

BUSINESS

Guizhou takes the green road to growth

Province banks on big data tech to advance high-quality development

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG** in Beijing and **YANG JUN** in Guiyang

Guizhou province in Southwest China is banking on transforming the local agricultural industry, providing roads to every village, and further integrating the big data sector with the real economy to advance its high-quality development, according to provincial officials.

The province has been ranked among the top three regions in China in terms of economic growth. It reported a growth of 9.1 percent for last year.

Chen Shaobo, director of the Guizhou Provincial Development and Reform Commission, said the province is looking to sustain the high-quality development model by using technology such as big data, poverty alleviation measures, optimizing the economic structure and embracing green industries.

Guizhou is the country's first pilot province experimenting with big data technology and it is setting up the country's first national big data lab and innovation center as well as the integration appraisal system for big data and real economy.

Supporting the local big data entrepreneurs and ensuring wider participation from the public are key to the continued development of the big data industry in the province, said Chen.

"Only by planting the big data gene into our entire social operations — businesses, civil affairs and political agenda, can the big data industry last longer and grow more steadily," said Chen.

In 2017, US tech giant Apple Inc established its data center in Guizhou, followed by other technology giants like Alibaba, Foxconn, Baidu and Huawei.

Guizhou, a mountainous region,

has much cooler weather and stable geographic conditions than many other places in the country and as such provides natural strengths to telecommunication companies and big data firms, he said.

How to further enhance the integration of the big data technology and the local industries and businesses is the priority for the provincial government, he added.

The province has more than 9,500 enterprises that have applied big data technology, and about 10,000 companies are using cloud technology, becoming a major new economic engine for the province.

For example, Guizhou Fa'er Coal Mine Co, a coal-mining operator since 2003, has reconstructed its manufacturing facilities through big data updates, with production capacities growing by more than 1,100 metric tons and efficiency up by 47 percent.

Chen said friendlier policies to develop the big data and technology sector have attracted an increasing number of talents to Guizhou and they are the real driving force for growth.

Meanwhile, "to develop a strong and modernized economy in Guizhou requires a deep reform in industries and in technology," he said.

The province has updated its traditional corn farming industry with more cash crops and plants. Last year, the province's agricultural sector grew 6.8 percent year-on-year, an eye-catching speed for the primary industry.

Per capita disposable income in urban and rural areas have grown 8.6 percent and 9.6 percent year-on-year respectively, he said.

Under the poverty alleviation programs in the province, nearly 2 million farmers earned more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,490) every year by growing tea, pepper and dragon fruit.



Farmers pick tea leaves at a plantation in Shiqian county, Guizhou province. The province has been growing more cash crops and plants in lieu of corn, as part of efforts to transform its agricultural industry. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Chen Shaobo, director of the Guizhou Provincial Development and Reform Commission

In Zunyi city, cash crops like pepper, mushrooms, and vegetables are widely replacing traditional staples like corn.

Turnover from corn cultivated on 0.06 hectare is about 790 yuan, said Wei Shuwang, mayor of Zunyi.

But by planting vegetables, the same turnover can reach 4,160 yuan, 5.3 times more than growing corn.

This year, the city is increasing the area under cultivation for pepper, bamboo, red sorghum and traditional Chinese medicine plants to develop a green economy and increase farmers' income, said the mayor.

The province is also encouraging a smart agricultural industry by using big data to develop its farming technology and improve its business turnover. For instance, a weather information collection system, smart irrigation systems and a pest control system have helped reduce about 36.5 percent of the labor costs in a kiwi planting center in Shuicheng county of the province. Big data can serve as an impetus for agricultural management, production and marketing.

"Poverty alleviation is the top priority in Guizhou. Our focus is on

how to achieve balanced development," Chen said.

The province has helped lift 7.68 million people out of poverty, the largest number of people lifted out of poverty in the country.

The result is largely due to the efficient implementation of the relocation projects, agricultural reforms, e-commerce businesses in rural areas and large-scale construction of expressways to improve overall connectivity in the province.

Last year, the province relocated 1.32 million people from their hometowns, which mostly sit in the remote mountainous regions and lack electricity and roads. This year, it plans to relocate 560,000 people, while the poverty alleviation target is about 1.1 million people.

Success of the poverty alleviation efforts, however, depends on the success of the ongoing comprehensive transportation system, attracting more businesses from outside or selling agricultural products

through e-commerce platforms, said the director.

The challenge is how to develop infrastructure facilities that connect every village in the province and pave the way for the "last mile" connectivity in remote mountainous regions, he added.

In addition to building roads, through the development of telecommunications and big data technologies, remote medical treatment and diagnosis have also played a major part in solving the medical problems of patients in remote areas.

Chen said: "The province will turn away companies that can cause huge pollution and reject businesses with bad credit records, so as to focus on high-quality development through digital innovation and measures to improve social welfare of the people."

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Xi'an's rural revitalization program lifts farming villages out of poverty

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Declaring that villages and their residents are a top economic priority, the local government of Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province, is committed to further boosting a rural revitalization strategy through a series of key initiatives in poverty alleviation.

"We should advance the supply-side structural reform in agricultural areas, improve the living environment for farmers and renovate poor villages," said Gao Gao, vice-mayor of Xi'an, during the second Xi'an Farmers Festival, held on March 8 in Tangcun village, Changan district.

Themed "inheriting the agricultural culture, building beautiful villages, caring for farmers and boosting the rural revitalization", the event strived to create a harmonious atmosphere and showcase the latest achievements in the agricultural industry as well as the development of farming villages.

Hu Wei, awarded as one of the "Top 10 Most Beautiful Farmers" during the festival, is not only a master in breeding but also a pioneer in advancing the agriculture sector with his own thinking. He referred to a new development mode to combine the local government, agricultural enterprises and poor households.

Hu has developed 39 households specialized in breeding chickens and built two aquaculture gardens for broiler chickens, with annual production surpassing 1 million.

Another winner of the award is Guo Yingwu, who has led more than 150 households on the road to prosperity in the past decade.

Starting from a some 2-hectare melon planting cooperative in 2009, Guo's business has grown into a 66.6-hectare industrial park with more than a dozen varieties of melons. Guo has accomplished this by focusing on brand building, applying new technologies and state-of-the-art facilities, and upgrading management.

"Based on the professionalism and mature technologies, both the quality and quantity of our products have



The scenery of cole flower fields is a must-see in Lantian county, Xi'an. DOUYIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

been largely improved," Guo said.

Guo added that despite making technological breakthroughs, innovating marketing strategy and a brand image are also very important. To increase added value, the cooperative has paid a great deal of attention to packaging.

"After last year's event, our products have gained increased awareness from the public. We have also expanded our marketing channels through the 'internet plus agriculture' e-commerce platforms, forming a new sales model that integrates online and offline marketing," Guo said.

Statistics show that Xi'an lifted

142 villagers, 14,534 households, and 41,211 people out of poverty in 2018. The incidence of poverty declined from 1.28 percent to 0.23 percent.

Su Xinyao, deputy director of the Xi'an agriculture and forestry commission, said that developing industries is also the key to poverty alleviation.

By the end of 2018, Xi'an had constructed more than 100 marketing entities and modern agriculture industrial parks and developed over 1,000 mid-income households in poor areas.

To date, the number of the city's marketing entities and modern agriculture industrial parks has reached 532, and they have established close ties with poor families.

Relying on the farmers' specialized cooperative organizations and leading agricultural enterprises, Xi'an is seeing the high-quality industrial development of its modern agriculture.

Since 2018, Xi'an has added 496

farmers' specialized cooperative organizations, 426 modern agricultural industrial parks, two provincial-level modern agricultural industrial parks and 171 leading agricultural enterprises.

Based on their high-quality agricultural products, those cooperative organizations, industrial parks and leading enterprises have upgraded the agricultural industrial chains and cultivated a batch of modern farmers.

Beautiful villages

Building beautiful villages is another vital approach for Xi'an to implement the strategy of rural revitalization and enhance people's sense of happiness through localized plans.

One example is the Qingshitou village in the city's Changan district, which is famous for its peach flower festival and good living environment.

To expand its tourism industrial

chain, the village has initiated the "Taoyuan farmhouse" demonstrative project, one of the key farm stays in the district, attracting hundreds of visitors in March every year.

Other initiatives include planting hedgerows, greening streets, wooden fences and cultural walls and launching environmental programs such as garbage collection, sewage control and toilet improvement.

The village's pillar agricultural products — Wangmang peaches, fresh lotus roots, organic rice and kiwis — help increase farmers' income.

Last year, Xi'an's rural tourism, which features 10 top-quality tourist routes, witnessed robust growth. The number of tourists reached 26.5 million, generating revenue of 2.67 billion yuan (\$398 million).

"We should further carry out the rural revitalization strategy to boost the agricultural industry, increase farmers' income and make villages more beautiful," said the vice-mayor.

Innovative models

Developing industries is the basis for targeted poverty alleviation. In recent years, Xi'an has exerted great efforts in innovating new models to lift more people out of poverty.

One of those models is the all-round industrial-driven one, which combines the local government, leading enterprises, supply and marketing organizations with poor households. Another model is to establish specialized cooperatives. One example is the Zhouyi village in Zhouzhi county, which is famous for its organic kiwi.

The village is renowned for its organic kiwi on Alibaba's e-commerce platform Taobao. To encourage more poor households to take part in the online market, the local government has strengthened its cooperation with internet giants including JD and launched e-commerce training for enterprises, cooperatives and farmers. To date, the number of registered online kiwi stores has reached more than 500.

Xi'an has launched its first batch of bee-breeding poverty alleviation projects involving a total of 265 poor households under the cooperative model between local government and social capital. Enterprises will offer support for poor households such as special training, management, product acquisition and other services to provide high-quality bee-related products and play a part in poverty relief. Shuian Road in Lantian county has developed 15 poverty alleviation industrial parks with 232 poor households. The region integrates targeted poverty alleviation into tourism and modern agriculture through a series of interactive projects in ecological agriculture, sightseeing and green products.