

Prof. Dr. Zulfiqar Ali
Vice Chancellor, UAF



Prof. Dr. Jiang Ping'an
President, XJAU

BIMONTHLY BULLETIN

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, FAISALABAD

Cultivating Connections: A Decade of CI-UAF's Legacy and Vision



Prof. Dr. Zhou Changming
Chinese Dean



Dr. Saddam Hussain
Pakistani Dean

In February 2014, in the presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping and then Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain, Mdm. Xu Lin, Director General of the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Director of Hanban, China, and Mr. Syed Tariq Fatemi, then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, signed an agreement in Beijing to jointly establish the Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (CI-UAF), which became the third Confucius Institute in Pakistan. The Chinese host university for CI-UAF is Xinjiang Agricultural University (XJAU). In July 2014, the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF) and XJAU signed an agreement to establish CI-UAF. Its official launch in February 2015 was marked by a plaque unveiling ceremony in Islamabad, jointly presided over by Chinese Foreign Minister Mr. Wang Yi and then-Pakistani National Assembly Speaker Mr. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. This event highlighted CI-UAF as a cornerstone of China-Pakistan educational cooperation. The Institute has now emerged as a key center for Chinese language education, cultural exchange, and academic cooperation between both countries.

CI-UAF has earned remarkable recognition on global platforms in the past decade. It is honored as one of the top 100 Model Confucius Institutes worldwide and distinguished as an Outstanding International HSK Testing Center in 2021 and 2023. With an active presence in several cities, CI-UAF has built a vibrant network of academic outreach.

Since its inception, CI-UAF has enrolled over 22,500 students, conducted 156 cultural activities attended by more than 56,000 participants, and organized 141 HSK/HSKK examinations with over 12,000 candidates. The Institute also introduced the YCT Examination, further expanding its examination portfolio. CI-UAF also offers elective courses under the code CHIN-405, "Learn Chinese with Me," which have been taught to over 7,500 students from various faculties of UAF.

Beyond education, the Institute plays a pivotal role in scholarship facilitation. More than 600 students have secured scholarships through CI-sets. These include eight (08) two-week cultural camps in China, 90 students for a semester- or year-long scholarships, and 77 admissions to postgraduate degree programs. CI-UAF remains committed to promoting Chinese language and culture, supporting CPEC-related initiatives, and building a deeper China-Pakistan community with a shared future.



The institute plans to expand its educational and cultural programs, enhance its examination offerings, and strengthen research collaborations to address agricultural challenges in both countries. With its agricultural roots and academic vigor, CI-UAF continues to serve as a vital bridge between Pakistan and China, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.



AGREEMENT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONFUCIUS SETS/SUB-CAMPUSES

BETWEEN

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, FAISALABAD

&

CHOLISTAN UNIVERSITY OF VETERINARY AND ANIMAL SCIENCES BAHAWALPUR

GHAZI UNIVERSITY, DERA GHAZI KHAN

THE UNIVERSITY OF FAISALABAD

13th JUNE 2025



CI-UAF IGNITES GROWTH: THREE NEW SUB-SETS LAUNCH ACROSS PUNJAB

The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (CI-UAF) has significantly expanded its presence in Punjab with the establishment of three new sub-sets/campuses. Formal agreements were signed with the University of Faisalabad (TUF), Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (CUVAS, Bahawalpur), and Ghazi University (GU, Dera Ghazi Khan).

A signing ceremony was held in the Syndicate Room at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF). Leading the signatories were Prof. Dr. Zulfiqar Ali, Vice Chancellor UAF/ Chairman, CI-UAF Board of Directors; Prof. Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of Ghazi University; and Prof. Dr. Ammanullah Malik, Rector of The University of Faisalabad. The event was also attended by key officials, including Dr. Saddam Hussain, Local Dean/Vice Chairman, CI-UAF, Dr. Muhammad Tehseen Azhar, Director External Linkages, UAF, Dr. Abid Mehmood Alvi, Registrar, GU, Dr. Musarat Iqbal, Host Director, CI-GU Sub-set Dr. Rao Kamal, Director External Linkages, CUVAS; and Prof. Dr. Zahir Ahmad Zahir, Director ORIC, TUF.

The CI-UAF remains dedicated to advancing Chinese language education, fostering cultural exchange, and strengthening academic and research cooperation between China and Pakistan. The launch of these three sub-sets marks a pivotal step in amplifying the Institute's reach and bolstering initiatives under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This expansion will directly address the growing demand for Chinese language proficiency in Pakistan and further cement the enduring bonds of friendship and collaboration between the two nations.

VICE CHANCELLOR PROF. DR. ZULFIQAR ALI PRESENTED UAF'S VISION FOR ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL COLLABORATION WITH CHINA IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT XJAU



Professor Dr. Zulfiqar Ali, Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), presented UAF's vision for strengthening agricultural cooperation with China in a thematic seminar "Digital Talent Development, New Quality Productivity, Agricultural Green Innovation and Sustainable Development," held on May 13th during the China-Central Asia Industrial and Technological Research Conference 2025 at Xinjiang Agricultural University (XJAU). This event focused on the technological frontiers and practices in the fields of green agricultural technology, smart agriculture, digital economy to enable agricultural industry, and ecological synergy in arid regions, and discussed international cooperation and digital talent training under the multi-entity interplay mechanism. Highlighting UAF's position as Pakistan's top agricultural university and its strong existing ties with Chinese partners like XJAU, Prof. Dr. Ali proposed concrete initiatives. He formally suggested establishing a "China Agri-Tech Center at CI-UAF" to serve as a hub for demonstrating and adapting Chinese smart farming and water-saving technologies for Pakistan. He further advocated for joint research with XJAU on critical issues like cotton genomics and desert farming models, joint skill development programs, and an annual "China-Pak Agri-Innovation Forum" for policy, industry, and academic linkages. He also emphasized Pakistan's potential to supply high-demand agricultural products (like mangoes, citrus, and Basmati rice) to China.

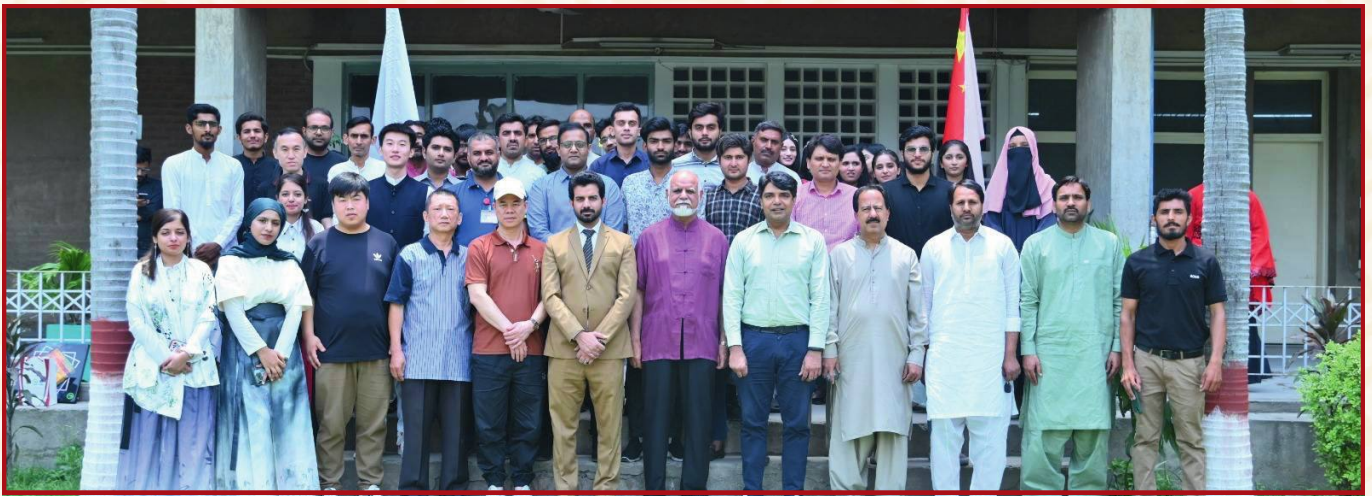


His presentation underscored UAF's proactive role in advancing practical cooperation under CPEC/BRI, aligning with the seminar's broader goals shared by leaders from China, Central Asia, and Russia to foster green innovation and sustainable agricultural development through regional collaboration.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE UAF CELEBRATED THE CHINESE DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL



The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (CI-UAF) celebrated the traditional Chinese Dragon Boat Festival on June 2, 2025. The event witnessed an enthusiastic turnout, especially from students deeply interested in Chinese language and culture. Mr. Chen Diyi (Director, Times Ceramics Pvt. Ltd), Mr. Umer Saeed (Registrar, UAF; Member BoD), Chinese alumni at UAF, and CI-UAF alumni graced the event, while Prof. Dr. Zhou participated virtually.



The event included national anthems of both countries, Chinese songs and a bilingual song performance by both Chinese and Pakistani students, showcasing cross-cultural harmony. A dramatic skit depicting the history and legend of the Dragon Boat Festival captivated the audience, offering both entertainment and valuable insight into the cultural significance of the occasion. An engaging chopstick challenge added a fun twist to the celebration. The event concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by the Vice Chairman/Dean of CI-UAF, distribution of souvenirs and a festive lunch, cementing cultural bonds.

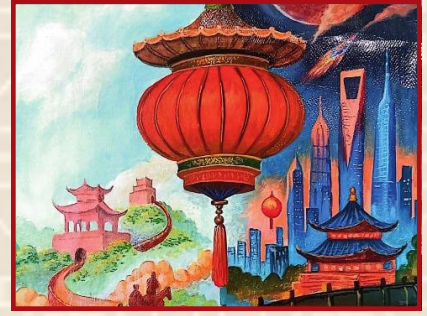


CI-UAF STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN 2025 CHINESE BRIDGE COMPETITION



Students from the Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad showcased exceptional talent in the prestigious 2025 Chinese Bridge (汉语桥) competition organized by China's Ministry of Education through its Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC). This premier international event cultivates global appreciation for Chinese language and culture among non-native speakers. Three outstanding CI-UAF representatives advanced to the international round excelling in singing film dubbing and traditional calligraphy categories. Their submitted performances earned Excellence Performance Awards from global judges recognizing remarkable artistic skill and dedication to cultural exchange. This achievement underscores our institute's commitment to nurturing cross-cultural ambassadors. The Chinese Bridge platform empowers learners worldwide to demonstrate linguistic abilities deepen cultural understanding and strengthen international bonds through artistic expression.

CI-UAF CELEBRATED INTERNATIONAL CHINESE LANGUAGE DAY WITH VIBRANT POSTER COMPETITION



The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (CI-UAF) marked International Chinese Language Day on April 22, 2025, with a dynamic celebration attended by nearly 200 faculty, students, and distinguished guests. The event opened with the national anthems of Pakistan and China, symbolizing the enduring friendship between both nations. Professor Zhou Changming, Chinese Dean of CI-UAF, addressed participants via video link, highlighting the event's role in promoting Chinese language learning and strengthening cultural bonds. A centerpiece of the celebration was the announcement of the "Gifts Across Time and Space" poster competition. From over 70 submissions, 15 entries were recognized for exceptional creativity. Professor Zahir Ahmad Zahir and Dr. Saddam Hussain presented awards to the winners, while Dr. Shakeel Anjum and Dr. Haroon Rashid served as competition judges. In the closing remarks, Professor Dr. Zahir closed by stressing this platform showcases student talent while deepening Chinese cultural understanding. He urged all to build bridges of friendship through Confucian teachings. The celebration thus reinforced Sino-Pak educational ties and laid foundations for future cultural collaborations through artistic expression and cross-cultural dialogue.

1ST PRIZE

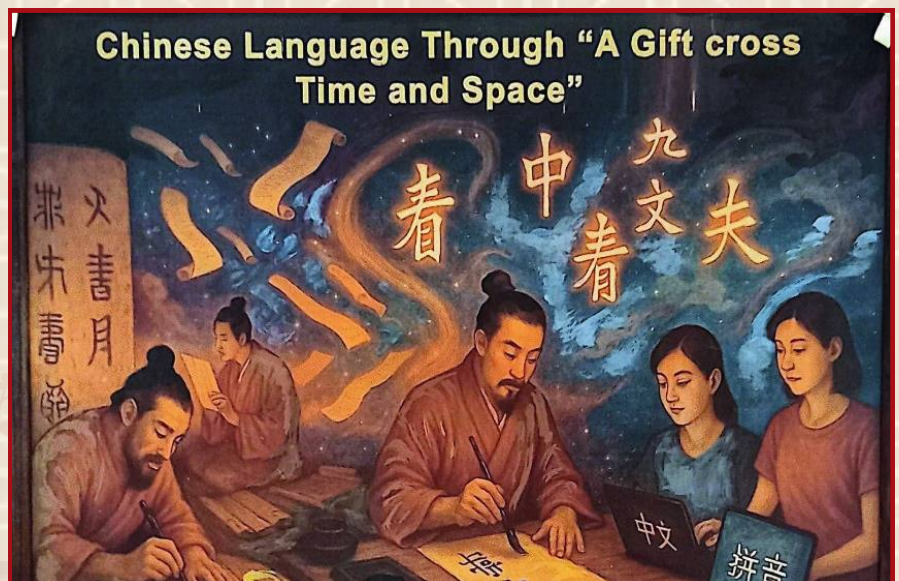
Muhammad
Ibrahim
(Pakistan)

2ND PRIZE

Arfa
Chaudhry
(Pakistan)

3RD PRIZE

Malek Swid
(Syria,
studying in
Pakistan)



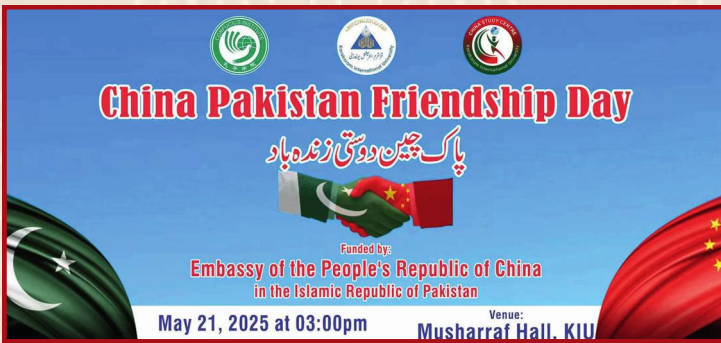
CI-UAF SUBSET AT KIU CELEBRATED PAKISTAN CHINA FRIENDSHIP DAY

A graceful and well-organized event was held at Karakoram International University (KIU) to mark Pakistan-China Friendship Day. The event was jointly organized by CI-UAF Subset and the China Study Centre at KIU. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Attaullah Shah, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. According to the Public Relations Department of KIU, the event was attended by a large number of university faculty, administrative officers, and students.

While addressing the audience, Prof. Dr. Attaullah Shah emphasized the significance of Pakistan-China relations and said: "The Pakistan-China friendship is an everlasting bond of trust and mutual respect that has stood strong for over 70 years. Both nations have always supported each other in difficult times. The people of Pakistan consider China their best friend, and China's title of 'Iron Brother' for Pakistan reflects the depth of this relationship."

The event also featured speeches from Dr. Sajjad Haider (Director, International Office), Dr. Faqir Muhammad (Director, China Study Centre) and Dr. Qamar Abbas (Provost), and Dr. Arif Hussain (Advisor to the Vice Chancellor). The speakers highlighted the objectives of celebrating this day and praised China's development, attributing it to the hard work and determination of its youth.

They urged Pakistani youth to play an active role in the progress and prosperity of their nation. During the celebration, students paid rich tribute to the Pakistan-China friendship through performances, speeches, and creative expressions, showcasing their affection and appreciation for this deep-rooted bond. The event truly reflected the essence of the everlasting Pakistan-China friendship and was declared a memorable occasion by the participants





EXPLORE CHINA WITH CI-UAF

Fully Funded Summer & Winter Camps!

"An unforgettable gateway to language, adventure, and global friendship!"

The Confucius Institute at UAF invites students to experience China's culture and landscapes through our fully funded 2-week Summer/Winter Camps! Since 2015, over 200 students have embarked on this transformative journey, fostering Pakistan-China friendship while visiting iconic sites like Beijing, Shanghai, and the Karakoram Highway.

Program Highlights:

- ✓ All-inclusive: Accommodation, meals, in-country travel & sightseeing
- ✓ Unique Routes: Travel via Karakoram Highway (Khunjerab Pass) or direct flights
- ✓ Cultural Immersion: Calligraphy, language workshops, and historical tours
- ✓ Full Safety: CI-UAF staff-supervised journeys

Eligibility:

- Current CI-UAF students
- HSK Level 1+ (passed within 2 years)
- No China visit in past 3 years

(Preference: Higher HSK levels)

🕒 **Summer Camp 2025** selections have been completed. Follow the CI-UAF website/social media pages for upcoming student camps in China.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN CHINA **FOR PAKISTANI STUDENTS**



The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad is pleased to present key scholarship programs in China. These opportunities—spanning agriculture, STEM, language studies, and research—offer full or partial funding for Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD studies. Explore the pathways to academic excellence in China below:

1. Chinese Government Scholarship (CSC)

- **Coverage:** Full tuition, accommodation, monthly stipend (3,000–3,500 RMB), medical insurance.
- **Programs:** Bachelor’s, Master’s, PhD, postdocs.
- **Link:** <https://www.campuschina.org>
- HEC Pakistan Portal:
- <https://hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/iao/CGSP/Pages/default.aspx>

2. CAS-ANSO Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full funding + stipend (Master’s: 3,000 RMB/month; PhD: 6,000–7,000 RMB/month).
- **Programs:** Master’s, PhD (STEM/Agriculture focus).
- **Link:** <http://www.anso.org.cn/programmes/talent/scholarship/>

3. GSCAAS Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full tuition, stipend, medical insurance.
- **Programs:** Bachelor’s, Master’s, PhD, postdocs.
- **Link:** https://gs.caas.cn/en/admission/guide_for_admission/index.htm

4. MOFCOM Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full tuition + stipend + 1-year Chinese language training.
- **Programs:** Master’s/PhD (Agriculture Economics, Rural Development).
- **Link:** <http://en.csc.edu.cn/Laihua/scholarshipdetailen.aspx?cid=97&id=2070>

5. China Belt and Road Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full tuition + stipend (3,000–3,500 RMB/month).
- **Programs:** Bachelor’s, Master’s, PhD.
- **Link:** https://www.campuschina.org/content/details3_74776.html

6. HIT International Students Scholarship (Chinese Language)

- **Coverage:** Tuition waiver + stipend.
- **Programs:** Bachelor’s/Master’s/PhD in Chinese Language.
- **Link:** <https://studyathit.hit.edu.cn/18367/list.htm>

7. Jiangsu Provincial Government Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Up to 30,000 RMB/year (tuition + stipend).
- **Programs:** Bachelor's, Master's, PhD.
- **Link:** <http://en.studyinjiangsu.org/scholarships/>

8. Shanghai Municipal Government Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full/partial tuition waiver + stipend.
- **Link:** http://study.edu.sh.gov.cn/en/apply_8.aspx

9. Hubei Provincial Scholarship

- **Coverage:** 15,000–35,000 RMB/year.
- **Link:** http://admission.hzau.edu.cn/EN/scholars_hips.htm

10. SWU President Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Tuition + stipend (1,100–1,700 RMB/month).
- **Programs:** Bachelor's, Master's, PhD.
- **Link:** https://admissions.swu.edu.cn/Scholarships/SWU_President_Scholarship.htm

11. China Link Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Stipend (3,000–3,500 RMB/month) + tuition/accommodation.
- **Programs:** Short-term research (1–12 months).
- **Link:** <https://www.csc.edu.cn/studyinchina/scholarshipdetailen.aspx?cid=97&id=2307>

12. Confucius Institute Scholarship

- **Coverage:** Full tuition + stipend + accommodation.
- **Programs:** Bachelor's/Master's/PhD in Chinese Language.
- **Link:** <http://cis.chinese.cn>



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTANI FACULTY IN CHINA

Following are the specialized programs for Pakistani academics, researchers, and professionals. These initiatives foster research collaboration, skill development, and innovation in agriculture, STEM, and policy fields.

1. POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAMS

1. CAS President's International Fellowship (PIFI) – Postdoctoral Track

- **For:** Early-career researchers (under 40).
- **Duration:** 1–2 years.
- **Coverage:** 200,000 RMB/year stipend, Research funding, Travel allowance
- **Link:** <https://fellowship.cas.cn/en/>
- <https://english.ucas.ac.cn/index.php/join/job-vacancy>

2. China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (CPSF)

- **For:** Recent PhD graduates.
- **Coverage:** Monthly stipend and competitive grants (up to 150,000 RMB).
- **Host Institutions:** Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), & other top universities.
- **Link:** <http://jj.chinapostdoctor.org.cn>

3. TYSP Talented Young Scientist Program

- **Duration/Focus:** Project based opportunities (1–3 years) as Post-doc/Visiting Scholar
- **Coverage:** Attractive salary, Accommodation, & Research Support
- **Link:** <https://tysp.cstec.org.cn/en/jobs.aspx>

2. VISITING SCIENTIST PROGRAMS

3. CAS-TWAS Visiting Scientist Fellowship

- **Duration:** 1–12 months.
- **Coverage:** Monthly stipend, Accommodation, Research support
- **Eligibility:** PhD holders from developing countries.
- **Link:** <https://twas.org/opportunities/fellowships/visiting>

4. MOST High-End Foreign Expert Program

- **For:** Senior scientists/professors.
- **Coverage:** 15,000–30,000 RMB/month, Travel + insurance
- **Focus:** Joint labs, technology transfer.
- **Link:** <https://fis.most.gov.cn/>

3. JOINT RESEARCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

5. NSFC-PSF Joint Research Project

- **Scope:** Agriculture, biotechnology, water resources, climate change.
- **Funding:** Up to 1.5 million RMB/project (3 years).
- **Partners:** Requires PI from China (NSFC-eligible) + Pakistan (PSF-eligible).
- **Link:** <https://www.nsf.gov.cn/english> | <https://www.psf.gov.pk>

6. Most International Partnership Program

- **Focus:** Agri-tech, food security, renewable energy
- **Funding:** 500,000–2 million RMB + equipment grants.
- **Duration:** 2–4 years.
- **Link:** <https://fis.most.gov.cn/>

7. CAS-PAS Joint Research Workshops

- **Purpose:** Seed funding for Sino-Pak teams (max. 10 members).
- **Coverage:** Travel, accommodation, logistics (200,000 RMB/workshop).
- **Apply:** Via Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) + Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS).
- **Link:** <https://www.cas.cn> | <http://www.paspk.org>

8. CAS-TWAS Joint Research Grants

- **For:** Early-career researchers from Pakistan.
- **Funding:** Up to 300,000 RMB for equipment/data collection.
- **Themes:** Crop resilience, soil health, precision farming.
- **Link:** <https://twas.org/opportunities/research-grants>

9. CPEC Joint Research Centers

- **Administered by:** China-Pakistan Joint Cooperation Committee
- **Areas:** Dryland agriculture, Cross-border pest management, Agri-drones/remote sensing
- **Funding Scale:** 5–15 million RMB/center (infrastructure + operations).
- **Link:** <http://cpec.gov.pk/academic-collaboration>

10. Silk Road Agricultural Fund (MoA China)

- **Projects:** Seed technology transfer, livestock genomics, irrigation AI.
- **Grants:** 1–3 million RMB (pilot implementation phase).
- **Eligibility:** Consortiums (min. 1 Chinese + 1 Pakistani university).

11. Belt and Road University Network (BRUN)

- **Scope:** Short-term researcher exchanges + pilot projects.
- **Funding:** Travel + subsistence (50,000–150,000 RMB).
- **Link:** <https://www.brun.org.cn/en>

5.SHORT-TERM TRAINING & WORKSHOPS

12. MOST Agricultural Technology Training (MOA)

- **Duration:** 2–8 weeks.
- **Topics:** Advanced Agricultural Technologies (e.g. Hybrid crop technology, Smart irrigation, Post-harvest management)
- **Coverage:** Fully funded (flights, accommodation, meals).
- **Link:** <http://www.moa.gov.cn/>



13. FAO-China South-South Cooperation Workshops

- **For:** Agri-policy makers, researchers.
- **Projects:** Soil health, pest control, aquaculture.
- **Apply via:** Pakistan Ministry of National Food Security.
- **Link:** <https://www.fao.org/china/en/>

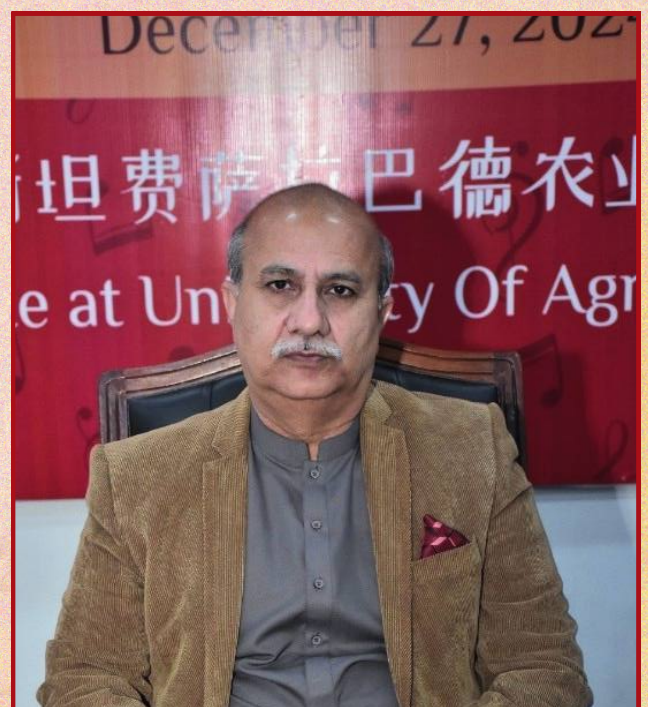


CI-UAF HONORED DR. ZAHIR'S LEGACY, WELCOMES NEW DEAN DR. SADDAM HUSSAIN



The Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad honored the distinguished service of Prof. Dr. Zahir Ahmad Zahir upon his retirement on April 30, 2025, following a transformative five-year tenure as Pakistani Dean/Vice Chairman (2020-2025). Under Dr. Zahir's leadership, CI-UAF achieved global recognition as a Top 100 Model Confucius Institute Worldwide. He elevated the institute's academic profile by strengthening Chinese language studies programs and cultural exchanges. His legacy was cemented by the completion of the state-of-the-art Confucius Institute Building and establishing CI-UAF as a premier HSK testing hub. At a farewell ceremony, colleagues paid tribute to his bridge-building impact, noting: "He didn't just build programs—he built enduring bridges between Pakistan and China." Succeeding this legacy, CI-UAF welcomes Dr. Saddam Hussain as the new Local Dean.

An alumnus of China's Huazhong Agricultural University (Wuhan), Dr. Hussain brings deep-rooted Sino-Pak collaboration expertise, having spearheaded several China-funded projects. As a Director of the Silkroad Biohealth Agricultural Industry Alliance at Northwest A&F University and collaborations with several Chinese Universities, he maintains robust ties with academia & researchers. Dr. Hussain emphasized that he would leverage his connections to strengthen cultural-academic exchanges, promote Chinese language education, accelerate joint research, and harness CPEC and Belt & Road opportunities to elevate UAF's global impact. "As CI-UAF begins this new chapter, the institute reaffirms its commitment to advancing Sino-Pak friendship through language, innovation, and shared growth—honoring Dr. Zahir's foundations while embracing Dr. Hussain's dynamic roadmap for the future." "The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials."





CI-UAF WELCOMED THE DELEGATION FROM ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE LAHORE

CI-UAF welcomed a delegation from Alliance Française Lahore, led by Director Mr. Fabrice Disdier and Deputy Director Mr. Imran Arif. Dr. Saddam Hussain, Pakistani Dean of CI-UAF, hosted the delegation. Following a warm reception, Dr. Hussain provided the guests with a guided tour of the CI-UAF's facilities.



The visitors highly praised the Institute's significant progress and commended its impactful initiatives dedicated to fostering cross-cultural exchange between Pakistan and China. The visit concluded with an exchange of souvenirs.





UAF DELEGATION PARTICIPATED IN HORTICULTURE WORKSHOP AT HUAZHONG AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

A delegation of prominent Pakistani horticulture experts - Dr. Ahmad Sattar Khan, Dr. Adnan Younis, Dr. Raheel Anwar, and Dr. Muhammad Azam - attended the China-Pakistan Horticulture Research Workshop 2025 hosted by Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU) in Wuhan from April 21-25, 2025. Prof. Yunjiang Cheng, Dean of HZAU's College of Horticulture and Forestry Sciences, welcomed the delegation, underscoring the strong, three-year partnership between HZAU and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in agriculture and talent exchange. He emphasized the workshop's importance for tackling global challenges like food security and climate change through horticultural research. The event successfully facilitated knowledge exchange and collaborative discussions, with both sides expressing satisfaction and anticipation for deepened future cooperation between the institutions.



UAF VETERINARY EXPERTS ATTENDED AT PRESTIGIOUS AGROBIODIVERSITY CONGRESS IN CHINA AS INVITED SPEAKERS

Distinguished veterinary scientists Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shahid Mahmood and Prof. Dr. Rao Zahid Abbas from the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) represented Pakistan as esteemed invited speakers at the high-profile 3rd International Agrobiodiversity Congress (IAC 2025) in Kunming, China (May 20-24, 2025). The Congress, a significant global platform co-hosted by Yunnan Agricultural University (YNAU) and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), featured their expert insights.



Building on this prestigious engagement, Dr. Abbas and Dr. Shahid embarked on strategic visits to leading Chinese institutions. They toured the Animal Care Hospital and held dynamic discussions with faculty and postgraduate researchers at Kunming University of Science and Technology (Faculty of Life Science and Technology) and Yunnan Agricultural University (College of Veterinary Medicine). These focused sessions actively explored concrete avenues for collaborative research and joint grant applications under the strategic "Belt and Road" Initiative.



OPINION

SOWING PROSPERITY: ROOTING CHINESE INNOVATION IN PAKISTAN'S AGRICULTURAL FUTURE

“Dr. Saddam Hussain, CI-UAF”

Pakistan's agricultural foundation—the bedrock of our economy and food security—faces unprecedented strain. The stark reality is reflected in the current year's overall agriculture GDP growth remained at just 0.56%; it is only thanks to a resilient 4.72% growth in the livestock sector that the net rate stayed positive. Alarming 2025 data further reveals a 13.5% decline in the crops sector, with cotton yields plummeting by 30.7%, maize by 15.4%, and wheat by 8.9%. Blessed with fertile soil and abundant water resources, the sector paradoxically grapples with climate change scorching crops, erratic monsoons, depleted soils, devastating post-harvest losses, and market failures pushing farmers to the brink. A population grows, transforming agriculture from a subsistence struggle into an engine of prosperity and food security is not just desirable – it is imperative. Yet, 1,200 miles north, China transformed deserts into breadbaskets, offering a powerful blueprint through its remarkable journey from scarcity to global agricultural powerhouse. This transformation, underpinned by massive R&D investment, infrastructure revolution, value addition, farmer empowerment, and disciplined policy, provides tangible lessons for Pakistan. The strategic lever for adaptation lies in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the deep cultural bridges fostered by institutions like the Confucius Institute. However, technology and infrastructure alone are insufficient. China's success was deeply rooted in a cultural shift embracing scientific farming, efficiency, and market orientation. Here, the Confucius Institute at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (CI-UAF) emerges as a vital engine for sustainable change. First, by strengthening language and cultural ties, specialized "Agri-Mandarin" programs can empower researchers, farmers, and entrepreneurs to decipher technical manuals, negotiate joint ventures, and access China's digital farming ecosystem. Second, through launching the China Agri-Tech Center at CI-UAF—a dynamic hub featuring an Agri-Tech Demonstration to showcase China's agri-technologies; a CPEC Agri-Export Masterclass partnering with Alibaba and Chinese logistics giants to train entrepreneurs in e-commerce, cold-chain logistics, and export compliance; and facilitate Joint Research initiatives tackling Pakistan's cotton yield crisis and rehabilitating Punjab's Thal & Cholistan regions using Xinjiang's desert farming models.



Third, CI-UAF can drive youth empowerment and agripreneurship through skill development courses and technological transfer programs. Deepening agricultural cooperation under CPEC moves decisively beyond roads and ports. China's recent donation of 278 advanced agricultural equipment worth 30 million yuan—including tractors, seeders, and combine harvesters—exemplifies this commitment. This addresses a critical gap: affordable, scalable mechanization tailored to Pakistan's predominantly small landholdings. Unlike bulky Western machinery, Chinese technology offers practical advantages, with mini-combine harvesters costing 50% less than European equivalents. Crucially, this is a localization blueprint; expanding the transfer and local manufacturing of specific, adaptable machinery—such as rice transplanters, precision seed drills, laser land levelers, small-scale threshers, mini harvestors, and solar-powered irrigation systems—is vital. Pakistani engineers are already adapting some of these machines and rigorously testing their performance under diverse local soil, climate, and cropping patterns; this essential step ensures suitability before widespread adoption. This technology transfer is paramount and must expand. Establishing joint R&D initiatives focused on developing climate-resilient varieties for field crops like wheat, rice, and cotton, alongside promoting widespread adoption of water-saving irrigation (drip/sprinkler) and precision farming tools (drones, sensors), is essential.



Simultaneously, CPEC must catalyze critical agri-infrastructure: integrating modern cold chains to slash post-harvest losses; leveraging CPEC's digital backbone to create platforms connecting farmers directly to buyers for fairer prices; prioritizing joint ventures for modern irrigation manufacturing, canal lining, small reservoirs, and nationwide adoption of efficient systems for water security; and facilitating access to finance by linking Pakistani farmers and agri-businesses with Chinese financial institutions.



Finally, by strengthening academic-industry synergy, CI-UAF can act as a conduit for partnerships between Pakistani researchers and Chinese agribusinesses; while conducting an annual China-Pak Agri-Innovation Forum may convene policymakers, researchers, and corporate leaders to align CPEC's agricultural agenda with grassroots needs. These initiatives will also enable China to systematically expand the adaptation of its proven technologies across Pakistan's unique agricultural landscape. The path forward demands urgent, coordinated action from policymakers in both nations. China must accelerate impact by scaling technology transfers and funding joint R&D hubs under CPEC's agricultural framework. Simultaneously, Pakistan must prioritize agri-tech in CPEC's next phase—streamlining customs for farm implements, subsidizing agri initiatives, and integrating climate-smart tools into national extension services. As bilateral cooperation deepens—evidenced by \$1 billion annual agricultural trade, expanded personnel exchanges, and industrial projects—a fundamental revamping of Pakistan's agricultural research is inevitable. Provincial and federal research institutions must pivot towards problem-oriented, focused research, urgently expanding collaboration with countries like China. The government must provide dedicated, substantial funding to fuel this critical research transformation. Concurrently, reforming institutions like agricultural extension services, regulatory authorities, and credit providers is essential, backed by unwavering accountability. The federal government's initiative to send 1,000 young Pakistani scientists to China marks significant progress, yet broader, sustained policy commitments remain imperative. The Confucius Institute stands ready to convene these critical dialogues, translating shared challenges into tangible, actionable solutions.



As Confucius wisely taught, "the essence of knowledge is to apply it." CPEC's physical infrastructure connects cities, but its agricultural promise connects lives. By harnessing CPEC as a vital channel for cutting-edge, localized technology and essential infrastructure, and by cultivating deep cultural and educational bridges that enable genuine knowledge transfer and foster a modern agrarian mindset, Pakistan can root Chinese innovation in its own fertile soil. This collaborative model, leveraging Pakistan's immense potential (global rankings: 4th in sugarcane, 5th in cotton, 8th in wheat, 9th in rice) and China's agricultural sci-tech contribution rate exceeding 63%, is not about blind imitation, but the intelligent adaptation of proven principles. It is Pakistan's imperative to cultivate resilience against climate shocks, unlock prosperity for rural communities, and secure a food-abundant future. The seeds of collaboration are sown; through unwavering partnership and decisive action, we can ensure they flourish into a harvest of sustainable national growth. The time to act is now.

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