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Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

Future Farmers of America and Japan Celebrate 35 Years of Exchanges, U.S. Foreign Service Officers Talk with FAA National Officers about U.S.-Japan Trade Relations, FFA Visits Vertical Farming Research Hub at Chiba University, AHEC's Responsible Purchasing Policy Program is First to be Recognized by Japan's Furniture Industry, U.S. Douglas Fir Gains Access to \$500 Million Japanese Subsidy Program, Major Supermarket Chain in Kansai Holds American Fair

General Information:

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Future Farmers of America and Japan Celebrate 35 Years of Exchanges: On January 31, 2014 the Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Officer team visited with Future Farmers of Japan (FFJ) at Tokyo Metropolitan Horticultural High School for an afternoon of diplomacy and cultural exchange. The FFJ students represented five different Tokyo-area high schools and led the FFA team through various cultural exchange activities including calligraphy, cup-and-ball, tea ceremony, the FFJ national dance/anthem

(pictured below) and the game “ninja,” which is apparently popular with young people on both sides of the Pacific. The U.S. Embassy, Tokyo’s Agricultural Attaché Evan Mangino presented the FFA team and President of FFJ with letters from Ambassador Kennedy congratulating the two groups on 35 years successful exchanges. Increasing support for student exchanges between Japan and the United States is among Ambassador Kennedy’s top priorities.



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Service Officers Talk with FAA National Officers about U.S.-Japan Trade Relations:

On January 28, 2014 the Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Officer team stopped by the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo for an overview of the Japanese food and agricultural market and the U.S.-Japan trade relationship. 2014 is the 35th year that the FFA National Officer team has come to Japan to learn more about this critically important export market for U.S. agricultural products. In addition to meeting with the whole USDA/Foreign agricultural Service (FAS) Japan

team, the FFA National Officers engaged with a number of first- and second-tour officers working in the Embassy to learn more about careers in the Foreign Service and international relations.

FFA Visits Vertical Farming Research Hub at Chiba University:

On January 27, 2014 the Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Officer team visited the Graduate School of Horticulture at Chiba University to learn about Japan’s cutting edge research in “plant growing factories.” The U.S. Embassy, Tokyo’s Agricultural Specialist and former Chiba University Assistant Professor Suguru Sato joined the team to explain some of the finer points of the advantages and challenges presented by growing



vegetables in controlled environments, including green houses and plant factories with 100% artificial light. The team saw a variety of lettuces and tomatoes in production and learned more about the public-private partnerships that support research at Chiba University.



AHEC's Responsible Purchasing Policy Program is First to be Recognized by Japan's Furniture Industry: On January 21, 2014 the Japan Federation of Wood Industry Associations (Zenmokuren) approved the American Hardwood Export Council's Responsible Purchasing Policy (RPP) program participants as the first non-Japanese group to be officially recognized as suppliers of "legal wood." As the Japan Furniture Industry Association recently declared that all of its members would be required to use only officially recognized legal wood in the future, Zenmokuren's decision should improve U.S. hardwood's competitive advantage relative to exporters

across East and Southeast Asia. U.S. hardwood lumber exports to Japan were worth \$58 million in 2012.

U.S. Douglas Fir Gains Access to \$500 Million Japanese Subsidy Program: On December 17, 2013, the U.S. softwoods industry scored a major success when the Government of Japan recognized U.S. Douglas fir as a "local species," qualifying over 90% of U.S. softwood exports to Japan for benefits under a \$500 million Japanese domestic subsidy program known as the Wood Use Point Program (WUPP). Though many nations, including Canada the United States' largest competitor in the Japanese market, have attempted to qualify for WUPP benefits, the United States alone has succeeded. The U.S. industry accomplished this coup with support and guidance from the Office of Agricultural Affairs in Tokyo over the last 9 months. This accomplishment will improve the competitiveness of U.S. softwood exports in the historically important Japanese wood products market, which was worth nearly \$800 million to U.S. producers in 2013.



Major Supermarket Chain in Kansai Holds American Fair: During November 14-20, 2013, Kansai Super Market Ltd., a major supermarket chain in Western Japan, held an American Fair at all of its 63 outlets. The annual promotion, sponsored by the Royal Company and the California Table Grape Commission, and endorsed by the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO), has been expanding in size since its start in 2011. This year, the fair not only featured varieties of California table grapes, pomegranates, strawberries, celery, lemon, and American pork, but also included American beef for the first time. Kansai Super Market Ltd stated that because more consumers in

the region were becoming aware of the tasty and easy-to-eat U.S.-grown seedless table grapes and they planned to continue their marketing efforts to support further market penetration. During this event, ATO Japan Director Steve Shnitzler also supported this event by endorsing the high-quality of U.S. grown agricultural products, including those being featured.
