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Changes to the milk industry in China after the 2008 milk scandal

Economic implications of larger farms and new technology are revealed in a new review in *Applied Animal Science*

Champaign, IL, April 12, 2021—China's dairy industry has seen a transition to larger dairy farms and the adoption of new technology since the milk scandal in 2008. These changes have resulted in environmental concerns and stricter government policies, which have become an economic constraint for dairy producers. A recent [review](#) in [Applied Animal Science](#) by authors at Zhejiang Sci-tech University, Hangzhou, China, and Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, describes the challenges and future outlook of China's milk industry after the 2008 milk scandal.

Between 1997 and 2008, milk production in China grew by about 15% annually, which was unprecedented. Before 1997, China's milk was primarily produced by small farmers, who owned about 3 cows on average; in 2008 approximately 68% of cows were held by small-scale farms. In 2008, limited raw milk supplies, increasing costs for feeding cows, and increasing milk sale prices, unfortunately, created sufficient incentive for some milk collection networks to add water or melamine, a potentially lethal compound that boosts the apparent protein content of raw milk. The safety of raw milk has improved greatly since then due to the Chinese government implementing a milk monitoring plan in 2009 to ensure the quality and safety of raw milk. China's milk production has, thus, changed from a quantity-based system to a quality-based system with tighter government regulation. Milk production and supply are still less than domestic demand, but production and supply are increasing.

Because shortages exist in China for domestic supplies of alfalfa and oat hays, their dairy farms have begun to use imported premium forages, leading to large increases in imports between 2009 and 2018 for alfalfa hay (from 74,185 to 1.38 million tonnes) and for oat hay (from 1,448 to 293,641 tonnes).

"Improving market competitiveness while ensuring economic and environmental sustainability are key to the future prospects for China's milk industry," said lead author Longbao Wei, China Academy for Rural Development, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China. "Future research needs to address the effects of different organizational forms of dairy enterprises and dairy farmers on milk production in China," added Wei. "Lack of an adequate supply of high-quality forages at cost-effective prices is currently a major obstacle to improving cow and farm productivity," said David K. Beede, PhD, editor in chief of *Applied Animal Science*.

The authors suggest that to better protect dairy farmers' interests and the national production of milk in China, a mutually beneficial marketing structure should be created to distribute interests and risks among dairy producers and milk processors.

The article appears in the April issue of *Applied Animal Science*.

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Notes for Editors

"REVIEW: Challenges and prospects for milk production in China after the 2008 milk scandal" by Qianqian Wang, Longbao Wei, and Wenting Wang (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15232/aas.2020-02074>), *Applied Animal Science*, Volume 37, Issue 2 (April 2021), published by FASS Inc. and Elsevier Inc.

Full text of the article is available to credentialed journalists upon request; contact Brittany Morstatter at +1-217-356-3182 ext. 143 or arpas@assochq.org to obtain copies. To schedule an interview with the authors, please contact Longbao Wei at lbwei@zju.edu.cn.

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