

From city life to rural roots

A young college graduate trades city life for pig farming, using digital skills to share authentic rural stories, boost local sales, and inspire new forms of entrepreneurship.

By GUI QIAN and LIU KUN in Wuhan

When 26-year-old Sun Shuangshuang carries a 40-kilogram bag of cornmeal to the pigsty in her small village in Yingshan county, Hubei, it's hard to believe she once worked in a sleek office in Wuhan, the provincial capital.

Today, she's a "pig-farming influencer" and a rural entrepreneur, blending business with a bit of farmyard charm.

Sun runs her own pig farm while managing the Douyin account "Black Pig Run Run", where her 626,000 followers get a glimpse into her unconventional life.

From the hustle of city offices to the mud-filled reality of pigsties, Sun represents a new idealism among young people today — grounding herself in the land and using innovation to empower local villagers.

In 2021, Sun graduated from Hubei University of Economics with a degree in internet and new media. When asked if returning to rural farming was a waste of her education, she laughed and said, "There are so many choices in life. It's time to shed the long robe of Kong Yiji", a reference to breaking free from the outdated scholar's mantle.

For Sun, using her professional knowledge to open markets and promote rural values is the true purpose of her education.

Her social media presence plays a significant role in selling products. Her first viral video — showing her sweeping the roof of a pigsty with a broom while a group of black pigs gathered around — garnered 2 million likes on Douyin and earned her 200,000 followers in a single day.

The hashtag "college student pig farmer" draws attention for its unusual contrast, but what truly captivates the audience is the authentic, down-to-earth rural life depicted in her videos.

"People love watching us share snippets of daily life, like gardening, cooking, and carrying feed," Sun said, noting that many of her followers — especially young people — long for this "leisurely and free" lifestyle.

"Some people leave comments saying they admire my courage for doing what they wouldn't dare try themselves," she said.

The impact is more than just online. In her weekly half-hour livestreams, Sun can sell two pigs weighing 300 kilograms each. Before the 2023 Spring Festival, 30 black pigs were sold to customers across the country.

Support that matters

The path of entrepreneurship hasn't always been smooth. In July 2023, an outbreak of swine fever devastated Sun's pig farm. "At that time, I really felt like giving up and returning to the city to get a job," she recalled.

But just when things seemed most difficult, help arrived. Yingshan's technology and agriculture bureaus sent experts to provide on-site guidance for disease control and recovery. The head of the local e-commerce association helped improve logistics, and the county government pledged 1 million yuan to support the construction of a new farm.

"They told me it's not easy for a young person to return to the countryside," Sun said.

It was this hands-on support that convinced her to fully commit to rural life.



Top and above right: Sun Shuangshuang feeds pigs on her farm in Yingshan, Hubei province. **Above left:** Sun (right) distributes revenue from livestream sales to local villagers. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



I don't like the fast-paced, highly competitive lifestyle of big cities. I prefer life in the countryside. There's more physical work, yes — but it's mentally calming and brings me peace of mind."

Sun Shuangshuang, 26, a rural entrepreneur in Yingshan, Hubei

The new pig farm is currently under development, featuring three modern pigsties with a capacity for 1,200 pigs, along with mechanized feeding equipment. "We used to be small-scale, scattered farmers," Sun said. "Now it's time for a scientific upgrade."

She's also pleased that the county's e-commerce industrial park has reduced logistics costs, making nationwide shipping 30 percent cheaper than before.

Sun uses her growing influence to help others as well. Every two weeks, she hosts a livestream to promote and sell local products — dried beans, rapeseed oil, wild chrysanthemums, and more.

One chicken farmer, nicknamed Little Ming from a neighboring county, saw his egg orders multiply after Sun featured him in her videos. So far, she has helped more than 50 households sell over 50,000 yuan worth of homemade goods.

"At first, they didn't believe I could sell dried vegetables to people outside the village," Sun recalled. "But when I handed them the money, their happiness was infectious."

Sun's desire to help others is deeply rooted in her childhood. Raised by her grandparents as a left-behind child, she remembers how they "always thought of others, yet lived frugally themselves." Later, she was able to attend university thanks to scholarships, which gave her a deeper appreciation for the power of support.

So when she saw elderly villagers with high-quality agricultural products but struggling to sell them, she felt she had to step in.

"The countryside doesn't lack people who can grow crops or raise livestock," she said. "What it lacks are people who know how to sell those products."

When asked what it means to return to the countryside to start a business, Sun's answer is refreshingly simple: "Just to stay and live in the countryside."

She recalls her days in the city — living on takeout, constantly busy, sometimes not even having time for a bathroom break, until the stress eventually made her seriously ill. Since moving back to the rural area, she grows her own vegetables, cooks her meals, gets regular exercise through farm work, and has learned many hands-on life skills.

"I don't like the fast-paced, highly competitive lifestyle of big cities. I prefer life in the countryside. There's more physical work, yes — but it's mentally calming and brings me peace of mind," she explained. "Everything I do now is essentially so I can continue living here."

Contact the writers at guiqian@i21st.cn

Young doctor brings hope to isolated villagers

By MENG WENJIE and LI YINGQING in Kunming

In the remote town of Yangla, nestled over 3,000 meters above sea level in the mountains of Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, 32-year-old doctor Nasheng is dedicated to providing healthcare to more than 5,400 villagers.

Nasheng graduated in Tibetan medicine from Qinghai University in Qinghai province. Her passion for the field was ignited not only by a childhood fascination with traditional healing but also by the healthcare challenges faced by her fellow villagers.

"I saw how difficult it was for my family to access medical treatment in inland areas — long journeys, language barriers, and cultural differences made it even harder," she said, noting that many elderly villagers speak only Tibetan.

When she arrived at the Yangla town health center in September 2021, she was struck by the isolation of the area. Although her hometown of Yunling is in the same county, getting to Yangla takes a grueling seven- to eight-hour drive.

"I have to cross Baima Snow Mountain and follow a winding path along the Jinsha River," she recalled.

Her accommodation is a modest

room inside the inpatient ward. "Other than a barbecue restaurant, there are no other entertainment options in town," she said. "But despite the challenges, I've never thought of giving up."

As a young doctor at the health center, Nasheng has gained invaluable hands-on experience with each patient she treats.

She clearly remembers her first patient — an elderly man with severely deformed joints — for whom she performed her first joint injection under her mentor's guidance.

"That moment made me realize just how much I still needed to learn in order to truly help people," she said.

Expanding access to care

Although Yangla town has a small population, its villages are spread across more than 1,000 square kilometers, often requiring several hours of travel by car to reach each one.

To improve access to healthcare, the center organizes mobile free clinics in different villages every month, supported by a dedicated team of over 20 staff members.

On her first mobile clinic visit, Nasheng and her team traveled five hours by car to reach a remote village. "We ran into a mudslide along the way and ended up carrying all the medical supplies over the mountain on foot," she recalled.

During one of these clinics, Nash-



Nasheng poses for a photo in front of the Yangla town health center in Yangla, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Yunnan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

eng treated an elderly patient with acupuncture. After the session, the patient expressed a desire for continued care, saying, "It's hard to get treatment again."

This experience made Nasheng aware that even though the village had a health station, many elderly residents still struggled to reach it due to the area's vastness. "What if there were another station here?" she wondered.

After submitting a proposal, and with support from the local government, a basic health station was established in June 2022.

"Now the service station has moved into a new building, and a village doctor is seeing patients there," Nasheng said.

Throughout her practice, Nasheng has noticed that most of the residents she treats are middle-aged or elderly. Living at high altitude, they often carry heavy loads downhill, which can lead to health issues such as rheumatism, frozen shoulder, and joint pain.

"Herbal baths can help ease some of the pain, but we didn't have the proper facilities before," Nasheng said.

After discussing the need with the health center director, a room for herbal baths was set up in 2023, expanding the range of treatment options available to local villagers.

In addition to treating patients, Nasheng continues to advance her medical skills. In 2024, she pursued further training at the Tibetan Tra-

ditional Hospital in the Xizang autonomous region, where she specialized in therapies such as bloodletting and Tibetan stick therapy — a method that involves tapping painful areas or acupuncture points with a special stick to relieve discomfort.

"Bloodletting is effective for conditions like gout and varicose veins, while stick therapy can help with frozen shoulder and nodules," she explained.

During her time in Yangla, Nasheng has built a strong connection with the locals. One moment that stood out was when an 80-year-old villager gave her some loquats as a gift.

"Fruit is scarce here — I've only ever seen apples and walnuts," Nasheng said. "She had picked them from a town at a lower altitude, knowing we rarely get a break or the chance to buy things from outside."

During last year's Spring Festival, villagers invited the medical team, who were still on duty, to join their celebrations. "We gathered around the stove, dancing to music — it was the most authentic Tibetan-style feast," Nasheng said with a smile.

Looking ahead, she hopes to continue her studies. "I want to pursue a master's degree and learn more about acupuncture techniques," she said. "But no matter what, I'll always come back — this is my home."

Contact the writers at mengwenjie@i21st.cn