

Business

China's millennial 'new farmers' opt to live off the land

Young Chinese uninspired by modern society's long work hours

SHANGHAI: Hu Siqin had a promising career in Shanghai with a Fortune 500 company and more than enough money, but something was missing under the bright lights of the big city, a sense of what she calls "roots". So the 33-year-old chucked it all in to lay down literal roots as part of a nascent back-to-the-farm movement in which young Chinese professionals are quitting the rat race for the simple joys of an organic, agrarian lifestyle.

"People like me don't feel that material comforts stimulate us, and deep down we remain unsatisfied," said Hu. "So we've started thinking, what is the purpose of our lives? What am I living for?" In many ways, it's a homecoming. Before the 20th century China was a primarily agrarian country for thousands of years, most of its vast population scratching out a life from the soil.

The ruling Communist Party, however, has for decades officially encouraged urbanization and migration to growing cities to help lift millions out of rural poverty and build a more modern, consumer-oriented economy. But with a measure of national prosperity now reached, attitudes are reversing among some people. Millions of young Chinese are increasingly uninspired by modern society's long work hours and meagre pay, urban congestion and high living costs, and parental pressure for success and grandchildren-spawning a succession of viral online memes encapsulating millennial despair.

Empty inside

Hu, who has worked in marketing and supply chains for French companies like personal-care giant L'Oréal and sports retailer Decathlon, said that in her career she "appeared happy on the outside, but felt empty

inside." She now sows organic, pesticide- and fertilizer-free sweet potatoes, long beans and other crops on rented plots of land with like-minded friends on Chongming, a large, primarily agricultural island on Shanghai's outskirts.

Hu, a petite dynamo with a shovel, can barely contain her delight as she pops sweet potatoes out of the soil and samples sorghum plants that tower over her. "So sweet!" she exclaims, biting into a stalk of the grain. According to the government, around 20 million people have joined what it terms a "new farmer" movement, some of whom have millions of social media followers as they post on their lifestyles.

China's government has recognized the potential advantage of an influx of tech- and business-savvy millennials bringing new ideas and enthusiasm to an ag sector still largely dominated by longtime peasant farmers, and has pledged financial and policy supports. The movement also ties into efforts by fast-growing start-ups like Pinduoduo, whose platforms help small farmers tap into a swelling Chinese market for freshly delivered produce.

Another path

For "new farmers" like Liang Funa, 34, it's about enjoying a healthy, peaceful and more sustainable life. The former ad executive felt burnt-out due to excessive work hours and a deeply unhealthy lifestyle. "Our generation is under huge pressure, and people who stay in cities can't see many other choices," he said. "The people around them talk constantly about buying a house or a car or getting married, like these are the only measures of success and there are no other roads available."

Liang, who moved to Chongming three years ago,



SHANGHAI: This photo taken on October 28, 2021 shows farmers Liang Funa (R) and Hu Siqin getting dressed for farm work in Chongming island in Shanghai. Millions of young Chinese are increasingly uninspired by modern society's long work hours and meagre pay, urban congestion and high living costs, and parental pressure for success and grandchildren — spawning a succession of viral online memes encapsulating millennial despair. — AFP

has had to rapidly learn horticulture—his farmer neighbors and internet websites help—while dabbling in side work online for extra income. But his life is now relatively stress-free, and Liang has realized just how few consumer goods he really needs. And by eating only his own organic vegetables, he feels healthier, mitigating the need for trips to the doctor. Convincing parents to accept this life choice is another matter.

Hu's parents are baffled, accusing her of "going backwards" in life. But she is unconcerned, and is now negotiating a long-term lease on a farmstead of her own in rural Zhejiang province near Shanghai. She hopes to sow her first crop in the spring. "I jumped out of my comfort zone and went to an unfamiliar and uncertain place, and it has been very profound," she said.— AFP

Huawei opens largest health lab in Dongguan to media

DONGGUAN: Huawei's Consumer Business Group opened their largest HUAWEI Health Lab to date to the media. The new 4,680 sq m facility in Songshan Lake, Dongguan, China representing a 200 million yuan R&D investment project will support more than 80 types of testing requests for R&D personnel in fields such as professional research, ecosystem co-development, and health and fitness scenario incubation, ultimately supporting the research, incubation and testing of Huawei's smart wearable products.

Huawei currently runs multiple Health Labs to study health-related technology, including Xi'an lab which focuses on innovative use cases for health and fitness technologies. The Songshan Lake Health Lab is intended become a world class health and fitness technology R&D institute dedicated to product R&D, standards R&D, certification, exhibitions, and industry incubation activities.

Huawei's smart wearable and health business has brought many innovative, science-based health and fitness products and services to consumers in recent years.

HUAWEI Health Lab hosted media open day

Huawei showcased its past research results in the health and fitness field at a media open day to provide a more detailed explanation of how the lab will meet its functional and research responsibilities. One showcase included the 3 million yuan plateau simulation laboratory which replicates high-altitude environments up to 6,000 meters above sea level to test how oxygen saturation affects the human body. The lab contains the facilities necessary for researchers to measure the changes in the human body under different altitudes and climate conditions and obtain accurate high-altitude data for analysis.

The lab also has a professional optical motion capture system, which includes 28 high-speed infrared cameras supporting a peak sampling rate of 10,000 Hz, allowing it to record a wide range of subjects, including moving bullets, with millimeter-level accuracy. By studying the movement of the human body along with attitude data, Huawei hopes to develop new and innovative features for its smart wearable products.

The exercise physiology research area of the lab also comes equipped with cardiopulmonary function and metabolism meters, heart rate belts, and high-performance treadmills that researchers can use to monitor as VO2 max, calorie consumption, and workout heart rate. To date, the laboratory has already captured about 192,500 km of running data this year, equivalent to four and a half laps around the earth's equator.

Huawei's smart wearable products support more than



100 workout modes thanks to these labs, including rock-climbing, swimming, table tennis, golf, and multi-functional sports.

Health and fitness incubation area

The new HUAWEI Health Lab will also serve as an incubator for scenario-oriented experiences and service packages that consumers can directly enjoy, including micro-physical examination, home fitness, and digital sports. In the lab's micro-physical examination area, users can use Huawei wearable products to measure physical indicators such as blood pressure and SpO2 monitoring. In the indoor fitness area, users can start tracking their exercise by connecting Huawei smartwatch, a HUAWEI Vision TV, and other third party equipment. In the digital sports area, users can compete with friends while using rowing machines and spinning bikes. The HUAWEI Health App now also offers 11 types of training courses including running, cycling, yoga, fitness, skipping, and more.

Huawei has invested heavily into research in digital health and fitness technologies and active partnerships with related industry authorities and ecosystem partners. At present, more than 5 million users have joined the HUAWEI Research Program, and over 320 million users have benefited from Huawei's health and fitness services. There are currently over 83 million global average monthly active users of the HUAWEI Health App.

Huawei's privacy protection policies have stated that privacy is a basic consumer right. As such, the company blocks third parties from accessing user data without the user's explicit consent and requires all of its ecosystem partners adhere to a strict privacy and security regime.



NBK holds career day in cooperation with MGRP

KUWAIT: As part of its constant commitment to support young national cadres and qualify them for the labor market, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), organized a career day for recruitment of national labor in the private sector, in cooperation with Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), at the headquarters of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) in Riggaa. The event was attended by Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait.

On this occasion, Gadeer Al-Kooheji, Recruitment Manager, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK's participation in this event underscores its policy of supporting national cadres to achieve their career ambitions. In addition, this event is regarded as an important platform for the bank to have a closer look at national talents which it seeks to solicit for joining its professional team."

Al-Kooheji noted that NBK Group Human Resources staff conducted interviews and responded to all inquiries raised by the students who filled out recruitment applications for job vacancies, in line with



Gadeer Al-Kooheji

the bank's commitment to encourage those graduates to join the banking sector.

She pointed out that during the career day, NBK recruited 20% of total applicants in different departments, stressing that the bank is looking for innovative talents having the passion and motivation for career progression.

NBK takes pride in being the largest national labor employer in the private sector in Kuwait with a national labor ratio of 74.3%, as part of its effort to deliver on its historical role and social responsibility by soliciting and recruiting national talent, she added.

Al-Kooheji emphasized that NBK supports its young cadres to assume leading positions in the bank, which makes NBK the employer of choice for national fresh graduates, as well as those looking for a promising career path, given NBK's distinguished resources and programs that are on par with international standards, which help up skill young talent. NBK's efforts in soliciting national talents go in line with its development and training plans aimed to invest in national cadres and prepare a promising banking generation. The bank is also keen to offer a series of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for youth.

Creating a carbon-neutral society leaving nobody behind is the key to mobility for all

DUBAI: Leading scientists across the globe agree that urgent action is necessary to reduce the impact of climate change. The development of sustainable and practical mobility solutions is essential to safeguard our planet for future generations, according to Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation.

In recent years, it has become abundantly clear that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the future of mankind. A recently issued United Nations report warned that our world is on a path to exceed the target set by world leaders as part of 2015's historic Paris Agreement to hold temperature increases to well below 2.0°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. So, what can we as a species do to avoid this calamity? One of the most important answers to the climate conundrum lies with carbon neutrality. When it comes to global warming, there is greater public awareness than ever before. Yet, perhaps fewer people are familiar with the concept - and huge potential impact - of achieving carbon neutrality. The vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is a result of increased greenhouse gas emissions since the dawn of the industrial revolution.

Of these gasses, one of the most harmful to the environment is carbon dioxide (CO2).

Essentially, becoming carbon neutral means reducing the amount of CO emissions put into the atmosphere to the same level as the volume of CO removed from the atmosphere, which occurs through a number of processes as part of the delicate balance of nature. Globally, transportation is thought to be responsible for around one-fifth of CO emissions, with road travel accounting for three-quarters of this total. With this in



mind, much energy has been focused on developing new technologies and innovations to power cleaner, greener mobility solutions.

As world leaders gathered in Glasgow for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), it is clear that action on climate change is no longer a choice, but a necessity. The scale of action required calls for a united effort and cooperation across the globe. Here in the Middle East, encouraging steps are being taken by governments to usher in a new era of sustainability.

Last month, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Bahrain announced a series of initiatives and investment plans to address the climate issue and to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century. These endeavors align with Toyota's own sustainability goals and plans to reduce CO2 emissions throughout its operations.

Toyota's vision is to create mobility for all. In a diverse and uncertain world, we strive to raise the quality and availability of mobility and ensure that no one is left behind. We wish to create new possibilities for all humankind and support a sustainable relationship with our planet. This is why we have made it our mission to minimize our environmental impact by achieving carbon neutrality not only in terms of vehicle emissions, but throughout our entire operations.

This is not a new direction adopted to align with the mood of the times. Toyota has been committed to developing diverse eco-friendly vehicles since 1997, when we introduced the Prius - the world's first mass-

produced Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV). Since then, Toyota has sold over 17 million electrified vehicles globally, contributing to a 20 percent reduction in CO2 and helping safeguard the wellbeing of the earth and its inhabitants.

While we are proud of these achievements, our journey to carbon neutrality is far from over. More still needs to be done, which is why Toyota is targeting combined sales of 10 million units globally for its expanding electrified vehicle range by 2030. We are also developing hydrogen-fueled combustion engine technology through our participation in motorsports and exploring the opportunities presented by E-fuel. Manufactured using hydrogen from renewable energy, this synthetic fuel has strong potential to be used as a "Carbon Neutral" fuel for gasoline and diesel combustion engine vehicles, including the ones that are already on the road. At Toyota, we believe there are many paths to reach the goal of carbon neutrality. Just as the mobility landscapes are different from country to country, so too are the pathways to achieving sustainability.

As innovation continues to shape the global mobility sector, we must embrace the latest breakthroughs to create products and services that offer people more ways to move safely, responsibly, and in harmony with the environment. By doing so, we can overcome the single greatest challenge facing humanity and unlock a world of sustainable mobility for all - a goal that must be achieved to protect the future of our planet for generations to come.