

Feature: Mexico's rising bicycle demand boosts imports from China

MEXICO CITY, March 29 (Xinhua) -- Mexico's growing demand for bikes in recent years has attracted Chinese bicycle firms to enter Mexican market.

According to data released by Mexican authorities, there has been a fourfold increase in imports of bicycles in Mexico, that is, from 75,774 units in 2010 to 318,272 units in 2014.

Moreover, Mexico's bicycle imports have also grown by six times in value from 6.2 million U.S. dollars in 2010 to 39.2 million in 2014.

China can be described as a big winner in this rapidly growing market. Data showed that China is Mexico's largest supplier of bicycle. It is said that about 90 percent of Mexico's imported bicycles came from China.

Benetto is a well-known bicycle chain store in Mexico. Although the chain brand is from Italy, the bikes sold there are mostly from China.

According to the manager of Benneteau University Avenue store, the parts and components of the bikes sold in the store are imported from China, and assembled in Mexico. Sales of the store rose by about 10 percent last year.

"A lot of parts are imported from China, since the use of parts made in Mexico will raise costs," said the manager whose first name is Enrique.

The Mexican government has for years taken various measures to encourage the use of bicycles in transportation in a bid to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.

In the capital of Mexico City, the government has set up 44 bicycle sites and provided 5,500 free bicycles for 150,000 people through the project of "Ecobici" or literally green bike. Up to now, the project has been launched for five years and reduced a total of 1,395 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

With the initiative of green travel advocated by the government, the popularity of bicycle has increased greatly in Mexico. Data showed that about 37 percent of Mexicans have their own bikes now.

In February, the 2015 World Bicycle Forum in Medellin, Colombia, brought together more than 4,000 attendees from across the globe to discuss the challenges and opportunities of urban cycling.

Cycling activists and city leaders said at the forum that cities and citizens are turning to the bicycle for good reasons. The bicycle offers a healthy form of mobility that cuts the need for car travel and reduces emissions. But there remains a major obstacle to establishing cycling as a key mode of travel: designing safer infrastructure that all people feel comfortable using.

Similarly, a study named "Biciciudades," literally meaning "Bike cities", released in 2013 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has triggered rising interest in cycling across Latin America, where people see it as a more economical, healthy and environmentally-friendly mode of transportation.

The IDB's project, which aimed to help Latin American and Caribbean intermediate cities learn from the success and failures of their larger neighbors, focused on the use of bicycles, based on surveys sent to municipal governments and social groups from 18 of the 21 emerging cities and six of the largest cities in the region by population.