

Hainan special



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Li Guoliang (middle), vice-governor of Hainan, with Xu Hubin (right), deputy permanent representative of the China Pavilion, at the Hainan Day event at Milan Expo.

Hainan looks to Italy to strengthen EU links

MILAN EXPO EVENT SHOWCASES THE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, CULTURE AND ART OF CHINA'S TROPICAL ISLAND

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To further its strategic development plan, Hainan province, at the southern tip of China, is looking to strengthen its links with Europe, particularly Italy.

The most recent effort was with Hainan Day at the ongoing Milan Expo.

Li Guoliang, vice-governor of Hainan, led a delegation to the event that included the provincial Deputy Director of Agriculture Wang Hongliang, Deputy Director of Commerce Li Longsheng, and Yao Haichang, the vice-chairman of the provincial branch of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, to create a high-level platform for enterprises in Hainan and Italy to strike trade deals.

The island is welcoming more global enterprises to work with local businesses, the vice-governor said at the expo's China Pavilion.

Hainan, which has a tropical marine monsoon climate with abundant sunlight and high temperatures, is rich in flora and fauna and is considered the perfect place for developing tropical, high-efficiency agriculture.

In recent years, Hainan has further



A Li ethnic woman shows brocade techniques at the China Pavilion at the Milan Expo.

enhanced its business ties with Italy. The trade value amounted to 103 million euros (\$114 million) last year compared with 90 million euros in 2012, an increase of 15 percent.

Li Longsheng, the commerce official, believes there is a wide range of areas where Hainan and Italy can work together.

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the amount of trade value between Hainan and Italy last year

"Italy is a major producer of EU agricultural products, with advanced management technology and high-level industrial standards, while Hainan is China's important agricultural supplier of winter vegetables," he says.

As a result, he adds, the island hopes to strengthen cooperation with Italy in the fields of food

processing, agricultural standardized production procedures, quality and safety regulations, agricultural production and management technology, and leisure and eco-agriculture.

Hainan, a major maritime province, is looking to cooperate with Italy in yacht design, development and manufacturing to meet the needs of international yacht construction, cruise terminal facilities and supporting services.

"Following the path of green and ecological development, our province strives to develop the advantageous industries such as winter vegetables, tropical fruits, modern seed industry, seafood products and high-quality livestock husbandry," vice-governor Li Guoliang said at the opening ceremony for Hainan Day. "Hainan's agricultural products are sold in more than 170 Chinese cities and exported to Europe, the United States, Japan, and 40 other countries and regions."

"The province has attached great importance to Hainan Day, and we will make the best of this opportunity to actively learn from other countries' successful experiences in developing agricultural economy, fully demonstrate the incredible charm and bright prospects of Hainan, and promote the cooperation between Italy and Hainan province in fields such as agricul-

ture, tourism, commerce and culture."

Niu Dun, China's permanent representative to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, said: "Eco-agriculture, as a major part of Chinese agriculture, is a good demonstration of sustainable and environment-friendly agricultural development."

"Hainan is a major agricultural province and its mode has been promoted as a good agricultural development example at the FAO."

As a European Union agricultural powerhouse, Italy's collaboration with Chinese provinces was win-win cooperation, Niu said. "We're happy to provide assistance for the two sides to carry out agricultural cooperation and hope the bilateral cooperation bears fruitful results."

The unique culture and art of ethnic groups on the island province were also showcased during Hainan Day. Women of the Li ethnic group displayed traditional brocade techniques at the China Pavilion. Woven from the fiber from kapok tree fruit, Li brocade is one of the country's earliest known textiles.

Belt and Road Initiative

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, Hainan also occupies a strategic spot due to its geographic location.

President Xi Jinping proposed the strategy, which includes the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, in 2013.

The belt is to be established along the ancient Silk Road trade route, stretching northwest from China's coastal areas through Central Asia to Europe, while the maritime route will run from China's south to Southeast Asia, Europe and Africa.

Vice-Governor Li Guoliang said the initiative provides great opportunities for Hainan to deepen its relationships with Italy and other countries along the belt.

"Italy is the terminal point of the ancient Silk Road, and also the meeting point of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," Wang Dong, the Chinese consul general in Milan, said in a speech during Hainan Day. "Meanwhile, Hainan is the maritime frontier for China to interact with other nations, acting as the service base for the maritime Silk Road."

Hainan will take full advantage of the Belt and Road Initiative, she added.

As part of the initiative, Hainan Airlines, China's fourth-largest carrier, launched a route connecting Chongqing to Rome. "It is important for Hainan Airlines to connect the two cities located along the Silk Road," said Li Guoliang.

During the Milan Expo, the Hainan delegation also visited Lombardy, one of the biggest regions in northwest Italy, which has a rich agricultural sector, to study its fruit and vegetable processing technology, livestock breeding, processing and selling methods, as well as its leisure and agricultural management concepts.

The delegation also signed a memorandum of understanding with Lombardy's regional government at the China-Hainan Ecological Agriculture Promotion Conference. Angelo Ciocca, a regional government councillor, says he is excited about the signing and is looking forward to converting the agreement into real action.