

The Current Status and Development of Rabbit Industry in China

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of China's economy, rabbit farming has become an important measure to improve farming income, especially in impoverished areas. In recent years, the Chinese rabbit industry has achieved great progress, not only through the increase in the output of rabbit products, but also the significant improvements in rabbit farming technology. From 2001 to 2011, rabbit meat production in China increased from 406,000 tons to 731,000 tons, accounting for an average annual rabbit meat growth rate of 7.98% over ten years. Conversely, over the same time period, the average annual growth rate for pork, beef, poultry, and sheep meat were 2.47%, 2.73%, 4.12%, 4.50%, respectively. Consequently, the percentage of rabbit meat compared to all animal meat increased from 0.66% in 2001 to 0.92% in 2011. However, accompanying the good performance of China's rabbit industry, a number of realistic challenges must be faced. The global economic crisis of recent years has impacted the export of Chinese rabbit products, and the increase in the price of foodstuff and labor will inevitably affect the income and profit of those involved in the rabbit industry. In developed areas of China, strict emission controls require the construction of high standard rabbitries to meet environment requirements. In addition, the extreme temperature changes in northern and southern China during summer and winter negatively impact rabbit reproductive performance. The quality and supply of rough feed, as well as disproportionate rabbit production in different areas, causes dramatic product price fluctuations. These factors have motivated farmers and companies to search for effective solutions. Due to the diversity in local environments, feed material supplies, rabbit production organizations, even different economic cultural traditions, various provinces and areas have developed different strategies to deal with feed supply and the frequently changing market. Farmers and companies have adopted their own improvements and increased their flexibility to meet the needs of the consumer in order to realize their goals, such as high efficiency or high product quality to gain profit. The Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Shandong and Zhejiang represent three typical rabbit industry models. Rabbit science research, innovation and new technology play important roles in increasing the sustainability of rabbit farming and transforming it into a competitive industry. Problem-solution driven studies and development, cooperation in rabbit production and research, large scale training, and government encouragement and support are critical. Fostering and developing the Chinese domestic market is becoming increasingly important and should be a long-term mission of this industry.

Key Words: Status, Development, Rabbit Industry, China