China 15th Five-Year Plan and its implications for the Healthcare Industry ©

China – Pharma – Medical Devices

15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030)

China's Five-Year Plan constitutes comprehensive policy frameworks that establish strategic priorities, policy objectives, and development targets guiding the country's economic and social progress over a five-year period.

According to the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (hereafter referred to as the **15th FYP**), China aims to promote foreign investment in advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries, a move that signals the country's transition toward a phase of "high-standard opening up". A thorough understanding of these policies is essential for companies operating in the healthcare sector seeking to enter or maintain their position in the Chinese market.

Biotech and Innovative Drugs

In **Chapter V**, the outline of the 15th FYP emphasizes China's intention to accelerate the development of the **biopharmaceutical sector (生物医药)** and promote the clinical use of **innovative drugs (创新药)**. As reported by *Qiushi*, recent investment decisions by multinational pharmaceutical companies appear to reflect this policy direction. It is therefore no coincidence that the U.S. pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Company recently announced plans to invest 3 billion U.S. dollars in China over the next decade, with the aim of strengthening its supply chain and expanding its manufacturing capabilities in the country. Similarly, the pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca has pledged to invest 15 billion U.S. dollars in China by 2030 in order to expand its manufacturing capacity as well as its research and development activities. These investment decisions illustrate how China's policy document, issued on 12 March 2026, may therefore prove crucial for pharmaceutical companies targeting the Chinese market. Moreover, the policy framework is already influencing the strategic choices of multinational pharmaceutical firms.[1]

Whole Chain Supervision

Another key component of the outline is **Chapter LIII**, which addresses to the regulatory framework governing food and pharmaceuticals. The document highlights the need to strengthen regulatory mechanisms ensuring **full-chain and whole-process supervision** of food and pharmaceuticals, while further refining the accountability system for food and drug safety. In addition, China pledges to strengthen oversight of biotechnology research, development, and applications, and to improve capacities for the storage and security management of biological data resources.

New Regulatory Framework

During the 2026–2030 period, China aims to establish a stricter and more efficient regulatory framework for pharmaceuticals and to further implement the *Action Plan for Raising Pharmaceutical Standards*. These objectives are reflected in recent regulatory developments introduced by the National Medical Products Administration. In particular, the newly revised **Implementing Regulations of the Drug Administration Law (**药品管理法实施条例**)** will enter into force on 15 May 2026, further strengthening regulatory oversight throughout the pharmaceutical lifecycle. In addition, the outline specifies that regulatory authorities will intensify sampling inspections and spot checks of high-risk products, enhance the evaluation of quality and efficacy consistency for generic drugs, and strengthen the monitoring of post-marketing clinical use data. In this context, the **Procedures for Handling Filing-Type Post-Marketing Variations for Pharmaceuticals Manufactured Outside the Territory (**境外生产药品上市后备案类变更办理程序**)** have recently been issued, providing additional guidance for regulatory compliance concerning imported medicines.

Taken together, these policy measures indicate that China is pursuing a dual strategy aimed at **promoting pharmaceutical innovation while simultaneously strengthening regulatory oversight**. For multinational pharmaceutical companies, this evolving policy environment presents both new opportunities for market expansion and increasingly sophisticated regulatory requirements.

Pricing And Procurement

Another important component of the outline is **Chapter XXXIX**, which addresses policies related to pharmaceutical pricing, procurement, and support for pharmaceutical innovation. The document emphasizes the need to improve the **drug pricing formation mechanism** (药品价格形成机制) and to further refine policies governing the **centralized procurement of pharmaceuticals and medical consumables (**药品和医用耗材集中采购**)**. At the same time, it calls for the optimization of review and approval procedures for **innovative drugs and clinically urgently needed medicines**, with the aim of accelerating their market entry. The plan also highlights the importance of strengthening mechanisms through which the medical insurance system can support the high-quality development of innovative drugs and medical devices. In addition, the document proposes further improvements to the catalogue of innovative medicines and encourages commercial insurance schemes to expand reimbursement coverage for such drugs. These measures reflect China's broader effort to promote pharmaceutical innovation while improving the efficiency and sustainability of the healthcare system.

Medical Devices

Article XXXIX of the outline of the **15th FYP** highlights the importance of strengthening the mechanisms through which the medical insurance system supports the high-quality development of **medical devices** (医疗器械). This provision reflects China's broader strategic objective of fostering innovation while safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the national healthcare system. By refining reimbursement mechanisms and expanding the role of medical insurance in supporting innovative treatments and technologies, the government seeks to facilitate both the market entry and the accessibility of advanced medical solutions. For medical device manufacturers, these policy initiatives signal growing institutional support for innovation within China's healthcare sector throughout the 2026–2030 period.

Healthcare Service System

Article XXX of the outline addresses the optimization of China's **healthcare service system** and the further development of a hierarchical diagnosis and treatment structure. The provision underscores the importance of promoting a more balanced regional distribution of high-quality medical resources while strengthening the role of national and regional medical centers. At the same time, the plan places significant emphasis on reinforcing **primary healthcare** by expanding county-level medical consortia and urban medical groups, improving family doctor services, and enhancing the role of primary healthcare institutions in the delivery of medical care. Moreover, the plan calls for strengthening the healthcare workforce and advancing the digitalization and intelligent development of the national health system, including the sharing and mutual recognition of medical testing and examination results. Collectively, these initiatives aim to enhance the accessibility, efficiency, and overall quality of healthcare services throughout China.

Conclusion

The outline of the **15th FYP** represents only the first theoretical step within the broader and complex framework shaping China's economic and social development for the 2026–2030 period. In order to promptly respond to the evolving challenges of the Chinese market, international pharmaceutical companies will need to stay up to date with the healthcare policies that are expected to be introduced in the coming years.