

Shanxi agriculture thrives, boosts farm income



Booming agricultural products processing industry is creating more job and revenue opportunities

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi province in North China has made great strides in its agriculture and rural development over the past 10 years as seen in the substantial increases in grain output and revenue earned by its farmers.

Local statistics show that the province's grain output increased from 13.09 million metric tons in 2012 to 14.24 million tons in 2021. The combined output value in the industries of farming, animal husbandry, forestry and fishery grew from 130.4 billion yuan (\$18.44 billion) to 213.4 billion yuan during the same period.

The per capita income of rural residents more than doubled from 7,064 yuan to 15,308 yuan during the past decade, with an increase surpassing many provinces and autonomous regions in China.

Officials said such achievements are the results of targeted efforts by the government in poverty relief and rural vitalization, like fostering industries with local characteristics, and promoting agricultural modernization, as well as assistance from various stakeholders of the society.

Wu Lianxiang, a resident in the vil-



From left: Agronomists teach a farmer (right) in Fangshan county new farming skills. An artist creates a piece of calligraphic work to express his joy over the positive changes in the rural areas of Fangshan county. PHOTOS BY WU LIUHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



lage of Wujiapu in Taigu district of Jinzhong city, was busy planting the Chinese mugwort herb together with her fellow farmers on Oct 22.

Chinese mugwort is a popular ingredient for making healthy food and traditional Chinese medicines.

Wu said the Chinese mugwort was introduced from Henan province by the operators of the Jinzhong National Agricultural High-Tech Zone, to which her home village is nearby.

The high-tech zone began to cooperate with the Gardening School of Shanxi Agricultural University in 2020 to establish a cultivation base for medical herbs and vegetables with high quality and promising market potential, aiming to promote the new varieties to the entire province.

"This is the slack season for my own farm, so I'm doing a part-time job with this Chinese mugwort culti-

vation base," Wu said. "I'm paid more than 100 yuan a day."

She added that working with the agricultural high-tech zone is now a major source of family revenue.

"There are abundant job opportunities throughout the year," Wu said. "You can make money all year round if you are willing to work."

While Wu is still working part time in the farming work of the zone, she said a lot of fellow villagers are employed by the local agricultural products processing companies as full-time workers.

Officials said the booming agricultural products processing industry is creating more job and revenue opportunities for rural residents.

Statistics from the Shanxi Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs show the industry has kept an average annual increase

rate of 12.3 percent over the past decade to reach a total sales revenue of 262 billion yuan in 2021. During the first eight months of 2022, the value reached 218.3 billion yuan and the whole-year figure is expected to hit 320 billion yuan.

Another sector significantly contributing to rising income of residents is the rural tourism industry.

The department's data indicated that the rural areas in Shanxi received more than 67 million tourist visits in 2021, generating total business revenue of 8.13 billion yuan for 424,000 rural residents involved.

Local enterprises in Shanxi are also contributing their efforts to promoting rural vitalization and helping farmers increase their earnings.

Shanxi's famed liquor company, Xinghuacun Fenjiu, for instance, is helping rural residents grow their

revenue by establishing sorghum farming bases in Fangshan county.

Chang Jianwei, deputy general manager of the company, said sorghum is the main ingredient for producing white liquor. It began to develop sorghum farms in Fangshan at the beginning of this year.

"This project is a win-win deal for both local farmers and Xinghuacun Fenjiu," Chang said. "The farms in Fangshan are designed to supply high-quality sorghum to our company and local farmers are offered better opportunities for growing revenue and obtaining new farming skills."

Chang said Xinghuacun Fenjiu's operations in Fangshan are now at a small scale with only four farms totaling nearly 7 hectares.

"We are at a stage of trial operation and we will plan for expansion judging from the quality and quantity of

sorghum yields," he said.

Chang said the first batch of sorghum was harvested recently, with a per-hectare output of nearly 10 tons, which is described by him as beyond their expectations. "And the quality is as good as we expected," he added.

Based on this year's experiment, he said the company is planning to expand its operations in Fangshan for years to come.

"We will supply qualified seeds and fertilizers to farmers for free," Chang said. "This move aims at controlling product quality while helping farmers slash their operational costs."

The company is also launching training courses for farmers, helping them master skills for modern farming, the executive said.

Wang Xiujuan contributed to this story.

New urban area acts as bridge between Taiyuan and Xinzhou

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A new urban area is emerging in central Shanxi province, thanks to the implementation of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou integration program. The new area, Daiyu New Industrial City, has risen in Yangqu county in the north of Taiyuan.

Construction of the new area started in March. After about 120 days, a number of infrastructure projects — including 11 roads at a total length of 28 kilometers and the Taiyuan Science and Technology Innovation Center — were completed.

About 38 km to the urban center of Taiyuan and 30 km to downtown Xinzhou, Daiyu new city is regarded as an important link between Taiyuan and Xinzhou.

The integration program of Taiyuan and Xinzhou was launched in 2021 by the provincial government, according to the central government's requirements.

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 the opportunity, the Shanxi provincial government pro-



An artist's rendering of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone. LI SHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

posed the development of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone in the months that followed.

The zone officially opened on Dec 29, marked by the establishment of the Promotional Center for the Development of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone. The zone is composed of two sections in Taiyuan and Xinzhou respectively.

In less than a year, the fledgling development zone has reported impressive achievements, with the most recent being Daiyu.

Since the beginning of this year,

the integrated zone has launched or planned a total of 682 key projects, with funding totaling 972.6 billion yuan (\$137.43 billion). The budget for this year is 175.6 billion yuan.

During the first eight months, a total of 15.99 billion yuan had been invested in the construction of key infrastructure projects, according to officials of the integrated zone.

With a host of facilities in place, a great number of businesses from the rest of the country and the world have decided to open their operations in the zone.

Statistics show the Taiyuan section of the integrated zone has secured investment projects with funding totaling 64.6 billion yuan to date. Meanwhile, the combined investment of projects to settle in the Xinzhou section has reached 32.2 billion yuan.

One major project established in the zone is the TI Holding Smart Valley, a science park founded by renowned Chinese science park developer TI Holding.

Xiang Xinjiang, general manager of the project, said TI Holding aims for the smart valley to become a landmark high-tech establishment in the integrated zone, setting an example for Shanxi's high-tech and green transformation.

The first phase of the smart valley is a life science park, which is under construction. It is scheduled to attract more than 10 leading domestic companies and establish about 200 incubators.

The smart valley is just one example of the integrated zone's ambition to build itself into a high-tech engine in Shanxi province.

For this purpose, the zone's authorities are in talks with research entities, including the famed Chinese Academy of Sciences, to launch innovation platforms, laboratories, and research and development facilities, as well as industrial venture capital funds in the zone.

Cao Yingting contributed to this story.

Joint televised show highlights exchanges

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group joined hands with the Austrian National Tourist Office and the Austrian embassy in China in hosting a televised exchange event in Beijing in late October, aiming to promote exchanges in the alcoholic beverage industry in both countries and make the unique products and culture of the famed Shanxi distillery brand known to the Austrian people.

At the show, the Austrian National Tourist Office's officials, Dieter Scharf and Barbara Stark, as well as Michael Berger, economic and commercial counselor at the Austrian embassy in China, were treated to a dinner composed of food from both countries, Austrian wines and white liquor from Xinghuacun Fenjiu.

Guests from Austria and Xinghuacun Fenjiu executives introduced the products, and history and culture of alcoholic beverages of both countries.

An executive of Xinghuacun Fenjiu talked about the long history and rich cultural influences of the company's products.

He said China has an alcoholic beverage production history of about 6,000 years. That is according to an archaeological discovery made at the site where today's Xinghuacun Fenjiu is located.

Findings there included alcoholic beverage making and storage utensils with a distinctive feature of Yangshao Culture, an ancient civilization in the middle reaches of the Yellow River which flourished between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago.

The discoveries proved that Xinghuacun township in the Shanxi city of Fenyang, where

Xinghuacun Fenjiu is headquartered, might be the source of China's alcoholic beverage industry. Xinghuacun began to make white liquor, or *baijiu*, in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). That was when Xinghuacun became popular in China thanks to a poem by renowned poet Du Mu.

In the poem called *Qingming*, Du described his mood during a trip on Qingming, or Tomb Sweeping Day, in April. In Chinese, Xinghuacun literally means apricot flower village.

"A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Qingming day.

The traveler's heart is going to break on the way.

Where can a wine shop be found to drown his dismay?

A cowherd points to the apricot flower village far away."

The poem is so popular in China that almost all school children are able to recite it. So its popularity has also made the white liquor brand a household name.

Fenjiu began to attract the attention of international buyers in 1915 after it won the first prize at the Panama Pacific International Expo, which was held in San Francisco. It began to be sold overseas on a large scale in the years to follow.

To date, Xinghuacun Fenjiu's products have been sold to more than 60 countries and regions, through its 50-plus overseas dealers.

The company's latest data show it reported business revenue of 22.1 billion yuan (\$3.1 billion) in the first nine months of the year, up 28 percent year-on-year. Its net profit increased 42 percent to 7 billion yuan during the same period.

Li Shu contributed to this story.

Province's cultural gems on display in Beijing

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The long-standing and brilliant culture of Shanxi is on display at the *Forging Ahead in the New Era* exhibition in Beijing where visitors are being told vivid stories through interactive exhibits.

The exhibition opened in late September at the Beijing Exhibition Hall. The monthslong event is designed to showcase China's development achievements over the past 10 years, while shedding light on the culture, life and attractions of various regions in the country.

Shanxi, boasting a history of more than 5,000 years, is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. Provincial officials said the exhibition hopes to raise interest in Shanxi's history and culture, inspire people with its spiritual values and draw them to Shanxi.

One of the eye-catching exhibits at the Shanxi pavilion are four huge boxes with push buttons.

Once visitors push the buttons, they will find miniature, augmented reality shows inside. They are scenarios of a bronze-casting facto-



The Taihang No. 1 Highway is a 1,000-kilometer-long sightseeing road that links major attractions in the Taihang Mountains. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ry in Houma city during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC); people's gatherings in the Jinsui Revolutionary Base in Lyuliang city in the 1940s; the making of hand-polished lacquerware in today's Pingyao county; and contemporary life and cultural activities in Pingyao ancient city in the county.

One visitor said the ancient city of Pingyao has a unique charm. "The most appealing part of it is that it is

still a habitat for many residents. It's a cultural and historical city and a livable city as well."

Near the boxes is a showroom with a big red, ancient-style gate. Inside there are five big screens that display Shanxi's landmark cultural sites and natural wonders including the Yungang Grottoes in Datong city, the Hukou Waterfalls on the Yellow River in Jixian county, the wooden pagoda in Yingxian county and Qikou

ancient town in Linxian county.

Yungang Grottoes, which is seen as one of the most precious assets of Chinese Buddhist arts, has attracted the most attention from visitors.

In addition to the video show, a 3D-printed replica of one of its caves is on display. Through this, visitors are offered a rare opportunity to get up-close to the details of cave structures, carvings and statues.

"Digital technologies are now the best means for the protection and promotion of the cultural assets of Yungang," said Li Hui, a guide at the exhibition. "We are using 3D laser scanning to survey the relics and make replicas with 3D printing. This will allow more visitors, either in China or abroad, to get better access to the cultural assets."

Also on display are Shanxi's three landmark tourism routes: the Yellow River, the Great Wall and Taihang Mountains. The exhibition shows that the scenic spots along the routes are connected by three major sightseeing roads in Shanxi, which make travel much easier than ever before.

Hou Jin contributed to this story.



The TV show produced by Xinghuacun Fenjiu and Austrian institutions is aimed at exchanges between the alcoholic beverage industries of both countries. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY