



Huaxi village in Jiangsu province has long been considered the country's No 1 village. XU CONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Village blazes path to prosperity

Huaxi, where residents once subsisted on grain rations, owns billion-yuan conglomerate

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
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Wu Xie'en, a village chief in Jiangsu province, has personally donated more than 100 million yuan (\$15.7 million) in 15 years to help villagers build a well-off community.

Huaxi village, where he works, is known as China's No 1 village. It may not be the country's richest village, but it is considered by many to be the most famous.

"Leading such a village is never easy," Wu said. "I just hope that my work can bring a better future to Huaxi and our villagers."

The 54-year-old has a busy schedule most days. He gets up at 6:30 am and arrives at the office within an hour. After spending an hour catching up with the news and routine paperwork, Wu turns his attention to meetings, making investment decisions and giving lectures. He often does not get to bed until 1:30 am.

The village he leads now owns a conglomerate, Jiangsu Huaxi Group, with total assets of more than 50 billion yuan. Located in the city of Jiangyin, it has grown from just under 1 square kilometer in the 1960s to 35 sq km.

About 60,000 people live in



Village chief Wu Xie'en talks about Huaxi's development in front of a photo of the Long Wish Hotel. LIU YIFAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

the well-planned village, where each family owns fancy cars and free villas. They work in the group's companies and factories, have free medical insurance and enjoy stock and yearly bonuses.

Huaxi has never been hesitant about showing the outside world how wealthy it is. Its 328-meter-high Long Wish Hotel, which cost 3 billion yuan to build and opened in 2011, houses a golden bull that

is estimated to worth 300 million yuan according to media reports.

But 57 years ago, Huaxi was a poor village with only 1,764 yuan in assets and debts of 20,000 yuan. Each of its 667 villagers received a daily ration of 250 grams of grain. Then its chief, Wu Xie'en's father, Wu Renbao, started to kick-start industry and help the villagers shake off poverty.

In his 15 years as village chief since succeeding his father, Wu has put a lot of thought into reforms and finding new growth engines — even being called the "factory-closing chief" for shutting down traditional industries.

In 2003, his first year in office, he closed nine companies engaged in traditional industries, such as chemical production and the manufacture of wire rods, which polluted the environment but could earn more than 100 million yuan a year.

The group now owns companies in many sectors, from wholesale agricultural products and financial services to investment and cutting-edge technologies.

In 2001, Huaxi started to accept villagers from neighboring areas.

"We have many preferential policies to attract talent," Wu said. "They are crucial to our development and we must have an open mind to welcome them."

The group has invested in a laser chip program led by scientists who returned to China from Silicon Valley in the United States. It began production in the neighboring city of Changzhou recently.

People working for the group now share the same salary standards and rights as villagers, who used to enjoy extra bonuses but now make up less than 8 percent of its workforce.

"You are a Huaxi local if you work for the village," Wu said. "The talented young generation is Huaxi's future."

For five years, he has sent batches of young people to poverty-stricken areas in Guizhou and Qinghai provinces to live with local farmers.

"Many of our young people have enjoyed good living conditions since they were born," Wu said.

"They should experience farmers' lives in other areas and know more about the country. We hope that with their help, the village and its companies can thrive for at least 100 years."

Rebirth in the face of death

By CAO YIN in Beijing and HUANG ZHILING in Chengdu

Jiang Yuhang regards the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake as his rebirth and something to treasure in his life.

His survival was seen by many as a miracle. The then-19-year-old intern at the Yingxiu highway administration spent 124 hours trapped under the rubble of a six-story building in Yingxiu township, Sichuan province, near the quake's epicenter, and he could smell the bodies of his dead colleagues nearby.

Ten years later, he still clearly remembers catching glimpses of the orange uniforms of the firefighters in the rescue team through the cracks in the debris that separated him from safety.

"Seeing those flashes of color made me feel secure and brought hope, so I made a decision at that moment to join them," the 29-year-old said.

Six months after the quake, he joined a rescue unit affiliated to the Shanghai Fire Service, which had saved his life. Later, he was transferred to his hometown, Kaili in Guizhou province, as part of an emergency response team.

"I am able to better understand peoples' feelings of hopelessness and fear during an emergency, because I have been in the same situation," he said.

The work has helped him to realize that it is not easy to become a good rescue worker. Every firefighter is always ready to respond quickly when the alarm bell rings, no matter what they are doing, because "no one knows when the next emergency will come".

At first, the work was new and exciting, and even though Jiang has inevitably settled into a routine, he has never regretted his choice.

Although the upcoming 10th anniversary of the quake means he cannot avoid recalling the disaster, he has devised his own method of dealing with it.

"Every May 12, I talk in my heart to the people who saved me and helped me after the disaster. I report the year's achievements and failures to them," he said, referring to the imaginary conversations he has with his saviors.

"The significance of commemorating the event is that we should improve our rescue services because learning lessons from a disaster can help to prevent us from being harmed again," he added. "I am proud to be a firefighter. For me, the happiest thing in the past 10 years has been better understanding the job and becoming fully integrated with the rescue team. I want to do this work for as long as possible."

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Jiang Yuhang trains a search dog in Kaili, Guizhou province. JIANG HONGJING / XINHUA

Around China

HENAN Teacher suspended for spitting ordeal

A kindergarten teacher, surnamed Zhang, has been suspended after ordering all 17 of her female pupils to line up and spit at a young male classmate in Pingdingshan. Footage showed Zhang leading her class in a round of applause after each spitting. The boy was in tears by the end of the ordeal. Zhang said she just wanted to teach the boy a lesson after he was caught spitting at one of his female classmates. The boy's parents contacted the education authority after learning what had happened to their son. They have since filed a lawsuit against the kindergarten.



due to a land-use feud. A Guolong village head, surnamed Zhuang, said young villagers should no longer suffer from age-old resentment.

NANFANG RURAL DAILY

JIANGSU Icy treat contains vile surprise

A woman, surnamed Yang, who discovered a rat's tail inside her flavored ice rejected a compensation offer of 2,000 yuan (\$315) in Huai'an on May 1. Yang said she was shocked when she found the object after taking a few bites. She immediately returned to the supermarket and asked for compensation of 50,000 yuan, but was denied. She contacted authorities but was told the most she could receive in compensation for a case like hers was 1,000 yuan.

BTIME.COM

SHANGHAI Worker sacked for wearing shorts

A man in Hongkou, surnamed Jin, has demanded compensation from his ex-boss after he was sacked last year for repeat-

edly wearing shorts to work. Jin is suing for 25,000 yuan (\$3,930) in damages. He has accused his former employer of violating labor laws and regulations, while it countered that Jin had breached company regulations because he had been told when he was hired in 2016 that he would not be allowed to wear shorts to work.

SHANGHAI TV STATION

SHAANXI Man beaten for forgetting hi-fi

A man, surnamed Wang, was beaten after he forgot to take a hi-fi to a square for a public dance session in Xi'an. Wang had pitched in with another man, surnamed Zhou, and other dance partners to purchase a hi-fi this month. But Zhou and three other dancers rushed to his barbershop and beat him, bruising his head, after he failed to take the hi-fi to a square in the city's Chang'an district on the night of May 6. Police arrived at the scene and took them all to a nearby substitution for questioning.

BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



Roses bring riches to flower innovator

A man in Southwest China is learning that a rose by any other name perhaps smells sweeter after all.

After three decades in the flower trade, Yang Yuyong's business is blossoming, and he was even given the right to name a variety of Chinese rose — *bingqing*, or "icy clear".

Yang, 63, now calls Yunnan province home — where the mild climate has allowed the cultivation of a booming floral market.

The province has 200,000 flower growers, creating 800,000 sector-related jobs. Commercial flower plantations cover over 100,000 hectares. Last year, the market in Yunnan was worth about 50 billion yuan (\$8 billion). "Spring is the busiest season as that's when we experiment with new varieties of hydrangea and roses, including domestic varieties," Yang said.

He learned flower growing in his native Northeast China from his father, and was the first to register a trademark for a Chinese rose.

To expand his business after initial success, Yang relocated to Yunnan in 1998, aiming for a broader overseas market. Now he watches over 80 hectares of flowers in Yuxi.



Women gather rose petals at a plantation in Anning, Yunnan province. The province has 200,000 flower growers, creating 800,000 sector-related jobs. WONG CAMPION / FOR CHINA DAILY

"When I came to Yunnan, most flowers on the market were ordinary at best, not good enough for export," he said.

He started to work for French company Meilland International in 1999. "Until 2008, we exported over 20 million yuan in flowers each year, but our business shrank during the global financial crisis," he said.

Farmers like Yang now concentrate on developing new varieties. He holds 39 patents for rose varieties, and nine for hydrangeas.

"It takes a great deal of investment and manpower to come up with new strains, but the government has helped me," he said.

Yang is exempt from 600,000 yuan in taxes each year as support for innovation. But these new varieties of flowers are too expensive to cultivate for most growers who are required to pay royalties on registered varieties.

"Most think they are too expensive and the stakes are too high," said Zhang Li, head of an international floral auction center in Kunming, capital of Yunnan.

Beginning in 2006, the center has waived patent fees on seeds, only charging royalties to flower growers when their products are sold.

ease-resistant and command higher selling prices," Zhang said.

Last year, close to 4,000 farmers planted patented roses, paying 8.5 million yuan in fees through the center. Yang himself collected 200,000 yuan in royalties last year.

"Intellectual property rights are ultimately productive forces. Patented products will eventually be accepted by more people," he said.

China is the world's largest producer and consumer of flowers, with 13,300 square kilometers of flower fields. Sales stood at 139 billion yuan in 2016.

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