

A Look Into Another World

People have different ideas of a proper way of life. Across the world, there are a variety of cultures that practice a broad spectrum of farming. The Chinese and American cultures do not only differ in their way of life, but also in their basic farming practices.

Zongren Kuang, a visiting professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications at Texas Tech University, has had a first-hand look at farming in China.

Growing up on a farm in the Jiangxi Province of China, Kuang said American and Chinese agriculture have a few main differences that are apparent to him.

One difference is the amount of land that Chinese farmers use.

Dr. Norman Hopper, Coordinator for Special Projects in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, agreed with Kuang that it is evident that the sizes of Chinese farms are much smaller than those here in the U.S.

“The biggest difference is economy of scale,” Hopper said. “Over here, farmers have at least a thousand acres, some more. In China the average is 2-3 acres.”

The difference of farm sizes that the Chinese culture provides leads to another significant difference in the two countries’ practices. Mechanization in China is far behind that seen in the U.S. in terms of farming, according to both Hopper and Kuang.

“Land per farmer is very small, so they cannot use a lot of big machines,” Kuang said. “So, Chinese farming is not adapted.”

In China, the closer to the larger cities that farms are, the more mechanized the farms become. In the western region of the country,

away from the major cities, they do not have many farms that use the equipment most U.S. farmers use today.

Chinese traditional agriculture practices have been used for thousands of years and are usually environmentally friendly and sustainable but are not as efficient.

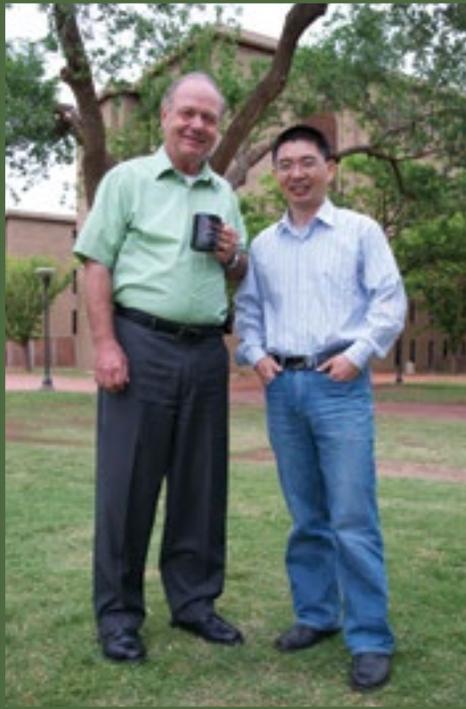
Kuang said the last significant difference is the education level of the producers. He said most Chinese farmers are educated for eight years of their lives. They also have different social and cultural backgrounds, usually having little business experience.

Although there are many differences, Chinese farming traditions run in many families. Many young farmers though will move away from their farming communities to find a job in the bigger cities, just as many do in the U.S.

“In the rural area there are very little young farmers to do ag works,” Kuang said. “Most of them move out.”

Hopper said the first time he went to China in 1996, the economy was changing so much and most young farmers were moving to the city. This meant that the agriculture industry was starting to lose the next generation of farmers.

From both views of Chinese agriculture, it is evident that what we know as daily farming is something very different in a world away. 



Hopper and Kuang join compare memories of Chinese agriculture.

 Jessica Lopez | Pearland, Texas

