

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

Voluntary - Public

Date: 4/16/2010

GAIN Report Number: JA0506

Japan

Post: Tokyo ATO

Partners in Agriculture

Report Categories:

Market Development Reports

Approved By:

Michael Conlon, Director, ATO Japan

Prepared By:

Matthew John Thoren, Intern, ATO Japan

Report Highlights:

As part of the *Partners in Agriculture* celebration, a delegation of Senior Nebraska farm representatives visited Japan from March 6 through 10 and the U.S. Embassy hosted a reception for the Japan Agricultural Exchange Council (JAEC), an organization which has played a vital role in bolstering a mutual understanding between the United States and Japan.

The Nebraska delegation's activities included farm visits, a U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) hosted supermarket tour, and a month long Nebraska beef promotion at the new Major League Baseball Cafe in the upscale Ebisu district of Tokyo. The culmination of the Nebraska visit was the reception at the U.S. Ambassador's residence on March 9 in honor of the JAEC and the Nebraska delegation. Since 1952, JAEC has sent over 12,000 young Japanese farmers to the United States, including 350 to Nebraska. The event was attended by the Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, the President of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, and the Japanese Minister of Agriculture.

General Information:

Introduction

About Partners in Agriculture

Partners in Agriculture is a series of events that is taking place from March through mid-summer of 2010 and aims to commemorate the tremendous success of the cooperator program, the special agricultural relationship between the United States and Japan, the 50th anniversary of the Grains Council, and the 50th anniversary of the Iowa hog lift and the Iowa-Yamanashi sister-state relationship.

Partners in Agriculture began on March 2 at FOODEX 2010, Asia's largest food trade show, and included a press conference held by U.S. Ambassador John Roos to kick off the celebration.

Nebraska Delegation Tour

Led by Nebraska Farm Bureau President Keith Olsen, a special delegation of top representatives from Nebraska's farming industry arrived in Tokyo on March 6th. The delegation paid a visit to Japan to deepen relationships with Japanese buyers and wholesalers and further their knowledge of the Japanese agriculture sector and market for agriculture products. Visiting members included representatives from Nebraska's beef, pork, soy and corn industries, many of whom were here for the first time.

Farm Visits

On March 7th, the delegation visited two farms in Kanagawa prefecture to explore Japanese agribusiness and opportunities for collaboration. The tour, organized by JAEC in conjunction with the Nebraska Center Japan Office, included a strawberry farm and a hog farm.

FAS/Japan's Briefing

On the following day, the Nebraska delegation, in cooperation with FAS/Japan, participated in a U.S. Embassy briefing. Representatives from the political and economic sections of the U.S. Embassy, the Foreign Commercial Service and the Office of Agricultural Affairs made presentations for the delegation about the economic, political, and agricultural situation in Japan. After the briefing, Japan representatives from the U.S. Soybean Association, U.S. Grains Council

and USMEF offered their insights on the Japanese market to the delegation. The meeting was followed by a luncheon with the Nebraska Center Japan Office and ATO staff.

Supermarket Visits

The delegation had the opportunity to visit two supermarkets in the Greater Tokyo Area arranged and hosted by USMEF Japan staff. Both stores had just launched USMEF sponsored POS promotions for American products at the time of the delegates' visit.

The first location, DAIEI Inc., Ichikawa store, located approximately 15 miles from central Tokyo, was chosen as an outlet representative of supermarkets catering to suburban Tokyo households. The delegation was met by Mahito Takeuchi, Chief Procurement Officer for the DAIEI meat division. DAIEI is the third largest supermarket in Japan with sales of over \$9 billion dollars.

The second location, COMODI IIDA Co., Ltd. in the Kinshicho area was representative of smaller outlets where households located closer to central Tokyo shop. The delegation was met by the head of the meat procurement department, Mr. Ryuichi Oshio. The tours gave the delegates the opportunity to communicate directly with the buyers and processors of U.S. meat products and strengthen their relationship.

Those representing the Nebraska meat industry were especially excited to engage with consumers purchasing U.S. meat products at the two supermarkets. The Nebraska delegation presented gifts at the end of each visit to their supermarket hosts.

Reception by the delegation at MLB Cafe

On the evening of March 8, the Nebraska delegation hosted a reception for Japanese traders to express their appreciation for the partnership in agriculture between Japan and the United States. The reception was held at the world's only official Major League Baseball cafe restaurant in Tokyo's upscale Ebisu district. The occasion provided a platform for the Nebraska delegation to welcome their customers to an American environment for one evening in exchange for being hosted in Japan throughout their visit.

Keith Olsen, Nebraska Farm Bureau President, Stan Garbacz, Nebraska Agriculture Trade Representative and Geoffrey Wiggin, U.S. Minister Counselor of Agriculture addressed the attendees. Approximately 70 Japanese traders, U.S. cooperator group representatives and the hosting Nebraska delegates attended the event. The Cafe served a buffet style dinner with Nebraska

beef and pork spare ribs, as part of a one-month Nebraska food fair at the cafe.

JAEC Reception

On March 9, James P. Zumwalt, Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, hosted a reception at the U.S. Ambassador's residence honoring the JAEC and the members of the Nebraska delegation. The history of the JAEC goes back to 1952 and the event marked the special partnership between the United States and Japan.

Japan Minister of Agriculture Hirotaka Akamatsu, the Guest of Honor, expressed appreciation for the opportunities given to young Japanese farmers through the JAEC program and emphasized further cooperation between the U.S. and Japan in agriculture.

Mr. Inoue, Chairman of the Japan Agricultural Exchange Commission, gave a very short introduction in English and then shared his experiences leading to JAEC leadership in Japanese. Mr. Inoue is one of over 12,000 distinguished young farmers who have been on the JAEC program to study agriculture in the U.S. since 1952 and have played key roles in Japanese agriculture and boosting mutual understanding. Mr. Inoue studied agricultural methods at a livestock farm in Iowa for one year in 1970.

Upon return to Japan, he inherited his family livestock operation. When the Japanese beef market was liberalized, he switched to raise *wagyu* (high end domestic beef) cattle, which has grown to an impressive 800 head today. Mr. Inoue now also serves as the Chairman of the Nara Prefecture Farm Instructors Association.

Following Mr. Inoue's speech, James P. Zumwalt, U.S. Deputy Charge of Mission addressed guests in Japanese about the importance of the evening's events and a hope for continued strength in U.S. – Japan agriculture relations.

Nebraska Farm Bureau President Keith Olsen joined Mr. Inoue in expressing his appreciation for the cooperation between the United States and Japan. Mr. Olsen noted that his enthusiasm for JAEC was enhanced by six months he previously spent in India studying local agriculture practices. Mr. Olsen, who also serves as the American Farm Bureau Federation board of directors, produces wheat, certified seed wheat and ecofallow corn at his farm near Grant in southwest Nebraska. Since the early 1950s, Nebraska has hosted 350 young Japanese farmers under the JAEC program.

Finally, Mr. Yoshio Okawara, Japanese Ambassador to the United States from 1980 to 1985, gave a toast to the reception and U.S. – Japan Agricultural relations. Ambassador Okawara served as Chairman of JAEC for 11 years until 1999 and as an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign affairs for 15 years until 2000. Ambassador Okawara currently is a special advisor to JAEC.

The JAEC reception reaffirmed the importance of grassroots level agricultural exchange between the United States and Japan for mutual growth and understanding. The reception was an absolute success with well over 90 percent of invitees accepting the invitation to the reception. Attendees included five additional officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Japan, several business leaders in the agriculture trade in Eastern Japan, chairpersons from two prestigious cooking schools and 148 JAEC members.

Furthermore, the California Watermelon Commission in conjunction with the event announced that they would be sponsoring one participant to study in the United States through the JAEC program.

Media Coverage

Multiple mass media organizations also attended the event, facilitating public exposure to the long term partnership in agriculture between the United States and Japan. Five senior members of Japanese print media organizations including the Mainichi Newspaper, the Japan Agricultural News and NHK Television, Japan's most watched network station, covered the event. Following the greetings from guest speakers, media personnel were given the opportunity to interview selected guests, including Keith Olsen.

With opportunities for engagement between the Nebraska delegation, their buyers, traders and customers, in-store and restaurant promotions, two major receptions with ministerial level involvement, and highlighting grassroots level agricultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan with media coverage, this portion of *Partners in Agriculture* was a grand success.



PIA Logo



Japanese Minister of Agriculture Akamatsu at the JAEC reception



Supermarket visit during the American fair