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Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

G7 Agricultural Ministers Meeting; NAEGA Event Gathers Local Grain Traders in Tokyo; ATO Japan Holds First Food Ingredient Seminar in Tokyo; Natto Competition Award Ceremony; Iowa State University Students Visit Japan, China; Cotton Day 2016; US Wheat Celebrates 60th Anniversary in Japan; The 2nd United Tastes of America – Asian Chef Challenge; Ambassador Kennedy Sees the Universe in a Bonsai; FAS/Tokyo Celebrates Dr. Tanksley for the Japan Prize; Welcome, Kurai-san!

General Information:

The Wasabi

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G7 Agricultural Ministers Meeting: U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and FAS Administrator Phil Karsting visited Niigata April 22-24 to participate in the G7 Agricultural Ministers Meeting, chaired by Japanese Minister of Agriculture Hiroshi Moriyama. The theme of the Ministerial meeting was “Strengthening Food Security.” The Ministers agreed to hold a fall conference in Japan on encouraging women’s participation in agriculture; to conduct regular meetings of G7 veterinary authorities to discuss trans-boundary diseases, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and other related issues; and to collaborate on agricultural research related to climate change. The Niigata Declaration can be found [online](#).

Following the Ministerial meeting, Minister-Counselor David Miller and Senior Agricultural Attaché Elizabeth Autry joined other Ministers and representatives from the G7 countries on a field trip to Ikutopia and Kameda Seika. Ikutopia Food and Flower Complex is a 74,000 square-meter facility providing various interactive experiences. After viewing the Center for Food and Flower Culture and the Children’s Creative Learning Center, there was a demonstration of driverless tractors. They then toured the factory of Kameda Seika, Japan’s largest confectionery manufacturer, mainly producing rice-based snacks. Kameda Seika is a significant user of U.S. rice and has three factories in the United States.

NAEGA Event Gathers Local Grain Traders in Tokyo: On May 16, the North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA) attracted more than 50 grain and oilseed traders to a seminar on *Contracts and Best Practices for the International Grain and Oilseed Trade* in Tokyo. In a toast at a reception following the event, Senior Agricultural Attaché Elizabeth Autry expressed her appreciation to NAEGA for helping to build trust and confidence between the U.S. and Japanese grain and oilseeds industries over many years. NAEGA President Gary C. Martin and Senior Advisor Samuel Bonilla were on hand to re-connect with close contacts and old friends. For more than half a century, Japan had been the largest market for U.S. corn until falling behind Mexico in 2015. Between 2006 and 2015, U.S. corn exports to Japan were worth more than \$27.5 Billion. Japan remains the third-largest market for U.S. soybean exports, generating more than \$10.6 Billion of exports over the last ten years.

ATO Japan Holds First Food Ingredient Seminar in Tokyo: The food manufacturing sector in Japan relies heavily on imported ingredients. To tap into this demand, ATO Japan held an ingredient and food technology seminar for product development and food technology sections of food manufacturing companies on May 13. The event introduced the latest U.S. food development trends and food technologies to generate new demand for a variety of U.S. agricultural products. In cooperation with renowned chefs and R&D specialists from the United States, five Cooperators gave presentations and demonstrations to around 100 Japanese attendees, with themes including “Clean Label” by the California Fig, “Beauty from Within” by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, and “Super Grain Sorghum” by the U.S. Grains Council.

By highlighting technologies, such as flavor and color mimicking, expert R&D speakers demonstrated how to use natural U.S. ingredients like fig paste, blueberry fiber, sorghum flour, and potato flakes to enhance the taste, quality or nutritional attributes of consumer-ready products. The day-long seminar generated renewed interest in U.S. agricultural products as ingredients, and the ATO plans to continue developing similar programs focused on ingredients in the future.



Natto Competition Award Ceremony: On May 13, Agricultural Attaché Jess Paulson participated in the 21st Annual National Natto Competition Award Ceremony in Tokyo. Robert Sinner of Casselton, North Dakota represented the Northern Food Soybean Association to present the Red River Valley U.S. Award to Sasanuma Goro Shyoten of Ibaraki Prefecture for their superior natto produced from U.S. soybeans. The competition was held on February 18 in Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture – one of the communities hardest hit by the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake. Natto-producing companies from all over the country competed in four categories (extra-small/small,

medium/large, broken, and U.S. soybeans).

Iowa State University Students Visit Japan, China: On 10, a group of 29 Iowa State University (ISU) students and from Animal Science Department enjoyed a briefing from the of Agricultural Affairs, the U.S. Grains Council (USGC), and



U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), before heading off to the largest cold storage facility in Japan operated by the Nippon Ham. The group learned a great deal Japanese agricultural production, policies in particular, and the importance of the Japanese market for U.S. farmers and

ranchers. They were even able to experience U.S. beef and pork first-hand (probably) as they grabbed a customary meal-away-from-home at a convenience store on their way to the cold storage facility. The group’s organizer, ISU Professor and Chair Emeritus Dr. Maynard Hogberg, was inspired to bring his students to Japan after joining an Iowa Pork Board trade mission to Japan in 2015.



May faculty Office the tour all of Group. about pork

Cotton Day 2016: Cotton Council International (CCI) celebrated Cotton Day (May 10th) with the 2016 Cotton USA Ceremony at the Westin Tokyo hotel, drawing more than 90 and over 300 industry attendees. At the event, CCI introduced new branding project, “COTTON USA – The Power of Cotton,” under which CCI has partnered with Japanese fashion Anrealage to develop work-wear using U.S. cotton. CCI also presented the 2016 Cotton USA Award to three famous Japanese actors that resemble the gentle, fresh and responsible of cotton. The actors (Norika Fujiwara, Fuuka Koshiba, and Mizobata) will auction their own cotton goods to raise funds for the victims of the Kumamoto Earthquake. ATO Japan Director Rachel Nelson took advantage of the opportunity to connect with industry contacts and support the ongoing efforts of CCI in Japan. In 1995, Japan established May 10th as “Cotton Day” since the date sounds like “cotton” (“go” for May in Japanese and “ten” in English for the 10th) 1995. CCI has held the Cotton USA Award ceremony every May since 2004 to promote the positive image of U.S. cotton.



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US Wheat celebrates 60th Anniversary in Japan: On April 11, Agricultural Minister-Counselor David Miller congratulated the U.S. Wheat Associates (USWA) Japan Office for its 60th year of devoted service to their most valued overseas market. Over 500 people, mostly from the Japanese import, milling, baking and food processing industries and the Japanese Government attended the reception and renewed their long-standing friendship with representatives from the U.S. wheat industry, including USWA Chairman Brian O’Toole and USWA President Alan Tracy. In his speech, Mr. Miller expressed his appreciation to these Japanese partners and the U.S. wheat industry for their dedication and

contributions to building a reliable partnership between Japan and the United States. For the last 25 years, Japan has been the most valuable market for U.S. wheat exports, worth more than \$17 Billion dollars over that time.

The 2nd United Tastes of America – Asian Chef Challenge: On March 23, the finalists for the United Tastes of America (UTOA) Asian Chef Challenge competition competed for the Grand Prize at the Hattori School in Tokyo. Having won their national competitions earlier in the year, professional chef teams from China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan again used fresh, high quality U.S. ingredients to promote U.S. agricultural products across five Asian countries. U.S. Agricultural Trade offices in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Beijing, Shenyang, Shanghai, and Chengdu used the UTOA Asian Chef Challenge to highlight a broad range of cooperator products to chefs and media the region. Funded by a U.S. MEF-led Global Initiative (GBI), a total of 72 local cooperator in five countries supported the competition.

All of the chefs in the final competition mentioned some U.S. ingredients for the first time. For example, the Japanese chefs said they really liked Jack cheese, which they had never used before and all the chefs said they were impressed by the large tasting Oregon Colossal Onions. Perhaps one of most notable comments was from the winning from Beijing, which noted how great it was to use



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beef for the first time at the championship in Tokyo, as U.S. beef is still not imported into mainland China.

The Grand Prize Winners were Mars Liu Peng of Yi House Art Hotel and Bin Wang of GeorgJensen Restaurant, both in Beijing. The First Runner-up team was Susumu Ogasiwa and Shinji Nagano from the Tokyo Disneyland Hotel's Canna restaurant, and the Second Runner-up team was Tang Chun Man and Sit Ka Keang Derek from the Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers. Though the impact is still being measured, Tokyo estimates having generated over \$450,000 of media exposure, while events in Taipei generated over \$200,000 worth, and Hong Kong staff using Facebook to promote the contest reached over 5,500 people.



Ambassador Kennedy Sees the Universe in a Bonsai:

On May 12, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy and six other U.S. Embassy officials, including Agricultural Assistant Midori Iijima and the Ambassador's Chef Marybeth Boller, received an introduction to the art of Bonsai from the Tokyo Metropolitan Horticultural High School (Engei HS) Bonsai Club. The Office of Agricultural Affairs coordinated the event to motivate Engei HS students to improve their English, to highlight agricultural study abroad opportunities in the United States, and to show the Ambassador's appreciation for the spectacular Bonsai that

Engei HS has displayed at the Ambassador's official residence since last spring. Engei HS has played an instrumental role in more than 100 years of U.S.-Japan flowering tree diplomacy, and is proud to continue that tradition through the art of Bonsai. The Ambassador's [tweets](#) from the event have been retweeted than 400 times.



more

The Bonsai workshop event videos are available on U.S. Embassy, Tokyo's social media accounts:

YouTube: https://youtu.be/ZYUGOQKac_w

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/usembassytokyo/>

FAS/Tokyo celebrates Dr. Tanksley for the Japan Prize: The Japan Prize is "a prestigious international award presented to individuals whose original and outstanding achievements are not only scientifically impressive, but have also served to promote peace and prosperity for all mankind." On April 18, Agricultural Specialists, Suguru Sato and Tomohiro Kurai attended the Japan Prize Lunch Reception to celebrate the laureates, including Dr. Steven Tanksley, a Cornell University professor emeritus, well known for his scientific contributions in the field of plant breeding, particularly the tomato. Agricultural Minister-Counselor David Miller also toasted Dr. Tanksley at the Japan Prize Presentation Ceremony and the Japan Prize Banquet on April 19.



Welcome, Kurai-san! Tomohiro Kurai (pictured above with Dr. Steven Tanksley) joined FAS/Tokyo as an Agricultural Specialist on

March 22. His portfolio includes horticultural commodities, organic products, food security and food safety issues. He earned his MS from Cornell University and a PhD in crop science from the University of Tokyo. Prior to joining the Embassy, he spent five years with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India researching dryland cereals, biofuels feedstocks and climate smart agriculture. He enjoys spending weekends with his wife and 3-year-old daughter as well as diverse ranges of activities, particularly scuba diving, tennis and golf.
