollution, Vol 234, 2018, 667-676
Thanks!

dunfuzhang@gmail.com