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Xinjiang fish farms find favor from farther afield

China Daily | Updated: 2023-03-31 10:57

URUMQI — When talking about well-known products from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the conversation often turns to mutton, fruits or nuts. What is less well known is that the fish raised in this vast region's meltwaters are gaining a reputation around the world.

The fish ponds of Nilka county in the Kazak autonomous prefecture of Ili are part of a rainbow trout farming industry that is currently worth 100 million yuan (\$14.5 million) a year.

Rainbow trout, a fish native to Pacific coast rivers and lakes in North America and Northeast Asia, are famous for having few bones and plenty of meat, which makes them ideal for farming.

Making use of its relative abundance of water, Ili has invested heavily in fish farming in recent years and has plans to produce about 30,000 metric tons of fish and fish products annually by 2025.

"Xinjiang-bred trout are enjoying growing recognition in Russia, owing to its geographical proximity and quality," said Wang Yuan, deputy manager of Xinjiang Zungui Fresh Food Technology.

"Deep-processed trout is also exported to Malaysia and many other destinations. This year, we will work to open up more markets, including Israel and Kazakhstan," he said.

Xinjiang Zungui's parent company, Xinjiang Tianyun Organic Agriculture, is a local fish farming, processing and retail leader. It produces a range of trout products, from fillets, segments and steaks to minced and smoked trout.

"Compared to last year when we had to go out in search of customers, this year, we've already received lots of orders, and production is at full capacity. We estimate that we'll process up to 2,000 tons of trout this year," Wang added.

Farmers are also experiencing a steady rise in incomes as a result of the utilization of the region's plentiful natural resources.

Xinhua



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