

Changes weighed to help farmers keep land rights

China will strengthen its protections of farmers' rights and interests by extending the current round of rural land contracts for another 30 years, if a draft revision of the Rural Land Contracting Law is passed by the nation's top legislature.



Farmers of an agricultural cooperative in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, walk back home after a day's work in October. [Photo/China Daily]

The proposed change aims to maintain the long-term stability and consistency of rural land contracts. It was submitted at a bimonthly session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for its first reading on Tuesday.

The 30-year extension was mentioned in a report delivered by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China, at the opening session of the 19th CPC National Congress on Oct 18.

Liu Zhenwei, deputy director of the NPC's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, said the current law has played a key role in rural economic development, keeping order in rural areas and increasing the incomes of farmers since it took effect in 2003.

"But to meet higher requirements of rural development, it needs a revision," Liu said.

The draft revision will better define the use rights of rural land, so that

farmers can enjoy “sufficient and guaranteed protection of their land rights”, he said.

Since the country adopted the household responsibility system in the early 1980s, property rights associated with rural land have been divided into two layers: the ownership right, referring to its collective ownership by a rural community (normally a village), and the use right that is held by an individual household that contracts a piece of land from the village.

The draft revision further separates the use right into the “contract right” and “management right”, according to Liu, who regarded it as a positive innovation.

The separation, as proposed by the draft, would allow farmers to retain contract right over their allowed land, and only transfer the management right if they choose to lease the land to others, mortgage it to banks or invest it in a cooperative in exchange for shares.

More than 30 percent of rural households have transferred their contracted land, totaling 31.9 million hectares, Liu said.

“In the past, we sometimes hesitated to rent more land out of concern that our business might suffer if the status of the land changed when the contract runs out. That’s because the current law limits our leasing rights to 30 years,” said Jin Weiran, who has rented rural land to plant vegetables in Rizhao, Shandong province, since 2007. “But now, I feel reassured.”

“Xi’s report and the draft revision means that what I paid in the rented land in the first several years can be rewarded after the land contract is extended,” he said.

Yu Liufen, Party chief of Yanbo village in Guizhou province, said land is the farmers’ lifeline, and they will no longer worry about uncertainties if the extension is approved.

Half of newborn babies are second child in Jan.-Aug.

In the first eight months of 2017, more than half of China’s newborn babies were the second child in the family, according to a health official.

From January to August this year, about 52 percent of the 11.6 million babies born have an older sibling, said Wang Peian, deputy head of the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC), in a demography forum Monday in Beijing.

Figures provided by the NHFPC showed that 18.5 million babies were born in hospital in 2016, the highest since 2000 and 1.3 million more than 2015, and about 45 percent of them had an older sibling.

In response to an aging population, since 2016 couples have been allowed to have two children, bringing to an end the one-child policy after almost 40 years.

Wang also said that even with an increased average age of expectant mothers, newborn and maternal mortality have fallen.

There will be changes to policies in tax, social security, housing, employment and others, and more support for the second child policy, said Wang.

In 2016, China allocated a total of 2.9 billion yuan (about 440 million U.S. dollars) for construction of maternity and pediatric hospitals at city and prefecture level.

By 2020, there will be around 89,000 new maternity beds in hospitals and 140,000 more obstetricians and midwives. More emergency centers for mother and child treatment will be set up across the country by the end of the year.

[3-D technology helps preserve iconic heritage](#)

About 2,000 kilometers from the Yungang Grottoes, a 1,500-year-old UNESCO World Heritage site in Shanxi province, a small army of 3-D printers has been working around the clock to save a cultural heritage from oblivion.

Over the past five months, the 20 machines, housed at a workshop in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, have been cranking out full-size replicas of three of the grottoes' Buddha statues. Faithful copies will soon be displayed in the eastern coastal city of Qingdao.

The grottoes contain more than 51,000 statues. But the original works, which were carved into soft stone, will gradually disappear as erosion runs its inexorable course.

"Even today, scientists are unable to stop the aging of the grottoes using chemical or physical methods," said Li Zhirong, an associate professor of archaeology at Zhejiang University who is dedicated to cultural heritage. "Therefore, the best way to protect the grottoes is to preserve their information in a scientific, comprehensive and authentic way."

Using 3-D scanners, the institute provided all the original data needed to

reproduce the cave and its carvings. For a 10-meter-tall statue, the error between the original work and the replica is less than 5 millimeters.

Such technology has been employed in other projects. For example, researchers replicated cave No 220 of the world-renowned Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu province. During the project, the team used newly developed equipment to record every detail of the frescoes, which date to the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

After making high-resolution images, the team used software to stitch them together into a single picture with high precision, said Diao Changyu, a computer specialist.

The technology can also help solve archaeological mysteries, researchers say. For instance, the team helped identify a badly damaged stone tablet last year after collecting 3-D images of it.

[Courts rule for probation in maternal filicide](#)

A court in Guangzhou has sentenced an elderly mother to probation for killing her mentally handicapped son, reports thepaper.cn.

The 83-year-old fed her 46-years old son with sleeping pills and then smothered him to death at their shared home in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province on May 9, 2017. She turned herself into the police on the same day.

The mother, only identified by her surname Huang, describes it as a mercy killing, saying her son – who born with a brain disorder – was starting to suffer physically after being bed-ridden.

She also testified that she feared for her son's future due to her own concern that she was going to die, leaving him helpless.

"With my care, he had better food and better company," said Huang, after being asked why she didn't seek hospice care for her son.

Huang's other son, along with other family members, petitioned the court to show mercy in the case.

While she has been found guilty of intentional homicide, the court says it's based its sentence on her voluntary confession, her advanced age and the pleas of her family.

"It's a special case in which the mother killed her son out of love. This is hugely different compared with other violent homicide cases," said Wan Yunfeng, head of the court in Yuexiu District in Guangzhou.

China's reusable spacecraft to be launched in 2020

China plans to launch its reusable spacecraft in 2020, according to a statement from China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation Tuesday.

Unlike traditional one-off spacecraft, the new spacecraft will fly into the sky like an aircraft, said Chen Hongbo, a researcher from the corporation.

The spacecraft can transport people or payload into the orbit and return to Earth.

Chen said that the spacecraft will be easier to maintain and can improve the frequency of launches at lower cost, bringing new opportunities for more people to travel into space.