

## Ecology and economic growth go hand-in-hand

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhong Liangsheng, a beekeeper in Wuping county in Longyan city of Fujian province, said he believes ecological protection and economic development are not contradictory to each other. Instead, the two can create mutual benefits.

"The green landscape is our biggest gold mine," he said.

Zhong's bee cooperative reaped over 10 million yuan (\$1.45 million) in annual output value.

As a veteran from the army, Zhong was first hired as forest ranger in Wuping back in 1998. His job was to dissuade and report unlawful felling.



The green landscape is our biggest gold mine."

Zhong Liangsheng, a beekeeper in Wuping county

In 2001, Wuping became one of the first counties in China to conduct forestry reformation and allow local farmers to operate tree farms around their homes.

To increase income for the family and bring wealth to more people, Zhong established a bee cooperative in 2011, where some 300 workers raise bees and sell honey to customers in Fujian, Beijing and Hong Kong.

"Good ecology is the best resources for companies like ours," he said.

Wuping county now has about 216,000 hectares of forest land and forest coverage reached 79.7 percent.

As a national forest economy demonstration base, Wuping encourages farmers to join forest-related business, such as planting, breeding, products' processing and sightseeing.

Fujian province is continuing its reforms on forestry-related policies, to better protect ecology and boost the regional economy. The aim is to balance ecological reservation with economic development, an official from the provincial forestry bureau said.

More methods will be released to solve challenges, which include the scattering of forestry resources, difficulty for foresters to receive loans and the expansion of business.

In December 2018, the first "forestry ecology bank" was opened in Shunchang county of Nanping city of Fujian.

It helps integrate the tree farms scattered in the county by entrusted management, purchase, rental and mortgage guarantees, said Zhao Gangyuan, head of the state-owned forest farm in Shunchang, which operates the bank.

In Jiangle county in the west of Fujian, there are about 13,000 hectares of bamboo forests. Local residents can get income from the carbon trading business, according to the county's officials.

# Fujian puts environment before economic gain

Area leading the way as China's first national-level ecological civilization pilot zone



With lush vegetation, Bihu Park in Zhangzhou city is a demonstration of the local government's efforts to improve ecology. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

In a report on ecological development of China's various regions, which was released by the Chinese Academy of Engineering in April, Fujian was ranked the first with a mark of 75.73 points.

The report was based on surveys of the regions' level of "ecological civilization" — a Chinese expression for performance in ecological development — during 2015-17.

The ecological civilization index is a weighted average index number of 17 subindices including: ecological environment, air quality, water quality, per capital GD, pollution control, coverage of green plants and total area of natural reserves.

The report said a mark of 80 points meant a performance on par with a world-leading level. Fujian's performance is close to that.

Fujian is followed by Zhejiang

province with a mark of 75.43 points and Chongqing municipality with 74.81 points.

Fujian's coastal city of Xiamen ranked No 1 among all the Chinese cities in this report, with a mark of more than 80 points. This means its ecological performance has reached a world-leading level.

In a recent survey made by the State Forestry and Grassland Administration, Fujian's forest coverage reached 66.8 percent. It grew 0.85 percentage points from the previous survey and has ranked first in the country for 40 years in a row.

The ranks of Fujian and Xiamen are hailed by locals as proof of the province's achievements in developing a national-level ecological civilization pilot zone.

In June 2016, Fujian was approved by the central government as the country's first national-level ecological civilization pilot

zone.

Since then, Fujian has carried out 38 reforms for this purpose. Eighteen practices have been studied and copied by Chinese regions. One is a tighter assessment of the environmental effect caused by investment projects.

In Guangze county in the northwest of Fujian, the government of Lifang township recently rejected a project proposed by a businessman outside the county.

The businessman intended to build an eel cultivation farm valued at 30 billion yuan (\$4.38 million) near the Xixi Stream, a tributary of Fujian's largest river Minjiang.

The township government's appraisal deemed the project likely to affect the water environment. The investment proposal was denied.

Guangze county's government leaders, as well as officials in the rest of Fujian, are required to link



From left: Tourists take a rafting tour on a river in the Jiulongtan scenic area in Taining county. DUAN CHANGZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY  
Primary school students are taught about beekeepers' work during a study tour in Jian'ou city. WEI YONGQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

“WE ARE STILL EXPLORING NEW APPROACHES, FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF BOTH THE ECOLOGY AND FARMERS' RIGHTS.”

Yang Yongquan, official at the forestry bureau in Wuping county

## Green revolution turning counties' fortunes around

By LIANG KAIYAN

### 10 million yuan

The annual investment from the provincial government to help Changing in soil erosion control

from 59.8 percent in 1986 to 79.8 percent in 2017. As a result, the soil erosion rate decreased, according to the county's forestry bureau.

In 2016, Fujian provincial government called on other regions to learn from Changing's experience in environmental protection and sustainable development.

Changing's neighboring county, Ninghua used to be the second-most serious soil-eroded area in Fujian province.

In 2012, the county government spent 5 million yuan setting up a com-

pany to conserve water in a bid to help control soil erosion.

With the company's help, the Shibi township adopted a new type of environmental protection method that features tree planting and engineering measures. Just three years later, forest coverage in Shibi reached 85 percent and the area of sandy land was reduced by 70 percent, according to local officials.

In Datian, the traditional mining county in central Fujian, the government has highlighted what can be done with its deserted mines. The government has cooperated with the province's research institution for the ecological restoration of mines. Some of the mining areas have been transformed into forests, farms, parks and ecotourism destinations.

Yongding district of Longyan city is home to a number of tulous, the special residential buildings included

on UNESCO's world heritage list. The district has combined soil erosion prevention with development of tourism facilities. Trees and grasses have been planted in scenic areas and along roads. Farmland on mountain slopes have been turned in forests.

Jianning county, at the source of the Minjiang River, has focused on the dairy industry after solving its soil erosion. Dairy is a sector that demands a sound ecological environment.

The county has developed a high-tech, ecological-friendly dairy industry park at a total investment of 2.67 billion yuan.

"The sound ecological environment now is the core competitiveness of the county to attract big dairy industry projects," said Zheng Jianbo, Party secretary of the county.

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From top: After a decade of improvement, the Mulan Stream has become a scenic river in Putian city. WEI YONGQING / FOR CHINA DAILY  
A tea farm dotted with sakura flowers in Zhangping city has become a popular destination for tourists. WANG MIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Protecting ecosystem with environment-friendly policies

By SONG MENGXING

Mountains and rivers are commonly seen in Fujian, making natural preservation a significant priority of the province in East China. Fujian's forestry authorities want to do more to improve the region's ecology.

Woods are among the most important means of production in Fujian's rural areas and also offer the most potential for farmers to increase income.

Representatives from the provincial forestry bureau said Fujian has released four guideline documents on promoting forestry reform since 2014. It is fostering new business entities and leading private capital to cooperate with foresters, insiders said.

To date, the province is home to more than 5,200 new-type business

entities involving professional forestry cooperatives and household tree farms.

Development of the forestry industry needs financial support, insiders said. Fujian encourages using forest rights as collateral to obtain loans and other financial services.

The province is a forerunner nationally for tree farm reform in major ecological areas. The local governments have bought or rented such forests for nature reserves and other ecological zones, where logging is restricted, to balance ecological protection with foresters' interests. Fujian has piloted such a practice for tree farms, which has a total area of 272,000 mu or 18,133 hectares, since 2016.

Other forms of forestry reform can also be seen in Fujian. The province integrated some State-owned

### 75.73 points

The mark that makes Fujian No 1 in the Chinese Academy of Engineering report for ecological development performance in China

meant that logging was forbidden, according to law.

In Wuping, there are a total of 5,600 hectares of tree farms included in various reserves for ecological protection. Logging is not allowed.

To compensate the farm owners, the local government purchased the operational rights of the affected farms.

"The purchase is about 22,500 yuan a hectare and the price is acceptable," Liang said.

He added that he can continue to utilize or develop the under-forest resources in the farm. For

instance, cultivating medical herbs, fruit shrubs and fungi, as well as raising animals like chickens and goats.

According to Liu Ziyin, an official at the local forestry administration, renting the tree farms is another option of the government.

"We are still exploring new approaches, for better protection of both the ecology and farmers' rights," added Yang Yongquan, another local forestry official.

To aid the government's application of new measures for developing the Fujian ecological pilot zone, nine local universities and research institutions forged an ecological civilization think tank in November 2018.

The think tank will use the members' research to conduct more systematic and feasible studies to help the government in decision-making, according to its founding declaration.

### 473,000 hectares

of trees have been planted on the mountains in Fujian province since 2014

tree farms, reducing the number of such farms from 235 to 129 in three years. Employee income in the farms increased and infrastructure was improved during that period.

In recent years, Fujian has promoted afforestation in mountainous areas, cities, countrysides and also on the coasts. The province encourages planting trees around dwellings, roads, villages and waters.

More precious broad-leaf species have been planted for afforestation and ecological landscape belts have been built in forests.

Statistics showed the province planted 473,000 hectares of trees on the mountains and 14,200 hectares of trees in villages and towns since 2014.

Local authorities also highlighted scientific management of forests. They imposed a quota on cutting trees on the mountain slopes to avoid water erosion and increase forest coverage.

In 2014, they closed mountain slopes of about 7,000 square kilometers to avoid logging.

Greening projects in cities and towns are also a focus of Fujian's forestry authorities. They aim to have 100 forest cities and towns, improve 100 urban forest parks and build 100 urban afforestation demonstration areas by the end of 2022.

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## Wuyishan focuses on cultural tourism

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Wuyishan, a city in East China's Fujian province, is developing green tourism to attract more visitors and promote high-quality local development.

The city's tourism revenue reached about 30.8 billion yuan (\$4.49 billion) last year. But most tourists only visit for a one-day tour of the city, spending that time on activities related to tea, a pillar industry in Wuyishan.

Wuyishan plans to upgrade its tourism industry by transforming from sightseeing to leisure tours, from tea-focused tourism to cultural experiences, and also enlarging the traveling area across the city.

Seven projects, with an investment of 5.68 billion yuan, kicked off last month. That involved an international tourist resort, high-end hotels, shopping facilities and more, to upgrade the local tourism industry.

The Jialong International Tourist Resort, for example, will have a giant panda base, a circus park, a zoo and an animal-themed hotel. The 466.6-hectare large resort will combine entertainment, shopping, catering, education and performance.

The Wuyistar Tea Park will organize activities such as academic study, tea ceremony training, as well as industrial and agricultural sightseeing.

Guo Yuanhai, deputy general manager of Wuyistar, said: "Though the output value of tea in the company has reached over 100 million yuan, selling tea only is not enough. Instead, we should develop a leisure tour area based on experience of the tea culture."

Millennium Resort Wuyishan, one of the luxurious hotels, introduced a top-level management team from the headquarters of the brand.

The resort hotel invested by Shima Group, is expected to introduce the local natural landscape into its decoration and design, according to Wang Yuansheng, director of the city's development, reform and technology bureau.

The Wufu town of Wuyishan has become a hot spot for investors in the tourism industry, as eight cultural tourism-related projects and 12 agricultural tourism-related projects have been operational there.

"The Wufu town is expected to be a new driver for the local economy," said Li Xiaoyong, head of the township government.

Wuyishan also plans to offer diversified tourism products such as rural tours, sports and family trips.

"The multiple products aim to enrich experiences for visitors and promote high-quality development of the local tourism industry," said Zhang Xianjun, deputy mayor of Wuyishan.

The city welcomed more than 320,000 visits during this year's May Day period, up 96 percent year-on-year. Tourism revenue reached 340 million yuan, 108 percent higher than the same period in 2018.

