

# CHINA

By **ZHU XINGXIN** in Taiyuan  
and **CHEN LIANG**

Tucked away in the rugged landscape of the Taihang Mountains in northeastern Shanxi province, the hamlet of Chehe in Lingqiu county has blossomed into a thriving village by embracing the principles of organic agriculture.

For decades, Chehe village was a place of hardship. Its land was barren, its infrastructure outdated, and its people reliant on the whims of nature for their livelihood. Led by village head Wang Chun, they had long struggled to eke out an existence from the unforgiving landscape. In the 1990s, Wang started leading villagers to plant trees on the barren slopes around the village.

However, the real change came in 2013.

That year, under the guidance of the China Agricultural University and in collaboration with 16 other organizations, Chehe was chosen as the first pilot site for an ambitious organic agriculture initiative. The project, outlined in the "Lingqiu County Organic Agriculture Park Implementation Plan (2013-2030)", aimed to transform the local economy and environment through sustainable practices.

"I was confident that organic agriculture was the right path," Wang recalled. "And it has changed everything."

With his leadership, the villagers pooled their resources — land, forests and rivers — into a cooperative, breaking away from traditional farming methods and embracing organic cultivation and livestock rearing.

The transformation was nothing short of miraculous. Nearly 47 hectares of land were converted into organic farmland, where villagers cultivated a variety of organic grains and vegetables. They also employed organic methods to raise over 30,000 chickens and 5,000 sheep. All these products were certified as traceable organic goods, quickly capturing the attention of eager markets in nearby Hebei province and major cities like Beijing and Tianjin.

A single organic egg from Chehe became a coveted item, contributing significantly to the village's newfound prosperity, Wang said. Last year, eggs from Chehe yielded an income of 3 million yuan (\$420,000) for the village cooperative.



## Organic farming transforms poor village's fortunes

Hamlet integrates agriculture and tourism, boosting rural vitalization



**Clockwise from top:** A local guide introduces organic farming to participants of the Third Organic Districts World Congress and the 12th Datong Chehe International Organic Agriculture Forum at a millet field in Lingqiu county, Shanxi province. Three participants take a closer look at millet grown at the plot. Several participants take a group photo in the field. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

By 2023, Chehe's collective income soared from zero in 2013 to 138 million yuan, with individual incomes increasing from 2,300 yuan in 2013 to 25,000 yuan in 2023.

The village, once labeled impoverished, was now thriving. The success of Chehe's organic model attracted international attention,

becoming a case study in poverty alleviation and rural vitalization.

The village didn't stop at agriculture. It seamlessly integrated organic farming with tourism, creating a unique cultural experience. Visitors could walk through lush vegetable gardens, pick fresh produce, and stay in charming guesthouses that

offered an authentic taste of rural life.

Chehe even built a 1,200-meter-long scenic boardwalk, drawing tourists eager to experience the beauty and tranquility of the countryside.

The impact of Chehe's transformation extended far beyond its bor-

ders. At present, Lingqiu county has established an organic food production base spanning 2,000 hectares, with 133 organic varieties certified. The total output value of organic agriculture has reached 570 million yuan.

At the Third Organic Districts World Congress and the 12th

Datong Chehe International Organic Agriculture Forum, held in Lingqiu on Aug 26, more than 150 experts from 25 countries, including Italy, Germany and Indonesia, gathered to explore how holistic organic agriculture could drive high-quality economic development.

The conference focused on the role of organic agriculture in addressing environmental challenges such as climate change and soil degradation. It emphasized the use of eco-friendly technologies to achieve ecological restoration and stable production, offering sustainable agricultural solutions for arid regions.

Patrick Deegbe, an entrepreneur from Switzerland and a participant in the conference, said that he was impressed by the agriculture project developed in Chehe. The village is transforming into an organic community and helping its residents shake off poverty, he said. The model can be introduced to African countries such as Ghana, he added.

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Liu Junyi, mayor of Datong which administers Lingqiu, said that since 2013, Lingqiu has been using organic agriculture as a strategic pivot to drive industrial transformation and promote rural development. Starting with the Chehe community as a pilot, they have advanced the construction of "organic production, organic society, and organic community", exploring a new path for agricultural development in the northern Shanxi region.

"In the future, Datong will continue to deepen international exchanges and cooperation, promoting further progress and achievements in the development of organic agriculture," he said.

Zhou Zejiang, president of the Advisory Board of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements-Asia, said that Chehe's success story was a testament to the power of organic agriculture as a bridge connecting diverse communities, governments, businesses and traditional farming wisdom with innovative ideas.

"Chehe was once a poor mountain village. Now, it stands as a model of agricultural and cultural richness, a testament to the collective efforts of its people," he said.

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Representatives from China and the United States attend the opening ceremony of a permanent exhibition on the Flying Tigers in Liuzhou city, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Sept 7.

XIE YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Permanent exhibition in Liuzhou city honors role of Flying Tigers

By **ZHANG LI** in Liuzhou, Guangxi  
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A permanent exhibition honoring the Flying Tigers opened in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Sept 7. The exhibit revisits the role played by China and the United States in fighting side by side against fascism during World War II.

The American Volunteer Group — widely known as the Flying Tigers — was established by US General Claire Chennault as part of the Chinese Air Force and was stationed in Liuzhou between 1942 and 1945.

Liuzhou served as a pivotal base for the Flying Tigers in South China and is home to some of the most well-preserved airfields used by the group.

Housed within the Liuzhou Military Museum, the exhibition, spanning over 6,000 square meters, is

open to the public free of charge and comprises five thematic sections showcasing more than 1,000 precious historical relics. Through a rich collection of physical materials, vivid reproductions and advanced techniques, the exhibition, for the first time, comprehensively and clearly maps the complete historical context of the Flying Tigers' joint fight with Chinese military personnel and civilians.

Jeffrey Greene, chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation and the American Flying Tigers Legacy Foundation, highlighted the profound friendship forged between the Chinese and US peoples amid the darkest days of WWII.

"Throughout the war, whenever an American airman was shot down or forced to land in Japanese-occupied territory, they were nearly always rescued by the Chinese people — unless captured

immediately by Japanese forces," he said.

This story of extraordinary friendship, rooted in mutual sacrifice and a deeply human narrative of love and fidelity, has become more than just a bridge between the two nations, he added.

Chen Gang, Party secretary of Guangxi, said the region intends to use the exhibition's opening to leverage Flying Tigers-related exhibits, venues and cultural relics as bonds to actively advance China-US youth exchange programs, build Flying Tigers friendship schools and strengthen nongovernmental friendly exchanges.

Yang Wanming, president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, said that China-US cooperation during WWII demonstrates that people of different countries can transcend differences and work together in the face of common challenges.

"Today, as the world undergoes unprecedented, accelerated changes and enters a new period of turbulence and transformation with mounting uncertainties, humanity stands at a historical crossroads once again," he said.

"Only through global cooperation and collective efforts can we build a peaceful and prosperous world."

Gail Baumgartner, 73, whose father was Flying Tigers veteran Joseph C. Cooper, has spent years sharing her father's story with younger generations.

Liuzhou Huxi Middle School joined the Flying Tigers Friendship School and Youth Leadership Program in 2023. At the time, they were the second Chinese school to participate in the initiative. Today, the program includes more than 100 leading Chinese middle schools, high schools and universities.

"To date, we have brought three groups of nearly 200 American students to China," Greene said. "Another group visit is planned for this winter, and two more next summer, to learn about the shared Sino-American legacy of the Flying Tigers."

## Solar project helps the sunshine on Huzhu's economy

XINING — Bathed in radiant sunlight, the rooftops of Dongshan village on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau gleam with solar panels that are helping transform local livelihoods while driving green development and rural vitalization across the region. Tucked away in the remote mountains of Huzhu Tu autonomous county, Haidong city, in Northwest China's Qinghai province, Dongshan enjoys abundant sunshine but has long been shadowed by poverty.

In recent years, Huzhu has harnessed the plentiful sunlight through the development of distributed photovoltaic energy, with villagers affectionately calling the solar panels their "sunshine bank accounts".

For a long time, the villagers here depended on farming and animal husbandry. However, the meager profits from these traditional industries forced more than half of the labor force to seek work elsewhere.

A few years ago, Wang Guofeng, Party chief of Dongshan, considered starting a clothing business to help villagers boost their incomes. However, his plans repeatedly fell through due to limited sales channels and inadequate venues.

A turning point came in 2021, when Dongshan was designated a

distributed photovoltaic pilot village and nearly 200,000 yuan (\$28,166) was invested in a 44.1-kilowatt rooftop solar power project. The installations prioritize meeting villagers' daily electricity needs, with any surplus fed back into the grid.

This project generates an annual income of over 20,000 yuan, Wang said. In addition, a state-funded photovoltaic poverty alleviation initiative launched in 2018 could provide the village with an annual dividend of 240,000 yuan, as the grid allocates a larger share of profits to local residents. Even better, the solar panels require minimal maintenance and occupy no arable land, making them a reliable and sustainable investment, Wang explained.

Banyan village is another pioneering community harnessing Huzhu's abundant sunshine, which offers up to 1,400 hours of usable sunlight annually. In the Tu ethnic language, "Banyan" means "a place of prosperity and bliss". Yet contrary to its name, the village, perched largely atop a hill, has long faced bitter cold winters and arid farmland.

In 2016, under a poverty alleviation program, villagers formerly residing on mountain tops and rugged hillsides were relocated to the

foot of the hill. After the relocation, the village turned its focus to solar energy, installing panels on rooftops, beside pigsties, and across the hillsides.

In 2017, Banyan village's 2-megawatt distributed photovoltaic poverty alleviation project began generating electricity. "With the solar panels installed, each household receives an annual dividend of 2,500 yuan, which is equivalent to the income from 10 mu (0.67 hectares) of land on the mountain," said Lyu Yourong, a local resident.

In 2023, the State Grid Haidong power supply company built a 200-kilowatt energy storage project for the village, along with four 7-kilowatt charging piles, creating an integrated "solar-storage-charging" parking lot.

The parking lot is part of the village's green power initiative. According to Jiang Shenghui from the power supply company, it helps address Banyan village's limited energy storage capacity while making the most of its abundant sunlight.

In general, the distributed photovoltaic system in Banyan generates 1.5 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, which is equivalent to saving about 460 metric tons of standard coal each year and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 1,200 tons. Today, villagers are not only benefiting from affordable green electricity but are also driving new energy vehicles as their standard of living rises.

In addition to installing distributed photovoltaic systems, Banyan has made significant strides in green transformation, becoming a certified zero-carbon village. This achievement is the result of numerous initiatives such as afforestation, the adoption of natural gas, and the replacement of grass-and-straw burning beds with electrically heated ones.

As of July, the total installed capacity of distributed photovoltaic systems in Haidong city had reached 113,500 kilowatts, covering 2,609 households, according to Jiang.



An aerial photo shows rooftops covered by solar panels at a village in the Huzhu Tu autonomous county, Qinghai province.

LI JIANQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

XINHUA