

Supervision of power

Supervisory commissions to independently probe graft cases

By Zeng Wenhui



Liu Jianchao, an NPC deputy and Director of the Supervisory Commission of Zhejiang Province, speaks to reporters in Beijing on March 13 (ZENG WENHUI)

Liu Jianchao, a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), head of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhejiang Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and Director of the Supervisory Commission of Zhejiang Province, attracted considerable media attention during a plenary meeting of the Zhejiang delegation to discuss the draft Supervision Law on March 13 during the First Session of the 13th NPC.

Surrounded by journalists after the meeting, Liu, former spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the draft covers almost all the reform practices adopted by Beijing and Zhejiang and Shanxi provinces in the pilot reform of the supervisory system implemented by the country over the past one and a half years, and strengthens the important knowledge and experience obtained during the process.

"The people oppose corruption most. Establishing supervisory commissions to perform duties in accordance with the Supervision Law will be the most effective way of fighting corruption," said Liu.

Supervisory bodies

In November 2016, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee issued a document, arranging the establishment of supervisory commissions at various levels in Beijing, Shanxi and Zhejiang. Take Zhejiang for instance, according to Liu, under the leadership of Party committees at every level, supervisory commissions in the province act as special anti-graft bodies, performing unified decision-making and command responsibilities. This solves the problem of overlapping duties among the Party's discipline inspection commissions, the administrative supervision departments and the procuratorates in the fight against corruption and the investigation of duty-related crimes.

Zhejiang transferred 1,889 posts to supervisory commissions from related anti-corruption, anti-misconduct, corruption prevention and duty-related crime prevention departments. Some 1,645 officials have already been transferred to supervisory commissions, expanding the discipline enforcement force on the frontlines and efficiently utilizing the resources available for fighting corruption. "This has effectively solved the problem of anti-graft duties being performed separately, where the system didn't run smoothly and powers were dispersed," Liu said.

In the amendment to the Constitution recently adopted by

the NPC, a section on supervisory commissions is included. Article 123 reads, "Supervisory commissions at all levels of the People's Republic of China are the country's supervisory organs." This confirms the legal status of supervisory commissions as state organs. New supervisory commissions will share staff and offices with the Party's discipline inspection agencies.

Article 127 of the amended Constitution states, "Supervisory commissions will independently exercise their power of supervision and will not be subject to interference by any administrative organ, public organization or individual."

"Reform of the supervisory system is a historic response to the deepening of political system reform," Zeng Wenming, an NPC deputy and Mayor of Ganzhou, east China's Jiangxi Province, told *Beijing Review*. He said the supervisory system reform will be of great and far-reaching significance for strengthening the Party's unified leadership on anti-graft work; establishing a centralized, unified, authoritative and highly efficient supervisory system; as well as promoting modernization of the country's governance system and governing capacity.

In Zeng's view, the establishment of supervisory commissions prevents a situation where the government supervises itself. "In the past, the torch of supervision was partially in the hands of government, but now it will be shifted to supervisory commissions, changing the internal supervision of those in the public sector to external supervision. Thus the supervision will be more independent and rigorous." Zeng said,

Xu Rui, an NPC deputy from Jiangxi and Party Secretary of the CPC Ruijin Committee, was a ballot examiner while the NPC deputies voted for the draft amendment to the Constitution. He told *Beijing Review* that the fact that the supervisory commission section is included in the Constitution indicates that anti-graft work is advancing from Party discipline inspection and supervision to the state level, and supervision will cover everyone in the public sector.

In November 2017, the Standing Committee of the 12th NPC decided to spread the pilot reform of the supervisory system to the entire country. Xu said that as a county-level city, Ruijin must keep in line with the national reform. The city has already completed the work of transferring staff to the local supervisory commission.

Law on supervision

President Xi Jinping once said that the fundamental way of improving

the Party's capability for self-purification is to rely on the Party's self-supervision as well as public supervision. Self-supervision is a worldwide challenge in the field of national governance, but the CPC is determined to be successful and achieve "peerless capability" to attain a clean government.

Zeng said the Supervision Law to be approved at this year's NPC annual session will be part of this "peerless capability," and when the law is promulgated, China's supervision work will definitely broaden. "The Supervision Law is a national law on anti-corruption, widening the persons subject to supervision, gathering the scattered supervisory forces and making the supervisory institutions more authoritative," said Zeng.

According to the Supervision Law, everyone in the public sector is under supervision, including civil servants; quasi-civil servants; persons engaged in public affairs in organizations with public management authorization; management team members in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public educational institutions; academic researchers; health care and sports professionals; management team members in community-level self-governance organizations; and others performing public duties in accordance with the law.

Liu said based on carrying out the reform requirements put forth by the CPC Central Committee, Zhejiang has seen government supervision go from a narrow view to a broader one by covering those in the public sector that had not been covered by intra-party supervision or party discipline. Before the reform, 383,000 people in Zhejiang were covered by administrative supervision, but since the reform was implemented, 701,000 people are now covered by national supervision, up by 83 percent.

Jia Yu, an NPC deputy and Chief Procurator of Zhejiang Provincial People's Procuratorate, has participated in the reform of the supervisory system in the province. He said formulating a Supervision Law that incorporates all practices proved to be effective in the past will ensure that the reform of the supervisory system and supervision operates in a legal framework. According to Jia, since Zhejiang was selected as a province for the pilot reform program, procuratorates across the province have been supporting and cooperating with the effort. All institutions, functions and staff members of the province's investigative departments in charge of duty-related crimes and corruption prevention have been transferred to supervisory commissions as planned. In the province, 1,645 staff members from procuratorates have been

transferred to supervisory commissions, accounting for 15.4 percent of total staff members in the procuratorates. "They are the backbone in procuratorates and will play an important role in supervisory commissions at different levels in the province," said Jia.

Ke Jianhua, an NPC deputy and Party Secretary of the CPC Guigan Community Committee of Lucheng District in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, said that as a community-level deputy, she is in favor of incorporating management team members from community-level organizations into the supervisory commissions as prescribed in the Supervision Law. "Classifying us 'non-officials,' as 'officials' in the eyes of ordinary people, subject to supervision shows that the country attaches great importance to and is responsible for community-level organizations, and this will, in effect, help supervise community-level governance," Ke said. She added that this will deter all those performing public duties from illegal activity and will help protect community-level management teams.

"We must meet the demand of the times and accept supervision on our own initiative, especially for those affairs concerning public interests. We must think more carefully, consult more and collect more opinions from the public in order to be open, transparent, democratic and conform to the law when carrying out work," Ke said.

More on the way

"We need to revise many other related laws so that they are consistent with the amended Constitution and the Supervision Law," Liu said.

Fang Lingmin, an NPC deputy and Director of the Supervisory Commission of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, agrees with Liu. According to the amendment to the Constitution, the supervisory organs will coordinate with judicial organs, procuratorial organs and law enforcement departments in the handling of duty-related offenses. Fang said that as the reform of the supervisory system deepens more laws will have to be revised to keep in line with the supervisory system reform and the Supervision Law, requiring that related departments better cooperate with each other.

"After the Supervision Law has taken effect, the Criminal Procedure Law, the Law on the Organization of the People's Procuratorates, the Public Procurators Law and the State Compensation Law must be revised. We also need to establish and improve some other related systems and institutions," Fang said.

Before being appointed director of the Supervisory Commission of Zhejiang, Liu was director of the International Cooperation Bureau of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. He told *Beijing Review* that China's supervisory system reform reviewed all excellent cultural traditions and governance measures in the country's history. It also evaluated the experiences of anti-corruption practices and incorporated them into a law.

Fighting corruption with an open mind, China is ready to exchange ideas and cooperate with other countries to combat corruption, which will also help the country run the supervisory system better, he said.

"In the future, we will also strengthen anti-graft cooperation with other countries, including the exchange of ideas and collaboration in measures and specific cases. If other countries need help from China in fighting corruption, China is ready to lend a hand," Liu said.

Fountain of youth

The CPC sustains its mission 97 years on

By Li Nan

For the past six decades, most members of the Yang family have celebrated their 20th birthday in exactly the same way: by becoming a member of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Grandfather Yang Benren, a veteran from east China's Jiangsu Province, became a member of the CPC in the 1950s. Thirty-three years later, his son, Yang Zhong, joined the Party as a college student. And this year, Yang Benren's granddaughter, Yang Wendi, followed in their footsteps by joining the world's largest political party on June 20, two days before her 20th birthday.

Joining the Party was always Yang Wendi's dream. Born into a family of CPC members, she grew up hearing about the Party. "I got to know about the CPC and its ties with the people when I was young. I longed to be one of them," Yang Wendi told *Beijing Review*.

On her first day at Nanjing's Southeast University in September 2016, her grandparents gave her a special gift: the Party Constitution. "Your grandfather joined the Party aged 20. So did your parents. Your grandmother, uncle and aunt are also Party members," her grandfather Yang Benren wrote on the last page. "My grandfather wanted to inspire me with the Party Constitution, hoping that I would develop a proper worldview and set of values during my formative years," Yang Wendi said.

That same month, Yang Wendi applied for Party membership. "It was a decision taken of careful consideration. Although my whole family is in the Party, it was my own decision to apply for membership. No one could make that decision but me."

As a student, Yang is not alone in joining the Party. In 2017, the CPC recruited 1.98 million new members, 71,000 more than 2016. Among these new recruits, 35.3 percent were students and 860,000 held junior college degrees or above, accounting for 43.4 percent, while 81.4 percent, or 1.61 million, were aged 35 or younger. By the end of last year, the total number of CPC members reached 89.56 million, according to the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee on June 30, the eve of the Party's 97th birthday.

Vigor and vitality

According to Xie Chuntao, Deputy Principal of the Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC, strengthening primary-level Party organization construction, improving the virtue of Party members, highlighting Party building, complying with Party discipline and optimizing the Party's governance are the key to the CPC's vigor. Xie outlined these ideas in his bestseller—*Why and How the CPC Works in China*—published in 2011.

Establishing Party organizations at the community level across all walks of life is one effective way in which the Party can grow, Xie said in his book. According to the Party Constitution, a Party organization should be established in a primary-level work unit where there are three or more full Party members. "The Party keeps the country and society well governed through extensive and well-organized primary-level Party organizations," said Xie.



CPC members take a class on the Party in a traditional ger in Xilinhot, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, on June 27 (XINHUA)

By the end of 2017, the CPC had 4.57 million such primary-level Party organizations. The presence of Party organizations in Party and government bodies reached 99.7 percent, 95.2 percent in public institutions and 92.8 percent in state-owned enterprises. Nearly 1.88 million non-state-owned enterprises have also set up Party organizations, according to the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee.

The Party's vigor and vitality have been strengthened, according to the department. "Student Party members are like new blood injected into the CPC, keeping the Party vigorous," said Yang Wendi.

While presiding over a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on June 29, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, noted that the CPC must regard political building as the Party's fundamental focus so as to provide an important guarantee for the Party to maintain its success. "If a Marxist political party loses its integrity in politics, there will be no morality and virtue in the Party," Xi said.

Party members receive training to deepen their understanding of the Party's theories and policies. Soon after joining the CPC, Yang Wendi took part in a five-day training exercise in Jinggangshan, one of the cradles of the Chinese revolution in east China's Jiangxi Province, in early July. "Joining the Party is a starting point rather than an end in its own right. As a newcomer, I need to absorb new ideas and theories of Party building to enable myself to make more contributions to the country and the people," Yang said.

Self-discipline

Party discipline is also crucial to the CPC's success. The anti-corruption campaign of recent years is one of the most important ways through which the Party can retain its integrity. From 2012 to 2017, according to the Supreme

People's Procuratorate, authorities investigated 120 "tigers," corrupt officials at the provincial level or above, including Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, prosecuting 105 including Zhou. A total of 62,715 "flies," low-ranking officials guilty of corruption, were also charged. A poll conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2017 showed that 92.9 percent of those surveyed were satisfied with the outcomes of the anti-graft campaign, 17.9 percentage point higher than in 2012. On June 29, Xi called for renewed efforts to combat corruption so that the Party can stay true to its original mission.

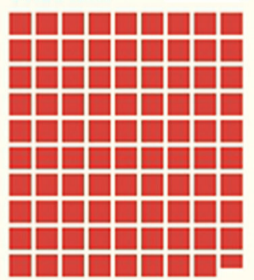
Since its establishment, the Party has continued to optimize its methods of governance. "In order to uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, our Party must have the courage to carry out self-reform and make itself stronger," Xi said at a national conference on organizational work in Beijing on July 4.

No matter how its governance strategies evolve, the CPC remains true to its original aspiration and mission to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation, said Ding Bin, a professor with the Jilin Provincial Party School. "The Party has retained its original aspiration while daring to revolutionize itself," he told *Beijing Review*.

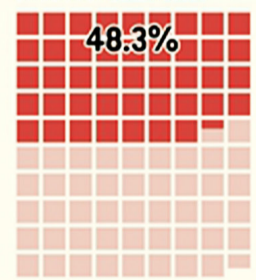
Xi also stressed that upholding the authority and centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee is essential to adhering to the Party's political leadership. "The whole nation follows the Party, and the whole Party follows the CPC Central Committee. This is how the CPC unites all forces in China and accomplishes things that other countries and parties cannot. It is also the key for the lasting vigor of the CPC," said Yan Shuhan, a professor with the Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC, in a interview with Xinhua News Agency.

The Communist Party of China in 2017

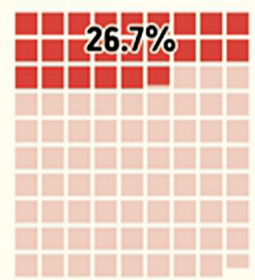
(1 square=1 mln)
Members:
89.56 mln



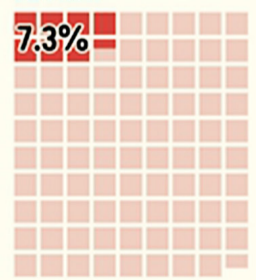
Members who hold junior college degrees or above: **43.29 mln**



Female members: **23.89 mln**



Ethnic minority members: **6.51 mln**



New members



1.98 mln
new members recruited, 71,000 more than 2016

860,000
new members held junior college degrees or above.



43.4%
of all new members



1 mln
new members worked in frontline production roles.



1.61 mln
were aged 35 or younger.

50.8%
of all new members

81.4%
of all new members

Party organizations



Coverage of Party organizations in Party and government bodies: **99.7%**



Coverage of Party organizations in public institutions: **95.2%**



Coverage of Party organizations in state-owned enterprises: **92.8%**



Nearly **1.88 mln** non-state-owned enterprises have set up Party organizations.



Among secretaries of the Party's village committees, **545,000** held junior college degrees or above. **17.4%**



The CPC had **4.57 mln** primary-level Party organizations.

(Source: Organization Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, designed by Pamela Tobey)

Rustic business, rural entrepreneurs

Development strategies tailored to local conditions are transforming villages

By Yuan Yuan

In 2017, Cheng Ju, a college graduate majoring in industrial design, completed her professional project—a service center in Dashi Village of Chongyang County, central China's Hubei Province. However, she did this not for a client, but for the local community in her role as secretary of the village branch of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Occupying 2,300 square meters, the service center is a multifunctional complex in the shape of a traditional Chinese courtyard. The village committee office, as well as a clinic, training school, gym, library, cafeteria, and activity center for women, children and seniors are all enclosed within.

"I want it to be a gathering place that everybody in the village loves to come to enjoy," Cheng told *Beijing Review*. She paid attention to every detail of the complex to ensure that it is both comfortable and pleasing to the eye.

The stools in the service center, for example, are each 25 centimeters wide. "It is comfortable for people to sit on for a long time without feeling tired even though it has no back to lean on," Cheng said.



Li Jun, a deputy to the 13th NPC, speaks at a press conference to share his experience on poverty alleviation in Beijing on March 15 (XINHUA)

The Party chief

After working in Guangzhou, the capital city of south China's Guangdong Province, for more than a year following graduation, Cheng returned to her hometown and ran for the village Party branch's secretary.

"The registered population of the village is more than 1,700, but only about 400 stay there," Cheng said. "Most of the villagers, especially the young ones travel outside to earn money. I want to do something to change that situation."

During the election, she promised that no effort would be spared in the construction of infrastructure in the village, including building a service center, a road and a bridge.

This was no easy task in an area widely known for poverty, with 106 people from 35 households still suffering below the poverty line at the time. Cheng admitted that as an inexperienced village Party secretary, she took many things for granted at the beginning.



Cheng Mengxing (left), an NPC deputy, at a panel discussion of the First Session of the 13th NPC in Beijing (XINHUA)

"The image of a village Party secretary in my mind was that the absolute soul of the village that all the villagers want to follow, as many TV series show," Cheng said. "As a young woman equipped with a good education, I thought I could easily do a good job by bringing in new ideas and advanced technologies."

Her imagination of that position was gradually eroded as she began to understand the reality of her daily duties. The villagers sought her help for everything. She was often asked to negotiate family feuds and on one occasion even helped an elderly woman to track down a lost rooster in the dead of night.

Yet despite her efforts, many villagers were not convinced that a 24-year-old could bring significant change to the village.

She started visiting every household, talking with the local people to learn more about their needs. Initially, the former Party secretary, an older man, would accompany Cheng, but before long she was embarking on these meetings alone.

Cheng also had to go to higher-level governments, applying for



Cheng Ju, a deputy to the 13th NPC, in Beijing on March 12 (XINHUA)

funds to invest in the infrastructure that the village so badly needed.

The outlay for the service center, more than 2.5 million yuan (\$395,000), was the combination of funds from higher-level governments and the philanthropy of local business people.

In the three years since she assumed the position, a solar power facility and a tea plantation have also been set up in the village. A road has been paved and a bridge built, and every one of the 106 people has been lifted out of poverty.

Great strides have also been made toward improving the environment and the development of local tourism resources. "The farmland in our village is quite limited, so we can't rely on agricultural produce for development," Cheng said. "The natural landscape in the village, however, is perfect for attracting tourists."

Dashi Village also happens to be the home of an ancient drum with a history of more than 3,000 years. There is a karst cave too, that is currently awaiting development, which is also on the list of future tourist destinations. All these are Dashi's natural assets for developing tourism.

"I knew that there was an ancient drum somewhere in our county, but I had no idea that it was right here in our village," Cheng said. "Many other villagers my age don't know this either. It shows that many of us don't know our hometown as well as we think. This is a common problem for young people from rural areas."

Now, when the villagers who work outside come back during the holidays, they first go to the service center, take photos and proudly share them on social media.

Cheng is confident in her plan to develop the village through tourism. Just outside the service center there is another area of around 3,000 square meters under construction that Cheng reveals might become a tourism center.

In order to develop tourism, the first priority is to make the village clean and pretty, and that is why dealing with refuse is Cheng's latest concern. This year, she was elected as a deputy for the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), and one of her suggestions at the NPC was to build a more comprehensive system of garbage classification in rural areas.

"The people left in the village are mostly women and seniors," Cheng said. "Garbage classification has the potential to both improve the village environment and create job opportunities for this group of residents," she said.

Looking back at more than three years as a village Party secretary, Cheng says she is happy with her choice to take the position. "This job gives me a sense of achievement."

Online villages

Li Jun, another deputy to the 13th NPC, shares Cheng's feeling.

After graduation from university, Li rejected a job offer in Chengdu, capital city of southwest China's Sichuan Province, and instead chose to work in his village, a decision that was strongly opposed by his parents at first.

"My parents wanted me to find a decent job in Chengdu and never come back as they saw no prospects for me in the village. But I thought differently, and in fact saw more opportunities there," Li told *Beijing Review*.

Born in 1985, Li, Secretary of the CPC Xiuyun Village Branch, Guangyuan City in Sichuan, has been working in the village for almost 10 years.



Ma Baozi, Party Secretary of Dahuang Village, Baofeng County from Henan Province, performs magic on stage in the village on August 11, 2017 (XINHUA)

In his eyes, the resources in rural areas in China are abundant but underutilized, and these assets are just waiting for people, especially young talent, to tap into them. Based on the specific circumstances of his village, Li focused his efforts on developing agricultural produce.

"When I had just started working in the village, I received phone calls from friends in Chengdu, offering to buy homegrown vegetables and other agricultural produce from rural households," Li said. He soon noticed the commercial potential of this industry and started to connect urban families in Chengdu with individual households in the village for a regular supply of produce.

"The urban people can order specific goods and our villagers will deliver them directly to people's doors in Chengdu on a regular basis," Li said. More than 3,000 households in Chengdu have now signed contracts with the village, and some shops have been opened in the city selling agricultural produce grown in the village.

"We have created our own brand and now we have a team of about 50 staff members working on this," Li said.

The average annual income in Xiuyun Village has increased from a few thousand to more than 30,000 yuan (\$4,750), and young villagers are gradually returning to the village to start their own businesses.

Li and his team are also working on a larger project selling pork by developing an app which customers can use to pick a pig and watch it grow on a farm. All the pigs have to be raised for at least 300 days, and they also ensure that no bad feed is involved. The pig farmers themselves will upload new pictures or videos of their livestock every day and send them to the customers.

"I hope the way we are developing agriculture in my village can be applied to more villages across China," Li said. "Young people are in high demand in rural areas and so I hope the government can provide more financial support for those who want to start businesses in the villages."

Cheng Mengxing, a 28-year-old businesswoman from Sanjie Village, Yingcheng City in Hubei Province, is also an NPC deputy. She says that right now money is an obstacle for rural entrepreneurs.

"I chose to come back to my hometown after graduation from university simply because I didn't want to be away from my family," Cheng Mengxing told *Beijing Review*.

While studying at university in Wuhan, capital city of Hubei, she missed her village's local noodles. Made from bean and rice powder, the noodles are a staple food in the village but difficult to find in other places.

"There are many local foods that are delicious, but are hardly known by people from other places, like the noodles from my hometown," Cheng Mengxing said.

So she decided to promote her village's delicacy. When she started this venture, there were already several small factories in the village making and selling packets of local noodles.

"These small factories were dirty and the production process lacked consistent standards. That is why they couldn't make it big," Cheng Mengxing said. "We needed to adopt advanced technologies to produce the original flavor of the noodle and preserve its freshness."

Now Cheng Mengxing's factory is the leading producer in the village and has even opened an

online shop. Profits however are limited, and she is struggling to find the funds to take the enterprise to the next level.

"We can't just focus on the production process," said Hua Qian, NPC deputy and a businesswoman from southwest China's Guizhou Province, who has answers to Cheng Mengxing's quandary. "Packaging, marketing and after-sale service are all very important for rural businesses."

Hua started her e-commerce career while studying traditional Chinese medicine in Wenzhou, a bustling city in east China's Zhejiang Province. At the beginning, Hua was just looking to make some money until she saw the potential in her hometown.

Guizhou is home to many ethnic groups. Ethnic clothes and accessories with the characteristics of different local cultures are popular all around the country. "Yet there were few people selling these kinds of goods online when I started my business there," Hua said.

While getting started, Hua began to realize that sourcing good quality items is just the first step in building a complete business model. Hua and six other members of the team dedicated more time to exploring off-line distribution channels, marketing and improving services for their customers. "A mature business line is a must for rural business development," she stressed.

The magic plan

Ma Baozi, Secretary of the CPC Dahuang Village Branch, Baofeng County in Henan Province, has been exploring unique methods of rural development.

With a history of magic shows dating back more than 1,000 years, Baofeng County is a well-known center for magicians in China.

"Half of the magicians in China are from our county," Ma said. Ma himself used to tour the country with his own magic troupe. When the village implored Ma to return and run for election as the village's Party secretary in the 1990s, he hesitated as he was making good money as an owner of a magic troupe having hundreds of people. Ultimately, however, he decided to go back.

"My hope is to help everybody in the village to earn good money," Ma said. "That was my promise during the election."

Ma opposed ideas to develop the village through tourism or agricultural production, as many villagers were away touring in magic troupes of their own and there was almost nobody working the land. The village itself also offers little in the way of tourist attractions.

"The development of our village has to be different," Ma said. "In the past, most of the places we visited on magic show tours were in rural areas where all the local people would come out to see our show. Our performance itself was free but if we sold some small souvenirs with it, then we could make a fair bit of money."

He then suggested villagers carry merchandise with them when performing in other places. Now there are more than 2,000 such magic show troupes from the village, and their sales can reach 300 million yuan (\$47.5 million) each year.

Those left in the village are also getting involved, as the village has now grown into an exchange center for magic merchandise and books in the north of China with annual transactions of 1.5 billion yuan (\$237 million).

"Now most of the young people in our village choose to stay in the village and many of those working in other places in China have also come back to settle down," Ma said proudly. "We are now planning to take this exchange center online and hopefully it will bring even more business for us."

Ma also said that more than half of the villagers can now do magic. "This is the tradition of our village and I plan to set up a museum of magic as well as a performance center to attract more people."

Ma was elected as an NPC deputy this year and is happy to see that many more policies aimed at energizing rural areas are being released at the NPC annual session.

On March 8, at a panel discussion with deputies from east China's Shandong Province during the First Session of the 13th NPC, President Xi Jinping said that the quality of socialist modernization and a moderately prosperous society will be determined by agricultural competitiveness and by rural environment and incomes.

Xi urged local authorities to energize rural industries, increase the incomes of rural residents, alleviate poverty and enrich rural life.

This is a continuation of the boost for rural areas after a vitalization strategy was brought up at the 19th National Congress of the CPC held in October 2017.

"With more support from the Central Government, I am pretty sure that the future of China's rural development will be promising," Ma said.

Golden green farms

The vitalization of rural areas has accelerated as more entrepreneurs and young people get involved

By Yuan Yuan



A field study on greenhouse agriculture is carried out in Changsheng Village of Zhaodong, Suihua City in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, on September 29 (WEI YAO)

With machines roaring, workers at a corn-processing factory in Xiangyang Village of Zhaodong, Suihua City in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, were busy peeling, washing, boiling and then packaging corn.

Boxes containing corn piled up around the factory. Wang Zhongbao, the owner of the plant, was busy answering calls from people wanting to place orders. "Our production volume can't meet the growing demand," Wang said. "I have to turn most of them away. We are planning to expand the plant to a much larger scale."

Working as a barefoot doctor in the village for over a decade, Wang decided to start his own poultry-raising business in 2005. He started with 2,000 chickens and spent a lot of time learning from skilled villagers and veterinarians how to avoid diseases and raise healthier chickens that would produce more eggs. Within a few years, he expanded to 5,000 chickens and then to over 10,000, involving more villagers in the process.

In order to pool more labor and resources together, Wang initiated a large-scale poultry-raising cooperative in 2008, setting up standardized technical support, supply chains and prices. More than 100 households joined, increasing the number of chickens to 800,000 and adding 100,000 geese.

In the first year, each household in the cooperative earned over 30,000 yuan (\$4,500) on average. By 2015, the total number of households involved had increased to 1,660, including some from other towns across the province.

When it was found that corn had such a large market, Wang expanded his business to include corn and other grains, setting up Wang Lao Bao Food Co. Ltd. in 2014. Today, the total assets of the company have surpassed 50 million yuan (\$7.35 million) with net profits hitting 8 million yuan (\$1.17 million) a year. More than 200 villagers are employed in the corn-processing factory during the busy season.

"Now we have 15,000 *mu* (1,000 hectares) of corn fields and we expect to expand," Wang said. With no additives or sugars involved in the processing, the corn is 100 percent organic and green, making it very popular with consumers even though it is not cheap. The market price for a regular ear of corn is normally 2 yuan (\$0.3), but Wang's corn can sell for up to 9.8 yuan (\$1.4), almost five times the average.

"The market for green and organic food has been increasing as more consumers become concerned about food safety. This is an opportunity for us to develop modern agriculture," Wang said. "I hope more villagers can explore more in this direction."

"We have greatly developed green and organic agriculture in recent years," Yin Cai, Deputy Director of the Zhaodong Bureau of Agriculture, told *Beijing Review*. "Among the total 3.7 million *mu* (246,67 hectares) of farmland, more than 1.1 million *mu* (73,333 hectares) is for green and organic farming."

Yin said that corn, the main crop in Zhaodong, is now following a healthier growing pattern. In the past, farmers paid a lot of attention to increasing the output volume by using chemical fertilizers, but this made the product more vulnerable to the market, since buyers had the final say on the price.

Now as farmers begin to pay more attention to increasing quality and focus on organic solutions and as more consumers are willing to pay more for organic food, those who produce quality crops are turning out to be the price controllers.

In the past, the price for regular millet was about 6 yuan (\$0.88) per kg, but now, with more local companies involved in organic crop supply, the price of organic millet can surpass 40 yuan (\$5.88).



Pan Shufan and her daughter Xiao Zhijie work in a greenhouse in Changsheng Village of Zhaodong on September 29 (WEI YAO)

Pretty and wealthy

Zhao Hongli, from Changsheng Village in Zhaodong, is an entrepreneurial pioneer. Before returning to the village and being elected secretary of the village Communist Party of China (CPC) branch in 2014, Zhao ran a liquor-brewing company for more than 20 years with more than 100 branch offices across the country.

"When I was elected village Party secretary, I was aware of the responsibility this entailed: to change the village into a new one," Zhao said. The new village needed to be clean and pretty, according to Zhao. With government grants, which largely improved its transportation conditions, street lights were erected and flowers were planted along the roads as well.

"This has greatly changed the appearance of the village," Cui



Zhang Dapeng, Director of the Soybean Office of Hailun, introduces the Heilongjiang Soybean Trading Center scheduled to open in the city at the end of the year on September 28 (WEI YAO)

Shuangxing, a resident, said. "We never had any concrete roads before; the unpaved roads were either dusty or muddy. Now it is more convenient."

A compound named Happy Courtyard was built as a caring center for seniors and villagers with disabilities. A performing center for errenzhuan, a typical stage performance from northeast China, was built as both an entertainment center for the villagers and a tourist destination.

Not far from the center, a garden with various fruits and vegetables was established with a lane shrouded in grape vines down the middle. In the peak summer season, an average of more than 4,000 tourists visit the village every day. Right beside the garden, some 200 newly built greenhouses are available for rent.

"Today, many villages are populated with seniors and children," Zhao said. "I hope Changsheng will attract more young people working in cities to come back home by creating more opportunities for them."

Xiao Zhijie, a 29-year-old villager in Changsheng, was lured back by the greenhouses. Xiao used to work in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, as an accountant after finishing college. "I always wanted to come back to my village to do something, but I didn't see any opportunities for the young before," Xiao said. "Now things are changing."

Xiao's mother, Pan Shufan, rented 28 greenhouses to grow pumpkins this year. As an employee at a local insurance company, Pan is about to switch her work focus to the greenhouses. Xiao and her brother were very passionate about getting involved and started to learn related knowledge and market conditions via the Internet.

"To work in the greenhouses is more fun and pleasurable for me," Pan said. "To see the process from seed to fruit is a reward you can't get from doing other jobs. This year, we plan to plant pumpkin and if the market proves to be good, we will expand the scale."

"Now I can see my family every day and we work together on something we all love. It makes us happy," Xiao said.

Zheng Yan, a 33-year-old villager, rented 10 greenhouses for growing a special type of mushroom. For the past two years, he rented farmland to grow corn and soybeans, but this year, he switched to greenhouses and a new plant.

"The mushroom I grow is hard to cultivate in north China because it is vulnerable to cold weather," Zheng said. He specifically went to Dalian, a city in northeast China's Liaoning Province, to learn how to grow the plant.

"I employ villagers at harvest time and pay them 100 yuan (\$14.7) per day per person," Zheng said. The mushroom grew pretty well this year, and he gets visits from villagers frequently asking questions about investment and profits. Zheng expects to earn about 200,000 yuan (\$28,800) this year.

Cui Shuangxing works in the greenhouses during the harvest season and earns 3,000 yuan (\$441) a month. Cui's husband works in a factory in the village and earns a similar salary. In addition, they have about 40 *mu* (2.7 hectares) of farmland that can bring in about 20,000 yuan (\$2,940) a year.

"We are currently very satisfied with our life," Cui said. "Our income is more than enough for us."

Zhao's vision for the village, however, is more far-reaching. "To earn more is just the first step," he said. "We are planning to set up a Confucius school in the village to spread China's traditional wisdom and morality. This will be beneficial to all of us."

Currently, a motorhome park is about to go under construction and will serve as lodgings for tourists. At the end of the year, a TV drama about the village's development will be shot on location, which will be another boost for tourism in the village.



Villagers work in a soybean field in Dongxing Village, Hailun, on September 28 (WEI YAO)

Black soil and soybeans

Liu Chunsheng, Secretary of the CPC Branch of Dongxing Village of Hailun, Suihua City in Heilongjiang, is also planning something big for the village. Having worked at his current position for the past 13 years, Liu is familiar with everything about the village.

"There are 14,252 *mu* (950 hectares) of farmland in the village with 787 households," Liu said. "In the past, each household dealt only with its own farmland, which, in a way, is a waste of labor and is inefficient."

In 2012, Liu initiated a cooperative to gather the farmland for collective farming. To date, all households in the village have joined. The cooperative deals with every step of the process, from sowing the seeds to harvesting. The village cooperates with DJI, a Chinese company that makes unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), throughout the process.

"We have a training base for young villagers to learn the skills needed to use UAVs," Liu said. "The training is all for free and takes 10-15 days. After grasping the skill, one can earn 20,000 to 30,000 yuan (\$4,411) during the summer alone." Each year, every household gets a share of the profits from the crops in addition to the regular rent from their farmland.



Workers process corn at a factory in Xiangyang Village of Zhaodong on September 29 (WEI YAO)

"We are planning to build the village into a big community integrating farmland, industry and living areas," Liu said. "We have already created the draft design for this project."

Hailun, known as the capital of the mineral selenium due to its selenium-rich black soil, is ideal for growing soybeans. A trading center in Hailun, which is supposed to go into operation by the end of the year, will be a major trade center of its kind in China.

"Since 2016, we have organized several tours that publicize our selenium-rich agricultural products to other areas in China," Guo Changsheng, Director of the Office of Selenium Industry of Hailun, said. "The supplement of selenium is beneficial to health, and it could help to prevent cancer."

Since February, the tour team has signed contracts with seven cities with contracted volume surpassing 350 million yuan (\$50.4 million) by the end of July.

"Our products have been well received by the market and our green and healthy products are expected to be on the table of more families soon," Guo said.