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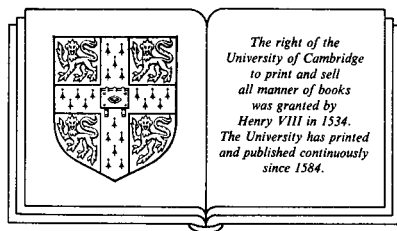
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FOOD GRAIN PROCUREMENT AND CONSUMPTION IN CHINA

KENNETH R. WALKER

*School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London*



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521143851

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First published 1984
First paperback printing 2010

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 83-7820

ISBN 978-0-521-25649-0 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-14385-1 Paperback

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To June, Neil and Ruth

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PREFACE

The economic development of poor countries is generally accompanied by a marked rise in the demand for food grain, a failure of domestic production and marketed supply to match demand and, consequently, an irresistible pressure to import grain. Demand growth is the combined result of rapid population increase and a high income elasticity of demand for grain at prevailing low levels of income per head. In the developing countries the increase in consumption averaged 3.7 per cent¹ per annum between 1960 and 1976, and the projected growth of demand into the 1990s has been estimated² at around 4 per cent per annum.

Empirical studies³ of food consumption show that the demand for grain passes through two important stages as income per head rises. Initially, at low levels of income, the direct consumption of food grain increases rapidly with rising per capita income but the pattern of grain consumption changes: fine grains (wheat, rice, soya beans, for

¹ W.R. Cline (ed.), *Policy Alternatives for a New Economic Order: An Economic Analysis* (London and New York, 1979).

² Kenneth L. Bachman and Leonardo A. Paulino, *Rapid Food Production Growth in Selected Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Underlying Trends 1961-76*, International Food Policy Research Institute Report no.11 (October 1979); also *Food Needs of Developing Countries: Projections of Production and Consumption to 1990*, IFPRI Report no.3 (December 1977).

³ OECD, *Study of Trends in World Supply and Demand of Major Agricultural Commodities*, Report by the Secretary-General (Paris, 1976); H. Kaneda, 'Long-Term Changes in Food Consumption Patterns in Japan 1878-1964', *Food Research Institute Studies* (vol.8), 1968, pp.3-32; F.H. Sanderson, *Japan's Food Prospects and Policies* (Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1978); S. Ishikawa, 'China's Food and Agriculture: A Turning Point', *Food Policy*, May 1977, pp.90-102; M.K. Bennett, *The World's Food* (New York, 1954); Ch'en Yueh-eh, 'Food Consumption in Taiwan', in Chinese-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction, *Economic Digest Series no.23, Agricultural Economic Research Papers* (Taipei, Taiwan, October 1978), pp. 187-97; Colin Clark and M.R. Haswell, *The Economics of Subsistence Agriculture* (London, 1967).

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example) are substituted for coarse grains (such as millet, maize, barley and sweet potatoes). At higher levels of income, the direct consumption of grain rises more slowly, reaches saturation and then declines. The demand for grain for indirect consumption, however, in the form of livestock products, begins to accelerate. Given the relevant grain–livestock production conversion ratios, this boosts the total demand for grain considerably. The more rapid the growth of the urban population and its income per head, the more pronounced are the shifts in demand towards a diet with more fine grains and more livestock products. If the marketed amount of domestically produced grain of the required kind is insufficient to meet urban demand there is, in the end, little alternative for governments than to import grain.

The history of many less-developed countries during the past fifteen to twenty years shows that increases in the demand for grain of 3–4 per cent per annum have rarely been matched by the growth of production. Between 1961 and 1976 grain production in ninety-four developing market economies⁴ increased by 2.6 per cent per year, which was exactly equal to the rate of growth of population. Production rose faster than population in only forty-one out of the ninety-four countries. Declining food grain self-sufficiency and increasing levels of grain imports have thus been a feature of the developing world in recent years.

During the period covered by this study (1952–80) China's experience with grain has, in most respects, been similar to that of a typical underdeveloped country: the population has continually expressed a strong desire to consume more grain, to substitute fine for coarse grain and, especially in the later 1970s, to convert more grain into livestock products. Like those of many less-developed countries, the Government of China has not been able to meet these requirements. People who are not acquainted with trends in the Chinese economy find it almost impossible to believe what the official statistics show – that average grain output per head in 1978–80 was, at best, only 6 per cent above its 1936 level and that, according to one estimate,⁵ it may have been 1 per cent *below* that level. The trend of growth of output in 1952–80 was 2.6 per cent per year, while

⁴ Bachman and Paulino, *Rapid Food Production Growth*, IFPRI Report no.11.

⁵ Yang Chien-pai, *Luen Kung-yeh ho Nung-yeh ti Kuan-hsi* (*On the Relations between Industry and Agriculture*) (Peking, 1981).

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	Grain output (million tons)	Total population (million)	Average grain output per head (kilograms)
1936	{ 149 ^a 139 ^b 144 ^c	450	{ 331 309 320
1952-4	163	588	277
1955-57	186	632	294
1952-57	175	610	287
1978-80	318	971	327

Notes and sources: * In China, 'grain' includes soya beans, potatoes, and pulses.

Production: a and b: Different estimates made by China of 1936 production (including soya beans); see Yang Chien-pai, *On the Relations between Industry and Agriculture*. The origin of a is not given but b is said to be an estimate of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1958. c is the average of a and b. All other production figures are from *Chung-kuo Nung-yeh Nien-chien 1980* (Chinese Agricultural Yearbook 1980) (Peking, 1981), p. 34; with potatoes for 1952-57 reweighted at 5:1.

Population: 1936: Yang Chien-pai, *On the Relations between Industry and Agriculture*. 1950s: *TCKT* (no. 11), 1957, p. 24. 1978-80: 1978: *PR* (no. 20), 1980, p. 24 (State Statistical Bureau figures). 1979: *Economic Yearbook* 1981. 1980: State Statistical Bureau figure in *JMJP*, 30 April 1981.

population grew at an annual rate of 2.0 per cent. With per capita output rising at 0.6 per cent per year there was thus little grain available to satisfy the demand associated with rising incomes, including that of an urban population which rose from 80 million during the mid-1950s to at least 150-180 million in 1980. Between 1955-57 and 1978-80 grain production per head declined in eleven out of China's twenty-seven provinces (in existence in 1980), and this group had a total population of 225 million, or 23 per cent of the 1978-80 total. Recent increases in average output per head merely reflect a falling rate of growth of population rather than a rising trend in production. Comparing the five years 1970-74 with the six years 1975-80, we find that the average trend of production growth fell from 3.4 per cent to 3.1 per cent, while population growth declined from 2.4 per cent to 1.3 per cent. Table 1 summarises the long-term changes in average grain production per head.

Since 1953 the Chinese Government has attempted to counter the excess demand for grain by controlling consumption as well as by

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promoting production. Right from those early years it was determined to manage without foreign grain imports and, indeed, it considered that provided grain distribution within China was efficiently organised, some grain could actually be exported. To achieve these aims the Government created a state system for the procurement, redistribution and rationing of grain covering the entire country and this system has survived, with some modifications, until the present day.

This book traces the progress of that policy between 1953 and 1962 and in the later 1970s. Unfortunately, owing to the lack of statistics, it does not cover the fourteen years from 1962 to 1976. The first period, however, does embody a distinct period in China's recent economic history: the Government's policy for achieving national self-sufficiency in grain was launched in 1953 and finally failed in 1961. Moreover, enough can be said about the problems of the late 1970s to put the entire period from 1953 into historical perspective. Most of the book is concerned with estimating the amounts of grain procured and redistributed, within and between provinces, and between rural and urban areas. It also attempts to measure the effect which redistribution had on grain consumption.

I have taken more than ten years to complete this study. This is mainly because I encountered many difficulties in collecting and analysing the data I required for all the provinces of China. At first I had no intention of covering the whole country but as time passed my search for data developed into a pilgrimage from which there could be no retreat. At times my search was exciting and rewarding, while at other times it was frustrating and endless. Most of the materials I needed were in foreign libraries and I was fortunate to be given several generous research grants which enabled me to visit such libraries and to acquire microfilms of Chinese sources. I gratefully acknowledge grants from the School of Oriental and African Studies (from its Research Committee and from research funds allocated by the former Director, Sir Cyril Philips and by the present Director, Professor C.D. Cowan); from the London–Cornell Project and from the Committee on the Chinese Economy of the US Social Science Research Council.

I am deeply indebted to all the librarians who helped me to locate materials during my visits, and who sent me many items of interest. I extend my warm thanks to the following: John Ma, sometime Curator of the East Asian Collection, the Hoover Library, Stanford; Ramon Myers, the current Curator, and Mark Tam, also of the Hoover

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Library; Edwin Beal, formerly of the Orientalia Division, Library of Congress; Eugene Wu, Harvard-Yenching Library; John Lust, Rosemary Stevens and Calliope Caroussis of the SOAS Library; the staff of the British Library, the Lenin Library and Library of the Academy of Science, Moscow, the Institut für Ostasienkunde, Hamburg, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Economic Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Peking and the City Library of Shanghai.

Many scholars gave me a great deal of advice and encouragement while I was preparing the book. Among the foreign scholars who did so and who I now thank are Shigeru Ishikawa, Robert Michael Field, John S. Aird, J. Philip Emerson, Nicholas Lardy, Charles Liu and Y.Y. Kueh. In China I received insight and information from numerous scholars and officials and although I cannot name them here I am, nevertheless, deeply indebted to them. In England I have encroached on the time of my colleagues and friends over a long period. Dr Werner Klatt, OBE, has always been kind enough to take an interest in my work and he never tired of explaining to me the technical and economic characteristics of various branches of agricultural activity. My close colleagues at SOAS have been an unfailing source of advice and they will be almost as relieved as I am that this study has finally been completed. Christopher Howe provided me with many Chinese sources, economic statistics and ideas. He believed that I would finish the job and he encouraged me to keep right on until I did so. Robert Ash was particularly helpful with data on Kiangsu and Shanghai and with matters relating to presentation. Michael Hodd generously gave his time to put some of the preliminary statistics I collected at the beginning of the project into manageable order and this helped to convince me that it would be possible for me to handle data for all the provinces in a single study. Peter Ayre advised me on the economic analysis of inequality and instability and was willing to discuss any methodological questions I put to him.

On a more general note, over the years I have been conscious of the long-term intellectual debt I owe to two of my former university teachers. Maurice Beresford, Professor of Economic History at the University of Leeds, first introduced me to the study of agrarian history over 25 years ago. I was immediately captivated by his teaching and have never forgotten either his meticulous attention to historical detail or the importance he attached to field studies. Later,

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when I was a research student at Oxford, I came under the spell of Colin Clark, Director of the Agricultural Economics Research Institute. His breathtaking knowledge of world economic development and his extraordinary ability to use the most fragmentary figures in a meaningful way had a profound effect on my work and subsequently on my approach to Chinese economic studies. I hope that both these great scholars recognise their influence in this book and are not disappointed with the result.

Finally, my wife June, and my children Neil and Ruth, watched the development of the book with interest, and accepted without question the strains on family life imposed by my preoccupation with research. In the winter of 1979–80 they shared with me the rare experience of visiting China – which had absorbed my own interest for twenty years – and I dedicate this book to them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NEWSPAPERS IN CHINESE

<i>AJP</i>	<i>An-hui jih-pao</i> . Anhwei Daily.
<i>CFJP</i>	<i>Chieh-fang jih-pao</i> . Liberation Daily.
<i>CHCHJP</i>	<i>Ch'ung-ch'ing jih-pao</i> . Chungking Daily.
<i>CHCJP</i>	<i>Ch'ang-chiang jih-pao</i> . Yangtze River Daily.
<i>CHDJP</i>	<i>Ch'eng-tu jih-pao</i> . Chengtu Daily.
<i>CHKJP</i>	<i>Che-chiang jih-pao</i> . Chekiang Daily.
<i>CTJP</i>	<i>Ch'ing-tao jih-pao</i> . Tsingtao Daily.
<i>FJP</i>	<i>Fu-chien jih-pao</i> . Fukien Daily.
<i>HAJP</i>	<i>Ha-er-pin jih-pao</i> . Harbin Daily.
<i>HCJP</i>	<i>Hsin Ch'ien jih-pao</i> . New Ch'ien (Kweichow) Daily.
<i>HHJP</i>	<i>Hsin-hua jih-pao</i> . New China Daily (Nanking).
<i>HHNP</i>	<i>Hsin Hu-nan pao</i> . New Hunan Daily.
<i>HJP</i>	<i>Hei-lung-chiang jih-pao</i> . Heilungkiang Daily.
<i>HKWHP</i>	<i>Hong Kong Wenhui Daily</i> .
<i>HONJP</i>	<i>Ho-nan jih-pao</i> . Honan Daily.
<i>HOPJP</i>	<i>Ho-pei jih-pao</i> . Hopei Daily.
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Hsin Su-chou pao</i> . New Soochow Daily.
<i>HUPJP</i>	<i>Hu-pei jih-pao</i> . Hupei Daily.
<i>HWP</i>	<i>Hsin-wen pao</i> . Daily News (Shanghai).
<i>JMJP</i>	<i>Jen-min jih-pao</i> . People's Daily.
<i>KAJP</i>	<i>Kan-su jih-pao</i> . Kansu Daily.
<i>KCJP</i>	<i>Kuei-chou jih-pao</i> . Kweichow Daily.
<i>KJP</i>	<i>Chi-lin jih-pao</i> . Kirin Daily.
<i>KMJP</i>	<i>Kuang-ming jih-pao</i> . Kwangming Daily.
<i>KSIJP</i>	<i>Chiang-hsi jih-pao</i> . Kiangsi Daily.
<i>KWCJP</i>	<i>Kuang-chou jih-pao</i> . Canton Daily.
<i>KWSIJP</i>	<i>Kuang-hsi jih-pao</i> . Kwangsi Daily.
<i>LJP</i>	<i>Liao-ning jih-pao</i> . Liaoning Daily.
<i>NFJP</i>	<i>Nan-fang jih-pao</i> . Southern Daily.
<i>NMKJP</i>	<i>Nei-meng-ku jih-pao</i> . Inner Mongolia Daily.
<i>PKJP</i>	<i>Pei-ching jih-pao</i> . Peking Daily.
<i>SASJP</i>	<i>Shan-hsi jih-pao</i> . Shansi Daily.
<i>SESJP</i>	<i>Shen-hsi jih-pao</i> . Shensi Daily.

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Abbreviations

<i>SHYJP</i>	<i>Shen-yang jih-pao</i> . Shenyang Daily.
<i>SIAJP</i>	<i>Hsi-an jih-pao</i> . Sian Daily.
<i>SINJP</i>	<i>Hsin-chiang jih-pao</i> . Sinkiang Daily.
<i>SNMJJP</i>	<i>Szu-ch'uan Nung-min jih-pao</i> . Szechuan Peasants' Daily.
<i>SZJP</i>	<i>Szu-ch'uan jih-pao</i> . Szechuan Daily.
<i>TCJP</i>	<i>Ta-chung jih-pao</i> . Mass Daily (Shantung).
<i>TJP</i>	<i>T'ien-chin jih-pao</i> . Tientsin Daily.
<i>TKJJJP</i>	<i>T'ien-chin Kung-jen jih-pao</i> . Tientsin Workers' Daily.
<i>TKP</i>	<i>Ta-kung pao</i> . Impartial Daily.
<i>TSINJP</i>	<i>Ch'ing-hai jih-pao</i> . Tsinghai Daily.
<i>TTKP</i>	<i>T'ien-chin Ta-kung pao</i> . Tientsin Impartial Daily.
<i>WHP</i>	<i>Wen-hui pao</i> . Cultural Exchange News.
<i>YJP</i>	<i>Yun-nan jih-pao</i> . Yunnan Daily.

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<i>CCKH</i>	<i>Ching-chi K'o-hsüeh</i> . Economic Science.
<i>CCKL</i>	<i>Ching-chi Kuan-li</i> . Economic Management.
<i>CCYC</i>	<i>Ching-chi Yen-chiu</i> . Economic Research.
<i>CHCC</i>	<i>Chi-hua Ching-chi</i> . Planned Economy.
<i>CHYTC</i>	<i>Chi-hua yü Tung-chi</i> . Planning and Statistics.
<i>CHYTC</i>	<i>Chiao Hsüeh yü Yen-chiu</i> . Teaching and Research.
<i>CKCNP</i>	<i>Chung-kuo Ch'ing-nien pao</i> . Chinese Youth News.
<i>CKNP</i>	<i>Chung-kuo Nung-pao</i> . Chinese Agricultural News.
<i>CKNPTK</i>	<i>Chung-kuo Nung-pao Tseng K'an</i> . Chinese Agricultural News Supplement.
<i>CNP</i>	<i>Ch'ing nien pao</i> . Youth News.
<i>FCY</i>	<i>Fu-chien Chiao-yü</i> . Fukien Education.
<i>HC</i>	<i>Hung-ch'i</i> . Red Flag.
<i>HCS</i>	<i>Hsin Chien-she</i> . New Construction.
<i>HCTC</i>	<i>Hsü-chou Ta-chung</i> . Hsüchow Masses.
<i>HH</i>	<i>Hsüeh-hsi</i> . Study.
<i>HHPYK</i>	<i>Hsin-hua Pan-yueh k'an</i> . New China Semi-Monthly.
<i>HHYK</i>	<i>Hsüeh-hsu Yueh-k'an</i> . Academic Monthly.
<i>HHYP</i>	<i>Hsin-hua Yueh-pao</i> . New China Monthly.
<i>HNY</i>	<i>Hsin Nung-yeh</i> . New Agriculture (Liaoning).
<i>JKYC</i>	<i>Jen-k'ou Yen-chiu</i> . Population Research.
<i>KSUNM</i>	<i>Chiang-su Nung-min</i> . Kiangsu Peasants.
<i>KWSINYTH</i>	<i>Kuang-hsi Nung-yeh Tung-hsün</i> . Kwangsi Peasants' Bulletin.
<i>LS</i>	<i>Liang-shih</i> . Grain.
<i>LSP</i>	<i>Liang-shih pao</i> . Grain News.
<i>NTKTTH</i>	<i>Nung-ts'un Kung-tso Tung-hsün</i> . Rural Work Bulletin.
<i>NYCCTK</i>	<i>Nung-yeh Ching-chi Ts'ung-kan</i> . Agricultural Economics Digest.

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<i>NYCCWT</i>	<i>Nung-yeh Ching-chi Wen-t'i</i> . Problems of Agricultural Economics.
<i>NYCS</i>	<i>Nung-yeh Chih-shih</i> . Agricultural Knowledge (Shantung).
<i>SC</i>	<i>Shih-chien</i> . Practice.
<i>SNM</i>	<i>Hsin-chiang Nung-min</i> . Sinkiang Peasants.
<i>TC</i>	<i>Ts'ai-cheng</i> . Finance.
<i>TCKT</i>	<i>Tung-chi Kung-tso</i> . Statistical Work.
<i>TLCS</i>	<i>Ti-li Chih-shih</i> . Geographical Knowledge.

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[More information](#)*Abbreviations**Encyclopaedia* (1981)*Chung-kuo Pai-k'o Nien-chien 1981* (Chinese Encyclopaedia Yearbook 1981) (Peking, 1981).*FKHP**Chung-hua Jen-min Kung-ho-kuo Fa-kuei Hui-pien* (Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Chinese People's Republic).*HNNY**Hu-nan Nung-yeh* (Hunan Agriculture). Compendium of Hunan Province Agricultural Institute (Peking, 1959).*LSWTCC**Liang-shih Wen-t'i Chin-chie* (Current and Past Grain Problems). Hupei Province Grain Office (Wuhan, 1957).*Mechanisation Bureau**Chung-kuo Nung-yeh Chi-hsie-hua Wen-t'i* (Problems of Agricultural Mechanisation in China). Mechanisation Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture (Paoting, 1958).*NMKTG**Nei-meng-ku tzu-chih-ch'ü Ching-chi ho Wen-hua Chien-she Ch'eng-chiu ti Tung-chi* (Statistics of the Achievements in Economic and Cultural Construction of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) (Peking, 1960).*NPC* (1957)*Chung-hua jen-min kung-ho-kuo ti yi ts'eng ch'uan kuo jen-min tai-piao ta-hui ti ssu tz'u hui-yi hui-k'an* (Compendium of the Fourth Session of the First National People's Congress of the Chinese People's Republic) (Peking, 1957).*NYHTH**Chung-kuo Nung-yeh ho-tso-hua yün-tung Shih-liao* (Historical Materials on the Agricultural Co-operativisation Movement in China). By Shih Ching-t'ing (2 vols., Peking, 1957).*Rational Transport**Liang-shih fen ch'ü ch'an hsiao p'ing-heng ho-li yün-shu* (Rational Transport for Balancing Grain Production and Consumption in Different Areas). Grain Bureau (Peking, 1957).*SNY**Hsin-chiang Nung-yeh* (Sinkiang Agriculture). Sinkiang Agricultural Science Institute (Peking, 1965).*TGY**Wei-ta ti Shih Nien* (Ten Great Years). State Statistical Bureau (Peking, 1959).*WS* (1967) and (1969)*Mao Tse-tung Ssu-hsiang Wan-sui* (Long Live Mao Tse-tung's Thought). Chinese Red Guard Publications (Taiwan Reprints, 1967 and 1969).

Abbreviations

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CIAAA	Central Intelligence Agency. <i>Agricultural Acreage in Communist China 1949–68. A Statistical Compilation.</i> August 1969. Mimeo.
CNS	<i>China News Service</i>
CQ	<i>China Quarterly</i>
FBIS	<i>Foreign Broadcast Information Service</i>
JCRR	Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (US–China)
JEC 1967	<i>An Economic Profile of Mainland China</i>, Studies Prepared for the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, February 1967 (Washington, 1967)
JPRS	<i>US Joint Publications Research Service</i> (translations of Chinese materials), Washington DC.
NCNA	<i>New China News Agency</i>
PAS	<i>Provincial Agricultural Statistics for Communist China.</i> Committee on the Economy of China. Social Science Research Council of the USA (Ithaca, New York, 1969).
PR	<i>Peking Review</i>
SCMM	<i>Survey of the China Mainland Magazines</i> (translations by US Consulate General, Hong Kong)
SCMP	<i>Survey of the China Mainland Press</i> (translations by US Consulate General, Hong Kong)
SWB	<i>Summary of World Broadcasts</i>
Tuan (1981)	<i>People's Republic of China Provincial Total Grain Production 1969–79.</i> Research Notes on Chinese Agriculture, no.2. Francis C. Tuan, International Economics Division, Economics and Statistics Service, USDA (Washington DC, 1981). Mimeo.