

Jilin special

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Northeast China's Jilin province is recognized as a premium region for grain plantation. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Growing in the field, cultivating the market

Northeastern province consolidates businesses, hones its skills to become recognized as premier producer of the staple food, **Dong Jidong** and **Liu Mingtai** report.

Northeast China's Jilin province, one of the major grain-producing regions in the country, has taken steps to promote its rice brands over recent years.

The rice plantation area in the province totals 800,000 hectares, and the annual output of rice stands at 6 million metric tons, according to the province's grain department.

"Jilin's rice industry features three advantages — high-quality rice varieties, an ideal geographical location and strong capabilities in production and processing," said Yang Guang, deputy chief of the Jilin grain department, at an agricultural summit held on the sidelines of the Changchun Agriculture and Food Expo in August.

The province is located at 40-46 degrees north latitude, widely recognized as the premium region for grain plantation, Yang said. The fertile black soil and irrigation of the rivers of Songhua and Liaohe also contribute to the rice's high quality, he said.

In March last year, President Xi Jinping praised Jilin rice as the top brand, speaking highly of its taste and quality during the annual sessions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top legislature and political advisory bodies.

However, the province's rice industry used to suffer from thorny issues of low prices and low processing capability. Jilin lagged behind neighboring provinces in building its own brands and merging its rice processing enterprises, according to industry insiders.

Heilongjiang, another province in Northeast China, started to integrate its rice-related resources and brands in 2001, while Jilin began doing that in 2014.

There used to be more

than 900 rice brands in Jilin, and most of its rice processing enterprises were small and scattered throughout the province.

In 2014, the province started to cultivate brands of geographical indication and restructured its rice processing industry.

To date, seven rice brands in Jilin, including Meihe and Wanchang, have been named National Protected Geographical Indication Products. Nine others, including Jiangjiadian, Huinan and Xijiang, have gained geographical indication status. The province has also established an industrial alliance for rice producers, which is comprised of 33 enterprises, including 26 rice-producing enterprises, three distributors and one e-commerce platform.

In July last year, when Xi visited Jilin, he checked the crops' growth in the paddy fields and urged the province to make its rice brands better-known so that farmers could increase their income. As a result, the provincial grain department set a goal of making the Jilin rice a name card of the province and accelerated efforts to build up its rice brands.

Jilin has stepped up promotion of its rice products since 2014. The provincial government branded all of its rice products under one overarching name, Jilin Rice, in order to expand its market share and launched promotional campaigns in major distribution regions throughout the country.

The province has also worked out a quality standard for its rice products and established a quality-traceability system to improve the credibility of its enterprises.

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Jilin is known for its ideal geographical location for producing high-quality rice varieties. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Jilin's rice industry features three advantages — high-quality rice varieties, an ideal geographical location and strong capabilities in production and processing."

Yang Guang, deputy chief of the Jilin grain department

800k hectares

Jilin's total rice plantation area

6m metric tons

Jilin's annual output of rice

9 rice brands

gained geographical indication status in the province



Chaganhu brand products of Songyuan's SYFCO Corp. Jilin plans to improve brand recognition and make Jilin Rice a household name around the country. PHOTOS BY DING LUYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Building and promoting an empire

Last year, Jilin province worked out a five-year plan to build up its rice brands, which created the goals of cultivating the overarching brand of Jilin Rice and building a provincial industrial alliance. The plan will also set up an internet portal, www.jldmw.com, establish a comprehensive quality standard system and sell the products through chain stores and counters at shopping malls and supermarkets.

Twenty-seven rice-producing enterprises in the eastern, central and western areas of the province have joined the alliance. The alliance has issued processing standards for four varieties of rice, setting a higher bar than the national industrial standards.

Jilin has adopted a range of innovative online and offline marketing channels to expand its share in the rice market around the country. The province has established long-term sales cooperation agreements with a variety of regions, including Beijing, Shanghai and the provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Yunnan.

This year, Jilin plans to step up promotion of its rice products to make Jilin Rice a well-known brand around the country in three to five years. The move is expected to improve brand recognition among mid- and high-end consumers and help with upgrading and restructuring the province's



Daohuaxiang, an organic rice product from Jilin.

rice industry, according to the provincial government. The farmers' income will also be increased, according to the plan.

A number of rice-producing enterprises in Jilin have expanded their operations to meet the surging demand.

In Wanchang township, a major grain-producing base in central Jilin, the Yufeng Rice Co has integrated agritourism, greenhouse cultivation of vegetables and logistics with its main business of rice production and processing.

In the city of Songyuan, SYFCO Corp has developed a total of 360 varieties of products under its brand Chaganhu. With its own grain production base, the company has established a quality-traceability system that can ensure food safety from the paddy fields to the retail stores, said Miao Fengxiang, deputy general manager of the company.

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Judges inspect ginseng at a competition during this year's Wild Ginseng Festival in Qinghe, Ji'an of Jilin province.

PHOTOS BY DING LUYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ginseng a cash crop for local suppliers

By **LIU MINGTAI**
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A 100-year-old wild ginseng fetched 1.68 million yuan (\$250,000) at an auction during the Ji'an Qinghe Wild Ginseng Festival in Northeast China's Jilin province on Sept 11.

"I started growing ginseng more than 30 years ago," said Wang Guiqiu, owner of the precious plant from Qinghe township, Ji'an of Jilin. "My fellow villagers saw I had good profits and followed me in planting and processing ginseng."

The industry has played a significant role in increasing local farmers' income, according to Gai Yunbo, deputy mayor of Ji'an city.

The revenue generated from the industry accounts for 60 percent of the farmers' per-capita net income in Ji'an, Gai said. In Qinghe, a major ginseng-producing region of Ji'an, the revenue accounts for 80 percent of the farmers' net income, he said.

"With rapid social development and people's increasing attention on healthcare, the potential for the industry's growth is huge," Gai said.

Yang Wenhui, acting mayor and deputy Party chief of Ji'an, said: "The festival has laid the foundation for Ji'an to hold international ginseng-culture festivals in the future. We hope to attract more visitors and help them to learn about the city."

The festival effectively improved public awareness of ginseng brands and promoted ginseng knowledge, said Zhong Weitong, leading researcher at the National Ginseng Products Quality Supervision and Inspection Center.

Nonetheless, the development of the ginseng industry is in urgent need of policy support, Zhong said.

Ji'an is dubbed the "home-town of ginseng", with written records of ginseng digging dating back more than 1,700 years. The artificial cultivation of ginseng in the city started nearly 500 years ago.

At present, the city's ginseng plantation area totals 1,000 hectares, accounting for more than 10 percent of the country's total. More than 12,000 people are employed in the sector, and their annual income has increased by 30,000 yuan on average, according to the city government.

Last year, the output of the ginseng plantation business reached 1.3 billion yuan and that of ginseng processing totaled 3.7 billion yuan.

The city currently has 123 ginseng-processing enterprises, the combined capacity of which reached 15,000 metric tons, ranking first in the country, according to the Ji'an government. The city has developed more than 440 ginseng products in medicine, healthcare and cosmetics.

Ji'an is also the world's only region that produces Biantiao ginseng, a variety with a unique planting technique, well-known for its quality, elegant shape and root hair. The processing technique for the ginseng was added to the list of national intangible cultural heritage in November 2014.

After more than 30 years' development, the ginseng market in Ji'an has developed into one of the largest markets for forest-grown ginseng in the country.

Last year, the market's turnover reached 2.2 billion yuan, of which mountain-grown ginseng accounts for more than 90 percent of the total transaction volume.

The government has set up a bureau to guide the scientific development of the industry and provide convenient administrative services.

Contest shows herb as delicacy

A contest for cuisine made with ginseng grown in Changbai Mountain was held in Ji'an, Northeast China's Jilin province, on Sept 11 and 12.

The two-day event aimed to improve public awareness about ginseng as a food ingredient.

Twenty-three chefs from 23 restaurants in the province created 65 dishes with ginseng on the spot. Six dishes, including sugar-coated ginseng, won gold awards at the event. Seventeen ginseng-producing enterprises displayed their products, such as ginseng drinks, cosmetics and candies.

Liu Fengyan, deputy director of the Jilin provincial Commission of Rural Affairs, said the purpose of the food contest was to help people to see ginseng as more than just herbal medicine, but also



Hawthorn jelly with ginseng.

a valuable delicacy rich in nutrition and health benefits.

The ginseng industry in Jilin has experienced leapfrog progress since the provincial government launched a campaign to revitalize the industry's development in 2010. The government has worked out a range of measures in systematic management, financial support, and product research and development to boost the industry.

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