China Launch Event for
Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions
to Transform Food and Land Use

November 22, 2019
Beijing, China

Event Summary:

On November 22, 2019, the Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) and WRI China launched the Chinese version of ‘Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use’ in Beijing. In addition to a diverse audience representing different stakeholders, 12 media attended, including People.cn, CBN, Bloomberg Businessweek, Jieman, 21st Century Business Herald, Worker’s Daily, The Beijing News, Science and Technology Daily, China Food Newspaper, Farmers’ Daily, Food Safety Guide Magazine and China Food Safety Newspaper.

Fang Li, Chief Representative, World Resource Institute China Office, facilitated and opened the meeting, then handed over to Seth Cook, Associate, FOLU China and India, who delivered a brief introduction to FOLU and its country platforms, and shared his observations of China’s achievements in food security and poverty reduction, as well as the challenges the country’s food and land use systems face.

Starting with a humorous story of a young reporter interviewing the TATA CEO, Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, WRI, underscored the importance of learning from good and bad decisions at this critical juncture to transform food and land use systems. Then Per Pharo, NICFI, FOLU Global Report Editor & Lead Author, gave a thorough overview of the report’s key findings and the ten critical transitions which underpin the report. This was followed by a presentation by Andre Deppermann, Research Scholar, IIASA on the modelling which generated much of the report’s unique data. A special organic tea break was arranged by Shi Yan, Founder, Shared Harvest, who also served as a panelist.

Representatives from Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), China Agricultural University (CAU), EAT Foundation, New Hope Group (China’s largest private agricultural company) and Shared Harvest CSA farm served on a panel which gave comments on the report and the ten critical transitions proposed.

One of the key messages of this event is that shifting to healthier and more sustainable diets is one of the most critical transitions for China, and could be achieved by promoting Chinese traditional diets, taxing meat consumption, building sustainable diet networks, as well as marketing healthy food more effectively. Immediate actions for FOLU/WRI could include: developing a transition agenda for China, establishing healthy diet targets in China’s ‘14th 5-year plan’, and supporting systematic institutional & policy analysis on China’s transitions.
Another important message is that there are still large gaps in the private sector in terms of greening agricultural supply chains. Current practices of China’s domestic companies like diversifying suppliers and investing in exporting countries are designed to ensure reliability of supply rather than quality and sustainability.

**Event snapshot**

Talks delivered by Fang Li, Per Pharo, Andre Deppermann, Manish Bapna and Seth Cook (clockwise from upper left)

**Panelists’ comments on the report**

“The ten critical transitions report provides a solution on how to deal with the challenges of demand and supply that arise in the course of urbanization and economic development.”
“Ecological civilization is high on the Chinese government agenda. We should take action now for generations to come.”

----- Yang Lirong, Division Chief, Senior Research Fellow, Environmental Convention Implementation Technical Center, Ministry of Ecology and Environment

“Unless you bend the curve now, we will eat the wrong foods and pay the price in terms of our health. The transition to healthy diets can contribute to environmental sustainability and pave the way to realizing the Paris Agreement.”

----- Dr. Fabrice DeClerck, Science Director, EAT/Stockholm Resilience Centre

“At New Hope Group, we are already making some progress as you listed in the report. I hope more industry peers and government officials can read this report and contribute to the healthy development of the food industry.”

----- An Fengshan, Chief Brand Officer, New Hope Group

“I find that ten years ago, what we discussed was more about reforming the model of agriculture, this time the report is more about reforming the system. I think we can discuss more on innovating the system. Also, the report mentioned hidden costs which I find quite interesting. I hope to scale up good case studies to share more with others.”

----- Dr. Shi Yan (Founder, Shared Harvest)

Selected insights from panelists

“It is important to build a system to better connect consumption and production, as more wastes and carbon will be generated during the transportation process over longer distances. I would also suggest setting up a unified standard to verify organic foods in order to save costs and streamline processes.”

----- Dr. Shi Yan (Founder, Shared Harvest)

“As a food company, we combine digitalization technology and our experiences to build smart agriculture and smart farms. We also provide internet finance programs to help support farmers and eradicate poverty.”

----- An Fengshan, Chief Brand Officer, New Hope Group

“In the past ten years, the obesity rate in China has increased by 68%; too much meat and fat are consumed. I am not saying that meat should be excluded from people’s diets, but eating more vegetables and less meat is healthier. More than that, it is beneficial to have more diversified food such as legumes and whole grains.”

----- Dr. Fabrice DeClerck, Science Director, EAT/Stockholm Resilience Centre

“First, I would recommend establishing a platform among farmers, to encourage all kinds of farms, large or small. Second, streamline and optimize supply systems to
connect consumption and production according to geographical proximity. Third, coordinate and combine consumption needs to upscale it to a bigger level.”

----- Wu Wenliang, Professor, Dean, College of Resources and Environmental Sciences, China Agricultural University

“The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held in Kunming next year. I think it would be a good time for government, industry and more stakeholders to read this report.”

----- Yang Lirong, Division Chief, Senior Research Fellow, Environmental Convention Implementation Technical Center, Ministry of Ecology and Environment

Selected insights from the Q&A

Q: What is the impact of climate change on agriculture here?

A: from Wu Wenliang: The impact is very big. Currently we are having a warm winter. When temperatures rise, groundwater levels are affected, which will influence the productivity of wheat. In the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, groundwater levels have declined significantly. Our generation, or even several generations, may never be able to recover the gap.

Q: Chinese people tend to eat more meat and rice in our tradition, which is often blamed for releasing more greenhouse gases. The report recommended to eat more vegetables and less meat. What innovations on financing and technology can you recommend to guide consumers to adopt a healthier diet?

A: from Per Pharo: The challenge is doubled for you to consume less meat and rice. However, it is important not only to change consumer habits, but also to change how we produce meat to make it greener. Also, the means of growing rice can be made more environmentally friendly.

A: from Shi Yan: I think it is key to rebuild our relationship with the land. From my observation, more food waste is generated when people live far away from the countryside. In recent years, China is promoting rural revitalization, which brings urban people closer to where food is grown while enabling farmers to be employed near their homes rather than migrating.

A: from An Fengshan: As a food company, we want to provide safer and healthier food for people. We will make changes accordingly.

A: from Fabrice DeClerck: In fact, how to produce food is very important. For example, the means of producing rice matters a lot in terms of methane emissions. In California, we can grow rice while preserving wetlands. Second, we need to change the notion that the richer people become, the more meat there is on the table.

A: from Wu Wenliang: I would propose to tax different foods to in order to change consumption patterns. For example, adding a 30% tax on beef and mutton, 20% on...
pork, while only 10% on vegetables. Second, setting red lines that wetlands cannot be changed to farm lands. Thirdly, we can rotate land for dry and wet use, which will generate more economic returns.

**Media Coverage**

**Summary:**

As of November 29th, a total of 41 clippings were generated from the media (including provincial media). Even Harbin news radio event broadcast a report in their news flash program.

**In-depth coverage**

1. CBN: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multi-protein Intake is better for Health

In China, 6 out of 10 risk factors of premature death are related to food and unbalanced diet structure. New findings reveal that diversifying protein supply can help formulate a healthier diet. “We are facing the first health crisis caused by non-communicable disease (NCDs),” observed Fabrice DeClerck. “Increasing the intake of vegetables can not only bring a healthier life but also reduce burdens on land use.”

Repost (7 clippings):

- Tencent: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Netease: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Sina: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Baidu: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Industry Observer(Weibo): Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Anhuiyuemu: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
- Xmnn: Less Pork More Vegetable? Expert: Multiprotein Intake is better for Health
2. Farmers’ Daily: Report “Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use” was Launched in Beijing

Summary: From the perspective of economic transformation, Farmers’ Daily analyzes the economic benefits of the transformation of food and land use system mentioned in the report, which can reduce the hidden costs of environment, health and development caused by the production and consumption of food and land.

3. Worker’s Daily: FOLU’s Report shows Hidden Cost are $12 Trillion A Year Worldwide, We Need Call for the Transformation of Food and Land Use Systems

Summary: The article highlighted the potential for investing in nature-based solutions, which would help people promote a diverse and healthy diet, reduce waste and revitalize the rural economy. The report discloses that the benefits far outweigh the costs, proposing a concrete reform agenda centered around ten critical transitions. These stand to unlock 4.5 trillion USD in new business opportunities each year by 2030, at the same time as saving costs of 5.7 trillion USD a year in damage to people and the planet by 2030, more than 15 times the investment cost of up to 350 billion a year.
4. Beijing News, The Food and Land Use Transition is Expected to Generate $4.5 trillion Per Year In New Business Opportunities

Summary: The report uses data to compare costs and benefits, proving that there are huge business opportunities in healthy diets. In addition, China’s efforts in environmental protection, afforestation and poverty alleviation are highly affirmed in the event. The report also recommends that China should take action and encourage others to cope with challenges such as land degradation, habitat loss and climate change.
Repost (6 clippings):

- Sina: **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
- Baidu: **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
- Sohu: **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
- Ciudsrc: **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
- Beijing News(Weibo): **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
- Finance Newsflash(Weibo): **Food and Land Use Transformation is Expected to Bring 4.5-trillion-Dollar New Business Opportunity**
5. People.cn: Latest Report “Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use” was launched in China

Summary: The report emphasizes the long-term benefits of food and land use transformation. It shows that transitions of food and land use system helps accelerate healthy diet processes, reduce the waste and develop rural economy at the same time.


Summary: The report presents four transition themes from the conference, noting the key for transition is to unleash the potential of high-quality food and land use systems through government’s policies, actions and public participation. “There is no system level trade-off between food production and environmental protection. Even with a growing global population we show that there is enough land to provide nutritious diets for all while at the same time protecting and restoring nature and slashing greenhouse gas emissions and delivering better, more inclusive development.” said Per Pharo, FOLU Global Report Editor and Lead Author

Repost (6 clippings):

- Hexun: Ten transportations for a Win-win World
- People: Ten transportations for a Win-win World
- China: Ten transportations for a Win-win World
- Wokeji: Ten transportations for a Win-win World
7. **China Food Safety News**: The Transformation of Food and Land Use Will Bring New Business Opportunities

**Summary:** The report calls on countries to seize the business opportunities brought by the transformation and achieve the goals of healthy and sustainable development.

8. **China Food News**: Food and Land Use Set to Cost 16 trillion USD Per Year, Unless Action is Taken Now

**Summary:** New findings reveal that the ways in which people produce and consume food and use land currently account for 12 trillion USD a year in hidden costs to the environment, human health and development, costs that are set to rise to 16 trillion USD by 2050 if current trends continue.
**Summary:** The article elaborates that there is no system level trade-off between food production and environmental protection. It quotes Fang Li of WRI China: “This groundbreaking report is highly relevant for China, demonstrating that transforming food and land use systems can generate enormous social, economic and environmental benefits. China can and must be a leader in this area, both for the country’s sake and for the health of the planet overall.”