

China aims to double income of rural residents in 12 years

China's ruling Communist Party said on Sunday that it would strive to double the per-capita disposable income of rural residents by 2020 from the 2008 level.

The goal was part of the decision made at the close of the third Plenary Session of the 17th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, which focused on issues concerning rural reform and development.

Hu Jintao, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, delivered a work report at the four-day plenum, held from Oct. 9 to 12 in Beijing.

The government would also boost consumption of rural residents by a big margin and basically eliminate absolute poverty in rural areas by 2020, according to a communique issued on the plenum's conclusion.

Per-capita disposable income was recorded at 4,140 yuan (605.6 U.S. dollars) in rural areas in 2007, a year-on-year gain of 9.5 percent in real terms. A rise of at least 6 percent was expected for 2008, according to a government report in March.

The rural population mired in absolute poverty was reduced to 15 million last year, down from 250 million in 1978.

Targets set at the plenum for rural reform and development till 2020 also included "improving the system of economic growth in the countryside and establishing a mechanism to integrate urban and rural areas in terms of economic growth and social development".

"The modernization of agriculture will advance with major progress, and agricultural productivity will be elevated to a higher level, with national grain security and product supplies guaranteed," said the communique.

The Central Committee also agreed a goal to improve grassroots democracy in the countryside, and vowed to guarantee equal public services in rural areas, such as education opportunities for all rural residents and better medical services and subsistence support.

The communique said there were several "musts" which should be followed:

- strengthening the position of agriculture as the foundation of the national economy and putting the food security of 1.3 billion people as the top priority.
- protecting farmers' rights and ensuring the aim and outcome of all the work of the Party and the state is to realize, safeguard and expand the fundamental interests of the majority of the farmers.
- unremittingly liberating and developing the productive forces in rural areas and make reform and innovation as the fundamental driving force for the development of the rural regions.
- taking into overall consideration the development of both urban and rural regions.
- upholding the Party's role as the leadership in the development of the rural areas.

The communique outlined the plan for advancing rural reform and development in the next few years, giving priority to reform and innovation, developing modern agriculture, boosting the capacity of agricultural production, and developing public utilities in rural regions.

About the land policy, the communique said it was necessary to maintain and improve the basic system for rural

operations and improve the strict management system of land in rural regions.

It was also necessary to set up a modern financial system in rural areas and establish a system which would help integrate economic and social development in urban and rural areas.

In addition, the communique said it was imperative to enhance standardization of agricultural products and strengthen work on improving quality of agricultural products.

"We should strictly conduct supervision in the entire production process and carry out supervisory duty to ensure quality of the products. We should never allow unqualified products to enter the market," it said.

A total of 202 full members and 166 alternate members of the Committee attended the plenum, according to the communique.

Members of standing committee of the CPC central committee for discipline inspection and top officials of the relevant departments were also present at the session, the communique said.

The plenum had also gathered delegates to the 17th CPC National Congress who had been working on agriculture and rural development at grassroots levels, and experts and scholars on agriculture, rural areas and farmers.

This meeting was significant because it was the third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee 30 years ago that pushed the country on to the road of its historic reform and opening-up drive.

Source: Xinhua