Nebraska seeks investment from China

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By May Zhou and Zhang Yuan in Omaha, Nebraska |   
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In welcoming scores of Chinese and US business leaders to Omaha, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts said he believes the state's relationship with China will grow.   
"In China, we see the middle classes are increasing tremendously," Ricketts said on Friday. "That presents opportunities for us to expand the relationship. In Nebraska, we think long term," he said.   
The governor said that China is the state's second-largest trade partner outside of North America and one of the fastest-growing. Last year, Nebraska exported products worth $1.3 billion to China.   
Elaborating his government's efforts to improve education, regulation and the tax system, Ricketts urged the business leaders to consider investing in the state.   
"We seek those Chinese companies who look to invest in Nebraska to help them to grow their business in the US, help them to leverage our regulatory and tax environment, our central location and the shared culture value," Ricketts said.   
Compared with other states such as Texas or California, Chinese direct investment in Nebraska is relatively small.   
To attract more businesses from China, Ricketts has visited the country twice since taking office in 2015, with the last trip in November. Ricketts said he took more than 70 businesspeople with him.   
During the last trip, Ricketts and Hu Heping, governor of Shaanxi province, formalized Nebraska and Shaanxi's relationship as sister states.   
"We had investment meetings in Shanghai and Xi'an. We tried to connect business leaders together to see where we can find those relationships and where to invest."   
Nebraska is strong in agriculture, and Ricketts said that's where Nebraska and China can grow the relationship the most.   
"That's why when we were in China last fall, we broke ground on a demonstration Nebraska farm in Yangling, Shaanxi. The idea is to show what technology and processes we have in agriculture to Chinese farmers and see how they may be able to use that."   
Ricketts said that Nebraska is the largest irrigable state in the United States, and 80 percent of center pivot irrigation equipment is made in the state. "China might take advantage of that technology," he said.   
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