

My China Story

# China-US Relations Need Dialogue, Understanding, Communication

By LONG Yun & QI Liming

"After reading this book, I hope you can now understand why your father keeps running to China, a marvelous country," These are the words Professor Denis Simon wrote to his children in his first book, *Technological Innovation in China: The Case of Shanghai Semiconductor Industry*, which he published three decades ago.

Recently, in an interview with *Science and Technology Daily*, Simon said that while his trips to China did keep him away from his children, they also helped him gain a deeper understanding of Chinese people and the country, making him more determined to foster collaboration and hopefully mediate the disputes between China and the U.S.

Simon retired in June 2020 from Duke Kunshan University in China, where he was executive vice president for five years. Currently, Simon serves as the senior adviser to the President for China Affairs at Duke University.

Over the past 40 years, he has devoted himself to studying China's talent cultivation system and the development of China's national innovation system. More importantly, as an old China hand, his role in promoting Sino-American exchanges is much more visible to the public.

In 2006, Simon was presented with the Chinese Government Friendship Award, the country's highest honor for foreign experts who have made a tremendous contribution to international cooperation.

**A witness of China's growth**

In 1981, Simon made his first journey to China from America, which he characterized as "a dream come true." Even today, he still remembers every moment of the four-week journey and the scenes of China at that time, which he recorded on 56 rolls of film. He found it



Professor Denis Simon. (PHOTO: S&T Daily)

difficult to believe that China has made such rapid progress and was so fully integrated into the mainstream of international society at the onset of its opening up.

Forty years later, when talking about China's development, he first mentioned the social changes led by China's growing connectivity with the outside world, adding that "China has benefited tremendously from its global engagement."

Regarding the sci-tech field, he highlighted that Chinese universities are on the rise in global rankings, producing a greater quantity and higher quality of research than ever before. "China now is an important part of the global knowledge system in terms of publication, cited academic papers and patents registered," he said, adding that the quantity in this field is now taking a back seat to quality.

In addition, China's world-renowned infrastructure boom is also

something he underscored. He was impressed by its most advanced transportation system and "cashless economy."

From his professional perspective, Simon said one of the most significant factors attributed to China's growth is that, "Chinese leaders showed a willingness to engage in fundamental changes in order to get China on a new path of more rapid modernization." He noted that more strategic thinking is adopted, which has currently driven the program of reform. In a country with gaps between city and countryside, and one region and another, China attaches great importance to promoting development to ensure it is balanced, coordinated, sustainable, and healthy. Through well-planned regional growth strategies, China has made the country's development more balanced and people's lives better, he said.

**Building bridges**

Dialogue is the most frequent word used by Simon. He admitted that

Chinese and Americans see the world through different lenses. However, dialogue helps build a mutual understanding of those core principles on both sides.

Simon is an active promoter of cooperation and not merely an armchair strategist. He said the time when he worked at Duke Kunshan University has left good memories. Among all his achievements in his five years there, he is proud of building a sociocultural bridge between the Chinese and the international students, noting that students establish an orchestrated interaction both inside and outside the classroom.

Even in the pandemic-ravaged days, Simon's steps never wavered, and he traveled between the U.S. and China, sparing no effort in removing barriers for people to, "Understand the true and accurate picture on both sides of the ocean." Simon's dedication to promoting exchanges has a simple motivation. He explained that the US-China relations in science and technology, economics, and other spheres are the most important bilateral relationships in the world, adding that both sides need to keep the lines of communication open despite existing difficulties.

Simon spent almost all his career trying to establish mutual understanding between China and the U.S. "There has never been a trip to China where I have not learned something new," he said.

He hoped the younger generation would continue to keep communication open through dialogue and build a solid foundation of understanding and cross-cultural acceptance between the two countries.

*This article is also contributed by Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development.*

# Chongyi Shangbao Terraces: Fertile Fields on High Mountains

Traditional Eastern Wisdom

By BI Weizi

The Chongyi Shangbao Terraces, located in the mountainous region of Chongyi county, east China's Jiangxi province, cover an area of about 3,400 hectares. Originally constructed on steep slopes during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and later refined during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the terraces utilize innovative irrigation and ecological systems to help prevent floods and droughts.

The terraces are specifically located around Huaxian Peak, the second highest peak in south of Jiangxi province, with an altitude of 1,741 meters. Thousands of hectares of terraced fields are scattered around the peak in the area of Nanliu, Lianghe and Chishui. The verti-

cal drop of the terraces is nearly 1,000 meters, with the highest field at 1,260 meters above sea level.

Shangbao Terraces are shaped by mountains and developed by water. It is not only a perfect farmland water conservancy and irrigation engineering system, but also a good ecological protection system. According to the demand of water transmission, the Hakka ethnic group ancestors built dams, reservoirs and other facilities to regulate, control and distribute water to effectively cope with floods and droughts, which has promoted local land reclamation and agricultural production.

The Shangbao Terraces are a testimony to the scientific farming culture of the Hakka ancestors living in harmony with nature. It was inscribed as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System and selected as one of the World Irrigation Engineering Heritage Sites in 2018 and 2022 respectively.



A bird view of the Chongyi Shangbao Terraces, Chongyi county, Jiangxi province. (PHOTO:VCG)

Service Info

# Forest-Mushroom Co-culture System Recognized as GIAHS

By Staff Reporters

Qingyuan Forest-Mushroom Co-culture System (QFMCS), located in east China's Zhejiang province, was recognized as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on November 5, making it the world's only GIAHS related to edible fungi.

For hundreds of years, local mushroom farmers in Qingyuan have scientifi-

cally developed the edible mushroom industry.

They created a complex mountainous agroforestry production system with integration of forest conservation, mushroom cultivation, and agricultural production.

QFMCS is hailed as a "living museum" of mushroom cultivation technology and an important fungus resource bank in China, since it has the most complete evolutionary chain of mushroom cultivation technology.



A villager in Qingyuan county, Zhejiang province, picks up edible fungi in his own greenhouse. (PHOTO: VCG)

# Cross-border Cooperation Focused by Global Young Scholar

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Professor Shahbaz Khan, director of the UNESCO Office in Beijing, referred to that young scientists have made a crucial contribution to scientific research, they are the future of science, technology and innovation. "We need more and more young people to participate in the efforts of achieving sustainable development goals," said Khan. The Roundtable also launched the

Top 100 Global Excellent Innovation Enterprise Club project, which is expected to operate next year, promoting sci-tech innovation and cooperation through publishing sci-tech related white papers, holding summits, forums and other activities.

Under the framework of the 2022 World Young Scientist Summit(WYSS), young scientists and talents from worldwide participated in the Roundtable.

# Sugar Substitutes, Absolutely Safe?

By Staff Reporters

**Truth: Excessive intake of sugar substitutes has health risks**

As winter approaches, people's time for outdoor exercise gradually decreases. Many people begin to worry about insufficient calorie consumption, so they pay extra attention to controlling calorie intake. Sugar-substituted drinks and snacks labeled "zero sugar" seem to contain no calories. Some people therefore believe that sugar substitutes are absolutely safe and healthy. So, is this really true?

"Sugar substitutes should also be consumed reasonably, excessive intake of them still poses health risks," said

Zheng Yunliang, director of the Tianjin Institute of Modern Health Technology.

Sugar substitutes refer to alternative sweeteners, which belong to food additives. There are three main categories of this — natural sweeteners, sugar alcohols and artificial sweeteners. At present, most of the sugar substitutes on the market are artificial sweeteners, which are chemically synthesized, such as aspartame.

"Sugar substitutes can be classified as nutritive or non-nutritive in terms of their ability to produce energy. Almost all non-nutritive sugar substitutes do not contain glucose in their breakdown products and are not directly involved in the secretion of insulin. Therefore, in

theory, non-nutritive sugar substitutes do not cause an increase in blood sugar," Zheng said.

However, this does not mean that sugar substitutes can be consumed in excess. "The sweetness of sugar substitutes could stimulate appetite, cause diarrhea after excessive intake, and may also increase the burden on kidneys," said Zheng, adding that scientific findings have shown that artificial sweeteners may have the risk of causing disease.

For example, a study published in the British Medical Journal in 2022 showed that replacing sugar with artificial sweeteners in foods or beverages did not have any benefit on the overall cardiovascular health of the population. A

related study was also published in the journal Cell, which found that the intake of artificial sweeteners was associated with changes in the gut microbiome, as well as elevated blood sugar.

Therefore, Zheng suggested that consumers should try to choose food containing natural sweeteners, such as erythritol, stevioside, and rosmarinic acid sweetener. "Occasional consumption of foods and beverages that are packed with sugar substitutes is safe, and people do not need to be overly stressed. The public should understand and consume sugar substitutes scientifically and enhance their health through diet and exercise," Zheng recommended.

alone GEF-7 biodiversity project in China, Strengthening the Protected Area Network for Migratory Bird Conservation Along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China, was officially launched in China, covering around 300,000 hectares of Wetlands of International Importance.

The country has also been working on the conservation of mangrove forests, which is of great importance for protecting coastal areas. With 27,100 hectares of mangrove forests, China is one of the few countries that has seen a net increase of mangrove coverage areas.

At COP14 this year, the Wuhan Declaration was adopted to reaffirm the principles of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to conserve, restore and ensure wise use of wetlands.

China, as a contracting party, will abide by the declaration and continue to work on wetlands protection.

# Wetlands Protection: China's Approach

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The country also set up a classification management system for wetlands conservation. Apart from the afore mentioned Wetlands of International Importance, there are also 29 pieces of wetlands of national importance, and 1,021 of provincial importance.

China is also the first country to have conducted national wetlands survey on three occasions. Field stations were built all over the country to carry out wetlands surveys and monitoring. Together with real-time monitoring and information management platforms, they will be gradually integrated into the national forest and grass ecological sensing system.

About a month ago, the National

Wetland Protection Plan (2022-2030) was issued, proposing that the national wetlands protection rate will reach 55 percent by 2025, and 50 new wetlands of national importance are to be established.

The people also contribute to wetlands conservation in their own way. Praised as the "most beautiful auntie" along the urban wetland of Guiyang, southwest China's Guizhou province, Zhou Yuqing has volunteered to protect the local wetland and disseminate environmental protection ideas since 2008. She later also founded a team of senior citizen volunteers for wetlands protection. For the past 14 years, the team has done voluntary work for a cumulative time of 13,000 hours.

**Striving for a world with healthy wetlands**

With only four percent of the planet's wetlands, China managed to satisfy the need for wetlands of its people, which makes up 20 percent of global population. China has hosted wetlands protection foreign aid training for developing countries, sharing its advanced technologies and successful methods with 150 wetlands administrators from more than 20 countries.

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, the wetlands project was successfully implemented within the framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, extensively conducting bilateral and multilateral cooperation in wetlands protection.

In May 2021, the largest stand-