

[A wonderland in microscopic carvings](#)



Ran Longquan, a master of microscopic carving, scrutinizes his works at his studio in Kunming, southwestern China's Yunnan province, Sept 12, 2017. [Photo/Chinanews.com]

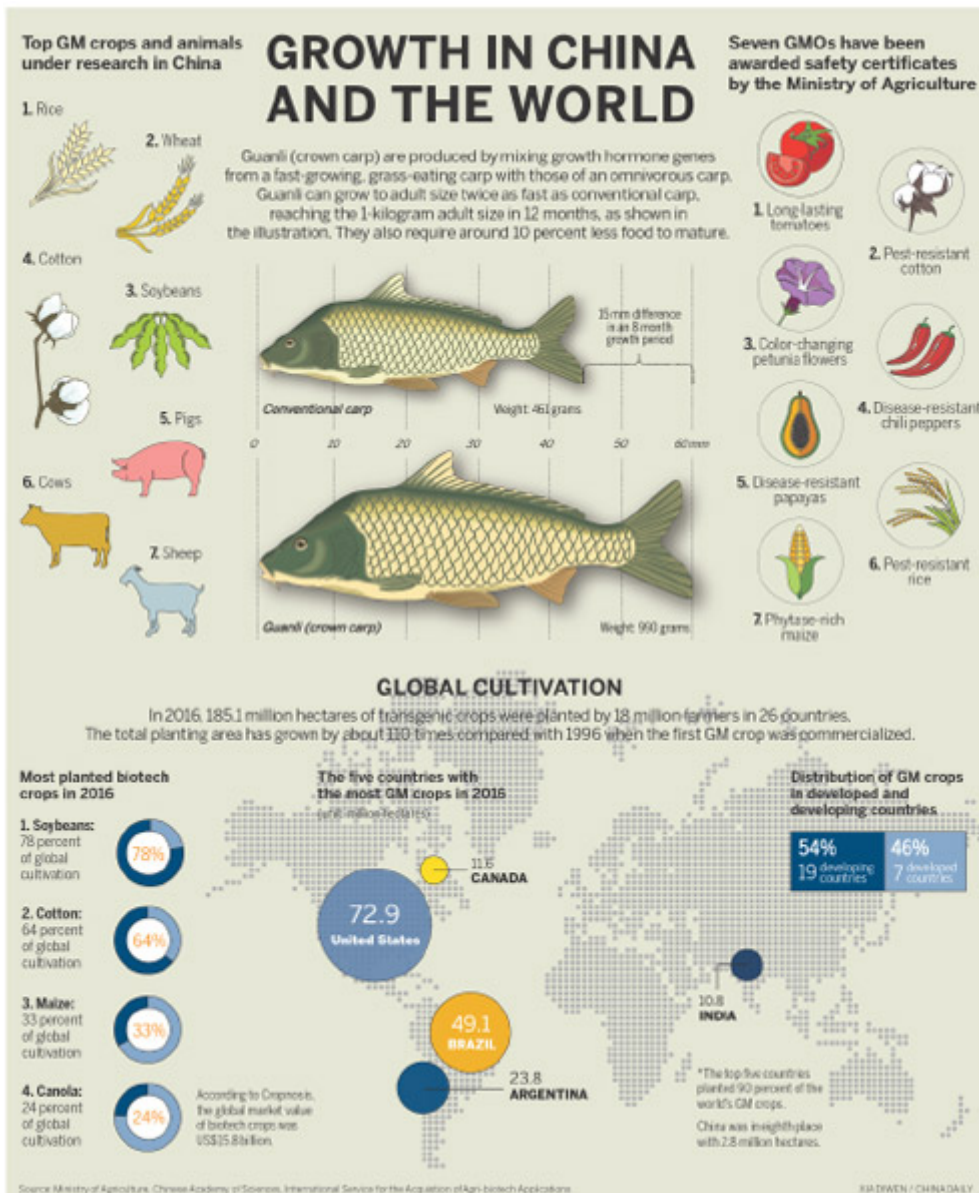
The master, born into a carpenter family, is 60 years old.

Since the 1980s, he has been carving on miniature items, such as a grain of rice, a peepal tree seed, and even a strand of hair.

His pieces of art have now been collected by Japan and Singapore.

[New carp species to extend scale of GM produce](#)

While giant genetically modified Chinese carp may leap onto the nation's dinner tables in about two years, scientists are urging that the promotion of GM fish should be conducted slowly and meticulously to avoid a public pushback.



The development of GM fish will have great economic value, protect national food security and help build sustainable agriculture, according to Wang Yaping, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Hydrobiology, speaking in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

In early August, Canadian supermarkets became the first in the world to sell a fast-growing GM salmon developed by AquaBounty Technologies, a biotech company in the US.

However, few people realize that in 1983 China was the first country to produce transgenic fish called guanli, or "crown carp", said Wang, one of the lead scientists behind the carp's development.

The fish has passed all the nutritional, toxicology and allergen tests conducted by the China National Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment. It is now undergoing ecological tests to determine how it interacts with other species in the wild, along with commercial production tests to pinpoint how effectively it can be mass produced.

When the tests have been completed, the Ministry of Agriculture and other regulatory bodies are likely to issue a final safety certificate that will allow the fish to be sold on the domestic market.

“So far, there has been no indication of negative effects on health or the environment,” Wang said. “If all goes well, crown carp will be on dinner tables within two to five years.”

A deeper pool

Scientists created the guanli by mixing growth hormone genes of a fast-growing, grass-eating carp with those of an omnivorous carp species native to the Yellow River.

“One common misconception people have is that growth hormones are anabolic steroids, but they are totally different substances—the former is a type of protein and the latter is a synthetic drug designed to mimic the muscle-building qualities of testosterone,” Wang said.

Unlike steroids, which can build up in the body and cause a range of health issues, growth hormones can be broken down into amino acids, losing their growth-stimulating properties, and absorbed as nutrients.

Wang said scientists have been taste-testing the fish for several years and have found no differences from regular carp: “Crown carp are essentially as safe to eat as conventionally grown carp.”

The fish can grow to adult size twice as quickly as conventionally farmed carp, reaching the adult size of 1 kilogram in just 12 months. In addition, it requires about 10 percent less food to reach maturity and can eat a wider range of foods, from microorganisms to grass.

Those factors mean widespread production of the fish will save time and labor, and reduce costs. “It will have tremendous economic value considering how important carp has been in the Chinese diet,” Wang said.

Last year, various types of carp were the staples of China’s 2.37 trillion yuan (\$365 billion) aquaculture industry. At 5.9 million metric tons, grass carp were the most widely grown freshwater species, according to a report published by the Fisheries Bureau at the Ministry of Agriculture.

“Given the significance of carp, we must go the extra mile to make our creations completely safe for both consumers and the environment,” Wang said.

One widespread concern is that the fast-growing, eat-any-thing crown carp will outcompete other aquatic wildlife, dominating and disrupting the ecosystem with its offspring and genes.

As a result, crown carp are now grown in confined tanks, but the threat that the fish could escape into the wild has seen scientists weaken its survival and reproductive capabilities via bioengineering.

To eliminate the environmental risk, scientists have also developed an

infertile, transgenic carp called jili, or “lucky carp”, which has the same fast-growth characteristics, but is unable to pass on its genes, Wang said.

Scientists hope jili will become a new source of food.

In July last year, the Institute of Hydrobiology signed a contract with Dahu Aquaculture, one of China’s biggest suppliers of freshwater products, to accelerate the commercialization of crown and lucky carp.

The company said plans for commercialization are awaiting final approval from the Ministry of Agriculture and other regulatory agencies. At present, though, the cost of producing the carp on an industrial scale remains largely unknown, along with the potential future revenue.

Muddying the waters

Chinese scientists have also developed a dozen other species of GM fish, including cat-fish, tilapia and bream. Despite their potential, Wang said it will not be easy for them to reach the market.

AquaBounty’s salmon was stuck in regulatory limbo for two decades before it was approved in the US in 2015. Last year, Canada approved sale of the fish, despite wide-spread opposition.

Although the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization have stated that GM foods which have undergone rigorous scientific research and are approved by law are safe for consumption, there are still a number of potential negatives.

Massive cultivation of a single GM crop can potentially undermine biodiversity, intro-duce mutated genes into the environment, transfer allergenic and antibiotic-resistant genes to other animals, and allow the private sector to dominate the market.

According to Wang, China has enacted more than a doz-en laws to regulate transgenic organisms since 1993. While imported GM soybeans and corn are used as feed for live-stock, human consumption of GMO foods is still banned, with the exception of cooking oil and papayas.

Growing public concern

A survey of more than 2,400 people conducted by CAS’ Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy between 2002 and 2012 indicated that public acceptance of GM foods fell dramatically during the period, from 67 percent to 31 for GM rice and from 55 percent to 23 for GM soybeans.

The survey also found that knowledge of GM crops remains low. About 50 percent of those interviewed in 2012 said they knew nothing about the effects of GM foods on humans, while 45 percent said they had a negative effect, a rise of 32 percent from 2002.

Negative media coverage, false information on the inter-net and China’s rising imports of GM crops were among the reasons for the controversy, the

survey found.

Wang is concerned that the guanli could face the same public pushback as the US salmon. As a result, he said the promotion of such fish should be conducted meticulously to avoid an outcry.

“While we can make the fish as safe as possible, we also need clearer laws and guide-lines on the farming, labeling, selling and export of GM organisms,” he said.

Despite that, he is optimistic about the eventual acceptance of GM foods. “For two centuries, Europeans thought tomatoes were toxic. It takes time for people to accept new things,” he added.

“Scientists and the media should take every opportunity to educate people. Knowledge and rationality should leap onto the table first, before GM carp.”

[Official addresses ideological issues about Xinjiang](#)

China’s top political advisor has made a clear stance on a string of historical issues concerning Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, saying they serve as important guidelines to address ideological problems in the area.

Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), made the remarks while addressing a two-day symposium on the region’s historical issues, which closed Wednesday.

Yu emphasized that Xinjiang is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and that China has been a unified and multi-ethnic country since the Qin and Han dynasties more than 2,000 years ago.

He pointed out that the various ethnic groups in the region are members of the Chinese nation, and share the common interest of realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.

The culture of ethnic groups in the region is rooted in the rich soil of Chinese civilization and is an indivisible part of it, according to Yu.

He further noted that promoting harmonious relations between religions can help maintain peace and prosperity in the region.

These views will serve as important guidelines for solving ideological problems in Xinjiang, a consensus which is reached on historical issues among officials and people from different ethnic groups in the region, and an important thought which helps take the initiative in ideological work, he

said.

Yu underlined the need to uphold such important principles and integrate them into the practical work of ideology.

He also stressed efforts to win the public trust, fight splitism, eliminate the influence of wrong ideas and solve the long-standing and deep-seated ideological problems.

Yu asked Communist Party cadres, the highly educated and religious leaders to do a better job in educating the people, and fulfill their responsibilities to lead.

The symposium was attended by Zhang Chunxian and Li Zhanshu, both members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

Those at present also included Du Qinglin, vice chairman of the CPPCC National Committee; Yang Jing, state councilor and secretary-general of the State Council; and Guo Shengkun, minister of public security.

[Fake profiles and scams rampant on dating websites](#)

Dating websites fail at verifying personal profiles as they claimed and people who work there blew the whistle on matchmaking fraud, The Beijing Times reported on Wednesday.

Dating websites are in the spotlight as Su Xiangmao, 37-year-old tech entrepreneur and multimillionaire committed suicide on Tuesday after he was scammed by his former wife, who he met from jiaoyuan.com, a well-known dating website in China.

In his suicide note, he claimed he and his wife were VIP members of a dating website with verified personal profiles made by website, according to early report. But he later found that information about his wife didn't check out and she scammed him for over 10 million yuan in months.

The paper reported that dating websites require people to register with a real name and ID, but information, like age, education or marital status and salary, can be easily altered.

After signing up with basic information, people can offer more personal data, like an academic certificate or property certificate, to have them verified so it will help them get more attention from other members, increasing their chances of making a match.

The dating sites claim they have several technology protections to verify

information, including real-name registration, vetting and system where members can complain or report someone with fraud profile.

However, those protections seem to be not working at all, the paper said.

A reporter from The Beijing Times signed up on jia yuan.com and baihe.com successfully with a fake ID with wrong ID number and random mug shot.

He also had no difficulties in changing his information, like academic background, profession, marital status and salary right after signing up, without further verification.

Jiajia, not her real name, a member of jia yuan.com, believes in verified profiles, saying she cares very much if other members have verified information.

"I won't send any message to a man without any verified personal info," she said.

However, Chen Wei, an attorney with Beijing Yingke Law Firm, said, "Dating websites have no access to the Ministry of Civil Affairs' marriage registration database, nor the Ministry of Public Security's ID database, so there is no way they can verify the most basic personal information, including a person's real name, age or marital history."

It seems there's a huge loophole in dating websites' vetting systems.

But it's just a start. More hoaxes are waiting.

A woman in the paper's story, who only gives the name Xiaoqing and who worked for two popular dating sites, including jia yuan.com, for over two years, explained how they exploit their clients.

She gets a commission fee from individuals who sign up with the matchmaking service

"I will get more salary if I can invite more online clients to sign up for a contract for matchmaking service," she said.

She said they have a template for clients saying someone's interested in them, no matter if it's true and they want to meet up or there's an event where there will be many people.

"We say all the fantasies for potential clients to show up at our event. Then our matchmakers will approach them individually to persuade them to sign up for our matchmaking service at the event," she said.

The matchmaking service costs range from thousands to hundreds of thousands of yuan and promise to find clients a certain amount of ideal dates in a certain amount of time. If the clients don't like who they meet, recommended by the service, the service will keep looking until they are satisfied.

It sounds fair. But actually it's common when matchmakers think some clients

are too picky or hard to sell, they will ask their friends to fill in – just to fulfill the contract, rather than find the potential right person, according to The Beijing Times.

They usually show up for dates but are barely willing to talk about themselves and disappear with some excuses and never reply to any calls or messages from their dates. Some clients put the dots together, thinking it's a scam when they received calls from their disappearing dates defending their matchmakers after complaints are made.

[Xi: Tourism important for progress](#)

China, with long history, rich culture and beautiful scenery, welcomes tourists from all over the world, President Xi Jinping said in a congratulatory letter to an international tourism meeting on Wednesday.



UN World Tourism Organization assembly attendees look over promotional products in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. [Photo/China News Service]

“Tourism is an important channel for different countries and cultures to communicate with each other, an effective way of developing a country’s economy and a key industry to improve people’s lives,” he said in the letter to the 22nd General Assembly of the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

The biennial officially kicked off on Wednesday in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. Activities started on Monday and the event runs through Saturday.

More than 1,000 representatives from 130 countries and regions are attending the meeting to discuss using sustainable tourism as a development tool and reinforcing Belt and Road tourism cooperation.

Xi said China pays great attention to the development of the tourism industry, which accounts for more than 10 percent of the country's economy and employment. In the next five years, Chinese tourists will make 700 million outbound trips.

He said the UNWTO plays a positive role in promoting the development of global tourism and strengthening international tourism cooperation.

"We hope all nations can utilize the opportunities of the meeting and push the tourism industry globally for greater development together," he said.

Vice-Premier Wang Yang, who attended the meeting, said China joined the UNWTO in 1983. Tourism has grown from a marginal to a major industry for the country's economy during the past three and a half decades, Wang said.

But China is not a "tourism power" yet, he said, and needs further development through expanded, deepened cooperation.

Taleb Rifai, secretary-general of the UNWTO, said China has become a world leader in all paths of life over the past decade and tourism is no exception.

"It is very inspiring to see China's commitment to international cooperation and tourism at the highest level," he said.

Li Jinzao, director of China National Tourism Administration, said the Belt and Road Initiative has created a larger tourism market among countries involved. There were at least 25 million tourist trips between China and other countries involved in the initiative in 2014 alone.

An initiative for tourism cooperation among nations involved in the initiative was formed during the meeting to improve tourism facilitation and quality and to face challenges and risks together.

"The Chengdu initiative sets out how we can harness tourism's potential and share our resources through large-scale partnerships to create a better future," Rifai said.