

FOOD CRISIS AND THE GLOBAL LAND GRAB

GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATIONS ARE BUYING UP FARMLAND IN OTHER COUNTRIES TO GROW THEIR OWN FOOD - OR SIMPLY TO MAKE MONEY



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3,000 Chinese farmers to farm abroad

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China Daily | 2003-12-18

Hundreds of farmers in Northwest China are expected to toil the soil in the neighboring Republic of Kazakhstan next spring, a local agricultural official said yesterday.

"We have signed a deal with Kazakhstan to rent 7,000 hectares of land in Alakol county for use for 10 years," said Sulitang Dosimuhan, an official in Yili Kazak Prefecture of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Some 3,000 Chinese farmers will flow into the land, arable but mostly deserted since 1990s, to grow soybeans, wheat and breed animals in the next three years, the deputy chief of the prefecture's Agricultural Bureau said in a telephone interview.

Alakol in Kazakhstan is vast in area but sparsely populated. It needs additional hands to further develop its agriculture industry, local sources said.

The Kazakhstan Embassy in Beijing was not available for comment yesterday.

Yili, Alakol's close neighbour, has a surplus rural workforce, as 1.7 million farmers work on 266,600 hectares of arable land, Dosimuhan said.

The land use agreement comes as, in part, the result of improved political and business relations between China and Kazakhstan, experts said.

Both are members of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization -- an international body founded in 2001. Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Kazakhstan in June.

Trade volume between China and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$1.37 billion in the first eight months of this year, or 79.6 per cent more than last year, customs statistics indicate.

Dosimuhan said he anticipated the experience and expertise of Chinese farmers to help local agriculture thrive.

He said the harvest will be sold either in Kazakhstan or outside.

Hu Feng, director of a Sino-Kazakhstan joint venture created last month to oversee the agricultural project, said he hoped the project will benefit both countries.

Apart from agriculture, the Alakol-based company will also work to develop construction and tourism sectors in the area, he said.

Source: [China Daily](#)



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