

China to restrict reliance on foreign seed companies to foster lagging innovation in genetic engineering and advanced breeding

China will encourage technological innovation to boost domestic supplies of high-quality seeds, dubbed “agriculture microchips,” officials said at a seed industry convention.

Despite years of bumper harvests, experts and officials have warned against China’s over-reliance on foreign seeds for a variety of crops, an underbelly of the campaign to secure food security in the world’s most populous nation.

China will speed up the revision of its seed law and regulations on protecting new plant species to foster innovation, Zhang Taolin, vice agriculture minister, told the ongoing 2021 China Seed Congress and Nanfan Agricultural Silicon Valley Forum.

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Wan [Jianmin, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences] said China has seen significant progress in basic research involving germplasm in recent years as Chinese scientists have completed sequencing or resequencing of a variety of key agricultural crops, and the country’s genome research on rice and wheat is among the top in the world.

Yet the country’s seed industry still faces a lack of originality in basic research, cutting-edge and core technologies, Wan said, stressing an urgent need to improve the corporate innovation on seed breeding.

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