SM295 | 8.8.2026
Summer Playlist 2026 | Episode 5
Josh Qiao, CEO, Yongan International Financial SG

This week on our *Summer Playlist*, we welcome Josh Qiao into the SmarterMarkets™ studio. Josh is CEO of Yongan International Financial SG. David Greely sits down with Josh to discuss how Yongan is providing access to China's futures and options markets for international traders, why it chose to become a clearing member of Abaxx Exchange, and the opportunities this creates in the commodities futures markets.

00:00
Josh Qiao
The market changed a lot recently. And, you know, two years ago, it was base metals and, last year it was precious metals. this year's energy. so the traditional markets, I think now that, the trend is shifting among different suite of products. For me, I do see a lot of, maybe LNG with the internationalization of the Chinese LNG. There might be a big jump in, you know, in the LNG market trading. also looking forward, maybe more futuristic looking, so maybe AI related products, if they can be launched successfully, it'll be massive.

00:40
Announcer
Welcome to SmarterMarkets, a weekly podcast featuring the icons and entrepreneurs of technology, commodities, and finance ranting on the inadequacies of our systems and riffing on ideas for how to solve them. Together we examine the questions: are we facing a crisis of information or a crisis of trust, and will building Smarter Markets be the antidote?
This episode is brought to you in part by Abaxx Technologies. AI agents are fundamentally changing how people and organizations interact with computers and the internet. A race is underway to establish the path that will govern the nature of these interactions. Abaxx Technologies introduces Abaxx Labs as its center for engaging with the developer community through the release of open source software to promote a path that empowers users to maintain control of their identity, data, and agents in digital spaces. Abaxx Labs' first release is the Agents++ library, a subset of Abaxx's ID++ software development kit that has been tuned for use with AI agents. Download Agents++ on GitHub today at github.com/abaxxlabs. That's github.com/abaxxlabs.

02:00
David Greely
Welcome back to Summer Playlist 2026 on SmarterMarkets. I'm Dave Greely, Chief Economist at Abaxx Technologies. Our guest today is Josh Qiao, CEO of Yongan International in Singapore. We'll be discussing how Yongan is providing access to China's futures and options markets for international traders, why it chose to become a clearing member of Abaxx Exchange, and the opportunities this creates in the commodities futures markets.

02:30
David Greely
Hello, Josh. Welcome to SmarterMarkets.

02:33
Josh Qiao
Hi, David.

02:34
David Greely
I'm really glad we're able to sit down here in Singapore, that we were able to make this work. And it's just a great opportunity to meet you in person, introduce you to our audience. Your company Yongan Singapore, you know, provides access to China's futures and options markets as well as futures and options markets globally and from here in Singapore. And I was just curious what exchanges and markets do currently provide access to.

03:00
Josh Qiao
Basically all the major market we can help our clients to access to. So we are the clearing member of two Singapore local exchanges, SGX and Abaxx. And for the major markets in the US, in Europe, we can provide access to. And for us, one of the trends is the access to the Chinese market as well. So yeah, that's globally.

03:24
David Greely
Right now it's pretty exciting how you're able to provide access for international traders to those exchanges in China. What exchanges are you providing access to within China?

03:37
Josh Qiao
We provide access to all five commodity exchanges that has internationalized products. Those five are Dalian Commodity Exchange. DCE. Zhengzhou Commodity Exchange. ZCE. Shanghai International Energy Exchange INE, and Shanghai Futures Exchange SHFE. Also the newest one, Guangzhou Futures Exchange GFEX. So all five.

04:05
David Greely
And what markets in China are you seeing the most interest from international traders to participate in?

04:12
Josh Qiao
I think we get a lot of inquiries on the Chinese markets across the whole suite of products for us. Most volume goes to the agricultural products because they have the whole suites that are open up for, for example, the soybean complex and also the rapeseed. So for that, the Chinese market can provide a whole package for the industry players. We do also see interest in the precious metals, energy related products, petrochemicals as well. So I think international traders are eager to see more and more products open up very quickly. I'd say overall, the opening up of the Chinese market is a success. I do see, increasing number of volume and participants trading into China.

05:02
David Greely
From what types of international clients are you seeing the most interest in gaining access to China's markets through?

05:11
Josh Qiao
We're seeing various types of clients that are trading to China. The first one I like to mention is, those corporates, the physical players, they, they want to trade into China for arbitrage or hedging purposes. The second would be financial institutions, for example, the traditional banks, trading houses, they are actively accessing China as well. And also one thing I like to mention, I do see pension funds also, they are trading into China. I'd say maybe for them, now, the Chinese market can be of important asset allocation for the players.

05:51
David Greely
Giving that increased diversification.

05:54
Josh Qiao
Yes, it definitely does. And also recently the Chinese pension funds are also opening up their accounts, that's the trend. To trade into the commodities and to allocate that assets.

06:10
David Greely
Why did you choose Singapore for providing access?

06:15
Josh Qiao
In the corporate level, it's a strategic decision. definitely. Singapore is an important hub for financial trading, especially commodities. Singapore has everything here. The exchanges here, the vendors here, our peers, and our clients. Everyone is here. So it gives us, I think, a gateway to a global reach as well as it's in the same time zone as China. So it does give us the convenience of servicing our clients and supporting different trades. Speaking of Singapore, I'd say, for a Chinese company to internationalize, to do global business. Maybe their first stop is Hong Kong, but definitely, Singapore will be their one of the first choices to set up office. And for global business, look at those U.S. or European companies. Singapore is an important stop for them to the Asia business as well.

07:13
David Greely
Now we're at this moment where China is opening up many of its markets to international traders and China's commodities markets are huge. Its futures markets are huge. What is China looking for from the international trading community by opening its markets?

07:30
Josh Qiao
China is the biggest buyer of many raw materials and the biggest exporter of many processed materials as well. So I think, it's strategically, it's a very wise idea to internationalize the commodity markets and to get international players to hedge, to trade Chinese products.

07:54
David Greely
And what do you think the international trading community is looking for by getting access to these Chinese exchanges and markets?

08:01
Josh Qiao
Well, primarily, everyone, they want to make money. They're looking for opportunities. The Chinese market does give them many opportunities because the markets are quite liquid, got many participants. I do see the big corporates, the trading houses and the physical players, they are using the Chinese market to hedge their physicals as well. So I'd say, yeah, it's, I mean, functions of a futures market. So price discovery and, and hedging.

08:31
David Greely
And before you came to Yongan, you had worked at the Dalian Commodity Exchange for many years. And I was curious, how do you think of how the Chinese markets and their participants use their markets relative to what we might be used to in the international community? How are the participants different, and how is the way they use the markets different?

08:56
Josh Qiao
Yeah. That's an interesting question. There are in many ways, Chinese market is a bit different from the rest of the world. In China, you can hold both long and short position at the same time. So in order type, there's buy to open and sell to open and there's a difference between open and close.

09:14
David Greely
And when you work with international traders who you're helping give access to the Chinese markets, are there certain places where you need to educate them, so that they understand how to participate in those markets in a better way?

09:29
Josh Qiao
Yeah. There are several things. Let's say, for example, the rules of the exchange. I think all the products are, they are margin percentage wise. So, yeah, if the price goes up, more margin is needed for that. And also there are trading limits and position limits when the contract reach to the expiration, we need to constantly remind our clients, it's time to reduce position. And now, recently, the

regulators rolled out more strict rules on program trading. So, you know, for that, we need to learn as well. And at the same time, we need to educate our clients. But so far, I think, even though there are a bit differences in the way the trades are done, but international clients are adapting, and they are doing quite well.

10:21
David Greely
Yongan recently became the first China's mainland backed clearing member of Abaxx Exchange here in Singapore. Why did you choose Abaxx Exchange to become a clearing member of?

10:33
Josh Qiao
In short, we do see opportunities working together with Abaxx. So in particular, Abaxx has, many, some of the products that are quite closely related to what our clients are trading or they are interested in. For example, the most liquid products in Abaxx, gold. In Asia, we are used to price gold in kilograms and grams and Abaxx has the kilobar contract. So that gives for our clients, more straightforward calculation without any conversion. How the prices is doing and compare in different markets that provides the hedging on cross market arbitrage opportunities. And also, lithium carbonate. That's something that's really hot in China recently. And there are many interests. If you look at the GFEX volume, they are growing up substantially in recent months.

11:31
Josh Qiao
And for our clients, maybe they'll be interested in arbitraging, or trading different markets as well. Also LNG. That's also a big part. And that's how we see the arbitrage opportunities. And I do see that for international traders. They want to trade the products in China. So for Abaxx products, that's closely related to the Chinese market, it also is USD denominated. We do see opportunities.

12:03
David Greely
You mentioned some of them, but what are some of the futures products that you're most excited about right now, to allow people to trade?

12:12
Josh Qiao
The market changed a lot recently. And, you know, two years ago, it was base metals and, last year it was precious metals. This year's energy. So the traditional markets, I think now the trend is shifting among different suites of products. For me, I do see a lot of, maybe LNG with the internationalization of the Chinese LNG. There might be a big jump in the LNG market trading. Also looking forward, maybe more futuristic looking, so maybe AI related products if they can be launched successfully, it'll be massive for example, token contracts.

12:58
David Greely
Yeah. And I believe recently lithium carbonate just opened up for international trading. Is that right?

13:03
Josh Qiao
Oh, glad you mentioned that. So for Yongan, we are one of the first overseas intermediaries of GFEX. We became one of the first OIs from Singapore to provide access. That's also a future contract as well, because the batteries that are used everywhere now, for energy storage, EVs, and also with the AI, it's a very energy consuming industry. So that'll be exciting.

13:38
David Greely
And you had mentioned earlier about the ARB trading, between contracts outside of China and within China. How important is that spread trading for commodities traders going to be?

13:50
Josh Qiao
I think people do see opportunities first because they can make profit from trading. And those arbitrators, they also make all the markets there to run more efficiently. I'd say, whenever there's missed pricing. Yeah, the arbitrators get in and make sure the markets are moving and are not distorted or anything. So I think it's a good thing for the traders because it gives them opportunities. And also it's a good thing for the market.

14:21
David Greely
And what are some of your goals in the near term for working with Abaxx?

14:25
Josh Qiao
Definitely will be trying to onboard more clients, to trade it to see now the gold and silver, even the LNG contracts in Abaxx, the volumes are going up. And I think eventually the clearing member and the exchange and also the traders, we are working in the ecosystem. So maybe we can grow the business together.

14:48
David Greely
And, you know, talked a little bit about locating in Singapore and both your company and Abaxx are located in Singapore, in part to kind of try to be a bridge for that North-South flow of commodities and commodities trading that's happening. Could you describe a little bit about that North-South flow in the commodities markets?

15:09
Josh Qiao
Yeah. So for us, we are more doing the northbound business. From what I see is, they are more and more interest in trading to China. Also, the Chinese exchanges are opening up more and more products. And those products in China, every launch is a success because they are volume, they are volatility there. And southbound I'd say, there are more for those big corporates to hedge their risk. And recently we do see some also some asset managers. They launched their funds overseas to raise money and to use their trading strategy and those asset managers. So they are trading into China and also the global markets. It's growing in both parts of the market.

15:59
David Greely
How does the financial aspect help with the underlying physical commercial market in these commodities?

16:06
Josh Qiao
Definitely hedging is a big part because in recent years, the commodity price are really fluctuating a lot. There are many events, people need to hedge. Also, I think being in Singapore, the companies and the whole industry is quite concentrated in here. You can get a lot of business partners. It's also a business opportunity for them. Maybe one physical trader through us, we can introduce them to other physical players. Or now the trading houses are more and more curious what are the hedge funds' views on the market? So for us as an FCM, we can be a center for a community of clients and also a center for information. So I think that that's very helpful to our clients.

16:55
David Greely
Really is building out that whole ecosystem. I wanted to ask you, you mentioned a few of the products, but what commodity futures markets and products are you most interested in developing over the coming years? Where do you see some of the big opportunities?

17:13
Josh Qiao
Okay. Because the whole community market has been there for more than 100 years. The traditional markets, there are needs and the overall market size is growing. However, I think for the next big thing, I'd say maybe, two parts. One is ESG, green energy. And the other

thing, and it's the hottest topic now is AI related, so maybe tokens, that's something that would make a huge difference of the market. But the traditional markets, they're already there.

17:50
David Greely
And what are some of the green energy markets? Do you see things for battery materials, lithium carbonate. How do you see some of those markets developing?

18:00
Josh Qiao
Yeah. Glad you mentioned the lithium. I do see a lot of interest on lithium as well because it’s a big part in the EVs and also in the whole energy storage and the whole industry. That's a big, big thing. Guangzhou Exchange, the lithium contract, the volume recently has boomed a lot. People are also looking into opportunities for arbitraging across different markets. Yeah, we have some clients doing between GFEX and CME contract. Well, it may be in the future, hope to build more volume on Abaxx as well.

18:40
David Greely
And, I wonder, you mentioned AI, you know, there's always even though commodity markets have been around a very long time, there's always a need for constant innovation. Where do you see some of the most interesting areas and potentials for innovation in some of the markets you serve?

18:56
Josh Qiao
Adopting AI or?

18:58
David Greely
Whether it's technology like AI or whether it's new markets. I'm curious where you would like to see some innovation in the areas you work in.

19:07
Josh Qiao
Maybe in the future. It does, you can use AI as a tool or something to better service our clients, or maybe with the launch of AI related products, the whole market will get more familiar with the whole AI systems, how AI works.

19:24
David Greely
And I'm curious, thinking about some of your clients, are many of your markets predominantly trading on the screen electronically, or do voice brokers still play a large role? How is that mix in the markets you're working in?

19:39
Josh Qiao
For us, most of the clients are using screen. I do see that. I think it's a trend for the market to move to a screen. Also many exchanges are trying to move their volume to screen as well. I'd say that that's the trend with the screen, but, still, in some markets, people like to discuss, discuss about the market to get the sense and they still want to talk to people to trade. I don't see the voice trade will be gone, at least in the next few decades still be there, but, definitely the volume on screen will be increasing.

20:16
David Greely
For you, as CEO of Yongan here in Singapore. What are your goals or aspirations for the company over the next few years?

20:24
Josh Qiao
Of course, our primary goal is to further grow our client base and to have a bigger presence, not only in Singapore, maybe in the whole ASEAN area. Also, as I mentioned, we want to be an important part of the whole ecosystem. So by connecting our clients, different types of clients and the exchanges and also the market intelligence companies, we can be a hub for information for physical trading opportunities as well. So in addition to that. So for Yongan, servicing the physical players, the physical players are in our gene. We also have a big physical trading team. We help traders to get market intelligence and to better help them with their decision in both the paper trading and the physical trading.

21:19
David Greely
Well, thanks so much for spending time with us. I wanted to ask you before we wrap up, you know, now that we're at this moment where China is opening up its markets to international traders and going abroad through firms like yours. How do you see this opening up of China's markets changing the international commodities markets?

21:38
Josh Qiao
Statistics of those things that I actually see is that in particular with the opening up of Dalian's iron ore futures, the volume of SGX also grows. That's because I was with DCE, and we did research on that. I believe for other products, it will be the same story. So I do see with the opening of the Chinese market, the whole global community of the derivatives markets will be growing together.

22:09
David Greely
Well, thanks so much for taking time to sit down with us. Really appreciate it.

22:13
Josh Qiao
Thank you David. It's my pleasure. And welcome to Singapore.

22:17
David Greely
Thanks again to Josh Qiao, CEO of Yongan International in Singapore. We hope you enjoyed the episode. We will be back next week with another episode of Summer Playlist 2026. We hope you will join us.

22:30
Announcer
This episode is brought to you in part by Abaxx Technologies. AI agents are fundamentally changing how people and organizations interact with computers and the internet. A race is underway to establish the path that will govern the nature of these interactions. Abaxx Technologies introduces Abaxx Labs as its center for engaging with the developer community through the release of open source software to promote a path that empowers users to maintain control of their identity, data and agents in digital spaces. Abaxx Labs' first release is the Agents++ library, a subset of Abaxx's ID++ software development kit that has been tuned for use with AI agents. Download Agents++ on GitHub today at github.com/abaxx labs. That's github.com/abaxxlabs.
That concludes this week's episode of SmarterMarkets by Abaxx. For episode transcripts and additional episode information, including research, editorial and video content, please visit smartermarkets.media. Please help more people discover the podcast by leaving a review on Apple Podcast, Spotify, YouTube, or your favorite podcast platform. SmarterMarkets is presented for informational and entertainment purposes only. The information presented on SmarterMarkets should not be construed as investment advice. Always consult a licensed investment professional before making investment decisions. The views and opinions expressed on SmarterMarkets are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the show's hosts or producer. SmarterMarkets, its hosts, guests, employees, and producer, Abaxx Technologies, shall not be held liable for losses resulting from investment decisions based on informational viewpoints presented on SmarterMarkets. Thank you for listening and please join us again next week.