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gLAWcal
Comment #205

**WILL CHINA BE ABLE TO FEED IT-
SELF?**

Based on

**James R. Simpson “Projections of Chi-
na’s Food Security to 2030: Obligations
as an Agricultural superpower”**



gLAWcal
Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

A gLAWcal comment on James R. Simpson "Projections of China's Food Security to 2030: Obligations as an Agricultural superpower" in Paolo Davide Farah and Elena Cima (Eds.) China's Influence on Non-Trade Concerns in International Economic Law

Several scholars have been discussing since the 1990s whether China would be able to feed itself considering the fast economic growth that has and is still occurring in the country, the increase in the population number despite the one child policy that was adopted by the Chinese government and the changes in the consumers tastes from relying mainly on the Chinese traditional cuisine for food to other kinds of cuisines such as Italian, Mexican and so on. In fact, the main reason these authors discussed this matter is because not only they were looking to assess whether the Chinese government has the capability to feed its population but also to understand whether the changes in the consumer's taste will affect food security overall around the globe. Would Chinese dependence on meat lead to an increase in the meat prices overall for instance? The same question could have also been asked with regards to other types of food. According to Brian Keeley, "Between 1980 and 2011, agricultural output (not all of it food, of course) expanded 4.5 times, thanks in part to increased use of machinery, improved irrigation, and hybrid crops. In parallel, the number of people going hungry has fallen sharply: In 1990, around one in five Chinese was malnourished; today it's under one in eight. Food security has also improved: In 1978, for example, rural households spent 68% of their income on food; today it's only around 40%." In contrast, in an article written in Forbes Magazine, the author Jack Perkowski stated that "Feeding China's population of 1.3 billion people is a difficult task, even

under the best of circumstances. Securing enough food for its people, however, will be even more difficult for China in the years ahead due to a number of factors, including increased competition from a growing global population, the reduction of the country's agricultural work force as millions of Chinese farmers flock to the cities, and the changing diets of its population as Chinese become more affluent." Indeed, among the many strategies that the Chinese government adopted in recent years for facing these problems, Beijing started purchasing agricultural lands in other countries in order to ensure the food security of the country in case of food crises. In the chapter Projections of China's Food Security to 2030: Obligations as an Agricultural superpower" of the book "China's Influence on Non-Trade Concerns in International Economic Law", the author James R. Simpson examined this issue. In the author's opinion, "technically, despite human population growth and changes in diet, China will be able to maintain its current level of being essentially self-sufficient in animal feedstuffs, animal and aquaculture products, and other foods for humans." Hence, according to the authors, the studies that were made in the 1990s have exaggerated the problems for several reasons. As such, through this chapter, he provided several arguments as to which the studies that were made were inaccurate or incorrect concluding with the fact that indeed China would be able to feed itself.



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