

## LIFE



According to a report by Xinhua News Agency on June 3, total revenue of agricultural products sold online reached 283 million yuan from January to April, 28 percent more than in the corresponding period last year. CHEN FEIBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

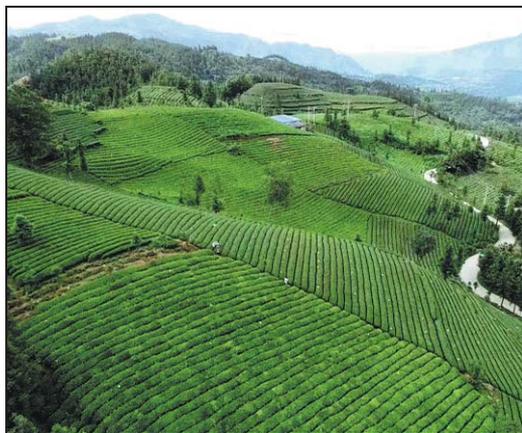
By CHEN NAN

Two years ago Huang Sixiu was inspecting shops on the e-commerce platform Taobao and came across an unusual sight. It was someone selling produce, but this was far from your regular Taobao shopping site. What Huang saw was a farmer standing among jujube trees in Cangzhou, Hebei province, hawking his wares to the world via live-streaming.

Almost instantly Huang knew that this was something she was going to get into — not selling jujubes, but using the power of live-streaming either to make money for herself, to do something to help her hometown financially, or both.

"I knew nothing about live-streaming but decided to give it a try," says Huang, 30, who was born and raised in the remote village of Pingqiao in Pu'an, a poverty-stricken county of Qianxinan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture in Guizhou province.

Despite Huang's hefty parenting duties — she has two children, one aged 3 and the other 1 — she finds she has plenty of free time. That time, she decided, could be turned to good account, and now she does a live-stream webcast of three hours almost every day, the subject matter including visits to local markets and cooking meals.



Huang Sixiu (center), born and raised in the remote village of Pingqiao in Pu'an, a poverty-stricken county of Qianxinan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture in Guizhou province (left), does a live-stream webcast of three hours almost every day with a focus on daily life contents including visits to local markets and cooking meals.

## Craftsmanship: Ethnic embroidery helps locals improve livelihood

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Five years after the earthquake and a few years after graduating from college, she quit her job as a public servant, and in 2014 she set up a cooperative in her hometown bringing local women together to make distinctive Qiang ethnic hand embroidery and sell it on the internet.

She named her online shop Xi Yue, meaning happiness. Though it was exactly this that her career change would bring her, when she made her decision it confounded many of her relatives and others in her hometown, many of whom have come to believe that city life

holds the promise of nirvana.

"Qiang ethnic people and embroidery are inextricably linked in their culture and throughout history, and I had been interested in the bright handcrafted Qiang cotton and silk works since when I was a child," Zhang says. "I was keen to let more people know about the great culture of the Qiang."

Zhang's mother is the leader of the village's women's federation and helped local women to sell their embroidery products.

"The Qiang people have no written language, so the Qiang embroidery is carried forward only by hand and word of mouth," Zhang says.

With her online shop on Taobao

and promoting the handcrafted embroidery products via social media platforms, Zhang steadily gained a following, especially among young buyers who like to put embroidered patterns to use in clothing, bags and accessories.

"Many Qiang women make embroidery for their own use and are unaware of how they can turn their handicrafts into commercial products," Zhang says. "Many of those who are, and who have never left their village see their products travel to different parts of the country and even throughout the world."

Having learned to do embroidery herself, she feels she can better present and explain products to

customers. She also conducts workshops training local women so they can join the cooperative. She now works with about 120 Qiang women from 30 to 70 years old, who turn Qiang embroidery into items that fit contemporary life.

Zhang says she receives orders from all over China. The women of her cooperative produce every day based on the size and pattern of the embroidery products, and they can earn between 500 yuan (\$70) and 3,000 yuan a month.

In addition to making embroidery products, villagers make a living by growing vegetables and raising livestock. The average income of the villagers is from

2,000 yuan to 3,000 yuan.

"Some disabled women cannot do farm work," Zhang says.

"The cooperative gives them the opportunity to make embroidery products and to make money from them. The good thing is that they don't have to leave their families to work in cities, and the income they earn gives them better lives."

Making traditional handicrafts has become a source of income for local women, but turning the art into products for modern consumption remains a key challenge for Zhang. She now runs eight shops, including four cooperative shops, across the country, to increase individual sales.

more than in the corresponding period last year.

"Every day we have about 800 to 1,200 orders online that sell over 200 types of local products around the country," says Hua Xi, a Guizhou native in her early 30s who has been helping local farmers sell products such as bamboo shoots, sticky-rice liquor and cinnabar online.

"It helps farmers to raise their incomes and promote entrepreneurship," Hua says.

Hua attended the National People's Congress in Beijing as a deputy last month. Hua, of the Dong ethnic group, says she set up her own e-commerce business in 2015. In April that year she moved her business to Rural Taobao, an e-commerce project set up by Alibaba Group "to turn China's rural residents into online shoppers and sellers". Hua says that by the first half of 2017 the annual value of her sales had surpassed 1 million yuan.

Several weeks ago Cui Shuxia, 80, of Taipingbao village in Xixian New Area, Shaanxi province, appeared in her grandson's live streaming show to promote and sell apricot.

She ate apricot in front of the camera and talked in Shaanxi dialect. Her video has been viewed nearly 2 million times on Sina Weibo, a major Chinese social media platform. Fans are impressed by Cui's sincerity and her humorous and natural way of talking. Cui not only introduced the history of apricot trees in the village but also told her own stories about growing apricot trees.



I'm very shy when I talk to the camera but my grandmother is very good at it. She knows a lot about apricots."

Wang Yalou, speaking about his grandmother Cui Shuxia, 80

"Within three hours we received more than 3,000 orders from consumers," Cui's grandson, Wang Yalou, told CCTV. Wang has run an online store selling local agricultural products for five years.

His family has a farmland of 7 mu (about half a hectare) growing apricot trees. Most of the local villagers make a living by growing and selling fruits, especially apricot.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, sales of local agricultural products fell early this year. On May 24 Wang launched the first live-streaming show on Taobao to promote his products.

"I'm very shy when I talk to the camera but my grandmother is very good at it. She knows a lot about apricots because the village she lives in has grown them for more than 100 years and has become very well known because of that."

Now, with apricots in great demand, Wang buys them from local farmers to sell online. "This is going to change the whole village," he says.

During a tour of Zhashui county in Shaanxi province on April 20, President Xi Jinping met a group of merchants who were using live-streaming to sell *mu'er*, a black fungus. China Central Television showed Xi telling the group that "e-commerce is very important in promoting agricultural products and has a big role to play".

Celebrities also use their star power to promote agricultural products of rural China. For example, on April 6, the live-streaming celebrity Li Jiaqi and the CCTV presenter Zhu Guangqian joined to sell agricultural products from Hubei province, which attracted over 10 million viewers and sold products of over 40 million yuan that night.

