



Shanxi Electric Motor Manufacturing is running at full capacity to meet increasing orders. ZHANG HAOYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Business back up to speed as Shanxi shakes off virus blues

Scores of enterprises resume normal operations after dynamic COVID-19 policy optimized



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Taiyuan-based Shanxi Electric Motor Manufacturing is gearing up to full capacity, with workers on three shifts at its production plants, to meet the requirements of increasing orders.

Since Nov 19, the company has delivered a total of 20 containers of products to overseas markets, according to its executives. They said the company is accelerating its purchases of raw materials and components to fulfill orders this year and meet the growing demands of 2023.

The company's fast recovery in production is mainly driven by demands for high-efficiency and energy-conserving motors, pneumatic equipment and pumps from steel-making, coking and other enterprises at home and abroad.

Despite the effects of COVID-19, the company's executives said its foreign trade deliveries are expected to surpass 150 million yuan (\$21.56 million) this year, an increase of more than 20 percent from 2021.

The normalization of operations at Shanxi Electric Motor Manufacturing is just one example of the resumption of business activities since State and Shanxi authorities released measures to optimize the COVID-19 response in late November and early December.

On Dec 13, the provincial government announced 29 measures to support the resumption of business activities in Shanxi, requiring various governmental institutions to offer assistance to enterprises.

According to the Shanxi Department of Industry and Information Technology, 93.3 percent of the province's 6,977 manufacturing enterprises above designated size — meaning those with an annual revenue of more than 20 million yuan — had seen their operations return to normal by Dec 12.

The department said the power industry was the fastest to recover, with 99.4 percent of them seeing normal operations. And the coal mining industry was second, with a normalization rate of 95.4 percent.

Qiao Ligang, deputy chief of the department, said it recently announced a slew of measures to help businesses resume operations.

One such measure is conducting research on companies' operational status to identify their difficulties and offering targeted assistance.

Another measure by the department is to help with the operation of industrial chains. This is to ensure that the supply and demand channel runs smoothly between upstream and downstream players.

The Shanxi Energy Bureau has highlighted the importance of the resumption of operations in the energy industry. Shanxi is a crucial supplier of coal, electricity and other energy resources to the entire country.

"For coal mining companies that had to shut down their mining operations due to COVID-19 control and prevention, we will reduce or exempt them from production resumption appraisal procedures," said Miao Huanli, deputy chief of the Shanxi Energy Bureau. "That means enterprises are given larger or even full autonomy to decide on when or how to resume work if they can ensure production safety and pollution control standards."

In the electric power sector, Miao said his bureau is helping power generation enterprises solve coal supply and transport problems.

"With these measures in place, the energy industry is seeing a rapid recovery in operations," the official said. "The number of energy enterprises with suspended operations was 67 at the peak of pandemic control and the number was reduced to 12 by Dec 8."

According to the Shanxi Commission of Development and Reform, construction of infrastructure projects is also back to normal.

Li Zhaowei, an official of the department, said Shanxi had 803 infrastructure projects suspended at the peak of pandemic control. "Now 685 of these projects, or 85.3 percent, have resumed construction."

Service industries which include retail, catering and tourism were the most affected during the pandemic, so the resumption of operations in these sectors has been a top concern of the government, said Liang Zhiyong, deputy chief of the Shanxi Department of Commerce.

"We are proposing plans to help these enterprises hold promotional events during the New Year and Spring Festival periods," Liang said. "And we suggest businesses extensively use e-commerce and other online tools to boost consumption."

The Shanxi Department of Finance is using fiscal tools to stimulate market demand and help enterprises resume operations.

Officials said the department has set aside a total of 60 billion yuan to help businesses and residents overcome difficulties caused by the pandemic.

Liu Ruiqiang contributed to this story.

Freight trains open up inland province's trade

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Officials and staff members at Zhongding Logistics Park celebrated Belt and Road International Day on Dec 16, saying the park's operation of China-Europe freight train services over the past six years has contributed to the Belt and Road Initiative and Shanxi's opening-up.

The park, located in the central Shanxi city of Jinzhong, was founded in November 2016 to serve trade between Shanxi and Europe on its China-Europe railways system.

Shanxi began to operate the China-Europe freight train service in 2017, with the first train to Europe departing from Zhongding on Feb 15 that year.

Before the operation of the logistics park, Shanxi's exports were made possible either through seaports in the east of China or via other Eurasian rail transport hubs like Zhengzhou, Chongqing and Chengdu.

Since the inauguration of China-Europe freight train from Zhongding, the province has seen a steady increase in the number of trains and in the volume of delivered cargo.

In 2017, there were only 10 freight trains that traveled between Shanxi and Central Asia and Europe. The total number of such trains reached 630 over the past six years, according to local officials.

Shanxi's freight trains have reached a great number of cities in Europe, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. These destinations are mostly in countries and regions involved in the BRI. The initiative was proposed by China in 2013 to improve

connectivity and boost international economic exchanges.

Thanks to the service, Shanxi has seen an enriched portfolio of exports, expanding from electronics, machinery, ceramics and steel products in the early years to solar power products, glassware, food, furniture and medical supplies now.

On their return trips, the trains have brought home a variety of products from Europe and Central Asia, like timber and pulp from Russia, copper and cotton from Uzbekistan and metals from Kazakhstan.

Over the past years, Shanxi has developed 10 regular rail routes to link such countries as Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

The international train services have made Shanxi a hub for opening-up in inland China and contributed to promoting international business cooperation under the framework of the BRI, local officials and industry insiders said.

According to Taiyuan Customs, the volume of Shanxi's exports to and imports from countries involved in the BRI has totaled 288.2 billion yuan (\$41.41 billion) since the initiative was launched in 2013. That amount accounted for 22.6 percent of Shanxi's total foreign trade during the period.

To date, Zhongding Logistics Park has developed freight train connections with 26 cities in 11 countries involved in the BRI, according to local officials.

Meng Ting contributed to this story.



Customs officers inspect cargo at Zhongding Logistics Park ahead of its delivery to Europe. MENG TING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chinese white liquor sold at auction in Paris

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A bottle of white liquor produced by Shanxi distillery company Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group in 1979 was auctioned for 19,000 euros (\$20,197) at the Millon auction house in Paris on Dec 6, marking recognition of the renowned Chinese liquor brand in France as well as the rest of Europe.

The auction featured 70 white liquor varieties produced by Chinese distilleries, including Xinghuacun Fenjiu, Yanghe, Luzhou Laojiao, Gujingong, Langjiu, Moutai and Wuliangye. The total transaction value at the auction amounted to 120,000 euros.

Most of the products were owned by Chinese businessman Wang Yaqing, who said all the revenue from the auction of his collection would be donated to the newly established France-China Association of Alcoholic Industry, a fund advocating for China-produced white liquor in Europe.

In addition to the 1979 Fenjiu, another liquor variety that was auctioned is a Xinghuacun Fenjiu 1978 Zhuyeqing.

Zeng Xiaofeng, a French-Chinese businessman who obtained one of the Fenjiu products, said he has collected a great number of French wines and this auction

offered him opportunities to enrich his collection portfolio of alcoholic beverages with the addition of Chinese white liquor varieties.

Ding Ting, an expert on wine and white liquor who was present at the auction, said as French-made wine is regarded as one of the cultural symbols of France, the white liquor of China also has a rich cultural connotation related to the country. He added that's why both top-quality French wine and Chinese white liquor are favored by collectors.

Mayeu de la Hamayde, the auctioneer at the event, said it was an honor for him as the first auctioneer in Europe to host an auction for white liquor products from China.

He said the enthusiasm among the participants in the auction shows the increasing popularity of Chinese white liquor in France and Europe. He added he hopes more such auctions will be held in Paris, to make the city one of the top booming markets for white liquor.

Millon, founded in 1928 in Paris, is one of the largest auction houses in France. Boasting more than 80 auctioneers and auction appraisers, Millon hosts more than 250 auction events annually in the past few years.



A bottle of Fenjiu liquor produced in 1979 is auctioned for 19,000 euros (\$20,197) at the Millon auction house in Paris on Dec 6.

WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Greening of Youyu good for nature and economy

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The temperature dropped to -20 C in late November in Youyu, a county in the north of Shanxi province.

Despite the biting cold, Zhao Shouzhong, a technician in the county's forestry and grassland bureau, was still on duty in a forest farm on the mountains of Hezhuang village with three other colleagues to see how the tree seedlings grow in the extreme weather.

"Judging from their root depth and the soil moisture, I estimate 90 percent of the seedlings can survive this winter," Zhao told his colleagues.

The tree farm that Zhao inspected is a part of the greening demonstration zone at the source of Yongding River, which originates from Shanxi, flows through Hebei and Beijing and empties itself into the Bohai Bay in Tianjin.

Planting trees and grasses in the spring and monitoring their growth all year round are the routines of forestry workers in Youyu, which is known throughout the country for its greening efforts over the past seven decades.

Youyu county is located in the northern part of Shanxi province. It was once a drought-plagued landmass where the living conditions of residents were threatened by sandstorms. Back in the 1940s and 1950s, the greening rate there was only about 0.3 percent.

In the early 1950s, the local government began to implement a greening campaign to battle sandstorms and improve the ecological environment



Forest coverage in Youyu county has now reached about 57 percent after decades of greening efforts. XIN TAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

of the county. Since then, government officials, together with forestry technicians and workers, as well as local farmers, have spared no effort in planting trees.

Over the past seven decades, more than 110,000 hectares of trees have been planted in the county, bringing its forest coverage to about 57 percent at this time. Now the previously barren land has been converted to an "oasis along the Great Wall," said local officials.

The period starting from 2016 has seen an even faster pace in the greening of Youyu. Data from the county's forestry and grassland bureau show that nearly 2,700 hectares of trees were added over the past seven years. The period has also seen the improvement of about 1,500 hectares of grasslands.

As Youyu is located in the semiarid

zone, its greening practice is a combination of planting trees and grasses.

"On slopes with a gradient of more than 25 degrees, we grow shrubs to prevent soil erosion," Zhao said. "In areas with a gradient of less than 25 degrees, we plant grasses and arbor trees."

The greening practice in Youyu has developed into a local pillar industry and brought visible benefits to local farmers and businesses.

Zhao Baoping is the head of a State-owned tree seedling farm in the county. He said his farm can meet the demands in both Youyu and other regions.

"We sell more than 300,000 seedlings a year to more than 30 cities and counties in Shanxi and Hebei provinces as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region," Zhao

Baoping said. "The annual sales revenue can reach up to 1 million yuan (\$143,100)."

Liu Zhanbiao, head of the Youyu forestry and grassland bureau, said farmers and businesses engaged in planting trees and cultivating seedlings can also get government subsidies for returning their farmlands to forests on a yearly basis.

Liu said the total area of Youyu's tree seedling farms now stands at 3,780 hectares, making the county one of the largest tree seedling bases in northern Shanxi.

Sea buckthorn is now a major cash crop in Youyu for its environmental and economic benefits. The shrub is among the most effective plant varieties in China's arid and semiarid areas for preventing soil erosion and desertification, while its fruit is an ingredient for making popular health drinks due to its rich content in vitamin C.

The forestry and grassland bureau said Youyu is now home to nearly 20,000 hectares of sea buckthorn farms. There are 12 enterprises engaged in cultivating the produce, with an annual sales revenue reaching 200 million yuan.

Relying on its improving ecological environment, Youyu has also established a number of ecological tourism attractions such as the Cangtuo River National Wetland Park, the Huangshawa National Desert Park and Nanshan Forest Park, and has boosted its forest-themed cultural tourism industry.

Ma Zhanfu contributed to this story.