The agricultural development of China’s western regions

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I will give you a brief introduction on the agricultural development of China’s western region. I hope it will help you understand the agricultural situations in the western region.

The area of China’s western region is 6.78 million square kilometers, 70.67% of the nation’s area. The population of China’s western region is 358 million, 70.67% of the nation’s population. The area of cultivated land of China’s western region is 1.53 million square kilometers, 37.9% of the nation’s overall cultivated land. The area of China’s western grassland is 9.9 million square kilometers, 84.1% of the nation’s gross area of grassland. Agriculture is an important industry of the western region and the main income source of farmers.

1. The natural resources of China’s western region determine the basic characters of agricultural production.

The western region covers a wide range of climate. The variety of physiognomy, climate and agricultural demand leads to the variety and of small regional climate and shapes regional characteristics. In terms of such conditions of resources, food crops are not advantageous plants in the western region. The special diversity condition provides valuable advantages on local featuring agriculture, such as Xinjiang raisin and cantaloupe, Ningxia medlar, rice and Tibet yak. They are all famous agricultural products growing in special environment with the combination of many resources. They have unique quality and taste that cannot be substituted by products from other district in people’s various needs for food. This is the foundation when western region takes part and competes in the agricultural trade. Moreover, fewer chemicals are used in agricultural production in the western region; the environment of production is less polluted; the environment of atmosphere, water and soil are obviously better than the eastern and middle part. The western region is a much better place for the production of organic agricultural and green products, and for bio-resource development. These are the advantages of agricultural development in the western region.

2. China’s entry to WTO accelerates the agricultural adjustment of the western region. The featuring industries of the western region are appearing, with increasing competence. The cotton production area centering in Xinjiang has replaced that of East China and North China to become the biggest cotton production base. Apple production is transferring from North China to West China, Shaanxi being the center and the biggest base. And tobacco production is moving from North China to the southwest. A green food and specializing products industry has gradually taken its initial formation in Ningxia Province, producing wine, potato products, Muslim milk, and high-grade rice. The “red industry” in Xinjiang Province has reached scale production, yielding safflower oil, tomatoes, etc. A base for seed planting has almost shaped in Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province.

3. The agriculture of China’s western region is still at its initial stage. The commercial rate of agricultural products is low, and the amount of trade is still small. The pressure for more food supplies is heavy, which limits the development of featuring agricultural products. The output of crops fluctuates around 1000 billion tons; the output of crops per capita fluctuates between 300
and 350 kilograms. It fluctuates a lot in different years. A number of bases for high quality products have been built in the western region, such as spicy garlic in Guanzhong, melon and fruit in Gansu and Xinjiang, date and potato in Northern Shaanxi, tea in Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan. Unfortunately, many of them haven't shown their full economic potential. Although development of bio-resources has started to show the trend of industrialization, it stagnates at the sale of the original resources or primary processed products. Large scale production, high grade products and large profit have not been achieved.

4. The strategic choice for development of featuring agriculture in the western region. Agricultural trade liberalization is an inevitable trend. We have to establish agricultural development strategy in accord with the times, so as to transform resource advantages to economic advantages, to enhance the competence of agriculture effectively in trade liberalization. The strategy of quality and profit rather than quantity expanding should be chosen. We should choose the industry that has an advantage and abandon the opposite. We may make use of the conception of “one village, one product”, to enhance the competence of featuring agricultural products. We can take the following measures: 1. Find the advantageous resources that may be accepted by the market and deserves further developing through Comparative analysis. Then make a plan for important industries to transform resource advantages to economic advantages and maximize the economic profit. 2. Establish agricultural base for featuring products to realize regional layout, specialization, scale production, and socializing service. Focus on deep development, improving quality, cutting cost, and new products. Enhance the regional advantage in competition. 3. Establish brand awareness, strengthen product publicity and upgrade featuring products to national or even world acknowledged products, with a comparatively constant consumer group and marketing region. 4. Strength science and technology development, set up training courses and business management courses, organize related associations, train some creative and adventurous leaders and researchers, who are eager to lead their companions to a better life, to accelerate the development of agricultural featuring industries.

Thank you.