

SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo's Business Environment Wins Praise from Innovation Norway

By Jin Yuhan

On March 11, a letter of appreciation from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in China arrived in Xiangshan. "On behalf of Innovation Norway, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the outstanding support you provided to Nordic Aqua (Ningbo) Co., Ltd. during the construction of its land-based Atlantic salmon farm in Xiangshan," wrote Henning Kristoffersen, Counsellor at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in China and Country Director of Innovation Norway China, praising Ningbo's business environment. The message highlights a successful example of cooperation between China and Norway.

A Norwegian Venture Takes Root in Ningbo

At the Nordic Aqua farms facility in Gaotang Island Township, the large recirculating aquaculture tanks are filled with healthy Atlantic salmon. The facility, located in Xiangshan County, is Asia's first large-scale land-based salmon farm using recirculating aquaculture technology. Once fully operational, it supplies about 70 tons of fresh salmon each week to markets across the Yangtze River Delta and other parts of China.

The company's general manager is Andreas Thorud, who also goes by the Chinese name Tong Anrui. Having lived in China for more than a decade, he is a fluent Chinese speaker. After studying at Tsinghua University and working with the Norwegian Seafood Council in the Asia-Pacific, Throud witnessed the explosive growth of China's high-end seafood market—and its challenges: 99% of Atlantic salmon consumed in China were imported, facing long transport times, customs in-



State Grid Xiangshan County Power Supply Company staff serve at Nordic Aqua.

Andreas Thorud (first from right) showcases salmon at an exhibition in Shanghai.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

spectations, and complex distribution chains. This resulted in higher costs and reduced freshness.

Thorud wondered: "Can Norway's advanced salmon farming technology be brought to China?"

His idea aligned with the vision of Nordic Aqua's founder, Ove Nodland, who had long hoped to introduce modern salmon farming to Ningbo. Nodland first came to Ningbo for business in the 1990s and is now an honorary citizen of the city. Thorud eagerly agreed to join Nodland's land-based salmon farming venture.

After extensive surveys, Gaotangdao Township, Xiangshan County was selected as the salmon farm's location. With long coastlines, stable currents, and pristine waters, it was ideal for salmon cultivation.

Nordic Aqua was formally established in 2018, and construction of the land-based salmon facility began in 2021. The company aims to raise salmon with quality rivaling that of Nordic countries.

Powering the Salmon Farm

Few realize that Atlantic salmon—famous for their selective habitats—also demand extremely stable electricity to thrive.

"Salmon farming relies on a recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS). Every system—water circulation cooling, purification, or oxygen supply—depends on stable electricity. Voltage must remain above 9,700 volts; otherwise, the entire system could shut down," said Li Yongjun, head of the Hepu Power Supply Station under the State

Grid Xiangshan County Power Supply Company. Li and his team have provided dedicated power support since the project's initial investment phase, working closely with the Xiangshan County government.

To meet Nordic Aqua's infrastructure needs, Xiangshan funded the construction of a 35 kV power line and substation, saving the company a significant upfront investment. Li also led his team in designing a multi-layered power supply system capable of millisecond-level switching, effectively eliminating risks of unexpected outages.

"By financing the 35 kV power line and 35 kV substation, the Xiangshan Government relieved the company of a major capital expense. Equally impressive, State Grid Xiangshan completed the entire cross-island transmission-and-substation project in only

six months is a remarkable achievement," wrote Kristoffersen his letter.

This reliable support has allowed Nordic Aqua to expand confidently. Phase I of the farm now operates at full capacity, producing 4,000 tons annually and supplying roughly 70 tons of premium salmon each week. Phase II came online in January, with total annual capacity expected to reach 8,000 tons by 2027. Plans for Phase III are also underway, which would push annual production beyond 20,000 tons, further boosting local high-end salmon output.

"This exceptional level of service reinforces the very positive impression Norwegian companies have of Xiangshan's business environment," Kristoffersen added, noting that the project would serve as a showcase for other Norwegian investors interested in the city.

Ningbo's Foreign Trade Surges 9.9% in Jan-Feb, Reaching Record High

By Zhao Yu

Ningbo's total import and export trade volume hit a record 257.3 billion yuan in the first two months of 2026, up 9.9% year-on-year, according to data released by Ningbo Customs on March 13. Exports rose 11.2% to 177.4 billion yuan, while imports increased 7.3% to 79.9 billion yuan.

General trade continued to lead the city's foreign trade expansion. From January to February, general trade imports and exports totaled 123.25 billion yuan, an 11.9% year-on-year increase, accounting for 89.9% of Ningbo's total foreign trade volume. Processing trade reached 14.69 billion yuan, up 3.7% year-on-year.

Private enterprises remained the main driver of Ningbo's foreign trade growth. From January to February, their total imports and exports reached 198.4 billion yuan, up 10.3% year-on-year, contributing 7.9 percentage points to the city's overall import and export growth. Their share of Ningbo's total foreign trade rose to 77.1%, up 0.2 percentage points. Exports by private firms totaled 148.09 billion yuan, a 14% increase from a year earlier.

Ningbo Zlink Technology Co., Ltd. exemplifies this trend. Covering markets in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, the company reported a 710% year-on-year surge in exports this January, driven by ultrasonic water meters, smart metering equipment, and IoT terminal products. "The key to establishing a solid overseas presence is incorporating advanced technology into practical solutions," said General Manager Zhang Dan.

Ningbo's global trading network continues to expand over the first two months of 2026. Trade with the EU, which remains the city's largest trading partner, reached 46.92 billion yuan, up 12.4%. Trade with ASEAN countries totaled 34.01 billion yuan, a 10.1% increase. Trade with Africa surged 26.5% to 16.01 billion yuan, while trade with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative reached 127.35 billion yuan, up 9.3%, accounting for 49.5% of the city's total foreign trade. Trade with Central and Eastern European countries totaled 10.62 billion yuan, up 4.1%.

New quality productive forces are reshaping Ningbo's export profile. Electromechanical products accounted for 105.22 billion yuan, or 59.3% of total exports in January and February, up 14.2% year-on-year. Exports of electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, and photovoltaic products soared 154.4% to 9.66 billion yuan. Specifically, electric vehicle exports jumped 312.6% to 6.82 billion yuan; lithium-ion battery exports rose 36.4% to 1.89 billion yuan; and photovoltaic product exports increased 24.9% to 950 million yuan.

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Ningbo University Students Build Electric Race Car for National Formula Competition

By Jin Lu

Students at Ningbo University are designing, building and racing their own electric formula-style cars, gaining hands-on engineering experience while preparing for one of China's most demanding university motorsport competitions.

The Changhua Racing Team was formed in 2014 under the auspices of the university's School of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics, bringing together students from multiple disciplines, including engineering, business and information science. The students design and assemble most of their race cars inde-

pendently.

Their goal is to compete in Formula Student Electric China (FSEC), a national contest organized by the China Society of Automotive Engineers. The competition challenges university students to design, build and test electric formula-style cars, which would then go through engineering reviews and on-track performance trials.

"Except for standardized components and the motor, we independently developed almost all other key parts," said Zhang Xuning, a sophomore majoring in vehicle engineering. "Design is the most challenging stage because all systems must meet

strict requirements while functioning together in synchronicity."

Each team must submit their engineering designs, cost analyses and business plans. Their vehicles must pass detailed technical inspections and compete on acceleration, efficiency endurance, and other metrics.

Participants say the project offers practical training that goes far beyond classroom learning.

"FSEC closely reflects real-world industry standards," said Li Bin, a junior responsible for chassis and ergonomics design. "We learn not only how to build a car but also how to manage complex



A race car designed and built by students at Ningbo University.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

engineering projects."

The team's current design can reach speeds of nearly 100 km/h in testing. After winning a national third

prize last year, members are now developing a new model equipped with dual motors as they aim for stronger results in future competitions.

