

## Business is booming in Shanxi

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With a total of 45 construction projects underway, about 30,000 workers employed by Shanxi Transportation Holdings Group are having their busiest year since the outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019.

The company is the leading constructor and operator of highways in Shanxi province. It reported business revenue of 9.27 billion yuan (\$1.34 billion) for the first quarter of this year, increasing 6.73 percent over the same period in 2022. The transport sector is often considered one of the primary barometers of a local economy and its robust growth marks a positive sign for Shanxi's steady recovery from the three-year pandemic.

The recovery momentum is demonstrated in the latest data released by the Shanxi Bureau of Statistics. It announced on April 21 that the province's first-quarter GDP stood at 582.43 billion yuan, growing 5 percent year-on-year.

"Shanxi's economy is showing a sustainable increase in the first three months of this year, with balanced development in almost all sectors," said deputy bureau chief and spokesman Wei Yongjie.

Primary industry, with agriculture at its core, reported an added value of 17.11 billion yuan, up 3.8 percent year-on-year. Secondary industry, mainly manufacturing, registered an added value increase of 5.1 percent to 291.08 billion, while tertiary industry, represented by the service sectors, reported an added value of 274.24 billion yuan, rising 4.9 percent.

In the agricultural sector, the province announced a plan earlier this year for boosting the modernization of its farming infrastructure, including upgrading irrigation systems, improving soil conditions and promoting greenhouse farming.

The vegetable and fruit sectors are the earliest beneficiaries of the modernization move. Thanks to the extensive use of greenhouses and other facilities, the vegetable sector reported a year-on-year output increase of 4.1 percent, while the fruit sector registered a more impressive growth rate of 11.6 percent.

In the energy sector, Shanxi maintained steady growth in the supply of coal, natural gas and electricity.

Thanks to the digital transformation of its mines, Shanxi produced 335 million metric tons of coal during the first quarter, growing 8.9 percent over the same period of last year. Over the same period, it supplied 38.01 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity to the rest of country, growing 16.7 percent year-on-year.

The manufacturing industry above designated scale — which means enterprises with annual sales revenue of more than 20 million yuan — reported a year-on-year increase of 13.3 percent in added value during the first quarter.

The province's 10 strategic emerging industries, including new energy vehicles and advanced manufacturing, reported combined business revenue of 380 billion yuan, showing an increasing proportion in Shanxi's economy.

Leng Xue contributed to this story.

## Old industries look to modern methods

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Taiyuan, the capital city of Shanxi province, has been a traditional manufacturing base in China for many years, featuring competitive sectors such as steelmaking, machinery, food and semiconductors.



Quality control workers inspect bottles at a vinegar production plant in Taiyuan's Qingxu county. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Winemakers embracing technology

Characteristic industries strategy encourages brewers to update techniques while preserving ancient recipes



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Yanmenguan, a strategic pass of the Great Wall, is the historical landmark of Daixian county in North China's Shanxi province.

Even mentioning this place can help people, including those who are not familiar with Shanxi's geography, get an idea of where this county is.

As one of the most important strongholds along the Great Wall, Yanmenguan is a household name for its frequent references in ancient documents, poems and novels. It is also closely associated with many conflicts and exchanges between the farming Han people to the south of the wall and the nomads in the north.

This place is also associated with a famed beverage — yellow wine. According to local history documents, one of the first references of the drink was in the early Song Dynasty (960-1279).

One of the county's history books said that a military force led by the famed Song Dynasty general Yang Jiye was stationed at Yanmenguan. Each time they were dispatched to defensive operations in the north, local resident would present them with homemade yellow wine, expecting their victorious return. Since then, presenting yellow wine to warriors has become a local tradition.

Yellow wine is made from grain with a fermenting technique that is low in alcohol and high in nutrition. This variety of beverage is unique to China, with a history of



Daixian county produces one of the best millets in China, ensuring the high quality of its yellow wine. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

more than a millennium.

In Daixian, yellow wine has been made using millet as its main ingredient. Located at 38 degrees north latitude and boasting loess soil, the county is said to have produced one of the best millets in China, thus ensuring the high quality of its yellow wine.

For many centuries, Daixian's yellow wine has been produced mostly by small mills and even households. In the context of today's fierce competition, Daixian's yellow wine industry sustains growth and prospers in the domestic market.

When talking about the industry's success, local insiders and officials said the time-honored production techniques, which feature the strictest standard for quality control, are key.

The glamor and vitality of the old techniques were endorsed by Shanxi's cultural heritage authorities when they included them in the provincial list for intangible cultur-

al heritage protection. They said the techniques are flourishing because they are well preserved and developing thanks to their use by local industrialists.

Gao Guixi, 90, is the founder of local producer Guixi Yellow Wine and is the fourth-generation inheritor of the ancient fermenting techniques.

"The centuries-old techniques are the most precious assets for the industry," Gao said.

"I've been in the industry for more than five decades and experienced ups and downs in my business.

"Every time when we survived and continued to grow, we knew it is the core value of 'quality is the lifeline', which is a tradition embodied in the ancient techniques, that has worked," Gao said.

The industry is also playing a significant role in the local economy as it continues to bring revenue and jobs to residents, as well as business

opportunities to local entrepreneurs, according to Zhu Xiaodong, Party secretary of the city of Xinzhou. The county of Daixian is a part of Xinzhou.

This economic role was recognized by Shanxi's authorities as it was included in the provincial list of characteristic towns for local specialty industries in 2022.

The government of Shanxi announced its first batch of 10 characteristic towns in September 2022.

Developing towns with characteristic industries is a new strategy in Shanxi, which aims to create economic engines that accelerate high-quality industrial growth locally.

Local entrepreneurs have realized that the listing of Daixian as a provincial-level characteristic town is a great opportunity for the wine industry's growth, in terms of increasing the influence of local products, strengthening local enterprises' innovation and

expanding marketing channels.

Many of them have big plans to expand and upgrade.

Yanmenwang Wine Industry is a yellow wine producer established in Daixian in 2022. It recently began construction of a huge project with a total investment of 6.6 billion yuan (\$953 million).

According to Zhang Hongbin, an executive in charge of the construction, it will be a facility integrating production and yellow wine-related tourism.

"In addition to a yellow wine production plant with a designed annual output of 100,000 metric tons, the facility will also include a museum, a yellow wine experiencing park and a hotel," Zhang said.

The executive added that, the company's production will highlight both ancient technique preservation and modernization.

"Ancient techniques will still be used to ensure the authenticity of Daixian yellow wine," Zhang said. "But these will be upgraded with intelligent and automatic production technologies for boosting efficiency and quality control."

He said the production plant is scheduled to begin operation in September.

Gao Ruilin, the third son of Gao Guixi and the current boss of Guixi Yellow Wine, has a similar approach to Zhang.

For instance, his company has used digitalized temperature control technology in the company's fermentation plant.

"Modern technologies like this are helpful in stabilizing production processes and controlling quality," he said. "The traditional things are not only preserved, but they advance with the times."

Wang Liqiang contributed to this story.

## Polishing centuries of lacquer art tradition

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Chinese lacquer art, with a history of more than 8,000 years, is still evolving and flourishing thanks to the efforts of creative practitioners like Guo Ximei.

Guo, a resident of Taiyuan, the capital city of North China's Shanxi province, said her approach to the millennia-old craft is innovative inheritance. She continues to use natural lacquer despite a wide variety of synthesized alternatives.

Natural lacquer, which is extracted from lacquer trees, is mainly composed of urushiol, lactase, gum and liquid.

It is utilized as a coating for wood products due to its resistance to corrosion, moisture and high temperature. Traditional lacquer art involves paintings and engravings on the lacquered surface.

"Craftsmanship is still the basic requirement and major source of inspiration for a successful lacquer artist in modern times," Guo said, adding that lacquer ware production is a comprehensive art requiring highly refined skills in pattern design, selection of materials, body construction, painting, enameling, engraving and polishing.

While adhering to traditional techniques and values in creating the art, there is ample room for innovation in today's market, Guo said.

She added that enriched appli-

cation procedure is a primary example.

"In the past, lacquer art was mostly used for furniture decoration," Guo said. But today, in her Taiyuan studio, lacquer ware creations cover a wide variety of items, including cups, earrings, bracelets, handbags and even postcards.

"Lacquer art needs to adapt to contemporary life and modern aesthetics by incorporating modern functionality and cultural elements," said Guo, who creates her art on silk, cotton, linen and paper, in addition to the traditional application on wood.

While patterns of traditional lacquer ware focus on flowers, animals, birds and human figures, Guo has enriched her artistic expressions by including such topics as natural landscapes and historical events.

Shanxi topography, including the Great Wall, the Yellow River and the Taihang Mountains are among the subjects depicted in Guo's creations.

"I hope my art can play a role in promoting Shanxi's tourism attractions," she said. "My studio hosts regular workshops for local students and we also offer online teaching programs for them. I hope to enhance people's awareness and enthusiasm by helping preserve the traditions of this art."

Zhao Lina and Zhang Caiyun contributed to this story.



Guo Ximei works on a piece of lacquerware at her studio in Taiyuan. ZHAO LINA / FOR CHINA DAILY

### Colorful celebrations

Shanxi welcomed a growing number of tourists during the May Day holiday due to the rich offerings by local destinations.

**Top:** A reality show called *Life by the Farms* is held in Yunqiu Mountain Scenic Area in the county of Xiangning in Linfen city. ZHANG ZHIGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

**Left:** Workers install new landscaping facilities for a carnival to be held in Jinyang Lake Park in Taiyuan city. RUAN YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

This part of the plan requires local leading manufacturers — including Taiyuan Iron and Steel, Huike Electronic New Materials, Meijin Hydrogen, Taiyuan Heavy Machinery and Shanxi Electric Motors — to build stronger industry chains through sharing of resources.

In an era of digitalization, the plan places focus on the digital economy for empowering the high-quality development of local manufacturers.

The city government of Taiyuan recently announced an action plan for the digital economy, defining its goals for this year and measures for implementation.

The action plan predicts there will be a rapid growth in the development of digital-related new infrastructure and the number of 5G base stations will reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

More than 10 major projects relating to big data, cloud computing and digital industrialization will also be launched this year.

Yang Yu contributed to this story.