

Demand for home services to drive growth

With more families needing help and being able to afford it, State Council urges sector to embrace new technologies

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China has decided to promote the development of the home services sector, which business insiders said will boost domestic consumption and attract more investment and professionals to help existing providers improve their services.

The decision was made at an executive meeting of the State Council on Wednesday, presided over by Premier Li Keqiang, with a view to meeting demand for household help as the number of elderly Chinese grows rapidly and more families have two children.

The home services sector will be encouraged to use the internet and other new technologies, a statement released after the meeting said, while training and supervision should be strengthened to improve service quality, with operations standardized.

The meeting also approved some supportive measures, including tax reductions for small companies and new majors to be offered by vocational colleges.

The new policies will help boost the development of home services in terms of new technologies, quality standards, and training and welfare for middle-aged women working as cleaners or baby-sitters — who are known colloquially as “aunties” in China — and others working in the sector, said Wan Yong, founder and CEO of Ayibang, an online home services company that provides services in Beijing and 10 other cities.

The policies could encourage more startups, with more investment coming into the sector, Wan said, but existing companies would need to improve their services to survive the competition.

“I take these new policies as a good signal,” he said. “Our real concern is how to get them carried out.”

The new policies, if fully implemented, will be good for the industry and those using its services, given the huge potential demand and different services needed, said Li Xiaoyue, branding manager of Daojia, another online home services company.

Government support would mean that quality standards and norms can be established for the home services industry, she said, while companies engaged in the sector also need support in providing housing and social security for workers.

“Traditional home services providers cannot manage a huge number of ‘aunties’, but internet-based technologies can, while improving service quality.”

Wan Yong, founder and CEO of Ayibang

25 million

the number of people working in the home services sector in 2016, accounting for about 3.3 percent of China’s workforce

50 million

the number of people expected to be working in the home services sector by 2025

Wan said his company needed more workers due to an increase in online orders. Good “aunties” are in extremely short supply, he said, which provided opportunities for them to earn very good salaries. One worker supplied by his company earned more than 30,000 yuan (\$4,470) cleaning home appliances during last month’s seasonal peak in demand, almost triple the average per capita monthly income in Beijing last year.

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technologies can, while improving service quality,” he said.

Wan’s company focuses on service quality and efficiency using internet-based approaches. The ultimate goal is to bring good services to consumers and win market share, he said.

A report released by the Chinese Academy of Labor and Social Security said more than 25 million peo-

ple worked in the sector in 2016, accounting for about 3.3 percent of China’s workforce. The number rose to around 30 million last year.

As people’s livelihoods improve, an increasing number of families can afford home services, providing a new driver for China’s economic growth and employment, the academy’s report said. The number of workers in the sector is expected to hit 50 million in 2025, it said.

Over the years, home services

have seen good development, with revenues increasing fast, said Tang Jianwei, a macroeconomic analyst at Bank of Communications’ Financial Research Center. But such services are still in short supply and demand for high-end services is surging, he said.

As of the end of last year, there were 249 million people in China aged 60 or older, accounting for 17.9 percent of the population, the National Bureau of Statistics said. There are 190 million families living in urban areas, with 15 percent of them needing home services, according to a survey by the China Home Service Association.

To meet demand brought about by the aging population and the second-child policy, the sector’s development can boost employment and expand domestic consumption, Tang said.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

POLICY RESPONSE

School bus safety, pork products and drunken drivers on agenda

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Several ministry-level departments, including those for education and market regulation, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Ministry urges checks on school bus safety

The Ministry of Education has urged schools to step up safety checks of school buses before the start of the new semester.

Local education authorities should step up safety management of school buses and ensure relevant regulations are well implemented, the ministry said in a notice issued on Thursday.

The ministry also urged better training for drivers of school buses in terms of safety awareness and emergency management. Middle school students should take part in at least one session of safety education and evacuation drills, the ministry said.

The notice also called on parents to remind their children to



be quiet and well behaved on school buses to ensure safety.

It also warned of the risks faced by students taking unlicensed school buses and encouraged public whistle-blowing on illegal school buses.

Food firms told to step up pork management



Chinese authorities have urged food companies to step up their management of pork to guard against African swine fever after media reports of suspected contaminated dumplings.

The State Administration for Market Regulation said on its microblog that the administration and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs had sent a joint work group to investigate a case in which dumplings were found to contain pork contaminated with African swine fever.

The administration said it has urged the food company to trace the source of the pork and dispose of related products.

The move followed media reports that samples from three batches of pork-filled dumplings

from Sanquan Foods had tested positive for the nucleic acid associated with African swine fever.

The authorities also called for local governments to step up risk-control measures, regulate information disclosure and punish unscrupulous firms.

Campaign targets drunken drivers

The Ministry of Public Security has launched a nationwide campaign targeting those driving under the influence of alcohol.

The ministry’s traffic management bureau said in a notice issued on Feb 18 that traffic police around the country should step up traffic checks, including daily inspections on the streets, to reduce the number of traffic accidents and casualties caused by drunken driving.

Drunken driving has long been one of the major causes of traffic accidents in China. Last year, 17,264 Chinese drivers were banned from driving for life, with 5,149 of them caught drunken driving after serious traffic accidents.



Policy digest

25 administrative approvals to be scrapped

China will further reduce licensing red tape to promote the transformation of government functions and improve the business environment, the State Council decided at an executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday.

According to a statement released after the meeting, the government will cancel 25 administrative approval items, including preapproval of corporate names before business registration and the preliminary review of domestically produced medicines, in order to further invigorate the market. Another six administrative approval items, including registration to practice some professions, will be delegated to government departments at or below the provincial level.

A pilot reform of the review system for construction projects will also be rolled out across the nation. Under unified requirements, an interagency review process, with a single department acting as the lead agency, will be adopted for the inspection of plans and completed projects, with clear time frames for reviews.

The goal is to enable a single blueprint for overseeing the implementation of a project, a single window providing multiagency services, a single checklist for preparing application materials, and a single set of mechanisms for regulating the permit process, the statement said.

It said the government aims to halve the time required for reviews of construction projects to 120 working days across the country in the first half of this year.

Local authorities urged to listen to businesses

Local authorities and government department must heed advice from enterprises and industry associations before making regulations related to the operations of businesses, the State Council executive meeting on Wednesday decided.

The move is an important measure to promote scientific and democratic decision-making and build a government that is in line with the rule of law, a statement released after the meeting said.

The authorities must learn about the concerns and demands of businesses before making regulations to ensure they are better targeted, the statement said.

During the regulation-making process, the authorities should solicit public opinion through various channels and heed the advice of typical businesses, it said.

During the implementation process, the authorities should set up a buffer period to leave enough time for businesses to implement new regulations.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of evaluations of policies and regulations after their implementation, and called for adjustments when necessary to improve the quality of government decision-making.

More encouragement for small-household farmers

China will step up support of small-household farmers and encourage their involvement in modern agriculture, according to a guideline published on Thursday.

The guideline, jointly released by the general offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, also aims to speed up development of



modern agriculture and facilitate the revitalization of rural areas.

It called for accelerated efforts to establish a policy system to support small-household farmers and to enhance social services for the agricultural sector.

More will be done to enhance the production capacities of small-household farmers and to open up more channels for them to increase their incomes, the guideline said. It also vowed to better protect farmers’ legitimate interests and enable them to share the outcomes of reform and development.

The government will offer policy incentives to encourage small-household farmers to expand production, provide training, step up research and the application of equipment and technologies that cater to their demands and improve rural infrastructure, the guideline said.

The country will also launch plans to cultivate family farms and guide such farms to adopt leading technologies and means of production, it said.

Small-household farmers will also receive support to develop new industries and business patterns in areas such as leisure tourism, catering, accommodation and nursing services, the guide added.