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Global Agricultural Information Network

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CAA and MAFF Educate Japanese Manufacturers and Consumers the New COOL; Ambassador Kennedy Celebrates the Holidays with Youth in Japan; Technology Can Help Japanese Agriculture Become a Growth Industry.

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General Information:

The Wasabi

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CAA and MAFF Educate Japanese Manufacturers and Consumers the New COOL: On December 21, 2016, FAS/Tokyo staff attended a seminar in Tokyo on a proposal to expand Japan's Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) requirements for food ingredients. This was one of 12 seminars being offered in 9 locations across Japan. The Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) explained the basic concepts and labeling methods of the proposed expansion of the COOL requirements for ingredients. The rule will require COOL for the major ingredients of all processed foods manufactured in Japan. Among the approximately 200 attendees, industry and consumer groups identified multiple points of concern and expressed confusion regarding the proposed expansion of the COOL requirements. The CAA indicated that it hopes to officially expand the requirements sometime in the summer of 2017. FAS/Tokyo will continue to monitor the development of this rule. For more information, please see [GAIN Report JA6048](#).

Ambassador Kennedy Celebrates the Holidays with Youth in Japan: On December 18, 2016, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy hosted a holiday party for Japanese youth who participated in grass-roots exchange activities sponsored by the Embassy. Members of the Bonsai Club of the Tokyo Metropolitan Horticultural High School (Engei HS) were among the invitees. Since the spring of 2015, Engei HS has displayed a number of spectacular *Bonsai* trees at the Ambassador's official residence. The Ambassador and her guests have greatly enjoyed the *Bonsai* trees over the last two years. Engei HS has played an instrumental role in more than 100 years of U.S.-Japan agricultural diplomacy, and is proud to continue that tradition through the art of *Bonsai* and caring for the last remaining 1915 flowering dogwood on their campus.



Ambassador Kennedy receives an explanation from Engei HS teachers and students on a Bonsai tree that the school brought to display at the Ambassador's official residence.

Last May, the Office of Agricultural Affairs coordinated an event in which the Ambassador and six

other U.S. Embassy officials received an introduction to the art of *Bonsai* from the Engei HS students. The *Bonsai* workshop event videos are available on the Embassy's social media accounts:

YouTube - https://youtu.be/ZYUGOQKac_w

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

Technology Can Help Japanese Agriculture Become a Growth Industry: On December 20, 2016, FAS/Japan staff attended a seminar on Japanese agriculture and agricultural technologies hosted by Agora Incorporated (Agora), a media company that runs an influential website. The purpose of the seminar was to help promote understanding of genetic engineering (GE) and biotech crops among the general public. Former Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Shigeru Ishiba (2008-2009) delivered a key note speech followed by a panel discussion. In his key note speech, Mr. Ishiba stressed necessity of improving the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and service sectors in order to maintain employment and income in rural areas.

The President of Agora facilitated a panel discussion on whether agricultural biotechnology, in particular GE crops, would help improve Japan's agricultural sector. The subject sparked a lively discussion between a Hokkaido farmer, the leader of a consumer group, a reporter, and former-Minister Ishiba. The Hokkaido farmer commented that GE would help reduce laborious work, such as removing weeds, and the consumer representative noted that genetic engineering is one of the innovative agricultural technologies that Japan should apply to its agricultural production. Japan imports large quantities of GE crops, despite the fact that growing GE crops in Japan is virtually impossible due to local regulations and/or anti-GE sentiment from some citizens' groups. The media representative closed the panel by suggesting continued public discourse, like the Agora event, could improve public understanding of GE technologies.