

# The Concept of Food Security in China under the New Situation

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## Abstract

**Food security is an important basis for national security. This paper makes a comprehensive analysis of the concept change of food security, the current situation of domestic food security, the policy orientation and the important problems faced by food security in the new era, with a view to further understanding the development direction and measures to ensure national food security in the future.**

## Keywords

**Food Security; Current Situation of Food Security; Policy Orientation.**

## 1. Introduction

"Food is the first of the government, and grain is the life of the people". Food security is an important basis for national security. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party Central Committee regards food security as the top priority of governance. From 2013 to 2022, 10 consecutive No. 1 central document comprehensively deployed the work of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers", and took a series of measures to improve food production and food security. General Secretary Xi Jinping attended the Central Rural Work Conference three times and delivered an important speech, giving a series of important instructions to the "three rural" work, food production and food security. The important issues such as ensuring food supply, initiative of food security, red line of cultivated land, and adjustment of food reserves have been profoundly explained. Such as "The Chinese people's jobs should always be firmly in their hands", "Our rice bowl should mainly contain Chinese food", and "The red line of cultivated land should be strictly guarded". It also proposed a new food security concept to ensure the basic self-sufficiency of grain and the absolute security of grain rations, firmly grasp the initiative of food security, and lead hundreds of millions of people to walk out of a path of food security with Chinese characteristics.

## 2. Food Security

The concept of food security was first put forward by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at the World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974. Food (food) is the most basic material condition to ensure human survival. To meet food security, it is necessary to ensure that everyone can obtain a certain amount of food (food) at each time point in the global or regional scope, So as to ensure human survival and health [1]. After the concept was put forward, experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

have continuously revised and improved it. In 1983 and 1996, purchasing power factors and quality safety factors were introduced and superimposed in the concept of food security.

The specificity of national conditions such as resource endowments and population numbers of countries in the world also leads to great differences in food security views among countries. Large population and scarce land resources are the basic national conditions of our country, resulting in the difficulty of ensuring sufficient food self-sufficiency. Therefore, domestic scholars have carried out deeper research on the definition of food security from the perspective of reality. He and Song believe that "on the macro level, food security is at the national level, and it is necessary to ensure that food has a certain self-sufficiency rate; on the medium level, it is important to improve the availability of urban food; on the micro level, it is necessary to make food affordable for low-income people" [2]. "The concept of food security in China has three basic connotations: one is the quantity security of food, the other is the quality security of food, and the third is the industrial security of food", which was proposed in the Readers of Food Security Cadres published in 2021 [3]. In addition, some scholars believe that food security should also include the variety, nutrition structure, order and sustainability of food supply [4].

### 3. Current Situation of Food Security in China

Food security is a worldwide problem. With the deepening development of the globalization and regionalization of the world economy, international grain trade has alleviated the imbalance of world grain supply to a certain extent, but excessive grain import has posed a certain threat to the food security of all grain importing countries. The food crisis in 2008 swept the world and sounded an alarm bell for the food security of all food-importing countries. Countries are becoming more cautious about the policies of using the international food market and international food resources to ensure food security. In 2013, China's Central Economic Work Conference first defined the new national food security strategy. Then, at the 2013 Central Rural Work Conference, the country again proposed that ensuring China's food security and solving the problem of eating well have always been the top priority of governing the country, and put forward "moderate import" as an important means to ensure national food security for the first time.

In the past decade, with the continuous progress of China's agricultural production technology, the comprehensive domestic grain production capacity has been continuously improved, and China's grain output has increased year by year. The grain output has increased from 588 million tons in 2011 to 686 million tons in 2022 (China Statistical Yearbook), with an increase of 16.7%. For eight consecutive years, it has maintained more than 1.3 trillion jin (Table 1), and the grain production has enjoyed "19 consecutive harvests". According to the white paper "China's Food Security" issued by China in 2019, the self-sufficiency rate of China's two major rations of wheat and rice exceeded 100%, and the self-sufficiency rate of grain exceeded 95%.

**Table 1.** Grain yield in 2011-2022 (100 million tons)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yield	5.88	6.12	6.30	6.40	6.61	6.60	6.62	6.58	6.64	6.69	6.83	6.86

However, while the grain output has increased significantly, China's grain self-sufficiency rate has dropped again and again. At the end of 2014, China's grain self-sufficiency rate has dropped to 87% (below 90% of the world security standard). In 2017, China's grain self-sufficiency rate has further decreased to about 82.3%, and the grain self-sufficiency rate has dropped to about 95%. While the grain output has increased year after year, China's grain has also presented a

strange phenomenon of overall net import and rapid import growth, and unnecessary import excessive. In 2017, China's grain imports totaled 130 million tons, an increase of 13.9% over 2016, while in 2018, China's grain imports totaled 115 million tons. Although the grain import volume decreased by 11.5% year on year, compared with the whole year of 2018, the cumulative export volume of China's grain totaled 3.66 million tons, and the import volume is still huge. All these have brought great challenges to China's food industry, food security and sustainable development of agriculture.

#### 4. Policy Orientation

In 2013, the Central Economic Work Conference put forward for the first time a new national food security strategy with the core content of "focusing on ourselves, based on the domestic market, ensuring production capacity, appropriate import, and scientific and technological support". The new national food security strategy believes that to ensure China's food security, in addition to relying on its own to increase grain production and increase grain reserves, under the free trade conditions without food embargo, make good use of both international and domestic markets. Two kinds of resources, appropriately increase food imports and accelerate the pace of agricultural "going out", grasp the scale and rhythm of food imports, and make full use of international food markets and resources to balance domestic food supply and demand. On the one hand, the new national food security strategy requires that China's food security should be "self centered" and "based on the domestic" at all times, continue to stabilize the planting area and yield of rice and wheat rations, optimize and stimulate various factors, continue to deepen reform in resource utilization, scientific and technological level, policy support, management system, and other aspects, and focus on the strength to consolidate and improve the comprehensive production capacity of grain, Ensure the absolute safety of rations. On the other hand, the new strategy of national food security requires that the current problem of tight balance of China's food supply and sustainable development of China's agricultural resources be solved through "moderate import", and the international food resources and international food market be fully utilized to ensure national food security. Limited by the constraints of domestic agricultural natural resources and the growth of population, it is increasingly difficult to continue to rely solely on themselves to ensure food security. In order to alleviate the pressure of domestic food production and agricultural natural resources, the appropriate and selective use of international food markets and international food resources to balance domestic food supply and demand has also become an important means and requirement of national food security at the current stage. Import "non-ration" grain varieties such as soybeans from the international grain market to meet domestic needs, and appropriately reduce the planting area of "non-ration" grain varieties such as soybeans, which can fully guarantee the production and supply of "ration" crops in China and ensure national food security.

#### 5. Problems

As a basic commodity, grain is facing "high variability" in international trade under special circumstances. Moderate import is an integral part of China's food security strategy. As the world's largest importer of agricultural products, China is subject to the high concentration of international trade supply. According to FAO database data, in 2017, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Ukraine and Russia accounted for 78% of the global corn export market, while Brazil, the United States, Argentina, Paraguay and Canada accounted for 93% of the global soybean export market. The global bulk agricultural futures market is mainly distributed in Europe and America, and the bulk agricultural trade is mainly controlled by a few multinational companies. In 2019, China's grain imports (including grains, beans and potatoes) reached 110 million tons.

In the same year, the import of pork and beef increased by 67.2% and 59.7% year on year respectively, reaching the historical peak [5]. At present, the COVID-19 is spreading all over the world, and barriers such as trade protectionism and unilateralism are growing. The stability and availability of the international food market have been greatly impacted. Once the geopolitical conflict breaks out and the route is blocked, there is a risk of choking or even interrupting the international food supply chain.

How to objectively grasp the situation facing China's food security, innovate China's food security thinking, scientifically grasp the appropriate scale of food imports, and ensure that food imports are appropriate, stable, and reliable, has become the key to whether "appropriate import" can ensure the successful implementation of the new strategy of national food security. The increasingly severe international food situation also makes the connection between food import and China's food security issues more and more close, and the research of food import on China's food security issues is also more academic research value.

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