



# Research on the Path of Agriculture-related Higher Vocational Colleges in Serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative

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**Abstract:** Under the background of vigorous promotion of "Building a community with a shared future for mankind" and the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the international exchanges and cooperation of higher vocational colleges in China are embracing new opportunities and challenges. By studying the policy basis of agriculture-related vocational colleges serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative, this paper analyzes the current situation of agriculture-related vocational colleges serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative. The aim is to make explorations on ways for agriculture-related higher vocational colleges to serve the Belt and Road Initiative from the aspects of connotation construction, cooperation platform innovation, international production capacity cooperation, overseas student training, standard output, overseas education, technical training, and characteristic building.

**Keywords:** agriculture, higher vocational colleges, the "Belt and Road" Initiative, internationalization

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On February 27, 2017, the "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under the New Situation" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council listed "international exchange and cooperation" as one of the five important missions of colleges and universities. Higher vocational colleges, as one of the important components of Chinese universities, should also pay attention to their own internationalization and strengthen cooperation and exchanges with foreign countries. Especially in the context of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, higher vocational colleges should make good use of national policies, give play to their own advantages and characteristics, explore the path of international development, and make contributions to the construction of the "Belt and Road".

## 1. Policy basis of agriculture-related higher vocational colleges serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative

### 1.1 National macro policies

During his visits to Central and Southeast Asian countries in September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the major initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road), which attracted great attention from the international community. On March 28, 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce jointly issued the *Vision and Actions for Jointly Building silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, outlining the roadmap of the Belt and Road Initiative and completing the top-level design of the Belt and Road Initiative.

### 1.2 Policies pertinent to agriculture

On October 17, 2016, the State Council issued the *Plan on National Agricultural Modernization (2016-2020)*, pointing out that opening-up is the only way to agricultural modernization, and we must adhere to two-way opening-up, win-win cooperation and common development, and focus on strengthening agricultural cooperation with foreign countries. On November 13, 2016, the *"Two Districts" Construction Plan for Agricultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries* issued by the Ministry of Agriculture proposed to actively explore the construction of the "two districts", namely the overseas agricultural cooperation demonstration zone and the agricultural opening-up and cooperation experimental zone, and build abroad and domestic platforms for enterprises to go global to form the strategic pivot of China's agricultural opening up and cooperation. On May 31, 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Commerce, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly issued the *Vision and Actions for Jointly Promoting the "One Belt and One Road" Construction of Agricultural Cooperation*. One of the best combining points for the countries along the route to

jointly build a community of interests and a community of destiny. At the same time, the document proposes cooperation mechanisms such as strengthening bilateral cooperation between governments, strengthening the role of multilateral cooperation mechanisms, playing the role of major conferences and forums, and jointly building overseas agricultural cooperation parks.

### **1.3 Policies related to education**

On April 29, 2016, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued *Several Opinions on Sound Implementation in the Opening up of Education in the New Era*, which made key deployment for the opening up of education in the new era. On July 13, 2016, the Ministry of Education issued the *"Belt and Road" Education Action*, which stated that China is willing to work with countries along the Belt and Road to expand cultural exchanges, strengthen personnel training, and jointly create a better future for education. On February 13, 2019, the State Council issued the *Implementation Plan for National Vocational Education Reform*, proposing to build an internationally advanced system of Chinese vocational education standards covering most industries. On March 29, 2019, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance issued the *Opinions on the Implementation of the Plan for High-level Higher Vocational Schools and Professional Construction with Chinese Characteristics*. Service capabilities and international influence have been significantly improved. At the same time, the document lists "improving the level of internationalization" as one of the key tasks of reform and development, and puts forward clear requirements for higher vocational schools to improve the level of internationalization.

## **2. The status quo of agriculture-related vocational colleges serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative**

The introduction of various policies at the national level provides strong policy support for agriculture-related vocational colleges to carry out international exchanges and cooperation in agricultural vocational education under the background of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, and promotes the process of international running of agriculture-related vocational colleges. According to the *Annual Report on the Quality of China's Higher Vocational Education 2019*, more than 300 vocational colleges enroll full-time overseas students, and the number of full-time overseas students in vocational colleges reaches 17,000, mainly from China's neighboring countries, ASEAN, Central Asia, Africa and dozens of other countries. Higher vocational colleges have set up 33 overseas branch schools, 72.7% of which are located in countries along the Belt and Road. "Luban Workshop" has become a new name card for China's international exchanges and cooperation in vocational education. Some higher vocational colleges have cooperated with local institutions in Thailand, the United Kingdom, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Cambodia to set up "Luban Workshop", cultivating thousands of technical talents. 595 professional teaching standards and 3,349 curriculum standards developed by higher vocational colleges have been adopted abroad. In terms of agriculture-related higher vocational colleges, Guangdong AIB Polytechnic, Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry, Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College, and Suzhou Polytechnic Institute of Agriculture were selected as the "Top 50 Influential International Higher Vocational Colleges in 2018". Other agriculture-related higher vocational colleges are also exploring and practicing internationalization.

According to 2019 Annual Report on the Quality of Higher Vocational Education, Beijing Vocational College of Agriculture, Chengdu Agricultural College, Chongqing Three Gorges Vocational College, Guangdong AIB Polytechnic, Guangxi Agricultural Vocational University (formerly Guangxi Agricultural Vocational College), Henan Vocational College of Agriculture, Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry, Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College, Xinjiang Agricultural Vocational Technical College, Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture, etc. have explored and practiced on full-time Overseas Students cultivation, part-time overseas personnel training, in-school students service "going out" enterprises overseas, full-time teachers to go abroad for guidance and training, full-time teachers holding posts in foreign organizations, professional teaching and curriculum standards developed and adopted abroad, awards in skill competitions abroad.

Beijing Vocational College of Agriculture, Guangdong AIB Polytechnic, and Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry have also set up overseas branch schools in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and other countries along the Belt and Road. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges have made some achievements in serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative. In particular, colleges in economically developed areas have accumulated rich experience in running schools internationally. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges are forming a new trend of expanding their international influence through multiple channels. Table 1 shows the international influence of some agriculture-related higher vocational colleges in 2018.

Table 1. International influence of some agriculture-related higher vocational colleges in 2018

Indicators	Unit	Beijing Vocational College of Agriculture	Chengdu Agricultural College	Chongqing Three Gorges Vocational College	Guangdong AIB Polytechnic	Guangxi Agricultural Vocational University	Henan Vocational College of Agriculture	Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry	Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College	Xinjiang Agricultural Vocational College	Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture
1	Number of full-time Overseas Students (more than one year)	32	9	25	3	0	1	230	433	2	36
2	Training quantity of part-time overseas personnel	3661	58	0	7327	548	36	4223	5264	120	600
3	In-school students service "going out" enterprises	0	0	0	15125	0	3022	963	24813	1050	3100
4	Time for full-time teachers to go abroad for guidance and training	0	923	0	2510	400	551	1440	1801	0	95
5	Number of full-time teachers holding posts in foreign organizations	0	0	0	19	2	0	23	3	0	3
6	Number of professional teaching standards developed and adopted abroad	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	2	1
	Number of curriculum standards developed and adopted abroad	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	5
7	Number of awards in skill competitions abroad	2	0	0	3	0	0	18	1	0	1

Data source: Annual report of higher vocational Education quality of higher vocational colleges in 2019.

However, the overall level of international education and the mode of international talent training of agriculture-related vocational colleges need to be further improved, especially the internationalization of agricultural professional level is still relatively low. At present, all agriculture-related vocational colleges mainly rely on independent exploration and discovery to serve the "Belt and Road" Initiative, showing a trend of unequal development in speed, quality and benefit. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, it is an urgent problem for us to study and solve how to make full use of relevant national policies, give play to their own disciplinary advantages and further improve the level and quality of service for the Belt and Road Initiative.

### **3. Path exploration for agriculture-related vocational colleges to serve the belt and Road Initiative**

Serving the "Belt and Road" Initiative is the mission entrusted to higher vocational colleges by The Times, and also an important opportunity for higher vocational colleges to improve their international school-running level. Agriculture-related vocational colleges should comply with the National "Belt and Road" Initiative, based on the disciplinary characteristics of agriculture-related vocational colleges, combine "agriculture" and "education" closely, and explore a path with agricultural characteristics to serve the "Belt and Road" Initiative.

#### **3.1 Strengthen connotation construction and service capacity**

The Implementation of the Construction Plan of High-Level Higher Vocational Colleges and Specialties with Chinese Characteristics (hereinafter referred to as the "Double High Plan") is a major measure to promote the high-quality development of higher vocational education, and also a vane of the reform and development of higher vocational colleges at the present stage. Agriculture-related vocational colleges should take the "Double High Plan" construction as an opportunity, insist on quality first, strengthen their own connotation construction, and improve service capabilities. In contrast to the overall goals and reform and development tasks of the "Double High Plan", agricultural vocational colleges should focus on strengthening party building, creating a highland for training technical and skilled personnel, a platform for technological innovation, a high-level professional group, and a high-level double-teaching team. It is necessary to improve the level of school-enterprise cooperation, service development, school governance, informatization and internationalization. This can significantly improve the running level, service capabilities, and international influence of higher vocational schools and professional groups, and lay the foundation for agricultural higher vocational colleges to serve the "Belt and Road" initiative. According to the Measures for The Selection and Management of The Construction Plan of High-level Vocational Schools and Majors with Chinese Characteristics (Trial), the "Double Higher Vocational Plan" has a support cycle every five years, with total volume control, dynamic management, annual evaluation and expiration assessment, and selection of the fittest. Therefore, the agriculture-related higher vocational colleges that have been selected as the construction units of the national and provincial "Double High Plan" should focus on their own construction tasks, actively promote the annual goals, complete the relevant construction goals year by year, and achieve great competitiveness through construction.

#### **3.2 Innovate on international exchange and cooperation platforms and build a "Belt and Road" agricultural vocational education community**

At present, most of the agricultural vocational colleges can have access to communication between teachers and students and they can participate in international conferences and skill contest (condition) to carry out international exchanges and cooperation in form of single exchanges and cooperation between colleges and universities. Opportunities for cooperation are confined with low efficiency. Therefore, agriculture-related higher vocational colleges should innovate the international exchange and cooperation platform, improve the efficiency of international exchange and cooperation, and build the "Belt and Road" agricultural vocational education community. First, give play to the linkage role of vocational education groups related to agriculture. Members of vocational education group can share high-quality teaching resources, organize groups to study and train abroad, jointly develop bilingual teaching materials, jointly hold international academic lectures, jointly carry out scientific research, etc., which makes vocational education Group become a new platform for international exchange and cooperation and form a large pattern of collective development. Second, establish an international alliance and build a new model of vocational education cooperation. Some higher vocational colleges, with the support of the government, have established international coalitions with institutions and enterprises inside and outside the United Nations, which have promoted international cooperation in vocational education through joint construction and sharing of teaching resources, cooperation in running schools, recruitment and training of international students, overseas internships, technical training, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Among the higher vocational colleges involved in agriculture, Xinjiang

Agricultural Vocational Technical College took the lead in establishing the "Silk Road ASIA-Europe Alliance of Colleges and Universities (Vocational Education)", Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College took the lead in establishing the "International Higher Vocational Education Alliance of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry", and Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry took the lead in establishing the "International Alliance of Modern Agricultural Vocational Education". Guangxi Agricultural Vocational University has led the establishment of "China-ASEAN Agricultural Vocational Education Alliance", actively promoting the implementation of agricultural vocational education to serve the "Belt and Road". Third, give full play to the advantages of school-enterprise cooperation to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. By taking advantage of the close combination of vocational education and enterprises, the joint enterprises will "go global" by sending students to "go global" Chinese-funded agricultural enterprises for internship, undertaking education and training for overseas employees of "go global" Chinese-funded agricultural enterprises, and jointly developing technical standards with enterprises.

### **3.3 Actively participate in international production capacity cooperation to increase the comprehensive agricultural production capacity of countries along the Belt and Road**

The Vision and Actions of Jointly Advancing Agricultural Cooperation along the Belt and Road pointed out that under the Belt and Road Initiative, international agricultural cooperation has become one of the best points for countries along the Belt and Road to build a community of shared interests and common destiny. Agriculture is an important basis for the national economic development of countries along the Belt and Road. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges should make full use of relevant national policies, give full play to their disciplinary advantages, actively participate in international production capacity cooperation, and improve the comprehensive agricultural production capacity of countries along the Belt and Road. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges can build overseas agricultural cooperation demonstration zones, training bases, and R&D bases based on the advantages of regional resources and industrial characteristics based on the actual conditions of countries along the "Belt and Road". Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges can also carry out experiments, demonstrations, exhibitions of new crop varieties, promotion of new technologies, training of agricultural technology skills, agricultural tourism and sightseeing, etc., to create a window for China's agricultural technology demonstration. At the same time, we will strengthen the construction of the whole industrial chain, promote the integration of the primary, secondary and tertiary industries in relevant countries, form platforms for industrial aggregation and integration, and lead and encourage enterprises to go global as a group. At present, many higher vocational colleges related to agriculture have carried out relevant attempts. For examples, Guangxi Agricultural Vocational University constructed "China-Laos Cooperative Crops Fine Varieties Experiment station" in Laos, Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry constructed "China-Kenya modern agricultural science and technology demonstration garden" in Kenya, and Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture built "China-Cambodia modern agricultural science and technology demonstration friendship garden" in Cambodia. This has played an active demonstration role in improving the level of local agricultural production, and has promoted the local social and economic development.

### **3.4 Improve the quality of overseas students and cultivate modern agricultural talents for countries along the "Belt and Road"**

Recruiting and training foreign students is an important part of promoting the internationalization of education in higher vocational colleges. Enrolling students from countries along the "Belt and Road" to study in China is an important measure to promote the construction of the "Belt and Road". This will not only help to carry out education interconnection cooperation, provide talent support for the joint construction of the "Belt and Road", but also help promote Chinese culture to "go global". According to the "2019 Annual Report on the Quality of Higher Vocational Education in China", many agricultural vocational colleges have taken full advantage of their professional advantages to recruit and train foreign students. Especially in Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College, the number of full-time international students in the school has reached 433. The number of foreign students in other agricultural vocational colleges is also rising. As the number of international students increases, the quality also needs to be improved. First, agricultural vocational colleges should give full play to their professional advantages and focus on cultivating agricultural talents for countries along the "Belt and Road". Second, agriculture-related vocational colleges should carry out pragmatic cooperation with reputable educational institutions in countries along the "Belt and Road" to ensure the quality of enrollment of foreign students. Third, agricultural higher vocational colleges should formulate international student education personnel training programs based on the characteristics of foreign student education different from domestic student training, and improve the foreign student training system in terms of curriculum settings, skills training, and internships. Fourth, agriculture-related vocational colleges should strengthen the construction of the teaching staff and cultivate high-level teachers of foreign students. Fifth,

agricultural vocational colleges should integrate new Chinese agricultural technologies and new cases into the course content through enterprise cooperation, and develop curriculum resources with strong usability and operability to meet the needs of foreign students for new agricultural knowledge.

### **3.5 Develop international general standards, implement overseas education, and provide Chinese solutions for the development of world agricultural vocational education**

Agriculture-related vocational colleges should actively create conditions and boldly try to export education. First, develop internationally accepted agricultural professional standards and curriculum systems, launch a batch of high-quality professional standards, curriculum standards, and teaching resources with international influence, and build an international brand of China's agricultural vocational education. According to the 2019 annual report on the quality of higher vocational education in higher vocational colleges, Guangdong AIB Polytechnic, Jiangsu Agri-animal Husbandry Vocational College, Xinjiang Agricultural Vocational Technical College, Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture have joined hands with foreign institutes. Schools and "going out" enterprises have used the advantages of the agricultural industry and professions to formulate professional standards and curriculum standards of international standards. These standards have also been adopted outside the country (border), and have been recognized by countries along the "Belt and Road". Second, qualified agriculture-related higher vocational colleges can explore overseas education. Running overseas schools for countries along the "Belt and Road" is an important way for vocational education to serve the country and contribute to the world. It is of great significance for exporting China's vocational education experience and creating technical and skilled talents for countries along the "Belt and Road". Agriculture is an important foundation for the national economic development of countries along the "Belt and Road", and the development of agriculture is inseparable from the cultivation of agricultural and rural talents. Agriculture-related vocational colleges and universities conduct overseas education in countries along the "Belt and Road", which is an important manifestation of agriculture-related vocational colleges making full use of relevant national policies, exerting their own disciplinary advantages, and serving the "Belt and Road" agricultural exchanges and cooperation. At present, the overseas education of agricultural vocational colleges is still in the exploratory stage, and there is not much experience to learn from. Agricultural higher vocational colleges trying to run schools overseas can choose from policy guarantees, selection of school locations, formulation of training programs, enrollment and student status, teaching management, teacher allocation, organizational management forms, and models in accordance with the "Guidelines for Running Higher Education Institutions Abroad" Research on the overall framework and development path of overseas education for agricultural vocational colleges, formulate a thorough plan, and research out practical and feasible paths for overseas education.

### **3.6 Undertake foreign-related agricultural technical skills training to build a brand of agricultural foreign aid training**

Carrying out foreign-related training can not only cultivate more technical talents for related countries that are friendly to China and beneficial to bilateral exchanges, but also expand China's international influence. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and other national ministries and commissions Actively carry out various foreign-related trainings. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges should give full play to industry advantages and professional teacher expertise, actively undertake foreign-related agricultural technical skills training, and build a brand of agricultural foreign aid training. First of all, agricultural vocational colleges should actively undertake foreign-related agricultural technical skills training tasks. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges can actively apply for training projects in foreign cooperation projects of various ministries and commissions, international organizations, and provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions by creating "training centers", using a combination of "inviting in" and "going out". Carry out training for countries along the "Belt and Road" to cultivate technical and skilled personnel for relevant countries. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has established the "China-ASEAN Agricultural Training Center" and the "China-Myanmar Agricultural Technology Training Center" in Guangxi Agricultural Vocational University and Yunnan Vocational and Technical College of Agriculture, and carried out agricultural technical skills training for ASEAN through the centers to provide necessary human resources for the economic and social development of ASEAN countries. Second, agriculture-related vocational colleges should actively undertake the education and training of overseas employees of Chinese-funded agricultural enterprises that are "going global". Agriculture-related vocational colleges can actively provide talent guarantee for the development of enterprises in the countries along the "Belt and Road", drive enterprises to "go global", and promote the localization of technical and skilled talents. Third, agricultural vocational colleges should pay attention to the improvement of the quality of foreign-related training. Agriculture-related vocational colleges can effectively improve the quality of training and ensure that the training is effective by formulating

Careful training plans, selecting training content, optimizing the curriculum system, innovating training methods, and cultivating high-quality teachers and management teams.

### **3.7 Adapt measures to local conditions to create a path for international exchange and cooperation in agricultural vocational education with regional characteristics**

A vast country and large regional differences are a basic national condition of our country. Whether it is the natural environment, history and culture, or the level of social and economic development, the south, east, and northwest are all different. In particular, the development of agriculture is greatly affected by factors such as geographical environment, climatic conditions, soil conditions, and water resources. Agricultural production has a strong regional nature, and the agricultural vocational education in various places also shows regional characteristics following the development of the local agricultural industry. Therefore, agricultural vocational colleges should adapt to local conditions and create a path for international exchange and cooperation in agricultural vocational education with regional characteristics. First, according to the geographic location of agricultural vocational colleges, countries along the "Belt and Road" with comparable natural conditions and industrial structures can be selected to cooperate and promote appropriate technical skills to better serve the development of local agricultural industries. Second, agricultural vocational colleges in border areas can rely on the unique conditions along the border to work closely with neighboring "Belt and Road" countries. From the perspective of China's border opening strategy, the opening to the east is mainly Heilongjiang and Jilin, the opening to the south is mainly Guangxi and Yunnan, the opening to the west is mainly Xinjiang, and the opening to the north is mainly Inner Mongolia. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges in border areas should serve the strategic pattern of opening up the borders of the country, focusing on exchanges and cooperation with neighboring countries to promote the development of neighboring countries.

## **4. Conclusion**

Universities must not only actively engage in educational, academic, and cultural exchanges and cooperation activities with universities and other institutions around the world, but also consciously establish the mission of serving the country and contributing to the world. Agriculture-related higher vocational colleges should use advanced domestic and foreign colleges and universities as their benchmarks, identify gaps, and seize the opportunity of the "Belt and Road" construction. Agriculture-related vocational colleges should give full play to their own advantages in running schools, and carry out in-depth and extensive cooperation with countries along the "Belt and Road" in the exchange of teachers and students in running schools, personnel training, technology promotion, standard output, and experimental demonstrations. Gradually move from "communication and cooperation" to "technology export", pushing China's agricultural science and technology to the world. In the process of implementation, agricultural vocational colleges should make good use of relevant national policies and actively and prudently promote internationalization based on actual conditions. Based on the professional structure of agricultural vocational colleges and the needs of the "Belt and Road" construction, it's necessary to study what we want to do and what we can do. In addition, it is necessary to combine the characteristics of vocational education with the close ties between enterprises and industries, and cooperate with enterprises to "go global", and ultimately enhance the international level of agricultural vocational colleges.

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