

POLICY REVIEW

Policy aims to rev up rural NEV sales

Measures call for promoting green vehicles, charging infrastructure

By XU WEI
xuwe@chinadaily.com.cn

The latest policy measures to bolster the development of new energy vehicles and charging facilities in rural areas have boosted automakers' confidence, with officials and business leaders highlighting the immense potential of the rural market to shore up the growth of the sector.

The measures were adopted at an executive meeting of the State Council, China's Cabinet, and outlined in a policy document issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration.

Key steps include strengthening the development of public charging facilities and providing greater support to operators of the stations.

There were about 13 million NEV owners in China by the end of last year, more than half the global total. China has also developed the world's largest and most wide-ranging NEV charging network, with 5.2 million facilities already built, according to the NDRC.

Meng Wei, a spokesperson for the commission, told a news conference on May 17 that a lack of charging facilities remained the largest obstacle to the growth of the domestic NEV industry, especially in rural areas.

"So we sought to solve the problem through innovative measures to promote the building, operation and maintenance of charging infrastructure in rural areas," she said.

Official figures showed that in 2021, rural sales of NEVs were up 169 percent from 2020, and in 2022, sales increased 87 percent year-on-year.

However, Meng pointed out that the NEV market in rural areas is still nascent, with relatively few owners, a lack of charging networks and underdeveloped after-sales services constraining the growth of the sector.

Government support

According to the latest policy document, the central government will use special bonds issued by local authorities to expand the coverage of charging stations at service areas on highways.

It also set out goals to build more charging stations at government buildings, public institutions, commercial areas and transportation hubs, with steps to expand the network to tourist attractions and gas stations.

The government will encourage NEV manufacturers to further develop their service networks and support vocational schools in efforts to offer maintenance training for NEVs in rural areas, the document said.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association, said there is still immense potential to promote NEVs in the rural market.

"It is a huge market and represents a major opportunity for automakers. It will also reshape China's consumption structure and lead to more sustainable consumer spending," he said.

Cui highlighted the need to pro-

mote the development of home chargers for rural families, in addition to the development of public charging stations.

With the majority of vehicles in rural areas currently powered by fossil fuels, the shift to NEVs would significantly contribute to national green transition goals, he added.

To boost sales of NEVs in rural areas, the policy document pledged to encourage automakers to diversify the supply of their products, and develop cheaper utility vehicles.

Businesses will be offered incentives to promote secondhand NEVs in rural areas, and the government will urge authorities, schools and hospitals in counties and townships to use NEVs.

The use of NEVs for public transportation, law enforcement, sanitation and logistics will also be promoted, the document said.

The government will roll out multifaceted policies to entice rural consumers, including issuing coupons and offering incentives to rural residents to replace their scooters with NEVs, according to the document.

The government will also ensure that financial institutions offer proper loan rates and payment terms for purchasers of NEVs.

NEV makers hopeful

Jiang Weidong, a deputy to the National People's Congress and founder of the Wuzheng Group, which manufactures NEVs for commercial use in Shandong province, said the policy measures will be a major boost to the growth of the sector.

"The cost of using NEVs to transport goods is significantly lower than that of gasoline-powered cars, and I believe more users will switch to our vehicles in the future," he said.

As China advances its rural vitalization strategy, the potential of consumer spending in the rural market will be further unleashed, he added.

To tap into the rural market, Jiang said his company will take advantage of its online platforms to offer rural buyers greater support in terms of financing and after-sales services.

Farizon Auto, a manufacturer of electric vans, trucks and mini-trucks that is part of the Geely Holding Group, said the latest policy measures will help shore up the growth of commercial NEVs.

The company will develop more

“So we sought to solve the problem through innovative measures to promote the building, operation and maintenance of charging infrastructure in rural areas.”

Meng Wei, spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission

vehicles tailored to the needs of rural motorists, it added.

The policy has also boosted the confidence of operators of public charging stations, who are eager to tap into the potential for the rural market.

An Shuo, founder of the Beijing ShiJi Yunan New Energy Co, a company devoted to the development of public charging facilities, said that in order to fuel the expansion of charging stations in rural areas, operators must tackle difficulties in facility maintenance, and authorities should give greater priority to ensuring the safety of residents.

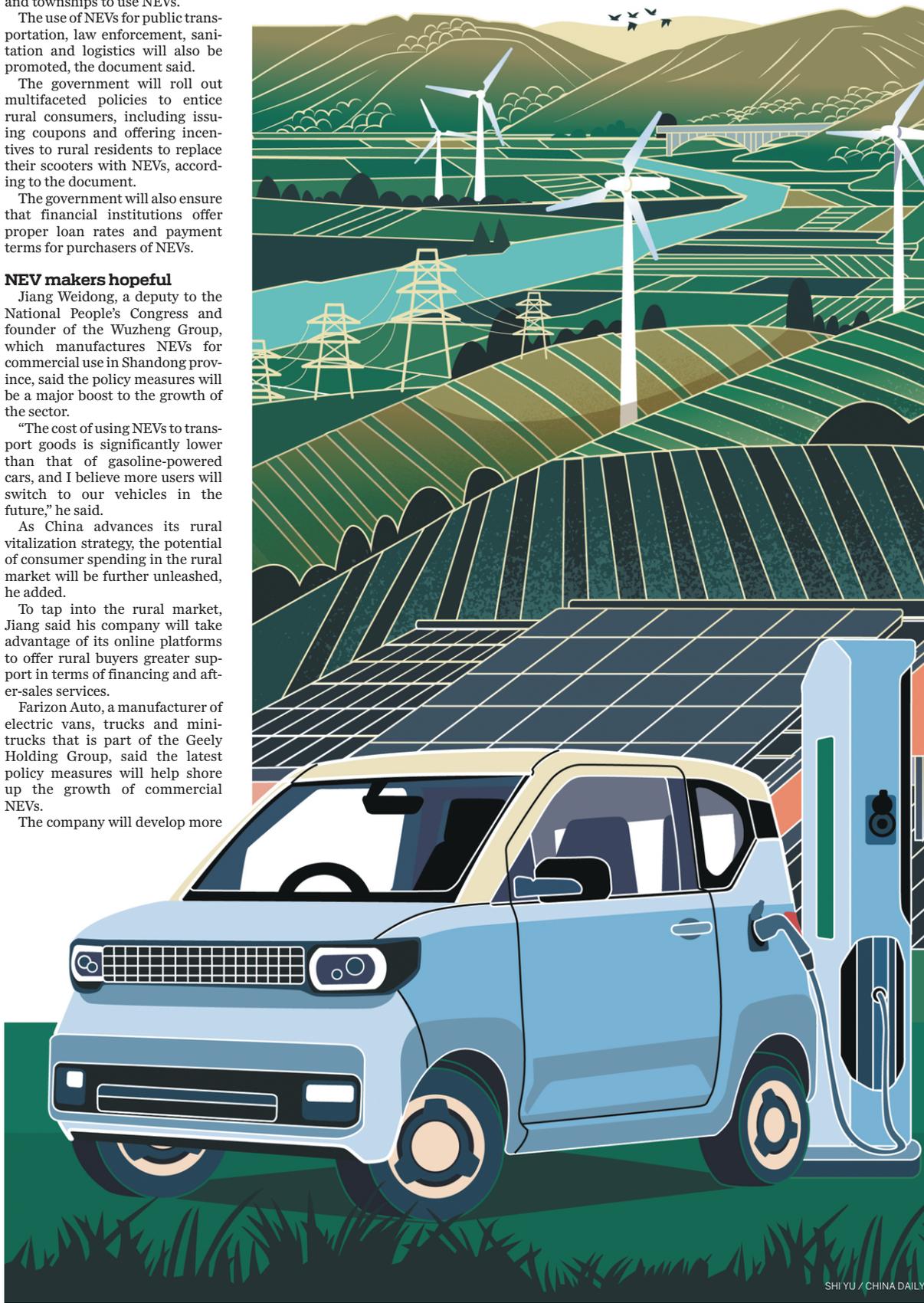
"The development of charging infrastructure must be planned in

a forward-thinking manner to spur the growth of the NEV sector," he said.

An explained that many rural drivers park their vehicles in front of their homes, so the development of home chargers is also important.

Meanwhile, as the use of electric vehicles increases, there will be heightened demand for fast-charging facilities, which will increase pressure on power grids.

He expressed hope that the government will roll out more detailed policy incentives for the renovation of power grids, and offer businesses more support in the planning of facilities and operation procedures.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Policy Digest

NHSA fighting medical insurance fund fraud

The National Healthcare Security Administration said it has taken a series of measures to fight medical insurance fraud over the past five years.

In a news conference held by the State Council Information Office last week, the administration's head Hu Jinglin, said that strengthening monitoring of the medical insurance fund and maintaining its security have always been a top priority for the administration.

Since 2019, the administration has carried out 184 unannounced inspections on 384 medical institutions, Hu said. Focusing on orthopedic, hemodialysis and cardiology departments, as well as key medicines and consumables, the administration has worked with police and health authorities to investigate fraud. In 2022, more than 7,000 suspects were detained, and more than 1 billion yuan (\$140 million) was recovered.

The administration also uses intelligent monitoring and big data technology to prevent illegal use of the fund.

Guideline promotes elder care services

The general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council have issued a guideline for promoting inclusive and basic elder care services for eligible seniors.

The guideline provides a "national list of basic elder care services", which local authorities are required to implement.

Among the services offered are an "advanced age subsidy" for people age 80 and above, and a subsidy for people to receive training to help them care for their older, disabled family members.

The list may be readjusted based on economic growth and financial resources, according to the guideline, which also urged governments at the provincial level to come up with their own lists to provide more specific services to local seniors.

According to an official with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, there were more than 280 million people age 60 and above in China at the end of last year, accounting for 19.8 percent of the total population.

The guideline demonstrates the importance the CPC Central Committee and the State Council attach to elder care services, and it is an important policy designed to ensure that seniors feel happy and secure, the official said.

Rescue teams brace for extreme weather



The National Fire and Rescue Administration held a virtual meeting earlier this month, asking fire and rescue teams around the country to spare no efforts in responding to floods and droughts resulting from extreme weather.

Extreme weather has been more frequent this year, leading to increased rainfall in both the northern and southern parts of the country, said the administration affiliated to the Ministry of Emergency Management.

According to the administration, serious flooding may occur in the middle and lower reaches of the Songhua and Nenjiang rivers in Northeast China, and of the Yellow River, as well as the Haihe River in North China and the valley of the Pearl River in South China.

Meanwhile, the country is also experiencing above average temperatures, with Yunnan province in particular suffering from acute drought.

WANG QINGYUN

Authorities lay emphasis on tackling high youth unemployment

By XU WEI

The Chinese authorities have rolled out steps to stabilize the job market, pledging to offer stronger policy support for businesses that create a large number of jobs.

In a policy document issued last month, the General Office of the State Council laid out a series of measures to expand employment, encourage entrepreneurship and boost vocational training.

Other key steps include encouraging State-owned enterprises to scale up recruitment and stabilizing the payrolls of government

departments and public institutions. An action plan will be put in place to create 1 million internship opportunities for young people, an initiative that will also provide employers with subsidies for the purpose of paying interns a basic allowance.

Experts said that tackling youth unemployment should continue to be a policy priority, and the government needs to come up with more pro-business measures to stabilize economic growth.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's surveyed unemployment rate among

all workers in urban areas stood at 5.2 percent in April. However, the jobless rate for those age 16 to 24 stood at 20.4 percent, highlighting the need for stronger policy support to spur youth employment.

China is set to see a record 11.58 million students graduate this year, which will put even more pressure on the job market.

Wang Ting, a professor of human resources at the China University of Political Science and Law, said that offering young people more jobs and better employment services should be given equal attention by authorities

looking to resolve the unemployment problem.

He underscored the need for higher-education institutions to adjust their majors in line with demand from the job market to make it easier for graduates to find work.

Wang also highlighted that more internship opportunities will help the young and jobless improve their skills and better adapt to the job market.

He added that it is also important that vocational schools offer more training opportunities tailored to the needs of employers,

especially in the green and digital sectors.

Meng Wei, a spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission, told a news briefing on May 17 that maintaining a proper rate of economic growth remains the fundamental solution to stabilizing the job market.

She said that the government will adopt measures to encourage private businesses to take part in sectors such as infrastructure construction, telecommunications and energy, and to push domestic companies in the foreign trade sector to explore global markets.