

The Telegraph

Chinese scientist sentenced for stealing US secrets

A Chinese scientist has been sentenced to more than seven years in prison for stealing trade secrets of major US agribusiness firms to benefit China.

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Huang Kexue, 46, stole secrets on organic insecticides from Dow AgroSciences, where he worked from 2003-2008, and handed them over to research students at or linked to Hunan Normal University, where he also was involved in research, the Justice Department said.

He was sentenced to 87 months in prison, after entering into a plea agreement on two counts hoping to reduce his sentence.

Huang, who was sentenced by the US District Judge William Lawrence in the Southern District of Indiana, had faced up to 25 years in prison on the two charges.

"Mr Huang stole valuable trade secrets from two American companies and disseminated them to individuals in Germany and China," said Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer.

"Economic espionage and trade secret theft are serious crimes that, as today's sentence shows, must be punished severely. Protecting trade secrets is vital to our nation's economic success," Breuer stressed.

In a plea agreement, Huang admitted to one count each of economic espionage "to benefit a component of the Chinese government" and theft of trade secrets.

The plea agreement said that "in stealing, transferring and using the trade secrets," Huang "intended to benefit the Hunan Normal University, the National Natural Science Foundation of China, and the 863 Program," all controlled and funded by the Chinese government.

The 863 Program is a Chinese government initiative to develop and acquire high-level technologies to build the country's global position in scientific research and in technology-intensive industries.

The plea agreement said Huang had used the Dow AgroSciences secrets to apply for grants from the National Natural Science Foundation and the 863 Programme in 2007-2010, and that at least two applications to the foundation resulted in funds for research through Hunan Normal.

The plea agreement said Huang also stole secrets on enzymes for a new food product from another company, identified in a separate statement as Cargill, when he worked there in 2009.