



Visitors and ginseng-diggers examine wild ginseng in the Changbai Mountains, an ideal place for ginseng growth due to its suitable temperature and climate.

XIAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Ginseng tradition alive in Wanliang center

### 54,000-square-meter base provides commercial platform for popular root

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Wanliang's ginseng center in Northeast China's Jilin province is well known as a producer of one of the finest varieties of the root in the country.

The 54,000-square-meter trade center in Fusong county, Baishan, Jilin province, is said to be the largest of its kind in the world. Built in 1989, it has retail shops, exclusive outlets and small stalls offering the same commodity. The center even has enough space to hold ginseng exhibitions.

People can buy all kinds of

ginseng there, ranging from delicate packages of dried ginseng to roots that have just been dug up. There is also ginseng in glass bottles that is immersed in a liquid.

The trade center moved around 40 million kilograms of fresh ginseng worth about 2 billion yuan (\$314 million) in 2010, and dried ginseng had a sales volume of 10,500 tons, worth 3.1 billion yuan. Moreover, it also traded 500 million yuan of rare varieties of ginseng in 2010.

Dubbed the "king of herbs", ginseng is considered to have great nutritious and medicinal value in Chinese

medicine. It is an ancient natural species, the existence of which predates mankind's arrival on the planet, said Cao Baoming, deputy chairman of the Chinese Folk Artists Association.

"Jilin's Fusong county in the Changbai Mountain area is an ideal place for ginseng cultivation due to the suitable temperature and climate. It has a history of cultivating ginseng that goes back more than a thousand years, which has made the herb a part of local people's life."

Cao described Fusong as a museum of ginseng culture because of the diversity both in shape and species. Some have leaves or roots shaped like animals or humans, such as the precious "three generations" ginseng. It consists of three small parts shaped like men at different ages: a grandfather, father and grandson.

When people dig wild ginseng in the mountains, they must follow a series of rules made by their ancestors, said Cao, who is also an expert on folk custom.

"First, is to gather a team. Otherwise, a single ginseng



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Ginseng roots from Jilin province. The local government has increased its investments in the production of green, high-quality ginseng.

digger will most likely get lost in the deep mountains. And it should be made up of an odd number of members, leaving room for ginseng, which is regarded as a person. If the team contains an even number of members, that indicates their efforts for ginseng will be in vain."

According to tradition, the team will build a shrine for the Mountain God who, according to legend, was also a ginseng collector that got lost and died on the mountain, Cao said.

"Ginseng diggers worship the god devoutly and believe he will protect them because they are his successors," he said.

While they are scouring the mountains, the foragers' rules prohibit talking loudly, sitting on stumps and hunting tigers and snakes in order to avoid disturbing the god, occupying his seats or hurting his pets, Cao said.

Once they find ginseng, they will circle it with red rope because ginseng roots are thought to be magical creatures, and collectors believe red rope prevents them from disappearing. The finders will also celebrate by cooking a pig shared with all the villagers upon their return.

Cao said these folk customs may seem superstitious, but most actually can be explained

by science and summed up from practices.

"The red rope, for instance, helps keep the eye from getting fatigued by looking at green plants for a prolonged period of time," Cao said.

Because Chinese people are paying closer attention to keeping healthy, the ginseng industry has got a strong support from the local government. People have abandoned the old way of cultivating ginseng, which leads to deforestation, in favor of a more sustainable method.

In addition, scientific innovations are being encouraged to develop more processed ginseng products, Cao said.



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PROVIDED BY CAO BAOMING

A three-person team sets out to dig for ginseng.

## New bonded area to revive NE China

By ZHANG ZHAO  
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Changchun Xinglong Bonded Area, the nation's 19th comprehensive bonded area, was recently approved by the State government and established in the capital city of Northeast China's Jilin province.

As the first national bonded area in the province, it is expected to lead Jilin's economy into the future by connecting it with global markets, said local officials.

Located in the Changchun Economic and Technological Development Zone in the northeastern region of Changchun city, it has a planned area of nearly 5 square kilometers and boasts advanced transportation facilities.

It sits beside a number of highways as well as the Xinglongshan Railroad Station, which was designed to have the largest cargo-handling capacity in the city. It is only 10 kilometers away from an international airport and it is roughly a five-hour drive away from the ports

of the seaside cities of Yingkou and Dalian in neighboring Liaoning province.

"The comprehensive bonded area covers many industries, including export-oriented processing and logistics, and it functions as a port," said Zhang Huanqiu, head of the development zone's administrative committee.

"It is one of the most open areas with the most functions and the most preferential policies," he added.

Bonded goods are stored, processed and transported within the area, thereby reducing logistics costs, which results in maximized profit for companies, Zhang said.

Many companies also have opened facilities for product development, testing and after-sale services.

Before the bonded area was established, export-oriented goods first had to be transported to customs offices at port cities, such as Dalian. Now they can be declared and examined at the customs office in the area, which saves time

and reduces capital pressure for local companies.

The management of the bonded area said the major industries include high-tech sectors, such as electronic products for automobiles and transportation equipment manufacturing. They also seek to build a modern logistics network that will cover Northeast Asia.

The economic and technological development zone has rich land resources, a good ecological environment and extensive infrastructure. In addition, the past seven sessions of the province's Northeast Asia Investment and Trade Expo have enhanced trade ties between Jilin and neighboring countries.

The bonded area is expected to help promote international economic cooperation and foster a "Northeast Asia Expo that never ends", local officials said.

"Without doubt, the founding of the bonded area is a milestone in the history of Jilin's openness to the outside world," said Zhang. "It will be of

huge importance in promoting the province's economy."

It is also predicted that the area will be a boon for the revival of China's northeastern region, which was one of the earliest and most important industrial bases half a century ago.

Changchun is one of China's centers for the manufacture of automobiles and their parts as well as a national base for biomedicine exports, farm produce processing and optoelectronic information technology. But the city's economy largely depends on investment.

The many emerging industries being developed in the bonded area will help shift the city's economic development model by increasing the export of innovative products. And the area also provides a platform to utilize the city's increasing industrial capacity.

Statistics show that Changchun's GDP has doubled every four years on average, and the government's fiscal revenue has doubled every three years. In



PROVIDED BY TIAN ZHONGHUA

Artist's rendering of a bird's eye view of the Changchun Xinglong Bonded Area.

2010, the city attracted investment totaling 140 billion yuan (\$22.1 billion), which in turn generated 100 billion yuan in added value.

### Infrastructure and policies

The local government has designed the bonded area to be a modern industrial park, and they have invested 640 million yuan over the past two years to acquire land.

Two main roads in the area and one leading to the airport have been basically completed. Water and gas supply, heating systems and an electricity network are being installed and will be completed this year

along with many other roads and a square.

The economic development zone has set up a 5-million-yuan fund as an allowance for companies in the bonded area for logistics, talent attraction and training. It also provides interest discounts and a long repayment schedule on loans to those companies that have made large investments.

A Fortune 500 company can enjoy a 50 percent discount when buying land in the area to build factories and storehouses on the condition that it brings an investment of \$10 million one lump sum and opens import-export services.

The administrative commit-

tee of the bonded area plans to complete the infrastructure by the next year and start operation of the customs office.

By the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015), local officials predict that around 100 companies will be attracted to the area, including two or three global market leaders in the processing sector. They are expected to provide about 30,000 jobs. The goal for total foreign trade volume is \$5 billion.

And according to the long-term plan, the area is expected to become "an internationally known processing and trade base and business center in Northeast Asia".