

# Agro-business centres along CPEC route

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By Amin Ahmed

**F**EDERAL agricultural institutions have found tremendous potential for the development of an agro-based industry along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and have identified at least eight 'agro-business centres' along the corridor's route.

A comprehensive package of cooperative initiatives and projects covers key areas like connectivity, information network infrastructure, energy cooperation, industries and industrial parks, tourism and financial cooperation.

Experts from the National Agricultural Research Centre, the Pakistan Agricultural Research Centre and the National Agricultural Research Centre, along with officials from the food ministry, have worked out a blueprint for the agro-business centres.

The document has been submitted to the Planning Commission, which will oversee the development and implementation of the CPEC projects from 2015 to 2030.

private sector could be attracted to set up small scale processing units and facilities for storage and packaging.

The Wet Mountain Corridor — spreading over Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra and the adjoining areas — produces fruits, vegetable, livestock and dairy and poultry products. The plan proposes expansion in the area under fruit cultivation through subsidies, soft loans and zero taxes.

The Barani Lands Corridor touches the area from Attock to Mianwali and Chakwal and grows commodities like groundnut, canola, mustard (edible oil), olive, honey, tunnel vegetables and livestock.

The Sandy Desert (Thal Corridor) — mainly the Faisalabad zone — is rich in agro-commodities and its crops include gram, wheat, pulses, millet, sorghum, guar, vegetables and fruits.

The proposed Northern Irrigated Corridor — covering the areas of Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur — has a potential market for

According to National Agricultural Research Centre Director-General Dr Muhammad Azeem, about 20 agricultural commodities are grown in the different agro-ecologies along the CPEC route. He says a consensus has emerged that with the setting up of the agro-business development centres, Pakistan would be able to enter the Chinese market with finished agricultural products, besides add more value to its own commodities.

The proposed eight corridors — which start from Gilgit, subsequently cover Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan and culminate at Gwadar — are the High Mountain Corridor, Wet Mountain Corridor, Potohar Corridor,

crops like wheat, pulses, cotton, sugarcane, rice and fruits such as mango, watermelon and dates, besides vegetables, livestock and dairy.

The proposed Southern Irrigated Corridor passes through Kashmir, Shikarpur, Jhal Magsi and Khuzdar, where a variety of agro-commodities are marketed.

Another area identified in the proposed plan is to be known as the Sulaiman Belt Corridor (Rod-Kohi Belt). It is rich in livestock, crops, vegetables, fruits and medicinal herbs, and it passes through Rajanpur and touches Kashmir up to Khuzdar.

The Dry Western Mountain Corridor, touching exclusively parts of Balochistan, is famous for its dry fruits, fresh fruits like





Sandy Desert (Thal Corridor), Northern Irrigated Corridor, Southern Irrigated Corridor, Sulaiman Belt Corridor, and the Dry Western Mountain Corridor.

pomegranate, and sizable livestock population. It has been proposed that pack houses and cold storages be set up there in phases in an integrated

In the proposed High Mountain Corridor in the Northern Areas, Pakistan produces a wide range commodities, including fresh and dry fruits, livestock, fish, vegetables, wheat, maize and medicinal herbs.

Public sector investment is needed here to improve the existing irrigation system. Besides, new schemes for water harvesting, establishment of fruit nurseries, training workers in fruit harvesting, cutting post-harvest losses and providing soft loans for modern horticultural business enterprises are also needed. The

approach for the whole value chain.

This includes reorienting and improving production facilities so that the products meet international quality requirements and compliance.

A case study by the Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Board for the establishment of a cool chain system estimates the reduction of post-harvest losses, market price equilibrium and enhancement of exports by both value and volume. It says a 25pc reduction in post-harvest would save Rs9bn per year. ■