

CHINA

Chinese team bags 8 golds at skills contest

By CHENG SI
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Chinese competitors have put in an excellent performance so far at the ongoing WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition, a replacement for the canceled WorldSkills Shanghai 2022.

As of Monday, Chinese competitors have won eight golds in events including cabinetmaking, print media technology and computer numerical control turning.

Early on Saturday, Li Dexin won the nation's first gold medal in cabinetmaking in this special edition of the event in Switzerland, one of 15 countries and regions hosting the competitions.

It's the first time that a Chinese competitor has won first prize in this event since the nation started taking part in 2017.

Liu Xiaohong, China's team leader of technical experts taking part in the cabinetmaking event, said competitors must make a piece of furniture following a given drawing in a 22-hour period — usually over four days. They must assemble, polish and install hardware to complete the furniture.

Li, the 22-year-old gold-medal winner for cabinetmaking, in an interview with ThePaper.cn, said: "It was quite a challenge for me as it was my first time in a world-class competition. The first problem is language, which brought much difficulty in communicating with international experts and judges."

He said he had been very stressed on the first day of the competition, but gradually found his pace on the second day, adding that it had taken him four years of ups and downs to qualify for the contest.

"All these difficulties and frustrations vanished after the organizers announced the result. I told

my parents the good news as soon as I could." After the win, Li told ThePaper.cn that he plans to continue to study for a master's or doctoral degree, and wishes to become a good teacher and pass down his skills and spirit of craftsmanship.

Liu, the team leader, said that winning gold in cabinetmaking is a praiseworthy breakthrough for the nation, and that the accolade would help boost the morale of compatriots in the following events.

"Woodwork is a traditional Chinese skill that has a history of thousands of years. China now is also a key player in the world's furniture market, and produces around 38 percent of the world's furniture with these products sold in over 200 countries and regions," she said.

It was the third time China had entered competitors in the cabinetmaking event. The Chinese team won second prize for cabinetmaking at the 45th WorldSkills event in Kazan, Russia in 2019.

According to a release by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, China has sent 36 competitors across 34 events held in countries and regions including Switzerland, Germany, France and Finland.

Competitions in these places are in progress except for several events that are scheduled to be held in Austria in November.

Shanghai should have hosted the 46th WorldSkills this year but canceled due to the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak in the city.

As a replacement, WorldSkills decided in June that a special edition of 62 competitive events would be held in 15 countries and regions in Asia, Europe and Africa from the middle of September to late November.

Fair deals



Employees of a tableware company introduce its products to buyers via livestream in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, during the 132nd session of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, on Monday. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Healthier school meals help rural students grow

By ZOU SHUO
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Rural students in China have grown taller and stronger on average over the past decade thanks to a nutrition improvement plan providing daily nutritious lunches to rural primary and middle school students, according to the Ministry of Education.

Based on surveys of students in some 700 counties during the past 10 years, 13-year-old males have seen the most growth in height and weight over the decade, with an average height of 7.5 centimeters taller and an average added weight of 6.6 kilograms from 2012 to 2021.

Twelve-year-old female students who experienced the most growth had added an average of 6.3 cm in height and 5.8 kg in weight in 2021 compared to average levels by 2012.

The survey found the growth retardation rate of students aged 6 to 15 dropped to 2.3 percent in 2021, down by 5.7 percentage points from 2012.

While the obesity rate of rural students reached 18.7 percent last year, it is 7.8 percentage points lower than the national average.

The anemia rate also dropped from 16.7 percent in 2012 to 12 percent in 2021, while students in western regions have seen a bigger drop in this area.

The surveys also found that rural students have more access to meat, vegetables and dairy products, and

more schools have built their own canteens.

The surveys were conducted by the national rural compulsory education student nutrition improvement plan working group and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

According to the Ministry of Education, more than 350 million students in 123,800 rural primary and middle schools had benefited from the plan by the end of last year.

To make sure rural students have more nutrition, the meal standards have been raised from 3 yuan (\$0.40) to 5 yuan per student per day.

Li Ming, principal of Daping Primary School in Xiji county in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, said that in the past there was no canteen in the school and it was very inconvenient for students to have lunch.

Since the initiative was implemented 10 years ago, students have been able to enjoy nutritious meals at school and as a result, they have grown taller and healthier, he told People's Daily.

At the No 11 Primary School in Tongren city, Guizhou province, the school canteen displays daily lunch menus, which include three dishes, a soup, a piece of fruit and milk.

The province has upgraded its nutrition improvement plan to make sure students can eat healthier and more nutritious meals at school.



Floral frame

People visit Lixiang Garden in Qiandao Lake in Chun'an, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. The flowers in the garden are in full bloom, attracting tourists.

WANG JIANCAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

More efforts ensure national food security

China achieved record grain output of nearly 683 million metric tons last year

By ZHAO YIMENG
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China will keep ensuring its national food security and beef up its ability to deal with uncertainties related to socioeconomic development, a senior official said on the sidelines of the ongoing 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

Cong Liang, director of the National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration, said China's ability to ensure its national food security continues to improve, with grain output reaching a record high of nearly 683 million metric tons last year.

"The grain reserve network has been further improved, effectively playing a key role in maintaining the bottom line, stabilizing expectations and ensuring security," he said on Monday at a news conference held at the press center of the congress.

National warehouses have an intact storage capacity of 700 million tons. The network consists of 6,000 grain processing enterprises, 53,000 supply stations and other

facilities that can be tapped into in case of major natural disasters or public emergencies.

While the international grain market is battling increasing food and grain price fluctuations, China's food supply is stable, abundant and able to meet consumer demand.

"With good grain conditions, we have managed to hold our rice bowls firmly in the hands of Chinese people and those bowls are mainly filled with Chinese food," Cong said.

The per capita grain for Chinese people has hit 483.5 kilograms, far above the warning line of food security, which is set to 400 kg by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The area of arable land in the country covers 128 million hectares, among which 71 million hectares are designated as production areas for grain and key agricultural products. Sixty million hectares of high-quality farmland have been developed.

Cong stressed the importance of land and technology in tapping the potential of grain production. Stringent measures should be taken to

protect farmland and maintain the bottom line of 120 million hectares.

Local authorities are being urged to develop more efficient and water-saving irrigation and to keep developing high-quality farmland with stable yields.

China will increase research and development in technologies such as green storage, efficient logistics, and grain and oil processing to continuously inject new momentum into food security, Cong said.

"Multiple measures are expected to be taken to stabilize and increase production, and keep the annual grain output above 650 million tons," he said.

China will also enhance its reserve capacity and optimize the structure of reserves so that key produce can be prepared and stored well, made available for deployment and utilized at critical times, he said.

He added that China will improve the adjustment mechanism of its national reserve market to ensure the supply and price of bulk commodities, and maintain the security and stability of the supply of primary products.

To reduce food loss, smart harvesting equipment and green storing techniques should be promoted, Cong said.

Combined planting maximizes yields

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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Farmers across Shandong province have begun harvesting their corn and soybean, planted using a combined planting method designed to increase the efficiency and yields of the local farmland.

The method involves planting two rows of corn for every four rows of soybean, and because of the height difference between the crops the amount of sunlight and airflow is maximized.

"The corn yield of each mu (0.067 hectare) in the field has reached 726.28 kilograms, and for soybean it is 134.23 kilograms," said Zhang Deping, who is in charge of a cooperative in the village of Qianjiang-junmiao in Yucheng, a county-level city of Dezhou.

"The corn yield is no less than that when we plant corn alone, and what's more, we harvest some soybean," he said.

The cooperative planted 38.23 hectares of soybean and corn together for the first time this year.

"Agricultural experts gave us very detailed instructions throughout the whole growing process, such as telling us what seeds are fit for combined planting and how to grow them at proper row intervals," said Zhang.

This year is the first year that combined soybean and corn planting has been promoted across the country, especially in the areas



Soybean, which is planted together with corn, is harvested at Wuzhuang village of Liangjia town in Yucheng, Shandong province on Sept 27. LIU ZHENXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

around the Yellow River, the Huaihe River, and in Southwest and Northwest China, in a bid to increase soybean production.

Statistics show the total area of combined soybean and corn planting this year reached a million hectares.

Shandong, as a major production area in the lower basin of the Yellow River, planted 110,666 hectares this year.

Farmers in the province have also tried planting four rows of soybean between every four rows of corn or six rows of soybean between every four rows of corn.

Because of the better air flow and more sunshine, the yield of

corn grown on the outside is higher than that of corn grown in the inside rows. Growing four rows of soybean makes the two rows of corn grown on the outside receive as much airflow and sunshine as possible, according to agricultural experts.

"The planting model of four rows of soybean plus two rows of corn is able to ensure the highest yield," said Liang Wenzhong, deputy director of the Yucheng bureau of agriculture and rural affairs.

The combined planting model also allows for the easier operation of planting machinery and harvesters, said Zhang.

Droughts in parts of country predicted

By LI HONGYANG
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Eastern and southern parts of China are forecast to suffer consistent serious droughts, according to the National Meteorological Center, after several areas have already been through two months of drought this year.

The scorching summer this year caused rare meteorological droughts in the Yangtze River Basin, and as of Monday the center had issued drought warnings for 61 consecutive days.

The droughts have dried up farmland, drained lakes and forced migratory birds to forage in farmland instead of wetlands.

So far, the Hunan provincial government has allocated about 378 million yuan (\$52 million) for insurance payouts to farmers as their rice crops have suffered losses from the droughts, Xiaoxiang Morning News reported.

Parts of Poyang Lake in Jiangxi province have seen water levels reach record lows, stranding a lot of fish.

On Oct 5, the lake's Xingzi hydrological station measured a water level of around 7 meters, the lowest since record keeping began in 1951, the center said.

Beijing Daily reported on Monday that dozens of residents from Jiujiang in Jiangxi province, had volunteered to transport stranded fish from Poyang Lake to the Ganjiang River about 10 kilometers away using four trucks.

Other volunteers have cleared large amounts of fishing nets from dried-up lake beds for migratory birds to better rest on, according to Jiangxi Daily.

Local reservoirs have been discharged to increase the lake's downstream section, the center said.

As of Friday, due to recent rain, the drought is showing some signs of being alleviated with the water level at the Xingzi station rising to about 8 meters, the center said.

Zhang Juan, a meteorological analyst at Weather China affiliated with the China Meteorological Administration, said that from June to August, the most intense high-temperature period occurred in central and eastern parts of China since meteorological observation records began in 1961.

The long-lasting extremely high temperatures led to the droughts, she said.

The National Climate Center predicted that precipitation along most parts of the Yangtze River in autumn will be far less than in the same period in previous years, creating risks of more droughts.