

AAINews

**APPROPRIATE AGRICULTURE INTERNATIONAL
CO., LTD**

TEL/FAX:+81-42-725-6250

1-2-3-403 Haramachida, Machida, Tokyo, 194-0013 JAPAN

E-mail: aai@koushu.co.jp Home Page: <http://www.koushu.co.jp>

Report from a Training Course in Tsukuba for Southern African Countries

From May 10 to 15 in 2004, the seven trainees from six countries attending the Special Course on Vegetable Cultivation Techniques for the Southern African Region went on a study trip to Kyushu. This trip was of course an important part of the course, but at the same time it was a fun program for the trainees being away from their daily routine in Tsukuba. They had been participating in lectures and practical work since March 2, 2004. During this trip, trainees visited the following locations:

Teruha Otsuribashi (suspension bridge) in Aya Town, Miyazaki Prefecture: Our bus went along the green river side in the Laurel Forest Nature Park in Aya Town to the Teruha Suspension Bridge. On the bus, our staff member explained the fact that trees such as oak, chinquapin and camphor compete to grow and form ecosystem of natural laurel forest -. A participant from Namibia said “This is heavenly!” as she enjoyed the beautiful view of the gorge. At the “country report” session held at the beginning of this course, she introduced her country with photos of uninterrupted desert. She must have been very impressed by the green broadleaved woodland, comparing it with her dry home country.



Organic Farm in Aya Town: Aya Town is located in the center of Miyazaki Prefecture. We visited organic farmers here. In 1985, Aya Town formulated an ordinance regarding the “Promotion of Natural Ecosystem Agriculture”. The town has been actively promoting organic farming around the Aya Town Organic Farming Development Center. (Refer to AAI News Vol. 33.) The trainees’ interest in organic farming grew as they met with organic farmers for the first time. This course includes some practical work related to organic farming such as compost, bokashi (fermented organic fertilizer), and carbonized rice husks. It is necessary to further refine the way we can integrate organic farming in the training course curriculum. However, we must ensure that trainees will have the right understanding that organic farming in Japan is still a very minor part of agriculture here.

Cabbage cultivation in Namino Village, Kumamoto Prefecture: We visited Mr. S, a cabbage farmer of Namino Village who received an award from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, for his excellent running of his production activities. Mr. S and his wife work on their 3 ha of field. They deal with all nursery management and quality control of the crops after planting. For labor-intensive work such as planting and harvesting, they rely on laborers other than their family members. Mr. S taught the trainees that the nursing phase is the most important part of farming. He answered many questions from the trainees, stressing the need for eliminating off-type seedlings and planting uniform seedlings in the main field. In order to do this, he explained that it is necessary to observe seedlings extremely carefully during the nursing period. He explained, using actual seedlings in the nursery, and pointed out the different colors and shapes of seedlings. His explanation has made the trainees realize the meaning of “nursing of seedlings takes you half way to successful cultivation”.



Potato cultivation in Aino Town in Nagasaki Prefecture: Here we had a meeting with young successors of farming. We learned about the existence of young people who are positively trying to protect their areas, and about the work of the Nagasaki Experiment Station and extension center which work in collaboration with the young generation. Why are there many young successors here, while we always hear about lack of successors? Our visit was too short to fully understand this phenomenon. The difficulty of planning field visits is that one tends to include too many items because one wishes to expose trainees to as many places as possible. If there are too many items in the itinerary one cannot spend enough time in each place. As it was the first time for the potato farmers in Aino Town to receive trainees, the young farmers seemed to have been somewhat hesitant. It is our job as trainers to break the ice in a situation like this.



Nagasaki Peace Park: In the Peace Park, the trainees were in a jolly sightseeing mood and interacted with students on a school trip. However, as soon as they entered the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, they fell silent. After two hours of going around in the museum they became exhausted. This visit may have been a little far from our objectives of the field trip. Nonetheless, we saw their earnest desire for learning about Japan’s history and comparing it with the history of their own countries.

(By Hasegawa and Ono during the Kyushu Field visit, August 2004)