

Ningbo Companies on the Global Stage

Cixing: Weaving a Strong Global Network

By Jin Lu

Visitors at the intelligent demonstration factory of Ningbo Cixing Co., Ltd. were recently captivated by a cutting-edge innovation: a fully automated flat knitting machine, capable of seamless knitting and powered by industrial internet technology. Suspended above the machine, spools of yarn fed into the needle grooves below, where the needles worked with remarkable speed. In just 30 minutes, the machine produced a stylish knitted sweater.

Cixing, maker of textile manufacture equipment, is a national sector champion of manufacturing and a pilot demonstration enterprise for intelligent manufacturing designated by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. The company is a leading producer of computerized flat knitting machinery. According to the China Textile Machinery Association, in the past few years, Cixing secured the top global market share in computerized flat knitting machines, with 21% in 2020 and 2021, and 25% in 2022.

Innovative Knitting Technology Impresses Visitors

"This new computerized flat knitting machine is the result of a decade of development and was our 'star product' last year," said Li Lijun, Vice General Manager of Cixing. "Compared to traditional equipment, it eliminates the need for multiple sewing steps, cutting production time by over 20%." Li further explained that the machine's embedded computer controls the cut, pattern, and size of the clothing, allowing designers' ideas or customer customization needs to be realized with ease through Cixing's independently developed intelligent patterning software.



Ningbo Cixing Co., Ltd.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

"Since last year, Cixing has accelerated innovation and expanded aggressively into both domestic and international markets, resulting in impressive sales of computerized flat knitting machines," Li added. The company now serves customers in nearly 30 countries and regions, with more than 10,000 clients in China alone.

Strengthening critical technology research and rapidly adopting intelligent manufacturing have proven to be Cixing's secret recipe to success in new markets. In recent years, the company has significantly increased its investment in innovation, ramping up research and development efforts and building a team of nearly 260 R&D professionals. To cater to the equipment upgrade needs of many small and medium-sized sweater companies, Cixing developed a high-cost-performance computerized flat knitting machine.

A major customer from Tongxiang, Zhejiang, who was at the company to pick up a shipment in person, placed an order for 500 of Cixing's new

machines after evaluating the cost-benefit ratio. "One operator can manage 16 of these new machines, and for every four machines, we save one sewing worker," he said. "This not only reduces labor costs but also boosts efficiency, with the equipment cost recoverable within two years." He added that with fewer skilled workers returning each year and the relatively long cycle of training new employees, upgrading equipment has become essential.

Homegrown Equipment Gains Nationwide Traction

Cixing is positioning itself not merely as an equipment manufacturer but as a provider of comprehensive digital knitting solutions. The company integrates hardware, such as computerized flat knitting machines, into full-scale digital factory solutions, helping customers enhance quality and efficiency while enabling flexible, customized, and high-value-added production models that

prioritize small-scale runs and rapid turnaround times. "Cixing aims to lead the industry by developing a flexible supply chain in knitting and accelerating the shift towards service-oriented manufacturing," said Sun Pingfan, the company's chairman.

In recent years, Cixing has collaborated with downstream clients to speed up the development of "cloud factories," which allow for regional and distributed sweater production, reducing inventory, shortening production cycles, and boosting efficiency. Simultaneously, the company has formed strategic partnerships with upstream yarn manufacturers to strengthen the market competitiveness of its flexible supply chain. By partnering with prominent e-commerce companies, Cixing has successfully broadened its sales channels and increased the volume of orders from clients.

After years of expanding its market presence, Cixing has garnered a significant following in the global knitting industry. The company has offices in Bangladesh and Turkey and

representatives in Italy and Argentina, creating a robust international network for market promotion, technical training, and product maintenance.

"Wherever our products are sold, we provide a full suite of online and in-person aftersales services," said Sun. He highlighted that in Bangladesh alone, Cixing has deployed nearly 50 technical service personnel who have trained over 3,000 skilled operators and management professionals in the use of computerized flat knitting machines.

"We aim to master core technologies and drive the industry forward," Sun remains steadfast in his commitment to independent innovation, steering the company with unwavering determination. The introduction of the seamless forming machine has emerged as a key growth driver, propelling the company's revenue to exceed 2 billion yuan last year. In the first quarter of this year alone, revenue hit 495 million yuan, marking an 11.72% increase from the previous year.

Ningbo's Industry, Commerce, and Trade Sustain Growth in First Seven Months of 2024

By Zhao Yu

On the afternoon of August 19th, the Municipal Bureau of Statistics released Ningbo's economic figures for July, showing that the economy maintained a steady trajectory. Over the first seven months of 2024, key sectors such as industry, commerce, and foreign trade saw continued growth, signaling the acceleration of Ningbo's high-quality development.

In July, Ningbo's industrial production grew steadily, bolstered by strong performance in key industries. The value added of industries above designated size increased by 6.3% year-on-year, with the growth rate accelerating by 1.5 percentage points compared to the previous month. From January to July, the value added in these industries grew by 7.8%.

Notably, key industries provided robust support for this growth. Among the 36 major industry categories, 26 saw an increase in value added, resulting in a growth rate of 72.2%. Of the top ten industries by scale, nine experienced growth while only one declined. In particular, the added value of vehicle manufacturing, metal products, and IT rose by 21.1%, 16.2%, and 9.3% respectively, contributing 6.4% to the overall growth in value added for industries above designated size.

Emerging industries have shown strong growth, with the added value of high-end equipment, strategic emerging sectors, and artificial intelligence rising by 13.2%, 13.1%, and 12.1%, respectively.

In the realm of merchandise trade, there was a significant rebound, while the financial sector remained steady. In July, sales of retail enterprises above designated size increased by 19.4% year-on-year, with the growth rate accelerating by 12.7 percentage points compared to the previous month. From January to July, sales of retail enterprises above designated size rose by 16.7%, with metals, chemicals, and chemical products seeing increases of 19.6% and 30.6%, respectively.

The Ningbo Zhoushan Port handled a cargo throughput of 820 million tons, reflecting a 3.9% increase. Of this, the Ningbo Port Area contributed 406 million tons, marking a 2.8% rise. The Port's container throughput reached 22.517 million TEUs, up by 7.9%, with the Ningbo Port Area alone accounting for 20.576 million TEUs, an 8.4% increase.

By the end of July, the balance of local and foreign currency deposits in the city's financial institutions stood at 3.58 trillion yuan, while the balance of loans reached 4.17 trillion yuan, representing increases of 6.2% and 13.4%, respectively.

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SPOTLIGHT

Hong Kong Youths on Exchange Program Explore Ningbo

By Yan Yiran

From August 12th to 17th, a group of Hong Kong students participating in the 2024 Future Stars Hong Kong Youth Exchange program visited Ningbo.

While the participants may have been aware of prominent figures with Ningbo roots in Hong Kong's business community, they lacked firsthand insight into their patriotic contributions. This trip provided them with a valuable lesson in understanding these connections.

At Ningbobang Museum, the achievements of Ningbo pioneers who established China's first modern industries and contributed to the country's development across various historical eras left a lasting impression on

the youths. At the History Museum of Ningbo University, they were deeply moved by stories of how individuals with Ningbo roots around the world offered support to the University's founding and development. At Ningbo Yongxin Optics, each piece of precision optical instrument narrated a tale of perseverance and success.

"Behind all these developments lies an unwavering spirit of devotion, which we should aspire to emulate," said a student from the University of Hong Kong.

Many buildings on Ningbo University's campus are named in honor of prominent individuals with Ningbo roots who donated to the institution, both from China and abroad. Lu, a student at Ningbo University, noted that the university's flourishing is due to their

ongoing support, and that a sense of gratitude is deeply embedded in every student.

"You can see that for these individuals with Ningbo roots, patriotism is not just a sentiment but is also translated into tangible actions," remarked Chen, another participant.

Yongxin Optics, formerly known as Ningbo Optical Instrument Factory, has developed a unique model of iterative innovation. During a dialogue session, the participants inquired about the company's talent demand, employee development, and collaboration with universities. Wang, a student from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said, "These innovations are impressive. I'd love to intern at Yongxin Optics if the opportunity arises."



Hong Kong students at Ningbo Yongxin Optics.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

The group then visited the Chuanshan Port Area of the Ningbo Zhoushan Port, marveling at the bustling modern terminals. "The reputation of the Ningbo Zhoushan Port as the greatest port of the East is well-deserved," remarked Deng, a student from Hong

Kong Baptist University.

Later, they were impressed by the picturesque environment and cultural heritage of Xilifang Village in Xiangshan county. Their journey was further enhanced by the charm of the exquisite homestays at Dongdan Beach.