

Review 2018 - 2020

Syngenta Foundation China

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Executive Summary

China has a vast rural area and a huge rural population. Robust and sustainable development there, especially in agriculture, is critical to feeding the population and supporting thriving rural communities.

We at the Foundation recognize that we can make unique contributions to agricultural development in China, particularly in under-developed regions. We established our Beijing Representative Office in 2018 in order to facilitate sustainable agricultural development. We focus primarily on increasing the productivity and quality of selected cash crops to improve farmers' income in low-income communities in Western China. We are active in value chain development of goji-berry and vegetables in Gansu and kiwifruit in Sichuan. We also support local research institutes to enhance their capabilities in potato in Gansu. Our project in the Yangqing district of Beijing is dedicated to introducing new sunflower varieties to improve farmer income. Our work supports the government's major initiatives including poverty alleviation and the rural revitalization strategy.

Our vision is that smallholders farm in a smart and eco-friendly way, and they get fairly treated by the market. We support smallholder farmers and entrepreneurial youth to become more professional growers by catalyzing market delivery of innovations, providing tailored training programs on best practices and know-how, and facilitating market access.

2020 has been a unique and challenging year because of COVID-19. We took rapid measures early to protect our team and business partners; we thus ensured the safety of our staff and smooth operation of our projects. In particular, we helped farmers to receive seeds in time and made sure technical support was in place. In the future, we are keen to collaborate with interested, like-minded local organizations to achieve greater impact in rural China.

Letters from the management

Dear readers,

It is a great pleasure to present our first Review, looking back at the past three years' journey in China. We established our Representative Office in 2018 and have since then built our local teams and presence to serve smallholder farmers in under-developed regions. I am happy to say that we have a great team, highly dedicated to improving farming. I would also like to thank our partners, including local governments, agricultural cooperatives, agri-companies and research institutes. Without their support, we would not have achieved so much in such a short period. Moving forward, we are keen to collaborate with potential partners to make more impact and advance the rural revitalization agenda.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy our Review. We welcome your comments and feedback.



Yuan Zhou

Head of Agricultural
Policy and China Program,
Basel Office



Yan Tong (Tony)

Country Director China,
Beijing Office

It is my privilege to be involved in agricultural development programs targeted at poverty alleviation in China. The Syngenta Foundation is dedicated worldwide to helping smallholders become more successful. We are a new organization in China, but we have already achieved a lot. We look forward to working with more organizations and people who share our vision. Together we will achieve even greater success.

About SFSA Global Introduction

The Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (“SFSA”) is a non-profit organization founded by Syngenta AG, headquartered in Basel, Switzerland. It is a highly reputed player in the field of international agricultural development.

Internationally, SFSA’s vision is to create a bright future for smallholder farming. This bright future is one in which farming is an attractive profession for the young. It is profitable, productive and uses modern technologies. It is also resilient both to sudden shocks and longer-term threats. We aim to increase smallholders’ income and resilience by helping them to improve their farming and connect to profitable markets. The SFSA mission is to strengthen smallholder farming and food systems through catalyzing market development and delivery of innovations, while building capacity across the public and private sectors.

Our focus is on ‘pre-commercial’ smallholders, often in semi-arid areas. We work mainly in Africa and Asia, and contribute to agricultural development debates worldwide. As well as establishing initiatives, we put major emphasis on successful scale-up and on climate-smart resilient agricultural technologies and methods across our portfolio. We collaborate with a wide range of organizations, including the public sector, international organizations, think tanks, the private sector, other foundations, social entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations. We have considerable expertise in public-private partnerships.

About SFSA China

History

– Fully support and align with China’s agricultural modernization and rural revitalization strategies

SFSA established its Beijing Representative Office in 2018 in order to facilitate sustainable agricultural development aiming to improve the livelihoods of resource-poor farmers in China. The office was registered under the supervision of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Agriculture. Our geographical focus is on under-developed provinces in the western part of China. We received valuable support from Syngenta China and ChemChina at the initial set-up stage.

SFSA had previously worked with a number of Chinese partners. In 2012, we ran the ‘Beijing Roundtable on Agricultural Extension’ with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. This event brought together top experts from Asia and beyond to discuss innovative approaches to providing agricultural advisory services. In 2013-14, SFSA partnered with GlobalGAP in China on the Farm Assurer Capacity Building Program. In 2017, SFSA began to work on food safety and quality studies, including examining food safety regulations and implementation, and studied various aspects of agricultural value chains, particularly regarding food traceability.

Since 2018, SFSA has concentrated on several projects aiming to increase agricultural productivity and the quality of selected cash crops, thereby improving small-scale farmers’ income opportunities and wellbeing.

Where we work

We are focused and committed to delivering our support and services to farmers in north-western and south-western regions. The vast rural areas here have many small-scale farmers, and the farming systems are relatively under-developed.



We have a small but welcoming office in Beijing to support our operations and colleagues in the field.



Our Executive Director, Simon Winter visiting the Beijing Office



Honglei Li and Yuwei Duan in the field

Our vision, mission and initiatives in China

– Full support and alignment with China’s agricultural modernization and poverty alleviation

Our Vision: Smallholder farmers farm in a smart and eco-friendly way, and they get fairly treated by the market.



Mission: We support organized smallholder farmers and entrepreneurial youth to become more professional growers by catalyzing market delivery of innovations, providing tailored training programs on best practices and knowhow, and facilitating market access. In the long term, we strive to establish a systematic support platform that covers the whole value chain of target crops.

Strategic initiatives:

1. Promotion of agricultural innovation and solutions
2. Knowledge development
3. Climate-smart and resilient farmland



Our Foundation signed an MOU with Dingxi Agricultural Bureau, 2018

The profile of our dedicated “clients”

– We serve Organized Smallholder Farmers

Organized Smallholder Farmers are our ideal “clients” in China. We support them by working with farming cooperatives or local agri-companies.



Located largely in western China



Average farmland of each household is less than 15 *mu* (1 hectare)



Mainly grow cash crops; can also grow field crops depending on market demand



Have the potential to become commercial and modern farmers, with support

Our local team

– Small but smart

We have built a small and competent team since the establishment of SFSA China. We are a team of four dedicated to helping more people in rural area of China.

Tong Yan: China Program Director; a very experienced and senior manager in agriculture. He manages our China operations and programs.

Wei Liu: Finance and admin manager; based in Beijing, she keeps a close eye on our numbers and processes.

Honglei Li: Gansu program manager; experienced in potato and vegetable production and commercialization.

Yuwei Duan: Sichuan program manager; very well connected in the global kiwifruit industry, and with a profound background in agriculture.



Gansu Projects

– Help agriculture and farmers to thrive in a challenging environment

Gansu Province is located in the northwest part of China. Most of the province has a very dry and harsh environment. It is a key focus area for China’s poverty alleviation efforts. We at the Foundation are currently operating in Dingxi City and Gulang County. In Dingxi, we have selected potato and vegetables as our target crops to help local farmers.

Dingxi Vegetable Project

In 2019, we introduced over 26 new vegetable varieties as well as new fertilizers for field trials in Dingxi, based on local needs. We provided technical training to over 500 vegetable growers to increase their knowledge and know-how, particularly in integrated pest management (IPM) and environment-friendly fertilization. To build local capacities, we arranged for nine vegetable technicians from Dingxi to visit Shouguang Vegetable Expo and exchange with farmers in Shougang, one of the most advanced vegetable producing areas.

In 2020, we introduced another eight new vegetable varieties. Along with the Dingxi Agricultural Bureau, we organized a performance evaluation for cabbage. Ten varieties were selected for recommendation in 2021. We remain committed to building farmers’ capacity. Over 800 growers have already participated in our indoor and virtual training classes.





Dingxi farmers have been growing potato for many years. However, they tend not to buy commercial seed, but only use their own potatoes to propagate. This practice has led to declining yields and quality.

In 2019, we worked with the Dingxi Academy of Agricultural Sciences (DAAS) to improve their breeding capacity and virus elimination techniques. We engaged top international potato experts to conduct relevant workshops. We also worked with the International Potato Center (Asia-Pacific branch) to bring drought- and disease-resistant germplasm to Gansu. We collaborated with Gansu Guofeng Seed Company on provision of virus-free seeds to smallholders and on seed production capacity-building. We invited a top British potato expert to Guofeng to provide guidance and technical support.

In 2019-20, we introduced and distributed virus-free potato seeds to about 250 small-scale growers. These helped them achieve a 20% yield increase and gain their first experience in using such seeds.





Gulang goji-berry Project

Gulang County is a very dry area, where farmers struggle to grow crops and make a decent income. We support production and value chain development of goji-berries, a profitable cash crop suited to the local climate.

In 2018, we helped a local agricultural cooperative to establish a 200-*mu* goji-berry demonstration farm. This offers economic and job opportunities to resettled poor farming households who have moved down from the mountains. The demo farm promotes advanced planting techniques to the surrounding growers. We also conducted a goji-berry value chain and competitiveness study for the county and organized a sector-wide workshop.

In 2019 we focused on expert and technical support to the local cooperative to gain “Green Food Certification”, as well as introducing modern drip irrigation and researching into goji-berry root rot disease. Building on our work, ChemChina decided to invest 1.2 million yuan to help the cooperative build a processing facility in Gulang.

This unit helps farmers to earn extra income by selling processed goji-berry products. To date, it has processed and packed 44 tons, sold under the new brand “Gu Mo”. We support the sales and market promotion activities, including the use of e-commerce.

We have also introduced new techniques like sticky traps to reduce agrochemical usage and we encourage organic fertilizer use for soil improvement. In August 2020, the agricultural cooperative received official Green Food Certification.





Gulang Vegetable Project

In Gulang County, we also support vegetables as cash crops for farmers to enhance their income.

In 2018 and 2019, we supported the establishment of five demonstration greenhouses. We trained 22 key agriculturists using the 'Train the Trainer' approach, helping them to provide technical training and extension to nearly 1900 smallholders. We also arranged for eight people to visit Shouguang Expo. We provided seeds to over 100 greenhouses built by ChemChina for local farmers in a major poverty alleviation scheme. We also taught the 800 recipients how to grow their vegetables more efficiently and sustainably.

In 2020, we established four vegetable greenhouses to promote new varieties, and used these for farmer training programs and field days. We trained 1300 small vegetable growers. We also guided farmers through tests of safer agrochemicals and spraying equipment.

We put great emphasis on good market links for our targeted farmers. We therefore organized for the heads of our supported agriculture cooperatives to visit wholesale markets in major cities to extend the sales channel. We also helped them to establish a booth at the national vegetable exhibition.

In 2020, as part of new crop introduction for degraded land, we provided growers with seeds for 1800 *mu* of oilseed sunflower. We also taught them how to handle this new variety. The first field results are encouraging.



How do our partners feel ?

– We really value feedback and comments from our supported farmers and other partners. We want to make sure that we give them what they need. Here are two examples of many.



Zhihai Wang
Potato Farmer

My name is Wang Zhihai, a potato grower in Jijigou Village, Weiyuan County, Dingxi City. I used self-saved seeds before, and my yields were low. After using the high-quality virus-free seed potatoes provided via Syngenta Foundation, the yield has greatly increased. I now understand that good seed potatoes bring higher yields.



Haishan Wang
Director of Gulang
Horticulture Station

SFSA has helped our region significantly. The team introduced many new vegetable varieties and provided technical support. They also helped us to establish good spraying and fertigation practices. The technical trainings they provided are very useful and they opened our eyes and minds to the outside world. We now have much better connections with the more developed regions.

Sichuan Projects

– We grow the future

Sichuan is located in the southwest part of China. It is surrounded by mountains and has a very humid climate. Kiwifruit has been a major cash crop in this area, but it is now facing many challenges that could hinder poverty alleviation. The province also faces a major shortage of rural labor.

In 2018, SFSA carefully studied the situation of Chinese smallholders and the development of the country's agriculture. We identified the southwest (Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou) and northwest (Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia) as the areas most needing us to engage.

Kiwifruit is one of the main cash crops in many parts of Sichuan and Shaanxi. In recent decades, the crop helped many families to earn good incomes and step out of poverty. However, a deadly kiwifruit bacterium called *Pseudomonas syringae actinidiae* (PSA) is now making it very hard for them to continue.

Local governments are giving this problem and other kiwifruit-related issues a major priority and are seeking external help. That is the main reason why SFSA initiated its Sichuan kiwifruit project in 2019.

Our program in Sichuan is composed of two main work streams. One focuses on capacity-building and training programs, the other on demonstration orchards and soil health.





Smallholder Farmer Training

People are the fundamental factor driving change. We therefore put a lot of resources and emphasis on training, both of existing farmers and people not yet in farming. We know that “seeing is believing”, so before we ask smallholders to adopt new solutions, we show them how these work in our demo orchard.

In 2019, we organized four training sessions for kiwifruit growers. The first round focused on flowering and cropping management of PSA pressure. China’s leading PSA expert, Zhuang Qihuo, shared good practices. We hosted around 150 people spread across a choice of dates. The second training block dealt with summer pruning and management under covers. We took two groups of 50 farmers to visit established structures in Dujiangyan, some 100km away, where they exchanged ideas and experiences. The third training session taught participants how best to harvest Gold Kiwis; the final round presented pruning and PSA control measures in winter. Encouraged by the success of these sessions, we ran a similar program in 2020.





Young Entrepreneurial Farmers Training

The farming population is aging drastically in China, as most of the rural youth are migrating to urban areas. However, growers will remain very important in the next generation. So, we must make agriculture fun and promising for young people and help them to be successful.

In 2020, we initiated a program in Mianzhu called Entrepreneurial Farmers Training (EFT). This focuses on sustainable kiwifruit production and marketing. EFT targets people under 35 with a rural or agricultural background. It aims to equip them with new skills and enable internships and mentoring in the kiwifruit industry.

EFT runs in partnership with Huasheng Agriculture Company (HAC) and Sichuan Provincial Academy of Natural Resource Sciences. It is endorsed by local government. So far, two cohorts of 30 participants have completed the 30-day program. Attendees gave EFT excellent ratings (see the following page). Some of them have chosen to follow up the training with internships in various roles at HAC.



Feedback on the EFT



Peiyao Li

Participant of EFT

After the EFT program, I feel so fortunate that I had applied for it. The training completely altered how I think about farming. I now feel motivated and empowered to be devoted to agriculture.



Feng Bai

Chairman of Huasheng
(Business partner of EFT)

I have been working in the agriculture industry for three decades and have never seen such a great program. It offers young people free, comprehensive and really useful training. I feel honored and inspired to see more and more young people interested in agriculture.



Yujiao Wang

Participant of EFT

I am from a rural area and studied agriculture. But I was lost and decided to find a job in a bank or an insurance company after graduation. EFT is like a lighthouse that has shown me so many possibilities. The mentor is amazing and inspiring. I will go back to my hometown and start to grow crops in a new way.



Demonstration Orchard for Soil Health

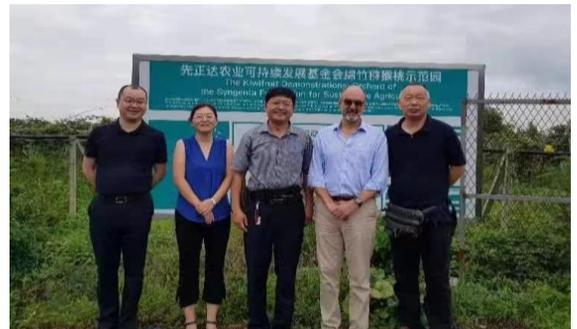
- Seeing is believing!

Soil degradation is a huge challenge in China after millennia of often intense cultivation. Degraded soils are critically low on organic matter; they also lack vigorous micro-bacteria and worms. Fertility is correspondingly low. China has large arable areas officially designated “poorly performing land”. We chose a site in this category for our demonstration orchard,

We started to establish the orchard in April 2019. Covering 70 *mu*, it is evenly divided into two blocks. We want to enhance one block by building a drainage system, growing



cover crops and introducing good micro-organisms. These measures aim to improve the soil’s physical, chemical and biological characteristics. Experiences here should enable us to propose proven solutions for better soil health.



We are delighted that New Zealand’s Massey University has joined us in these efforts. New Zealand is a world leader in kiwifruit production; Massey is additionally very strong on soil science. A university team will conduct research in conjunction with Huasheng Agriculture Company, Sichuan Provincial Academy of Natural Resource Sciences and SFSA. We are also discussing cooperation with Sichuan Agricultural University for additional resources and support.



In the face of the disease, the race is on to find more resistant kiwifruit varieties. To help, we are establishing a varietal assessment site in Guangyuan.

Guangyuan is a famous area for red kiwifruit. However, PSA bacteria have hit the crop badly. The main red variety, Hongyang, is highly susceptible to PSA. The sector therefore needs to find hardier alternatives as soon as possible. We have rented an area of 8 *mu* to compare the performance of the three most promising choices (Jinshi1, Hongshi 2 and Jinglong 2). We have grafted the rootstock and will continue to provide our technical support in 2021.

We have also helped local business partners to build up capacity for the trials and varietal evaluation.



Beijing Project

Promoting new alternative crops.

One of the main challenges facing many smallholders who grow cereals is how to create more value with their crops. For farmers in Beijing's Yanqing District, we have carefully selected and introduced leading oilseed sunflower varieties as an alternative.

We initiated the sunflower projects in 2019. The aim is to help local farmers to improve their income by replacing their current crop of corn or wheat with high-quality sunflower. They will sell the seeds they produce in this program to the local sunflower oil factory. This arrangement is a win-win: farmers enjoy good income and the factory gets a reliable local supply.

As well as the oil factory, this initiative involves the Beijing Agriculture Bureau, Xihuiling Agriculture Cooperative and the company Syngenta. The program began with a trial of three varieties on a total area of 100 *mu*.

After great results in the first year, the local government asked us to support a ten-fold increase in the growing area for 2020. We successfully provided seeds and technical support for production on 1000 *mu*.



Policy Research



China Agricultural Policy Program

Alongside the smallholder development projects, we are engaged actively in policy work. The aim is to improve the enabling environment for smallholder farming and related businesses. Through applied policy research, we put forward options and recommendations for improving agricultural and food policies and their implementation.

In 2018, we initiated a policy study looking at the agricultural innovation system in China. The research delivers a series of papers on innovation in agricultural technologies, reforms and incentive policies in China's agriculture and innovation in institutional arrangement. These papers form the basis for a book entitled "From Food Scarcity to Surplus: Innovations in Indian, Chinese and Israeli Agriculture", due for publication in the first half of 2021.

In 2019, together with the Nature Conservancy, we launched a policy study on soil health and resource use efficiency in China's agriculture. The aim is to better understand China's policies on green agriculture development, focusing particularly on subsidies. We have completed the policy review and are currently conducting in-depth studies in several provinces.

In 2020, our global policy team initiated a research project on reorienting public agricultural R&D for achieving sustainable, nutritious and climate-resilient food systems. This covers several Asian and African countries. In China, we are collaborating with China Agricultural University. Together, we are analyzing the patterns and priorities of public and private R&D spending and investment in agri-food systems. We aim to identify gaps and explore how to reorient current research funding to address future challenges in the areas of the environment, health and climate change.

We will continue the collaboration with various policy partners and stakeholders in the future to facilitate positive policy change for farming.

Against COVID-19 TOGETHER

We faced unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. We are working together as a team and as a ‘family’.

In early 2020, Wuhan reported the first case of COVID-19; the whole nation went into emergency lockdown soon after. It was a situation unlike anyone had previously had to face. SFSA rapidly responded, purchasing personal protection equipment and ensuring that employees stayed at home.

We then proactively communicated with local government and business partners. Our aim was to make sure that our “client” farmers continued to benefit from support regardless of the challenges.



In Gansu, we went to enormous efforts to make sure farmers still got their seeds on time.

For the training programs in Sichuan, we got all participants tested before arrival and restricted personal travel during the training. We also measured and recorded everyone’s temperature three times a day.

So far, no one within our programs has been infected, and we have accomplished all target missions.



Events - Communications

- Alongside our projects, we put a lot of emphasis on teamwork, communication and personal development.

In our small team, just like in a large one, it is important to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for every member. We host a Diversity & Inclusion meeting each year, looking at how to make our team more diverse; our business partners do the same.

We greatly value team spirit. That is particularly important with four employees often widely separated across different locations. In 2019, we ran four days of team-building activities in Sichuan. These helped us get to know both each other and our local work better.

SFSA cares deeply about developing young employees. Yuwei Duan participated in the 2019 UNLEASH program contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

We also share development ideas and experiences with counterparts at SinoChem and ChemChina. Further suitable collaboration is planned.



Top left: China team-building; top right: Yuwei attending UNLEASH; bottom left: SFSA team visiting MAP center; bottom right: SFSA team meeting with Sinochem Agriculture.

Events - Conferences

- We are very interested in establishing more connections and strengthening our networks, for example at high-level conferences.



In March 2019, Yuan Zhou attended the China Seed Congress on behalf of the whole team. She and Ian Barker jointly presented the Foundation’s global activities, notably the Seeds2B program. They exchanged ideas and perspectives with other participants on challenges and opportunities in international cooperation.

In October 2019, Yuan attended the annual Social Entrepreneurship & Transformation Forum organized by the Swiss Embassy in China. There she made active contributions to the main theme – tapping the potential of social enterprises to transform the world towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, Yuan shared her perspectives on agricultural and rural development in China.



Yuan Zhou and former SFSA employee Ian Barker at China Seed Congress

Looking Forward

- We will continue to firmly support our projects in Gansu, Sichuan and Beijing. We are also very keen to work with partners on, for example, cash crop value chains and agriculture-related education, as well as other topics.



Organizational Development

SFSA will put even more emphasis on gender diversity. We are dedicated to maintaining a comfortable and safe working environment for everyone. We will work with our various partners to improve rural gender equality. We will also pay special attention to youth inclusion, notably in entrepreneurship.



Resource Mobilization

For a small young team, we have achieved remarkable results so far. We are now eager to build our projects to the next level. We want to work with other organizations that share our vision and values. Together, we can accomplish much more than alone and separately. We have been making contacts with potential business partners.

We will also explore the possibility of diversifying our operational model to make it more financially sustainable.



Local Project Development

For Gansu projects:

We will support our vegetable farmers in Dingxi by continuously introducing new varieties and growing techniques.

In Gulang, we will enhance the work on our goji-berry demonstration orchard and help local farmers to transition from low-profit field crops to high-value cash crops. We will expand our range of supported crops from vegetables alone to include fruit trees and other options. We cherish our partnership with Sino-Chem and ChemChina and will build this further.

For Sichuan Projects:

Our focus will expand from only working around kiwifruit to simultaneously support other crops, such as pumpkin, spring onion and sweet corn. We aim to expand the number of supported farmers and increase our impact and reputation.

We will further refine our Entrepreneurial Farmer Training, based on feedback so far. EFT should then attract many more young people to devote their skills and energy to agriculture.

Contact and further information

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