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Mapping and Assessing Exiting and Potential Financing Instruments and Mechanisms that Support Local Biodiversity Actions

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Mapping and assessing existing and potential financing instruments in China is essential to support sub-national Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) implementation and promote nature-positive development. As part of Output of the project of INTERACT-Bio, this work contributes to piloting innovative finance instruments, developing investment cases aligned with ecological and economic priorities, and informing a step-by-step guide for local governments which is Guide to Biodiversity Financing for Cities and Regions. The mapping also serves as a key input for training relevant staff in China's pilot city-regions, helping them identify suitable financing options. By enhancing project preparation and access to biodiversity finance, including three pilot projects in China, the initiative supports replicable, scalable models for local biodiversity action.

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I. General information





Financing green initiatives is currently a hot topic. Financing green initiatives is currently a hot topic. Financing for biodiversity has become an urgent issue for both the public and private sectors as the world faces biodiversity loss. This urgency has been heightened since the Convention on Biological Diversity was agreed upon, particularly with the promotion of the Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022. Achieving sustainable biodiversity development and financing for biodiversity are challenges that both sectors must address collaboratively.

In China, biodiversity conservation has been integrated into the green finance taxonomy. Additionally, various financial products and biodiversity and ecological financing mechanisms are being explored and implemented. Given China's specific context, numerous innovative and practical policies and mechanisms have been developed.

This report will map and assess two parts:

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- potential financing instruments, including biodiversity-related finance policies and regulations.
- financing mechanisms, including related policies and regulations.



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II. Financing instruments and products





Based on cases and implementations worldwide, financial instruments for biodiversity include biodiversity-relevant subsides, Intergovernmental transfers, ecological fiscal transfers, green bonds, green loans, green credit, green insurance, payment for ecosystem services, public-private partnerships, biodiversity offsetting, conservation trust funds, blended finance. These can be categorized into traditional financing instruments and innovative financing instruments.

2.1 Financing instruments policies and regulations

Policies and regulations concerning financing instruments for biodiversity conservation play a crucial role in multilevel governance and career development. In 2016, the "Guidelines on building a green financial system" released by seven ministries and commissions, advocated for the development of green credit, green bonds, green

funds, green insurance, and environmental rights transactions. These guidelines aimed to support local green finance development and international cooperation.

Reflecting on these guidelines and guiding the development of related industries, several finance taxonomy catalogues have been established, including those for biodiversity conservation. Examples include the "Guide to green credit (year of 2012)", "Projects supported by green bonds catalogues (year of 2021)", "Guide to green low carbon transition industries catalogues (year of 2024)" and so on. Biodiversity-related projects and industries are categorized under ecological conservation, restoration, and development in both the green bonds and green low carbon transition industries catalogues. These efforts focus on biodiversity conservation, natural habitat conservation and management, and addressing natural environmental issues.

As the issuance of green bonds progresses rapidly, several guides and principles have been launched, including the green bonds issuing guide (2015), supporting green bonds development guidance (2017), and China green bonds principles (2022). The green bonds catalogue applies to green enterprise bonds, while the Green Bonds Issuing Guide is relevant for the rating certification of green financial bonds, green corporate bonds, and green debt financing instruments for non-financial enterprises. The China Green Bonds Principles regulate the use of raised funds, project evaluation and selection, raised funds management, and information disclosure duration, aiming to unify domestic green bond standards with international ones.

From an ecological and environmental perspective, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment launched a "Guide on Entering Reserve Pool of Ecological and Environmental Financial Support Project (Trial) " in 2022. This guide seeks to stimulate financial investment and strengthen precise support for pollution prevention and control efforts.

2.2 Green credit and green loans

In China, biodiversity conservation is primarily supported by green credit. Green credit accounts for about 90% of green financing, compared to the lower shares of green funds, green bonds, and green insurance. However, green credit has focused less on biodiversity projects and more on new energy manufacturing and projects and services supporting energy-saving and environmental protection. In the field of biodiversity, green credit mainly supports natural conservation engineering, natural protection area construction, and ecological restoration engineering. Traditional methods include syndicated loans and liquidity loans to meet the demands of ecological conservation and restoration projects.









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Compared with these traditional ways, the implementation of the green credit policy illustrates the power of collaboration between the Environmental Protection Bureau and local banks, drives many creative instruments on loans. This partnership demonstrates how China's green credit policy and finance can be harnessed to enforce environmental regulations and foster a culture of responsibility in the corporate sector. China's green credit policy acts as a catalyst, inspiring firms, particularly those reliant on external financing, to actively address water pollution. The policy's long-term constraints compel businesses to prioritize prevention at the source, leading to a shift away from end-of-pipe treatments. This focus on sustainable practices showcases the policy's effectiveness in driving environmental responsibility.

From the bank's perspective, expanding the scope of collateral and optimising the credit process can improve the credit access conditions for biodiversity conservation entities. This instrument is appropriate to the projects with resident or tourism fees, charges and taxes. Banking institutions typically support biodiversity conservation projects by accepting charging permits, guarantees, and other forms of collateral.

2.2.1 Case Studies: Cabon sink loan

Deqing Rural Commercial Bank has introduced an innovative series of loans focused on wetland carbon sinks. These include the Wetland Carbon Sink Worry-free Loan, Wetland Carbon Sink Shared Wealth Loan, and Enterprise Transition Carbon Sink Loan. These initiatives target both sides of production and demand related to carbon sinks. The loans are designed to support various projects such as wetland ecological restoration, renovation and enhancement of scenic areas, transitioning farmers affected by the "retreat from fishing to farming" policy in wetlands, and facilitating the low-carbon transformation of high-carbon companies purchasing wetland carbon sinks. This coordinated approach aims to promote biodiversity conservation effectively.

2.2.2 Case Studies: Ecological Credit Evaluation

In Zhejiang, the "Two Mountains Bank" ecological credit evaluation system has been established. The concept of "Two Mountains" stems from a national-level initiative that emphasizes the value of "clear waters and green mountains as valuable as mountains of gold and silver" in the Chinese context. Local governments have partnered with rural commercial banks and other entities to launch financial products like the "Two Mountains Loan" and "GEP Ecological Value Loan". These products are based on ecological credit as a foundational criterion, offering preferential conditions for financial credit.

2.2.3 Case Studies: Multiple financial and loan products

In Jiangsu, Bank has introduced innovative green financial group products that address various challenges related to biodiversity. These include pioneering domestic products like the "Environmental Protection Loan," "Jiangsu Carbon _ 7 _ Loan," and "Green Innovation Combination Loan." These diverse financial products aim to bridge the funding gap for biodiversity conservation and offer solutions for other industries grappling with biodiversity-related financial issues.

Furthermore, recognizing the long-term and low returns associated with biodiversity protection projects, Jiangsu Bank has adopted an "ecological restoration + industrial operation" financing model for subsidence land resulting from coal mining. This model has led to the creation of integrated environmental restoration and tourism parks, effectively safeguarding biodiversity and other ecological resources in subsidence areas. This financing model exemplifies a typical Ecological Environment-oriented Development (EOD) approach, highlighted in the section on Financing Mechanisms.









III. Financing mechanisms





China has established a multi-level ecological financing mechanism led by the government. The main source of funds for biodiversity conservation in China is still government fiscal expenditure, with the proportion of private and international funds remaining relatively low. Therefore, China has actively explored combining ecological protection with financial mechanisms and launched a market-oriented ecological financing mechanism driven by policy incentives. This mechanism aims to facilitate the participation of funds from multiple departments, focusing primarily on Ecological Environment-oriented Development mode (EOD), ecological compensation mechanisms, and ecological product value realization mechanisms.

3.1 Ecological Environment-oriented Development (EOD) mode

The construction of the Ecological Environment-oriented Development (EOD) mode was implemented through pilot projects proposed by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the China Development Bank. In 2022, the General Office of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment issued the "Guide on Entering Reserve Pool of Ecological and Environmental Financial Support Project (Trial)". This guide encompasses projects utilizing the EOD mode, the public-private partnership (PPP) model, and other market-oriented methods aimed at promoting and directing financial investments towards significant ecological and environmental protection projects.

3.2 Ecological compensation mechanism

The ecological compensation mechanism is an innovative measure by China. In 2016, the General Office of the State Council recently issued the "Guidelines on Improving the Ecological Protection Compensation Mechanism", which clarified that a stable investment mechanism and a compensation mechanism for raising funds through multiple









pathways will be established. In 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Guidelines on Deepening the Reform of the Ecological Protection Compensation System" which explores diversified compensation methods. In 2024, "Regulations governing ecological protection compensation" was by Premier of the State Council and launched. This regulation cover fiscal horizonal compensation, regional vertical compensation, marketing mechanisms, and provisions for guarantee and supervision management.

3.3 Ecological product value realization mechanism

For the ecological product value realization mechanism, in 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Guidelines on Establishing and Improving the Ecological Product Value Realization Mechanism". These guidelines aim to promote the development of ecological environmental protection and restoration, as well as the management and development of ecological products. They propose increasing support for green finance to encourage the private sector to explore models such as "ecological asset permits and interests mortgage + project loan". This approach supports improvements in the ecological environment and regional development of green industries. Furthermore, the mechanism encourages banking institutions to enhance medium to long-term loan support for ecological product operators and developers, thereby reducing financing costs and improving the quality and efficiency of financial services.

At the local government level, it encourages government financing guarantee institutions to provide financing guarantee services to qualified ecological product operators and developers. Through this mechanism, both the public and private sectors explore pathways and models for ecological product asset securitization.

In 2021, the "Guidelines of the General Office of the State Council on Encouraging and Supporting Social Capital to Participate in Ecological Protection and Restoration" clarified the policy measures provided for private sector to participate in ecological protection and restoration. These measures include planning and control, incentives for property permits, resource utilization, fiscal and tax support, and financial backing.







IV. Mapping for Biodiversity Instruments





Own-source revenues

Taxes

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Resources Tax: It is a tax levied on the exploitation and use of natural resources. The taxable items includes mineral resources, water resources, forest resources and other resources.

Tourism/user fees

These mainly include tickets fees, entrance fees, concession fees, licenses or permits and user fees.

Biodiversity-relevant subsides

Biodiversity-relevant subsides derived from central financial subsides and local financial subsides. The catagories related to biodiversity are vital ecological protection and restoration, water ecological governance and stream governance, Forestry and grassland protection and restoration funds, etc. managed and issued by multiple departments or ministries.



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Loan from commecial bank

The China Bijie Weining branch of Industrial and Commercial Bank: For the "Caohai North shore rain collection area of vegetation restoration project" provided 620 million yuan of credit fund support, accounting for 79.09% of the entire project fund.

Syndicated loan/consortium loan

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- China Development Bank (CDB), together with nine other banks, including Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Bank of Tianjin, supported ecological protection projects in the northern mountainous areas of Tianjin.
- Loans from Asian Development Bank(ADB) & French Development Agency (AFD): Hunan South Dongting Lake Wetland Ecological Restoration and Sustainable Development Project(Starting from 2024)
- Loans from ADB & CDB: Fujian Xianyou Mulan River Basin Integrated Ecological Improvement and Environmental Management Project (2022-2029)
- Loans from ADB & KfW Bankengruppe: Anhui Huangshan Xin'an River Ecological Protection and Green
 Development Project
- Qingdao Bank: Secured a landmark \$150 million Blue syndicated loan with the support of the International Finance Corporation (IFC). It's first Blue finance investment in China. The Blue Loan is an innovative financing instrument whose funds are earmarked to serve ocean-friendly projects and important clean water conservation projects. The landmark \$150 million financing package includes \$40 million from IFC's own account and \$110 million in parallel loans from the Asian Development Bank, the German Investment and Development Company, and the French development agency, Investment for Economic Cooperation.

Equity/rights and interests mortgage/pledge loan

- Carbon Emission Rights Pledge Loan
- Forest Tenure Rights Pledge Loan
- Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) Future Income Rights Pledge Financing
- Pollution Discharge Rights Mortgage Financing
- Intellectual Property Rights Pledge Loan
- Forestry Carbon Sink Pledge Loan
- Forest Land Easement Income Rights Pledge Loan
- Energy Use Rights Pledge Loan
- Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) Income Rights Pledge Loan
- Public Welfare Forest Compensation Income Rights Pledge Loan
- Water Conservancy Project Property Rights Mortgage Loan
- Ecological Project Income Rights Pledge Loan
- Ecological Trademark Rights Pledge Loan
- Ecological Patent Rights Pledge Loan
- Other Green Rights and Ecological Asset-Based Pledge Financing Products
- Pledge of fee rights for specific ecological assets

Fund

Shandong Green Development Fund: The Shandong Green Development Fund leverages financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the German Development Bank (KfW), and the French Development Agency (AFD). The fund primarily supports climate mitigation initiatives, which comprise 75% of its portfolio, through direct investments and the establishment of sub-funds. These initiatives include renewable energy, green buildings, sustainable urban transport, and energy efficiency projects. The remaining 25% is allocated to climate adaptation efforts, targeting areas such as coastal protection, flood prevention, drought-resilient agriculture, and urban heat island mitigation through greening initiatives.



Green loans

Bank+local governments

Industrial Bank "Environmental Loan": The "Environmental Loan" is a financing product jointly developed by the Industrial Bank Hefei Branch, the Anhui Provincial Department of Finance, and the Anhui Provincial Department of Environmental Protection, in collaboration with three other partner banks. This initiative targets small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs) in Anhui Province that demonstrate high environmental credit ratings. By leveraging financial risk compensation funds as a credit enhancement mechanism, the product encourages commercial banks to extend credit support to environmental protection enterprises. The funding is directed toward activities such as pollution prevention and control, ecological protection and restoration, resource recycling, the use of new and renewable energy, industrial energy efficiency improvements, and the broader development of the environmental protection industry.

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Loan rates

By linking loan pricing (interest rates) to key low-carbon technical indicators through a floating interest rate mechanism, enterprises are incentivized to pursue low-carbon transformation, green development, and emissions reduction.

In one notable example, Rabobank, together with 21 other international banks, formed a consortium to provide COFCO International with a US\$2.1 billion sustainability-linked loan. The interest rate on this loan is tied to the company's performance against specific sustainability targets, including environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics as well as traceability indicators for agricultural products. If all targets are achieved, the company receives a financial incentive in the form of an interest rate rebate.

Financing institution issussing green bonds

- In 2018, Fudian Bank issued green financial bonds, part of which was allocated to environmental projects such as the ecological restoration of Yilong Lake and the dredging of Dianchi Lake.
- In 2019, the Macao Branch of the Bank of China issued a biodiversity-themed green bond with a total value equivalent to 1.8 billion RMB. The proceeds supported biodiversity conservation initiatives, including domestic ecological demonstration projects, mountain ecosystem restoration, and the development of national forest reserves. This issuance drew significant attention to biodiversity-themed green debt.
- In 2020, the Bank of China became the first global commercial bank to issue a blue bond, marking a milestone in ocean-focused sustainable finance.
- In 2021, the Bank of China issued the world's first biodiversity-themed green bond, worth 1.8 billion RMB. This was also Asia's first biodiversity bond and represented a major breakthrough for China's commercial banking sector in advancing green financial products for biodiversity conservation.
- In 2021, the Bank of China issued another biodiversity-themed green bond to finance a range of conservationfocused projects, including ecological construction demonstrations in key regions, restoration of mountain ecosystems, the development of ecological water networks, national forest reserves, and the transformation of low-quality and low-efficiency forests.
- In 2021, the Agricultural Development Bank of China successfully issued the country's first forest carbon sequestration-themed carbon neutrality bond for global investors. The funds raised were entirely used to support afforestation, reforestation, and other forest carbon sequestration projects.
- In 2022, the Paris Branch of the Bank of China issued Europe's first biodiversity-themed green bond, raising USD 400 million to support projects such as rare plant protection, ecological restoration of natural landscapes, national forest reserves, and lake ecosystem conservation.
- In 2022, China Construction Bank issued a dual-themed green bond focusing on "Biodiversity" and the "Belt and Road Initiative." The selected projects featured biodiversity benefits such as natural forest preservation, river, lake, and wetland conservation, conversion of farmland back to forest, and clean energy investments in Belt and Road countries.
- In 2023, the Agricultural Development Bank of China issued green bonds totaling 7.4 billion RMB under the themes of "Supporting Biodiversity Protection" and "Promoting Green Industry Development in Gansu." The bonds were issued via public bidding through the Central Clearing Company.



Corporation issuing green bonds

In May 2021, Shaanxi Coal Group successfully issued a sustainability-linked bond.

Local governments issuing the special bonds

• In 2023, Hainan became the first mainland local government to issue a biodiversity-themed green bond in Hong Kong. The issuance included a two-year sustainable development bond, a three-year biodiversitythemed green bond, and a five-year blue bond. The funds raised will be primarily invested in key public sectors such as healthcare, education, environmental monitoring and restoration, species conservation, and marine protection. This initiative supports the implementation of the sustainable development strategy, accelerates the construction of national ecological civilization pilot zones, and advances marine ecological conservation and restoration efforts.

• China's first ecological protection special bond was issued by the Tianjin Municipal Government in 2018, raising 1.5 billion yuan with a seven-year maturity. The proceeds were allocated to the ecological protection and restoration of the Qilihai Wetland in Ninghe District, Tianjin. Project income was generated through mechanisms such as carbon emission trading and the transfer of construction land quotas made possible by wetland restoration. This approach effectively balanced project financing and revenue generation.

Special construction fund (special bonds)+ bank

- Yunnan has adopted the "special construction fund + bank" approach to raise funds to support projects in key areas, including the construction of biodiversity conservation projects. The special construction Fund shall be established by the China Development Bank and the Agricultural Development Bank of China to raise funds by issuing special bonds in the inter-bank market.
- The Chengdu Branch of Hua Xia Bank successfully underwrote and issued the country's first equity-funded green medium-term note, which is the country's largest green medium-term note issued in terms of amount. It promotes the protection of aquatic habitats and provides a reference for the coordinated development of subsequent aquatic habitat protection and hydropower station construction projects.

For the damage to people

- Wildlife-caused personal and property loss insurance compensation has been implemented in Qinghai and Sichuan Provinces to address damages caused by terrestrial wildlife.
- In 2022, PICC expanded its insurance coverage to include natural disaster early warnings such as heavy rain, snowstorms, cold waves, strong winds, and forest fires under its insurance liability. The company adopted a proactive approach by integrating disaster risk reduction measures and conducting advance disaster assessments to help mitigate forest-related losses. During the insurance period, the insurer is responsible for covering the necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by the insured for taking emergency measures to protect forest resources in response to official early disaster warnings.

For agricultural industries

- Key issues: Climate (temperature, precipitation, etc.) during beekeeping has an impact on the growth and development of honey plants and individual bees, as well as the yield and quality of bee products.
- Insurance liability: During the insurance period, if the presumed honey collection amount calculated by the rainfall of the agreed weather station is less than the target honey collection amount, compensation shall be made according to the agreement.
- Key issues: In the growing period of chestnut, the external wind strength has a certain impact on its yield.
- Insurance liability: During the insurance period, when the actual wind index exceeds a certain amount, it is regarded as an insured accident, and the insurer is responsible for compensation in accordance with the contract.



Insurance + mortagage

- On May 25, 2021, PICC signed China's first Carbon Sink Insurance agreement for commercial forestry carbon sink price insurance with the State-owned Forest Farm of Shunchang County, Nanping City, Fujian Province. In collaboration with Industrial Bank and the Straits Equity Trading Center, PICC Property and Casualty Insurance pioneered a new green finance model—"forestry carbon sink pledge + long-term carbon sink financing + forestry insurance." This integrated approach links forest insurance with carbon sink pledges and financing mechanisms, effectively transforming carbon emission rights into economic value and offering a new pathway for monetizing ecological products.
- In January 2022, the Shanghai Environment and Energy Exchange and CPIC Property Insurance jointly launched China's first grassland carbon sink remote sensing index insurance. Utilizing remote sensing data and scientific assessments of grassland carbon sink values, this innovative green financial product provides ecological risk protection to farmers and herders in Damao Banner, Baotou City, supporting sustainable grassland management and enhancing resilience against climate-related risks.

Ecological fiscal transfers

The policy of "Ecological Compensation" in China includes hosizonal ecological compensation and vertical ecological compensation. One of the measure of Ecological Compensation is the ecological fiscal transfers. It is mainly included inter-provincial government or inter-city government ecological fiscal transfers in terms of the watershed ecological convervation and governance, conservation of natural protection area etc.



Public-private partnerships

The National Green Development Fund Co., Ltd. was jointly established by the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. The State Council authorized the Ministry of Finance to act as the national investor, which in turn entrusted the Shanghai Municipal Government with the specific responsibilities of managing the fund. An example of a funded initiative is the ecological restoration and wetland construction in the buffer zone around Erhai Lake in Dali City, implemented as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project. However, many PPP projects in recent years have faced operational challenges, with one of the main issues being capital chain disruptions. As a result, PPPs have not been widely encouraged recently, and efforts are ongoing to explore more sustainable and resilient PPP mechanisms for green development financing.

Payment for ecosysterm services

Through the implementation of Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) accounting, several cities and regions in China have developed their tourism industries and generated significant tourism revenue. In these areas, the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is commonly used, fostering cooperation between the public and private sectors and facilitating payment for ecosystem services. Typically, the public sector—represented by local governments—funds ecological restoration and governance efforts, while the private sector is responsible for operations and industrial investments. The Eco-environment-oriented Development (EOD) projects, initiated by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, utilize this financing mechanism to promote sustainable development.



Eco-labels

Except the FSC eco-label, China has the domestic certification which is China Forest Certification Council (CFCC) mutually recognised with Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Through certificed by CFCC, it is convenced that the forest has reached the requrirment of susutainable operation.



Private fund

Zhangjiajie city of Hunan Province, adopted the "private fund + bank" approach to raise funds to support ecotourism development projects. 2017

Conservation trust funds

In 2014, Qingshan Village in Hangzhou City established the country's first water fund trust which is "Good Water Fund No. 1", to agree on the distribution of benefits in the form of trust contracts.

Crowdfunding

Some social organisations/institutions lauched crowfunding projects related to biodiversity, for example, Shanshui Conservasion Center lauching multiple charity activities of natural conversation and wildlife protection.

Techical Assistance

- ADB TA 10410-PRC: Developing National Mangrove Protection and Restoration Strategies
- ADB TA 10158-PRC: Research on Protection and Restoration Policy of Migratory Birds
- ADB TA 10033-PRC: Innovating Eco-Compensation Mechanisms in Yangtze River Basin
- ADB TA 10015-PRC: Institutional and Strategic Research for Conservation and Restoration of Freshwater Ecosystem in Qinling National Park
- ADB TA 6963-PRC: Research of Ecological Water Security for Healthy River and Biodiversity Protection in the Lower Yellow River and Delta

• A 8269-PRC: Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Yunnan Province

And more...



- ADB Grants 0311-PRC: Jiangsu Yancheng Wetlands Protection Project
- ADB Grants 0250-PRC: Forestry and Ecological Restoration in Three Northwest Provinces Project
- ADB Grants 0169-PRC: Shaanxi Qinling Biodiversity Conservation and Demonstration Project
- ADB Grants 4571-PRC: Sanjiang Plain Wetlands Protection
- WB Grants: Update and Implementation of NBSAP and Preparing the %th National Report to the CBD
- GEF-8: Conserving Biodiversity and Natural Resources through Spatial Planning and Integrated Landscape
 Management
- GEF-8: The Sustainable City Project for Coordinated Development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region
- GEF 7: Strengthening in-situ Biodiversity Conservation in the Yangtze River Economic Belt
- GEF 6: Strengthening Coordinated Approaches to Reduce Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Threats to Globally Significant Agrobiodiversity and Agroecosystems in China
- (R-IAST)

And more...

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