

POLICY REVIEW



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Bigger green role for private firms

More sectors to be opened up to market competition, including petroleum, chemical engineering and natural gas

By XU WEI
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China has pledged greater support for private businesses in the energy saving and environmental protection sectors, with measures to level the playing field and offer more favorable industrial policies as the country ramps up efforts to meet its pollution fighting goals.

A guideline issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce and four other government departments on May 21 said the government will create a market environment that is fairer and more open for private businesses in the two sectors.

The country will open up more key sectors, including petroleum, chemical engineering, electricity and natural gas, to introduce market competition and enable greater

involvement by third-party businesses in energy control and the treatment of pollutants, the guideline said.

Local authorities must offer equal treatment to private and State-owned businesses in the development of environmental protection infrastructure such as sewage and garbage treatment facilities, the disposal of medical and other hazardous waste, and the construction of recycling centers, it added.

The guideline also pledged continued efforts to refine bidding mechanisms, with authorities prohibited from setting up restrictive regulations that bar the entry of private businesses.

Local authorities should refrain from offering competitive advantages — in the form of strategic cooperation agreements — to businesses during bidding for projects.

An NDRC official said in a news

release that most market players in the environmental protection and energy saving sectors are small, medium- or micro-sized businesses, which are more susceptible to the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guideline is intended to solve problems faced by private businesses in the market environment, support policies and information requirements, the official said.

Local authorities must ensure the full enforcement of the guideline and extend more help to private businesses in the sectors so they can survive the pandemic and grow further, the official said.

The authorities also pledged in the guideline to offer better and more stable industry support policies, with measures to support the involvement of private businesses in the country's major projects.

Private businesses will receive support to take part in the campaigns to prevent and control air, water and soil pollution, and incentives to participate in the construction and renovation of infrastructure, treatment of polluted water bodies and seawater

desalination projects.

The guideline urged local authorities to fully implement tax breaks offered to businesses, including favorable corporate tax and value-added tax policies.

The government will scale up support of green finance for private businesses. For businesses facing problems accessing capital, authorities will encourage capital management companies, investment funds and State-owned capital to help alleviate their financial difficulties, the guideline said.

It also highlighted the need to offer aid to struggling businesses equipped with core technologies and having good business prospects, and enabling more private businesses to innovate their business models.

Fan Yuansheng, president of the China Association of Environmental Protection Industry, said the challenges faced by private businesses include a market environment that is not open and fair enough and a lack of sound management and risk control measures.

Other challenges include a lack of innovative capacity, difficulties in

obtaining funding and big debts, he said.

Fan said the guideline includes specific items to safeguard the interests of private businesses.

"Private businesses are never fearful of market competition, and they are good at thriving in competition," he said.

The guideline will promote the opening up of markets and prevent new monopolies, Fan said, with provisions barring practices that excluded private businesses during government bidding processes to further promote fair market competition.

He added that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deficiencies in the country's environmental protection infrastructure, and the involvement of private businesses will help bolster the development of projects for treating medical waste, sewage and other garbage.

The total output value of China's energy saving and environmental protection sectors reached 7 trillion yuan (\$981.5 billion) in 2018, and is expected to exceed 8 trillion yuan this year, according to the association.

Policy digest

Reform and opening-up key to meeting targets

China will advance reform and opening-up with greater strength as part of its efforts to meet this year's targets and tasks for economic and social development, an executive meeting of the State Council emphasized on Friday.

The meeting, chaired by Premier Li Keqiang, decided on the division of responsibilities in executing the key tasks in the Government Work Report, which was approved at the closing meeting of the third session of the 13th National People's Congress on Thursday.

The meeting urged greater reform to overcome difficulties and boost development, as it helps to unleash market vitality and public creativity, according to a statement released after the meeting.

Deepening reform of government functions, and fostering a market-oriented and world-class business environment governed by a sound legal framework and promoting fair competition will feature prominently on the government work agenda, those at the meeting said.

The meeting also called for the extensive application of practices used to reach out to and meet the needs of businesses during the response to COVID-19, and for restrictions to be removed unless they are needed for disease containment purposes.

More initiatives will be taken to pursue opening-up to cultivate a big market for the whole world that is attractive to more foreign investors.

The meeting also called for full appreciation of the complexity and severity of the current situation and close monitoring of the evolving dynamics of the global COVID-19 and economic situations.

Problems that emerge during policy implementation should be carefully analyzed and properly addressed to inform improvements to existing policies.

Farm law enforcement requirements detailed

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has updated a catalog that outlines requirements and functions in agricultural law enforcement.

The 2020 Guiding Catalog for Integrated Administrative Law Enforcement Items in Agriculture aims to standardize administrative penalties in the agricultural sector, the ministry said Thursday.

The catalog lists 251 penalties set by laws and administrative regulations in agriculture, as well as warnings and fines set by departmental rules.

According to the catalog, a unified operating manual, based on real needs, should be formulated to instruct efficient, integrated administrative law enforcement in agriculture that is performed with openness and transparency.

The manual should define work routines, time limits and codes of conduct when dealing with administrative law enforcement, it said.

XINHUA-CHINA DAILY

POLICY RESPONSE

Efforts to promote migrant worker employment stepped up

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A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for agriculture and rural affairs, finance, and education, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

8 million migrant workers find jobs near hometowns

More than 8 million migrant workers who went back to their hometowns during the COVID-19 pandemic had found jobs nearby by the end of last month, a video



conference was told on Friday.

The meeting was held jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

Migrant workers have faced a difficult employment situation due to the effects of the pandemic, with many stranded in their hometowns, where local companies have few jobs to offer.

The departments have stepped up efforts to promote the implementation of various policies and measures to help ease the difficulties, the meeting heard.

Local authorities are being asked to carry out employment surveys in rural areas and to provide employment information for migrant workers in a timely manner.

Guideline to guarantee well-being of disabled

China will take measures to guarantee the basic well-being of people



with disabilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a guideline published on May 25.

The guideline, issued jointly by the China Disabled Persons' Federation, the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, the Ministry of Finance and two other departments, included specific requirements for guaranteeing the basic livelihood and employment of people with disabilities as well as pushing forward with poverty alleviation work related to them.

Local authorities should pay close attention to and get an accurate

understanding of the basic living conditions of disabled people who have been affected by the pandemic, guarantee the basic livelihoods of households with disabled people, and help institutions that provide nursing services for the disabled to resume operations, the guideline said.

It also required local authorities to take various measures to maintain the employment of people with disabilities, including negotiating with employers to maintain their working relationship with disabled employees and promoting online employment.

The guideline also called for greater assistance for people with disabilities in the country's rural areas.

Enrollment policies have not changed, says ministry

China will press ahead with policies dealing with students' enrollment in nearby schools as part of efforts to ensure the balanced development of

compulsory education, a Ministry of Education official said on May 19.

"In regard to nearby enrollment, the MOE's policies remain unchanged and will be carried forward with great strength," Tian Zuyin, head of the ministry's education inspection department, told a news conference in Beijing.

He said the ministry is pushing forward with the standardized construction of schools and the balanced development of compulsory education to ensure that schools in every district are equipped to offer high-quality and balanced education.

That makes it unnecessary for parents to select a school, as their children can just go to the closest one, Tian said.

Balanced development of compulsory education generally refers to efforts to narrowing inter-regional, rural-urban or interschool gaps in terms of education conditions and quality.

Crackdown on illegal use of agricultural chemicals

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has launched a crackdown on the illegal use of chemicals and additives to ensure food safety.

The administration said in a notice issued on Wednesday that the campaign, to last through December, will focus on vegetables, fruits, poultry, eggs, pork, beef, mutton and aquatic products. It will target violations of preservative use and the use of illegal chemicals or unauthorized drugs and pesticides.

The ministry has told local authorities to take strong measures, including unannounced inspections, to better regulate farm production.

