



Feeding the masses: China-Latin America agriculture connections through time

21st May, 2014

**John Hope Franklin Room, Social Science Research Building, room 224
The University of Chicago**

The production, consumption, and exchange of food have long underpinned relations between China and Latin America. From the arrival of the Mexican sweet potato in China in the 16th century to the current expansion of soy and livestock agribusiness, food has been a foundation of trans-Pacific cultural and economic exchange. People have been as central to this phenomenon as the products they cultivate: indentured Chinese laborers underpinned early Latin American food production, and recent investment proposals from the PRC government envision the introduction of Chinese agricultural workers into the soy plantations of South America. These past and present developments have raised pressing policy challenges that must take account of changing demographic processes within China.

Today, China's growing urban population is creating unprecedented demand for food.

300 million additional Chinese citizens are expected to leave behind rural agriculture for urban consumer culture by 2025, bringing the number of city dwellers to around one billion. Augmenting the number of urban consumers is central to the government's development strategy, but the food necessary to sustain them is in short supply. With only nine per cent of the world's arable land and a diminishing base of agricultural labor, China must develop new strategies for importing and producing urban staples like beef, pork, and chicken. Acquisition of foreign agriculture products, particularly soybeans and oils for human and animal consumption, is therefore becoming an important factor in China's political and economic stability.

This forum will explore how China's need for food has transformed Latin American landscapes through time. It will identify historical patterns, examine past insights that may prove useful for present understanding, and consider the future trajectory of Sino-Latin American agriculture relations. Bringing together specialists from Asia, the Americas, and Australia, the forum will be the third in a series of events organized in tandem with the annual conference of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). It will enable dialogue between social, political, and economic scientists at a time when China is playing a critical role in the development of Latin America and the world.

9am-9:15am Welcome and overview

- Prof. Dain Borges, Director, The University of Chicago Center for Latin American Studies
- Dr. Adrian Hearn, Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) Global China Group and the University of Sydney China Studies Centre

9:15am-10:45am Session 1

Chair: Prof. Emilio Kourí, The University of Chicago

- *China-Latin America agrarian relations from the longue durée to a decade of rapid change*
Prof. Peter Winn, Tufts University
- *Policy responses to Chinese agriculture investment in Latin America and Australia*
Dr. Adrian Hearn, University of Sydney China Studies Centre and WUN Global China Group
- *Feeding the Dragon: food safety, investment and niche products*
Prof. Josephine Smart, University of Calgary

10:45am-11:00am coffee break

11:00am-12:30pm Session 2

Chair: Dr. Kathleen López, Rutgers University

- *China's agriculture trade and investment with Canada*
Prof. Gordon Houlden and Ms. Jia Wang, University of Alberta and WUN Global China Group
- *Pressures on Chinese food security: water, land, and cities*
Prof. Jianhua Zhang, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and WUN Global China Group
- *Role and views of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay on global food security*
Prof. Marcelo Regúnaga, Former Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of Argentina

12:30pm-1:30pm Lunch

1:30pm-2:15pm Keynote speech: The Meaning of China's New Dream for Global Agriculture

Mr. David Hale, CEO, David Hale Global Economics

2:15pm-2:30pm Coffee break

2:30pm-4:00pm Session 3

Chair: Prof. Mike Albertus, The University of Chicago

- *China's evolving approach to overseas agricultural investment: lessons learned in Latin America*
Ms. Margaret Myers, the Inter-American Dialogue
- *Chinese investment in the Brazilian soybean sector: negotiating a new balance of power in the emerging global food regimes*
Dr. Emelie Peine, University of Puget Sound
- *Chinese involvement in agro-industrial complexes in Latin America and the Caribbean: a comparative perspective*
Dr. R. Evan Ellis, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

4pm-4:15pm Concluding remarks

- Dr. Gonzalo Paz, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.