

# CHINA

## Ginseng lies at the root of Jilin's success

Province makes 40% of products sold worldwide, set to expand

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

Jilin province is working to turn ginseng into an industry worth 100 billion yuan (\$14.18 billion), the province's top official said on Tuesday.

"The ginseng industry has entered an important period of development with strategic opportunities for transformation, upgrading and high-quality development," Jing Junhai, Jilin's Party secretary, said at the opening ceremony of the 2022 High-quality Development Conference of the Ginseng Industry in the capital, Changchun, on Tuesday.

"We will focus on promoting quality, product innovation and brand-building to draw up a blueprint for the development of the ginseng industry."

Jilin is the country's leading producer of ginseng and has a lengthy history of cultivating the root. More than 60 percent of Chinese ginseng is grown there, and some 40 percent of ginseng sold worldwide also comes from the province, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Last year Jilin had 9,773 hectares planted with ginseng, and the output value of its ginseng-related industries was about 60 billion yuan.

According to a development plan released by the provincial government in May, the industry is projected to exceed 80 billion yuan by 2025 and reach 100 billion yuan by 2030.

Jing also said that Jilin will work on recognition by focusing on its Changbai Mountain Ginseng brand.

It was first marketed after being registered at the State Administration



Clockwise from top: Workers sort slices of dry ginseng at a processing factory in Fusong county, Jilin province. A trader sells ginseng products via livestreaming in Fusong. Farmers tend ginseng growing in a greenhouse on a plantation in Fusong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

of Industry and Commerce in 2009. In 2012, a franchiser was created to recruit franchisees willing to follow the same management concept, and in 2017, Changbai Mountain Ginseng was officially

recognized as a China Famous Brand, a Jilin Famous Brand and a Changchun Famous Brand.

After years of development, the popularity and influence of the brand continue to grow, and

increasing numbers of producers and investors are getting involved with the ginseng industry.

The Changbai Mountain Ginseng Planting Alliance, which was set up in 2016, aims to improve

yields and quality by finding better ways to grow and protect the crop.

"The improper use of chemical pesticides by some farmers in pursuit of higher yields may result in high buildups in the root and poor

quality," said Xu Huaiyou, secretary-general of the alliance. "We are working to help farmers grow quality ginseng and increase yields by opening planting centers, setting standards for pesticide use and providing access to scientific planting methods."

At the Wanliang Ginseng Trading Market in Jilin's Fusong county — the largest ginseng trading market in Asia — a kilogram of fresh ginseng grown by the Changbai Mountain Ginseng Planting Alliance sells for 2 to 4 yuan more than the market price, due to its higher quality.

Fusong, which is at the northwestern foot of Changbai Mountain, is known as the "hometown of ginseng" for its forests, rich and fertile soil, and cool, humid weather, which provide the ideal conditions for growing ginseng.

Covering an area of nearly 40,000 square meters, Wanliang is a large-scale comprehensive market that integrates economy and trade, finance, logistics, warehousing and associated services.

Each year, it sells ginseng products to some 30 countries and regions, including Japan, South Korea and the United States.

The market has an average annual sales volume of 40,000 metric tons, and its highest annual turnover reached 20 billion yuan. It has also become a platform helping residents use e-commerce platforms, livestreaming and AI to sell ginseng.

The booming market has drawn many young people back home to start their own businesses.

"There are more than 4,000 households in Wanliang township engaged in the planting, processing and marketing of ginseng," said Li Bin, township Party secretary. "And some 100,000 households in nearby areas have also begun to participate in the industry."

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## Hot, dry and automatic, Wuhan's noodles go robotic

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and CHEN MEILING

Busy commuters in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, are now able to get their favorite breakfast — a bowl of hot dry noodles — from robot chefs in under a minute.

The robots, which resemble vending machines and accept payment via WeChat, are responsible for the entire cooking process, from boiling the noodles to preparing ingredients with mechanical arms.

Each robot is capable of cooking two bowls at a time in just 50 seconds.

Hot dry noodles are a classic Wuhan delicacy, and are one of the most popular breakfast items in the city.

However, quality is hard to control, and is not easy to prepare the noodles in summer, when the cooking fires cause chefs to sweat. Wuhan is one of China's "four ovens", known for its high temperatures in summer.

"Conditions can affect the quality of noodles prepared by people, but



Customers line up to order hot dry noodles cooked by a robot in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

robots are able to perform in a uniform fashion," said Zuo Zhijiang, 48, a professor at the Intelligent Manufacturing School at Wuhan's Jiangnan University and developer of the robots.

The machines, which are 1-square-meter in size, can store up

to 360 bags of fresh noodles in enclosed refrigerated chambers and are also equipped with automatic disinfection and cleaning equipment. Zuo said that the aim is to make noodles with a dine-in, handmade taste, not that of instant noodles.

Cailinji, a local restaurant chain with a 94-year history of making the dish, provides the ingredients the robots use. When the machines first started operating, the restaurant sent 30 of its managers to test the final results.

Zhang Yu, one of the managers, gave the dish a thumbs-up.

"It tasted more delicious than mine," he told Hubei Daily, adding that cooks at his restaurant work hard every day, as they have to wake up at 4 am and cook on a stove in 40 degree heat.

The robots can be installed in subway stations, hospitals, schools, offices and other places with sufficient human traffic, according to Cailinji. The company plans to open neighborhood clusters of unmanned hot dry noodle restaurants that can be run by single manager.

Currently, the robots are working in a canteen at Jiangnan University and also in a factory. Each bowl of noodles costs 4.5 yuan (\$0.65).

Wuhan Huaxia Fine-blanking Technology has invested 20 million

yuan into the project to increase production and improve stability. Jiang Chengdong, chairman of the company, told Hubei Daily that its high-end manufacturing production lines are able to produce several thousand hot dry noodle robots a month.

Zuo said one of the challenges is that the robots cannot respond to requests for variations.

"For example, some people ask for more vinegar or chili sauce," he said. "We will work to offer more options."

He said he hopes to install the robots in airports and railway stations.

"Six years ago, I was unable to move because of pain in my feet, and I thought a lot about what a burden I would be on my children when I got old. So I want to do more to develop intelligent robots," Zuo said. "Besides, with the population shrinking and youngsters unwilling to do heavy work, robots will be the best replacement."

Zuo's school has developed a number of different robots, including ones used for blasting and drilling, supermarket tallying, delivering goods and picking tomatoes.

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## Awards show nothing square about this dance

Decked out in fancy attire, Li Fengwei and her teammates have been busy lately, rehearsing for an upcoming square dance competition.

The 60-year-old is a member of a dance troupe at a cultural center in Beijing's Xicheng district. Established in 2003, the team is currently comprised of 40 enthusiastic square dancers with an average age of 62.

"We started from zero," said Li, who joined the team after retiring. "Everyone was in different physical condition and at a different level, but we persevered with our love and passion for dance."

In addition to dancing, 59-year-old Zhao Huijie, who is also a member of the troupe, has taught herself basic editing skills so that she can arrange better music for the dances. Her teammate Kong Hangyu, has regained her healthy physique since she began dancing.

As the troupe's instructor, Yue Xiaodong is delighted to see the positive impact square dancing has had on the lives of senior dancers.

"Square dancing is of great value to them and has helped them receive recognition," he said. Square dancing has received

widespread public attention in China for its strong sense of empathy and engagement.

Yuan Liang, an official with the Beijing Cultural Center, said that there are currently more than 4,000 square dance groups in Beijing, and the choreography and costumes showcase local characteristics.

Chinese square dancers have performed in France, New Zealand and the United States in recent years.

"Square dance differs from other professional genres as it can incorporate moves from any other dance style. It is not only a grassroots cultural activity that has grown out of people's daily lives, it is also closely linked to traditional culture," Yue said.

For the first time, square dancing was included as a separate category in the recently announced Qun Xing National Award for Culture and Arts in China. Li's team was one of the winners.

"The award is motivation for all the ordinary people who join square dance activities," said Yuan, expressing hopes that it will help promote Chinese culture around the world.

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Members of a troupe at a cultural center in Beijing's Xicheng district practice square dance in a park on Sept 8. TAI SICONG / XINHUA

## Courtyard teacher helps village kids master English

GUIYANG — Liu Xiaosheng finally had time to himself when the summer vacation recently ended. The 73-year-old had been teaching children English free of charge six days a week for over a month.

His "classroom" was a rural family courtyard in a village administered by the city of Zunyi, Guizhou province. On the outer wall of the house, there was a small blackboard covered with phonetic symbols. Benches were arranged in a U shape to serve as desks, and a dozen children were packed in for classes.

Before he retired, Liu was a foreign language professor at a university in Chongqing municipality. In 2012, he brought his family to Guizhou, a region known for its cool climate, to spend the summer. One evening, he saw a neighbor's

child learning English. He asked the child to read him a passage.

"The pronunciation was bad," Liu recalled. As a teacher, he knew how important standard pronunciation was to learning the language and he began to correct the child.

In this way, Liu "recruited" his first student. News of free English tutoring from a retired university professor soon spread through the village, and more and more children came to learn.

At first, Liu taught in his living room, and then moved into the corridor for more space.

But soon, the corridor was packed with students.

One villager volunteered to vacate his rice milling room to use as a classroom, and the villagers pooled their money to buy desks, chairs, benches and a blackboard.

Later, as the number of students grew, Liu set up a classroom in the courtyard of a villager's house, and as a result, he is now affectionately known as the "courtyard teacher."

Every summer, about 40 children come for English tutoring. This summer, thanks to media reports, more than 60 turned up, a record high.

Luo Lihang, a senior at a university in Shandong province, was one of Liu's first students in the village. She learned English from him every summer before starting college and has now become Liu's teaching assistant, responsible for the daily management of the class.

One day last summer, it began to rain just as class was about to begin, but there was no room large enough to accommodate all the students. Luo said that in order not to delay

the class, he let the students sit under the eaves while he stood in the rain under an umbrella to teach.

So far, some 100 local students have attended the classes, many of whom have been admitted to universities, with some even pursuing doctoral degrees.

Villagers once proposed paying tuition fees, but Liu turned down the offer. Some also tried to give him gifts to express their gratitude, but he refused. He said that teaching had become a part of his life, and he did it for neither fame nor profit.

Before he wrapped up this year's session and returned to Chongqing, he promised the children that he would see them again next year.

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