

2016 Re-inventing Japan Project (Short-Term)

International Students Summit

“Luiz de Queiroz” College of Agriculture – Department of Entomology and Acarology

4th Year Leonardo Libardi Miraldo

1. Purpose of participating in the study abroad program

My main purpose was to participate in the ISS to discuss issues related to Food, Agriculture and Environment in the New Century as well as to learn new culture and people from all around the world.

2. Activities done during the program and how they were related to the purpose

First of all, the ISS organization is incredible! When I and Prof. Helaine arrived at the Narita Airport, there were people waiting to help us to get the bus to T-CAT. After that, the ISS student coordinator (Yuki Inoue) and his friends received us with so enthusiasm. Next, we entered in the subway to go to the Tokyo University of Agriculture (or Tokyo NODAI as they usually call it). After almost 2 hours, we had arrived at Tokyo NODAI. There were some students who had already arrived sooner than me. After solving some issues at the Center for International Programs (CIP), I went to the men’s dormitory with Yuki where he taught some Japanese rituals, for example: we should take off our shoes before entering the dormitory and also wear a Japanese sandal to walk around inside the dormitory.

After that, we went to a sushi restaurant near the University. It was such an amazing experience, because the Japanese food from Japan is very different from the Brazilian’s Japanese food. Besides, I could talk to my session’s friends (Tom, from China; Fernando, from Mexico and Hlib, from Ukraine) and other Japanese students. During the dinner I learned that the water is free in almost every place (so different from Brazil) and also how to eat sushi and hold on the hashi (Japanese sticks), of course. When we came back to the dormitory, I met my two room mates, Kim Hyo Guk from South Korea and Nyambar Ganbold from Mongolia. Except them, I also met the participants from the other countries who were in the same place. This diversity is one of the most important reasons that makes the ISS being unforgettable. There I could learn many traditional trends which helped me getting better as citizen.

In the following day, we went to the Railway Museum. It was fantastic! There we learned about more than thirty subways and its evolution until nowadays. Next, we had lunch together inside the Railway Museum where I tasted the famous green tea (I really like it!). After that, we went to the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum where they showed us more than hundred Bonsai. There, a friendly woman talked to us how to cultivate a Bonsai, how we should see it and its behavior during all the seasons. Besides, we saw the oldest Bonsai (more than 1,000 years according to the woman) and the heaviest one (more than 100 Kg). When we were coming back to the University, I opened a candy bag from Brazil and all the people inside the bus really enjoyed it. After that, everyday one of the students offered a typical candy from their country (I really miss those delicious candies).

The next two days were very busy. First, the session chairpersons and also the students went to a classroom at 8:30 am, where we stayed until 8:00 pm. During that time, we changed some mistakes in our presentation and rehearsed it many times, in order to get a better performance in the final presentation. After we finished all the presentations, we started to work in our session conclusion presentation and also its script. In this sense, we wrote in the room board some topics about each presentation, for example: positive/negative points, similarities and differences, targets, goals, time frame, problems, future plan and students action.

During the preparation, I could realize some challenges, for example: We are from different nations (China, Brazil, Ukraine and Mexico) and also different points of view from the same topic. So, considering our differences, the major challenge was how could we link our ideas in order to get just one session conclusion. After a lot of discussion, we got it by 10:00 pm. In this sense, besides improving my English and meeting people from different countries, I could improve my relationship with people who think the opposite from me. Furthermore, the ISS provide me the idea that despite our differences, as a student, we can make the world a better place, through the idea: "Act local, think global".

In the following day, all the ISS participants got together in the same room and we were separated in 4 big groups, in order to discuss some cases about the environmental justice, mainly food security, sustainable agriculture and education issues. First, we discussed about food security, how can we produce more food with less natural resources and also less pesticides, considering the climate change effects and the lack of information by the population. In this sense, there were some very interesting solutions, for example: students producing organic food in the University, students promoting extension programs to small farmers near the city in order to help them how to recycle their trash and use it in the agriculture, students promoting the urban agriculture in order to produce food inside the big cities and the rational use of Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)

After we discussed all the cases, each group started to prepare the cases' conclusion and the next ISS theme purpose. Next, we shared the theme purposes and we realized an interesting fact: all the theme purposes were so similar. In this sense, we linked all the theme purpose into one: "Students Taking Action to Address Inequality Through Greater Access to Resources and Knowledge in order to Promote Sustainable Agriculture. Moreover, we are living in an unequal world, because there is a lot of disparity cases, for example: developing and developed countries, rich and poor, natural resources distribution and unequal access to knowledge and education. Despite the government support, the ISS helped me to figure out that the students can fill this inequality up through disseminating research results to the farmers and also use the technology as a tool for such action. After that, we elected 10 students to prepare the general discussion and its script based on all the session conclusions.

In the following day, it was the first day of the ISS and the participants anxiety was increasing quickly. First of all, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of The University of Western Australia (UWA), Kent Anderson, talked about how can UWA and others Universities help to feed the world in the coming years, considering the climate change and also the world growth population. Next, after the break, the presentations started by the Field and Food Security Session. As a result, I could realize some actions in order to promote the food security, for example through extension program to the near communities. Otherwise, the food security is also a difficult issue to discuss considering that the majority of the farmers have been cultivating in an intensive agriculture system. The next session discussed about Agricultural Development. In this sense, I could see that the organic production and also the environmental worry is increasing all around the world. Moreover, many students are promoting extension programs to small farmers through technologies innovations and research results spreading. Next, there were presentations in the field of environment which talked a lot about the environment protection and restoration, preserving the biodiversity in order to provide a better environment and also agriculture conditions through the cooperation between extension students group and the farmers. After that, I visited some sports centers inside the Tokyo NODAI, for example: archery, baseball, athletics, kendo, sumo and also soccer. Throughout the visit I could realize some important points: discipline and perseverance. In this sense, I learned the sport can help the self-esteem of the student and also his responsibility.

The discussions about environment issues continued on the next day. Although, the students concluded the amount of agrochemicals used in agriculture is decreasing in many countries, the natural resources pollution is a fact. Moreover, there is limited support from the government and the competition between big companies and student-founded companies is unfair. In this sense, as students, we can promote the rational use of agrochemicals, promote organic food production inside the University and also promote extension programs. The last two sessions discussed about the field of education and as others sessions, the students focused in organic production, extension programs and also environmental protection.

After that, the general discussion was conducted by the general chairperson (Kyoko Inagaki, Felipe Goh and Dario Takahashi) in order to conclude all the session conclusion and I think the message of the 16th ISS was: Students are able to fill the gap between university and farmers through extension programs in order to promote the tradeoff between food production and natural resources use.

Next, there were some amazing activities during the closing ceremony. First a Tokyo NODAI students group presented the “turnip dance” which was very interesting because of their traditional clothes, seriousness and motor co-ordination. Next, the final ceremony speech was started by the Tokyo NODAI vice president followed by the delivery certification from the Tokyo NODAI organization to the ISS presenters. After that, all the ISS participants (advisors, presenters and organizers) had dinner together, celebrating the program end. That time was amazing, because I could talk to some advisors and also presenters that didn’t belong to my session during the ISS program. Moreover, I could improve my english and also increase my networking.

On the October 1st we visited some tourist points in Japan. As the past days, we took subway to go everywhere many times (very different from Brazil which has few cities with subway station). First, we walked around the Tokyo Station and the stores inside it. Then, we bought some souvenirs for our family when we came back home. Second, we went to the Emperor Palace which is a very beautiful building. Next, we visited the Asakusa Shrine temple and its Garden. It was a very good experience because the Garden is a peaceful place which transmits good energy. After that, we went to Akihabara which is a very big commercial center composed by big building and many people walking around the streets. During our visit, we bought some stuff and also ate delicious Ramem (typical japanese food).

In summary, the ISS program was perfect for me and the people from Japan and also others countries were very receptive. In my point of view, the program helped all students to become a better person in order to build a better world for the next generations.

3. What I accomplished and learn through this program

Through the ISS program I learned that people differences can be essential for solving a problem/challenge if their share the same goal. In this sense, I also improved my capacity to relate with different people. Next, I could improve my oratory skills through presentation rehearsal and also the ISS final presentation. Besides, I came back to Brazil with the idea that there are, at least, one student in each country who want to make the world a better place. Furthermore, each ISS presenter has the mission to spread the ISS conclusion to the local community, in order to increase the number of people who believe in a better world.

4. How did this program shape my career and how i’m going to apply what I had learned in the future

The ISS program transformed me into a better citizen through the discussions with different people. Besides, the program helped me to be more organized and also improved my critical sense. Based on that, I can relate to people in a better way through acting with leadership in order to solve all the challenges. Furthermore, the ISS increased my environmental worried so, wherever I’ll work, I’ll always think about the environmental impact of any action/decision.

Moreover, the program showed to me that students are able to help the community through promoting extension programs in order to spread the research information from the University to the society and farmers near the cities.

5. Suggestions to improve the program

The ISS organization is impeccable, but I think they can improve some stuff to the next year, for example: They can allow the students to use the refrigerator, in order to save their breakfast for the following day. Besides, it’s more interesting for the students visit one farm and one museum, instead of two museums. Finally, I think the ISS coordinators can promote some activities with

others sessions, for example: a dinner with another session, in order to provide the integration between the sessions.

6. Pictures



A part of turnip dance group



My session friends inside the Asakusa Shrine garden



Saying goodbye to Japan



Last dinner in Akihabara with session participants and ISS coordinators