

Embrapa signs memorandum for cooperation with China to develop AI for family farming

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The Memorandum of Understanding gathers five institutions and provides for joint research, researcher exchanges, and the establishment of pilot centers for smart agricultural machinery in Brazil.



Embrapa expanded its scientific and technological cooperation agenda with China by signing a Memorandum of Understanding during an institutional mission to the country to establish the Brazil-China Cooperation Center for the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture. The initiative joined Embrapa, Nanjing Agricultural University (NAU), Jiangsu Academy of Agricultural Sciences (JAAS), Sinomach Digital Technology Corporation, and the International Association for People's Cooperation (IAPC) in a collaborative work program expected to last five years. The agreement was signed on Monday (21) in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province, where Sinomach Digital is headquartered.

The partnership focuses on developing and adapting digital agriculture, automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence solutions, with special attention to the needs of family farming. Planned activities include joint research on smart agricultural machinery, digital platforms, and crop models, as well as researcher exchanges, technical missions, workshops, training events, and joint efforts to secure Brazilian, Chinese, and international research funding.

For Embrapa president Silvia Massruhá, the cooperation expands the possibilities for joint development between the two countries. "This Brazil-China cooperation is very important to adapt technological solutions in the areas of digital agriculture, automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, with the aim of producing more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems," she stated.

Silvia Massruhá also met with Dilma Rousseff in Shanghai, president of the New Development Bank (NDB), better known as the BRICS Bank, with an agenda focused on fostering institutional ties and creating new cooperation opportunities for

Brazilian agriculture. Embrapa's mission to China aimed at expanding scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

Technology focused on family farming

One of the main anticipated outcomes of the Memorandum of Understanding is the establishment of pilot areas in Brazil with Smart Agricultural Machinery Service Centers. The aim is to provide small and medium-sized machines, sensors, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence to support production monitoring and management.

The services are going to be organized collectively, with the participation of family farming associations and cooperative unions. The model aims not only to expand access to technologies that individually could be costly for smallholders, but also to strengthen capacities, technical assistance, and rural extension services.

According to the agreement, the possibility of integrating demonstration units into the National Program for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (Pronater) will also be assessed, in addition to replicating the experience in other family farming territories.

Mission brings Brazilian and Chinese science closer

The new agreement is part of a broader agenda carried out by Embrapa in China from September 15 to 22. The delegation led by president Silvia Massruhá attended the World AgriFood Innovation Conference (WAFI) 2026 in Beijing and held meetings with Chinese universities, research institutions, and companies. The agenda began at China Agricultural University (CAU) and included discussions on digital agriculture, bioinputs, agroecology, composting, and innovation for agri-food systems.

The partnership with Chinese institutions continues an approach that Embrapa and Sinomach Digital have already been developing. In 2025, the two institutions signed a memorandum in Brasília, which was later incorporated into a bilateral memorandum between Brazil and China. In 2024, Sinomach Digital, China Agricultural University, and the University of Brasília also participated in the establishment of a rural science and technology center focused on family farming.