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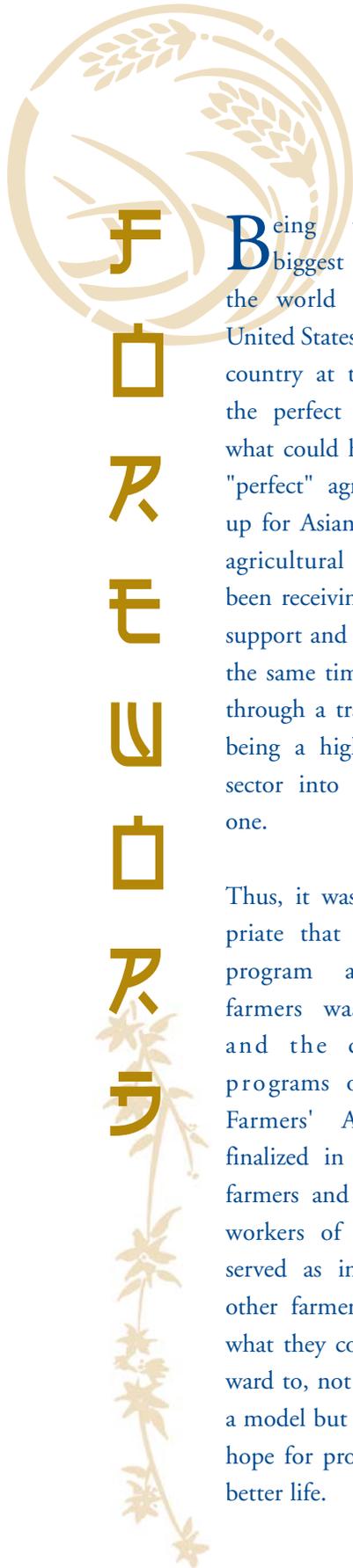
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*The Participants of the Japan Leg of the Asian Farmers' Exchange Program*



Being the second biggest economy in the world next to the United States and an Asian country at that, Japan is the perfect place to see what could have been the "perfect" agricultural setup for Asian farmers. Its agricultural sector has been receiving the highest support and subsidies. At the same time, it is going through a transition from being a highly protected sector into a liberalizing one.

Thus, it was only appropriate that an exchange program among Asia farmers was conducted and the design and programs of the Asian Farmers' Alliance was finalized in Japan. The farmers and development workers of this country served as inspiration for other farmers' groups on what they could look forward to, not necessarily as a model but as a source of hope for prosperity and a better life.

For these, we praise and thank God for allowing us to have safely gathered so many people in so different countries. We also thank him for helping us strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Asian farmers and DHRRA members who have participated in the fourth leg of the Asian Farmers' Exchange Program held in Tochigi-ken, Japan.

We, the DHRRA family and participants of the exchange program, would also like to express our sincerest and deepest gratitude to our hosts, the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) and to JaDHRRA, for sharing with us their hospitality and for helping us arrange the exchange visit.

We also would like to especially thank ARI for giving us a taste of the alternative lifestyle that they have been advocating and a glimpse on the real "soul" of Japan.



However, the farmers' exchange program would have not been possible without the support of the ASEAN Foundation and Misereor of Germany. To both partners we also would like to express our appreciation and gratitude.

Again, thank you and hoping to see you all in the near future and wishing you all success in your struggles and endeavors.

God bless!

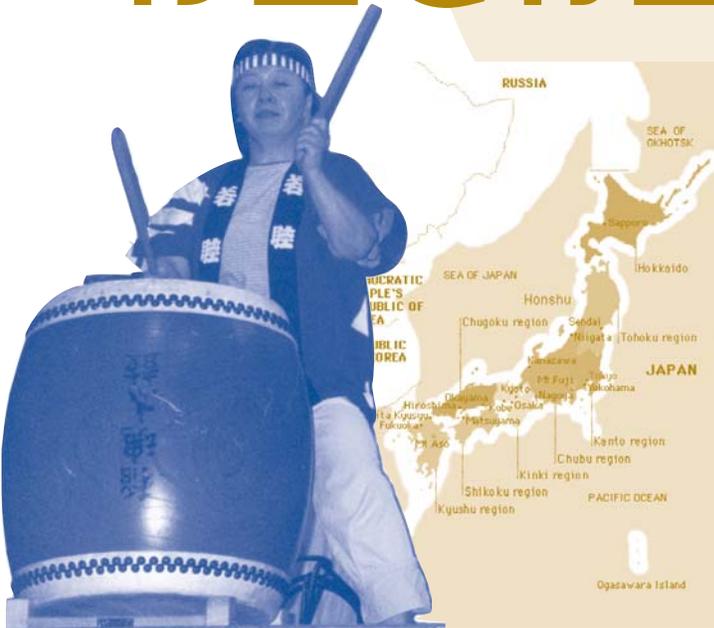
**BOSCO WEN RUEY LEE**  
*Vice Chairperson for North Asia, AsiaDHRRA*



# こんにちは

Welcome to Japan,  
Land of the Rising Sun!

# こんにちは WAT



The roads were wide and smooth, long and straight. Reflecting the strength and resolve of the Japanese people, their roads do not go around mountains but run straight through them with tunnels so long that the nauseating gas fumes from car exhausts could not escape from the middle sections of these tunnels.

These roads and highways kept company the participants

of the fourth leg of the Asian Farmers' Exchange Program held in Tochigi-ken, Japan from 24 August to 3 September 2001. For eleven days, they traveled through rural Japan to see and learn about its farmers, cooperatives, agricultural technologies and policies, as well as, its culture and heritage. Twenty-three farmer-leaders and eighteen NGO workers coming from Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam came together for the exchange visit.

Travel they did, from Narita to Tochigi-ken, to the Sionai area at Yamagata-ken, and then back. The long bus rides were quite enjoyable and interesting, providing a perfect and "cost-effective" means of seeing the Japan's countryside, which according to Fumiko, one of the ARI staff who was also our guide and friend, is the "real" soul of Japan, distinguishing it from "materialistic" Tokyo. 🐞

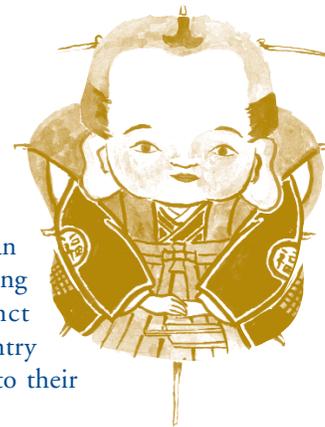


## ラボン 1 25 August 2001

### *Orientations, Country Updates, Rules and Chores*

The official start of the Farmers' Exchange Visit (FEV) mainly involved orientations on campus rules and the different chores that everybody had to do while in the ARI campus and throughout the field visits. Chores to be done in schedules and turns included washing the dishes, cooking, and cleaning of seminar room.

Dr. Yoshikuni Yatani of JaDHERRA also gave a national situationer on Japan highlighting the interconnectedness of all creatures on earth and the growing consciousness among Japanese people to preserve the environment and their distinct culture. Similarly, each participating country also reported updates on their country situations and what their respective organizations have, so far, done with regard to their country plans and commitments under the previous FEV programs.



At the end of the day, a welcome dinner, actually a feast, consisting of kara age (breaded chicken), sobas (noodles), a variety of tempuras (breaded vegetables and shrimps), among others, was prepared by ARI for the FEV participants.

## ラボン 2 26 August 2001

### *Off to Shonai*

After Sunday religious service and breakfast, the group hit the road again for the Shonai region in Yamagata prefecture. The trip took more than six hours passing through two prefectures or provinces. Thanks to the good and straight roads and tunnels, otherwise, the trip would have taken much longer.



While traveling to Yamagata, one can obviously notice how well the Japanese people planned the use of their lands. Flat lands were used for rice production while maintaining pockets of "forests" as source of wood for local communities. No built up structures, except for public comfort rooms and bus stops, can be found along the highways. Rivers and forests in the hilly and mountainous parts were preserved. From the bus, one can actually still see waterfalls and people fishing along the rivers.



Before proceeding to our accommodation in Shonai, the group first proceeded to the Matsugaoka Pioneer Memorial Museum and Silk Museum at Tsuruoka City. Here on display are the traditional farming tools and equipment of Japanese peasants dating back to the times of the samurais, daimyos and shoguns.

Upon arrival at Shonai, we were greeted by one of the city's councilors, who arranged for our stay at the Fujishima Rural Improvement Center (FRIC). We were also met by Shunetsu san who was one of the FEV



participants in the Indonesia leg of the program. It was the height of the harvest season then so he could not join us for the whole duration of the exchange visit. We were, however, scheduled to visit his family's farm later during the field visit to learn about their production and marketing of green beans the tekei way.

At Shonai, we joined up with a group of ARI students led by Miura san, Executive Director of ARI, who were also going on a field trip.



### *Impressive Japanese Discipline*

Having been on Japanese soil for only a few minutes one could already notice one outstanding trait of the Japanese people - discipline. Policemen were in uniform complete with helmets, reflectorite vests, rubber boots and overalls and standing still at designated spots. Traffic rules were strictly being observed not only in highly populated urban areas but also in the countryside. If these conducts of Japanese cops mirror those of the rest of the citizenry, it is no wonder that Japan has emerged as a superpower so swiftly from the rubbles of World War II.

### *Bento Boxes and \$1.50 Cola*

Along the way to the ARI campus in Tochigi-ken, our group of FEV participants had to stop at a Seven-Eleven convenience store to have a first taste of Japanese culture and cuisine - the Japanese bento or lunch boxes. Too hungry for just Sushi (fermented rice rolled in seaweeds) the men in our group had pork or chicken with rice while some had cold Soba or Japanese noodles.

The group was surprised, if not shocked, at how expensive food and other commodities were in Japan. For one, a can or bottle of cola costs around 140 yen or about US\$1.50!

However, those bento boxes priced at about 300 to 500 yen were worth it, as I've never seen Ka Oca, A Filipino participant, so happy after finishing one. He was praising how good Japanese rice tasted the rest of the way.

### *Public Markets*

As night caught up with us, and still some 30 minutes away from ARI, we again had to make a stop

over at a public rest area. The comfort rooms were located in a building, which could have passed for a classy restaurant. We were told that it was actually a government building that also served as public market during weekends where farmers in the area could bring their produce to sell.

As in the other public establishments we have seen so far, rest rooms were sparkingly clean and laser-automated.

### *Mock Policemen and Patrol Cars*

Traveling through the towns of Japan at night revealed an interesting traffic device -- electric posts dressed-up with reflectorites to look as policemen and patrol cars. They were supposed to serve as deterrents to speeding at night.

### *Tatami Mats and Futon*

Tatami mats are traditional Japanese beddings laid out on the wooden floors of the house, particularly in the living room and the sleeping quarters. They are good for the back and the futons that usually come with it are very comfortable and great space savers as they could be easily folded away during day time when not in use. By the way, neither shoes nor slippers are allowed on the tatami mats or in any part of a Japanese home or office for that matter.

### *No Curfews?*

We were quite surprised that during the orientations, no specific rule was mentioned regarding curfews. But after a few days of stay at the ARI campus we soon realized why. It was simply because people staying at ARI had nowhere to go at night. The campus is a long way from the nearest main road and the nearest town proper. Also, there was no local public transportation anyway.

## ラバンヨマ 27-28 August 2001

### Field Visits to Japanese Farms and Cooperatives

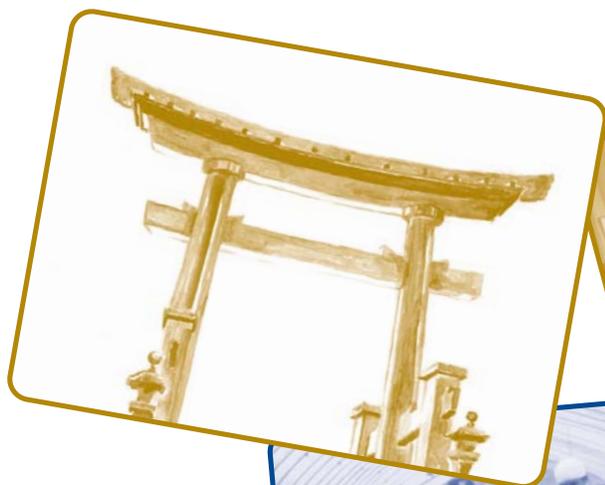
On the third and fourth day of the exchange visit, the group visited several model farmers and local consumers' cooperatives in the Shonai area. Visits and interactions with local farmers were also done to give the FEV participants a direct assessment of the situation.

Unique about the cooperatives in Shonai was the interfacing of the operations and activities of the three cooperatives to attain benefits for all stakeholders.

#### The Shonai Agriculture Cooperative Farm

Established in 1989 in Mikawa town in Yamagata prefecture, the Shonai Agriculture Cooperative Farm is relatively a small farmer's cooperative with 32 members covering 20 households but makes an annual gross sale of some US\$ 2.2 million.

Its primary ventures cover alternative marketing and food processing, in particular rice cracker and cake production. Alternative marketing initiatives of the cooperative involve the creation of alternative markets not only in Shonai but also in urban areas like Tokyo, Kobe, and Osaka. The Shonai Agriculture Cooperative Farm, as much possible, tries to directly market their goods to consumers, a marketing system known locally as tekei.



## Agricultural Land Reform in Japan

From 1946 to 1950, agrarian reform was enforced in Japan by the United States occupation forces following World War II as a means of breaking the power of the large landowners who had been the pillars of the militaristic developments in Japan during the pre-war period.

Just after the war, when the Occupation Forces had not yet taken any clear stance on land reform, the Japan Ministry of Agriculture independently drafted a land reform bill. The bill, which was to be known as the First Land Reform Bill, served as a revision of the Farmland Adjustment Law of 1938 and contained the following main revisions:

1. compulsory transfer of all land owned by absentee landlords and all tenanted land of other landowners, whose individual holding exceeded 5 hectares;
2. replacement of traditional land rent in kind to equivalent cash rent, calculated on the bases of landlords rice price (which was considerably lower than the producers price); and
3. reorganization of the Farmland Committees.

The said bill was proposed to the Diet on December 4, 1945 but was almost rejected due to the resistance by the conservatives. However, on December 9, 1945, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) issued a memorandum ordering the Japanese government to prepare plans for an agrarian reform program. Thus, the said bill was eventually passed into law by the Diet.

However, the SCAP found the bill with many deficiencies and did not approve it. Among the deficiencies found were the limited landholdings to be covered by the law. Only 900,000 hectares of tenanted land owned by only 100,000 landlords were to be subjected to compulsory transfer since landholdings of village landlords, at that time, rarely exceeded 5 hectares. The definition of "absentee landlord" was also unclear and could have provided landlords with loopholes for evading the land reform law.

After discussions between the SCAP and the Ministry of Agriculture, the first bill was revised into a more "drastic" land reform plan (called the second land reform plan) and was finally passed into law by the Diet on October 11, 1946.

The main provisions of the said law were the following:

1. Compulsory purchase of land - All farmlands owned by the government absentee landlords were to be subject to compulsory purchase by the government.

"absentee landlord" was defined as those who did not reside in the same village of the leased out land.

All tenanted lands of village landlords in excess of 1 hectare (4 hectares in Hokkaido prefecture) were also subject to compulsory purchase. Owner cultivated lands in excess of 3 hectares (12 hectares in Hokkaido) were to be purchased, if their cultivation were deemed inefficient in terms of land productivity.

2. The Purchase condition - The purchase price was set at around 760 yen per tan for paddy land and 450 yen per tan for upland. Payment to landlords was made in National Bonds with a 3.6% interest and redeemable within 30 years. The purchase price of the tenants was the same as the landlords selling price. Payments could be made in cash or in annual installments within 30 years at 3.2% interest.
3. The Land Committees - The Land Committees were set up at the village, prefecture and central level. The Village Land Committees were composed of 10 members (5 tenants, 3 landlords, and 2 owner farmers) and were responsible for drafting the purchase plan. Such plans were to be approved by the Prefecture Land Committee and lands were purchased directly by the government.
4. Other regulations - The said law also introduced other regulations aimed at controlling tenancy relations and enhancing tenants rights. For instance, all rents were to be paid in cash and the level was fixed. Tenancy contracts could not be terminated nor refused renewal without the approval of the Land Committee.

The total costs of the program reached more than 1 billion yen in the first three years (1946-1948) of its implementation, of which 60% were used for the operations while the rest represented institutional costs. From March 1947 to end of 1948, a total of 1.63 million hectares of farmlands were acquired by the government, which were also immediately sold to cultivators.

As a result of the implementation of land reform in Japan, most of the farmlands under tenancy were transferred to the cultivators. Before the reforms, in 1941, almost half of all the farmlands were cultivated by tenant farmers. By 1995, only 9% of such lands remained tenanted.

Also, 80% to 90% of the lands owned by absentee landlords (which covered some 560,000 hectares) were



### The Matsugaoka Pioneer Memorial and Silk Museums

The Matsugaoka Pioneer Memorial Museum in Tsuruoka City housed agricultural instruments and tools, including those utilized for silk production, used during ancient and pre-modern Japan. Samurai who have lost their jobs as retainers to their daimyos or feudal lords founded the city of Tsuruoka in 1872. The landowning class was abolished in 1872 as a result of the restoration of the emperor's supreme authority over Japan. Prior to the Meiji restoration period, the Emperor only exercised symbolic powers with actual political and military power rested on the Shogun. During this time, the daimyos were forced to return all their lands to the emperor.



The said samurais eventually settled in Tsuruoka, cultivated the land and established the silk factories, which at that time was the booming industry.

The museum buildings, which included five wooden buildings and an old thatched roof wooden house, were the actual restored and preserved buildings built and occupied by the very samurais who founded the city. Currently, 63 families who are direct descendants of the samurai settlers in the area still live in Matsugaoka. Those running the museum were among them.

To intensify relationships between the cooperative and consumers, the cooperative also organizes seminars and fellowships to facilitate the sharing on the price of products, problems in organic farming, and food issues between consumers and producers.

The cooperative has also organized its members into smaller groups to handle the processing of raw products into processed snacks and rice cakes. These groups start out as home-based food processors but eventually could expand into processing factories.

### The Kyouritsusha Consumer's Cooperative

On the other hand, the Kyouritsusha is a consumer's cooperative with a membership of 92,967 with annual gross sales of US\$ 197.77 million. Established in 1955 as a consumer cooperative for residents of Yamagata, it started its operations in Tsuruoka City but has now expanded throughout the Yamagata prefecture.

The cooperative serves as the direct buyers and distributors of the produce of members of the Shonai Agriculture Cooperative Farm. The farmers' products are sold at the chain of shopping centers (called "COPIA") that have been established by Kyouritsusha throughout the prefecture.

Unlike the typical co-operatives, Kyouritsusha has been active in many citizen movements involving anti-nuclear issues, and environmental and conservation activities. It has also supplied, as produced by its partner farmer cooperatives, organic food for its clients and members.

### Tagawa Agriculture Cooperative (JA)

Third in this interconnected structure of cooperatives in Shonai is the Tagawa Agriculture Cooperative (JA), which is a general farmer's cooperative established in 1996 with a membership of 19,789 covering 7 cities and a village in the Shonai area. It also makes an annual gross sale of US\$ 159.5 million.

The Tagawa Agriculture Cooperative is engaged in promoting the production and marketing of "safe and healthy food", in particular "Shonai Rice", to consumers all over Japan. This is partly in reaction to the entry of cheaper but not guaranteed safe imported rice as a result of the liberalization of Japan's rice market.

Aside from packaging and marketing its members' products, it also provides subsidies, loans and insurance to farmers. It also provides technical support and education to farmers regarding appropriate farming methods.



### Only One Bathroom?

If there is anything about Japanese culture that really baffled many foreign participants is the tendency for buildings to have several toilets, segregated for men and women, but have only one bathroom each for both male and female even if the building has a capacity to house up to 80 people.

As a result, FEV participants who are not accustomed to this Japanese practice of taking baths together with several other people, had to sign-up for a scheduled time slot when he or she can take a bath alone during the day or in the wee hours of the morning.

brought out by the participants. It was thus surprising to know that his products and farm have been certified as "organic" by a national organic certifying body.

In his persimmon orchard, the participants were shown the mulching method being used for the portion of the orchard cultivated organically. However, the farmer-participants made the same observations that they had with Mr. Shito's paddy fields. His orchard was located on a hill with the organic persimmon trees planted on the lower part of the hill while the non-organic trees were at the top of the hill. Thus, there was a very big chance of the organic persimmon trees being contaminated with chemicals through leaching as water from the non-organic trees may flow unto the organic trees when it rains.

### ... A Backyard Vegetable Farm...

At Mr. Kato's home vegetable garden, the participants were shown how he produces fermented feeds for chickens using indigenous microorganisms and corn.

He also shared how government has been encouraging farmers to plant portions of their paddy fields to green soya beans (at least, 30% of their paddy fields) in exchange for double to triple the subsidies they are currently receiving for planting rice. These, apparently, are the measures being employed by the Japanese government to mitigate the impact of its liberalization of the rice sector. The objective is to lower local rice production so as to sustain the high domestic prices of rice in the light of increasing supply of imported rice.

The following day, it was time for visits and interactions with local farmers in the area. Among those visited included Mr. Shito's organic rice farm, Mr. Kato's home vegetable garden, and Mr. Sato's cattle farm.

### A Visit to an Organic Rice Farm...

First stop for the field visits that day was Mr. Shito's organic rice paddy field and persimmon orchard. Interviews by the FEV participants with Mr. Shito revealed that he was using for his rice production High Yielding Varieties (HYV). The seeds were bought from the government. The group also found out that Mr. Shito was just using less amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and has not yet really achieved, strictly speaking, pure organic farming standards. His rice paddies were also surrounded by other rice paddies, which used conventional farming methods (i.e. use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides) indicating that his paddy fields were highly contaminated.

This is a common problem faced by organic farming practitioners not only in Japan but also in other countries as



### ... and a Cattle Farm.

The group also visited Mr. Sato's cattle farm, which had some of the most modern methods of cattle raising. The participants were requested not to enter the newly cleaned barns for fear of contamination but they noted the strict compliance with the standards on safety and sanitation.



One major observation the group made while traveling from Tochigi-ken and going around the farms was that no piece of land stood idle. Every inch of rural Japan is used. Even lands adjacent to houses and commercial establishments are planted to rice. During the 6-hour travel from Tochigi-ken to Shonai one could also not find lands left unplanted.



### Rock Avalanche Catchers and Public Comfort Rooms

While traveling from Tochigi-ken to Yamagata-ken, one cannot help but notice metal structures that looked like fences installed at the side of mountains and cliffs along the highways. These structures would stretch for kilometers and seemed to be mere fences. Apparently, these were structures designed to catch boulders falling from cliffs to prevent them from descending unto the highways.

Another remarkable structures along the highways were the public rest rooms, which again were fully laser-automated and sparkingly clean. Each public rest room was being maintained by a caretaker who, like the policemen at the Narita airport, were in full gear and just stood steadily at one spot while whistling a jolly tune. However, once people leave the premises, he was quick at cleaning the place.

### Snow Catchers

At Shonai along highways, metal structures that looked like window blinds also stretched for hundreds of meters along the smaller roads. Again, it was perplexing to know the purpose of the said structures. One of the members of the group suggested that they were racks for stacking harvested rice since they were usually located on

roads parallel to rice fields. However, our Japanese friend from ARI informed

us that they were actually designed to prevent snow in winter from blowing unto the roads. During winter, they are shut, just like window blinds to form a metal wall along the roads to block blowing snow and, occasionally, strong winds in the area.

### Expensive Trash

During the visits to the farms, the group had to stop at the house of one Japanese farmer to have lunch. After eating, the group was advised to bring with them the disposable bento boxes and mineral water containers they had just used.

Apparently, it was customary for people not to leave their trash in other people's houses because the host family would have to pay for the trash when collected from them. Trash is actually weighed and its collection paid for in Japan. Penalties are also imposed on trash that are thrown in undesignated areas or are put out for collection outside the designated time for collection.

No wonder Japan is so clean and that the people in Mr. Kato's community were more than happy to give him their biodegradable wastes (i.e. left-over foods, etc.), which he uses for his fermented chicken feeds.

## うらぶ 29 August 2001

### *Climbing a Holy Mountain and Back to Tochigi-ken*

It was now time to go back to ARI at Tochigi-ken. But just before doing that, the group went for some sight seeing and hiking up a holy mountain.

Thinking that the climb was going to be just for a few meters up a hill, the whole group, both young and old, decided to go hiking up the mountain.

At first, there were a lot to see and the path was still relatively flat. There was a century-old pine tree, a 500 year-old pagoda, and several Shinto shrines.

But just right after the 500 year-old pagoda, the path takes a sharp turn to the left and then there it was -- the stairway to heaven, a 2 kilometer climb up the mountain at a 45-degree angle. The stone-curved steps made the climb a little "easier" compared to what monks a few hundred years back had to endure when they had to climb the mountain, as part of their training, without the steps.

The climb, which was quite a challenge and took more than two hours, was a real experience both physically and spiritually. It reminded us how much we could push ourselves beyond what we conceived as our limitations. It also taught us to appreciate God's creations and things that we have usually taken for granted -- such as a sip of water from a spring at the top of the mountain.

At the top of the mountain were majestic and ancient Shinto temples where people prayed and made their



#### *Fortunes, Wishing Blocks and Trees*

It has been customary for visitors or pilgrims to Shinto shrines to purchase wooden blocks or special papers where they can write their wishes. These wooden blocks and sheets of paper, after saying a prayer, are then hanged in a designated place in front of the temple. For the sheets of paper, they are usually tied or pinned to a tree.

Small pieces of paper with fortunes written on them could also be bought from the temple. Unfortunately, they were written in Japanese, which we could not read. Our Japanese



friends valiantly translated for us as we listen in awe.

#### *Cleansing and Refreshing at the Temples*

As a rite of purification or cleansing, it was also customary for temple pilgrims to first refresh or drink from a special water fountain, which usually is supplied by a spring, before entering the grounds of a Shinto shrine. Thus, many of the Japanese pilgrims were surprised to see some of the participants of the FEV splashing water from the fountain on their sweat drenched faces to cool off after the hard climb up the holy mountain.





## Japan Farm Policies

Prior to World War II, Japan has already adopted protectionist policies for agriculture sector. In the 1930s, Japan already implemented rice policies to maintain domestic rice prices through government marketing and controls of imports.

However, a more aggressive protection policy on the agricultural sector was sought after World War II as the local economy, including the agriculture sector, was badly ravaged and food shortages lasted for several years afterwards.

Thus, it became the objective of the Japanese government to achieve the following:

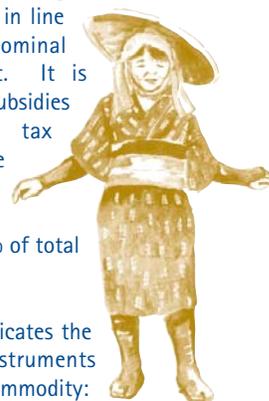
1. Parity of farm and non-farm incomes;
2. Self-sufficiency in major food stuffs; and
3. Improvement of farm productivity.

To achieve such goals, the Japanese government adopted the following commodity protection instruments:

1. Import Restrictions - These apply either through explicit quotas or through state trading. Rice imports are controlled through state trading via the Food Agency, which also controls wheat and barley. While another state trading organization, the Livestock Industry Promotion Corporation, controls beef, butter, and powdered milk.
2. Price Support Policy - Which includes Price Stabilization Programs (for meat, and dairy

products) with buffer stock operations supporting domestic prices between ceiling and floor prices, where the stabilized price zone is higher than the equilibrium price so that the buffer stock creates a loss that is financed by government, partly through import levies on beef. Deficiency Payments (DP) are also used for soybeans, rapeseed and milk products. Milk products DP is partly financed from state trading profits in the marketing of milk.

3. Capital Subsidies - By 1984, some 40% of total agricultural investment was funded from government subsidies, while 80% of land infrastructure (farm ditches, irrigation improvement, farmland consolidation, farm rent subsidies, as well as major drainage schemes) was so funded. These percentages increased more or less in line with the rate of nominal protection on output. It is estimated that net subsidies (net of farmers tax payments, which are minimized through various unspecified means) amount to 35% of total agricultural GDP.



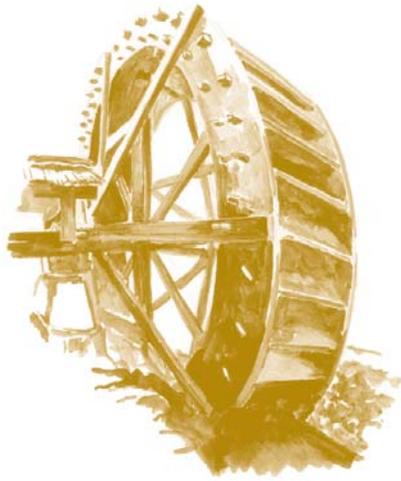
Below, is a table that indicates the different protection instruments that has been used per commodity:

### Commodity Protection Instruments

Commodity	Direct Subsidy	Quantitative Restrictions	Import Duties
Rice	yes	yes	yes
Wheat & Barley	yes	yes	yes
Coarse Grains	no	very limited	No (for livestock feed)
Sugar	yes (indirect)	no	yes
Fruit	no	no	yes
Beef	yes (indirect)	no	yes
Dairy	yes (indirect)	no	yes



## Witnessing Solidarity among Japanese Farmers



The farmers, especially those from the developing countries, just found it amusing to hear the heads of the cooperatives and the farmers complaining about the hard-times and competition they were experiencing and facing. Amusing in the sense that the level of support and subsidy they were still receiving from their government was still very much bigger than what cooperatives and farmers in developing countries receive. "In our country, farmers worry what they will eat for the day and yet is still able to laugh at his predicament. Here, their subsidies are reduced and they already complain," said one farmer.

However, we have to give it to the Japanese farmers and cooperatives for not taking things lying down. The Japanese cooperatives are uniting and putting up a fight against encroaching multi-nationals. And the Japanese government is developing measures of continuing support and protection for its farmers (e.g. imposition of 900% sales tax on imported rice if

### The Asian Rural Institute (ARI)

*"That we may live together"*

The Asian Rural Institute (ARI), a non-traditional and faith-based training center, was founded in 1973 by Rev. Toshiro Takami to provide rural leaders from all over the globe practical "hands-on" training in leadership and in food production within a rural community setting.

Since its foundation, ARI has trained more than 900 people from 47 countries in the skills of leadership, community organization, sustainable agriculture and simple community living.

ARI is guided by its mission statement, which states that:

*"The mission of the Asian Rural Institute is to build an environmentally healthy, just and peaceful world, in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential. This mission is rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.*

*To carry out this mission, we nurture and train rural leaders for a life of sharing. Leaders, both women and men, who live and work in grassroots rural communities primarily in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, form a community of learning each year together with the staff and other residents.*

*Through community-based learning, we study the best ways for rural people to share and enhance resources and abilities for the common good. We present a challenge to ourselves and to the whole world in our approach to food and life."*

ARI's motto is: "That we may live together."

Located 170 kilometers north of Tokyo in Tochigi Prefecture of Japan within the town of Nishinasuno, the six-hectare ARI campus consists not only of classrooms and dormitories but also farm fields, gardens, livestock pens, fishponds, compost production areas, and other facilities.

ARI's rural location also means that it can draw on the expertise of local farmers who cooperate with ARI's program - which focuses on the development within an individual a wide range of skills rather than on intensive specialization.

At ARI, emphasis on learning and work as a "community" is also taught. Every student and staff is required to take turns in the chores (i.e. maintaining the gardens and animal pens and fishponds, cleaning, cooking and washing dishes). Also, both teaching and learning from each other is practiced.

sold in the local market, increased support for crop diversification, etc.) as compared to other third world governments who aside from refusing to put up a fight are even embracing the whole neo-liberalization ideology even if the livelihood of its poor farmers are already being ruined.

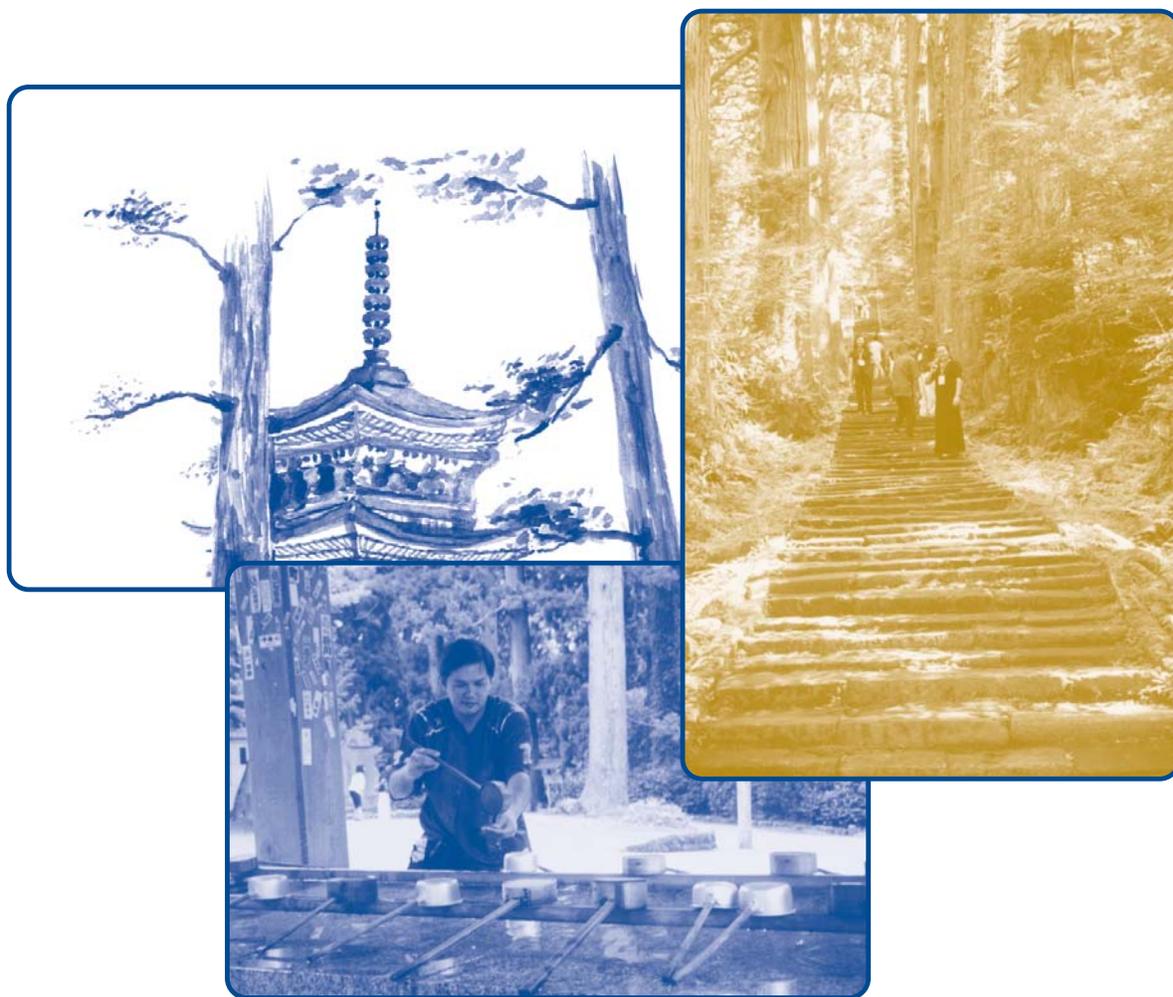
### *A Lost Farming Generation?*

It was also sad to see very old farmers (we saw farmers, both men and women, who were 60-80 years old) still working in their farms because the young ones preferred to work in the cities and factories where "the pay is higher but the work is much less difficult." The average age of Japanese farmers in 1993 was 55 years old and its total number fell from 8.1 million in 1970 to 3.4 million in 1993.

### *An Evening of More Reflection and Sharing*

In the evening, after a short visit downtown, Dr. Yoshiro Takami, Honorary President and founder of ARI, gave a talk on the history of ARI and its training program. (See related box story).

After Dr. Takami's talk, the group was off to ARI's bazaar. A room-full of used clothes donated to ARI,



## うらな 31 August 2001

### ARJ Tour, Lectures and Bokashi-Making

Day seven of the FEV was "ARI Day."

The day started at around 6:30 in the morning with a tour of the 16-hectare ARI farm where ARI students had their hands-on training on farming. The farm also provided for the food requirements of the campus. The farm had paddy fields, charcoal kilns, fishponds, chicken pens, pens for cows, pigs and goats, compost and biogas production areas, and a vegetable garden.

After breakfast, FEV participants had a choice of attending a series of lectures or making bokashi or organic fertilizer.

The lecture series covered the following topics:

1. Organic Farming and Alternative Marketing by Mr. Fumio Takahashi of Green Earth Farmers;
2. Alternative International Trade by Mr. Kazuo Kobayashi of Negros Campaign; and
3. Sustainable Agriculture Movement: Experience of an NGO in Northern Thailand.

The lecture series was capped by a panel discussion on alternative marketing and on agriculture and rural development.

Meanwhile, more than half of the FEV participants were off to make bokashi. It involved collecting dried chicken manure from the chicken pen. Then, it was mixed with clay subsoil, rice husk charcoal, rice brown and water. The FEV participants took turns in mixing the said materials. At the end it, the heap was covered and left to "ferment" for 10-14 days.

The FEV participants were also shown how rice husk charcoal was made. It mainly involved the use of a "stove", which is basically an oilcan with a chimney. Fire is started in the stove and then dry rice husks are piled around the stove until the rice husks turn black.

The day ended with a fellowship dinner with each country preparing a local viand. After dinner, each country rendered a special number ranging from local songs (or for some chants) to traditional and modern dances.

#### 100 Yen Stores and Second Hand Shops

Before leaving Tochigi-ken, the group visited downtown and shopped around at "100 Yen shops" where everything was priced at 100 Yen. It was quite ironic that we were shopping in Japan but the items being sold at these 100 Yen shops were mostly made from China or Korea. There were Japanese lamps, kites and fans made in China and plastic wares coming from Korea. Huh, globalization...what a strange bedmate.

Equally interesting, however, were the second hand shops and warehouses were old refurbished items like Japanese tea pots and cups, kitchen and cook wares, home accessories and decors, used clothes and even home appliances that can be bought at prices less than 50 percent of original brand new price. Patience and sharp eyes, however, are necessary for that prized find.

But what were really unimaginable were the 15-minute shopping drills that the FEV participants had. The group's bus, with JB as our strict timekeeper, would stop at one shop and would be given only 15 minutes to look around and buy what they wanted. Then it was off to another shop for another 15 minutes. By regular standards, this was unheard of, as "mallng" usually took, at least, half a day on a leisurely pace. Another taste of Japanese discipline and value for time?

# 1-2 September 2001

## AFA Business Meeting

The last two official days of the FEV were spent on discussions on the Asian Farmers' Alliance for Sustainable Rural Development or AFA in short. The discussions started with AsiaDHRRA Chairperson Guillermo Cua giving a talk on strategies for rural solidarity building.

### Refresher on the Context & Steps Undertaken in the Alliance Formation

Mohammad Subandi of API then presented the context and history of the proposal to form the farmers' alliance. As presented by Mr. Subandi, the alliance formation process developed throughout the earlier exchange visits. During the first FEV held at Suwon, South Korea in November 1999, the participants raised the importance of solidarity among Asia's poor rural communities. As a result, a joint declaration was issued for the formation of a solidarity group that will advocate for the rights of the small farmers especially in the light of globalization's onslaught on agriculture.

This was further reiterated during the second FEV held in the Philippines last July 2000 where an Ad Hoc Committee composed of farmer-leaders from five national organizations was formed and acted as interim adviser in the formulation of the next program's design and agenda.

Then on March 2001, during the 3rd FEV held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the alliance was formally organized after an Asian peasant agenda was forged by the participating farmer-leaders from the twelve participating countries. A working committee was also given the task of drafting a discussion paper that details the plans for the alliance formation process. The committee, composed of farmer-leaders from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, met in Baguio, Philippines last June 2001 and came up with the details on the alliance formation process, which were to be presented in these discussions.

### Of Vision and Reasons for Being

After laying down the basis for unity and therefore the need for the alliance, the rest of the members of the working committee took turns in presenting key elements of the alliance. First, Mr. Phromma Kengkla of NFAD-FAD and Mrs. Hoang Dieu Tuyet of VNFU presented the proposed vision, mission

### AFA's Vision and Mission Statements

The Asian region is home to diversity. From the cultures to socio-political and economic realities, Asia presents a wide spectrum of evolving contexts. However, in the midst of such diversity and differences, bases for solidarity and unity abound. As farmers, we share common concerns, common dreams, and common values.

We envision Asian rural communities free from hunger and poverty, ensured of food security, characterized by peace, happiness, good health, and prosperity where farmers, both men and women, own or have access and control over the land and nurture it through sustainable, appropriate, integrated, organic and environment-friendly agricultural practices and technologies; and are self-reliant, educated, and able to participate in development processes through politically strong, socially responsive, culturally sensitive and economically-viable organizations which pave way for fair market for their products and enable them to maintain control over their goods and services.

As a strong alliance of Asian farmers, our mission is to strengthen solidarity among farmers through the advancement of their sectoral agenda and protection of their rights. We endeavor to build a strong and dynamic regional lobby for genuine agrarian reform and sustainable rural development, while facilitating the exchange of creative local grassroots initiatives that attempt to address the roots of rural poverty.



and goals of the alliance as well as its proposed programs. Then, Ka Aning Loza of PAKISAMA then presented the proposed membership criteria, privileges and functions.

### *Alliance Formation Process Consensus*

After the presentations, sub-regional workshops were held to discuss the alliance formation process. The following consensus points were made during the plenary:

1. The formation of an alliance of farmers in Asia is important;
2. Given all the outputs, points and concerns raised during the plenary discussions, it was agreed that there was a need to allow for more consultations, deeper analyses and reflections to ensure a strong alliance formation process;
3. The concerns of the northern farmers and farmers' organizations were to be reflected in the final form of the alliance;
4. The task of follow-throughs regarding the alliance formation process was given to the working committee; and
5. Mandate was given to AsiaDHRRA in starting the development of a follow up program for the alliance and to raise resources for this.

## さよなら 10 **3 September 2001** *Sayonara and Arigato!*

At three in the morning, participants of the exchange visit have started to board the ARI bus for the trip to the Narita International Airport for their flights back to their respective countries.

Some were still half-asleep due to the previous night's revelry, while many were already excited to be home again with their loved ones. However, all were thankful for the opportunity to have seen, smelled, tasted, breathed, and lived the "real" Japan even for a few days.



# List of Participants

## Cambodia

Mr. Ouk Sokha  
Mr. Sou Sery Da

## Indonesia

Mr. Mohammad Subandi  
Mr. Mamock Sugijatmo  
Ms. Dwi Astuti  
Mr. Soetrisno Kusumohadi

## Japan

Mr. Yoshikuni Yatani  
Mr. Kisaku Uchida

## Lao PDR

Ms. Bounthith  
Mr. Sengpaseuth Simmanivong

## Malaysia

Ms. Parvathi Letchumanan  
Mr. Siliveraju Gurulingam  
Mr. Kok Pak Choy  
Ms. Chan Kah Chi

## Myanmar

Mr. Basilio Maung Than Taut

## Nepal

Ms. Bindu Shree Shrestha  
Ms. Sunita Yonzon

## Philippines

Mr. Ananias Loza  
Mr. Oscar Castillo  
Mr. Ernesto Lim, Jr.  
Mr. Guillermo Cua

## South Korea

Mr. Sang Jun Youn  
Mr. Sung Lee

## Taiwan ROC

Mr. Chien Chih Wu  
Mr. Tzong-chig Chiu  
Mr. Tsai Wei Su  
Mr. Bosco Lee

## Thailand

Mr. Phomma Kengkla  
Mr. Thawatchai Khayanying  
Ms. Napasri Maneewong  
Mr. Paiboon Chareonsap

## Vietnam

Ms. Hoang Dieu Tuyet  
Mr. Bui Quang Toan

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AsiaDHRRA is a regional network of 11 development organizations from 10 Asian countries working in the rural areas.

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