

# Years of efforts to control soil erosion paying off in Shanxi



Yellow River benefits from environmental work, resulting in improved tourism and agriculture

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As the North China province of Shanxi has an important position in the ecosystem and environmental well-being of the Yellow River drainage basin, local authorities have made painstaking efforts to improve the ecological environment over recent years.

Shanxi is located in the middle reaches of the Yellow River. The river enters the province in Laoniuan village in the northwestern county of Pianguan and leaves Shanxi in the village of Matiwo in the southeastern county of Yuanqu. Its journey of 965 kilometers across Shanxi covers four cities and 19 counties.

In addition to the mainstream, there are a great number of Yellow River tributaries in Shanxi, with their total drainage area covering 73.1 percent of Shanxi's land. The Yellow River drainage basin in Shanxi is also home to 73.4 percent of the local population and makes up the majority of the provincial GDP.

As Shanxi is located on the Loess Plateau, where soil erosion has been a severe challenge for millennia, it has a crucial role in the protection of the ecological environment of the Yellow River.

Over the past decades, local officials and residents have devoted much effort to improving the environment, especially curbing soil erosion.

The efforts have been strengthened since Shanxi began to implement its strategy in 2017 to develop into an important experimental zone for ecological protection and high-quality development in the Yellow River drainage region.

Officials said efforts to improve the ecological environment of the Yellow River and its tributaries include measures such as controlling soil erosion, economizing the use of water and curbing water pollution.

In Shanxi, soil erosion control efforts are a combination of land greening and engineering measures such as building level terraces and facilities for gully head protection.

Between 2018 and 2022, Shanxi saw a total of 2,300 square kilometers of land freed from soil erosion. By the end of 2022, about 56 percent of land suffering soil erosion had been effectively curbed, compared to the ratio of 53.8 percent in 2018. This marked an even sharper contrast with the 1950s, when 108,000 sq km of land, or nearly 70 percent of Shanxi's total area, was subject to soil erosion.



A wetland park at the confluence of the Yellow River and tributary Fenhe River.

PHOTOS BY YAN XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The county of Yonghe to the east of the Yellow River is frequently cited by people in Shanxi as an example of curbed erosion and an improved river environment.

Local officials said since 2010, multiple measures have been taken to control soil erosion, like upgrading farms on slopes into level terraces, building gully dams and planting trees and grasses.

At present, the county's forest coverage has reached 46.5 percent. The annual volume of soil washed away has been reduced 48.7 percent, or 883,000 metric tons, compared with that of 2010.

Shilou, a county to the north of Yonghe, used to feature an even more fragile ecosystem in the past. More than 67 percent of the land is sloped with gradients of more than 25 percent, and there are more than 5,700 gullies on the slopes. During its worst period, 73 percent of the land suffered soil erosion.

Under these circumstances, the county has made heavy investments in developing terraced farms, building gully dams and greening hill slopes. Local statistics show that the county now has 100 gullies improved, 730 hectares of slopes greened and 800 hectares of terraced farms added.

Local residents are especially satisfied with the improvement. "In the past, we grew crops on the sloped farms without any modification," said a local farmer. "Farming this way was totally a business at nature's mercy — a heavy rain would wash away all the crops and all your hopes."

He went on to say the county's move in soil erosion control has changed everything for the better. "Now we grow crops on terraced farms, which can retain soil, water and nutrition. And our yields are basically guaranteed."

Hequ in the northwest of Shanxi, is the first county in the province to integrate soil erosion into rural governance.



The Yellow River has become a landmark tourist attraction in Shanxi province.

Hequ began its efforts in controlling soil erosion more than 70 years ago and it began a "household contracting system for curbing small drainage areas" in the early 1980s.

According to Wang Yingqiang, Party secretary of Hequ's Tougou township, which was then at the forefront of controlling soil erosion, the innovative practice assigned the mission of improving gullies — or small drainage areas — to households by clarifying their responsibilities and benefits.

"We know that the 'contracting farmlands to households' move in the late 1970s initiated China's rural reforms," Wang said. "But in Hequ, we ventured even further to contract gullies to households."

He noted that the practice was cited by the No 1 document of 1984 released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and was promoted to the rest of the country.

The initiative aroused great enthusiasm among residents in curbing soil erosion and has greatly improved the local ecological environment.

Statistics from the county's agriculture, rural affairs and water

resources bureau show that the county has modified more than 13,000 hectares of farmlands into high-standard, terraced farms and completed construction of 1,426 gully dams over the past four decades. Today, the county has 65 percent of its eroded land curbed and has achieved forest coverage of 24.8 percent.

In addition to improving the environment and farmlands, the soil erosion initiative in Shanxi has brought other benefits to residents. One is the booming rural tourism industry as a result of increased vegetation coverage.

Shanxi's tourism authorities have made the Yellow River one of the three landmark attractions in the province. The areas along the river now constitute a picturesque sightseeing belt featuring clear waters and green mountains.

In addition, farmers in Shanxi have planted a lot of cash crops like walnut, apple and Chinese red pepper to curb soil erosion and the yields are proving another major source of revenue.

Zhao Jianjun contributed to this story.



Steel products made by Jin Gang Holding are ready to be delivered. The company is on the 2023 China top 500 and Shanxi top 100 lists for private businesses. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Rankings reveal private enterprises are thriving with competitive edge

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi's private economy is showing strong growth momentum, with the emergence of a number of industry-leading players and overall improvement in the competitiveness of privately run enterprises, according to local officials and industry insiders.

The 2023 Shanxi Summit for Top 100 Private Businesses, which was held in late October in Taiyuan, the capital city of the province, released the 2023 lists of Shanxi's top 100 private enterprises, top 30 private manufacturers, top 20 private service providers and top five privately run digital service platforms.

Prior to the event, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce released the 2023 list of China's top 500 private businesses. Shanxi has eight businesses on the list — the number stays the same as last year but the enterprises have seen a rise in the ranking on average.

"In Shanxi, the top 100 list indicates the growing competitiveness of private businesses, which is manifested in the rising thresholds for included companies in terms of revenue and profitability," Chen Xuzhong, Party secretary of the Shanxi Federation of Industry and Commerce, said at the summit.

According to Chen, the 2022 revenue threshold for entering the list was 3.31 billion yuan (\$464.72 million), up 22.09 percent compared with that of the previous list released last year. In total, the top 100 businesses' combined business revenue in 2022 was 1.23 trillion yuan, growing 15.31 percent from that of the previous list.

The official added that the top 100's total assets amounted to 1.15 trillion yuan in 2022, an increase of 15.99 percent year-on-year and 2.68 percent that of seven years ago.

It is worth mentioning that the total tax payment from the top 100 reached 73.02 billion yuan last year, growing 47.33 percent from the previous year, and their total number of employees hit 383,500, increasing 6.26 percent year-on-year.

Top of the list was Pengfei Group, a company based in the city of Lyuliang. Its business revenue in 2022 was 102.97 billion yuan, growing 19.46 percent year-on-year. This company, the leading player in Shanxi's hydrogen industry chain, is also the first private business in the province with business revenue surpassing the 100 billion yuan benchmark.

Jing Puqiu, chairwoman of the Shanxi Federation of Industry and Commerce and Shanxi Chamber of Commerce, said that the top 100 private businesses have also played a crucial role in Shanxi's economic transformation, high-quality development and digitalization.

She noted that a great number of the companies are from the advanced manufacturing industries, which are injecting new vigor in smart manufacturing, industrial digitalization, electronics, new energy development and other cutting-edge sectors.

Nanye Industry Group based in the city of Changzhi is the only electronics company in Shanxi entering the China top 500 and Shanxi top 100 lists for private businesses. The company is an industry leader in Shanxi, boasting one of China's most complete industry chains in LED development and production.

Wang Yuan, president of Huaxiang Group, another company on the top 100 list, said that the growing strength of Shanxi's private businesses can be largely attributed to the improving business environment in the province.

He said over the past few years, Shanxi's authorities and governments at various levels have mapped a number of favorable policies to assist the development of enterprises, which include deepening administrative approval reform, streamlining business registration and approval procedures, and offering whole-process assistance to help businesses grow.

The entrepreneurs' confidence is shown in the 2022 statistics. That year saw Shanxi's total number of private business entities reach 3.89 million, growing 26.5 percent from the previous year.

Li Lian contributed to this story.

## Global Digital Trade Expo highlights achievements of traders

By HAO NAN

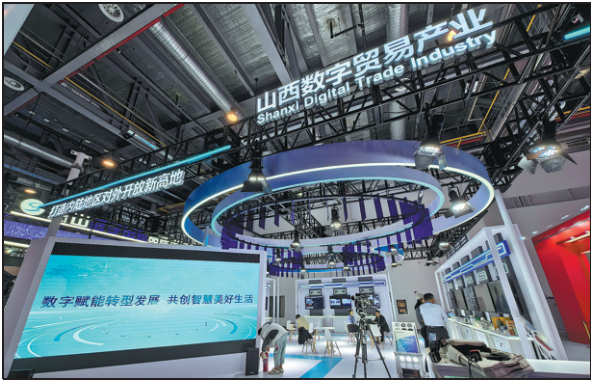
haonan@chinadaily.com.cn

Digital trade companies from Shanxi province recently gathered in Hangzhou to show the major achievements of Shanxi's digital trade industry and find new partners in the sector.

They have also shared new development opportunities by participating in the second Global Digital Trade Expo.

With the theme of "Digital Trade for Global Business", the expo kicked off on Nov 23 in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province.

Introducing goods sent by the latest China-Europe freight train departing from Shanxi for Spain, such as porcelain bottles, colored enamel bowls, prepackaged food and compressors — at the expo's Silk Road E-commerce Pavilion, Lin Nan, deputy general manager of Shanxi Jin'ou Logistics, said since its establishment in 2017, the company has operated 730 trips of China-Europe (Central Asia) freight trains, loaded with goods with a total value of 11.25 billion yuan (\$1.57 billion).



From left: The Shanxi pavilion at the second Global Digital Trade Expo in Hangzhou. Shanxi Data Traffic Ecology Park displays its operating experience and services at the expo. PHOTOS BY YAN JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

These freight train services have reached 29 cities in 14 countries.

In the future, the company, affiliated with Huayuan International Land Port, will accelerate the construction of a comprehensive transportation network centering on the Belt and Road Initiative; speed up the high-quality development of Chi-

na-Europe freight train services; build a modern international logistics system; and help Shanxi's intelligent manufacturing go global, Lin said.

At the expo, Shanxi Data Traffic Ecology Park, which serves as China's first digital economy industrial park driven by data resources,

has fully displayed its operating experience and services.

"With the help of the expo, we plan to attract investment mainly focusing on intelligent manufacturing, as well as data, algorithm and computing power-related sectors, in a bid to inject new impetus into the development of Shanxi's digital economy,"

said Bai Haobai, head of the park's investment attraction department.

Over the past three years, the park has attracted more than 650 leading digital economy businesses, including 13 listed companies and 27 specialized companies, with total revenue exceeding 26 billion yuan.

It has also provided jobs for more



than 9,000 people, and created 16 application scenarios like digital intelligent manufacturing, digital energy, digital culture and digital entertainment.

Other products and services showcased by the Shanxi companies at the expo included electric cars, a smart retail system which can integrate the data of various sales channels into one to facilitate management and analysis, and a series of digital products designed for primary and secondary schools, higher vocational colleges, and universities.

This year's Global Digital Trade Expo, which ran from Nov 23 to 27, had introduced new products, services and technologies, and facilitated idea exchanges and collaborations.

It has attracted more than 800 digital trade enterprises, including 50-plus Fortune Global 500 companies and around 50 enterprises on the lists of top 100 global and national digital trade players.

Officials from 68 international organizations and business associations, as well as embassies, consulates and government officials from 63 countries and regions, also participated in the event, reflecting its growing international influence.

Yan Jie contributed to this story.