



**Wang Hengming**  
Xinglong town, Guanghan city  
Sichuan Province, China

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## Farming the “land of abundance”

Wang Hengming is a soft-spoken, 42 year old vegetable farmer in the Sichuan province of southwest China. On May 12, 2008, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck his homeland.

More than 70,000 people may have died. For those fortunate enough to have escaped harm like Wang and his family, their lives were economically, physically and emotionally disrupted.

Agriculture is one of the main activities in this part of China and it was devastated. The FAO estimated that the quake caused US\$6 billion in damage to Sichuan’s agriculture as farmland was damaged, livestock were killed and farm equipment destroyed.

Known as the “land of abundance,” Sichuan province covers an area of 485,000 square kilometers (187,000

square miles) and is one of the major agricultural regions of China. A wide range of crops are grown here. While rice is predominant, the region is also a major producer of wheat, rapeseed and a host of different vegetables.

Wang Hengming and his family live in the town of Xinglong just outside Guanghan City. They were among the 5 million or more people that were left homeless by the quake.

Eight months later, however, Wang has a freshly rebuilt house, which he shares with elderly parents and a teenage

son who goes to school in the city. His brother and wife live next door.

At the end of their tidy row of houses is this year's crop of cauliflower – the first full crop since the earthquake. Although their fields themselves weren't damaged, they did suffer neglect as everyone focused on the task of rebuilding. Many vegetable greenhouses were completely destroyed.

**“Now with better technology, we have better farming.”**

The rebuilding continues throughout the village, but for Wang, life is almost back to normal.

“Normal” means several hours a day – up to ten at the busiest point in the season – out in the fields. In addition to this cauliflower crop, Wang and his family also grow cucumbers, eggplants and Chinese cabbage.

An important daily activity is scouting for a long list of insects and diseases that can affect his crops, including *Phytophthora* blight, downy mildew and gray mold. After losing 1 mu (1/15 hectare) of greenhouse-grown eggplant to *Verticillium* wilt in 1999, Wang is diligent about examining his fields for signs of trouble.

He still attends regular training programmes held by the town government and plant protection stations run by the agriculture departments, in cooperation with CropLife Asia, to continue honing his already remarkable agronomy skills.

Wang says if that same disease attacked his eggplant crop today, he wouldn't flinch. Thanks to new technology



and a comprehensive understanding of how to use it, his crop would be well-protected. He easily recites specific methods to prevent and treat each disease.

All of this technology and agronomic know-how is paying off for Wang and his family. He and his wife have been working in the fields and growing vegetables ever since they were teenagers. According to Wang's wife – the ‘minister of finance’ he jokingly calls her – their annual income from cash crops has grown to 20,000 yuan. That's almost US\$3,000.

Not only has their increased income helped them rebuild their house quickly after the earthquake, it also ensures they can continue to invest in fertilizer and crop protection products to keep their crops healthy and robust. After those basic needs, they have more than half their income left for daily expenditures, including schooling for their son.

“Now with better technology, we have better farming,” he says. And that means a lot in the “land of abundance”.

# protection

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