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Headline: China soybean, corn imports to surge by 2015 on demand, acreage –Olam Chief

China Soybean, Corn Imports to Surge By 2015 on Demand, Acreage -Olam Chief

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Dow Jones Commodities Service

SINGAPORE--China could import as much as 80 million metric tons of soybeans and up to 20 million tons of corn by 2015 as rising income spurs demand for protein-rich diets in the world's second-largest economy, Olam International (O32.SG) Chief Executive Sunny Verghese said Friday.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture world agricultural supply and demand report in August, China is expected to import 59.50 million tons of soybeans and 2 million tons of corn in the 2012-13 marketing year.

In 1980 per capita meat consumption in China was about 15 kilograms, Mr. Verghese said addressing an event held at the Singapore Management University. This figure has climbed to 55-60 kilograms per person now, necessitating the need for more feed grains, he said.

Another factor that will continue to contribute to China's continued and rising reliance on imports is the country's limited area under cultivation, he said.

He forecast China's total cultivated land to be about 121 million hectares at present. The area under cultivation could rise to as much as 160 million hectares by 2015. But this increase pales into insignificance, given China's huge domestic consumption, he said.

An additional 33 million hectares would be required for soybean alone, if the country were to become self sufficient in soybean production, he said.