



A worker at Qinzhou Yellow Millet Group processes a load of the cereal before it is delivered to Canada. ZHONG QING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi's yellow millet taking root in Chinese and overseas markets

Province's traditional crop, which was once favored by royal dynasties, has found a new customer base and enjoys growing sales in Canada

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Peng Lisha, a sales manager of Qinzhou Yellow Millet Group based in Qinzhou city, Shanxi province, is estimating the arrival date of a shipment of millet bound for Canada.

"More than half a month passed since it departed Tianjin Port and it's about to arrive at Vancouver Port in a few days," Peng said.

Peng is concerned with the shipment because this is the biggest deal she has made for her company this year, in the context that foreign trade has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The executive said she received an enquiry from Canada's Afod in April. "After Afod representatives visited our company three times in May, we signed an agreement on June 4, which authorized Afod as the exclusive dealer of our yellow millet in Canada," Peng said.

She said a total of 200 metric tons of millet will be shipped to Canada in 2020. "This is the largest export volume of yellow millet from Qinzhou in its history," Peng said.

Qinzhou is a major producer of yellow millet in Shanxi and is known throughout the country for the high quality of its product.

According to Wen Xiuwei, executive deputy president of Qinzhou Yellow Millet Group, the company began to export millet to Canada five years ago but the sales volume was small.

In addition, there are sales of millet in Poland and Australia but the total amount is about 3 tons a year.

"The founder of Afod is a Canadian-Chinese, whose hometown is in Shanxi," Wen said. He added that the boss is familiar with all varieties of millet in Shanxi and knows the products from Qinzhou are among the best.

"We learned from Afod that millet products sold very well in some supermarkets in Canada, especially among Chinese communities. And they also have plans to sell



them in the United States," Wen said.

The executive said the millet products are processed according to the strict requirements of the client.

"Millet is stored in warehouses at temperatures between 1-2 C and undergoes multiple procedures of sorting and dehulling before delivery," Wen said.

"When the product arrived at Tianjin Port, it passed strict checks by Afod representatives. We received payment three days after the checks," said Peng, the sales manager.

"We will get further feedback when the products arrive in Canada and are sold in local markets. Further improvements will be made according to the feedback," she said.

Qinzhou Yellow is a renowned millet brand name with a local geographic indication trademark. It was a favorite food of the royal families during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, according to local historical records.

However, the yellow millet unique to Qingzhou had been seen by local farmers as a variety with a low output and crops were limited to certain higher-altitude areas.

In the 1970s, the Shanxi Academy of Agricultural Sciences and Shanxi University of Agriculture jointly established a research program on Qinzhou's yellow millet. They studied whether the grain could be grown in other regions or whether the per-unit output could be raised.

The eight-year program led to a substantial improvement in the output of yellow millet and helped it adapt to a wider range of geographic conditions, while main-

taining its quality.

Qingzhou Yellow Millet Group was established in the 1990s as a local flagship company in the processing and sales of the products.

Millet was among the earliest grains in China. It has been planted on the Loess Plateau that today includes Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces for around 7,000 years.

The area of millet in Shanxi is currently between 200,000 and 240,000 hectares, accounting for about 10 percent of the country's total. Its output is about one-eighth of the national total, according to Shanxi Food and Strategic Reserves Administration.

To improve market recognition, the Shanxi provincial government released a plan for the brand building of local millet in August 2017.

The plan required the establishment of industrial alliances and a regional brand for the products.

"Since 2017, a millet industrial alliance, a millet industry operational center and a collective brand of 'Shanxi Millet' have been established, helping to promote the products throughout the entire country and the rest of the world," said Wang Yunlong, head of the Shanxi Food and Strategic Reserves Administration.

"To meet customer demands for healthier food, Shanxi has developed more than 20,000 hectares of farmland for organic millet and its output is expected to surpass 50,000 tons this year," Wang added.

The official noted that growing millet is an important means to help rural residents lift themselves out of poverty.

Qinzhou Yellow Millet Group, for instance, has helped more than 20,000 rural households by encouraging them to grow the crop, purchasing their products, promoting advanced farming techniques and providing financial assistance, according to Shi Yaowu, board chairman of the company.

Li Yali contributed to this story.

Great Wall's 'moon gate' rises from the rubble following storm collapse

By YUAN SHENGGAO

When reconstruction of a collapsed gate at the Great Wall in Shanyin county, Shanxi province, was completed on Aug 6, a group of researchers was overwhelmed with excitement.

"We are happy to be witness to the resurrection of the famed 'moon gate,'" said Liu Hengshan, chairman of the Society of the Great Wall Studies based in Shuozhou city.

"The renovated gate is almost the same as the original. You can't tell any difference more than 10 meters away," said Wang Jinfei, a photographer of Taiyuan-based Shanxi Daily newspaper.

An enthusiast of the Great Wall, Wang had taken many pictures of the gate before it collapsed in 2016.

The gate, a part of the Shanyin section of the Great Wall 1.4 kilometers away from the renowned Guangwu Fortress, was built in the 16th century during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

The arched gate was a favorite of photographers because pictures with the moon shining through the gate had been a sensation in the media. It was named the "most beautiful landmark of the Great Wall" by enthusiasts.

However, it was destroyed by a heavy storm in October 2016.

"The pass, consisting of the gate and a watchtower, became ramshackle five centuries after its construction. Following a rainstorm that lasted for three days, we found it collapsed," said Yin Chengwu, a local official responsible for the protection of the Great Wall.

Human activities were another reason for the collapse of the gate, in addition to a lack of maintenance over the centuries, accord-



The rebuilt "moon gate" in the Shanyin section of the Great Wall looks almost the same as it did before becoming damaged four years ago. WANG JINFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ing to Zhang Bingfa, one of the founders of the Society of the Great Wall Studies.

He noted that some locals were found taking bricks away from the wall for building their own homes.

"Many sections of the Great Wall are in a similar condition. There is an urgent need to protect and repair the walls," Zhang said.

Local officials in Shanyin quickly responded to the collapse. Engineering measures were taken to prevent other parts of the wall near the gate from falling down.

The government then invited experts on Great Wall protection to draft plans for the reconstruction.

A research team composed of experts from the National Culture and Heritage Administration and the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage was involved in the planning and reconstruction of the gate.

The team members collected

more than 3,000 pictures of the "moon gate" to ensure that the new structure keeps its original appearance.

Qiao Yunfei, a member of the team, said new technologies and materials had been used to improve the structure's resistance to natural disasters like storms and earthquakes.

"To keep its original appearance, the new materials were only used in the interior of the structure," Qiao said.

Dozens of tourists also witnessed the completion of the gate. Tang Bin, a tourist from South China's Guangdong province, said he came to the site because he heard that it would reopen on Aug 6.

Bringing his family with him, he said that "we are the most fortunate to be here on the day of its reopening".

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Village's movie academy could play host to major actors of the future

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On their way to *xiaokang* — or moderately prosperous — society, the people of Jiajiazhuang, a small village in Fenyang city, are planning an undertaking that they could never have predicted.

The village's officials recently announced an ambitious plan to build a movie academy. The plan came about because it is the home village of Jia Zhangke, one of the top movie directors in China.

As one of the leading "sixth-generation directors" in Chinese cinema, the 50-year-old Jia has garnered international praise and awards for a number of his social realism films over the past years, with representative works including *Mountains May Depart*, *Still Life*, and *A Touch of Sin*.

Jia is a supporter of the village movie academy.

He sees the village as a source of inspiration for his artistic creations and has regularly portrayed rural life and landscapes in his movies.

During a recent conference for the preparation of the academy, he promised to use the village as a base for his new movies.

According to local officials, the academy will be located in the Jiajiazhuang Industrial Park, next to the Jia Zhangke International Arts Center and Jia Zhangke Seeds Theater.

After decades of development, the village has grown into a community distinguished from its neighbors.

It now boasts a four-star hotel and several other star-rated



Decades of development has turned Jiajiazhuang village into an attractive community for residents. SI BUSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

accommodations, a booming commercial street and a number of creative cultural facilities.

In the village history museum, visitors see from pictures that this booming community was an impoverished village decades ago. People lived in shabby thatched houses, the roads were muddy when it rained and people's incomes were limited because of the infertile land.

But changes took place in the late 1980s when the village leaders led residents to start up their own businesses.

Now the village has complete industrial chains for agriculture to manufacturing and tourism. Per capita annual income reached 30,000 yuan (\$4,320) in 2019,

according to the local villagers' committee.

"A good life is not defined by how much money you have. We are now hoping to live a life with both spiritual and economic accomplishments," said Zhang Lijun, a local villager.

The village is currently shifting its focus to developing industries that improve local education and spiritual well-being, like the movie academy.

Zhang is cooperating with his fellow villagers to establish an international school in the village.

"With the faculty and facilities in place, the school is ready to open in early September," Zhang said.

Li Yali contributed to this story.

Amateur photographer puts local culture into focus

By DOMINA YEVHENIA

This is how I see Shanxi province. I have been living in Taiyuan for two years. Photography is my hobby and I would like to develop it further. Here you feel you're at a junction of technology and old China because there is both ancient and modern architecture.

Taiyuan is developing every day. But no matter how much technology comes to our lives, there are

still many historical places here.

There are lots of parks with stunning views and nature. Everything is green and the scenery is breathtaking. In such places, I want to spend a lot of time and whenever I go back I take new photos.

I like to watch people go out on a picnic and enjoy their free time. I am sure that in this province there are many more interesting places that you should go to, tell

people from Taiyuan about and then tell people from other provinces and countries as well.

Outdoor recreation surrounded by nature makes us peaceful, can refresh our minds and makes time with our friends and family happier.

I know many colorful places in China. But I think Shanxi really deserves the attention of tourists.

All of my photos were taken in the city of Taiyuan but can you

imagine how many amazing places are outside the city? Mountains, rivers and temples — all these can be found in Shanxi province.

So much history is here and local people are always happy to share stories with you.

In many parks you can find English translations for signs, which help make trips more meaningful.

People here are distinguished by



Domina Yevhenia

their kindness, are always ready to help and are proud to be part of that culture.

I am happy to have lived here for

such a long time. It gives me an opportunity to compare life here with that in other provinces.

There are really big differences

but I have found there are a lot of great people here, with the same kind of hospitality as you can experience elsewhere in China. Even though my Chinese is not so good, local people are always ready to help me, to explain what I don't understand and show me their city, their culture in best lights.

I am happy to be a part of this and hope that I can show other people Shanxi province from another angle.

The writer is a Ukrainian working for the Aobao Hills Kindergarten in Taiyuan.