



Farmers use machines to harvest wheat in the township of Donglu in Ruicheng county. GAO ZHIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Ruicheng to boost its harvest output with irrigation system

Modern operations to increase efficiency and allow local residents to earn higher incomes



By YUAN SHENGGAO

When the harvest of wheat was about to begin in Ruicheng, the county in Yuncheng city in Shanxi province held a grand gala to witness what appears to be a certain good harvest.

Wheat growers, experts and officials gathered in the county for the 2021 Yuncheng Wheat Culture Festival on June 8.

Sun Zhonghua, chairman of the China Society of Cooperative Economics and former chief agronomist at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, said the festival is expected to become a brilliant branding campaign for the marketing of local grain and promoting Yuncheng's unique farming culture. Accounting for more than a half of wheat output in the province, Yuncheng is known as "the granary of Shanxi".

Ruicheng is the leading wheat growing area in Yuncheng. It has been rated as one of China's top grain-producing counties for 11 consecutive years.

While experts and officials are optimistic about the wheat output this year, Li Zhanpeng, a farmer in the village of Caicun, said he has even higher expectations.

Li's family operates a half hectare

of wheat land, with about a half of the land having access to an irrigation system and the other half being terraced fields.

"The output from the irrigated land is about 7.5 metric tons a hectare in normal years, while that of the terraced fields is less than 2.5 tons," Li said.

But his terraced fields will have access to irrigation this year, thanks to a new irrigation project recently launched by the county, Li said. "With adequate water supply, there will be a threefold increase in output from my former dry, terraced fields."

Yang Zeqi, an official at the Ruicheng bureau of agriculture and rural affairs, said the new irrigation system in Caicun will cover a wheat growing area of more than 60 hectares this year.

"The farmlands on the terraces by the Yellow River feature sufficient sunlight and good soil quality," Yang said. "A lack of an irrigation system, however, is the major bottleneck hindering output increase."

The official said the new project is not just limited to irrigation.

"Facilities will be built for the operation of farming machines and the irrigation system can be used for both watering and fertilizing," Yang said.

In Caicun, about 200 households that farm on terraced fields will benefit from the project, according to Li Zuomin, an official of the village.

"Farmers used to harvest their crops once a year," the village official said. "With this irrigation system in place, they can do so twice a year, which means another dramatic increase in output."

Ren He, Party secretary of the county's bureau of agriculture and rural affairs, made an accurate estimation of crop output increase as a result of the current farmland improving program.

"In Ruicheng, we now have more than 22,700 hectares of high-standard farmlands with access to irrigation and facilities for machined operations.

"The farmland-improving program will cover another 2,500 hectares this year and about 20,000 hectares by the end of 2025. The total area of high-standard farmlands will surpass 45,000 hectares."

Ren estimated the grain output in Ruicheng will double its current figure to reach 360,300 tons in 2025.

In addition to improving farmland conditions, the county's agricultural authorities are helping farmers increase output and improve product quality with modern farming measures, Ren said.

These efforts include on-site instructions by local agronomists, promotion of farming machines, the use of organic fertilizers and the use of the internet of things for monitoring farmland conditions.

Chen Zuankang, a farmer in Yaotou village, is a beneficiary of modern farming operations.

"In the past, we used a lot of fertilizers in farming — about 1,000 kilograms a hectare," Chen said. "That cost nearly 2,000 yuan (\$312) a hectare."

The farmer said the use of organic fertilizers can help cut costs by more than 800 yuan a hectare.

"Organic fertilizers can substan-

tially improve soil conditions — preventing it from hardening and increasing nutrition," Chen added.

Also helping to improve farming efficiency are various machines. Such machines are mostly owned by local cooperatives.

Dongheng Farming Machines Cooperative based in the county seat of Ruicheng is one such entity.

Currently owning 56 different sets of machines, the cooperative was founded in 2010. It now has more than 200 member households, according to Zhang Dongdong, chief of the cooperative.

"In Ruicheng, most of the farmers operate small pieces of land," Zhang said. "It is impossible for them to own a variety of farming machines individually."

He noted that the farming cooperatives now offer "a perfect solution" to the problem.

Zhang said Dongheng not only operates farming machines, but also offers a full range of services for farmers, from tilling to harvesting and even grain storage and sales.

Yin Yaozong from Wanli village is a member of the cooperative. He said his family operates a farm of nearly seven hectares.

"Farming on the plantation used to require the labor of an entire family," the 66-year-old said. "And we had to hire farming workers in the busiest time."

But now he can take care of the farm on his own while other members of his family find other jobs to increase revenues, Yin said.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

## Potato crops get to the root of tackling poverty

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Youyu is among the driest counties in Shanxi province. Finding the right crop for the conditions to ensure food supply and offer a stable channel to increase farmers' revenue has been a decadeslong challenge for county authorities.

Hao Fan, a local entrepreneur, didn't expect a decision he made 10 years ago would help solve this problem.

A native of Youyu, Hao had been an executive of a power company in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and had no experience in farming. But after seeing people in his home village struggle to make a living from farming on dry, infertile land, he vowed that one day he would help.

When he learned that potatoes are a crop that can adapt to dry conditions and deliver high yields, he decided to open a farm in 2011.

He quit his job and returned to his home village of Yechang, starting a plantation to grow potatoes on nearly 50 hectares of land.

A yield of 150 metric tons, which brought him a revenue of 1.3 million yuan (\$203,000) in the following year, showed that he made the right decision. He then expanded his plantation to about 500 hectares. He later established a company for the planting, seedling cultivation and processing, and sales of potato products.

Encouraged by the success of Hao's business, farmers in neighboring townships have engaged in potato plantations over recent years.

Despite his success, Hao kept looking for other crops to suit local conditions and that could generate greater profits.

He developed forage-grass

farms in the rest of Shuozhou city with a total area surpassing 1,000 hectares in 2018. The county of Youyu is a part of Shuozhou.

Hao said by selling forage grass to dairy farms in Inner Mongolia, his plantations generated more than 10 million yuan in revenue last year.

Hao's enterprise has collaborated with local farmers by renting their land, purchasing their produce or providing them with jobs.

Li Baomin, a resident in the village of Yechang, said his family has seen increased incomes over recent years thanks to enterprises like the one owned by Hao.

"We are paid rent from our leased land," Li said. "Some family members now work for Hao's companies and other enterprises in Youyu, with pay much higher than operating our own farm."

In Shuozhou, local authorities are trying to find other resources to help with poverty reduction and rural revitalization.

In Pinglu district, for instance, the local government is leveraging the long daylight hours to develop the solar power industry.

Jia Baoming used to be a member of an impoverished family in Xiaobaiyangwa village. To help to lift the family out of poverty, the village built a small solar farm on his land, giving him an additional revenue from power generation.

There are 29 solar power stations in Shuozhou for the purpose of poverty reduction. More than 7,700 households in 200 villages have benefited from the project, which adds more than 3,000 yuan a year for each family on average, according to the city government.

Li Shu contributed to this story.



Farmers harvest scallions on a plantation in the village of Liujiayao in Youyu county. XIN TAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Data traffic park a new phase of development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi province is pinning its hopes on digital technologies to enable high-quality development, cultivate emerging sectors and upgrade traditional industries.

A recent move in this direction was the opening of China's first data traffic park, which was founded on Oct 19 in the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Area.

The establishment, officially called Shanxi Data Traffic Ecology Park, is run by the Shanxi New Social Stratum Association, Shanxi Association of Digital Industries and the park's administrative committee.

Data traffic refers to the amount of data moving across a network at a given time. The correct organization of data traffic helps to ensure the quality of service in a given network. A number of new industries, including e-commerce, livestreams and esports, have been developed on the back of data-traffic resources, according to industry insiders.

They said data-traffic resources are crucial to upgrade traditional industries such as logistics, education and healthcare.

In the park, authorities plan to

create an industrial ecology that encompasses providers of data-traffic resources, industries empowered by data traffic and a pool of professionals in data-traffic-related industries.

According to He Han, general manager of the park, the park aims to create a favorable business environment by providing cost-effective data-traffic services and incentives to startups.

To date, more than 70 companies from Shanxi and the rest of China have begun operating in park. These include three listed companies and three unicorns. Unicorns are companies with market value of more than \$1 billion within 10 years of their establishment.

Among the unicorns, Jiangsu-based Full Truck Alliance is a leading online commercial freight platform in China. It is building its digital logistics headquarters for Central and West China in the park.

He predicted that the total number of businesses in the park will surpass 100 by the end of this year. The companies' combined business revenue is expected to reach 10 billion yuan (\$1.56 billion).

Liu Ruiqiang contributed to this story.



Shanxi Data Traffic Ecology Park is China's first park for data traffic-related industries. LIU RUIQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Grand concert honoring CPC centennial

To mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, a grand concert is held at Shanxi University in Taiyuan on June 11. Performed by teachers and students of the school of music at the university, the concert featured Western and traditional Chinese musical instruments, China's revolutionary music and the folk music of Shanxi. The event was highlighted by a concerto played by 18 musicians on nine pianos.

KOU NING / FOR CHINA DAILY



## Expats in Shanxi now eligible for COVID-19 vaccine

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Expatriates in Shanxi province can now receive vaccinations for the COVID-19 virus, according to a notice released by the provincial government on June 10.

The notice said expats receiving COVID-19 vaccination should be aged above 18.

They should make the decision on whether to receive the service based on their own will after being informed of its potential risks.

Domestically developed vaccines will be used and the service is free of charge, the notice said.

Expats in Shanxi can make reservations through the entities they work with, log onto four e-government apps or go directly to neighboring vaccination locations.

Foreigners are required to present their effective IDs — passports or residential permits — at the vaccination sites, reporting their health status for service staff members to judge whether they are suitable for the vaccination.

After being injected with the vaccine, they are required stay at the site for a 30-minute observation and should report to local medical institutions if they have any aller-

gic reactions within 14 days.

For more information about the vaccine, foreigners can ask for English-language service through three special COVID-19 hotlines: 0351-4040561, 0351-3580400 and 0351-3580337. The hotline service is available seven days a week and 24 hours a day.

Shanxi has stepped up its rate of COVID-19 vaccination. A total of 13.09 million people in Shanxi had been vaccinated as of June 13, according to the Shanxi office for the prevention and control of COVID-19.

In Shanxi, the vaccine is availa-

ble in various locations including medical institutions and temporary vaccination sites. Doctors will also regularly visit local communities and business entities to offer the service for residents or employees.

More than 44,000 medical workers are currently offering vaccination service at various cities across Shanxi. The medical workers are capable of serving more than 1 million people each day, according to the Shanxi Health Commission.

Xue Lin contributed to this story.