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Inside C2

China leads US in global competition for key emerging technology, study says

SYDNEY, March 2 (Reuters) - China has a “stunning lead” in 37 out of 44 critical and emerging technologies as Western democracies lose a global competition for research output, a security think tank said on Thursday after tracking defence, space, energy and biotechnology.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) said its study showed that, in some fields, all of the world’s top 10 research institutions are based in China.
The study, funded by the United States State Department, found the United States was often second-ranked, although it led global research in high-performance computing, quantum computing, small satellites and vaccines.

“Western democracies are losing the global technological competition, including the race for scientific and research breakthroughs,” the report said, urging greater research investment by governments.

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US Commerce chief urges chip companies to begin environmental reviews
China had established a “stunning lead in high-impact research” under government programs.

The report called for democratic nations to collaborate more often to create secure supply chains and “rapidly pursue a strategic critical technology step-up”.

ASPI tracked the most-cited scientific papers, which it said are the most likely to result in patents. China’s surprise breakthrough in hypersonic missiles in 2021 would have been identified earlier if China’s strong research had been detected, it said.

“Over the past five years, China generated 48.49% of the world’s high-impact research papers into advanced aircraft engines, including hypersonics, and it hosts seven of the world’s top 10 research institutions,” it said.

In the fields of photonic sensors and quantum communication, China’s research strength could result in it “going dark” to the surveillance of western intelligence, including the “Five Eyes” of Britain, United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, it said.

National talent flows of researchers were also tracked and monopoly risks were identified.

China was likely to emerge with a monopoly in 10 fields including synthetic biology, where it produces one-third of all research, as well as electric batteries, 5G, and nano manufacturing.

The Chinese Academy of Sciences, a government research body, ranked first or second in most of the 44 technologies tracked, which spanned defence, space, robotics, energy, the environment, biotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), advanced materials and quantum technology.

China was bolstering its research with knowledge gained overseas, and the data showed one-fifth of the top Chinese researchers were trained in a Five Eyes country, it said.

The study recommended visa screening programs to limit illegal technology transfers and instead favour international collaboration with security allies.

Australia’s universities have said they are complying with foreign influence laws designed to stop the illegal transfer of technology to China, but also noted international collaboration is an integral part of university research

Putin says Ukrainian group attacks border region, Kyiv denies Russian 'provocation'

LONDON, March 2 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday Russia had been hit by a "terrorist attack" in the southern Bryansk region bordering Ukraine, and vowed to crush what he said was a Ukrainian sabotage group that had fired at civilians.

Ukraine accused Russia of staging a false "provocation", but also appeared to imply some form of operation had indeed been carried out by Russian anti-government partisans.

Amid reports of shelling and sporadic sabotage, Russia's border regions have become increasingly volatile since Moscow invaded Ukraine a year ago.

Putin, in a televised address, accused the group of opening fire on civilians in a car, including children. Bryansk Governor Alexander Bogomaz said the attack had killed two people and wounded an 11-year-old boy.

"They won't achieve anything. We will crush them," said Putin, saying the group was made up of the kind of people who wanted to rob Russia of its history and language.

Later in the day four members of Russia's National Guard were injured when their car ran over a mine in the village of Sushany, just across the border from Ukraine, said Alexander Khinstein, a senior federal parliamentarian.

Latest Updates
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Torture chambers in Ukraine's Kherson 'financed by Russian state' -investigators
Protests, fights break out in Georgian parliament over 'foreign agents' bill
The four had been taking part in an operation to secure the region, he wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

The FSB security service initially said the army and FSB were trying to liquidate "an armed group of Ukrainian nationalists" who had crossed the border.

WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

03/06/2023

This Is A Critical Moment For Chinese Americans Welcoming Congresswoman Judy Chu Coming To Houston

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Since the Texas Senate proposed Bill 147, Asian Americans in the United States have launched the strongest and fiercest response in history, including demonstrations, petitions, testimonies and legal challenges.

The Chinese who emigrated to the American continent a hundred years ago were a group of workers who came to build the railroad and worked at this difficult job. And for the last several years, many of us came to America to contribute our wisdom and strengths to this land we called home.

But in recent years this society has started to publicly express and display a lot of discrimination and anger against Asian decendents, especially against the Chinese. Many politicians now are publicly just using their power to sponsor a bill against, or specifically to ban Chinese from, buying real estate in Texas.

Today with the support of our good friend Congressman Al Green and Congresswoman Judy Chu we will sponsor a big rally in Houston, Texas, on Saturday, March 11th at 10:30 am at Stafford Center.

This rally will also be joined by leaders including state and local elected officials and leaders from the African and Latino communities.

We are now learning to team up with other ethnic groups to be a unified force to fight for the political future of all people.

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice

Andrew Tate and Tristan Tate are escorted by police officers outside the headquarters of the Bucharest Court of Appeal, in Bucharest, Romania. Inquam Photos/Octav Ganea

Haitians gather outside an immigration office looking for turns to apply for a passport days after Haiti police blocked streets and broke into the airport during a protest demanding justice for fellow police officers killed by armed gangs, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo

Ukrainian servicemen stand near a military vehicle with anti-aircraft cannon at their positions near a front line, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region, Ukraine. REUTERS/Oleksandr Ratushniak

Haitians gather outside an immigration office looking for turns to apply for a passport days after Haiti police blocked streets and broke into the airport during a protest demanding justice for fellow police officers killed by armed gangs, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo

Air Force fighter jets participate in a rehearsal ahead of Sri Lanka's 75th Independence Day celebrations in Colombo, Sri Lanka. REUTERS/Dinuka Liyanawatte

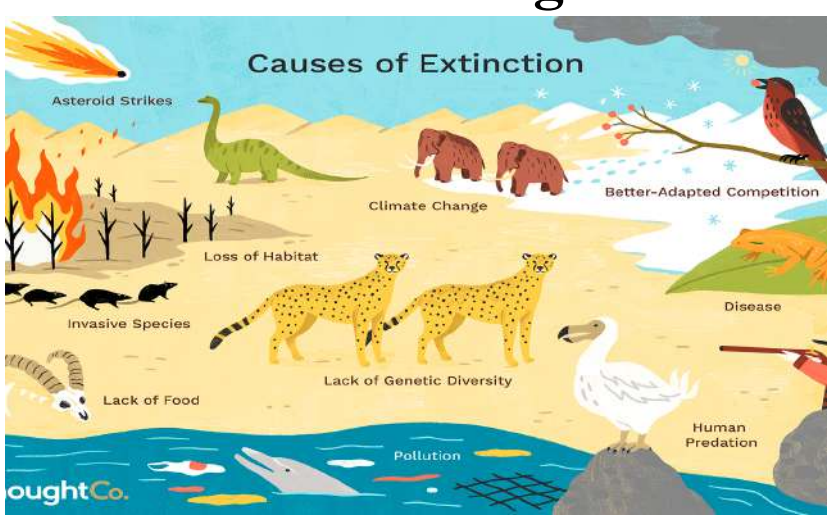
Police officers inspect a crater near a site of a residential building destroyed by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kramatorsk, Ukraine. REUTERS/Vitalii Hnidyi

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Coffee, Wine, And Wheat Varieties Are Among The Foods We Could Lose Forever

The Extinction Crisis That No One Is Talking About



Key Point

Supply chain challenges and inflation spikes in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic have now been joined by growing and documented concerns for the potential extinction of endangered foods and the lack of food choices along with the diversity of foods as well as the nutritional values they represent that are in serious danger of disappearing from the global marketplace. Scientific observers are now saying it is time to act and make efforts to bring diversity back into the food system while being motivated by the health of society.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Your morning coffee is in a perilous state. There are just two species of coffee plants on which the entire multibillion-dollar industry is based: One of them is considered poor-tasting, and the other, which you're likely familiar with, is threatened by climate change and a deadly fungal disease.

Thankfully, there's another kind of coffee out there, known as stenophylla. It has a higher heat tolerance, greater resistance to certain fungal pathogens, and it tastes great. There's just one problem: It's incredibly rare, and until recently, scientists believed it was extinct.

Stenophylla is just one of dozens of important foods that are threatened with extinction, according to Dan Saladino, a BBC journalist and author of the new book, "Eating to Extinction: The World's Rarest Foods and Why We Need to Save Them." While grocery stores may seem as abundant as ever, Saladino argues that the diversity of food is actually in decline. Of the hundreds of thousands of wheat varieties that farmers once cultivated, for example, only a handful are now farmed on a large scale, he told Vox.

As we grow and harvest fewer varieties of plants and animals, the foods you can buy in the grocery store may become less nutritious and flavorful, and — as the current state of coffee demonstrates — the global food system could become less resilient. That's why it's so crucial to lift up communities that are protecting foods from disappearing, Saladino told Vox in an interview about his new book.

The important conversation that followers was held between author Dan Saladino and Vox.com interviewer Benji Jones and pinpoints the food diversity challenges that face us all.

Grocery stores may be stocked, but the variety of food is in decline

Benji Jones

You write that a lot of foods, such as varieties of coffee and wheat, are going extinct. Yet when I walk into the grocery store it seems like there's more variety than ever.

Dan Saladino

Whether it's cotton candy grapes or certain varieties of avocado, there's a degree of uniformity. And while you'll see this abundance — consider bread, and the wheat it's made of — it's extremely narrow in terms of its genetics.

In this amazing place in the Arctic called Svalbard, there's a seed vault buried deep under the ice, down a tunnel, in which there are more than 200,000 different unique samples of wheat. That's the kind of diversity that's hidden from us. A farmer today in the UK might get a recommended list of wheat varieties to grow — dictated largely by the food industry and millers and bakers — of fewer than 10 kinds.

You can take all of the world's staple crops, including maize [also known as corn] and rice, and you'll see the same thing. In seed banks around the world, there are tens to hundreds of thousands of varieties, yet in the food system that we experience, it's an extremely small number.

Benji Jones

Why should the average grocery shopper care about losing these rare varieties of food?

Dan Saladino

Endangered foods give us options in a future with many challenges — feeding a growing population, reducing emissions, and finding fresh water, for example.

Take a type of maize tucked away in a mountain village in southern Mexico, very close to where maize was first domesticated thousands of years ago. Botanists arrived in the late 1970s and saw this 16-foot-tall stock of maize. It shouldn't have been growing there because the soil was so poor.

Not only was it so tall, but it also has these aerial roots that were dripping with mucus, like something out of a science fiction film. Just three years ago, a scientist figured out that the mucus is an interplay between sugars and microbes that's actually feeding the plant from the air. That hadn't been seen before in cereal crops.

A type of maize that grows in the Sierra Mixe region of Oaxaca, Mexico. It has aerial roots coated in mucus that help the plant pull nutrients out of the air. (Photo/Allen Van Deynze et. al./PLOS Biology)

Why should we care? If we understand how this plant works, could we potentially use it to reduce our use of fertilizer globally? We know there is a way in which some plants are feeding themselves. We need to give thanks to the Indigenous people who have looked after this maize for centuries, if not thousands of years.

Benji Jones

A wider variety of crops also makes our food system more resilient to threats like disease and climate change, right?

Dan Saladino

That's another really important lesson. I traveled to eastern Turkey to get as close as I could to the Fertile Crescent, where wheat was first domesticated. I found farmers who had saved a type of emmer wheat that had been growing for 8,000 to 9,000 years. It's been growing in high altitudes where it's damp.

If you put a modern wheat variety in that environment, fungal diseases would ruin the crop. And so what they have in Turkey is a precious genetic resource that has forms of resistance, such as to fungal pathogens.

A field of kavilca, or emmer, wheat. (Dan Saladino)

You can also find those principles of disease resilience among ancient varieties of rice and maize — really, in all of the crops. Over thousands of years, our ancestors created these adaptations through farming under different conditions.

What we've done since is create these incredibly high-performance plants that need specific conditions to grow, and a lot of inputs, like fertilizer. Each wheat or maize plant is almost a clone, whereas in traditional farming, there's a huge amount of genetic diversity in the field. If you get a bad summer or too much or too little rain, some of those traditional varieties are still going to bear grains because there is diversity within the crops.

You can breed out bitterness, but you might lose deliciousness

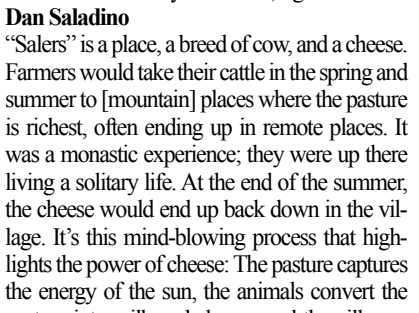
Benji Jones

Is there a flavor extinction happening as well?

Dan Saladino

Absolutely. I tell the story of a type of wild citrus from northern India called memang narang. It has a cultural, culinary, and medicinal function, but the striking thing is how bitter these fruits are. The people who live here place huge value on bitterness, a flavor that's disappearing from most of our palates. Fruit breeders, over centuries, have been ingenious at giving us something that we love: sweetness. They have bred out the bitterness.

When you realize that the bitter taste comes from compounds that help plants protect themselves from pests, then you understand why it might be beneficial to retain that flavor. We've taken the beneficial bitter compounds out, and we've cloaked plants in pesticides and other chemicals to protect them.



A type of rare coffee, Coffea stenophylla. (Getty Images)

Another example comes from coffee. We live in a world where we can enjoy a lot of different types of arabica coffee. There's robusta as well. But these are just two of more than a hundred different types of coffee around the world.

Historically, there were cultures in parts of Africa that had more distinctive types of coffee, including one called stenophylla that was prized in parts of East Africa up until the 1960s, when it pretty much went extinct because farming systems changed. It has greater disease resistance than arabica. And arabica is under pressure now because of climate change — it's an extremely delicate plant. Stenophylla offers the benefit of disease resistance, and it's an amazing-tasting coffee.

Coffee as we know it is in danger. Can we breed a better cup?

Benji Jones

Another example that helps explain the decline of flavor comes from a region of France, home to the Salers cow. It really shows the connection between biodiversity and flavor, right?

Dan Saladino

"Salers" is a place, a breed of cow, and a cheese. Farmers would take their cattle in the spring and summer to [mountain] places where the pasture is richest, often ending up in remote places. It was a monastic experience; they were up there living a solitary life. At the end of the summer, the cheese would end up back down in the village. It's this mind-blowing process that highlights the power of cheese: The pasture captures the energy of the sun, the animals convert the pasture into milk and cheese, and the villagers then eat the cheese during the winter when other foods are running out.

(Article Continues Below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Article Continues From Above)

Coffee, Wine, And Wheat Varieties Are Among The Foods We Could Lose Forever

The Extinction Crisis That No One Is Talking About

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Dan Saladino

The remarkable thing is that the pasture is so rich in microbes that these farmers don't even need a starter culture to coagulate the milk and turn it into cheese. As soon as the milk hits these wooden barrels, it's inoculated with microbes. For a modern health inspector, it would be a nightmare to watch.

We've been talking about the endangered genetics of crops and endangered tastes. Here, we're talking about endangered microbes that are not only missing from the cheese making process, but also from our gut microbiomes.

A breed of cattle called Salers in the Cantal region of France. (Photo/Andia/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

Benji Jones

You also explain that when these cows have access to a wide diversity of plants in the pasture, their milk and cheese end up tasting richer. That's because different grasses have different types of defense chemicals called terpenes, which can translate to flavor in the milk.

Dan Saladino

Terpenes can be found in milk from rich pastures, but not in cheese made from cattle that have been fed on grains. We're only beginning to understand the connections between biodiversity and our food and our health and our flavors.

Benji Jones

You traveled the world sampling all of these foods with unique flavors. What were some that stood out?

Dan Saladino

Skerpikjøt is this food from the Faroe Islands. There's not enough sunlight or firewood there to produce salt to preserve food. People instead built these huts that have gaps that allow the sea air in. They raise sheep and hang the meat in these huts, which gets bathed by the salty air and slowly fermented and preserved. It doesn't look like food. It's covered in mold. It needs to be washed. It's almost as if this sheep meat is gently rotting away in these huts, but actually, the conditions are exactly right so it doesn't rot or become too funky. It becomes this wonderful preserved meat.

Benji Jones

You also have an incredible chapter about a type of wine in the country Georgia, which you explain is where some of the world's first — or the first — winemakers were practicing their craft.

Dan Saladino

Georgia is the most likely country in which grapes were domesticated and the first winemakers were practicing their craft. They have a technology that predates the barrel by thousands of years — the qvevri. These are terracotta vessels that you bury underground with whole branches of grapes with skin and pips [seeds] inside. Many people think France and Italy and Spain and California are great wine-producing regions. Here is a place where the relationship with wine just goes up another level. There is a reverence and spiritual dimension to wine drinking.

A workshop where Georgian qvevris are being made. (Photo/Dan Saladino)

Our relationship with food mirrors our relationship with nature

Benji Jones

In your book, you talk about how losing certain foods isn't just about losing resilience, flavor, and culture, but also about our changing relationship with nature. You explain that some groups, like the Hadza people of Tanzania, are deeply connected to their environment through food — and by losing certain foods, we may be losing these connections.

Dan Saladino

The Hadza story brilliantly sums that up. I followed some of these hunter-gatherers out within a landscape of baobab trees. In those trees, some of which are a thousand years old, you can find bees' nests and one of the greatest prizes the Hadza can find: honey. It's an extremely important food — and their favorite food — but it's hard for them to find the hives high up in the trees.

The Hadza whistle, and after a period of time, if they're lucky, a very humble-looking bird will fly down. The bird will start a "conversation" with the hunter-gatherers and lead them to a tree with honey. The bird knows where the honey is, whereas the hunter-gatherers have the fire and the smoke to get rid of the bees, which are a risk for the bird. The Hadza can go up, extract the honey, and then leave something behind for the birds.

An illustration of a greater honeyguide. (Photo/Brown Bear/ Windmill Books/Universal Images Group via Getty Images,)

Toward the end of the Hadza visit, we went to a mud and brick hut, and inside there were cans and cans of soda. This was a source of sugar and energy that could mean that they no longer use that skill to find honey within our lifetimes — something so fundamentally important to human history could disappear.

Benji Jones

Do we run the risk of glorifying some of these older cultures? Don't some of these groups want soda — or access to health care, or other benefits that come with Western or modern life?

Dan Saladino

There's story after story of another culture coming in and imposing its food and its farming systems and its values and its desires on these Indigenous food systems. My argument is that people should be given the choice. They should have access to health care, but that doesn't necessarily mean that their way of life should be fundamentally changed because they're buying into our system.

A man dries a rare, prized type of Venezuelan cacao called criollo. (Photo/ Dan Saladino)

How to save endangered foods

Benji Jones

There are clearly a lot of things that don't work with our food system. What gave you hope while reporting the book? What inspired you?

Dan Saladino

There's a network of people out there who are saving the diversity of foods. Before Covid, they gathered at a slow food event to bring their foods from around the world, and share stories about what they've saved and what threats they're facing. This solidarity is what gives me optimism.

In southwestern China, I met a farmer saving an extremely rare type of highly nutritious colored rice. He got out his phone and sold rice through WeChat to people in Beijing and Chengdu, some of the biggest cities in the world. Modern technology can actually connect us.

Benji Jones

The food industry is massive and largely run by just a small number of companies. How does one person help prevent these unique foods from going extinct?

Dan Saladino

It's important to understand what we mean by endangered foods and diversity. I think we should all choose our favorite foods and interrogate the diversity of that food. Explore cacao, coffee, or different types of cheeses. Then maybe develop a relationship with a cheesemaker and become a different kind of customer — somebody who's supporting a local farmer.

There are levers that governments can pull to make a big, significant change. I also think we have the most selfish reasons to embrace diversity — our own health. We know what's happening in many parts of the world, in terms of type 2 diabetes, cancers, and other diseases that have a food dimension. Perhaps we will be motivated by health to try and bring diversity back into the food system. The science says we need to. (Courtesy vox.com)