

Mechanized farming lifts profits and efficiency

As province celebrates harvest festival, rural workers feel the benefit of modern technology

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Residents in Shanxi province celebrated the fifth Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival, a national event in late September, when a bumper harvest looked set thanks to good weather and an increasing level of mechanization.

The festival was celebrated with both joy and labor, as farmers throughout the province were harvesting autumn grains across fields totaling 2.74 million hectares.

In the village of Dongpanliang in Xiaoyi city, the Fudong Mechanical Farming Cooperative mobilized all of its six harvesting machines to work on its corn farm spanning about 270 hectares.

"With all the machines, the harvest is expected to be completed in about a week, marking a sharp increase in efficiency compared with manual labor," said Fan Zhong, head of the cooperative, which incorporates local households as its stakeholders.

He added that the machines can separate corn grains from cobs and grind the cobs into animal feed during the harvesting process.

"Thanks to plentiful rainfall and adequate sunshine, we are expecting a better-than-ever yield this year," Fan said. "The per-hectare output is estimated at more than 11 metric tons."

Alongside the corn fields is a farm of 200 hectares for soybeans. The harvest for that would begin about



China Shanxi

two weeks later, according to Fan.

He said the good harvest can also be attributed to the support of governments at all levels in Shanxi.

The governments' support includes subsidies to farmers and technical services from agricultural officials and experts.

Since the beginning of this year, the provincial government of Shanxi has allocated more than 9 billion yuan (\$1.26 billion) to subsidize farmers in the improvement of farming conditions, promoting the use of farming machines, and to encourage the planting of staple crops and cash crops with local characteristics, according to the Shanxi Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The department has also dispatched a great many officials and experts to rural areas throughout the province to offer technical services and help farmers deal with natural disasters, such as flood and drought.

An official from the department said that promoting the use of farming machines and new sciences and technologies is still a major task in Shanxi's agricultural sector this year despite breakthroughs in 2021.

The utilization rate of farming



The characters *feng shou*, which means good harvest, are drawn on a corn drying ground by rural workers in Hejin county to celebrate the fifth Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

machines reached 72.6 percent in Shanxi in 2021, meaning that only 27.4 percent of the farming work was done by hand. The official said the machine-use rate is 1.6 percentage points higher than the national average.

He added that new business models like e-commerce are playing an increasingly important role to help farmers manage their operations and boost revenues.

Chen Shao, general manager of Xinyu Agriculture and Husbandry based in the city of Shuozhou, said he is happy because his company recently signed a big deal with a food company.

"Just weeks after the deal was inked, the clients came directly to our farms and loaded our freshly harvested potatoes onto their lorries right away," Chen said. "That move helped us save a lot of money in stor-

age and transportation."

The executive noted that it is a common practice nowadays for farming companies to use online platforms to identify sales partners, display their produce and make transactions.

Jia Ruixiang, a fruit farmer in the village of Shangsi in Xixian county, said the booming e-commerce industry is now bringing additional benefits to his business.

A local e-commerce company called Northern Latitude 36 Degree offered to be the exclusive dealer of his pears.

"The company has a system to grade the products," Jia said. "I was both surprised and excited that about 10 percent of our pears were rated as 'excellent' and 70 percent as 'good'."

He added that the pears rated as excellent were sold to the dealer for 20 yuan a kilo.

"That's several times the price at which we sold a year ago," Jia said. "We had adopted the same lower price for all the products because we didn't know how to grade them."

Shanxi has reported a steady increase in its agricultural sector so far this year. The output of its summer-harvested grains in Shanxi reached 2.45 million metric tons, growing 0.8 percent from the same period of 2021. Per-hectare yield hit 4.58 tons, increasing 1.1 percent year-on-year and creating a record, according to the provincial agricultural department.

The province reported a revenue of 44.87 billion yuan for the farming, forestry, husbandry and aquaculture sectors in the first half of this year, up 5.6 percent from 2021.

There was also a steady increase in revenue for rural residents. Their per capita disposable income reached 7,099 yuan in the first half of this year. Representing an increase of 6.1 percent year-on-year, the rate is 0.3 percentage points higher than the national average.

Wang Xiujuan contributed to this story.



From left: The township of Tongyu in Zuoquan county has developed into one of the most famous Red tourism destination in Shanxi province. CUI XINYU / FOR CHINA DAILY Local artists dance at the opening ceremony of the eighth Shanxi Tourism Development Conference. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tourism conference highlights rich heritage of Shanxi

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The eighth Shanxi Tourism Development Conference, which was held in the city of Yuncheng from Sept 21-23, became a stage to showcase the province's rich tourism resources and its latest developments in the integration of culture and tourism.

Lan Fo'an, governor of Shanxi, was present at the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech. He said Shanxi's recent efforts in tourism development highlight the integration of tourism with culture, as the authorities aim to build the province into "a globally renowned cultural tourism destination".

He said the culture-tourism integration is based on the fact that Shanxi is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization, boasting a history of more than 5,000 years and a wealth of historical heritage.

Lan added that Shanxi has developed three landmark tourism routes

along the renowned Yellow River, Great Wall and Taihang Mountains, allowing visitors to experience the history and culture, as well as enjoy the spectacular natural wonders.

The conference also became a platform to display the best practices of many regions in Shanxi in promoting tourism development and showcasing their unique tourism resources.

At an exhibition held by Yuncheng, the host city was described as "the gift of the Yellow River", "the land of poetry", and "a witness to the 5,000-year Chinese civilization".

The 5,464-kilometer Yellow River has 965 km of its course in Shanxi. Yuncheng boasts a 345-km section of the river, the longest in the province.

The Yellow River started its journey in Yuncheng at Longmen — or Dragon's Gate — in the county of Hejin. The place became famous partly because of a poem by Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai, who

said that "The Yellow River finally knocks at the Dragon's Gate after its long, roaring journey from the Kunlun Mountains".

For tourists to Yuncheng, their trips are always accompanied by the Yellow River and poetry.

In Yongji, a city administered by Yuncheng, the Yellow River became an inspiration for Wang Zhihuan, another Tang Dynasty poet when he ascended the landmark Guanque, or Stork Tower, by the river.

In his poem *Ascending Stork Tower*, which has attained household fame, he said:

"The setting sun beyond the mountains glows,

The Yellow River seaward flows. One can enjoy a grander sight, By climbing onto a greater height."

Many tourism sites along the river in Yuncheng are now connected by the Yellow River Highway No 1, a major sightseeing road in Shanxi.

Zuoquan, a county at the heart of

the Taihang Mountains, showed how it benefits from the integration of tourism with culture, especially Red culture tied to the revolutionary past of the Communist Party of China.

One example is the township of Tongyu, the site where a historic assembly for a CPC-led democracy took place. The assembly in 1941 ushered in a system involving the participation of all walks of life in governing the region, which evolved into milestone systems of the People's Congress, the People's Political Consultative Conference and the United Front about a decade later.

Tongyu is developing itself into a Red tourism site around the assembly's venue, attracting more tourists to study the history and experience of local life, according to Hu Jie, Party secretary of the township.

Zhang Ting contributed to this story.

City living up to its name for prosperity

By YUAN SHENGGAO

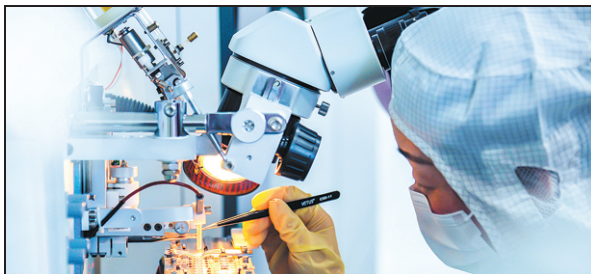
The name of the southeastern Shanxi city of Changzhi, which literally means long-term stability and prosperity, has been taken as a suggestion of the aspiration of its people for many centuries.

That aspiration has become a reality over the recent decades thanks to the efforts by local authorities in alleviating poverty, improving the environment and promoting economic development in the area.

The city began its targeted poverty-alleviation campaign about a decade ago, with a focus on moving residents out of places with adverse living conditions and developing farming industries with local characteristics.

During the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the city invested a total of 1.66 billion yuan (\$229.74 million) in a relocation campaign that involved moving 30,006 residents from 394 villages to the new settlements.

To help rural residents increase their revenues, the city has fostered eight farming sectors with local characteristics, which include medical



Precise integrated circuits are manufactured by Zhongke Lu'an Group in Changzhi. LI NING / FOR CHINA DAILY

herbs, millet, vegetables, fruits, potatoes and edible fungi. As a result, Changzhi was among the first cities in Shanxi to announce the elimination of absolute poverty in February 2020.

Another major booster for the improvement of people's livelihoods is the city's ever-growing economic strength as a result of the development of both traditional and emerging industries.

Local data showed that Changzhi's GDP reached 231.1 billion yuan in

2021, ranking it second in Shanxi province.

The city's steady growth is a result of its industrial transformation, which features upgrading its traditional industries to be more efficient and environmentally friendly, and fostering emerging industries as new development engines.

Coal mining is a traditional industry that Changzhi has devoted much energy to upgrading. At present, more than 70 percent of the coal out-

put is generated by mines with advanced, efficient and clean production facilities.

In 2021, the output value of the city's strategically emerging industries, including advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, electronics, photovoltaic equipment and medicine, registered a 90 percent increase from the level a year ago.

The output value of the city's semiconductor and photoelectronic industries now accounts for about 95 percent of Shanxi's total, while its photovoltaic equipment and medicine sectors take up more than a half of the market share in the province.

With its increasing economic strength, Changzhi is in a better position to improve the living environment for its people. It has carried out a 10-year campaign to green the city since 2012. As a result, the vegetation coverage in Changzhi's urban areas has reached 47.38 percent.

Since last year, Changzhi has launched 620 projects in building urban facilities including roads, parks and environmental protection facilities, making the city a better place for people to live in and do business.

Li Jiaming contributed to this story.

Spirit maker eyes Uganda as its next foreign market

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Executives from Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group paid a visit to the embassy of Uganda in Beijing, aiming for the renowned white liquor brand from the Shanxi city of Fenyang to enter the African country and the wider continent.

In their talks with Fred Mugisha, Uganda's deputy ambassador to China, and other diplomats, Xinghuacun Fenjiu's executives for overseas operations talked about the history of the brand and its development in the international market.

Zhang Weidong, head of the group's overseas operations, said Xinghuacun Fenjiu is one of the pioneers in China's white liquor industry to expand into global markets.

After it won a gold 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. To date, Xinghuacun Fenjiu has developed a presence in more than 80 countries.

But the expo was not the beginning of the white liquor's international journey.

"It was the seven voyages by renowned Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) navigator Zheng He that marked the first peak time for Fenjiu to go global," Zhang said.

He explained that, according to historical records, Fenjiu was first used to meet the demands of sailors during their lengthy journeys. They later found the liquor was well received by residents in

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Zhang Weidong, head of Xinghuacun Fenjiu International Trade

Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa, so they brought a larger quantity of Fenjiu to sell in their later voyages.

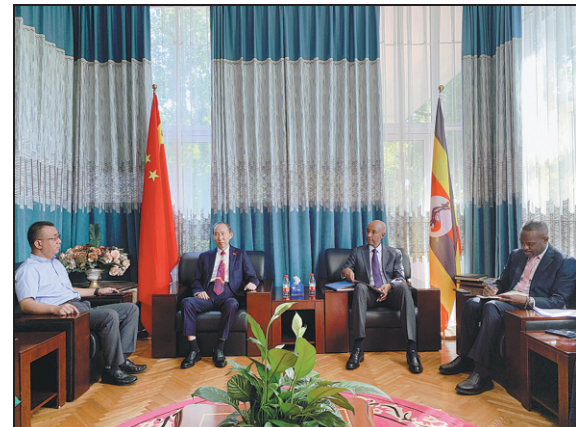
Despite its glorious history, the Shanxi-made liquor began its large-scale expedition overseas in the early 20th century.

In recent years, Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group has accelerated its pace of globalization by forging partnerships with more overseas dealers and opening more sales outlets. Africa is the group's new target market.

Deputy Ambassador Mugisha said Uganda welcomes excellent Chinese enterprises like Xinghuacun Fenjiu and the embassy is willing to help the company establish operations there, whether they build factories or open outlets.

Xinghuacun Fenjiu International Trade is the company's arm for overseas operations. It said it has now developed a network of more than 50 dealers and more than 9,000 overseas outlets.

Zhao Qingyuan contributed to this story.



Xinghuacun Fenjiu executives talk with Ugandan diplomats in Beijing on the possibilities of the brand entering the African country. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY