



An array of agricultural produce is displayed in celebration of the Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival on Sunday in Maoming, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Guangdong harvesting success through agriculture

High-quality development project powering province's goal of new growth in countryside



By HAO NAN  
haonan@chinadaily.com.cn

Guangdong held its annual celebration of the Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival on Sunday across the province, with its main venue located in Maoming, a coastal city in the western part of the province.

The event showcased the achievements of rural vitalization in Guangdong via exhibitions, cultural performances and interactive experiences, highlighting the new look and vitality of the province's agriculture, rural areas, and farmers.

Additionally, it featured an exhibition of Guangdong's advantageous and agricultural specialty products, bringing together the harvest achievements from 21 cities across the province.

In recent years, Guangdong has aimed to become a province with strong agriculture, vigorously promoting the high-quality development project for its counties, towns and villages, making a point of developing specialties.

The results of rural vitalization in the province have been remarkable. In the first half of this year, the total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fisheries in Guangdong grew by 3.5 percent, and the per capita disposable income of rural residents

exceeded 25,000 yuan (\$3,546), an increase of 6.7 percent year-on-year.

The total import and export value of agricultural products continued to rank first in the country during the first six months, and the annual grain output remained stable at over 12.8 million metric tons.

The construction of modern marine ranches is in full swing, with a total investment exceeding 6.4 billion yuan. Breakthroughs have been made in breeding and equipment innovation, with deep-sea aquaculture technology leading the nation.

The implementation of the high-quality development project for Guangdong's counties, towns and villages, proposed by the Guangdong Committee of the Communist Party of China, was approved in 2022. This project has been prioritized as a top initiative in the province since early 2023, with coordinated urban-rural integration as a key approach during its implementation.

The CPC Guangdong Committee also called for increased efforts in regional urban-rural coordination to promote the efficient use of development space, orderly flow of production factors, balanced allocation of public resources, and equal coverage of basic public services, aiming to dismantle the dual urban-rural system.

The project targets 122 counties—which also include county-level

cities and districts — across the province, with their 1,609 towns and 26,500 administrative villages.

By 2025, the system and mechanism for urban-rural integration development are expected to take shape, accelerating county-level economic development and achieving new results in urbanization and rural vitalization, local officials said.

By 2027, significant progress in coordinated urban-rural development is expected, with a marked enhancement in the comprehensive strength of counties. Economically strong counties and towns, as well as harmonious and beautiful villages, will emerge, achieving breakthrough progress in the practice of Chinese-style modernization at the county level.

Looking ahead to 2035, the role and importance of counties in the province's economic and social development will become more prominent. New urbanization will be basically achieved, rural vitalization will make decisive progress, urban-rural development will be more coordinated and balanced, and common prosperity will see more substantial progress.

On March 29, during a press conference held by the State Council Information Office, Guangdong Governor Wang Weizhong stated that the imbalance in urban-rural regional development is the biggest problem in Guangdong's high-quality development.

"We will persevere and work tire-

lessly to enhance the comprehensive strength of county economies," Wang said.

"We also plan to focus on improving township development, effectively promote comprehensive rural vitalization, and facilitate the orderly transfer of industries from the Pearl River Delta to eastern, western and northern Guangdong, in a bid to transform our problem into potential strength," he added.

In 2023, the combined GDP of county-level regions in Guangdong grew by 5.2 percent year-on-year, with 112 towns being among the top 1,000 towns nationwide, and the income ratio between urban and rural residents narrowed to 2.36:1.

In May, Guangdong issued this year's work priorities for comprehensively advancing the high-quality development project for its counties, towns and villages, outlining 41 specific requirements across six major areas, including industrial development, residential environment construction, public services and social governance.

In the industrial development sector, for example, the province proposes to transfer at least 600 industrial projects to its destined 15 industrial platforms; cultivate 10 modern agricultural industry belts, each with a full-industry-chain output value of over 10 billion yuan; designate approximately 100 new provincial-level leading agricultural enterprises; and commence 50 new modern marine ranching projects.

## Basketball games help to shine light on villages

By HAO NAN

Basketball enthusiasts recently enjoyed an extravaganza in Guangdong province, as the 2024 national rural basketball tournament (Guangdong) concluded on Sept 15 in Shaxi town, Zhongshan city.

Over eight days, 23 teams from 21 cities across the province competed in 63 matches, with the Zhongshan Shaxi team and the Zhongshan Guzhen team emerging as the champion and runner-up, respectively.

This year's event blended sports with showcases of intangible cultural heritage, local delicacies and agricultural product exhibitions. It was deemed a shining brand of Guangdong's "harmonious and beautiful villages" and a new force accelerating the advancement of the high-quality development project for Guangdong's counties, towns and villages.

During the tournament, Zhongshan organized a series of intangible cultural heritage performances, including the drunken dragon dance and *qilin* (a legendary beast in Chinese mythology) dance. Additionally, the city set up exhibition areas for products from various cities across Guangdong and curated several premium rural cultural tourism routes to leverage the event's influence in promoting rural cuisine and scenic spots.

The event not only allowed villagers to experience the joy of sports but stimulated the development of local catering industries such as dining, accommodation and tourism, creating more job opportunities.

Also, more than 100 rural livestreamers from across the province, joined by four foreign livestreamers, turned their cameras to Zhongshan. Through their lenses, the basketball matches, picturesque rural landscapes, traditional cultural performances and distinctive Lingnan cuisine were showcased to a nationwide audience.

Their live broadcasts showed off the charm of beautiful rural areas and enhanced the recognition of Guangdong's special agricultural products, broadening the path for rural vitalization in the province.

In Guangdong, rural basketball enjoys great popularity among the grassroots. Through initiatives like

the farmers' fitness project, the province established basketball courts in all administrative villages more than a decade ago.

Furthermore, it has organized provincewide sports events like the 10,000 villages basketball tournament, which promoted sports facilities in villages and strengthened the cultivation of talented athletes.

Taking Shaxi as an example, its basketball tradition dates back to the 1930s, earning it the title of "basketball town" in Zhongshan. Statistics show that nearly 300 local athletes have participated in each national rural basketball tournament in recent years, with up to 70 percent of the local population caring about the events.

Experts said that cultural vitalization is the soul of rural vitalization, essential for enhancing social civilization and fostering a new atmosphere. They noted that integrating sports with rural areas enriches cultural life and enhances cohesion, outlining a diverse and multifaceted path to rural vitalization.

Customs, folk songs and dances, and agricultural skills are excellent rural cultural resources. Making good use of these resources and promoting the deep integration of community sports with local culture and ethnic characteristics can inject continuous momentum into rural vitalization.

This approach helps to create a strong atmosphere for the whole society to care about constructing livable and beautiful villages, and promotes high-quality development in rural sports, experts said.

According to the Guangdong rural construction action plan issued in the first half of 2023, all administrative villages in the Pearl River Delta region are to meet the standards for beautiful and livable villages by 2025.

Also, more than 80 percent of administrative villages in the coastal economic belt and northern ecological development areas will reach these standards by 2025.

The standards for such villages encompass key infrastructure areas such as roads, water supply, energy, logistics, informatization, comprehensive services, housing and living environments, as well as improvements in rural public services and governance.



Basketball fans wave the flag for the Zhongshan Shaxi team at the provincial final. MIAO XIAOJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Colleges dedicate expert resources to spur rural vitalization

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Pest control is a common concern to farmers worldwide, yet in Zijin county of Heyuan, Guangdong province, tea green leafhopper insects turn out to be a favorite.

As one of China's top 100 counties for tea production, Zijin in South China has a history of growing tea that can be traced back nearly 700 years, according to the county's historical records.

The county has risen to fame in recent years for *chancha* tea, made using leaves bitten by tea green leafhoppers.

The tiny green-winged insects insert their mosquito-like mouths into the newly sprouted tea buds to suck their sap, affecting tea growth and resulting in a sharp decrease in yields.

However, farmers soon found that the tea made using leafhopper-bitten leaves has a unique flavor and aroma. It has gained in popularity in the market, with 500 grams of *chancha* tea priced at thousands of yuan.

The leafhoppers' bites can trigger a series of immune responses from within tea trees, which adds a honey aroma to the finished tea, experts explained.

Despite being sought-after in the market, the tea was difficult to produce on a large scale, subject to the biological habits of the tea green leafhopper.

The colleges of plant protection



A farmer drives a harvester across a field in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and horticulture at South China Agricultural University worked together to address the technical difficulties in artificial breeding of the tea green leafhopper, helping local farmers increase the yield of *chancha* tea.

To this end, the university has founded an expert panel covering the entire industry chain of tea tree breeding, cultivation, processing and plant protection. It conducts research on new technologies and focuses on building a comprehensive industry chain support model.

"Thanks to the strong support from the government and the technical assistance from South China

Agricultural University, the aroma of tea from Zijin county is spreading further and the local tea farmers are living a sweeter life," said Zhong Tiege, an executive of Qinglingfeng Tea. The company evolved from a farmers' cooperative and is now an enterprise integrating tea planting, processing and sales.

*Chancha* tea has become a pillar industry in Zijin, with its tea plantations expanding from 1,200 hectares in 2015 to 5,333 hectares in 2023.

**County economy**

Counties across Guangdong account for approximately 71.7 percent of the province's entire area. In

contrast, their combined GDP contributed 12.5 percent of the province's total.

As county economy lagged behind in the province's high-quality development, the Guangdong Committee of the Communist Party of China launched a project in December 2022 to promote rural vitalization and modernization and achieve coordinated rural-urban growth.

The high-quality development project for Guangdong counties, towns and villages involves 122 counties, 1,609 towns and 26,500 villages across the province.

With an outreach of their staff, technology and service, higher-education institutions in Guangdong have engaged in the project, injecting new momentum into driving the high-quality development at county level.

Zhu Kongjun, head of the Guangdong Department of Education, said the province has so far arranged 82 colleges to pair with 57 county economies for cooperation across a variety of sectors. These include public services, technological support for industrial development, grassroots-level training and urban planning and development.

In the matchmaking activity, the capacities and needs of both sides were taken into account, including such factors as educational characteristics and resources of the colleges, as well as the counties' geographical

locations, industrial foundation and development, Zhu said.

**School alliances**

Three college alliances for rural development have been established in Guangdong, focusing on industrial growth, public services, and village planning and construction, respectively.

They provide platforms for colleges to share resources, collaborate on innovation and complement each other's strengths, according to the provincial department of education.

The alliances use advantageous industrial projects as the link, following the development concepts of "each village with one signature product" and "each town with one iconic industry". This has created a group of college-led rural-industrial development demonstration models, which strive to enhance development in counties.

"We'll turn the vast expanse of the countryside that the project targets into a grand stage for the application of education and research achievements by colleges, and into a large classroom for student growth," Zhu said.

Many higher-education institutions in Guangdong have sent teams of teachers and students to identify the characteristics of different counties in coastal areas, mountainous regions and farms, he said.

They have enhanced efforts in technological introduction, transfor-

mation and training in paired counties, helping to stimulate local development and cultivate advantageous industries, he noted.

In addition, Guangdong plans to dispatch at least 2,225 agricultural technicians to villages and townships that feature grain production or characteristic industries, and are included in the second batch of county economies listed in the project.

**More support**

To create a growing pool of qualified people to assist rural vitalization, Guangdong has launched a systematic training and startup incubation program designed for young people in rural areas, through a cooperation model combining government, business and college.

Starting from December 2022, the youth training program has benefited more than 47,400 participants online, as well as more than 1,000 entrepreneurs, village officials, rural volunteers and college graduates who want to work in villages.

The Guangdong Youth Development Foundation set up a fund on Sept 12. Dedicated to supporting young people in rural vitalization, its initial fund amounts to 10 million yuan (\$1.42 million).



Scan the QR codes to download the GD Today app or visit the website for more information.