

CHINA'S AGRIFOOD QUESTION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION?

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This presentation is premised on the perception that the analysis of Brazil-China agri-food trade and investment relations in the South American context lacks a better understanding of the Chinese agrifood question regarding the challenges of global sustainable development. This perception arises from the synthesis of results of a fruitful research program on the Brazil-China soy-meat complex, the performance of Chinese agribusiness corporations in the Southern Cone, and China's agrifood innovations vis-a-vis the challenges of food security. The argument explored is that, besides the promotion of measures to reduce its dependence on agrifood imports in an increasingly strained geopolitical conjuncture, the leadership role that China is taking on climate change and global environmental governance also needs to be considered. However, instead of focusing on its repercussions for South America *per se*, the overall aim is to analyse China's responses to domestic agrarian, food, and rural issues in intersection with the challenges for global sustainable development. It is hardly surprising that China's unprecedented historical trajectory of rapid economic growth and structural transformation since the onset of the Reform and Opening-Up has been accompanied by enormous ecological costs and environmental problems. However, equally remarkable is the speed at which its awareness of the severity of these issues has translated into real and effective domestic responses and a shift in the country's international environmental profile, culminating in its adherence to global conventions such as the SDGs within the UN's Agenda 2030. Xi Jinping's call for building an Ecological Civilization (EC) put forward a grand strategic vision that provides political direction and policy orientation in navigating the "principal contradiction" of the New Era. The presentation seeks to show how the contemporary agrifood question, by encompassing the major problematics of China's development trajectory, actually plays a crucial role in its progress towards achieving the SDGs.