

## China's silk producing season on top

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The end of May is known as the silkworm cocoon season in China. In China, spring is the best season to raise the silkworm. Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Sichuan are silk-producing provinces in China. Silkworm farmers in these provinces are busy cultivating silk cocoons. China produces 70 per cent of silkworm cocoons and raw silk in the world. Each cocoon has only one thread and in a good cocoon, the length of the thread is around 1.5 kilometres. It takes 28 days for silkworms to transform into adult, pupae.

China is the top silk exporter in the world. In 2022 China's silk export reached \$932.98 million, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade. China produces more than 150,000 metric tonnes of silk every year. After China India produces 30,000 metric tonnes of silk. China's plant-reeled silk export reached 3590 tonnes in 2022 up by 202.46 per cent year on year, with an export value of \$222 million up by 223.35 per cent.

Silk is a long continuous fibre made from the solidification of silk liquid secreted by the mature silkworm during cocooning. Depending on the food of the silkworm, it can be divided into mulberry silk, sericulture silk, cassava silk and camphor silk and so on.

Mulberry silk as raw material, a number of cocoon silk will be held together and reeled into filament, also known as silk. Machine-reeled silk is called plant-reeled silk. At present, it is rare to see hand-reeled silk, and the silk produced in China and exported is basically plant-reeled silk.

As the largest manufacturer of silk, China's The National Genetic Resources Bank of the Silkworm in Chongqing was recently listed as one of 12 new genetic resource protection units. There are 217 protection units including 10 genetic resources in China.

According to the China Daily, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs approved the second group of units in January. The protection of China's silkworm genes found in silkworm eggs under the country's Animal Husbandry Law, according to the Institute of Sericulture and Systems Biology in Southwest University, the gene bank's home.

The gene bank established in the 1930s, has maintained comprehensive silkworm data since 1940. Over the years, the gene bank became the world's biggest for domestic silkworms bank.

The gene bank has more than 1,150 live genetic stocks of domestic silkworms, including local strains, improved varieties, natural mutants, chemical-induced and physically-induced artificial mutants, innovative germplasms that are constructed via transgenic and genome-editing techniques and special germplasms whose lineage traces to wild ancestors. The stock covers more than 90 per cent of the world's representative silkworm resources.

Chinese cities such as Suzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Shaoxing are known for the silk industries.

Silk has been a symbol of Chinese culture for thousands of years and spring is the best season to raise the silkworms that produce it. The province is known across the world for its high-quality material and local farmers continue to adapt to the times. Specially bred mulberry leaves contain 20 per cent protein, which silkworms then convert into silk protein after devouring them.

China's silk reeling industry has been industrialised since the 1950s, and it's now a local economic pillar. Modern agricultural techniques have helped take the industry to the next level.

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