

Hainan sows seeds of cooperation

Province reaches out to global Belt and Road partners with top-quality agricultural products, technologies



Fields featuring 31 major hybrid rice varieties grown in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative are attracting crowds of tourists at the Sanya Haitang Bay Paddy Field National Park. The 186-hectare national park boasts a total of 500 rice varieties and demonstrates good integration of agriculture and tourism. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

China's southern province of Hainan is using policies granted by the central government as well as its tropical resources to set up more exchange platforms and expand cooperation with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, according to provincial government officials.

Hainan will highlight the role of agriculture. Efforts are being made to promote the island as a national tropical agricultural science center, a transport hub of global animal and plant germ plasm resources, a pilot zone for eco-agriculture and a platform supporting exchanges, said the officials.

Hainan's advantage lies in its tropical resources, allowing Hainan to push tropical agricultural collaboration with countries taking part in the initiative, said Liu Cigui, Party secretary of Hainan province. He made the comments during a visit to the China (Hainan) International Winter Trade Fair for Tropical Agricultural Products. The fair attracted more than 6,000 visitors in December.

He said Hainan can bring more benefits to people in countries and regions involved in the initiative by selecting and cultivating high-quality plants, optimizing agricultural structures and liberalizing the agricultural market.

A total of 138 companies from 34 countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative participated in the fair. They brought with them 400 kinds of products — Brazilian steak, Malaysian Elvis Durian, Vietnamese coffee, French wine, latex mattresses from Thailand, Sri Lanka's black tea, Bulgarian rose oil and Nepalese exquisite crafts.

"Sri Lanka and Hainan have similar farming patterns. We hope Hainan will bring more advanced planting and processing technologies to Sri Lanka, to help us increase crop yields and industrialize our traditional tropical agriculture," said a Sri Lankan official at the fair.

Liu said the growing influence of the winter fair, which was launched 21 years ago, indicated bright prospects. This is in terms of cooperation and advanced agriculture techniques and plant exchanges between Hainan and countries taking part in the BRI.

Overseas investors have shown keen interest in Hainan, especially its agricultural market. In April

Plan for Hainan's agriculture industry (2018-25)

Foster 30 influential brands

Build 100 bases for quality seeds and seedlings

Create 100 demonstration parks

Total annual output value of specialized farm produce to reach 100 billion yuan (\$14.9 billion)

Source: Hainan Daily



2018, the central government decided to make the island a free-trade zone. They will gradually develop it into a free trade port with Chinese characteristics.

Pule, a major farm produce company in Australia, runs a branch company in Haikou, the capital of Hainan. "We will introduce Hainan's seedless litchi to Australia while bringing Australian mango to Hainan. We are preparing a base here to introduce more agricultural products, such as broccoli, blueberry and sweet pepper from Australia," said Ji Zhaozhi, chairman of the company.

"Development of the Hainan Free Trade Zone will expand market access and attract more foreign investors to Hainan's seed industry and farm produce processing," said Xu Zhongyuan, deputy director of the trade promotion center under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Xu said the ministry supports Hainan in developing export bases for produce to help grow agriculture in the province.

The local government is building an international trade and shipping hub. It is also promoting the connection of air and sea routes between Hainan and the countries and regions involved in the BRI. This will cut logistical costs of agricultural produce and help agricultural trade, he said.

"The Chinese Academy of Sciences will join Hainan in building a pilot seed industry. We will work together to develop a demonstration park for agricultural technology innovation and transfer of hybrid rice to countries involved in the BRI," said Cao Jinghua, director of the international cooperation department with the academy.

Sanya, a city at the southern tip of Hainan, plays an important role in the development of hybrid

rice. The cereal has since spread to more than 30 countries, especially Southeast Asian countries. The total crop area of hybrid rice is more than 7 million hectares worldwide by now, providing food to millions of people.

Hainan's tropical climate and rich biological resources have made it an important national center of seed propagation. Every winter, more than 7,000 domestic agricultural scientists and employees work at the off-season breeding centers, with Sanya as the main base.

A batch of Chinese seed-breeding enterprises have set up research and breeding bases in countries taking part in the BRI. The overseas seeds research and development center of Yuan Long Ping High-Tech Agriculture has established seven breeding stations in the Philippines, India and other countries. Tianjin Tianlong Technology, by relying on the Hainan National South China Breeding Research and Development Service Platform, has established an Asian Agricultural Technology Center in Indonesia and introduced its products to European and American markets.

Xu Yun, director of the Hainan provincial agricultural and rural affairs department, said Hainan's climate and China's technical know-how in hybrid rice will help Chinese seed propagation companies play a bigger role in implementing the BRI.

Hainan is building the National

(Qionghai) Pilot Zone for International Agricultural Cooperation and the China-Cambodia Tropical Eco-farming Cooperation Demonstration Zone. The province has also launched programs of technological transfer and training for these countries, with support from the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences.

To date, Hainan has 346 hectares of demonstration bases for banana, pepper, cassava, durian, coconut trees and rubber trees in Kratie, eastern Cambodia, according to official statistics.

In 2019, Hainan will focus its overseas cooperation on seed and seedlings with countries taking part in the BRI, especially Israel, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Thailand, said Xu, director of the Hainan agriculture department.

Hainan will also establish tropical agricultural bases for international scientific and technological cooperation with countries involved in the initiative. Technology transfer and joint research will be strengthened with Southeast Asian countries, African countries and nations in the South Pacific region, according to a report from the province's agriculture department.

By joining hands with the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Hainan will set up bases in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos to help them to develop Chinese herbal medicine.



Farmers in Bhaktapur, near Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, visit a hybrid rice field grown with seeds developed by Chinese scientists in Hainan, which largely improved local food production.

Island boosts international air and sea transport links

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A regular direct flight between Haikou, capital of Hainan province, and Pattaya in Thailand was launched by Hainan United Airlines Travel Group and Thai Lion Air on April 9, the latest and the eighth new international air route opened in Hainan this year.

Thailand is an important country involved in the Belt and Road Initiative and a traditional tourist market for Hainan, with more than 18,495 Thai tourists visiting Hainan last year, an increase of 20.3 percent over 2017, said an official with the Hainan tourism authority.

"Opening the air route will bring new vitality to both markets," said Sun Xiangtao, deputy secretary general of the association of travel agencies in Haikou. "With Pattaya now an attractive destination for European and American tourists, the new air route is expected to help bring more Western tourists to improve Hainan's market structure and make its tourism industry more international."

It's part of Hainan's effort to enhance its international competitiveness and influence via expanding air and sea connectivity with countries and regions involved in the BRI, according to a report from the provincial government.



Tourists from cruise liner MS Westerdam arrive at the Sanya Phoenix Island International Cruise Terminal in January.

Hainan will make special efforts to build a "four-hour flight" economic circle that will cover 21 countries and regions in Asia, which accounts for about 47 percent of the world's population, the report said. An "eight-hour flight" economic circle covering 59 countries and regions in Asia, Oceania, Europe and Africa, which is home to about 67 percent of the world's population, will also be created, according to officials at a recent meeting to mark the first anniversary of the establishment of the Hainan free trade zone.

The Hainan provincial transport department said in its work plan

for 2019 that the island province will continue to promote the opening-up of its transportation sector, develop high-quality cruise routes around Hainan Island, longer cruise tours and more international tourist attractions.

It said construction of the new airport in Sanya will be accelerated and the second-phase expansion of Meilan International Airport in Haikou will be completed, while the preparations for new airports in Danzhou and Dongfang on the western side of the island are under way.

Hainan is preparing to launch more than 14 overseas air routes

this year. It will have more than 70 international direct flights.

In about three years, Hainan's international air routes are expected to increase to 100, with a target of attracting 2 million inbound tourists annually, according to the provincial government.

Hainan will explore new ways of establishing trading centers for international shipping businesses and develop high-end services such as shipping insurance, shipping arbitration and the issuance of freight index, according to the plan from the provincial transportation department.

It said the planning for the Dongfang Airport International Express Center project and construction of the shipping hub at Yangpu Port for the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor will be accelerated to enhance the export-oriented economy in Hainan.

In addition, Hainan will further collaborate with China COSCO Shipping to expand its shipping routes from Hainan to Southeast Asian and South Asian countries, opening routes from Singapore for container ships, and gradually build a service network covering Northeast Asia, North America and Central and South America.

In mid-March, a new policy made it possible for overseas yachts to enter the waters of Hainan and its

adjacent scenic spots with temporary approvals. Previously, the entry of foreign yachts to Hainan was handled by State-level transportation authorities.

Wu Pingsheng, deputy director at the Hainan Maritime Safety Administration, said the new measures also provide easier access for yachts from Hong Kong and Macao to Hainan, with entry and exit approval procedures simplified and requirements for single-voyage certification documents canceled.

The tropical province also started offering 30-day visa-free access to tourists from 59 countries including the United Kingdom, France and Russia in May last year. It has adopted a slew of policies and measures including those that have boosted duty-free business and granted greater economic freedom to foreign companies to help develop the whole island as a free trade zone, and gradually build it into a free trade port with Chinese characteristics.

Hainan received 76.27 million visitors in 2018. Among them, 1.26 million were inbound tourists, a year-on-year increase of 12.9 percent. The island province also greeted 141 inbound cruise liners, up 15 percent over the previous year, according to data from the Hainan provincial tourism, culture, broadcasting and sports departments.

Tropical FTZ steps on the innovation pedal

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Hainan, China's largest free-trade zone with a high level of opening-up, has made considerable progress in creating a favorable environment for innovation, according to local officials.

They said the improved business environment, better intellectual property protection and diversity in financial products were among the achievements made by the FTZ. It is the 12th such zone since last April when the central government released plans to make the province a pilot FTZ. It will also explore building the area as a free-trade port with Chinese characteristics.

Liu Cigui, Party secretary of Hainan, said institutional innovation is the core task for Hainan in the construction of the pilot FTZ. Through efforts in institutional innovation, Hainan will deepen reform and opening-up and create a business environment characterized by rule of law, internationalization and support.

To vitalize the market, Hainan has simplified the business registration process on its online platform. Verification time has been shortened to just three days. Manual verification is only required for special cases, said Zhang Dongbin, director of the provincial market supervision bureau.

Innovation in financing for intellectual property has also seen progress in Hainan with the island province issuing the country's first intellectual property asset securities late last year. The plan is to raise 470 million yuan (\$70 million) of funds. This is considered a new model for the protection of intellectual property rights and a new financing tool for small and medium-sized enterprises.

On Jan 1, the Hainan Free Trade Account was launched to promote financial support. It is a convertible accounting system with renminbi as its base currency, using unified accounting rules and taking into account types of different risk management between RMB and foreign currencies.

"Hainan's new open economy system is growing fast and a new pattern of comprehensive opening-up is unfolding in a fast manner."

Sun Dahai, deputy secretary-general of the CPC Hainan Provincial Committee

Also in January, Hainan set up the country's first trading center for international tropical agricultural products. It aims to build a digital platform to help introduce more tropical agricultural products from Hainan and overseas countries for trading, said an official with Hainan State Farms Investment Holdings Group.

Hainan has made a good start in establishing a well-linked administrative mechanism. It has introduced many headquarters economy-related projects and overseas human resources in boosting further opening-up, said Sun Dahai, deputy secretary-general of the Communist Party of China Hainan Provincial Committee.

The new policies and measures have attracted a large number of overseas investors, including 27 Fortune Global 500 companies, which have established regional headquarters or business projects in Hainan FTZ.

"Hainan's new open economy system is growing fast and a new pattern of comprehensive opening-up is unfolding in a fast manner," said Sun.