

Shanxi farmers rejoice in harvest festivities

Modern techniques, operational models producing bumper yields



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Residents in Shanxi province celebrated the fourth Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival, a national event for farmers, at Shanxi Agricultural Valley in the city of Jinzhong on Sept 23.

A rich variety of produce including corn, millet, pumpkin and medicinal herbs were exhibited at an exhibition hall in the valley.

Outside the venue, there were float parades, song, dance and folk shows all performed by farmers from across Shanxi.

Lin Wu, Party secretary of Shanxi province, attended the festival.

When speaking to the visitors, Lin said that as Shanxi eliminated absolute poverty in 2020, the province is now shifting its focus to rural revitalization.

The official said Shanxi's rural development has entered a new era, featuring agricultural modernization, innovation in operational models, and fostering special and advantageous farming products.

He noted that the provincial authorities will continue their sup-

port for rural development and helping rural residents improve their livelihoods.

While farmers celebrated the festival at the venue in Jinzhong, the festive atmosphere could be felt all over rural Shanxi.

In the village of Yaohui in Jingle county, Jia Xiuping was busy harvesting quinoa on her farm of nearly 70 hectares.

Jia said she was happy with the quality and quantity of the harvest.

"I estimate that the output on this farm can earn me nearly 2 million yuan (\$310,000) this year," Jia said.

She said the good harvest was made possible with the use of modern farming machinery and local agronomists' efforts in improving the quality and yield of the crop.

Quinoa was originally imported into China from South America and Shanxi started farming it about a decade ago.

Jingle is a high-altitude county in Shanxi, with natural conditions suitable for growing quinoa.

The county is now a nationally renowned production base for the crop that is known for being rich in nutrition. Its stable output, high quality and competitive prices have made it a major source of revenue for local farmers.

Also benefiting from modern agricultural technology are the apple farmers in the village of Dongzhuang in Yicheng county.

Local resident Cao Jiang runs a 1.3-hectare farm growing high-quality apples known as "King of Mid-Autumn". He expects his farm can earn him more than 200,000 yuan in net income this year.

Cao said special thanks should be given to farming technicians like Li Wencheng, who has taught farmers modern ways of cultivation and introduced modern machinery and technology.

Li, a retired technician, is also the owner of a small farm of about 0.7 hectares.

"My wife and I could earn more than 100,000 yuan from the farm this year. That will be a handsome income for an old couple like us," Li said.

"A smaller farm means a lighter workload, which allows me to have more time to teach farming skills and techniques to locals."

Wang Guolin, Party secretary of the village, said farmers like to call the local apples "cash fruit" because of the healthy incomes they provide.

"There are nearly 75 hectares of apple trees in our village, including 20 hectares of 'King of Mid-Autumn'," Wang said. "We estimate the villagers' total revenue from apples this year can surpass 4.5 million yuan."

Chen Zhilong, a millet farmer in Shanyin county, is another beneficiary of both advanced technologies and new operational models.



Shanxi's celebration of the fourth Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival and the seventh China (Shanxi) Specialty Farm Produce Fair are held at Shanxi Agricultural Valley in the city of Jinzhong on Sept 23.

PENG KE'ER / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Some techniques and technologies are so amazing that we have gained an unexpected yield of our crops," Chen said.

One technique advised by local agronomists is to change the sowing time from spring to winter, according to Chen. "This change in technique, plus the use of water-saving technology, has led to a per-hectare increase in yield of 3 metric tons."

The farmer said there are a number of cooperatives and companies engaged in the processing and sales of local millet.

Xinfei Agriculture Development is one such cooperative in Shanyin.

"We are selling millet through a branding strategy," said Dong Pingping, deputy general manager of the company. "Our Fuxi brand — which means selenium-rich — millet has been well received in both domestic and overseas markets, with overseas



Farmers in Yuncheng celebrate their good harvest with a drum dance. YAO ZHONGJI / FOR CHINA DAILY

orders amounting to 30 million yuan so far this year."

Chen said he is selling his organic and selenium-rich millet to companies like Xinfei at prices of more

than 60 yuan a kilogram, which is several times higher than that of a couple of years ago.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.

Province's mountains a top tourist attraction

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Featuring lush forests and clear waters, the Taihang Mountains, which stretch more than 400 kilometers in the east of Shanxi, have become one of the province's top attractions.

Nowadays the scenery represents a sharp contrast to what it was decades ago, when the region was basically composed of barren rocky mountains.

It was through the efforts of forestry scientists to improve the local environment that the changes began.

"When seeing the harsh environment decades ago, even some experts from the rest of country said it might be in vain to 'green' this mountainous region of Taihang," recalled Chang Jianguo, an official and researcher at the Shanxi Academy of Forestry Sciences.

"But as native forestry researchers in Shanxi, we knew the mountains had been covered by lush vegetation in certain periods in history and we believed we could find solutions to restore the environment," he added.

Scientists from the academy began

to build a vegetation recovery base on the dry, rocky mountains near Liujiacun village in Pingshun county about 40 years ago.

Over the decades, scientists cultivated some breeds out of local plant species that were suitable for growing in dry, hilly environments.

The academy reaped initial success in their experiment, and another 11 research institutions later joined this program. They tried to replicate the Liujiacun experience across the Taihang Mountains and the rest of Shanxi.

Their research into vegetation recovery has helped to control soil erosion and stabilize sandy soil to prevent sandstorms. This has greatly contributed to the overall improvement of the natural environment.

Statistics from the Shanxi Forestry and Grassland Bureau show that the province's total forestry area reached 3.63 million hectares by the end of 2019. That accounted for 23.18 percent of Shanxi's total land area, a ratio surpassing the national average for the first time on record.

In addition to the local researchers and forestry workers, modern technologies are playing an increasingly



Thanks to an ecological recovery project, the mountains in Xiangfen county are now covered with lush forests. LI XIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

important role in taking care of Shanxi's forests.

At various levels, Shanxi's forestry administrations are using such technologies as satellite remote sensing, big data, cloud computing and drones in the management of forests.

"The biggest threat to forests is fire," said Wang Min, an official at the Guandishan forestry administration bureau in Wenshui county. "To improve the efficiency of fire prevention and control, we have developed a smart forestry management system."

The system features a smart operational center that is connected to 11 monitoring sites with a 5G network.

"Once fire is detected by a monitoring site, the alarm will ring at the

operational center and the images of a fire's location will be shown on the display immediately," Wang said. "This allows us to respond to an emergency very quickly."

He added that the system can be used to detect damage caused by insects.

According to the Shanxi Forestry and Grassland Bureau, the occurrence of fire in Shanxi's forests has decreased steadily in recent years, thanks to the use of new and high technologies.

Bureau officials said the occurrence of fire now stands at a very low rate of less than 0.05 percent.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Hidden temple a gem of Buddhism history

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Although the religion of Buddhism has been in China for nearly 2,000 years, the chance of finding wooden-structured Buddhist temples from more than 1,200 years ago is almost zero.

The persecution of Buddhism by Tang Dynasty (618-907) Emperor Wuzong during the Huichang era (841-846) caused the disappearance of almost all the Buddhist temples in China.

But at least one Buddhist temple, in the Wutai Mountains of Shanxi province, survived the era, with its main wooden structures standing to this day.

The Wutai Mountains in Wutai county is a renowned Buddhist holy land and a top tourist destination in Shanxi. It is said to be the venue where Bodhisattva Manjusri preached his teachings and is home to a great number of Buddhist temples.

Renowned ancient architecture researchers — Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, who were also a couple — discovered the Foguang Temple in Doucun township, Wutai county, in the 1930s.

Their intensive research, including study of the architectural style, structural details and inscriptions, proved that the Grand Eastern Hall in Foguang is a Tang Dynasty structure built in 857. They believed that was the earliest wooden structure in Wutai and one of the earliest in China.

Despite its long history, this is a post-Huichang structure.

When conducting a survey of local ancient structures in the 1950s, researchers in Shanxi discovered a small Buddhist temple called Nanchan in the village of Lijiazhuang, Wutai county.

Inscriptions on a column of the main hall showed that it was among the remains of a temple

built in 785, about 60 years before the Huichang era.

At this news, experts from the then Ministry of Culture made a research tour of the temple. It proved that Nanchan is the only pre-Huichang Buddhist temple in China and the earliest wooden structure in the country and in Asia.

Experts said one of the reasons that Nanchan Temple survived the Huichang persecution of Buddhism and other anti-Buddhism campaigns in later dynasties is that it was located in a remote village. It is more than 80 kilometers away from the town of Taihuai, the hub of Buddhist temples in the Wutai Mountains.

One of the unique characteristics of the temple is that its main hall, which features sloped roofs and overhanging eaves, which were identified by researchers as a typical style of the Tang Dynasty.

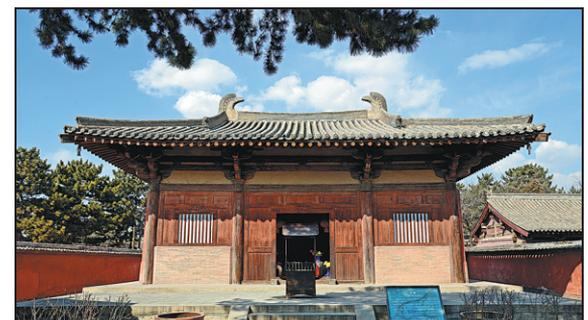
"The hall with gently sloped roofs and overhanging eaves resembles a flying bird," said researchers who discovered the site. "This was identical with Tang Dynasty poets' frequent descriptions of palace and temple buildings as 'flying birds'."

Inside the hall are 17 statues from the Tang Dynasty, which are said to be one of the earliest Buddhist statues in China next only to those in the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu province.

Standing at the center is Vairochana Buddha, one of the incarnations of Sakyamuni Buddha. He is surrounded by his 16 followers.

Among them are two bodhisattvas with the shape and appearance of females. They have curved eyebrows and plump cheeks, which were typical features of Tang Dynasty beauties, according to the researchers.

Peng Ke'er contributed to this story.



The main hall of Nanchan Temple in Wutai county is the earliest wooden structure in Asia. LU JUNHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Advanced equipment manufacturing gets a boost

By YUAN SHENGGAO

An intelligent advanced equipment industrial park project, initiated by Taiyuan Heavy Machinery Group, is taking shape in Xiaohu New Area in Taiyuan, Shanxi province.

Construction on the project started on March 28, and with the local government's support, the park is expected to become an important production facility of Taiyuan Heavy Machinery.

Xiaohu New Area is located in the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone, which is between Taiyuan and the neighboring city of Jinzhong. Serving multiple purposes, the zone is now a major industrial hub in the province.

The newly launched intelligent advanced equipment industrial park involved a total investment of 6 billion yuan (\$930 million), said Ren Yaoting, a manager responsible for the construction of the industrial park.

After its completion, the park's annual output is expected to reach 700,000 metric tons with an output value of 16 billion yuan.

Authorities in Shanxi province



The facility for manufacturing Baidu's Xiaodu smart speaker begins trial production recently. ZHENG MINGJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

are now creating an administrative framework to help to accelerate the construction on new projects and support their operation. Their efforts include shortening the approval time for new projects and offering tailored, whole-process services to support business growth.

As a result of such efforts, the province secured 506 large and medium-sized investment projects in the past month alone. Before that, 459 projects were signed earlier this year that have started construction and another 265 have begun operations.

Such projects cover high-tech

industries and environmentally friendly industries including synthetic biology, electronic information, advanced equipment manufacturing, energy conservation and environmental protection.

Internet company Baidu has settled a project for the production of its Xiaodu smart speaker, an intelligent audio device based on Baidu's artificial intelligence technology, in the city of Yangquan in the east of Shanxi. Shanxi Jonter, located in the Shanxi Yangquan High-Tech Industrial Development Zone, was chosen to be Xiaodu's original equipment manufacturer.

The first-phase investment of the Xiaodu project will be 150 million yuan, for the construction of a production line with an annual output of 10 million units.

Annual output value of the project is estimated at 400 million yuan for 2022. The amount is expected to reach 1 billion yuan in 2024 and the project is also anticipated to create some 1,000 jobs by that year.

"Shanxi Jonter has now begun trial production of the Xiaodu smart speakers," said Kou Zhiqiang, general manager of Shenzhen Jonter Digital, the parent of Shanxi Jonter. "From the project's founding in June to trial production at present, it only took three months. This is something we could not imagine in the past."

He said it was the enterprise-friendly business environment and warmhearted services provided by officials that prompted Jonter's decision to launch its business in Yangquan.

"We will not only focus on our own growth, but also make contributions to boosting Yangquan's economic development and industrial upgrading," Kou said.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.