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Management of Official Overseas Trips of Staff in Agri-scientific Research Institutions

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Abstract Taking Tropical Crops Genetic Resources Institute (TCGRI) of Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) as an example, this paper discussed current situation of management of official overseas trips of staff in agri-scientific research institutions, analyzed existing problems, and finally came up with pertinent recommendations.

Key words Agri-scientific research institutions, Official overseas trips, Management, Recommendations

With constant expansion of China's opening to the outside world and further deepening of international cooperation and exchange, international academic exchange, negotiation, and scientific exchanging visits become more and more frequent^[1]. To implement "Go global" and "Bring in" development strategies, more and more sci-tech innovation talents of agri-scientific research institutions go out and extensively carry out sci-tech cooperation and exchange. As effective dissemination means for globalization of agricultural science and technology and important approach of attracting advanced technologies, official overseas trip plays an important role in raising international influence power and academic status of agri-scientific research institutions and cultivating personnel, and it has greatly promoted healthy development and internationalization of China's agri-scientific and technological undertaking. However, with increase of people going abroad, new situations, problems, and conflicts should arouse our high attention. When handling or applying passports (visa) for scientific research personnel, foreign affairs management department of agri-scientific

research institutions encounters many problems, so strengthening management of official overseas trip is brought into schedule. Taking Tropical Crops Genetic Resources Institute (TCGRI) of Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) as an example, we discussed current situation of management of official overseas trips of staff in agri-scientific research institutions, analyzed existing problems, and finally came up with pertinent recommendations.

1 Current situation of official overseas trips

1.1 Constant rise of number of people for official overseas trips With constant development of agricultural science and technology, agri-scientific research institutions need more scientific research personnel going abroad for further study, survey and exchange, overseas training, scientific research cooperation, and sci-tech support for foreign countries, accordingly the number of people for official overseas trips constantly rises, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 General situation of official overseas trips of TCGRI of CATAS in 2004–2013

Year	Conference	Training	Advanced study	Implementing international cooperation project	Sci-tech support for foreign countries	Academic exchange	Total	Comparative growth on moving base //%
2004	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	100
2005	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	200.0
2006	1	2	0	8	2	6	19	475.0
2007	2	1	0	9	1	7	20	105.3
2008	0	13	0	4	1	1	19	95.0
2009	13	0	0	8	1	2	24	126.3
2010	1	6	0	11	4	3	25	104.2
2011	4	2	1	10	4	5	26	104.0
2012	3	2	1	13	4	7	30	115.4
2013	1	4	3	22	3	8	41	136.7
Total	27	30	5	85	22	41	210	

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From Table 1, it can be seen that the number of people for official overseas trips of TCGRI of CATAS constantly rises. In 2005 and 2006, the growth rate reached 100% and 275% separately. Table 1 also indicates that the number of people implemen-

ting international cooperation projects ranked the first place for recent 10 years, accounting for 40.48% of the total number of people for official overseas trips, playing a dominant role in rise of number of people for official overseas trips.

1.2 More and more countries visited With diversification of international cooperation modes, cooperation and exchange countries of scientific research institutions are more and more and spread all over the world, as shown in Table 2. From Table 2, we can see that most visits of TCGRI of CATAS are Asian countries, accounting for 48.10%, the next is Africa, accounting for 24.29%, followed by American countries, accounting for 21.43%. These have certain relationship with major research fields of TCGRI of CATAS. TCGRI of CATAS is engaged in survey, collection, storage, evaluation, innovation and use of tropical and south tropical region germplasm resources based on tropical and south subtropical region of China and facing the world tropical region. Therefore, countries visited are mainly Asian, African, South American countries which are rich in tropical crop resources.

Table 2 Countries and times for official overseas trips of TCGRI of CATAS in 2004 – 2013

Year	Asia	Africa	America	Europe	Oceania	Total
2004	2	0	0	0	0	2
2005	2	0	2	0	0	4
2006	9	3	5	1	1	19
2007	13	4	2	0	1	20
2008	10	5	3	0	1	19
2009	13	4	6	0	1	24
2010	5	10	10	0	0	25
2011	9	6	8	0	3	26
2012	15	12	2	0	1	30
2013	23	7	7	4	0	41
Total	101	51	45	5	8	210

1.3 Diversified visit types and contents Official overseas trips are changing from simple academic exchange and participation of international conferences to overseas training, scientific and technological support, overseas advanced study, and scientific research cooperation. Personnel of official overseas trips are gradually changing from leaders and pace-setters in scientific research to general scientific researchers, which optimizes allocation of personnel of official overseas trips, as listed in Table 3.

From Table 3, we can see that the number of people for official overseas trips with higher title ranks the first place all the time. Among 210 person-times of official overseas trips of TCGRI of CATAS, research fellows are 86 person-times accounting for 40.95%; research associates are 69 person-times, accounting for 32.86%. Collectively, these two professional title researchers account for 73.81% of the total people for official overseas trips. This is closely related to relatively higher academic position and frequent contacts with outside world. Table 3 indicates that although person-time of intermediate and junior title personnel for official overseas trips is low, it gradually rises year by year.

Table 3 Professional title of personnel of TCGRI of CATAS for official overseas trips in 2004 – 2013

Year	Research Fellow	Research Associate	Assistant Research Fellow	Research Intern	Total
2004	1	1	0	0	2
2005	1	1	2	0	4
2006	8	7	2	2	19
2007	9	6	3	2	20
2008	8	6	3	2	19
2009	10	9	4	1	24
2010	10	8	5	2	25
2011	10	9	5	2	26
2012	11	10	6	3	30
2013	18	12	7	4	41
Total	86	69	37	18	210

1.4 Inconsistent visiting time Since the purposes and countries of official overseas trips are different, visiting time is varied. For administrative visiting, implementing general international cooperation projects, and participating international conference, official overseas trips generally last 5 to 7 days; for implementing support for developing countries, official overseas trips generally last one to 3 months; for overseas training, official overseas trips generally last 2 to 6 months; as visiting scholars, official overseas trips generally last one year; for scientific and technological support, official overseas trips generally last one to 2 years.

1.5 Difficult management of overseas study With increase of people for official overseas trips, constant expansion of countries, and diversification of types of official overseas trips, the management of overseas study becomes more and more difficult. Activities and time of people for official overseas trips are difficult to control and highly free. Facing foreign customs and cultural environment, sometimes people have difficulty in controlling their thought. Especially when they stay a long time, the management is more difficult.

2 Specific problems of official overseas trips

2.1 Application for official overseas trips When applying temporary official overseas trips, it is required to specify team name, visiting purpose, visiting country or region, team members, staying days, and source of fund in detail. Besides, it is required to make application to their own departments and superior foreign affairs competent authorities, and ask instructions of institution leaders as necessary. Only after leaders of relevant management departments sign approval opinion, may passport visa officer handle the next procedure for going abroad. However, in specific work, some applicants are unclear of application procedure or some applicants think their qualifications are higher, so they do not handle the procedure according to requirement of relevant management department. This causes many troubles to passport visa officer.

2.2 Application for approval document of official overseas trips When applying approval document of official overseas

trips, passport visa officer should provide acceptable invitation letter for superior competent authorities and attach official documents and relevant files for official overseas trips. However, in actual work, many invitation letters are not written in the official form of inviter or the visiting purpose and reason are simple, but inviting members and days are many because foreigners do not know specific difference between private and official overseas trips. As a result, application documents are unacceptable, and then superior competent authorities will ask applicants to submit acceptable files again. Repetitive submission of application files will lead to long time of application.

2.3 Application of passport and visa for official overseas trips and Exit – Entry Permit for trip to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan According to requirements of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, applicants of passport and visa for official overseas trips and Exit – Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan should submit original approval document, acceptable invitation letter, and copies of applicants' ID card. However, in actual handling procedure, applicants should submit different files according to their status, visiting countries, visiting purposes, and visiting time. If visiting sensitive countries or regions, it is required to ask opinion of the consulate in advance. For personnel for overseas training, it is required to submit approval document of expert bureau of the visiting country, approval document of superior competent authority or registration file; visa de retour is required for visiting Colombia; original Portuguese invitation letter should be submitted for visiting Brazil; face-to-face visa is required for visiting the United States.

2.4 Application of visa and visa signature Before submitting visa and visa signature application, it is required to prepare relevant files and documents. It is recommended to download relevant files from the website of Foreign Affairs of Hainan Province, prepare relevant application documents according to visa requirements of corresponding country. Applicants should know such requirements in advance or ask inviters to provide relevant documents, including ID card of inviters, business license of inviting organization, certificate of organization code, hotel order, and acceptable invitation letter, *etc.* However, since some applicants are unclear of these application procedures or passport visa officer is inexperienced, visa officer fails to urge applicants to submit the above files. As a result, it leads to failure to apply passport visa. After the application documents are accepted, it is impossible to obtain visa due to the shortage of time. In consequence, applicants fail to go abroad or the visiting time has to be delayed and the visiting task fails to be completed on time. After receiving application of scientific researchers for official overseas trips, the passport visa officer should firstly get to know relevant information of visiting country, find out visa requirements of visiting country, provide relevant information for applicants, urge them to prepare related documents or ask the inviter to provide related documents and calculate schedule, to promptly and effectively handle passport and visa.

2.5 Application for permit of official trip to Taiwan In view of the problems left over by history between mainland and Taiwan, the procedure for application for permit of official trip to Taiwan is relatively complicated and needs approval of many superior competent authorities, including approval of applicant institution, local public security department, provincial public security bureau, Taiwan Affairs Office of the province, and Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council. If the trip involves some leaders, it also needs report to provincial general office and Provincial Party Committee Organization Department. The invitation letter for official trip to Taiwan should specify the trip purpose, time, duration, and fund source, but should not contain words such as Republic of China, Taiwan Civil Government, or country. Also, the trip schedule should not include free activity or visit of sensitive site, like Martyr's Shrine. These need passport visa officer handling all matters in advance.

3 Recommendations for management of official overseas trips of staff in agri-scientific research institutions

With constant development of agricultural science and technology and construction and development trend of agri-scientific research institutions, there will be more and more scientific research personnel going abroad for further study, survey and exchange, overseas training, scientific research cooperation, and foreign assistance of science and technology, accordingly the number of people for official overseas trips constantly rises. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to strengthen management of official overseas trips of staff in agri-scientific research institutions. At present, it is recommended to strengthen management of official overseas trips of staff in agri-scientific research institutions from planned control, strict examination and approval, and strengthening organization leadership and education.

3.1 Carrying out planned control Personnel for official overseas trips should make scientific and reasonable plan according to actual need of work. Scientific research institutions should declare the official overseas trip plan of next year through foreign affairs department, report to relevant departments and committees, and the superior competent authorities will issue target of official overseas trips. Those failing to declare the next year plan are generally not allowed to go abroad, to maximally reduce the arbitrariness and blindness of official overseas trips.

3.2 Rigorously reinforcing examination and approval procedure for official overseas trips The examination and approval should strictly accord with *Several Regulations on further Strengthening Official Overseas Trips* [General Office of the CPC Central Committee: No. 19 of 2008] and *Management Methods for Temporary Official Overseas Trips* (Department of Administration and Politics of Ministry of Finance: No. 516 of 2013). If task of overseas trips and budget of overseas trip fund are not examined and approved, it is not allowed to arrange official overseas trips. For party members and cadres, it is particularly required to take strict requirement, management and supervision. For teams, days,

routes, fund budget and expenditure standard in violation of stipulated criteria, it is recommended to seriously handle relevant organizations and responsible persons and investigate responsibilities of relevant leaders.

3.3 Strengthening organization leadership and implementing the leader responsibility system It is required to strengthen organization leadership, implement the leader responsibility system, and make clear responsibility. The one who dispatches official overseas trips shall take the responsibility. Workers of relevant management department should study foreign affairs management policies in depth, get familiar with policy details, grasp various provisions and requirements, apply theories in actual work, and management official overseas trips from the source. Besides, it should strengthen the supervision. Before the official overseas trips, leaders should speak face to face with persons going abroad, make clear relevant foreign affairs management rules and regulations, set forth specific requirements, and ask them to make written promise. This is an effective guarantee for management of official overseas trips and also the essential part for bringing into play benefits of overseas trips to the maximum extent^[3].

3.4 Strengthening discipline education of official overseas trips Strengthening discipline education of official overseas trips is an effective means of improving quality of official overseas trips^[2]. The discipline education of foreign affairs can take centralized training, key person talk or individual reminding before official overseas trips. It is required to strictly implement the team leader responsibility system and make clear responsibility and obligations of team leaders. Also, it is recommended to make well preparation before official overseas trips, and get fully understanding and knowledge of basic national conditions, bilateral relations, and safety situation of the visiting countries. Besides, it is not allowed to change staying time, visiting routes, or participate in any activity and conference irrelevant to visiting tasks without approval. In foreign affair activities, it is required to maintain vigilance, keep state secrecy, strictly observe foreign affairs discipline and confidential rules and regulations, and ask instructions and make

report, never do what he thinks is right.

3.5 Management after returning to homeland After returning to homeland, personnel of official overseas trips should submit a detailed survey report and passport to their foreign affairs management department, and make public the survey information on related website. Their institutions may organize special lecture and share the survey achievements as necessary. To reimburse the expenses, the personnel should fill in the expense account approved and signed by the leader responsible for the official overseas trips. Various reimbursement documents should indicate expense items, date, quantity, and amount in Chinese and have signature of the person handling the matter. Besides, it should be attached with the Air Transport E-ticket Itinerary, copy of approval letter for official overseas trips, copy of passport (Exit – Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macau), and visa page (exit-entry records).

4 Conclusions

With constant expansion of China's opening to the outside world and further deepening of international cooperation and exchange, the official overseas trip will be a long-term task. Making proper plan, examination and approval, and management after returning homeland for official overseas trips will play a more important role in the state, collective and individual, and also play a positive role in scientific and technological diplomacy.

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