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Puyuan knits success with fashionable wool clothing

By MA ZHENHUAN in Tongxiang, Zhejiang | China Daily Global | Updated: 2021-05-19 00:00

Classic, chic, warm and undeniably comfortable wool sweaters or knitwear are a wardrobe must for people — and Puyuan, a small town that does not have a sheep-raising tradition has emerged as the nation's biggest wool clothing production hub.

It boasts the most complete knitwear production chain ranging from design, manufacturing, sales and marketing after over three decades of development.

The wool industry in Puyuan township of Jiaxing in Zhejiang province began to take shape in 1976 when a local cooperative bought three manual flat knitting machines. Locals in Puyuan found making wool clothing lucrative in the early 1980s, and family workshops sprung up.

Then, people began to set up shops on the streets and peddle their products, which served as a prototype for today's big-scale wool products market.

Each year, around 700 million wool sweaters and knitwear pieces are sold and transported out of Puyuan, making it the largest wool sweater trading hub of the nation.

Xi Jinping, then Party secretary of Zhejiang, visited Puyuan three times between 2003 and 2005, and encouraged the local government and businesses to better develop and consolidate the wool sweater manufacturing sector and turn Puyuan town into a fashion hub of wool clothing.

Today, Puyuan has turned into China's manufacturing and leading fashion center for wool clothing, comprising 15 wool sweater submarkets and five facilitating ones covering a combined area of 1.7 square kilometers. The combined wool clothing sector saw transactions amounting to 108.9 billion yuan (\$16.8 billion) last

year, up 22.7 percent over 2005, the last time Xi visited the place. The city's GDP stood at 13.31 billion yuan last year, up 11.8 percent from 2005.

"I was fascinated by the sweater designs and bought 10 pieces in 30 minutes," said a tourist from Beijing surnamed Zhou and a finicky shopper, who spent a lot of time wandering through the market.

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Chen Jiagen, president of a local garment and fashion company, attributed Puyuan's success to the added emphasis on improving designs, quality and branding over the last 15 years.

"Many enterprises here have spent huge sums to have their own set of designers and brands, earning high premiums from chic and leading designs instead of the previous low-value manufacturing," he said.

Chen Rong, chairman of the Wenzhou Chamber of Commerce of Puyuan, who came to the place when he was only 22 and had been undertaking wool sweater business for the past two decades, said Puyuan's charm lies in the fact that production, sales and marketing can be done both online and offline here.

"The local government has been fully working with enterprises to integrate internet sales platforms with each part of the wool sweater business, with buyers and suppliers placing orders and allocating manufacturing resources with the help of their respective internet platforms," said Chen Rong.

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