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**ANALYSIS OF SINO-RUSSIAN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION UNDER  
THE FRAMEWORK OF HEILONGJIANG FREE TRADE ZONE**

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**Abstract**

Agricultural cooperation and agricultural products trade are new driving forces for the deepening economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia in recent years. Driven by the interests and needs of both China and Russia, China's construction of a Free Trade Zone which facing Russia has achieved phased results, and agricultural cooperation has attracted much attention under the framework of the Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone. The purpose of this article is through the current situation of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation to analyze and explain the prospects of agricultural cooperation under the framework of Chinese (Heilongjiang) FTZ. Through the analysis, the author concludes that the development focus of Heihe and Suifenhe areas in Heilongjiang FTZ is agricultural cooperation between China and Russia. The innovation of this paper is to combine the traditional research perspective of Sino Russian agricultural cooperation with the cooperation under the framework of free trade zone.

**Keywords**

China-Russia regional economic cooperation – FTZ – SCO – Food security

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## Introduction

Agricultural cooperation between China and Russia has always been highly valued by the leaders and scholars of the two countries. In recent years, in response to the European and American sanctions, Russia has adjusted its domestic economic policy and vigorously developed agriculture, which has made the country's grain export grow steadily<sup>1</sup>. China is a large foodstuff importer, for Russia, China is undoubtedly a very ideal export market. For China, the short distance between China and Russia can greatly reduce transportation costs and time. From the perspective of balanced trade and market diversification, importing Russian foodstuff will help ensure China's food security. Many experts believe that the establishment of Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone will have a very positive impact on Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation. Liu Xun<sup>2</sup> “The establishment of the pilot free trade area will not only deepen the economic cooperation between Heilongjiang province and Russia, but also bring new impetus to the economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia, promoting the growth of mutual investment cooperation between China and Russia, promoting the optimization of trade structure in cooperation between China and Russia, and unleashing the development potential of cross-border ecommerce cooperation between China and Russia”. Heng Wang<sup>3</sup> proposes to carry out in-depth cooperation in the fields of agricultural investment organic food development planting and animal husbandry agricultural products trade and agricultural technology between China and Russia. Song L.<sup>4</sup> mentioned should modernization of trade (e-commerce), using the advantages of agricultural resources in the Russian Far East to create a green food processing base. Zhuoqun Gao<sup>5</sup> pointed that China and Russia should play greater roles in agricultural cooperation and food supply on the international market. The processing capacity of Heilongjiang Province is relatively weak during the process of developing border trade with Russia in the future, Heilongjiang Province should extend the industry chain as well, especially for the agricultural one<sup>6</sup>. Based on the research on the construction outline<sup>7</sup> and relevant data of Heilongjiang FTZ, this paper analyzes the

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. Konarovskij, “Rossiya – SHOS: nekotorye elementy strategii”, Vestnik mezhdunarodnyh organizacij Vol: 11 num 4 (2016): 149-161 y E. A. Matushevskaya, “Formirovanie kompleksnogo podhoda k ocenke effektivnosti funkcionirovaniya svobodnoj ekonomicheskoy zony”, Ekonomika regiona Vol: 14 num 3 (2018).

<sup>2</sup> L. Xun, “The establishment of Heilongjiang Pilot free trade zone and its influence on The Development of Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation”, China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House (2020): 42-46.

<sup>3</sup> H. Wang y Zh. Wang, “Analysis of the Present Situation and Potential of Agriculture Cooperation between China and Russia under the Background of “The Belt and Road””. China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House Vol: 48 num 14 (2020): 225-231.

<sup>4</sup> L. Song, “Strategic priorities of cooperation between Heilongjiang province and Russia”. R-Economy Vol: 5 num 1 (2019): 13–18.

<sup>5</sup> Zh. Gao, “The border trade and agricultural development research between Russia and Heilongjiang province”, Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii «Rossiya – Kitaj: vektor razvitiya» (2016): 272-276.

<sup>6</sup> I. Chen y S. Van, “Analiz potenciala kitajsko-rossijskogo sel'skohozyajstvennogo sotrudnichestva”, Ekonomika i predprinimatel'stvo (2020): 346-350.

<sup>7</sup> L. Syun', “Hejlunczyanskaya zona svobodnoj trgovli v Kitae”, Ekonomika i predprinimatel'stvo Vol: 14 num 1 (2020); D. Guan, “Analiz trgovno-ekonomicheskoy vzaimodopolnyaemosti mezhdu RF i KNR”, Terra Economicus Vol: 9 num 1 (2011); N. Lu; S. H. Lu y M. Huan, “Sotrudnichestvo Kitaya s Rossiej i stranami Central'noj Azii v formate «Odnogo poyasa, odnogo puti» kak faktor razvitiya SHOS”, Vestnik mezhdunarodnyh organizacij Vol: 13 num 3 (2018): 113–127 y B. Ying, “Research on Promoting the Comprehensive Construction of Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone”, SHANGYE JINGJI num 6 (2020): 8-10

prospects and positive significance of China Russia agricultural cooperation under the framework of the free trade zone, and also puts forward suggestions on further improving agricultural cooperation within the FTZ.

## Research methods

Literature analysis, data analysis. In the literature analysis, the author has reviewed a large number of literature on China Russia agricultural cooperation, China Russia economic and trade exchanges, and the construction of China's free trade zone since 2016, including Chinese, Russian and English literature, due to the international perspective of writing. The author consulted the statistical yearbook of China, the statistical data of the Ministry of Commerce of China and the UNcomtrade database for data analysis in 2012-2019, which made the analysis process more complete.

## Results

Heilongjiang province has irreplaceable special status and superior resources in China's economic and trade relations with Russia. Based on the analysis of the development planning of Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone, the author believes that the development core of Heihe and Suifenhe areas should be the Sino Russian agricultural products trade and agricultural cooperation. Among them, the advantage of Heihe area is more prominent. The reasons are as follows: from the perspective of geographical location, Heihe city is just on the border between China and Russia, with geographical advantages. According to the economic data of Heihe City, Heihe city achieved a GDP of 505.1 billion yuan in 2018, representing a year-on-year increase of 7%. Among them, the added value of the primary industry was 22.32 billion yuan, an increase of 7.7%. The added value of the second industry was 7.95 billion yuan, an increase of 8.6%; the added value of the third industry was 20.24 billion yuan, an increase of 5.5%. The three industries accounted for 44.2%, 15.7% and 40.1% of GDP respectively. This means that the strongest driving force of Heihe's economy is the primary industry of agriculture. The Far East of Russia has good natural conditions and a vast territory with few people. But, the local agricultural development lacks labor force and agricultural machinery, the crops are single and the processing degree is low. In this way, there are obvious complementary advantages between them.

## Discussion

At current period, China and Russia have close contacts in economic, political, social, environmental and other fields. With the continuous changes in the trade structure, except traditional links in the import and export of energy, raw materials and machinery & equipment, the two countries have also increased their share of trade in the agricultural sector. In recent years, Russia regards agriculture as the main force for economic growth. In terms of agricultural products trade, Russia is very optimistic about the Chinese market and also regards China as the first agricultural cooperative country. Russia has even offered preferential policies to attract Chinese investors to Russia to jointly develop agricultural land, such as providing at least 1.68 million hectares of land to Chinese buyers for agricultural investment projects. Chinese investors have invested in Russia's advantageous industries in the agricultural sector, such as soybean planting, soybean grain processing, dairy cow breeding, dairy processing, mushroom planting, etc<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Sino-Russian agricultural markets increase their cooperation, and Russia will occupy half of China's agricultural product market in the future. Sina Finance. September 2017. Retrieved from: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1678056670897208754&wfr=spider&for=pc>

In 2019, China and Russia have made remarkable achievements in the field of agricultural cooperation. In June 2019, the two sides signed an agreement on the supply of Russian agricultural products to China, in particular, wheat, corn, sunflower powder, sugar beet meal, etc. China, the world's largest buyer of soy, is also allowed to import soy from all regions of Russia. Table 1 shows the amount of agricultural products imported by China from Russia in 2012-2019<sup>9</sup>. The author also compared the amount of agricultural products imported by China from Russia and the United States. We can clearly see that the amount of agricultural products imported by China from Russia has increased by 2.3 times in 7 years. At the same time, it can also be seen that since the beginning of the Sino-US trade war, China's imports of agricultural products from the United States have shrunk. This is the best time for Russia to expand its export of agricultural products to China. Russian agricultural products have great development potential in the Chinese market.

	China from (million dollars)	Import Russia U.S.	China from (million dollars)	Import American U.S.	China from (million dollars)	import world U.S.	Share Russia	of	Share America	of
2012	1554.12		28734.46		62500		2.49%		45.98%	
2013	1569.81		26578.26		67100		2.34%		39.61%	
2014	1550.31		28673.55		71340		2.17%		40.19%	
2015	1718.76		24654.14		70180		2.45%		35.13%	
2016	1991.34		23841.83		72610		2.74%		32.84%	
2017	2119.54		24083.56		124680		1.70%		19.32%	
2018	3206.70		16193.54		137150		2.34%		11.81%	
2019	3593.29		14094.07		149850		2.40%		9.41%	

Table1<sup>10</sup>

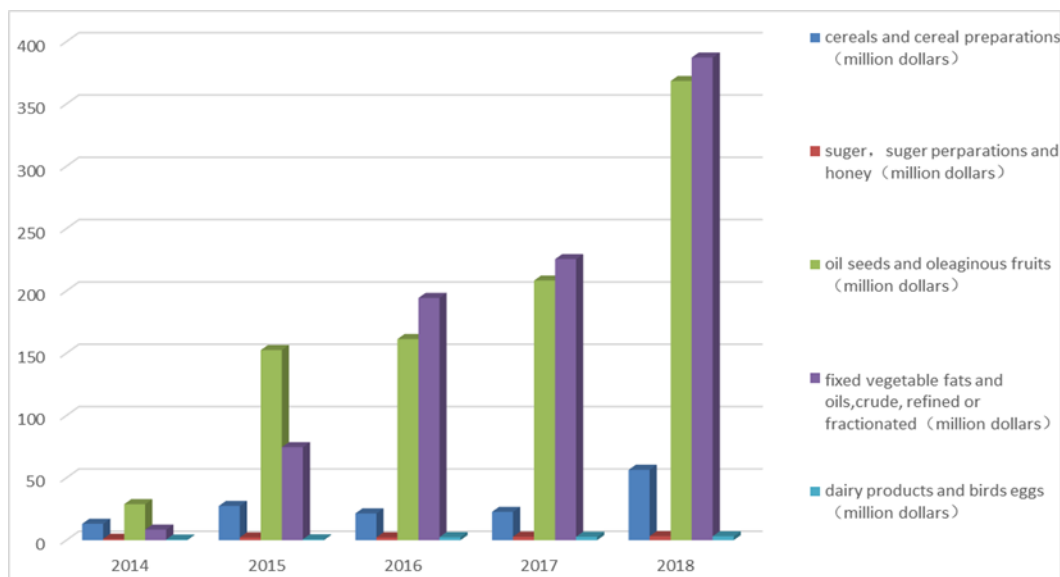
The general overview of China's imports of agricultural products from 2012 to 2019 and imports from Russia and the United States

When analyzing the data, the author found that several types of agricultural products imported by China from Russia increased rapidly. As shown in Figure 1, China's imports of grain and vegetable oil from Russia increased dramatically from 2014 to 2018. In 2014, China imported US \$13.14 million of grain from Russia, an increase of 4.29 times in 2018 and 45.4 times in vegetable oil. Russian sunflower oil producers will be able to meet most of the supply in China and India by 2024, according to Sergei Levin, Deputy Minister of the Russian Ministry of agriculture. By 2024, Russian producers are likely to account for the majority of China's market, with a share of 50%. Imports of sugar, honey and egg milk products from Russia also increased by more than 3 times<sup>11</sup>. This is attributable to the continuous efforts of China and Russia in agricultural cooperation in recent years. In August 2019, Heilongjiang Province officially launched the construction of a free trade zone for Russia. The establishment of the Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone will greatly enhance the openness of border areas. This is undoubtedly an important measure for China to further strengthen economic and trade cooperation with Russia.

<sup>9</sup> M. A. Konarovskij, "SHOS i BRIKS: vozmozhnosti i perspektivy sopryazheniya", International organisations research journal num 4 (2019): 161-171.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Commerce PRC. Retrieved from: <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/>

<sup>11</sup> G. Y. Ostaev; D. V. Kondratyev y O. V. Kotlyachkov, "Improving the methods and approaches of analysis and management accounting in agriculture", Amazonia Investiga Vol: 8 num 20 (2019): 135-143.

Figure 1<sup>12</sup>

Trends of China's imports of individual foods from Russia  
(according to SITC 3 classification)

In the overall plan of China (Heilongjiang) pilot Free Trade Zone, it is mentioned that the free trade zone should be built into an open cooperation highland focusing on Russia and Northeast Asia. The enterprises in the pilot Free Trade Zone can import potassium fertilizer from the surrounding countries to meet the needs of agricultural development in Heilongjiang province. Enterprises in the pilot free trade zone are encouraged to carry out overseas agricultural cooperation and build overseas agricultural cooperation parks. Enterprises are also encouraged to trade and process the returned products from overseas investment. Under the framework of Heilongjiang Free Trade Zone, government will speed up the process of market access of forage grass from Russia. Support the establishment of designated supervision sites for the import of seed and seedlings, chilled aquatic products, etc.

The implementation scope of Heilongjiang pilot Free Trade Zone is 119.85 square kilometers, covering 3 areas. Among them, 79.86 square kilometers of Harbin area, 20 square kilometers of Heihe area, and 19.99 square kilometers of Suifenhe area (including 1.8 square kilometers of Suifenhe Comprehensive Bonded Zone). Harbin area focuses on the development of new generation information technology, new materials, high-end equipment, biomedicine and other strategic emerging industries. At the same time, in Heilongjiang FTZ will build a national logistics hub connecting China and Eurasia. Heihe District focuses on the development of cross-border energy resources comprehensive processing and utilization, green food, commerce and logistics, tourism, health, border finance and other industries. Suifenhe District focuses on the development of imported wood, grain, clean energy and other processing industries. Set up commodity import and export storage, transportation and processing distribution center. In combination with the industrial policies in recent years, the Sino Russian cooperation and development plan in the Far East of Russia (2018-2024) was approved in Nov.2018. Agriculture has become one of the 7 priority areas for Sino Russian economic and trade cooperation in the Far East of Russia.

<sup>12</sup> UNcomtrade. Retrieved from: <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>

In combination with the industrial policies in recent years, the Sino Russian cooperation and development plan in the Far East of Russia (2018-2024) was approved in 11 2018. Agriculture has become one of the 7 priority areas for Sino Russian economic and trade cooperation in the Far East of Russia. The establishment of Heilongjiang free trade zone will have a very far-reaching and positive impact on the economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia. However, the relevant policies of the free trade zone are not incomplete at present. For example, the standards of agricultural products inspection and Quarantine of the two countries are still to be negotiated, the storage, transportation and processing methods of agricultural products as well as the investment preferential policies in the free trade zone need to be further agreed by the two governments.

## Conclusion

The Chinese government has given a lot of policy support to the establishment of the Sino Russian free trade zone. From these policies, the agricultural cooperation under the framework of the free trade zone is highly valued. China is a major food importer. Under the background of the Sino US trade war, further deepening cooperation between China and Russia in the agricultural field will play a very positive and important role in solving China's food security problems. The establishment of Heilongjiang free trade zone will further promote a new mode of agricultural cooperation between China and Russia. The author suggests that the two countries should negotiate to establish agricultural product R & D center to meet the needs of each other's market, Sino Russian agricultural shared database and Sino Russian digital agricultural development center, etc. While deepening cooperation, should also improve the dispute resolution and establish a risk sharing mechanism. For example, Russian enterprises and Chinese enterprises are drew into agricultural science and technology parks and industrial parks to promote mutual benefit and win-win results.

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