



## Aussie earthworms grow fertile business in booming China

### Australian export case study

Australian agribusiness company, The Woods International, is developing agribusiness opportunities in the Western Chinese province of Xinjiang, with a unique and natural liquid fertiliser made from Australian earthworm droppings.

The company's product is now being piloted by one of China's largest agricultural companies, the China Colored Cotton Company.

The China Colored Cotton Company produces 60 per cent of China's coloured cotton and has a goal of producing 30 per cent of the world's coloured cotton by 2018. This represents six million tonnes of cotton each year.

Since coloured cotton requires less pesticides, chemicals, bleaches or artificial dyes, fewer allergies and respiratory problems result from wearing the final product.

Austrade's [Beijing-based](#) Senior Trade Commissioner Alan Morrell said the company's success offered an excellent example of emerging agribusiness opportunities in China.

"Agriculture is a vital contributor to the Chinese economy, accounting for around 11 per cent of GDP and over 40 per cent of employment," Mr Morrell said.

"The ongoing challenges China faces to feed its massive population means great opportunities for Australia's sophisticated agribusiness sector.

"China is expected to produce over 20 million tonnes of fertiliser in 2010, with Austrade estimating the market to be worth approximately A\$5.8 billion.

"Aussie Liquid Fertilizer' is a product which is natural, highly efficient and competes well with chemical fertilisers that are rising in price around the world," Mr Morrell said.

The Woods International Director, Chris Ma, first realised there was an opportunity for liquid fertiliser products in China during a visit in 2003.

"Liquid fertiliser was not popularly used at the time and we saw enormous potential for quality solutions to deliver results in Chinese conditions. So, we established relationships with local farms in Australia and developed a new product," Mr Ma said.

"Our first shipment - seven tons of our earthworm 'Aussie Liquid Fertilizer' product - arrived in 2007, and was trialled on a range of crops across China including tea, cucumber, melons, tobacco, tomatoes, sunflowers, citrus and herbs.

"After attaining the necessary approvals to bring an animal-based fertiliser product into China, we encountered floods, unseasonal snow storms and earthquakes, which badly affected initial trials.

"Despite these challenges we persisted, and outstanding results were achieved with the surviving trial crops," Mr Ma said.

The Woods International then attended several [Austrade agribusiness events in China](#), including a study tour that focused on opportunities in the arid, but agriculturally important, province of Xinjiang. It was the first Australian trade event to the region, focusing on Australia's agribusiness strengths.

The event also took advantage of the Australian pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo 2010, highlighting Australian agribusiness to a range of invited Chinese guests and promoting Australian expertise relevant to China's agricultural challenges.

A much larger field pilot using 'Aussie Liquid Fertilizer' on 10 crops, including further cotton trials, as well as sunflower, water melons, rock melons, tomato, grapes, cucumber, hops, egg plants and chilli, will start in March 2011.



The Woods International's 'Aussie Liquid Fertilizer' helped to produce this healthy chilli harvest in Sichuan, China

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The Chinese agricultural products market is forecast to have a value of A\$602.2 billion by 2014, an increase of 26.5 per cent on 2009.

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