

# A brief introduction to China's strategy for plant conservation

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China is one of the first group countries who joined the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and China is also a big country with very rich plant resources, including abundant species, numerous endemic species, ancient origin of the flora and a large number of cultivar species. The Chinese government has paid great attention to the conservation of plant resources, and remarkable progress has been made in a number of areas, including *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation. But as a result of the increased population and the economic development, there are many impacts to the ecological environments and China's plant diversity is under serious threat. So in view of the present status of plant resources and conservation, it is necessary and urgent to draft the China Strategy for Plant Conservation, and also as a party of the CBD, China has the responsibility to response to the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* (GSPC) actively.

For conserving plant diversity and implementing the CBD, the relevant agencies of the Chinese government have organized to draft the text of China's Strategy for Plant Conservation (CSPC) based on the 16 targets of the GSPC. Each target has three aspects; the current status of plant conservation, problems and constraints that are faced, and the actions need to do in the near future.

China has paid more attention to conserving plant diversity.

## Understanding and documenting plant diversity

China has compiled and published the book of Flora of China in 126 volumes that consist of 31142 species. 12 volumes of the English Edition of Flora of China English edition have also been published. For the assessment of the conservation status, the red list of China's flora has been compiled and the list of National Key Protected Wild plant also been published. And the same time many kinds of database for China's plant information such as the Chinese Virtual Herbarium have been established.

## Conserving plant diversity

By 2006, 2349 nature reserves had been established. This accounts for 15% of the total area of China. 60% of high plant communities and 70% national key protected wild plants have been protected effectively so far. 160 botanical gardens and 90 specific plant gardens have been established, which conserve 60% plant species in China. Recovery of *Paphiopedilum armeniacum*, *Doritis pulcherrima*, *Cycas debaoensis* have been achieved successfully to a certain extent. The national investigation of alien species has been completed, and alien invasive species database has been established. A list of Major Alien Invasive Species for Agriculture and Forestry in China has been compiled.

## Sustaining plant diversity

A series of laws and regulations were issued and the Office for Import and Export Management of Endangered Species was set up with 22 branch offices across China. A demonstration area for sustainable forest management was established. The cultivation and breeding of wild plants and realization of the usage of cultivated resources has been rapidly developed.

## **Promoting education and awareness about plant diversity,**

Information related to plant diversity conservation has been adopted into education curricula of primary and middle school. A series of education and publicity activities of biodiversity protection have been organized every year. A large number of popular science education bases taking plants as their subjects have been established. More than 450 million visitors visit the nature reserves, forest parks and botanical gardens every year. Many officials and nongovernmental websites for publicizing the importance of plant diversity have also been established in China.

## **Building capacity for the conservation of plant diversity**

China has set up wild plant conservation departments in the State Forestry Administration (SFA), the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) and the Ministry of Agriculture respectively in charge of wild plant conservation; China successively released a series of laws and regulations, such as the Forest Law, The Environmental Protection Law, the Conservation Regulation of Wild Plants, etc. Many colleges and universities have introduced courses for plant diversity conservation; Groups such as China Wild Plant Conservation Association have become more and more active. A network of nature reserves and botanical gardens has been set up. China has carried out broad cooperation with international organizations, countries and regions and has held a series of international conferences, cooperation projects on biodiversity.

Of course, China still faces many problems and constraints in the field of plant conservation, including lack of sufficient regulations, lack of public awareness, insufficient information of the plant resources, and shortage of financial support, some species being over-harvested, etc. It is estimated the about 4000 to 5000 species of wild plants are threatened, which accounts for 15-20% of the total in China.

According to the current situation and the problems we faced, we have proposed the actions which need to be taken in the near future in the text of GSPC, including

- launching a plant species evaluation in the scope of the whole country
- evaluating the current status of the all known species of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation
- regenerating the data base of Chinese endangered plant species
- forming a comprehensive nature reserve network focused on wild plant conservation
- setting up a monitoring system for the population status of China's national key protected wild plants
- rescuing and relieving critically endangered wild plants species through artificial culture and habitat rehabilitation
- evaluating the effectiveness of the biodiversity conservation
- strengthening the advertisement and education for plant conservation
- enhancing the training for plant conservation,
- completing the regulations for plant conservation and strengthening administration enforcement and supervision capabilities
- strengthening the network construction combining all of the organization and public
- strengthening international cooperation.

The implementation of China's Strategy for Plant Conservation will further strengthen the conservation of China's plant diversity and make a great contribution to the implementation of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*.