

Henan Alfalfa Project deepens Youran dairy's feed-to-milk strategy

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The project extends Youran Dairy's forage operations into Henan, where the company has already invested \$356.26 million in four dairy farms housing 45,000 cows



Inner Mongolia Youran Dairy Co. is expanding its forage production network into central China, with plans to establish a 4,000-hectare alfalfa cultivation base in Lankao County, Henan Province. The project is expected to become the company's largest alfalfa-growing operation in the Central Plains, with a planned annual output of approximately 170,000 tonnes of alfalfa silage.

The company signed a strategic cooperation agreement for the project on October 10, 2026. Once fully developed, the base is intended to provide a more dependable, year-round supply of high-quality forage for around 95,000 high-yielding dairy cows, reinforcing the link between feed production and large-scale milk production.

The expansion comes as dairy producers seek greater control over feed quality and availability, two critical variables in the economics of intensive milk production. By extending its cultivation network into Henan, Youran Dairy is pursuing a regional supply model that connects forage-growing areas in northern China with dairy operations in the Central Plains.

Feed security moves up the dairy agenda

Henan is among China's major dairy-producing regions and offers favourable conditions for alfalfa cultivation, with the potential for six to seven harvests a year. The proposed base will use existing land in the Yellow River floodplain, according to the project announcement, while supporting the development of a more integrated forage and livestock value chain in Lankao County.

For dairy operators, locally available, consistent-quality forage can help reduce exposure to supply disruptions and improve feed planning. The project is intended to strengthen that foundation while supporting the wider development of the regional

dairy industry.

Youran Dairy has already invested a cumulative \$356.26 million (RMB2.4 billion) in Henan, where it has established four large-scale dairy farms with a combined herd of 45,000 cows. The new alfalfa project would extend the company's presence in the province from milk production into a more substantial local feed-supply operation.

The proposed cultivation base is also expected to generate economic and social benefits for Lankao County, alongside potential ecological gains associated with the use of existing land. The scale of those benefits, however, will depend on project implementation and land and water management.

Building a vertically integrated forage business

Youran Dairy's forage expansion builds on more than a decade of investment in cultivation and breeding. Since 2014, the company has developed alfalfa production capabilities across several regions, beginning with a standardised 3,666.67-hectare cultivation base in Ar Horqin Banner, Inner Mongolia, an area recognised for its grass-growing industry.

It subsequently added cultivation bases in Inner Mongolia and Gansu Province. The company's current forage-growing footprint stands at approximately 16,000 hectares, and it describes itself as China's largest alfalfa supplier.

Its operations extend beyond growing forage. Youran Dairy operates two alfalfa seed bases in Hohhot and Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, supporting research into grass varieties, breeding and commercialisation. The company has developed capabilities spanning seed selection, breeding, cultivation practices and the supply of quality forage.

Premium-grade alfalfa has accounted for more than 60 per cent of its self-produced output in recent years, according to the company. This focus on quality is particularly relevant to high-yielding dairy herds, where feed composition and consistency influence production performance.

Connecting northern forage supply with central China

The Lankao project introduces a two-region production model linking northern China's established forage-growing areas with the Central Plains' dairy clusters. The arrangement could help place feed production closer to livestock demand while diversifying the company's geographical supply base.

For Youran Dairy, the strategic objective is to align forage cultivation more closely with the needs of large-scale dairy farming. For Henan, the proposed investment offers an opportunity to strengthen local feed availability and expand activity across the grass-and-livestock value chain.

The project's ultimate contribution will depend on how quickly the base is developed, its actual yields and the economics of producing and distributing forage at scale. If delivered as planned, the 4,000-hectare operation would represent a significant addition to Youran Dairy's cultivation network and deepen its role in China's dairy feed supply chain.