

# Research Report on Paddy and Rice Import in China, 2019-2023

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## Abstracts

### DESCRIPTION

China is the world's largest producer and consumer of paddy and rice. Once a net exporter of paddy and rice, China became a net rice importer in 2011, and the world's largest rice importer in 2012. In 2017, it imported 4.03 million tons of paddy and rice. The reasons why China shifted from a traditional rice exporter into the world's largest rice importer include: (1) Farming brings little income in China. With the growing economy and rising urbanization level, many rural laborers flow to cities and towns instead of being engaged in agriculture, which leads to sluggish growth in agricultural output; and (2) the prices of domestically grown rice are much higher than those of imported rice. China's rice imports are mainly mid-and low-end rice from Vietnam and Thailand. Their prices are only 80% of those of domestically grown rice at the same quality levels or lower.

The Chinese government implements tariff rate quota administration for paddy and rice. The annual quota for 2012 to 2019 is 5.32 million tons. If an importer can obtain the quota, it will enjoy very low import tariffs. However, many private grain traders and food processing enterprises are ineligible for the quota. To reduce costs, they purchase smuggled rice. It is reported that smuggled rice mainly comes from Thailand and Burma via Yunnan and Guangxi, with Nanning city of Guangxi seeing the most rampant rice smuggling in China. In 2017, China Customs handled 57 cases of rice smuggling that involved 394,400 tons of rice. The total value of the involved rice exceeded USD 200 million. It is estimated that at least 2 million tons of rice worth more than USD 1 billion are smuggled to China every year.

As China's net annual population growth exceeds 10 million, the demand for paddy and

rice will keep growing in the coming years. While the profitability of rice planting is decreasing as the prices of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, energy and other production factors keep rising. A rural laborer can get a monthly pay of CNY 3,000 (USD 435) or more from an urban job. If he/she works as a farmer in his/her hometown, he/she can hardly earn USD 300 per month, let alone that farming presents heavier workloads. It is expected that as more rural laborers migrate to cities, the number of farmers will keep declining, and the production of main agricultural products including paddy will see slow growth or even negative growth in the coming years. In this context, China will have to import more paddy and rice.

With about 125.84 million tons of rice yields, China's reliance on rice imports was about 3.2% in 2017. Considering the smuggled rice, the reliance on foreign rice actually exceeded 5%. It is expected that more foreign paddy and rice will enter China in the coming years. And intensifying smuggling may drag down the import volume, which presents huge opportunities to global rice exporters.

#### **TOPICS COVERED:**

Major factors influencing paddy and rice import in China

Analysis on supply for and demand of paddy and rice in China

Import volumes of paddy and rice in China

Import prices of rice in China

Major sources of China's rice imports

Analysis on rice smuggling to China

Prospect of paddy and rice import in China from 2019 to 2023

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