

CHINA

Farmer's passion to help reaps rewards

Hometown hero in Hunan promotes agricultural development so villagers can find work, escape poverty

By ZHU YOUFANG in Changsha and CHEN MEILING

Xiao Yuan, 28, said she has a special attachment to the countryside, as her family grew up in rural areas. "I've always been attracted to villages," she said.

After studying in Russia for seven years, Xiao started planting orange groves in her hometown of Shexingshan in Hunan province, and has since helped more than 2,000 villagers escape poverty.

Xiao got her undergraduate degree from the Lomonosov Moscow State University and a master's in linguistics from the St Petersburg State University. She could also have gone on to pursue a doctorate but instead, she opted to return to Shexingshan. "I had been away from home for too long, and I missed China so much," she said.

One day in November 2019, she bought some pork from an elderly man in a nearby village.

Xiao didn't have cash and couldn't pay through WeChat because the man didn't have an account. He said he would come to her house and collect payment the following day.

As the man had promised, he turned up at her house for payment, and while driving him home, Xiao realized that he had walked hours to reach her along a 3-kilometer road through the mountains.

His wife, who is visually impaired, was waiting at the door for them.

"When they shook my hands and said I was a good woman, I felt very guilty," she said, adding that she then began thinking about doing something to help poor families in nearby villages.

Toward the end of 2019, she rented 66 hectares to plant oranges and tangelos, hoping to drive rural



From left: Xiao Yuan works on her orange plantation in Shexingshan, Hunan province. Xiao learns how to drive an automatic seedling planting machine on her plantation.

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vitalization and help develop the area's economy.

A year later, she rented an additional 66 hectares and planted rice. However, her efforts were spoiled last year by too much rainfall, which halted growth and even caused some seedlings to rot.

This year, Xiao spent 300,000 yuan (\$44,250) on building a greenhouse to resolve the problem once and for all.

To boost sales, she signed a contract with an agricultural technology company that gives a 30 percent discount on seeds, offers

guidance on the use of planting technology, and purchases all of the crops at harvest.

Xiao said that aside from improving sales, working with the company has reduced production costs for farmers and has taught them about advanced agricultural technology. Through her encouragement, 24 farming households are now collaborating with the company.

She said that developing agriculture is much like studying. "Every effort pays off."

Xiao has spent about 800,000

yuan a year on renting land for villagers, benefiting about 2,000 people, and has also provided them with 32 full-time and 190 part-time jobs. With her help, 2,091 people from poor families were able to escape poverty in 2020.

"Agriculture is important. It's the basis of every industry. So this career gives me a sense of honor and purpose," she said, adding that she hopes more young people will consider returning to the villages to farm.

Peng Jianxin and his wife, Xie Yongying, of Gaohe village were

some of that pressure has eased. "Last year, Xiao also gave us baby chicks and pigs to raise, encouraging us to make our own money. With her help, our life has a purpose," He said.

Ou Dazhi, a former member of the Xinlian village poverty relief team, said that Xiao's efforts will benefit farmers in the long run, and that he hoped more college students will be willing to return to the villages.

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Nansha standing out as key investment destination in Bay Area

By YIN RUOWEI yinruowei@chinadaily.com.cn

Guangzhou's Nansha district in South China's Guangdong province is to host an investment promotion, a thematic session of the 2022 Guangzhou Annual Investment Conference, on the afternoon of Aug 30.

The event will be the latest move of the district to welcome and encourage potential investors to share new business opportunities arising from the implementation of the "Overall Plan for Promoting Comprehensive Cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao by Further Deepening Opening-up in Nansha District of Guangzhou", which was released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, on June 14.

During the promotion, local officials will explain "Why (invest in) Nansha" while some senior executives of enterprises that have invested in Nansha will share "How (they feel) in Nansha" with the guests present. Also, a contract signing ceremony for new investment projects will be held and new industrial policies released.

A growing number of foreign chambers of commerce in Guangzhou and Fortune Global 500 enterprises have developed an interest in Nansha.

According to a senior executive with the district's investment promotion agency, many attendees spoke highly of the investment climate in Nansha including its business environment and favorable policies during a recent tour, adding: "They are even more confident of doing business in Nansha."

A large number of investors have flocked to Nansha in the past couple of months and several enterprises including Youngy Investment Management Group, China Unicom and China National Software have signed agreements to launch a slew of innovative industrial projects in Nansha.

"Nansha is a State-level new area, pilot free trade zone and demonstration zone for comprehensive cooperation among



Above: A panoramic view of Nansha Jiaomen River in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province.

Left: A panoramic view of a commercial spaceflight industrial base in Nansha.

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million yuan (\$72.3 million) with a subsidy, equivalent to 2 percent of its actual investment. The maximum subsidy is 200 million yuan.

For foreign-funded projects, rewards of up to 200 million yuan will be given to any new investment depending on its actual capital input; multinational enterprises basing their regional headquarters in Nansha might receive up to 100 million yuan in rewards.

There is also a package of initiatives to assist foreign-funded enterprises with land issues, government services, financing and human resources, among many others.

The new policies keep the district ahead of the game, Li added.

The district has so far spent more than 15 billion yuan supporting enterprises and talents. To date, Nansha is home to more than 3,000 foreign-funded enterprises. It has

witnessed a surge of enterprises in the fields of manufacturing, scientific and technological innovation, biomedicine and financial services. This realized paid-in foreign capital worth \$1.72 billion in the first half of this year.

As of June, 232 Fortune Global 500 companies including Toyota, Denso and Tupperware had invested in Nansha. They launched nine investment projects in the first half of this year, statistics from the district's commerce bureau indicated.

In advanced manufacturing, the output value of the automobile manufacturing industry in Nansha exceeded 150 billion yuan in 2021. A new energy automobile industrial cluster capable of yielding an annual industrial output value of 100 billion yuan, which is composed of such carmakers as GAC Toyota, Hycan and WM Motor, is speeding up its development. Meanwhile, the leading technologies of Dongfang (Guangzhou) Heavy Machinery and Guangzhou Herrenknecht Tunnelling Machinery are gaining popularity in overseas markets; and its Longxue island has been among the three major shipbuilding bases in China.

In emerging industries, Nansha is home to a total of 620 artificial intelligence and biotechnology enterprises including Cloudwalk and Walvax Biotechnology. Also, an aerospace industrial park is taking shape with the headquarters of CAS Space and the aerospace branch of Geely in place.

In the modern financial industry, the district is home to more than 6,600 financial enterprises and the number of financing and leasing enterprises accounts for 20 percent of the country's total, which has made the district the aircraft and ship-leasing center in South China.

In addition, Nansha ranks highly among State-level pilot free trade zones in such innovation parameters as trade facilitation and investment liberalization and it occupies a leading position among State-level new areas in business environment.

It is also the first special zone in China for international talent,

home to around 17,000 domestic and overseas high-caliber professionals.

European Louis Dreyfus Company, the world's leading agricultural product processing and trade enterprise, is building a food industry park in Nansha. Construction started in March.

Wang Dazhong, a director of LDC's North Asia branch, said: "LDC is very excited about the newly released plan, which has not only proved that we made a right investment decision, but boosted our confidence. We hope that we can leverage our knowledge and experience in food trade, share dividends and finally take root in China."

Wang said that LDC is interested in Nansha's ambition to be a benchmark for high-quality urban development in the future, as it aligns with the company's philosophy. Talents move to attractive cities. Therefore, enterprises like his can recruit more of them. Moreover, a city with high-quality development will surely boast diversified and refined consumption demands, which means lucrative markets for enterprises.

"We look forward to taking root in Nansha with the help of preferential policies. Focusing on the food industry park, we will take advantage of the resources within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area," Wang said.

"Next, we will set up a storage and distribution center for imported grain. This will help balance grain production and sales, and ensure a secure supply of important agricultural products into the Bay Area and surrounding areas, and an efficient supply of high-quality protein products in South China. We want to ride the wave of Nansha's growth."

Scan the QR codes below to learn more about Nansha.

