

Israel as a Global Leader in Smart Agriculture: Technology Development and Transfer Mechanisms

Michael Girel

AuxBridge Technology Transfer
Research and Development
Center

Tel-Aviv, Israel

michael@auxbridge.com

Abstract—Israel has established itself as a global leader in smart agriculture, leveraging technological innovation to enhance agricultural efficiency and sustainability. This study examines Israel's contributions to smart agriculture and its mechanisms for technology transfer, with a particular focus on its cooperation with China. The topicality of this research lies in the growing global demand for sustainable agricultural solutions, driven by climate change, resource scarcity, and food security challenges. Israel's expertise in precision farming, drip irrigation, agri-biotechnology, and water resource management has made it a key partner in international agricultural development, with China serving as a prominent recipient of its technological innovations. The purpose of this study is to analyse the mechanisms and effectiveness of Israel's agro-technology transfer, assessing its impact on China's agricultural sector and its replicability in other national contexts. The research explores the role of public-private partnerships, government policies, innovation hubs, and financial protocols in facilitating international technology transfer. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining case study analysis, policy reviews, expert interviews, and on-site observations. Primary data was gathered through fieldwork at China-Israel Technology Transfer Centres, interviews with local agricultural stakeholders, and reviews of bilateral agreements. Secondary data includes government reports, legislative documents, and academic literature on technology transfer and smart agriculture. The findings indicate that Israel's structured, government-backed approach to technology transfer has led to successful adaptation and implementation of its agro-technologies in China. The China-Israel cooperation serves as a model for other nations, demonstrating the importance of strategic frameworks, knowledge-sharing platforms, and capacity-building programs in agricultural modernisation. However, challenges remain, including bureaucratic

barriers, differences in regulatory frameworks, and the need for localised adaptations. This study concludes that Israel's technology transfer model represents a scalable and effective strategy for addressing global agricultural challenges. Strengthening international cooperation, fostering innovation-driven policies, and enhancing financial support for technology adoption are key recommendations for advancing global sustainable agriculture.

Keywords— *Israel, PR China, smart agriculture, technology transfer.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid population growth, climate change, and dwindling natural resources, the demand for sustainable and efficient agricultural practices has become a global priority. Smart agriculture, which integrates advanced technologies such as precision farming, data analytics, and resource-efficient solutions, is emerging as a critical response to these challenges. Among the global leaders in agricultural innovation, Israel has distinguished itself by developing and transferring cutting-edge agro-technologies that enhance productivity, water efficiency, and sustainability. Understanding Israel's advancements and mechanisms for technology transfer is essential for scaling these innovations globally, particularly in regions facing similar agricultural and environmental constraints.

Israel's agricultural success stems from its necessity-driven ingenuity, as the country has historically faced extreme resource limitations such as water scarcity and arid soil conditions. These constraints led to the development of pioneering solutions like drip irrigation, precision farming, agri-biotechnology, and vertical farming [11]. These technologies have been successfully

Online ISSN 2256-070X

<https://doi.org/10.17770/etr2025vol1.8626>

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transferred to numerous countries, particularly China, where environmental conditions and agricultural challenges mirror those of Israel [19]. However, the mechanisms of this transfer, as well as its effectiveness in local adaptation, remain almost unexplored [6].

A notable example of successful technology transfer is the China-Israel agricultural partnership, which has facilitated the implementation of Israeli innovations through joint demonstration farms, irrigation system adaptation, and knowledge exchange programs [18]. This cooperation underscores the significance of public-private partnerships, government policies, and international collaboration in advancing agricultural sustainability [9]. While previous studies highlight Israel's role in agro-innovation [2], [11], fewer have examined the practical aspects of bilateral technology transfer, financial agreements, and local adoption frameworks [10].

The purpose of this study is to analyse Israel's mechanisms of agro-technology transfer, assess their impact on China's agricultural sector, and explore how these strategies can be replicated in other national contexts. The research specifically examines the role of government policies, financial frameworks, and research institutions in facilitating technology transfer; the effectiveness of China-Israel cooperation in smart agriculture, focusing on case studies and real-world applications and the challenges of agro-technology adoption, including regulatory, infrastructural, and economic barriers.

Several scholars have analysed Israel's agricultural innovation and its impact on global sustainability. M.Singh [16] explores Israel's leadership in precision agriculture, while D.Abraham, Th.Ngog, J.Said and M.Yachin [1] provide insights into how Israeli technologies enhance resource efficiency in developing nations. X.Zhang and E.Lazin [19] offer a case study of Sino-Israeli agricultural cooperation, focusing on projects in Shandong Province, whereas M.Dor [6] examines China's growing demand for Israeli agro-tech solutions.

From a policy perspective, Y.Liu [9] and D.Guang [7] discuss how bilateral agreements shape technology exchange and innovation hubs. Studies H.Naftali [11] highlight the establishment of technology transfer centres, emphasising public-private collaboration. Meanwhile, W.Li [10] explores the financial and institutional challenges in implementing large-scale agro-technology projects.

By synthesising existing research, case studies, and field data, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of Israel's agricultural technology transfer model, its practical applications, and its potential for global adoption. Understanding these mechanisms is critical for enhancing international cooperation in agricultural sustainability and addressing pressing food security challenges worldwide.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research utilised a multidisciplinary approach combining primary data collection, case studies, policy analysis, and literature review. This comprehensive

methodology ensured a well-rounded analysis of the subject matter, incorporating both theoretical and practical insights. The key materials and methods employed are outlined below:

- **Personal Experience of the Author.** Firsthand observations during professional visits to China served as a foundational resource for this study. These visits included engagements with China-Israel Technology Transfer Centres, where Israeli agro-tech innovations are showcased and adapted to local contexts. Fieldwork also encompassed visits to local agricultural communities employing Israeli technologies, such as drip irrigation and precision farming systems. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local government officials and agricultural stakeholders to gather qualitative insights into their experiences, perceptions, and future plans for incorporating Israeli technologies into their agricultural practices.
- **Case studies Method** incorporated detailed case analyses of cooperative initiatives between Israel and China (China-Israel Technology Transfer Centres, partnerships with local communities adopting Israeli innovations, and pilot projects implemented under bilateral agreements). Each case study provided a granular understanding of the mechanisms and outcomes of these collaborations. The data was drawn from project documentation, site visits, and interviews with key stakeholders, offering a multi-dimensional perspective on the technology transfer process.
- **Study of Chinese Government Policy.** An in-depth examination of Chinese government policies supporting the adoption of international agricultural technologies, particularly from Israel, formed a critical part of the research. This analysis focused on policy directives that encourage collaboration with foreign technology providers, such as subsidies for technology adoption, incentives for international partnerships, and the inclusion of Israeli technologies in China's strategic agricultural development plans. The long-standing history of Israeli-Chinese agro-tech cooperation was contextualised within China's broader agricultural modernisation goals.
- **Study of Israeli Normative and Legislative Documents.** The research reviewed Israeli policies, regulations, and financial agreements that facilitate international technology transfer, with a particular emphasis on bilateral agreements with China. Key focus areas included the Israeli-Chinese

financial protocol agreement, which governs technology exports, and the supportive legislative frameworks that ensure intellectual property protection and encourage public-private partnerships in the agro-tech sector.

- Literature Review. The study drew on a wide range of academic and mass media publications, industry reports, and government white papers addressing smart agriculture, technology transfer mechanisms, and Israeli-Chinese collaborations. These sources provided theoretical foundations, historical context, and comparative insights that complemented the primary data.

By synthesising these diverse materials and methods, the study offers a holistic understanding of Israel's leadership in smart agriculture and the mechanisms that underpin its successful technology transfer model, particularly in the context of Israeli-Chinese cooperation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the 21st century, the global demand for sustainable, efficient, and innovative agricultural practices has reached unprecedented levels. With challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, and population growth putting immense pressure on traditional farming methods, nations are seeking transformative solutions to ensure food security and environmental sustainability. At the forefront of this revolution is Israel - a nation that has turned its harsh environmental conditions into an opportunity to become a global leader in smart agriculture [11].

Israel's journey to becoming a smart agricultural powerhouse is rooted in necessity. The country's arid climate, limited water resources, and scarce arable land forced it to innovate or perish [1]. This adversity-driven ingenuity led to groundbreaking technologies that have transformed not only Israel's agricultural landscape but also that of nations worldwide.

In this research, the term "smart agriculture" is understood within the Israeli context as the integration of advanced technologies and innovative practices into farming to enhance efficiency, sustainability, and productivity. This approach leverages data-driven tools such as sensors, drones, satellite imaging, and information technology to optimise the management of resources like water, fertilisers, and pesticides. Israeli smart agriculture prioritises the efficient use of limited natural resources while focusing on increasing crop yields and reducing environmental impact [16].

By blending traditional agricultural knowledge with cutting-edge technologies, Israeli smart agriculture addresses key challenges such as arid conditions, water scarcity, and the need for sustainable food production. This practice not only enhances the economic viability of agriculture but also supports ecological preservation and

global food security [1], cementing Israel's reputation as a pioneer in agricultural innovation.

One of Israel's most groundbreaking contributions to global agriculture is drip irrigation technology, pioneered by Israeli engineer Simcha Blass in the 1960s. Today, this innovation is utilised in over 100 countries and is celebrated as a transformative solution for water-scarce regions [16]. By delivering water directly to plant roots, drip irrigation minimises water consumption while maximising crop yields, enabling sustainable farming practices even in the world's most arid areas.

Israel has also taken the lead in developing precision farming solutions, incorporating advanced technologies like drones, satellite imaging, and sensors to monitor crop health and optimise resource use. These systems empower farmers to make data-driven decisions, reduce waste, and enhance productivity, setting new benchmarks in sustainable agriculture.

In agri-biotechnology, Israel has achieved significant milestones, including the development of drought-resistant and pest-resistant crop varieties. These innovations help farmers adapt to climate change and reduce reliance on chemical inputs, aligning with global efforts toward ecological sustainability.

Urbanisation and shrinking farmland have driven Israel to embrace vertical farming techniques that maximise output in limited spaces. Utilising hydroponics, aeroponics, and artificial lighting, these systems enable year-round cultivation in controlled environments. Similarly, Israel's advances in pest management — through natural predators and sophisticated monitoring systems — have reduced the need for chemical pesticides while maintaining ecological balance [1], [11], [16], [18].

Driven by environmental challenges and a commitment to sustainability, smart agriculture has become a defining feature of Israeli innovation. From pioneering irrigation technologies to advancing biotechnology and precision farming, Israel continues to transform global agricultural practices. Its ability to integrate technology with sustainable methods underscores its leadership in addressing modern agricultural challenges.

Through its pioneering work in smart agriculture, Israel not only addresses its own agricultural needs but also provides solutions to global challenges. The country's ability to integrate technology, sustainability, and efficiency positions it as a leader in the future of global agriculture [18]. Through partnerships, training programs, and technology transfer centres, Israel has empowered other nations to adopt and adapt its cutting-edge solutions to their unique agricultural challenges. A prominent example of international collaboration can be seen in the Sino-Israeli partnership in agriculture. Technological transfer in the field of crop production has established itself as historically robust, with the first transfers of Israeli technologies to China's agricultural sector dating back to the late 1970s.: Agricultural Demonstration Farm

in Shandong Province (1978, aimed at introducing Israeli irrigation and farming techniques to enhance crop yields and water efficiency), Drip Irrigation Systems in Xinjiang (1985), Flower and Vegetable Greenhouses in Beijing (1990). Additionally, the Beijing Sino-Israel Demonstration Farm, launched in 1993, showcased advanced Israeli agricultural technologies, such as irrigation, fertilisation, and greenhouse systems, to modernise farming practices [6], [19]. These early initiatives laid the groundwork for sustained cooperation in agricultural innovation.

The second wave of active agro-technology transfer occurred in the first decades of the 21st century, focusing primarily on innovative water resource management. Key projects from this period include the China-Israel Water City Project (2011), the Billion-Shekel Water Technology Export Agreement (2012; the export of Israeli water technologies worth over 1 billion of Israel shekel to China, focusing on aiding Chinese farmers with advanced irrigation and water management solutions), and the Shouguang Water Technology Demonstration City (2014), along with various other local initiatives [4], [6], [8]. These efforts emphasised sustainable water use and laid a strong foundation for addressing global agricultural challenges, further solidifying the partnership between Israel and China in agriculture.

Currently, this collaboration is experiencing its third wave. China has shown increasing interest in acquiring advanced technologies in areas such as sheep and goat breeding and milk processing for these animals. Other key areas of interest include smart agricultural production systems (such as online platforms and mobile applications), the development of biopesticides and natural fertilisers for land restoration, and innovative approaches to the preservation and processing of plant products [3], [9]. These modern advancements reflect the evolving priorities in the Sino-Israeli agricultural partnership.

Technology transfer is a complex and multifaceted process that requires consideration of numerous factors, including international and local legal frameworks, cultural and psychological differences, local customs, and the extent of support and permissibility provided by participating states. Over decades of practical collaboration, Israeli-Chinese technology transfers have established a variety of mechanisms that formalise and streamline these processes, often adapting to the specific needs of each project. These mechanisms, refined through experience, serve as models for effective collaboration. Below, we will explore the main approaches, recognising that each instance of technology transfer in the agricultural sector is unique, often combining elements from multiple mechanisms to achieve optimal results. Additionally, the influence of evolving bilateral agreements and emerging innovations has further diversified the methods used, reflecting the dynamic nature of this collaboration:

- The China-Israel Technology Transfer Centres (CITTCs) are a cornerstone in the transfer of Israeli agro-technologies to China.

Supported by state and local governments, these centres, along with university innovation hubs and parks, play a vital role in fostering innovation, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. By 2024, China has established five technology transfer centres, three university innovation hubs, and two parks, focusing on green and smart technologies for sustainable agriculture. Key facilities include the China-Israel Changzhou Innovation Park (2014), Shanghai China-Israel Innovation Hub (2019), and Shenzhen Belt and Road Environmental Technology Exchange and Transfer Center (2021), complemented by local initiatives in Shandong, Fujian, and Hebei Provinces. Rooted in personal collaborations between Israeli researchers and Chinese partners, some centres even maintain offices in Israel, such as the Changzhou Innovation Park's office in Tel Aviv, facilitating direct access to Israeli startups. Supported by the Ministries of Ecology, Education, and Agriculture, these centres provide platforms for Israeli agro-tech companies to showcase and adapt innovations, promote joint research, and offer training programs and demonstration farms. Additionally, CITTCs often provide grants to Israeli specialists and startups, fostering a sustainable ecosystem for technology adoption. This system of CITTCs as active institutions aims to bridge Israeli innovation and China's agricultural needs, ensuring impactful knowledge transfer. Inviting Israeli Specialists for Joint Research and Development is a critical mechanism for technology transfer. These professionals collaborate with local researchers, farmers, and policymakers to adapt Israeli technologies to China's unique agricultural landscape. In projects like the Beijing Sino-Israel Demonstration Farm (1993), Israeli specialists trained Chinese farmers in using drip irrigation and greenhouse systems. This hands-on approach ensured the successful integration of technologies into local farming practices. The joint research on drought-resistant crops between Israeli and Chinese institutions (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel) and Huazhong Agricultural University (China), start 2015) has resulted in the development of crop varieties tailored to arid regions of China, combining Israeli genetic expertise with local agricultural knowledge [2], [12], [13], [14], [15];

- Private-sector initiatives play a significant role in driving technology transfer, with individual entrepreneurs and local

governments purchasing Israeli technologies for specific regional needs. The implementation of hydroponic systems in Weifang (2012), Shandong Province, by a local agricultural enterprise, showcased how Israeli innovations can improve the efficiency of vegetable production. This project utilised Israeli technologies for soilless cultivation, increasing yields and reducing resource consumption. The Dagan Demonstration Farm in Fujian Province (2013) introduced integrated fish and crop farming systems, utilising Israeli expertise to promote sustainable and profitable agricultural practices [10], [17];

- Inviting Israeli specialists to China for joint R&D projects and the training of Chinese professionals is a key component of China's broader strategy to integrate global expertise into its agricultural sector. This initiative aligns with China's "Thousand Talents Plan" (2008) and other national programs, such as The Medium- and Long-Term Plan for the Development of Science and Technology (2006–2020), The Agricultural Modernisation Plan (2016–2020), and The Regulations on the Administration of Introducing Foreign Intelligence (2020). These policies aim to attract international specialists across various sectors to accelerate China's modernisation efforts. Within agriculture, Israeli experts contribute significantly to precision farming, water-efficient irrigation, and biotechnology. Collaborative research projects, like drought-resistant crop development, and training initiatives in smart agriculture enable Chinese professionals to adopt and innovate upon Israeli technologies, fostering long-term sustainability and food security. [5], [8];
- The Israel-China Financial Protocol is a government-backed framework designed to finance large-scale technology transfer projects, fostering bilateral investment in advanced sectors, particularly agriculture. This mechanism facilitates agreements between Israeli and Chinese financial institutions, enabling the seamless adoption of cutting-edge technologies. A prime example is the Billion-Shekel Water Technology Export Agreement (2012), which provided significant funding for Israeli companies to export innovative water management solutions to China. These technologies were successfully integrated into large-scale agricultural irrigation systems across multiple provinces, mitigating water

scarcity and enhancing crop yields. Beyond irrigation, the protocol has also supported projects in precision farming, agri-biotechnology, and smart greenhouse development, reinforcing the role of financial cooperation in advancing sustainable agricultural transformation and long-term food security in China [4], [6];

- Both Israeli and Chinese Government-Led Initiatives play an active role in promoting agricultural technology transfer through bilateral agreements, research funds, and policy support. The China-Israel Joint Committee on Innovation Cooperation in 2014 established a framework for collaboration in agricultural innovation, water management, and biotechnology, providing funding for joint projects that foster advancements in precision agriculture and sustainable farming. Additionally, China's Thousand Talents Plan and other national strategies actively recruit foreign experts, including Israeli specialists, to enhance local agricultural capacity. Government-backed technology transfer centres and financial protocols further streamline adoption processes, ensuring innovations are financially viable, scalable, and aligned with national development goals [7], [9].

Despite the significant benefits of agro-technology transfer and the clarity of its mission, vision, and expected outcomes, practical implementation through various mechanisms often encounters specific challenges. Table 1 presents the results of author's analysis of the advantages and difficulties associated with different mechanisms of agro-technology transfer. This assessment, based on the mechanisms employed in the transfer of agricultural technologies between Israel and China, provides insights into their practical application and highlights the complexities involved in achieving effective technology adaptation and integration. Each mechanism offers unique benefits while facing distinct challenges, requiring careful consideration and tailored approaches for successful outcomes.

China's experience in agro-technology transfer with Israel offers a valuable blueprint for global collaborations. Through mechanisms like technology transfer centres, government-supported innovation hubs, and joint R&D initiatives, China has successfully adapted Israeli technologies to meet local agricultural needs. These structures, supported by state funding and bilateral agreements, enable effective knowledge exchange, localised innovation, and scalable technology adoption. Replicating such mechanisms globally can enhance Israel's ability to share its advanced agricultural innovations with other countries. Establishing technology transfer centres, inspired by the China-Israel model, would create platforms for training, R&D collaboration, and

technology demonstration. Joint ventures, involving Israeli expertise and local partnerships, can address region-specific challenges like water scarcity or crop resilience. China's emphasis on structured, government-backed frameworks ensures both scalability and long-term impact. By leveraging these mechanisms, Israel can strengthen its global leadership in agro-technology, fostering sustainable agricultural development worldwide.

TABLE 1 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ISRAEL-CHINA AGROTECH TRANSFERRING MECHANISMS

Mechanism	Benefits	Challenges
China-Israel Technology Transfer Centers (CITTCs)	provide structured platforms for technology demonstration and adaptation; foster collaboration through joint R&D and training; supported by government funding, ensuring sustainability.	bureaucratic processes in setting up and operating centres; differences in technology adoption readiness across regions; difference in seeing the process of technology transferring, technology adoption and start-ups as a concept.
Private-sector initiatives	allows flexibility and rapid implementation; encourages innovation tailored to specific regional needs; facilitates direct investment.	lack of alignment with national policies can limit scalability; uneven results due to varying levels of local capacity.
Inviting Israeli specialists to China	builds local expertise and fosters independence in using Israeli technologies; scales up knowledge dissemination through trained local teams.	cultural and language barriers; high costs of deploying experts and ensuring continuity of their involvement.
Israel-China Financial Protocol	reduces financial barriers for large-scale technology adoption; encourages private and public sector partnerships.	complex financial arrangements may delay project execution; overdependence on subsidies can affect project sustainability.
Government-Led Initiatives	ensures alignment with national priorities; provides legal and financial support for large-scale projects; encourages long-term collaboration.	slower decision-making due to bureaucratic processes; limited flexibility in adapting technologies to specific contexts.

The examination of Israel's role as a global leader in smart agriculture highlights its ability to innovate under challenging conditions and its commitment to sharing

these innovations through effective technology transfer mechanisms. Israel's advancements, such as drip irrigation, precision farming, and agri-biotechnology, address critical challenges like water scarcity, climate change, and sustainable food production. These technologies not only transform Israel's agricultural landscape but also significantly benefit partner nations. China's adoption of Israeli agro-technologies exemplifies the successful implementation of these innovations on a global scale. Mechanisms such as technology transfer centres, government-supported financial protocols, and joint R&D initiatives facilitate seamless collaboration and adaptation to local needs. The China-Israel partnership demonstrates how structured frameworks and bilateral agreements can enable technology transfer that is both scalable and sustainable.

Despite the successes, challenges remain in integrating Israeli technologies into diverse agricultural contexts. Differences in cultural, economic, and regulatory environments can affect the efficacy of technology transfer. Additionally, the high initial investment required for some technologies may limit adoption in resource-constrained regions. Addressing these challenges through tailored strategies, capacity-building initiatives, and long-term partnerships can further enhance the global impact of Israeli agro-technologies, solidifying Israel's position as a leader in sustainable agricultural innovation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Israel's experience in smart agriculture and technology transfer offers a strategic roadmap for countries striving to balance agricultural efficiency, sustainability, and economic viability. By fostering knowledge-sharing networks, adaptive policy-making, and investment in cutting-edge agricultural solutions, Israel's model serves as a cornerstone for future global agro-innovation strategies. Theoretically, the article contributes to innovation diffusion models by demonstrating how necessity drives technological advancement and adaptation. Israel's development of resource-efficient agricultural practices - exemplified by drip irrigation and precision farming - aligns with frameworks that emphasise the interplay between innovation, policy, and collaborative networks. The research reinforces that structured technology transfer mechanisms, such as technology transfer centres, government-led initiatives, and public-private partnerships, provide a replicable blueprint for enhancing global agricultural sustainability. These mechanisms not only validate existing theories on knowledge transfer and diffusion but also introduce nuanced perspectives on how cultural, economic, and regulatory environments shape technological adoption. Practically, Israel's experience offers tangible solutions to critical global challenges, such as water scarcity, food insecurity, and climate change. The systematic adaptation of Israeli innovations by partner nations, notably China, illustrates that tailored technology transfer can lead to improved resource management and heightened agricultural productivity. Initiatives like the China-Israel Technology Transfer Centres exemplify how localised implementation - backed by robust governmental support

and bilateral agreements - can transform abstract technological potential into concrete benefits for farming communities. These outcomes encourage policymakers and agricultural stakeholders worldwide to invest in similar models that integrate research and development with hands-on training and local capacity-building. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of adaptive policies that accommodate the challenges of cross-cultural technology transfer, urging continuous refinement of support structures to overcome economic and regulatory disparities. In doing so, it establishes a clear roadmap for sustainable development initiatives that combine technological innovation with environmental stewardship worldwide.

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