

# Shanxi getting serious on rural revenues



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi's agricultural industry is on track to achieve high-quality and sustainable development, according to its latest statistics.

The North China province reported an overall added value of 44.87 billion yuan (\$6.62 billion) in its agricultural sector for the first half of this year, increasing 5.6 percent from the same period of 2021.

Per capita disposable income of rural residents reached 7,099 yuan during the first six months, growing 6.1 percent year-on-year. The rate was 0.3 percentage points higher than the national average, according to the Shanxi Statistics Bureau.

Local officials said these achievements were made because of efforts to develop an agricultural industry with local characteristics and continuous farming modernization.

One focus of Shanxi's agricultural industry is the high-efficiency growth of its dryland farming.

Shanxi's agricultural experts said that, unlike the south and east of China, dryland farming is the characteristic of local agriculture, because of the relatively lower amount of precipitation in the province.

They believe developing water-saving irrigation, cultivating crop varieties to suit local conditions and improving soil quality are the key elements for better dryland farming.

On June 6, a wheat farm in Yuebi village in Linfen reported a per-hectare yield of 8.7 metric tons, a record



Modernization of agricultural techniques succeeds in increasing crop yields and farmers' incomes

Researchers have planted more than 100 rice varieties in an experimental area in Jinzhong National Agricultural High-Tech Development Zone, aiming to cultivate varieties that are suitable for dryland farming in Shanxi. WANG XIUJUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

for dryland wheat farming in Shanxi.

An official in the village said that the use of new techniques, proposed by local agronomists, is the reason behind the stellar performance. The techniques include soil moisture improvement through deeper plowing and accurate spray irrigation.

Yao Jianmin from Shanxi Agricultural University is one of the local farming experts who offered their know-how, expertise and solutions to Shanxi's dryland farmers.

Over the decades, he has traveled across Shanxi to provide services to farmers in more than 50 counties.

One of his solutions to dryland farming is the use of water-perme-

able films. "Water-permeable films can effectively prevent evaporation and soil erosion and retain water and nutrition, while allowing roots to breathe better," Yao explained.

In addition to local experts, agronomists from the rest of the country are contributing their solutions to Shanxi's dryland farming.

Guo Hui, from the Nanjing Agricultural University in Jiangsu province, for instance, is leading a team of researchers to work with the Jinzhong National Agricultural High-Tech Development Zone.

The team's mission is to cultivate rice varieties suitable for dryland farming conditions in Shanxi.

"We know that rice varieties growing in the northern part of China have a better quality and taste than those in the southern parts of the country," Guo said. "And the larger temperature difference between day and night in the north is the major reason for this unique quality."

He noted that rice varieties from the north have higher prices than those from the south, so these can contribute to the revenue of growers.

But even in the north, rice is still a water-dependent crop, so it is widely seen in regions with larger amount of precipitation and better water supplies, like Northeast China, according to Guo.

He said that his team has made initial breakthroughs in cultivating dryland-farming rice varieties suitable for Shanxi.

The team planted 110 rice varieties in an experimental area of about 2 hectares, with a great number of them showing adaptability to dryland farming. "We will sort out a few varieties that are most suitable for dryland farming in a period of about five years," Guo said.

In addition to staple grain crops like wheat, cash crops are also playing an increasingly important role in driving rural development.

One such crop is daylily, with the city of Datong as a major producer.

The flowers are a popular food ingredient throughout China.

In recent years, the local daylily industry has expanded substantially thanks to the support of authorities.

When farmers are busy collecting daylily flowers during the July-August harvest season, Zhang Qiang, mayor of Datong, was calculating the earnings that the industry could make this year.

"In Datong, the planting area of daylilies is close to 18,000 hectares this year," Zhang said. "We estimate the total revenue generated by the entire industrial chain, from plantation to processing and sales, could reach 4 billion yuan this year."

The entire daylily industry generated a revenue of 3 billion yuan in 2021, according to the mayor.

The daylily industry in Datong offered job and business opportunities to more than 132,000 rural residents in 2021. It also brought an additional per-household income of 5,400 yuan to those in the industry, according to Zhang.

Similar to the daylily industry in Datong, an extended industrial chain for agriculture has been formed in Shanxi. Statistics from the Shanxi Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs showed that the industries of agricultural product processing and sales reported a combined revenue of 262 billion yuan in 2021, up 20 percent from 2020.

In addition to daylily, other crops like coarse cereals, vegetables, fruits, edible fungi and medical herbs, as well as livestock like cattle and sheep, are forming new specialty industries in Shanxi and creating new sources of income for rural residents.

Wang Xiujuan contributed to this story.

## Coal industry embraces recycling that cuts costs

By YUAN SHENGGAO

In a coal-rich province like Shanxi, the clean production, efficient development and use of coal can play an important role in sustainable development. That is what the latest practices of the local coal-mining and energy-production enterprises show.

Tunlan Coal Mine, a coal-mining and coal-fired power generating enterprise in the Shanxi city of Gujiao, for instance, is contributing to sustainable development by establishing an innovative coal-refuse recycling and reuse project.

The coal ash from its near-mine power plant is now transported via conveyor belts to its depleted mining shafts for refilling, reaching a depth of up to 400 meters underground.

An executive of the company said such a practice has multiple benefits in both economic and environmental terms.

"It can effectively solve the problem of solid waste discharge and avoid the risks of geological disasters," the executive said. "This is also a practical solution to save on the costs

of waste disposal and shaft refilling." Lu'an Group based in the city of Changzhi is another industrial player that has offered sustainable solutions for the clean development of coal.

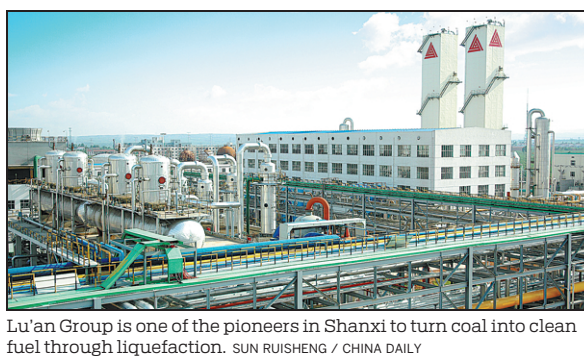
The company is the operator of several mines containing coal with high sulfur content. High-sulfur coal has been deemed a variant with lower combustion efficiency and a higher rate of emissions and is rejected by many coal-consuming enterprises.

The company's solution to this problem is turning the lower-grade coal into cleaner fuel through liquefaction.

Lu'an Coal-Based Clean Energy, one of the branches of the group, recently launched a power generation project fired by liquefied coal. The facility can process 1.8 million metric tons of coal a year.

The practices of both Tunlan Coal Mine and Lu'an Group are part of Shanxi's efforts in developing a "green" — or environmentally friendly — coal industry, which is made possible through the use of new and high technologies.

Shanxi's coal-mining companies



Lu'an Group is one of the pioneers in Shanxi to turn coal into clean fuel through liquefaction. SUN RUIHENG / CHINA DAILY

are now vigorously upgrading their operations through the use of digital technologies. According to the Shanxi Energy Administration, the province is now home to 10 pilot coal mines for intelligent operations and 20 pilot coal mines for green production. The total number of intelligent-mining shafts owned by various companies has reached 328.

As a result of the upgrades, the majority of coal output, or 75 percent, is now produced by mines with advanced, efficient and clean-production facilities.

While upgrading the coal-mining industry, Shanxi has also stepped up efforts to develop other clean energy resources like solar, wind and

hydraulic power. The capacity of power generation plants based on clean and renewable energy resources now accounts for 34.3 percent of Shanxi's total, local statistics show.

Shanxi witnessed rapid growth in the development of the solar and wind power industries during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20). Those years saw wind-power generation capacity increase at an average annual rate of 24.16 percent, while the growth rate for solar-power generation was 63.22 percent. These ranked Shanxi among the fastest-growing provinces in the two sectors.

Han Linfang contributed to this story.

## Spirit's ancient journey to European countries

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Renowned white liquor producer Xinghuacun Fenjiu, based in the Shanxi city of Fenyang, hosted a tasting event in the Spanish city of Valencia on July 10.

The day also marked the official launch of the company's white liquor, or *baijiu*, in the southwestern European country. Huilong International, a Chinese-funded company, was selected as the official dealer for Xinghuacun Fenjiu's products in Spain.

Guests, including officials, business representatives and residents, from Valencia and its neighboring cities attended the event.

The party's menu was a combination of Chinese liquor and Spanish food. Guests were treated to *baijiu* from Shanxi and Spanish ham and cheese.

Carlos Lopez, mayor of Manises, a city near Valencia, was among those attending. He said he was impressed with the unique taste of Fenjiu liquor but was more interested in the cultural significance of *baijiu* from Shanxi after he was told its long history.

Xinghuacun Fenjiu is one of the pioneering *baijiu* companies of China to go global.

After it won a first prize at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the United States, in 1915, Fenjiu-branded white liquor began to attract the attention of international buyers. Since then, several

Fenjiu brands, including Fenjiu and Zhuyeqing, have become popular in overseas markets. The brands were first sold to Southeast Asia and East Asia and then to Europe and the Americas.

But the early 20th century was not the beginning of Fenjiu's globalization. Fenjiu originally refers to *baijiu* produced in the city of Fenyang where Xinghuacun Fenjiu is located. It became the exclusive brand name of the company in the mid-20th century.

Historical records show that *baijiu* produced in Fenyang began its international journey in the 18th century with the famed *Jinshang*, or Shanxi merchants. These businessmen had been trading in Mongolia, Russia and other regions in Europe since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

In European countries, which included Spain, the exported liquor was usually in a bottle that featured a label of the three Chinese characters of Xinghuacun and pictures themed on Chinese legends. Xinghuacun, a town in Fenyang, has been the traditional production base for Fenjiu and is incorporated into the brand name of the liquor company.

Some of these antique bottles are now on exhibit at the British Museum in London, offering evidence for Fenjiu's footprints across Europe.

Zhao Qingyuan contributed to this story.



Spanish guests taste Fenjiu liquor at an experience event in the city of Valencia. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## City cluster integration to boost region's development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With workers now busy laying asphalt on the 37-kilometer Taiyuan-Xinzhou Avenue, construction of the major passageway to link the two key cities of Taiyuan and Xinzhou in central Shanxi is expected to be completed in a couple of days.

The completion of the project will signify a milestone for the ongoing Taiyuan-Xinzhou integration program, which aims to build a city cluster in the center of Shanxi and foster a new engine for local growth, according to local officials.

The urban integration program of the two cities was decided in 2021 by the Shanxi authorities.

The decision was made in response to the central government's proposal. In March 2021, the State Council released a guideline for the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), requiring Shanxi to foster a city cluster in its central region.

Grasping this historic opportunity, the Shanxi provincial government proposed a plan to promote the development of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone in the months that followed.

The Promotional Center for the Development of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou



The Taiyuan section of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Avenue is scheduled to open on Sept 30. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Integrated Economic Zone was founded on Dec 29, marking the operation of the zone began officially. Its two operational centers in Taiyuan and Xinzhou were established on Dec 29 and 30 respectively.

According to Wang Xiangzheng, deputy chief of the Taiyuan operational center, construction of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone is well underway with the launch of a great number of infrastructure projects.

"Construction of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Avenue is expected to be completed before Aug 20," Wang said. "And it is scheduled to be open to traffic on Sept 30."

In addition to the avenue, three bullet trains have been added to the rail transit system between the two cities. "There are a total of 12 bullet trains running on round trips every day between the two cities, which offer greater convenience to inter-city travelers," Wang said.

Businesses from around the province and the rest of the county have settled in the integrated zone.

On July 15, the administrative services bureaus in Taiyuan and Xinzhou issued the first business licenses to two companies newly established in the zone.

Zhicheng Incubation Space is one of the companies obtaining the

license.

"We are happy to be one of the first to get the license," said Zhang Hui, general manager of the company. "The location of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone better positions us to serve clients in both cities."

The investment promotion agencies in the zone have held fruitful talks with businesses throughout the country who intend to found 89 projects in the zone, with a total investment of 96.52 billion yuan (\$14.3 billion). Agreements for 84 projects have been signed, with a total investment of 64.63 billion yuan.

The integrated economic zone will comprise a number of economic zones and industrial parks in the two cities, including the Zhongbei High-Tech Zone and Yangqu Industrial Park in Taiyuan, and the Xinzhou Economic Zone and Yuanping Economic and Technological Development Zone in Xinzhou.

The Taiyuan-Xinzhou integrated zone is also designed to host industries relocated from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, where an integrated regional development plan is in place.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.