

AAINews

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5th Year of the Tsukuba Training Courses

In early April, the time of cherry blossoms, we held the annual cherry blossom viewing event under cherry trees in the garden of the JICA Tsukuba International Center. We had a very jolly time dancing and playing tennis under perfect weather with the participants of the Vegetable Cultivation Technology II Course (Vegetable Course) and the Course on Vegetable and Upland Crops Cultivation Techniques for Southern African Countries (Southern African Course).

For AAI, this year is the fifth year of the JICA training courses in Tsukuba. In addition to the Southern African Course which we have been running for some time, we were commissioned to conduct another course called the Vegetable Course. At present, we locate 4 trainers in Tsukuba and deal with 21 trainees from 16 countries. For the Southern African Course an extension of the course duration was approved from this year, which enables us to teach techniques for crop rotation much more thoroughly. Furthermore, in the Vegetable Course, we teach techniques for seed production, vegetable cultivation with high production and quality, as well as environmentally friendly vegetable cultivation.

In recent years, a new policy for the Tsukuba training courses was formulated. The new policy emphasizes the need not only for nurturing human resources that contribute to regional development, but also for those courses to find solutions for problems in particular regions. Given this, it is expected that feasibility action plans are formulated during the training courses which will translate techniques acquired in training to actual actions on the ground. In order to respond to this, at the beginning of each course, participants are asked to present a job report describing regions they work in and their concrete tasks, in addition to the existing country report. In this way, trainees are able to clarify problems they face in their job, and try to find solutions in the form of action plans at a latter stage of the training. During our follow up investigation this year, we witnessed that the trainees from Botswana and Namibia have already started implementing some of the activities in their action plan. Seeing at first hand the implementation of the action plan that emanated from the training is a great joy for us trainers.

Having said the above, we must be careful not to simplify the matter, saying “problem solving training courses equals presentation of an action plan.” Many problems that emerged from the trainees’ job report are to do with low production of crops. There is a host of reasons for not being able to maximize potential productivity of crops and they are complicatedly intertwined, therefore there is often no simple solution. For the trainees to address their problems, it is essential to enhance their knowledge of growth diagnosis and remedial measures, and to improve the techniques and capacity to teach their fellow countrymen and women on the ground. We strongly feel that human resource creation and problem solving approaches are actually the two sides of the same coin. Therefore in our daily training activities, we strive to find ideas for solving the problems that our trainees face, through various activities. In this year’s Southern African Course, we hope to discuss and consolidate with our participants the important elements of productivity such as improvement and retention of soil fertility, utilization of useful regional resources, and circular utilization of organic substances. The results of these discussions will lead to further improvement of our training. Seeing this year’s trainees, we feel that we can find some new triggers for improvement. We would like to continue with training activities, hoisting the flag “learning with trainees and jointly creating improved courses” as an ideal.

By Hasegawa from Tsukuba (currently tormented by back ache due to fruitful practical sessions in cultivation!)



Cherry blossom viewing at TBIC



Trainees sweating from working in the field