



IRSA WORLD CONGRESS SESSION PROPOSAL FORM

Name of the proposed session:

The ecological and organic agriculture sector in China: Emerging organizational structures and actors

Key words (maximum 3):

sustainable agriculture, organic food, China

Name(s) of the Session organizer(s):

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Abstract:

This session analyzes the emerging ecological and organic agriculture sector in China to illustrate the impacts of Chinese farmers, consumers, local-level state and private sector actors on sustainable agriculture development. First we summarize the greening of agriculture in China and contrast the different organizational structures for ecological production: private farms, farmer cooperatives, state-supported 'Dragon-head enterprises' (that contract small farmers or farmer cooperatives), and combinations of these forms. A second presentation focuses on the role of Farmers Professional Associations (FPA) or 'cooperatives' in scaling up and standardizing ecological agriculture. Three cooperative models are analyzed: FPAs initiated and led by large-scale independent farmers, by private enterprises, and by external forces (academics/experts, foreign donors, domestic certifiers). A third presentation analyzes the increasing food safety consciousness of urban middle class consumers as a driver behind the growth, changing norms, and regulatory structures in the ecological food sector in China. Although small-scale farmers are integrated into these growing markets for ecologically-produced food, they have limited power and carry the blame in widely publicized food safety scandals. Finally, we focus attention on the recently emerging alternative food sector in China through an analysis of the Community Supported Agriculture model, and provide comparisons with similar trends in Canada.