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Xinhua | 19 April 2017

Chinese investors breathe new life to Ukraine's rural area

KIEV, April 19 (Xinhua) -- Newly sown fields, well-kept houses and modern farms -- the rural area surrounding Koryukovka settlement shines like a pearl among the string of abandoned villages in a remote corner of Ukraine's northern Chernigov region.

After experiencing labour force outflow for decades, Koryukovka gained new life in 2013, when it attracted the interest of investors from Central China's Henan province.

The Chinese state-owned Huangfanqu Farm entered into a joint venture called Fanda with a Ukrainian partner and has already invested more than 10 million U.S. dollars in the development of farming in Koryukovka district, changing the lives of locals.

REANIMATION OF LIVESTOCK FARM

"Since the Chinese company started to finance us, we have significantly increased the number of livestock and boosted the productivity of our cattle," Olga Ruchko, a technician at the Koryukovka livestock farm, told Xinhua.

Standing proudly in front of the modern farm, Ruchko was not trying to hide her pleasure with the Chinese



Chinese state-owned Huangfanqu Farm and a Ukrainian partner are investing \$50 million in a livestock farm in Koryukovka and a grains farm in Naumovka, as well as a 2,700 ha forest, where it plans to raise wild animals.

investors.

In 2013, the farm in Koryukovka faced a threat of closure because the previous owners failed to provide enough funds even for buying protein-rich feeds for cows to help the animals produce enough milk and gain weight.

"Previously, we could not afford good feeds and our livestock has not got enough nutrition. But now, with Chinese financing, we buy everything we need – oil cakes and concentrated feeding stuff for cows and mixed cattle feed for calves," Ruchko said.

Due to better feeding and improved animal welfare after the renovation of the farm, the daily milk output per cow has increased from 10 to 22 liters.

Chinese investment has helped double the livestock at the farm to 2,000 cows and calves and provided jobs to about 100 residents of Koryukovka.

The farmers sell about 9 tons of fresh milk to local cheese producing plants per day. They also provide free milk to a local kindergarten.

"Currently, we supply milk as a raw material, but the company plans to build its own processing plant to produce finished products," Viktor Yushchenko, chairman of Gorky enterprise, which runs the Koryukovka farm, told Xinhua.

DECENT LIFE FOR VILLAGERS

The farm at Koryukovka, nearly 300 km north of the Ukrainian capital, is one of the two agricultural enterprises managed by Fanda. The other is located in Naumovka, a suburb of Koryukovka, just 15 minutes' drive away.

Once a flourishing village during the Soviet times, Naumovka lost most of its younger generation, who left in search of better life in the city.

Now, young people stopped moving out from Naumovka as the village offers them new employment opportunities. Chinese investment revived about 3,000 hectares of arable farmland in Naumovka, providing jobs to more than 130 villagers.

In 2013, Volodymyr Metla, a 40-year-old resident of Naumovka, was considering moving to Kiev to take a job as a construction worker so that he could support his family.

Metla's life has changed since Chinese investors came to his village and gave him a job as a tractor driver, while employing his wife as a junior accountant.

"I have been working for the Chinese company for about four years and I like my job. Chinese managers pay the wages timely, they have good agriculture equipment and they are good people. We made friends with some of them," Metla told Xinhua.

Farmers from nearby villages also came to work in Naumovka.

"I am from Kholmy, it is 30 km away from here. I used to work for a local enterprise, but it had collapsed. Here I work as a driver of a combine harvester, a sowing machine and a truck," Sergey Onopchenko told Xinhua.

WIN-WIN COOPERATION

Apart from managing livestock farm in Koryukovka and fields of corn, oats and lupine in Naumovka, Fanda rents a forest of 2,700 hectares, where it plans to raise wild animals, such as deer and hunting birds.

Zhang Zhenhua, the director of Fanda, said that the agricultural cooperation between Chinese and Ukrainian enterprises is a win-win for both sides due to the complementary advantages of the two economies.

China has experience and knowledge of modern farming technologies, its investors have financial resources, while Ukraine has fertile land and good farming infrastructure.

"Before coming to Ukraine, we have visited many countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. Then we found out that agriculture is very well developed in Ukraine and decided to invest in this country," Zhang told Xinhua.

The intention of the Ukrainian authorities to join the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative has reassured the Chinese farmers of prospects in Ukraine.

Speaking of his dream, Zhang said it is simple: to further develop his enterprise to bring benefits for his employees and local people.

To bring his dream to life, Zhang is seeking fresh investment for reconstructing a pig breeding complex, building a greenhouse for vegetables and fruits, and constructing a milk processing plant.

"Throughout the world, agriculture works on the same principles: the cultivation of land and breeding of cattle does not make a big profit. To get more income, you need to process the products," Zhang said.

Fanda is expected to invest more than 50 million U.S. dollars in total. The projected capital injection will allow the company to create up to 1,500 new jobs in the Koryukovka district.

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