

Thoughts on the Agricultural Practice of the Party's Governance Strategy for Xinjiang in the New Era: Based on the Border Counties and the Action of Prospering the Border Areas and Enriching the People

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Abstract This paper introduces the distribution and characteristics of national first-class open ports, national bases for foreign trade transformation and upgrading, and bases for high-quality development of agricultural international trade in Xinjiang. It studies the border counties of the autonomous region, analyzes the main problems in the Action of Prospering the Border Areas and Enriching the People, and proposes suggestions such as building a transportation hub center for the Belt and Road Initiative, constructing national foreign trade bases related to agricultural products, developing the port economic belt, developing the newly established five counties and cities, scaling up facility agriculture, developing comprehensive agriculture in border counties according to local conditions, and strengthening the Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People. These are intended to provide reference for the implementation of the Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang in the new era in the agricultural sector.

Key words Border counties, Characteristic agriculture, Agricultural intellectual property, Action of Prospering the Border Areas and Enriching the people, The Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang

0 Introduction

The Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People represents a development strategy for border regions initiated by China. Guided by the principles of "enriching the populace, revitalizing border areas, strengthening the nation, and maintaining amicable neighboring relations", this initiative prioritizes infrastructure development, livelihood improvement, industrial fostering, and ecological conservation. To date, it has established a comprehensive framework comprising six major engineering systems, namely: "consolidating border defenses through foundational strengthening, ensuring border stability via livelihood support, promoting border prosperity through industrial growth, enhancing neighborly ties via opening-up, preserving border ecology via environmental protection, and maintaining border harmony through ethnic unity"^[1–3]. Among its key components, the adaptive development of port economic belts holds significant importance^[3–5].

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region accounts for approximately one-sixth of China's total land area. It shares borders with as many as eight neighboring countries: to the southwest, it adjoins India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; and from the southwest to the northeast, it borders Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia. Its boundary line extends over 5 700 km, accounting for about one fourth of China's total land border

length^[6–7].

Xinjiang serves as the primary front for China's Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People. The region currently administers 35 border counties, including Kokdala City and Baiyang City. These counties are distributed across southern Xinjiang (Hotan, Kashgar, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, and Aksu), northern Xinjiang (the counties directly under Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Kokdala, Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, Tacheng, Baiyang, Altay, and Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture), and eastern Xinjiang (Hami). Furthermore, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) operates 58 border regimental farms in the area, among which 31 are located directly along the border. These farms fall under XPCC divisions: in southern Xinjiang, the 1st, 3rd, and 14th Divisions; in northern Xinjiang, the 4th, 5th, 6th (including Qitai Farm and Beitashan Ranch), 7th (the 137th Regiment's Awusqi Pastoral Area), 9th, and 10th Divisions; and in eastern Xinjiang, the 13th Division. Of the 13 county-level cities directly administered by the autonomous region, only Kokdala City and Baiyang City are situated with their administrative seats adjacent to the international border.

The autonomous region has identified several key pillars for developing itself as the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt. These include the "One Port"-the Urumqi International Land Port Area; the "Two Zones"-the Kashgar and Khorgos Economic Development Zones; the "Five Centers, namely, a transportation hub center, a trade and logistics center, a medical service center, a cultural, science and education center, and a regional financial center; and the "Port Economic Belt"^[6–7]. In terms of railway connectivity, the Khorgos and Alataw Pass railway ports have already been operating normally for an extended period. Meanwhile,

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construction on the China-Pakistan Railway and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway is being vigorously advanced, and the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway is scheduled to enter full-scale construction soon.

The Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang in the new era has become a major topic of academic and policy interest^[8-13]. In September 2025, the State Council Information Office released a white paper titled *The Successful Practice of the Party's Governance Strategy for Xinjiang in the New Era*^[8]. In collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and other agencies, Xinjiang has fully applied the holistic approach to national security^[14] while balancing development and security. Since 2023, the region has established five new administrative units, namely, Baiyang City, He'an County, Hekang County, Cenling County, and Caohu City, which have substantially enhanced the modernization of governance systems and capacities along the border. In this context, the present study adheres to the holistic national security perspective, takes the consolidation of the Chinese national community consciousness^[15] as its guiding principle, and draws upon the experience of border counties and the Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People to examine practical approaches for implementing the Party's governance strategy for Xinjiang in the new era within the agricultural sector.

1 National first-class open ports

Along Xinjiang's land borders, there are 16 national first-class open ports, distributed as follows: one each on the China-Pakistan and China-Tajikistan borders; three on the China-Kyrgyzstan border; seven on the China-Kazakhstan border; and three on the China-Mongolia border. Among these, two are combined rail-road ports and fourteen are road ports. It should be noted that the Muzart and Aheitu Bieke road ports are not yet in official operation, whereas the Khunjerab and Turugart ports are expected to become the railway gateways for the future China-Pakistan Railway and China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway, respectively. Furthermore, the region also has three aviation ports. These land and air ports accommodate the Khorgos, Urumqi, and Kashgar zones of the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone, along with four comprehensive bonded zones located in Khorgos, Alataw Pass, Urumqi, and Kashgar.

1.1 Land ports in southern Xinjiang

1.1.1 Khunjerab. This port corresponds to Pakistan's Sust Port. It is a year-round open China-Pakistan road port, one of the six designated ports in Xinjiang for the import of fruits. It will also serve as the railway port for the future China-Pakistan Railway. Situated in the core area of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, it is located in Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, Kashgar Prefecture, on the Pamir Plateau at an altitude of 4 733 m. It serves as an important corridor for economic and cultural exchanges between China and Southwest Asia, as well as Europe. Historically, it was a vital passage on the ancient Silk Road leading to India, Central Asia, West Asia, and onward to Europe.

1.1.2 Karasu. Corresponding to Tajikistan's Kulma Port, Karasu is a year-round road port open between China and Tajikistan. It is situated in Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, Kashgar Prefecture, on the Pamir Plateau, at an elevation of 4 368 m.

1.1.3 Irkeshtam. Corresponding to Kyrgyzstan's Irkeshtam Port, this is a year-round open road port between China and Kyrgyzstan, and is one of Xinjiang's six designated entry ports for imported fruits. The port is now situated about 3 km west of Wuqia County seat in Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, located in the frontal mountain zone of the Pamir Plateau at roughly 2 000 m above sea level. Historically a key passage for friendly interactions between China and Central Asian nations, Irkeshtam also served as an important staging post along the ancient Silk Road.

1.1.4 Turugart. Corresponding to Kyrgyzstan's Turugart Port, this year-round open road port between China and Kyrgyzstan is designated to become the railway gateway for the future China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway. The port is now located in Tuoyun Township, Wuqia County, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, lying in the valley flanked by Akhtag Mountain to the north and Tuopatag Mountain to the south, at an elevation of 2 010 m. In history, it was a staging post along the Silk Road during the Han Dynasty.

1.1.5 Bedel. This port corresponds to Kyrgyzstan's Bedel Port. It is a China-Kyrgyzstan road port that was established as a temporarily open port in 2024 and will become a year-round open port after 2027. It is located at Boundary Marker No. 6 at Bedel Pass, Wushi County, Aksu Prefecture, in the Bedel Valley of the Kokshal-Tau Range in the Tianshan Mountains, at an altitude of 2 754 m. It serves as a shortcut and strategic gateway from Aksu Prefecture to Central Asia and has historically been one of the foreign trade ports in southern Xinjiang since ancient times.

1.2 Land ports in northern Xinjiang

1.2.1 Muzart. This port corresponds to Kazakhstan's Narynkol Road Port. It is a China-Kazakhstan road port that has not yet been officially opened for operation. Located 109 km southwest of Zhaosu County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, it sits in the upper reaches of the Tekes River at the northern foot of the Tianshan Mountains, at an elevation of approximately 1 806 m. It serves as an important westward opening passage for Ili Prefecture and is one of the most convenient land routes from the southern part of northern Xinjiang to Central Asia.

1.2.2 Dulata. Corresponding to Kazakhstan's Kolzhat Port, Dulata is a year-round road port open between China and Kazakhstan. It is located in the central part of the southern section of Aixinsheli Town, Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture. The port lies on the northern slopes of the Wusun Mountains and along the south bank of the Ili River, at an elevation of 750 m. In history, Dulata has been a key corridor for non-official trade with the western regions.

1.2.3 Khorgos. This port corresponds to Kazakhstan's Khorgos Port. It is a year-round open China-Kazakhstan combined railway-road port, and one of the six designated ports in Xinjiang for the

import of fruits. Located in Khorgos City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, on the east bank of the Khorgos River, it has an elevation of 635 m. The port hosts the Khorgos Economic Development Zone, the Khorgos zone of the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone, and the Khorgos Comprehensive Bonded Zone. It is known as the "Golden Port" of the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt, and as far back as the Sui and Tang dynasties, it served as an important post station on the northern route of the ancient Silk Road.

1.2.4 Alataw Pass (Alashankou). This port corresponds to Kazakhstan's Druzhba Port. It is a year-round open China-Kazakhstan combined railway-road port, and one of the six designated ports in Xinjiang for the import of fruits. Located in Alashankou City, Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, it sits in the Alataw Pass between the Alatau Mountains and the Barluk Mountains, at an elevation ranging from 190 to 340 m. The port hosts the Alashankou Comprehensive Bonded Zone and serves as a core corridor for China-Europe railway express services. It is the western bridgehead of the New Eurasian Continental Bridge and a key land route for western China's opening-up to Central Asia and Europe.

1.2.5 Baketu. This port corresponds to Kazakhstan's Bakhty Port. It is a year-round open China-Kazakhstan road port, located in the southwestern part of Tacheng City, Tacheng Prefecture, on the western edge of the Tacheng Basin, at an elevation of 460 – 480 m. It is the road port closest to Urumqi and has a trading history of 200 years, serving as a major transportation route from western China to Central Asia and Europe.

1.2.6 Aheitu Bieke. This port corresponds to Kazakhstan's Alenshevka Port. It is a China-Kazakhstan road port that has not yet been officially opened for operation. It is located in the western part of Habahe County, Altay Prefecture, on the east bank of the Alakbek River, a tributary of the Irtysh River. It sits at the terminal point of National Highway G331 (Dandong-Altay Highway), which spans six provinces (autonomous regions) across northeastern, northern, and northwestern China, at an elevation of approximately 650 m.

1.2.7 Jeminay. Corresponding to Kazakhstan's Maykapchagay Port, Jeminay is a year-round road port open between China and Kazakhstan. Situated in Jeminay County within Altay Prefecture, the port lies at the convergence of the borders of China, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia, on the southern slopes of the Altai Mountains, at roughly 770 m above sea level. With a trading history spanning over a century, Jeminay remains a key international trade corridor from China to Central Asia and Europe.

1.2.8 Hongshanzui. This port corresponds to Mongolia's Dayan Port. It is a seasonally open China-Mongolia road port, located in Fuhai County, Altay Prefecture, amid the lofty mountains of the central Altai Range, at an altitude of 1 800 m. In history, it served as a trade route between China and Mongolia.

1.2.9 Takeshken. This port corresponds to Mongolia's Bulgan Port. It is a year-round open China-Mongolia road port, located in Takeshken Town, Qinghe County, Altay Prefecture, on the north-

ern bank of the Bulgan River, at an elevation of 1 180 m. It is China's primary road port for importing coking coal from Mongolia and an important node on the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor.

1.2.10 Wulastai. Corresponding to Mongolia's Bayan Tag Port, Wulastai is now a year-round open road port between China and Mongolia. It is located in Qitai County, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, within the Beitashan (Bayan Tag) area, at an elevation of roughly 2 000 m. As the nearest land port to the Urumqi-Changji region (comprising Urumqi City and Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture), Wulastai has a historical legacy as a rest stop along an ancient commercial route.

1.3 Land ports in eastern Xinjiang Laoyemiao Port. This port corresponds to Mongolia's Bulgastai Port. It is a year-round open China-Mongolia road port, located in Santanghu Town, Balikun Kazakh Autonomous County, Hami City, in a transitional zone between desert steppe and mountainous terrain, at an elevation of 995.9 m. It serves as an important pivot point on the northern corridor of the Silk Road Economic Belt core area.

1.4 Aviation ports in Xinjiang

1.4.1 Urumqi Aviation Port. This port is a regular international aviation port in Urumqi, located at Diwopu, Xinshi District, Urumqi City, and operating under Urumqi Tianshan International Airport. It is currently one of the six designated ports in Xinjiang for the import of fruits. Serving as China's aviation hub to Central and West Asia, Africa, and Europe, it is the largest airport in Xinjiang. The port hosts the Urumqi zone of the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone and the Urumqi Comprehensive Bonded Zone.

1.4.2 Kashgar Aviation Port. This port is a regular international aviation port in Kashgar Prefecture, located north of Kashgar City, Kashgar Prefecture, and operating under Kashgar Laining International Airport. It is currently one of the six designated ports in Xinjiang for the import of fruits. It is the second largest airport in Xinjiang and hosts the Kashgar zone of the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone and the Kashgar Comprehensive Bonded Zone.

1.4.3 Yining Aviation Port. This port is a regular international aviation port for Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture. It is located in Yining City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, and operates under Yili Yining International Airport. It is the third largest airport in Xinjiang, and has injected strong momentum into the expansion of air routes toward Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe.

2 National foreign trade bases

2.1 National Bases for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading

The National Bases for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading are platforms established by the Ministry of Commerce of China to stabilize the scale and optimize the structure of foreign trade. These bases are specifically selected from export-oriented industrial clusters that exhibit prominent industrial advantages, distinctive regional characteristics, and outstanding innovation-driven development, with the aim of promoting foreign trade transformation and upgrading while ensuring the stability of indus-

trial and supply chains. Since 2020, the Ministry of Commerce has accredited a total of 567 such bases nationwide through assessment, covering eight major industries: agricultural products, textiles and garments, pharmaceuticals, new materials, specialty chemicals, light industrial and craft products, mechanical and electrical products, and mechanical and electrical equipment.

The existing National Bases for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region include: Urumqi National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (canned fruits and vegetables), Korla Economic and Technological Development Zone National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (textiles and garments), Kashgar Economic Development Zone National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (garments), Luopu County, Hotan Prefecture National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (hair products), Urumqi High-tech Industrial Development Zone National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (new materials), and Changji City National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (electrical equipment).

The existing National Bases for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading under the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) include: the 2nd Division National Base (vegetables); the 9th Division National Base (vegetables); the 6th Division National Base (tomatoes); the 10th Division Beitun City National Base (specialty agricultural products); the 6th Division National Base (feed additives); the 8th Division National Base (textiles); the 3rd Division Tumshuk City National Base (textiles and garments); the 1st Division Aral Economic and Technological Development Zone National Base (textiles and garments); and the 8th Division Shihezi City National Base (specialty chemicals).

Those that did not pass the assessment include: the 8th Division Shihezi City National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (agricultural products); the Kashgar Economic Development Zone National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (garments); the Ili (Jiangsu) Textile and Garment Industrial Park National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (textiles and garments); and the Bole Border Economic Cooperation Zone National Base for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading (electronic industry).

2.2 Bases for High-Quality Development of Agricultural International Trade Accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Bases for High-Quality Development of Agricultural International Trade represent leading enterprises in the export of agricultural products. Between 2021 and 2023, a total of 337 bases received this accreditation, while another 28 were incorporated into the corresponding management framework. These bases span a wide range of product categories, including vegetables, fruits, aquatic products, tea, and livestock and poultry products, and are located across various provinces and municipalities nationwide. They are widely regarded as the "frontrunners" in China's agricultural foreign trade.

Xinjiang currently has 9 Bases for High-Quality Development

of Agricultural International Trade: Aksu Hengtong Juice Co., Ltd.; Xinjiang Fufeng Biotechnology Co., Ltd.; Xinjiang Guannong Fruit & Grignum Co., Ltd.; the consortium of Xinjiang Light Industry International Investment Co., Ltd.; Xinjiang Jindian Premium Food Co., Ltd.; Tacheng Yongli Trading Co., Ltd.; Chenguang Biotechnology Group Shache Co., Ltd.; COFCO Tunhe Emin Tomato Products Co., Ltd.; and Xinjiang Beijiang Fruit and Vegetable Industry Development Co., Ltd.

3 Border counties in southern Xinjiang

3.1 Hotan Prefecture Situated in the southern part of Xinjiang, Hotan Prefecture is bounded by the Kunlun Mountains to the south, which separate it from the Tibet Autonomous Region, and by the Karakoram Mountains to the southwest, where it adjoins the Kashmir region under the de facto administration of India and Pakistan. The prefecture has a border length of 210 km. Its border counties include He'an and Hekang, and the relevant XPCC border regimental farms in this area include the 14th Division Pishan Farm (Kunquan Town), among others.

3.1.1 He'an County. Established on December 27, 2024, this county was created by splitting off the southern part of the former Hotan County, and administers two towns: Hongliu Town and Tianshuihai Town.

Its core functions: (i) Supporting the construction and operation of the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway. He'an County serves as the starting core area of the Xinjiang section of the railway. The main railway line runs through the entire county, with key stations including Tianshuihai Station (at an elevation of 5 080 m, one of the highest on the entire line) and Dahuangliutan Station. The establishment of this county is intended to provide a localized administrative entity to undertake responsibilities for this national megaproject, including land acquisition coordination, logistical support, and engineering operation and maintenance.

(ii) Strengthening high-altitude border governance and control. Located on the front line of Sino-Indian border disputes and control, it has a border line of 143 km, with an average elevation of 5 300 m, characterized by extremely harsh natural conditions. Following the establishment of the new county-level administrative unit, the governance focus has been shifted forward to the border front line, addressing the problems of excessive administrative radius and slow response that the former Hotan County faced in managing the high-cold mountainous areas, thereby improving border control efficiency and emergency response capabilities.

(iii) Promoting mineral resource development and the cultivation of specialized industries. A total of 46 types of minerals, including lithium, lead, zinc, beryllium, and silver, have been proven within the county. Among these, the Kangxiwa-Hongliutan area is estimated to contain 1.6 million t of lithium oxide resources, and the Huoshaoyun metallogenic belt has proven lead-zinc metal reserves exceeding 23.4 million t (ranking sixth globally). He'an County is accelerating the implementation of mining projects and, at the same time, planning a "3 + N" industrial sys-

tem that includes plateau tourism and specialty agriculture and animal husbandry, with the goal of building itself into a "mining border town".

He'an County is located in the heart of the Karakoram Mountains, with an average elevation of 5 300 m. It is covered with snow year-round, has a cold climate with large diurnal temperature variations, and experiences strong winds throughout much of the year. The ecological conditions here are approaching the limits for plant growth.

The former Hotan County has a number of geographical indication products, including Hotan thin-skinned walnuts, Hotan jujubes, Hotan Cistanche, and Hotan carpets, as well as geographical indication trademarks such as Hotan thin-skinned walnuts, Hotan melons, Hotan grapes, Hotan pomegranates, Hotan jade dates (Registration No. : 7711765, 7871448), Hotan Cistanche, Hotan roses, Hotan mutton, and Hotan carpets. However, with the exception of Hotan carpets, the protection scope of these geographical indications generally does not extend to He'an County.

3.1.2 Hekang County. Established on December 27, 2024, Hekang County was formed by separating the southern portion of the former Pishan County. It currently administers four township-level divisions: Kunling Town (formerly known as Xaitula Town), Jiliang Town, Kank'er Kirghiz Ethnic Township, and Nao'abati Tajik Ethnic Township.

Its primary functions are as follows: (i) Supporting the construction and operation of the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway. Hekang County constitutes the core coverage area of the middle section of the railway's Xinjiang segment, with the main line traversing the entire county and incorporating critical nodes such as Kangxiwa Station and Quanshuihu Jie Station. Within the county lie the longest tunnel of the entire line (about 12 km) and multiple key control projects at icy mountain passes (referred to locally as daban), positioning it as the primary Xinjiang front for railway construction. The county government's core responsibilities encompass project coordination, strategic material transshipment, ecological conservation, and emergency response, thereby providing proximate administrative support for the railway project.

(ii) Strengthening border governance and national defense security. Located in the central part of the Karakoram Mountains, adjacent to the disputed Sino-Indian border area, the county borders the Indian-controlled Kashmir region to the south of the county boundary, holding significant military strategic importance. Within the county are red landmarks such as the Kangxiwa Martyrs' Cemetery (a national-level memorial facility for martyrs) and the Site of the Xaitula Ancient Post (a national key cultural relic protection unit), serving as an important vehicle for carrying forward the "Karakoram Spirit". As a key border governance county, it undertakes tasks including border control and border patrols (with a county boundary line of 28 km).

(iii) Facilitating resource exploitation and the development of specialty industries. The county boasts substantial mineral wealth, with proven reserves including 3.106 8 million t of lead-

zinc ores and 2 071 t of jade, alongside estimated resources of 25 million t of bauxite and 7.57 million t of quartz. Recent discoveries have also identified lithium and additional quartz deposits. Taking advantage of the G219 National Highway running through the county (which handles an annual traffic volume of 15 million passenger trips) the county has developed four distinctive tourism corridors: the "Kunlun Wonderland · Ice and Snow Romance" highland scenic route; the "Millennium Imprint · Mysterious Sangzhu" ancient passage heritage trail; the "National Highway · Red Frontier" cultural integration route; and the "Heroic Martyrs · Border Defense Spirit" frontier tribute trail. Priority sectors include green mining, new construction materials, cultural tourism and wellness, educational study tours, and outdoor adventure activities.

Hekang County is located in the central part of the Karakoram Mountains, with an average elevation of 3 700 m. It has a plateau frigid climate and features two major rivers: the Karakash River and the Akhta River.

The former Pishan County has geographical indication products such as Hotan jujubes, Hotan carpets, Hotan Cistanche, Piyalma sweet pomegranates, and Keliyang snow chrysanthemum. It also holds geographical indication trademarks including Hotan melons, Hotan grapes, Hotan pomegranates, Hotan jade dates (registration No. : 7711765, 7871448), Hotan Cistanche, Hotan roses, Hotan mutton, and Hotan carpets. However, with the exception of Hotan carpets, the protection scope of these geographical indications generally does not extend to Hekang County.

3.2 Kashgar Prefecture Situated in southwestern Xinjiang, Kashgar Prefecture shares borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan to the southwest and Tajikistan to the west, with a total boundary line of 896 km. Historically a key node of the ancient Silk Road, the prefecture now lies at the heart of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and hosts an operational border trade market between China and Pakistan. Its border counties include Cenling County and Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, while the relevant XPCC border regimental farms in this area include the 3rd Division Yecheng Second Ranch (Xinghua Town), among others.

3.2.1 Cenling County. Established on March 26, 2026, this county was created by splitting off the former Xihexiu Township of Yecheng County. It currently administers four towns: Xinhua Town, Baoyu Town, Yongkang Town, and Yuye Town.

Its core functions: (i) Strengthening administrative governance capacity. Cenling County serves as a key connection area for the Xinjiang section of the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway, undertaking functions such as front-end engineering coordination, material transshipment, and border passage control, thereby achieving a closed-loop governance model of "full-line county management and segment-by-segment responsibility" and forming an administrative entity that extends to the border. The county is only about 50 km south of the China-Pakistan border. Following its establishment, it has integrated multiple departmental forces including border defense, public security, transportation, and emergency response to

build an integrated prevention and control system combining "railway security + border control + emergency rescue", thereby improving national defense delivery efficiency (railway delivery time reduced from 2–3 d to within 12 h) and strengthening border control capabilities. The former Xihexiu Township suffered from an excessive administrative radius (the township government was 160 km from Yecheng). The county's establishment has moved the county-level government seat forward to Xinhua Town, directly serving the border front, addressing the "last kilometer" governance challenge, filling the governance gap, and achieving an administrative center shift forward.

(ii) Activating the endogenous driving force for industrial development. Leveraging the convergence advantages of the G219 Xinjiang-Tibet Highway and the future Xinjiang-Tibet Railway, the county plans to construct a railway logistics park and a cross-border trade distribution center to support the in-depth development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and actively develop cross-border logistics and border trade industries. It aims to develop high-altitude specialty agriculture and animal husbandry (such as Yecheng walnuts) using glacial meltwater, exploit clean energy sources such as wind and solar power, and build an eco-tourism brand. By integrating world-class natural resources including the Kelaqing River Valley and the northern slope of K2, it will promote high-end adventure, scientific expedition, and photographic tourism, thereby cultivating plateau specialty industries. As a new member of the Kashgar Special Economic Zone's radiating belt, the county will undertake industrial relocation, connect with South Asian markets, develop export-oriented processing and cross-border e-commerce, and promote the extension of the Silk Road Economic Belt core area development to greater depth, forming a "frontier-hinterland" linkage pattern.

(iii) Enhancing the well-being of border residents. Shorten the radius of public services, promote the simultaneous construction of educational, medical, cultural, and sports facilities, and enhance the sense of gain and happiness among the Kyrgyz, Tajik, and other ethnic minority populations. Through affordable housing (civil servant communities, teacher apartments, etc.) and industrial employment opportunities, attract talent to settle down, form a long-term mechanism of "population guarding the border and industry stabilizing the border", and promote population agglomeration and the well-being of residents in work and life.

Cenling County is a vital corridor linking Central and South Asia and a critical hub along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Positioned at the eastern edge of the Pamir Plateau and the northern foothills of the Karakoram Mountains, the county lies in a valley flanked by the Kunlun Mountains to the north and the Karakoram Mountains to the south. This typical high-altitude border region is characterized by extreme oxygen deficiency and harsh conditions, with an average altitude of over 4 000 m and treacherous passes including Kudi Daban and Mazar Daban. The county is also the headwater of the Yarkand River, the third largest river in Xinjiang in terms of annual discharge and revered as the "mother

river" of Kashgar Prefecture.

The former Yecheng County is home to a range of geographical indication (GI) products, including Yecheng walnuts, Yengisar Samaiti apricots, and dried Yengisar Samaiti apricots, along with GI trademarks such as Yecheng walnuts, Kashgar walnuts, Kashgar almonds, Kashgar melons, Kashgar jujubes, Kashgar prunes, Kashgar sweet apricots, Kashgar grapes, Kashgar pomegranates, Kashgar fennel, and Kashgar mutton. Nevertheless, with the exception of these designations, the GI protection scope for these products generally does not cover Cenling County (which was formerly Xihexiu Township of Yecheng County).

3.2.2 Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County. Situated in the southeastern Pamir Plateau, at the convergence of the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Alay mountain ranges, the county is characterized by an expanse of snow-clad peaks and rugged ravines, with an average elevation exceeding 4 000 m. It boasts Qogir (K2), the second highest mountain in the world at 8 611 m. The topography descends from southwest to northeast and encompasses mountains, valleys, basins, and hills. The county is drained by several rivers, including the Tashkurgan, Taheman, Waqia, and Kuleqing, and is endowed with abundant surface water, hydropower, geothermal, and solar energy resources. The climate is classified as plateau alpine arid to semi-arid.

Tashkurgan County has leveraged its unique plateau resources to develop a distinctive path for modern agriculture and animal husbandry. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes snow plateau cultivation such as sea buckthorn, plateau snow chrysanthemum, maca (*Lepidium meynii* Walp), high-altitude Chinese medicinal herbs (*Saussurea involucreata*, *Viola tianschanica*, *Arnebia euchroma*, etc.), and facility agriculture (plateau apricots, cherries, figs, cherry tomatoes, etc.). Plateau animal husbandry includes Pamir yaks, Tashkurgan sheep, and plateau chickens. Plateau cold-water aquaculture includes rainbow trout, golden trout, Chinese sturgeon, and salmon. The only geographical indication product is Pamir Glacier Mineral Water. Geographical indication trademarks include Kashgar almonds, Kashgar walnuts, Kashgar melons, Kashgar jujubes, Kashgar prunes, Kashgar sweet apricots, Kashgar grapes, Kashgar pomegranates, Kashgar fennel, and Kashgar mutton.

3.3 Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture and Caohu City

Situated in southwestern Xinjiang, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture extends across the southwestern Tianshan Mountains, the eastern Pamir Plateau, the northern slopes of the Kunlun Mountains, and the northwestern margin of the Tarim Basin. It shares borders with Kyrgyzstan to the north and Tajikistan to the west, with a total boundary length of 1 195 km. The prefecture's border administrative divisions include all four of its constituent counties and cities (Akto County, Wuqia County, Artux City, and Akqi County) as well as the Xinjiang-administered county-level city of Caohu. Relevant border regimental farms in this area include the XPCC 3rd Division Tuoyun Ranch (Xingbian Town), among others.

3.3.1 Kizilsu Prefecture. Taking advantage of its distinctive geography and climate, Kizilsu Prefecture has adopted a development approach centered on "securing grain production, optimizing cotton cultivation, strengthening fruit growing, revitalizing livestock farming, and promoting specialized industries", thereby converting its resource endowment into economic competitiveness and fostering a range of market-oriented specialty industries. Key agricultural specialties include livestock such as Pamir yaks, Kirghiz sheep, and Simmental cattle. In Artux City, prominent products include Karakus melons, figs, Munage grapes, red willows, and Jiangyue donkeys, along with high-end seafood (grouper, oysters, prawns, *etc.*). Akto County features crystal melons, Baren apricots, cold-water fish (rainbow trout, golden trout, sturgeon, high whitefish, *etc.*), and large-water fishery products (whitebait, trout, high whitefish, taimen, *etc.*). Akqi County is known for sea buckthorn, while Wuqia County produces highland barley, shiitake mushrooms, and oyster mushrooms. The geographical indication product in the area is Jiashi melon, and GI trademarks include Akto Baren apricots, Artux figs, Artux Munage grapes, Wuqia Awei mushrooms, Wuqia snow chrysanthemum, Wuqia yak, and Wuqia sheep.

3.3.2 Caohu City. Designated as a county-level city under the direct administration of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Caohu City was established on April 17, 2026. It was formed by carving out a portion of the former Tumshuk City, with its core territory built upon the 41st Regiment (Caohu Town) of the XPCC 3rd Division. The city government is seated in Caohu Town.

The establishment of Caohu City signifies a transition from township-level to city-level governance, which is expected to catalyze new developments in infrastructure, industrial restructuring, and population dynamics. It also represents a key initiative to advance urbanization in southern Xinjiang and to foster balanced regional development.

Caohu City is located at the convergence of Akto County (Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture) and Kashgar City, Shule County, and Shufu County (all in Kashgar Prefecture). Positioned on the northern bank of the middle Tarim River and on the fringe of the Taklamakan Desert, the area benefits from a temperate climate, productive soils, and plentiful water supplies. It is endowed with substantial ecological assets, most notably approximately 104 700 ha of pristine *Populus euphratica* forests, which have earned it the designation "Shangri-La in the Desert". These conditions make it highly suitable for growing cotton, rice, and various fruits.

Caohu City's economic development is driven primarily by facility agriculture and textile manufacturing. As one of the early military reclamation bases established by the XPCC, the city preserves the historical heritage symbolized by the "First Plow of Military Reclamation". The XPCC Caohu Industrial Park, which spans 10 km², accommodates the textile industry cluster within the Kashgar Economic Development Zone.

The city has formed a new industrial pattern integrating agri-

culture and tourism, centered on the three pillars of "specialty fruits, facility vegetables, and suburban tourism". Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes traditional cultivation of apples, jujubes, walnuts, prunes, cherries, grapes, peaches, and pears; facility agriculture such as off-season vegetables, cherry tomatoes, eggplants, watermelons, strawberries, horned melons (snake melons), and dragon fruit; livestock farming including beef cattle and sheep; and aquaculture such as cold-water fish, crabs, and crayfish.

3.4 Aksu Prefecture This prefecture is located at the southern foot of the Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang and on the northern edge of the Tarim Basin. Its northwestern border is delineated by the central ridge of the Tianshan Mountains, adjacent to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, with a border line of 263.8 km. Its border counties include Wushi County and Wensu County, and also involve the county-level city, Aral City, directly administered by Xinjiang. Among them, the border regimental farms include the XPCC 1st Division 4th Regiment (Yongning Town), among others.

3.4.1 Wushi County. It features a mountainous periphery enclosing a central valley. The terrain comprises 59.9% mountain areas, 27.6% Gobi desert, and only 12.5% valley plains. The county's highest elevation is Zatkeli Peak at 5 153 m, while the average elevation stands at 1 396 m. The climate is classified as warm continental semi-arid, with annual precipitation in the valley plains ranging between 70 and 120 mm.

Wushi County's agriculture exhibits distinct characteristics of diversified and clustered development, forming an integrated development pattern of "quality grain and cotton as the foundation, specialty fruits as the pillar, livestock breeding for energy storage, ecological aquaculture adding color, and sideline economies weaving the fabric". The county has established an agricultural, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery industrial system centered on specialty fruits, modern livestock, cold-water fish, and characteristic cultivation, embarking on a path of industrial revitalization. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of wheat, corn, cotton, walnuts, sea buckthorn, tomatoes, peppers, cowpeas, konjac, sugar beets, and stevia; animal husbandry such as Dorper sheep, high-end beef cattle, pheasants, and guinea fowl; and aquaculture of cold-water fish (salmon, sturgeon, rainbow trout, golden trout, *etc.*). Geographical indication products include Aksu walnuts. Geographical indication trademarks include Wushi chickpeas, Aksu walnuts, fresh Aksu walnuts, Aksu jujubes (registration No.: 5098712, 5015105), Aksu apples, and Wushi sea buckthorn.

3.4.2 Wensu County. The terrain is high in the north and low in the south, with mountainous areas in the north accounting for 56.67% and plains in the south accounting for 43.33%. To the north stand 15 giant peaks over 6 000 m, with the highest peak in the Tianshan Mountains, Tomur Peak, reaching 7 443.8 m above sea level. In the south, there are two plains: the alluvial plain of the Kumalak River and the Toxkan River in the west, and the pluvial plain of the Tailan River and the Karayulgun River in the

east. The county has a typical continental climate with four distinct seasons, and an average annual precipitation of 65.4 mm.

Wensu County benefits from an optimal combination of water, soil, light, and thermal resources, which underpins an oasis-based agricultural system dominated by fruit cultivation and supported by high-quality grain production. Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as rice, cotton, walnuts, jujubes, air-dried apricots, sea buckthorn, and black fungus (note: sea buckthorn appears twice in the original); livestock farming involving mutton sheep, beef cattle, dairy cattle, camel milk, and black-boned chickens; cold-water aquaculture (sturgeon, salmon, giant salamander, golden trout, *etc.*); and integrated rice-crayfish systems featuring the Australian red-claw crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*). The county's geographical indication products include Wensu rice, Aksu walnuts, Aksu jujubes, and Aksu apples, while GI trademarks cover Wensu rice, Aksu walnuts, fresh Aksu walnuts, Aksu jujubes (registration No.: 5098712 and 5015105), and Aksu apples.

4 Border counties in northern Xinjiang

The border counties in northern Xinjiang involve the counties directly under Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, Tacheng Prefecture, Altay Prefecture, and Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, as well as the county-level cities directly administered by the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, including Kokdala City, Shuanghe City, Baiyang City, Huyanghe City (the 137th Regiment Awusqi Pastoral Area of the 7th Division), Beitun City, and Wujiacqu City (the 6th Division Qitai Farm and Beitashan Ranch).

4.1 Counties directly under Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture and Kokdala City The counties directly under the prefecture and the Xinjiang-administered county-level city Kokdala City are located in the western part of Xinjiang, on the western side of the Ili River Valley, bordering Kazakhstan, with a border line of 464.1 km. It was a hub on the ancient Silk Road. The border counties include Zhaosu County, Kokdala City, Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County, and Khorgos City. Among them, the border regimental farms include the XPCC 4th Division 61st Regiment, 62nd Regiment, 63rd Regiment (Yushuzhuang Town), 67th Regiment (Jintun Town), 74th Regiment, 76th Regiment, and 77th Regiment, among others.

4.1.1 Zhaosu County. Relying on its unique ecological resources and brand advantages such as "China's Heavenly Horse Town," Zhaosu County has established a distinctive modern industrial system across agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, and sideline (cultural tourism) sectors. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of potatoes, rapeseed, edible fungi, and Chinese medicinal herbs (including *Arnebia euchroma*, *Astragalus*, peony, fritillary, *Codonopsis*, licorice, *etc.*); livestock farming such as cattle, sheep, horses, and honey; and aquaculture of cold-water fish (salmon, golden trout, rainbow trout, *etc.*). Geographical indication products include Zhaosu potatoes,

Zhaosu rapeseed, Zhaosu garlic, and Zhaosu Heavenly Horses. Geographical indication trademarks include Zhaosu potatoes, Ili lavender, Ili apples, Ili horses, Ili chickens, and Ili honey.

4.1.2 Kokdala City. The city has pursued a modern agricultural development strategy centered on "securing grain production, optimizing fruit cultivation, strengthening livestock farming, and promoting specialty industries". As the XPCC's largest base for grain and oil production, a national-level corn seed production hub, and the acclaimed "Hometown of Spices in China", and "Hometown of Ice Wine in China", Kokdala boasts a diverse agricultural portfolio. Key specialties include field crops and orchard products such as corn, potatoes, lavender, apples, grapes, peaches, apricots, prunes, plumcots, cherries, and peppers; livestock operations involving beef cattle, military reclamation mutton sheep, and meat ducks; and integrated rice-crayfish farming systems. GI trademarks in the area include Ili apples, Ili lavender, Ili horses, Ili chickens, and Ili honey.

4.1.3 Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County. Guided by the development strategy of "stabilizing grain production, optimizing fruit cultivation, strengthening livestock farming, and promoting fishery", the county has embarked on an efficient and green path of modern agricultural development. Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as rice, corn, wheat, yellowhorn (*Xanthoceras sorbifolium*), crabapple, honeycrisp apples, prunes, and sugar beets; livestock production covering beef cattle, mutton sheep, pigs, horses, camels, peacocks, deer, and chickens; and aquaculture operations including cold-water fish and integrated rice-aquaculture systems (Australian red-claw crayfish, Pacific white shrimp *Penaeus vannamei*). GI trademarks in the area include Qapqal rice, Ili apples, Ili lavender, Ili horses, Ili chickens, and Ili honey.

4.1.4 Khorgos City. Leveraging its port advantages and the aid resources from Jiangsu Province, the city is making every effort to build an export-oriented and modern specialty agricultural industrial system. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of Mohur grapes, flat peaches, dried apricots on trees, and soilless cultivation of tomatoes; livestock farming such as white-feathered broilers, ducks, and geese; and aquaculture such as crabs and cold-water fish (including *Diptychus dybowskii*). Geographical indication trademarks include Ili apples, Ili lavender, Ili horses, Ili chickens, and Ili honey.

4.2 Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture Situated on the northwestern frontier of Xinjiang, Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture shares a 372-km border with Kazakhstan to the west. It is a vital nexus linking domestic and international passages along the "Central Corridor" of the Silk Road Economic Belt, and serves as a key hub for import and export cargo transit. The second Eurasian Continental Bridge traverses the entire prefecture. The prefecture's border administrative divisions include Wenquan County, Bole City, and Alashankou City, as well as the Xinjiang-administered county-level city of Shuanghe. Relevant border regimental farms in this area include the XPCC 5th Division's 84th

(Shiyu Town), 86th (Bohe Town), 87th, 88th, and 89th (Youyi Town) Regiments, among others.

4.2.1 Wenquan County. The county features "one cow, one fish, one mushroom, and one grain" as its distinctive products, with cultural tourism and wellness as the core link, forming an integrated development pattern of "promoting agriculture through tourism and boosting tourism through agriculture". Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of edible sunflowers, seed-use squash, apricots, apples, Red Globe grapes, sugar beets, perilla, and edible fungi (morels, matsutake, *etc.*); livestock farming such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, and beef cattle (duplicate); aquaculture such as high whitefish, salmon, caviar, and Pacific white shrimp. Geographical indication products include Bole Red Globe grapes.

4.2.2 Bole City. Guided by the development strategy of "securing grain production, optimizing cotton cultivation, boosting livestock farming, strengthening fruit growing, and promoting specialty industries", the city has established an industrial framework characterized by "cotton in the east, grain in the west, suburban specialties, and integrated crop-livestock systems". Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as corn, cotton, grapes, greenhouse-grown produce (strawberries, figs, *etc.*), and crabapples; livestock operations involving beef cattle, mutton sheep, and specialty breeds (sika deer, golden pheasants, peacocks, *etc.*); aquaculture of cold-water fish (high whitefish, salmon, *etc.*); and ecological recycling models such as "lotus-shrimp symbiosis" and integrated "shrimp-vegetable-fruit" systems. GI products in the area feature Bole Red Globe grapes.

4.2.3 Alashankou City. Capitalizing on its strategic position as a national logistics hub, Alashankou City has cultivated an export-oriented industrial system driven by "local processing of imported resources" and "consolidation and distribution of exported agricultural products". Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as Red Globe grapes, yellowhorn, cotton, and greenhouse-grown produce (mint, *etc.*); aquaculture operations producing crayfish, tilapia, land-based "seafood" (largemouth bass, *etc.*), and brine shrimp; and processing sectors handling imported grains and oilseeds (wheat, sunflower seeds, flaxseeds, *etc.*), timber, meat, and live animals. GI products in the area feature Bole Red Globe grapes.

4.3 Tacheng Prefecture and Baiyang City Located in the northwestern part of Xinjiang, this prefecture spans the northwest of the Junggar Basin and the western mountainous areas. It borders Kazakhstan to the northwest, with a border line of 540.6 km. It serves as the "Junggar Gateway" and the "Central Asia Trade Corridor" for China to connect with Russia and various Central Asian countries. The border counties include Toli County, Yumin County, Tacheng City, Emin County, and Hoboksar Mongol Autonomous County, and also involve the Xinjiang-administered county-level cities, namely, Baiyang City and Huyanghe City. Among them, the border regimental farms include the XPCC 9th Division Baiyang City's 161st Regiment (Xiaobaiyang Town),

162nd Regiment, 163rd Regiment (Fuxing Town), 164th Regiment (Jinyu Town), 165th Regiment (Jinxiu Town), 166th Regiment, and 167th Regiment; as well as the 7th Division Huyanghe City's 137th Regiment Awusqi Pastoral Area, and the 10th Division Beitun City's 184th Regiment, among others.

4.3.1 Toli County. By empowering development with science and technology and adopting a whole-industry-chain approach, the county has systematically established a new, diversified, and large-scale pattern of specialty industries. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of chickpeas, black wheat, potatoes, edible sunflowers, flax, sunflowers, apples, sea buckthorn, safflower, and alfalfa; livestock farming such as cattle, sheep, camels, and ducks; and aquaculture such as crabs, crayfish, and carp. Geographical indication products include Tacheng Bashibai sheep.

4.3.2 Yumin County. Guided by the strategic focus on "one flower (thornless safflower) and one sheep (Bashibai sheep)", Yumin County has established a well-defined agricultural industrial system. Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as thornless safflower, wheat, corn, prunes, black chokeberry, sea buckthorn, fritillary, and snow lotus; and livestock production featuring Bashibai sheep. GI products in the area include Yumin thornless safflower and Tacheng Bashibai sheep, while GI trademarks cover Yumin thornless safflower and Yumin Bashibai sheep (registration No. : 5373503 and 5373504).

4.3.3 Tacheng City. The city exhibits a development pattern characterized by "grain as the foundation, with multiple sectors progressing in parallel". While maintaining a robust traditional agricultural and livestock base, Tacheng has also broken new ground in modern animal husbandry, specialty crop cultivation, and smart agriculture. Key agricultural specialties include field crops such as corn, wheat, cotton, seed-use squash, apples, strawberries, blackcurrants, high-acid crabapples, sugar beets, edible sunflowers, safflower, and medicinal cucumbers; livestock operations covering beef cattle, mutton sheep, black donkeys, donkey milk, and Australian ostriches; and aquaculture producing pike perch and largemouth bass. GI products in the area feature Tacheng Bashibai sheep.

4.3.4 Emin County. The county is a typical large agricultural and livestock county, displaying the distinctive characteristics of "stabilizing grain, strengthening livestock, and achieving breakthroughs in specialty industries". Its grain and livestock sectors have prominent scale advantages, while specialty industries such as edible fungi, sea buckthorn, and flying geese are becoming new growth engines. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of wheat, corn, seed watermelon (seed-use watermelon), seed-use squash, edible sunflowers, black wheat, sea buckthorn, raspberries, sugar beets, tomatoes, pumpkins, and edible fungi; livestock farming such as beef cattle, sheep, camels, camel milk, laying hens, and turkeys; and aquaculture such as carp and grass carp. Geographical indication products include Tacheng Bashibai sheep. Geographical indication trademarks include Emin

Yemule white sheep.

4.3.5 Hoboksar Mongol Autonomous County. The county is characterized by "organic agriculture leading, specialty animal husbandry breaking through, and coordinated development of ecological fruit forestry and intangible-cultural-heritage-related sideline industries". Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of cotton, seed-use squash, sunflowers, Yulu fragrant pears, sea buckthorn, and fresh-eating apples; livestock farming such as beef cattle, cashmere goats, chickens, and ostriches; and conventional aquaculture in reservoirs such as Yushigai Reservoir. Geographical indication products include Tacheng Bashibai sheep.

4.3.6 Baiyang City. Designated as a county-level city under the direct administration of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Baiyang City was established on April 28, 2023. Its territory is mainly derived from the 163rd Regiment (Fuxing Town) of the XPCC 9th Division, and the city government is seated in Fuxing Town.

The city's agricultural land includes 68 000 ha of cultivated area, 234 700 ha of natural pastures, and 14 000 fruit and vegetable greenhouses. Major agricultural outputs include wheat, corn, sugar beets, and tomatoes for processing, with an annual livestock population of about 1 million head. Baiyang thus ranks as a key Xinjiang production base for grain, sugar, meat, and fruit and vegetable exports.

As a port city on the northern corridor of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, Baiyang City is the only XPCC city built immediately adjacent to a port. It is endowed with a range of policy and industrial platforms, including the Tacheng Key Development and Opening-up Pilot Zone (9th Division area), the Baketu Economic and Technological Development Zone, a national-level demonstration base for foreign trade transformation and upgrading, and a pilot zone for processing imported goods from border trade. These advantages position Baiyang City as a frontier gateway for China's westward opening and international connectivity, holding a uniquely significant geographical role.

According to the *Announcement on the Adjustment of the Administrative Divisions of Baiyang City* issued on April 17, 2026, with the approval of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, portions of the administrative areas of Tacheng City, Emin County, Toli County, and Yumin County in Tacheng Prefecture have been placed under the jurisdiction of Baiyang City.

The city is the largest domestic production base for early-maturing corn seeds. It has also built a multi-dimensional industrial network spanning modern animal husbandry, ecological fruit forestry, specialty breeding, and smart fisheries. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of corn seeds, sea buckthorn, safflower, flat peaches, apples, sugar beets, tomatoes, and facility agriculture (figs, kiwifruit, sugarcane, *etc.*); livestock farming such as beef cattle, mutton sheep, and lion-headed geese; and aquaculture such as industrialized farming of Pacific white shrimp. Geographical indication products include

Tacheng Bashibai sheep.

4.4 Altay Prefecture Located in northern Xinjiang, at the southwestern foot of the central section of the Altai Mountains and the northern part of the Junggar Basin, it connects with Kazakhstan and Russia to the northwest, and borders Mongolia to the northeast. The China-Kazakhstan border line is 396 km, the China-Russia border line is 54 km, and the China-Mongolia border line is 747 km, with a total border line of 1 197 km. It is the only region in northwestern China that borders Russia, and serves as an important node on the northern corridor of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Xinjiang's participation in the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor. Its border counties include all seven counties and cities in the region (Jeminay County, Habahe County, Burqin County, Altay City, Fuhai County, Fuyun County, and Qinghe County), as well as the Xinjiang-administered county-level city-Beitun City. Among them, the border regimental farms include the XPCC 10th Division's 181st Regiment, 183rd Regiment (Shuangqu Town), 185th Regiment, and 186th Regiment, among others.

The prefecture encompasses a variety of landforms, including mountains, hills, plains, and deserts. Situated deep within the Eurasian continent at a high latitude, it experiences a typical temperate continental cold climate, with mean annual precipitation in the plains between 131 and 223 mm. Recognized as a relatively water-abundant region in Xinjiang, it is often referred to as the "water tower" of northern Xinjiang. The prefecture is drained by three major river systems (the Irtysh, the Ulungur, and the Jeminay mountain streams) and is home to lakes including Ulungur Lake, Kanas Lake, and Jili Lake.

The prefecture is leveraging its pristine and unique natural endowments to develop an advantageous industrial matrix with "ecology, organic production, and specialty features" as its core competitiveness. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of white wheat, edible sunflowers, blackcurrants, and Chinese medicinal herbs (sea buckthorn, apocynum, licorice, wolfberry, lingonberry, *etc.*); livestock farming such as Altay sheep, camels, beef cattle, and horses; and aquaculture such as pike, Siberian roach, pike perch, lake roach, silver crucian carp, bream, pond smelt, carp, silver carp, bighead carp, grass carp, pikeperch, crayfish, and taimen. Geographical indication products include Kanas soybeans, Dingshan edible sunflowers, Kanas honey melons, Altay large-fruit sea buckthorn, Altay sheep, Hemu honey, and Altay pike. Geographical indication trademarks include Jeminay spring wheat and Altay sheep.

4.5 Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture Situated at the northern foothills of the Tianshan Mountains and the southeastern margin of the Junggar Basin, the prefecture shares a 227.3-km border with Mongolia to the northeast. It constitutes a key passage for the opening-up of the Urumqi-Changji region (comprising Urumqi City and Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture). Its border counties include Qitai and Mulei Kazakh Autonomous County, as well as the Xinjiang-administered county-level city of Wujiaqu.

Relevant border regimental farms in this area include the XPCC Qitai Farm and Beitashan Ranch, *etc.*

4.5.1 Qitai County. The county's topography is characterized by high terrain in the north and south and low terrain in the center. The southern mountainous and hilly zone, situated in the Bogda Mountains of the eastern Tianshan range, ranges in elevation from 1 100 to 4 356 m. The central plain, part of the Tianshan alluvial plain, lies at elevations between 650 and 1 100 m. The northern desert and Gobi zone has elevations of 506 to 1 100 m. The county experiences a temperate continental semi-desert arid climate, with a mean annual precipitation of 269.4 mm.

Qitai County is an important agricultural county in Xinjiang. On the basis of stabilizing grain production, it is promoting the development of the entire agricultural industry chain by building a modern agricultural system supported by multiple pillars, mainly covering five sectors: high-quality grain and oil, specialty cultivation, premium fruit, modern animal husbandry, and agricultural product processing and trade logistics. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of wheat, corn, potatoes, hazelnuts, seed watermelon, apples, peaches, crabapples, pumpkins, peppers, and Chinese medicinal herbs (*Cistanche*, *Cynomorium*); and livestock farming such as pigs, sheep, and chickens. Geographical indication products include Qitai white potato, Gucheng wine, and Qitai Sipingtou peppers. Geographical indication trademarks include Qitai steamed buns, Qitai potatoes, Qitai flour, Qitai dried noodles, Qitai starch noodles, Qitai buckwheat noodles, Qitai crabapples, Qitai pork, Qitai beef, Qitai mutton, and Qitai native chickens.

4.5.2 Mulei Kazakh Autonomous County. Located at the northern foot of the eastern Tianshan Mountains and the southeastern edge of the Junggar Basin, the county features the Bogda Mountains in the south with elevations ranging from 2 500 to 5 000 m, the Beitashan Mountains and the larger and smaller Haptik Mountains in the north with elevations from 1 500 to 2 000 m, and the Mengluoke and Qingjülü Mountains in the east with elevations from 1 500 to 2 000 m. In the center lies the Huojinghuangqixin Desert with elevations from 700 to 1 000 m, forming a half-basin terrain that is high in the south, north, and east, and low in the center. The mountain ranges gradually descend from west to east, while the basin slopes from east to west. Geomorphologically, it can be divided into four distinct units: mountains, hills, plains, and deserts. It is situated in the temperate desert zone of northern Xinjiang, with a distinctly arid continental climate and an average annual precipitation of 294.9 mm.

Relying on its unique geographical climate and natural resources, the county has formed a closed-loop entire industrial chain of "specialty cultivation + high-quality breeding + deep processing + integration of agriculture and tourism", systematically transforming its resource advantages into "industries that enrich the people". Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of wheat, white peas, chickpeas, potatoes, yellowhorn, apples, dragon fruit, and raspberries; livestock farming such as

sheep, long-eyebrowed camels, sika deer, camels, and black-boned chickens. Geographical indication products include Mulei chickpeas and Mulei mutton.

5 Border counties in Hami City, eastern Xinjiang

Situated in eastern Xinjiang and stretching across the eastern Tianshan Mountains, Hami City shares borders with Mongolia to the north and northeast, with a total boundary length of 587.6 km. It constitutes a key area for Xinjiang's border trade with Mongolia. The border administrative divisions in eastern Xinjiang encompass all three county-level units of Hami City—Balikun Kazakh Autonomous County, Yiwu County, and Yizhou District—as well as the Xinjiang-administered county-level city of Xinxing. Relevant border regimental farms in this area include the XPCC 13th Division's Hongshan Farm, Naomaohu Farm, and Hongxing Fourth Farm's Luoyi Town, among others. The city experiences a temperate continental arid climate; however, due to the topographic influence of the Tianshan Mountains, climatic conditions vary considerably across the region. In general, the southern area is dry and hot with minimal precipitation, while the northern area is cooler and receives somewhat more rainfall.

Hami City is pursuing a path of high-quality development by deeply cultivating local specialties, relying on scientific and technological innovation, and continuously extending the industrial chain. Centered around the three key words of "specialty, quality, and innovation", it has built an efficient and synergistic modern agricultural industrial cluster. Its specialty advantageous agriculture includes cultivation of Hami melons, cotton, traditional superior fruits (jujubes, grapes, apricots, *etc.*), emerging high-value fruits (prunes, figs, nectarines, cherries, dragon fruit, *etc.*), pigment peppers, and medicinal herbs (*Isatis* root, licorice, mugwort, *etc.*); livestock farming such as cattle, sheep, and camel milk; and aquaculture such as cold-water fish (rainbow trout, sturgeon, salmon, Chinese sturgeon, *etc.*) and land-based farmed seafood (Pacific white shrimp, largemouth bass, *etc.*). Geographical indication products include Hami melons, Hami jujubes, and Hami mutton. Geographical indication trademarks include Hami melons, Hami jujubes, and Toksun black sheep.

6 Major problems in Xinjiang's Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People

6.1 Insufficient infrastructure development at open ports

The operation of open ports in Xinjiang is constrained by inadequate infrastructure. The Muzart and Aheitu Bieke road ports remain unopened for official operation, while the Bedel port was established only as a temporary facility in 2024 and will not achieve year-round status until after 2027. The China-Pakistan Railway and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway are still under construction, meaning that the Khunjerab and Turugart ports will only become combined rail-road gateways in the future. Moreover, the Irkeshtam and Turugart ports have been relocated to new sites and still require further facility upgrades. Across the region, all ports

also need to accelerate the deployment of smart port technologies and intelligent customs clearance systems.

6.2 Limited number of agricultural national foreign trade bases

There are 15 National Bases for Foreign Trade Transformation and Upgrading in Xinjiang accredited by the Ministry of Commerce, of which 6 are in the agricultural product category and 6 in the textile and garment category. Among these, the number of agricultural national foreign trade bases related to border counties is relatively small, with only the 9th Division National Base (vegetables) and the 10th Division Beitun City National Base (specialty agricultural products) falling into this category. Xinjiang has 9 Bases for High-Quality Development of Agricultural International Trade, of which only Aksu Hengtong Juice Co., Ltd., COFCO Tunhe Emin Tomato Products Co., Ltd., Tacheng Yongli Trading Co., Ltd., and Xinjiang Beijiang Fruit and Vegetable Industry Development Co., Ltd. are related to border counties. Their registered locations are respectively in the border counties of Wensu County, Bole City, Tacheng City, and Emin County.

6.3 Insufficient development of the port economic belt The development of a comprehensive economic system that facilitates the circulation of domestic and international resource factors through port hubs is insufficient. Improvements are still needed in multiple areas, including infrastructure, trade services, and industrial collaboration. The synergistic model of "port + hub + corridor + platform + industry" requires further development. The dual-wheel drive of "port + industry" has not been effectively promoted. Except for Khorghos City and Alashankou City, the rate of local processing of imported goods in the other 33 border counties remains to be improved. Xinjiang as a whole also needs to implement the "Port Economy +" strategy to promote foreign trade growth.

6.4 Weak infrastructure and inadequate social public service systems in the five newly established counties and cities

The five newly established counties and cities, namely, He'an County, Hekang County, Cenling County, Caohu City, and Baiyang City, suffer from lagging infrastructure development and a low level of urbanization. Their county-level social public service systems, including education, healthcare, public health, culture, sports, social security, employment and income distribution, ecological environmental protection, market supervision, public facilities, and digital services, are still inadequate. The modern agricultural industrial system, production system, and management system are also underdeveloped. It is necessary to promote the optimization of the agricultural industrial structure and the integration of primary, secondary, and tertiary industries, adopt technological equipment support and green and efficient production methods, and foster the cultivation of new business entities and the development of socialized service mechanisms. He'an County, Hekang County, and Cenling County also need to support the construction and operation of the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway.

6.5 Limited scale of facility agriculture Although recent years have witnessed some progress in facility agriculture across

Xinjiang's border counties, including protected cultivation of vegetables, edible mushrooms, and medicinal plants; intensive livestock operations for cattle, sheep, chickens, and ducks; and controlled-environment aquaculture for cold-water fish and land-based seafood, the overall scale of such operations remains relatively small.

6.6 Development of comprehensive agriculture in border counties needs to be adapted to local conditions

The agricultural environments and resources in Xinjiang's border counties vary considerably, ranging from high-altitude, extremely cold conditions where the ecological environment approaches the limits for plant growth, to arid desert environments. It is necessary to develop new quality productive forces according to local conditions, so as to promote the high-quality development of distinctive and advantageous agricultural, forestry, animal husbandry, sideline, and fishery industries, especially the geographical indication industry.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Strengthening the development of high-quality open ports and building a "Belt and Road" transportation hub center

Efforts should focus on strengthening the infrastructure development of the Muzart road port, the Aheitu Bieke road port, and the Bedel port, as well as accelerating the construction of the China-Pakistan Railway, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway, and the Xinjiang-Tibet Railway. Meanwhile, support should be provided for upgrading and renovating the infrastructure of all ports, deepening the development of smart ports and intelligent customs clearance systems, exploring the construction of new types of intelligent cross-border transport corridors such as autonomous driving, enhancing the transport support capacity of international logistics corridors, and building a "Belt and Road" transportation hub center.

7.2 Strengthening the cultivation of agricultural foreign trade bases to drive the upgrading of export-oriented agricultural economy

Priority should be given to reinforcing the national foreign trade transformation and upgrading bases for agricultural products, such as the 9th Division vegetable base and the 10th Division Beitun City specialty agricultural products base, while also advancing the development of agricultural international trade high-quality development bases, including Aksu Hengtong Juice Co., Ltd., COFCO Tunhe Emin Tomato Products Co., Ltd., Tacheng Yongli Trading Co., Ltd., and Xinjiang Beijiang Fruit and Vegetable Industry Development Co., Ltd. These efforts are intended to invigorate and upgrade the export-oriented agricultural economy.

7.3 Developing the port economic belt to promote the external circulation of the agricultural economy

In conjunction with the development of agricultural national foreign trade transformation and upgrading bases, agricultural international trade high-quality development bases, and high-quality open ports, various border trade models for agricultural products should be promoted, including general trade, bonded logistics, processing trade, and

"border trade + local processing", so as to stabilize the industrial and supply chains of agricultural services. The "Port Economy + " strategy should be implemented to accelerate the transition toward "industrial hubs" and effectively drive the growth of regional agricultural product foreign trade. A new pattern of coordinated development featuring "port + hinterland" and "port + industrial park" should be established, facilitating the transformation of "economic corridors" into "corridor economies" and "transit economies" into "localized economies", thereby promoting the external circulation of the agricultural economy.

7.4 Developing the five newly established counties and cities to consolidate border foundations and ensure border livelihoods Efforts should be made to comprehensively develop the five newly established administrative units (He'an County, Hekang County, Cenling County, Caohu City, and Baiyang City) with a focus on infrastructure development and the establishment of social public service systems. This includes promoting quality early childhood education, excellent schooling, fair remuneration, quality healthcare, elderly care, livable housing, and support for the vulnerable. These measures are intended to advance the Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People, with the consolidation of the sense of community for the Chinese nation as the overarching theme, thereby strengthening border foundations and ensuring border livelihoods.

7.5 Scaling up facility agriculture to promote the development of new quality productive forces in agriculture It is essential to upgrade agricultural water supply infrastructure, expand protected cultivation of vegetables, edible mushrooms, and fruits in border counties, scale up intensive livestock production systems, and develop recirculating aquaculture systems (both open-loop and closed-loop) with particular emphasis on cold-water fish and land-based seafood. These actions will advance facility agriculture, smart farming, and integrated industrial development, thereby stimulating the emergence of new quality productive forces in the agricultural sector.

7.6 Developing comprehensive agriculture in border counties according to local conditions and strengthening the Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People Based on natural resources, agricultural geographical environments, and other factors, efforts should be made to develop distinctive and advantageous comprehensive agriculture according to local conditions, with particular emphasis on geographical indication crop cultivation, animal husbandry, and aquaculture. It is also essential to promote the deep application of cutting-edge technologies such as biotechnology, digital technology, and intelligent equipment in agriculture and rural areas, so as to develop new quality productive forces in agriculture. In combination with national foreign trade bases and port economic belts, efforts should also be made to build a new development pattern in which the domestic

economic cycle is the mainstay and the domestic and international cycles reinforce each other, thereby strengthening the Action of Prospering the Border and Enriching the People.

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