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# Apps, roads swiftly move vegetables

Technology and infrastructure make logistics of selling fresh produce an efficient process

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Vegetable dealers in Shouguang, in East China's Shandong province, are now finding it more convenient to do business, thanks to the rapid development of technology and infrastructure.

Wang Changshuai, a vegetable trader, and his employees were selling vegetables recently at the trading hall of Shouguang Dali Agricultural Products Logistics Park — China's largest vegetable distribution hub. The park has an annual transaction volume of 4 million metric tons of vegetables.

Behind them, there were two 30-ton cargo trucks fully loaded with cabbages, carrots and peppers. It took about 20 hours for them to be transported from East China's Fujian province — about 1,600 kilometers to the south, where a rich variety of vegetables is grown in winter.

"The expressway network is convenient. More importantly, the special vehicles that are registered to transport fresh vegetables can go through the non-toll green passages," Wang said.

Usually, he sells out 30-60 tons of vegetables every day.

A buyer named Fu Tingrun bought 1,000 kilograms of peppers. Every day, Fu sends 20 tons of various vegetables from Shouguang to Qinhuang-



Visitors look at vegetables during a recent agricultural product expo in Weifang, in East China's Shandong province.  
ZHAO YUGUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

dao in North China's Hebei province.

They put their debit cards on the scale and the payment was done.

Wang, 41, has been in the vegetable business for 25 years. "Things have changed greatly. In the past, we had to pay with cash. I had to take cash to buy the vegetables at the planting areas," Wang said.

"Nowadays, we have better roads, more vehicles and a convenient cold chain. We get more information online," he said.

"However, the competition is becoming more severe," he added, saying that there are more vegetable wholesale markets around the coun-

try and the price for vegetables is becoming cheaper.

Wang's comments were echoed by Guo Mingqian, assistant to the general manager of the logistics park.

Shouguang's history as a national level vegetable wholesale market can be traced back to 1984. Vegetables were transported from other places to the market and it kept expanding.

The logistics park now covers an area of 1,685 mu (1.12 square kilometers) and the vegetables are distributed to almost all the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, Guo said.

"We can feel the impact of the

booming markets around the country," she said. "One example is more vegetables are transported directly to Beijing without transferring here in Shouguang."

Approved by the Ministry of Commerce, it created China's first market index on agricultural products. Since April 20, 2011, the vegetable index has been released at 10 am every day.

By collecting and analyzing the price, volume and value of 223 vegetable varieties transacted in the park, the index reflects the trend of the entire vegetable market and offers valuable information for planters, dealers and government institutions.

## Keeping pace with logistics advances

To ensure blockchain technology's healthy development, China expedites technical standards and guidance

By **JING SHUIYU**  
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When his daughter persuaded him to buy a black lightweight suit online, Kan Jianfeng, 61, cautious dad that he is, raised a host of sharp questions: Is the seller honest? How could he make sure that the product he buys would actually be delivered (and not swapped with a counterfeit, or, worse, not delivered at all)?

Kan's nagging doubts arose because uncertainty sometimes shrouds online shopping, with e-tailers rigging positive ratings, exaggerating the products' quality and messing up on deliveries.

To overcome such hassles, blockchain technology will likely be used increasingly in China.

Once recorded in a blockchain-based digital ledger or register, data cannot be altered, experts said. It can be shared among a distributed network of computers with no need

for middlemen (visualize transactions between two parties without banks in between). Decentralization is its hallmark.

Bettina Warburg, the founder and director of Blockchain Futures Lab, said in a talk: "It's basically a public registry of who owns what and who transacts what."

Despite being controversial, if cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin are receiving a benefit of doubt from certain sections of the financial markets, it is because they use blockchain technology. Its most-talked-about applications are in finance.

Chinese companies are, however, looking to use blockchain beyond finance in areas such as food traceability and charitable works.

Layla Dong, CEO and founder of Blockshine, a Shanghai-based blockchain consultancy, said: "In China, e-commerce giant Alibaba's logistics branch got a head start. It applied blockchain to track the origin and

destination of every package, and all the information is transparent to the clients involved."

Yuan Peizhang, product manager with Beijing Chilun Yichuang Technology Co, said: "For traditional logistics firms, missing or inconsistent delivery information remains the most difficult problem to solve. Blockchain, if it comes to its full fruition, will make the faking of information harder for anyone."

According to Chinese research firm CCID Consulting Co, blockchain services in China are projected to reach 81 million yuan (\$12.8 million) in sales by this year-end, and 512 million yuan by 2020. The figure in 2015, according to the report, was "almost zero".

E-commerce company JD, in partnership with Wal-Mart Stores and Tsinghua University, launched a blockchain alliance in China to test the technology for food traceability and transparency.

Chai Yueting, professor of Tsinghua University's Department of Automation, said: "Blockchain tech's integration into food safety is one of the most important ways to improve the life quality of the Chinese and even global peoples."

"If some application scenarios already have good decentralized solutions, and blockchain neither lowers the cost nor improves efficiency, then there is no need to insist on using it," said Zhong Xinlong, a consultant at CCID Consulting.

To ensure blockchain's healthy development, China is expediting technical standards and guidance. The country's first official guidance, a document titled The Blockchain Technology and Application Development Whitepaper, was published in 2016 by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Tencent Holdings has been exploring blockchain-based applications in various scenarios, but the technology

is still in its infancy, said Pony Ma Huateng, chairman of the company best known for its app WeChat.

A possible application could be verification of bills and documents, said Ma.

A key to healthy development of the blockchain technology is to draw social attention away from digital currencies, Ma said.

His comments came as regulators around the world look to effectively regulate cryptocurrencies, which pose potential risks like money laundering and tax evasion.

Blockchain is just the technology behind digital currencies, and the technology per se has no problem, said Ding Lei, a member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

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