

Guangdong enterprises seize moment to capture foreign trade

GD TODAY

Canton Fair an ideal opportunity for local businesses to secure overseas orders

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As the 135th China Import and Export Fair, more commonly known as the Canton Fair, opened in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, on Monday, a host of businesses are taking advantage of their home turf to seize orders in the international market.

Official data show that nearly 5,440 Guangdong-based companies are participating in the ongoing Canton Fair. They occupy more than 15,500 exhibition booths, accounting for 19 percent of the total exhibitors and 21.4 percent of the total stands in the event's export exhibition area.

The Guangdong trade legion includes high-tech businesses and companies with an edge in traditional industries, as well as champion manufacturers in niche segments, and specialized and innovative enterprises. Among them, the exhibitors with proprietary brands for export, high-tech products and eco-friendly operations have caught attention from overseas buyers.

The Canton Fair provides an important opportunity for face-to-face communication with customers, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the needs and expectations of businesspeople from different regions. It also enables a more comprehensive showcase of the latest technologies and products of exhibiting companies, participating business representatives said.

"This year has seen a major surge in orders from the European and American markets. We have made appointments with many old customers to meet at the Canton Fair, as they all want to see the new trends in the laser industry," said Li Wenyan, an executive in charge of foreign trade at Foshan Huibaiheng Laser Technology, a high-tech company based in Foshan, Guangdong province, which specializes in the research and development, production and sales of large and medium power laser equipment.

The company has continuously increased its research efforts and developed new products to meet the new demands of overseas customers, Li said.

Since the opening of the first phase of the fair, running through to Friday, the Jiangmen Low-Altitude Economy Zone's pavilion has attracted numerous domestic and international merchants.

Xue Junzhao, sales director of Guangdong Zilink Aero Technology, a high-tech manufacturer based in Jiangmen, Guangdong province, which is participating in the zone's exhibition, was busy attending to the crowd.

The company, which began with aviation engines, has in recent years ventured into the drone market and independently developed a variety of



A buyer from abroad interacts with a robot made in Guangdong province at the Canton Fair being held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. SHI LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

hybrid-powered drones. As a newcomer to the Canton Fair, Xue is filled with anticipation. He said the overseas drone market has tremendous potential. On the first day of the fair, his company's booth attracted a host of inquiries. Xue said he wishes to explore the international market via the Canton Fair.

At the ongoing fair, a group of Guangdong-based businesses have set their sights on new areas such as the low-altitude economy, humanoid robots, and new energy, exhibiting a range of high-tech and high added-value products that represent new quality productive forces. In the practical interaction between industry and technology, the innovation and application of new technologies are continuously sparking new ideas.

Guangdong is set to make this session of the Canton Fair a wonderful and successful economic and trade event, Wang Weizhong, governor of the province, said at a recent meeting.

He called for maximum effort for the event to accomplish the province's annual economic and social development goals, putting emphasis on new quality productive forces, going all out to stabilize foreign trade, attract investment and encourage consumption.

The governor also encouraged officials from cities across the province to take proactive measures to ensure the Canton Fair is a success and capitalize on it to target international market demand and assist local businesses in securing orders.

As a foreign trade powerhouse, Guangdong is a driving force for China's foreign trade development and plays a stabilizing role in the trade landscape. Data from the Guangdong Sub-administration of the General Administration of Customs show that the province garnered 8.3 trillion yuan (\$1.15 trillion) in foreign trade in 2023, a 0.3 percent rise year-on-year. Exports increased 2.5 percent to 5.4 trillion yuan while imports dropped 3.6 percent to 2.9 trillion yuan.

The province's foreign trade volume contributed 19.9 percent of the country's total in 2023, ranking first nationwide.

Guangdong will promote the improvement and efficiency of foreign trade through a series of initiatives. They include building export-oriented industry clusters; ramping up expansion in key overseas markets; establishing important product distribution hubs; developing new foreign trade business formats; fostering and strengthening related business entities and improving cross-border logistics systems, according to a recent provincial policy on promoting high-level opening-up.

Industrial clusters

Guangdong will reinforce and enhance a batch of export-oriented industry clusters, each capable of generating at least 1 trillion yuan in annual export value. Sectors include electronic information, the modern light industry and textiles, the policy says.

The policy also makes it clear that the province will increase the export of smart home appliances as well as related equipment to the trillion-yuan level, while nurturing 100-billion-yuan-level export-oriented industrial clusters for such sectors as precision instruments, biopharmaceuticals, new-type energy storage, modern agriculture and food.

Additional efforts will be made to tap into the export potential of county-level economies in a bid to foster a number of 100-million-yuan-level characteristic industries for export.

"Guangdong's strong suit in foreign trade is in the province's dominant advantageous industries. It can be inferred that strengthening the interaction between production and trade is key to Guangdong's future foreign trade development," said Chen He, head of the Research Institute of International Services Economy at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.

Market expansion

Guangdong will target key export markets worth more than 100 billion yuan, and systematically formulate and implement market development plans for each, according to the opening-up policy.

To this end, the province will help local businesses maintain their presence in traditional markets such as Europe, the United States, Japan and South Korea, while improving the added value of their exports.

Other efforts include expansion into emerging markets, such as members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations via the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and tapping into African market potential by expanding market procurement trade on the continent.

Emerging markets now have more weight in Guangdong's international trade landscape. Transactions with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative reached 3.04 trillion yuan in 2023, accounting for 36.6 percent of the province's total foreign trade, an increase of 0.3 percentage points over 2022. Trade with Latin America and Africa increased by 7.5 percent and 3.9 percent year-on-year in 2023.

Exports from Guangdong to the United States and European Union member countries stood at 1 trillion yuan and some 970 billion yuan in 2023, accounting for 12.1 percent and 11.7 percent of the province's total foreign trade volume, respectively.

Distribution hubs

Revolving around bulk cargo, electronic components, aircraft, automobiles, agricultural products, and mid-to-high-end consumer goods, six major import bases will be developed in Guangdong, the policy says.

The province will step up the construction of national demonstration zones for import-driven innovation at Guangzhou's Nansha and Huangpu districts, as well as the China (Guangdong) Pilot Free Trade's Qianhai and Shekou Area in Shenzhen.

Guangdong will also apply for the construction of a number of supervision sites designated for the import of meat, grains, seeds, fruits and other products.

Enhanced cooperation for trade with member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council — a regional bloc based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which represents Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen — is also on the province's foreign trade promotional drive, aimed at expanding imports of crude oil, natural gas and agricultural products.

Leveraging provincial-level foreign trade companies, Guangdong will enhance support services for major projects as well.

E-commerce

Cross-border e-commerce is a new growth area for Guangdong's foreign trade. In developing new formats for foreign trade, Guangdong will support Guangzhou and Shenzhen in building themselves into international hubs for cross-border e-commerce. They are to create 20 industrial parks and foster 10 industry-leading enterprises each with a scale of more than 10 billion yuan, establishing 500 large-scale overseas warehouses. All this will help to drive the scale of cross-border e-commerce to exceed 1 trillion yuan, according to the policy.

The province will advance the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as a global trade digitalization leader; establish a sound offshore trade authenticity verification system; ramp up businesses such as import distribution and export consolidation services, bonded maintenance and remanufacturing; and promote the development of international shipping vessels' fuel oil supply services at bonded zones.

Over the years, cross-border e-commerce has become the driving force behind the province's foreign trade growth. Guangdong generated 843.3 billion yuan in cross-border e-commerce deals in 2023, a jump of 25.2 percent from 2022.

Market entities

When it comes to fostering entities involved in foreign trade, Guangdong will support industry leaders to grow stronger and conduct pilot reforms at bonded zones that cover the entire industry chain. Support will be also extended to Guangzhou, Shenzhen and more cities for their construction of global supply chain management centers for such industries as textiles and garments, electronic information and autos.

While attracting industry-leading businesses from sectors including trade, port logistics and industry chains, Guangdong will foster local supply chain leaders, as well as businesses specialized in overseas distribution and agency. It will also encourage local manufacturers to establish sales companies targeting overseas markets, assist over 10,000 small and medium-sized enterprises in the foreign trade sector with their operations' digital transformation and foster at least 100 influential proprietary brands for export.

event in the global trade landscape," she said. "I firmly believe that the Canton Fair is the best bridge to connect businesses with China."

Despite an absence in several editions of the Canton Fair in the last few years, Frangelica Liang, member of the BritCham Committee, was impressed with what she saw today.

"I was amazed this morning when I watched GDToday's live interview in the fair, seeing an amazing range of high-end manufacturing products, from consumer electronics, industrial manufacturing, hardware tools, to AI-equipped high-tech healthcare facilities, new energy vehicles, smart transportation, all showcasing the new page of China's manufacturing in high-end fields," she said.

Liang believes the Canton Fair will embark on a new journey for global trade and the manufacturing industry.

The first day of the fair saw a bustling scene of overseas buyers coming together to find the best products and suppliers. As of 5 pm on Monday, more than 60,000 overseas buyers from 205 countries and regions worldwide attended in person, an increase of 18.5 percent compared to the previous session.

GDToday contributed to this story.

GDToday briefly

Services highlighted for major show's attendees

Guangzhou, the host city of the Canton Fair, is attaching great importance to quality services of dining, accommodation, transportation and recreation for participants. Additional foreign currency exchange machines and mobile point-of-sale devices have been installed to make payment convenient. E-guides to convenient payment services are available on nearly 1,000 electronic displays at tourism venues, while printed manuals are available at hotels, scenic spots and public cultural venues. Local hotels are providing considerate services for international guests, such as free shuttle buses to the exhibition halls, early bird discounts, dining discounts and other exclusive benefits. Forty distinctive one-day tour routes have been launched for visitors. Theaters in Guangzhou will present various genres of performance from different eras and cultures, including the premiere of the Cantonese opera *Shuangxiu Yuan* and the French musical *Don Juan* at the Guangzhou Opera House.

Program launched for travelers' convenience

A mini program called One Stop on the Alipay app to assist services for visitors was launched in Guangdong on Friday ahead of the 135th Canton Fair, which opened in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, on Monday. Powered by Alipay, the mini program, featuring real-time mobile transactions in Guangdong, aims to provide one-stop quality services for all international guests. It is designed as a comprehensive public service and information platform serving overseas visitors to Guangdong province as well as people from China's Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions under the guidance of the Guangdong Administration of Government Services and Data Management. Services ranging from hailing a taxi, entering the metro and booking a hotel room, to paying a bill at a restaurant are available on the mini program.

Assisted entry for inflow of guests

Guangzhou has issued a series of measures to assist entry at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport for overseas buyers attending the ongoing Canton Fair. They include optimized visa services, customs clearance and payment processes. The airport has established an entry visa office and a site for temporary entry permit applications to provide one-stop services for foreign participants in the Canton Fair. Nationals from 54 countries who meet the policy requirements and hold a connecting ticket to a third country or region with a fixed date and seat within 144 hours can apply for visa-free transit in Guangdong. The Guangzhou general station of exit and entry frontier inspection has worked with port and shipping enterprises as well as airlines to provide round-the-clock channels for customs clearance services. China Southern Airlines has also increased domestic and international flights to meet growing travel demand. Some 93,000 overseas buyers from 215 countries and regions have signed up for the fair.

New customs measures unveiled in Guangzhou

Guangzhou Customs recently released 18 measures to improve customs supervision and clearance service for businesses attending the Canton Fair. The new measures include extending the temporary import period for exhibits, supporting enterprises in their participation in the exhibition outside the designated zone, implementing preferential tax policies for imported exhibits, prioritizing business handling and facilitating personnel clearance, which are expected to help ensure smooth and efficient customs clearance for inbound and outbound personnel and materials related to the fair.



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Seeing is believing: visitors share their experiences

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Scores of guests shared their stories while seeking opportunities for cooperation at a salon during the 135th Canton Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

The event themed "Exploring the Future" was hosted by GDToday of Nanfang Media Group at the Canton Fair Complex on Monday, the opening day.

Among the event's 60 attendees were Chinese and foreign buyers, exhibitors, representatives of foreign chambers of commerce and reporters from domestic and foreign media outlets.

"For us, this edition of the fair is also important," said Umberto Naddei, member of the Italian Chamber of Commerce and the CEO of China Noi Group, adding that his company would like to introduce the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area project to its customers.

Naddei said he hopes that this edition, thanks to the "simple" visa policies, will be able to expect a greater

number of Western customers.

Under China's new visa policies, with a trial period running to Nov 30, ordinary passport holders from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and Malaysia are able to enjoy visa-free entry into China for up to 15 days.

Benjamin King, founder and CEO of Kinyu Supply Chain Management, shared his experience and said that doing business in China is about relationships and people.

"Many companies travel to China and to the Canton Fair to look for new products. But the most important aspect of the Canton Fair is the people," he said. "Find the right partner, make sure you communicate well with them and build a strong personal relationship and then the business will flow smoothly."

Bekar Mikaberidze, founder of One Belt One Road Georgian Business House, said: "My Canton Fair story began in 2006, when I was an undergraduate student at Tianjin



Participants in the "Exploring the Future"-themed salon line up on stage. The event was hosted by GDToday of Nanfang Media Group during the 135th Canton Fair. QIN SHAO LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

University and I attended the fair with a boss of an enterprise in my country. At that time, I saw that China enjoyed a promising future.

"From then on, I kept my buyer badge and attended the fair twice a year. At the very beginning I could find clothes, furniture, lamps and other small-sized products at the fair. And this year in 2024, apart from furniture, lamps and other small-sized products, we can see the display of various machines, such as electric vehicles and photovoltaic

products. These changes impress me that China is developing rapidly."

Giselle Bonet, representative of the Venezuela Chamber of Commerce and CEO of Pinchili China, said: "The Canton Fair has evolved over the past decade, adapting to the changes that the international market needs."

"The improvements in conference organization, venue, product types and technical content have enhanced the overall experience for participants, making it a significant