

Former Cochran Fellow Opened Supermarket Chain Stores in Shanghai, Beijing Featuring U.S. Products

May 2010

In 1996, Cui Yi Xiong spent three weeks in the United State learning about U.S. food retailing practices, food companies, and supermarket management techniques. The training was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Cochran Fellowship Program. Mr. Cui took supermarket management courses at Cornell University and Arizona State University, attended the joint Food Marketing Institute/National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Food Show in Chicago, Illinois, and visited food companies and retail stores, such as Costco and Wal-mart and food producers and distributors in Arizona and California.



**Cui Yi Xiong in his Hong Mei City Shop Supermarket chain store located in Gubei area, Shanghai.
Photo credit: Wang Yike**

The training paid off handsomely for Mr. Cui, who had one small grocery store at the time that stocked a few imported food products. After the Cochran training, Mr. Cui used the concepts he learned to gear his grocery store primarily toward fresh and imported food products that appeal to expatriates. "I started to import food products directly from the United States," said Mr. Cui. "I also realized that if I had my own farm I could assure consumers that their food was safe from farm to fork. The training was a real eye-opener for me."

Today, City Shop is one of the largest high-end supermarket chains in Shanghai with nine retail outlets and one in Beijing. More than 85 percent of City Shop's products are imported. Each store carries nearly 3,000 American food and non-food items. Last year, total sales reached \$44 million.

Mr. Cui also realized his dream of growing his own fresh, safe food. He owns the City Shop farm in Hongwei Village, in the outskirts of Shanghai, which produces more than 140 different vegetables and herbs and distributes them to his stores, as well as to other retail and food service outlets. Mr. Cui also serves as

Vice Director of the Shanghai Chain Store and Franchise Association.

The Cochran Program helped Mr. Cui strengthen and enhance his trade links to the United States. A recently held three-week American Food Festival at City Shop retail outlets,

which was organized by the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office at the American Consulate in Shanghai, sold almost \$1-million worth of U.S. agricultural products.

The Cochran Program is administered by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. It provides U.S.-based agricultural training opportunities for senior and mid-level specialists and administrators from the public and private sectors of middle-income and emerging markets. Training programs are designed and organized in conjunction with U.S. universities, other USDA or government agencies, agribusinesses or consultants and cover a wide-range of topics, including agricultural trade, marketing, and management; agribusiness development; animal, plant, and food sciences; or extension services.

Since its inception in 1984, the Cochran Program has provided U.S.-based training for more than 13,500 international participants from 121 countries. The program is named for U.S. Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi who envisioned providing training and support to help developing nations improve their agricultural systems and strengthen and enhance trade links with the United States. Funding for the program is provided by the U.S. Congress.