

## CHINA

### Restoring the Qixian wetlands - essential biological wealth



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In Qixian, a small town located in the heart of the Loess Plateau in Shanxi Province, biodiversity is a major challenge. Indeed, it is one of the regions that suffers the most from erosion in the world and its wetlands have gradually deteriorated. Its land ecosystems have the highest level of biological wealth in the world. AFD is supporting the authorities for the restoration of two of the Changyuan River wetlands in order to preserve this biodiversity and strengthen local development.

#### CONTEXT

China is one of the world's 17 biodiversity hotspot countries. It is home to an eighth of total plant species and terrestrial wildlife and has 66 million hectares of wetlands, i.e. 10% of the world's wetlands and 8% of China's surface area. It consequently ranks 1st in Asia and 4th worldwide in terms of wetland surface area. These areas provide 55% of the country's ecosystem services, contain 82% of freshwater resources, and shelter over 11,000 plant and animal species, including 54% of endangered birds in Asia. They are also a major migration route for a large number of birds.

In recent decades, China's wetlands have experienced a rate of deterioration and disappearance of major concern, due to population pressure, urban sprawl and detrimental territorial development policies.

#### DESCRIPTION

The project is located in the heart of the Loess Plateau (loess is a loose detrital sedimentary rock formed by silt build-up from wind erosion) in Shanxi Province. The Changyuan River National Park comprises various types of habitat: rivers, marshes, ponds, rainforests. Upstream from the park, there is the Sixiannao forest provincial reserve. These two protected areas belong to the Changyuan watershed, which has a surface area of 101,116 ha and is an essential ecological corridor for the region. The park is home to a wealth of natural habitats and wildlife species due to its wetlands and topographical variety. Among the 234 animal species and 428 plant species listed, 27 are on the national red list. Some are the most seriously endangered and emblematic, such as the black stork, golden eagle, great bustard and Mandarin duck.

The park is faced with strong anthropogenic pressure, which contributes to ecological degradation. This leads to a heterogeneous and deteriorated ecological state, a disrupted hydrological regime, and significant pollution in neighboring areas. The project is based on several components:

- The restoration of wetlands;
- The conservation of species and their habitats;
- The development of ecotourism;
- Waste, wastewater and energy management;
- Governance and capacity building.

#### IMPACTS

- Development of natural resources in Qixian District, in addition to its historic and cultural heritage, and improvement in the environmental status of its wetlands;
- Greater resilience capacity of the local ecosystem and more effective adaptation to climate change;

09/07/2014

Project start date



Qixian, Shanxi  
Location



Biodiversity  
sector(s)



Loan  
financing tool(s)



30 000 000 EUR  
Financing amount

ONGOING

Status

Qixian (Shanxi) local authorities  
Beneficiaries

- Improvement in living conditions for local populations, thanks to the effective sanitation solutions provided and alternative and better-paid job opportunities;
- Initiation of an institutional dialogue with Chinese partners at central and local level for a dissemination of good practices on the management and restoration of the extremely fragile ecosystems of Loess Plateau.