



# Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

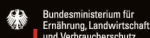
## Agricultural Heritage: A New Vision, A New Hope



China has a five-thousand-year history of agricultural civilization. Diversified natural and cultural features across regions have led to a variety of agricultural heritage systems which have evolved from the co-adaptation of the local community and its environment. However, for a long period, their ecological rationality and potential economic benefits have not been fully recognized. In most cases, they are considered primitive practices and should be abandoned and adopt modern agriculture techniques to cope for living today.



In 2005, with the introduction of FAO's GIAHS Initiative in China, a new vision and understanding of "traditional agriculture" has begun. Through the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research (IGSNRR) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and in cooperation with the local governments, the Center for Natural and Cultural Heritage (CNACH), or GIAHS Office, was established. The GIAHS Office has spearheaded research and development activities leading to significant country side development investments and policy change.





Importance and values of agricultural heritage systems have been published in scientific journals, newspapers, magazines and a series of books. Lessons learned and best practices have been disseminated through academic workshops, exhibitions and TV documentaries. All these efforts have led to an increased awareness on the values of agricultural heritage systems.

Farmers who went to cities to work in the past are now willing to stay in their town due to the potential economic development and benefits found in their agricultural heritage. Now, they can have better livelihoods by producing organic food products and developing eco-tourism. The local governments have set up leading groups, developed conservation plans and formulated management regulations to conserve their Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS). There has also been a growing interest by scientists, researchers and the media on GIAHS and their values. Television, radio and newspapers are now competing for coverage on this hot-topic. GIAHS has become a nationwide concept accepted in China. And more importantly, Agricultural Heritage has given hope to many small farmers and minorities.

**China's GIAHS pilot sites and candidates**

