

FY 2015 Re-inventing Japan Project Leadership Development in the Fields of Food, Agriculture, and the Environment in Latin America (Short-term)

Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia (UFRA) - Environmental Engineering and Renewable Energy – 2nd Year - Luna Leite Sidrim

My name is Luna Leite Sidrim, I'm 20 years old and I'm a 2nd year student at Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia (UFRA), majoring in Environmental Engineering and Renewable Energy.

I applied for the exchange for several reasons. First of all, I've always had interest on the Japanese language and culture. I'm currently taking Japanese lessons, so when the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program in Japan showed up I was eager to apply. Second, this trip would be a huge personal experience. It was my first time traveling all by myself to a different country, especially to a place like Japan, whose culture is so distinct from the Brazilian one. And last but not least, for the academic reasons. At first look, the theme of the program didn't seem to fit with my graduation course, but as I was studying the topics I could find many relatable things.

The issue of the food industry and agriculture, in Brazil and Latin America, related to the environment, is a crucial topic to be developed, once the current molds are far from the sustainability and environment preservation. This exchange was important for me to understand and look for solutions, once dealing with agriculture is also dealing with the whole environment. Therefore, with the right and sustainable techniques, it is possible to mitigate serious problems, such as contaminations and food shortage. Besides that, it is possible to search for ways of avoiding the ecosystem degradation, and also understand the effects on economics and social scopes.

The program had two weeks of duration and had a schedule with interesting activities for each day. The first week was focused on getting to know the Setagaya Campus facilities and departments. We arrived in Japan on February 16th and met the students from Peru and Mexico at the airport. After that, we were guided by Mr. Iwai to Tokyo NODAI, Setagaya Campus, where we were going to stay during the program. In that afternoon, we visited some sports departments they have at the university, such as archery and sumo. It was my first seeing these sports, so it was really interesting! At night, we had a welcome party dinner at Aiya Setagaya Oakland, and there we met some professors and other people that helped and guided us during our stay.

On the 18th, we had Orientation with Professor Suzuki and learned about the Tokyo NODAI campuses and history of foundation. We also visited the library, a huge building with 5 floors that give all the support you need for studying and searching. It was the most beautiful and well equipped library I've ever been. In the afternoon, we visited the Department of Fermentation Science and had a lecture by Professor Tokuoka about the history of sake and how it is produced. We also could taste different types of sake and smell its refined aromas.

After that, we visited the Department of Bioproduction and Environment Engineering, directed by Professor Suzuki. This one was definitely my favorite! I was amazed by how they manage to transform the leftovers of the cafeteria university and the High School's restaurant into fertilizers. A process that usually would take 2 months, they do it in only 2 hours. They also have a machine that can produce methane without using water in the process. The preoccupation with the garbage destiny is really intense in Japan. They have selected trash bins for different kinds of garbage everywhere and people respect that. I wish people have this conscience here in Brazil; it would improve the well-being, keep the environment clean and healthiness of the population.

On the 3rd day of our stay we visited the Departments of International Agricultural Development guided by Professor Sanada and a lecture on Japanese agriculture with Professor Gojyo. On the first Department, we visited many laboratories with high technologies equipments, and it was really interesting to know that they have interest in others countries' agricultures and aliments. The lecture given by Professor gojyo was about the management of family agriculture, the positive sides and some problems they are facing.

On Saturday morning we had an explanation of Mercado of Tokyo NODAI, where they sell products manufactured by the university and local farmers. Then, we had our first day of market internship with Mercado at NODAI Setagaya Campus. We could learn about the products, how to deal

with costumers and even some Japanese words! We could also interact with other NODAI students and help them with the market selling.

Sunday was Tour of Tokyo day! Mr. May took us to Shinjuku to visit the Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden. It was one of the most beautiful places I've ever been! Even on winter there were some Sakura trees that bloomed in colors. It must be even more beautiful on spring and fall. After that we had lunch and went to Shibuya to spend the rest of the day.

On February 22th, we had lectures on Japanese agriculture with Professor Shiwachi, and Japanese classes with Mrs. Yamada. We learned about the traditional Japanese agriculture techniques, main fruits and vegetables that are planted and the different types of products around the country. After that, we had Japanese lessons with Mrs. Yamada, who taught us hiragana and katakana, greetings and the particles. After lunch, we visited Futakotamagawa with Professor Suzuki to learn about the Japanese culture. We visited a market and a traditional Japanese garden.

From 23th to 26th of February, we went to Nagano, Nagawa-machi, to have a cultural experience of village life. There, we visited the Obsidiam museum to learn about the Japanese ancient history and how to make stonewears. We also visited Shinshuu Tate Iwa Japanese Village to learn how to make soba and a Japanese fan. On our 3rd day there, we visited the Matsumoto Castle and the Suwa Grand Shrine. I'm really grateful for all the things I experienced in this trip. The view was outstanding and the food was really delicious!!

On our last day, we had a meeting with the mayor of the city and we did a presentation about the activities we did there and what we learned. They also requested our opinions on how to make the city more visible for tourists, since the number of young people is decreasing fast and the elders can't take care of their plantations by themselves. We gave some ideas, and I hope they will be helpful for them in the future.



On the weekend, we had market internship Mercado in Hachioji, and this time there were a lot of people. It was a really interesting experience, just as it was on the first day. We spent the whole day helping the NODAI students to sell the products, met new people and I even got to speak the bit of Japanese I know.

On the 29th, we visited three departments of NODAI Atsugi Campus, which are Department of Agriculture, Department of Animal Science and the Department of Human and Animal-Plant Relationships. The Campus is really beautiful, but smaller than the Setagaya one. We learned there about the food quality and techniques on how to keep the fruits and vegetables fresh for a longer time. We also visited many laboratories of the Department of Animal Science, and saw how plants and animals can help people with disable problems.

On that same day, we visited the Isehara Farm. There we could see a lot of green houses with hydroponic and ornamental plants. We visited the orchards too, which has traditional and foreign fruits.

March 1st was our last day of activities on the Campus. We made a presentation for the Professors Tokuoka and Suziki about what we did and learned during our stay in Japan. After that we met the NODAI students that went to Peru and Mexico, and the one that came to Brazil. That was my favorite part! We had a cultural exchange and talked a lot about the things we experience on each other's countries. I'm sure I made friends that day! The next day we went to the airport to travel back to our respective countries.

This exchange was really important for me in so many ways. I feel like I've grown there with all the things that I learned. I met wonderful people and got to experience a whole different and amazing culture. It was relevant for my career as well, even though I'm still in the beginning of the course and don't know what I want to work with in the future. The things I learned there introduced me to a new side of the environment and I could compare the Japan situation with the Brazil one. There are so many aspects that we can build on in the search of solutions to environmental and social problems in Brazil. I hope that, after I finish my graduation course, I'll be able to help the country to improve for a place that respects the environment and people's wellbeing.

As for the program itself, I don't think it needs many improvements. I was well received, the schedule was full of interesting activities and, by the end of the exchange, I got my JASSO scholarship. My only suggestion is to add another day for touring. I feel like I could have seen so much more of the city, just one day is not enough.

I'd like to thank the Tokyo NODAI again for the amazing opportunity I was given. I'll take the things I learned during the program with me for the rest of my life. I've grown so much, both as a person and as a student. I hope I'll be able to come back to Japan to learn more and experience that beautiful culture again.

