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Insights | 'Foreign special envoy' marvels at 'sweet miracle' in Chinese village

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By Gan Tian

(ECNS) -- "A new chapter of life: Songxi style, foreign special envoy, rural revitalization, spiritual enrichment."

Several months ago, Australian Sinologist Roland Boer shared these reflections on social media after learning of how century-old sugarcane cultivation had been transformed into fortune-making sugarcane industry in Songxi, a county in Fujian Province nestled along the Songxi River at the foot of Zhanlu Mountain.



Roland Boer conducts research in Wanqian Village, Songxi County, Fujian Province. (Photo provided by the interviewee)

At that time, Boer has left Beijing, where he had worked for many years, and moved to Fujian Province. He was hired by the Development and Reform Bureau of Songxi County as a "foreign special envoy." His research approach, in his own words, was "cycling, camping, visiting, surveying, communicating, pondering, and writing."

When he first arrived in Songxi, spring was at its peak. The Australian professor in his sixties often rode a bicycle with a tent, wandering through streets and alleys or deep into the mountains to explore rural life in northern Fujian Province. Fluent in Chinese, he quickly adapted to local life, joining villagers for "tea talks."

As he cycled farther and made more Chinese friends, Boer came to understand that this "very distinctive place"—Songxi had experienced a remarkable journey from hardship to sweetness.

In a recent interview with China News Network, Boer noted that Songxi County, especially Wanqian Village, had once been underdeveloped but had undergone a remarkable transformation.

According to Boer, many years ago, Wanqian Village was a "village with nothing"—"no road to get out of the village, no bridge to cross the river and no way to become prosperous." Although the village is home to century-old sugarcane varieties whose perennial root systems have survived for nearly 300 years, this rare resource remained largely overlooked for a long time.

With the advancement of comprehensive rural revitalization, the "code" to unlock the sugarcane's wealth-generating potential was finally cracked.

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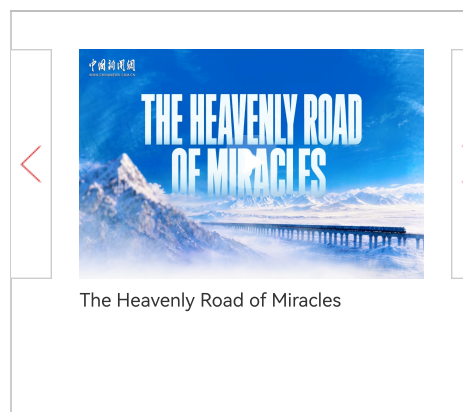
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Boer mentioned that in recent years, villagers in Wanqian Village have actively engaged in industrial development, using sugarcane as raw material to "make distinctive brown sugars, brew century-old sugarcane fruit wine, and conduct scientific research on its medicinal value." The sugarcane has gradually become "key to prosperity of this area around."

Public data shows that Songxi County now has over 2,000 mu (about 1.33 square kilometers) of century-old sugarcane plantations, forming a large-scale cultivation system with Wanqian Village as its core and surrounding areas as an extension. The once-impoverished county ultimately shed its poverty label and embarked on a "sweet road to prosperity."



The spring scene in Songxi County, Fujian Province. (Photo provided by the interviewee)

Witnessing this transformation, Boer couldn't help but praise it as "a place where a 'miracle' arises" during his third camping trip to Wanqian Village.

How did this small village create such a big "miracle"?

In Boer's view, on one hand, new quality productive forces have empowered "high-quality development of the new rural collective economy," profoundly reshaping China's rural economic landscape.

On the other hand, during his field visits, Boer noticed that "it is quite noticeable the way in which the grassroots of the Communist Party of China (CPC) works. People work diligently, and the capable are placed in positions of responsibility."

"The party branches integrated with the local population, Party secretaries are trusted by everyone in the villages where they work or the districts where they work," said the professor.

The year 2026 marks the 105th anniversary of the CPC . Over the past 105 years, the CPC has grown from small to large and from weak to strong, continuously advancing practices such as democratic centralism. Today, the CPC has over 100 million members. And it has been able to "bring together all of China's population", as Boer has noticed.

In his view, the CPC advocates correct perspective on governance, formulates and implements rules such as the Central Eight-point Regulation, deepens its understanding of self-reform, improving and innovating Marxist theory, which all offer lessons for other countries and political parties.

The story of Songxi County's rejuvenation with century-old sugarcane can be viewed as a vivid "microcosm" of China's development of new quality productive forces and high-quality growth under the CPC's leadership, and opened a special window into understanding a real, multidimensional, and vibrant China.

As spring yields to summer, and all things flourish. Abundant and prosperous, people live a rich life. Over "tea talks" with people in Songxi County and through contemplation and writing in the

countryside, Boer looks forward to another "sweet harvest" later this year.

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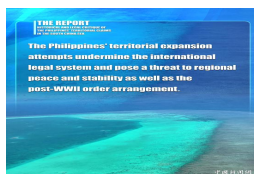
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