

Policy thrust on saving arable land

The government yesterday announced the long-awaited national land-use policy till 2020 to address the rising conflict between its expanding industrial areas and shrinking arable land.

Approved at a State Council executive meeting, presided by Premier Wen Jiabao, the policy says the country should have 121.2 million hectares of arable land till 2010 and 120.3 million hectares till 2020.

The figures are a little higher than the government's long-held 120-million-hectare "critical mark" to ensure food security for the increasing population.

Last year, arable land area fell to 121.73 million hectares, the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR).

Earlier, Hu Cunzhi, head of the MLR's planning commission, said the policy takes into consideration land use across all sectors and aims to better protect arable land and make the use of areas designated for development more efficient.

The policy's main aims are to protect farmland and "strictly control the use of arable land for non-agricultural purpose".

The plan also aims to:

Control the expansion of newly approved construction projects, and step up efforts to make infrastructure land use more efficient;

Strengthen control on land use management at the provincial level;

Balance land use and environmental protection;

Strengthen land-use standard and land supply legislation; and

Take steps, such as setting up an accountability system for arable land protection, to ensure policy measures are implemented effectively.

The plan, approved two years after it was submitted to the State Council, the country's cabinet, has undergone many revisions. And after the State Council's approval, it has become the most significant policy on land use.

Source: China Daily