

2019 Comprehensive International Education Program, Re-inventing Japan Project
(Short term), 19th International Students Summit, RJP Program

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In September 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in a short-term exchange program to Tokyo University of Agriculture. In this program, I aimed to perform activities that would contribute to my learning about a more sustainable agriculture and the efficient management of natural resources, a topic of extreme relevance in the world today, in addition of learning new methods and technologies, which could be adapted to my region. Besides, I had the purpose of doing the exchange of culture and knowledge with other participants, as well as learn about Japanese culture.

From September 7th to 13th, occurred the Comprehensive International Education Program (CIEP). The program aimed to teach local and foreign students about food, agriculture and environment in Asia, focused in Japan. In the first day, we learned about Japanese history and culture, visiting the National Museum of Japanese History (Figure 1), including the botanical garden. Then, we stayed in a hotel in Chiba prefecture, where we watched some lectures about the CIEP theme and group work. In the second day, we went to Koshiho farm to do some fieldwork, based on traditional Japanese agriculture. The division of activities was according to each group. We had the chance to learn about planting, weeding, harvesting and other agricultural activities. Later, we visited a pear plantation at Naito farm, where we could learn about some pear types, in addition of management techniques, such as pruning and grafting. In the third day, we visited a pear-processing factory at Shirai, where the locals sorted and packed the pears. In the afternoon, we visited and plant factory at Chiba university campus, where we had a lecture about hydroponics and then, learned about high technologies applied to plant producing. In the fourth day, we visited Nodai's Atsugi Campus, where we had a lecture about Japanese soils. Then, we visited Isehara farm, where we saw some experimental plantations of tomatoes, grapes and apples. In the afternoon, we travelled to Kanagawa prefecture, in order to visit Kanagawa Agricultural Technology Center, where we had a lecture about their activities and researches. After, we visited some greenhouses with controlled luminosity, temperature and moisture, where they grew tomatoes. In this place, we could see the highest technology level applied to agriculture. In the next day, we had two lectures in the morning time. The first one was about desertification in Ethiopia and climate changes in Japan. The second one was about food value chain. In the afternoon, each group reunited to discuss about a problem identified during the program, and some solutions for this problem. The next day had a similar schedule, with two lectures in the morning, one about environment and agriculture in Asia and another about taste modifiers, and discussion in-group in the afternoon. In the last day, each group had to make a presentation about the problems and solutions found, and the discussion of the previous day. The morning time was reserved for groups' preparation, which were held in the afternoon. Later, there was a completion ceremony, where our certificates were delivered. It was an intense, but very interesting week.

Figure 1. Visiting the National Museum of Japanese History.



Author: Salvador P. Catelo (2019).

On September 14th, the Latin-American students participated the Re-inventing Japan project, a small internship where we were able to know the ERECON (Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation) project. We travelled to Machida region, where firstly we had some lectures about the ERECON activities. Then, we had a small theoretical and practical course about pelletized compost. In the afternoon, we observed the Satoyama farming, which allies agriculture with native forest, creating a sustainable environment. In the same region, we visited some ancient temples and a castle built in the 16th century. During this day, we had the chance to learn about initiatives that aimed a more sustainable agriculture and about the Japanese culture as well.

Figure 2. Satoyama way of farming.



Author: Saulo Chaves (2019)

From September 16th to 20th, the 19th ISS (International Students Summit) took place at Tokyo University of Agriculture. The event had the theme “Youth transforming thoughts on sustainable agriculture and resource management to connect local and global community”. It was a whole week of discussion about the theme and other related subjects. In the first day, all participants travelled to Kosuge Village, a small village located in a mountainous region. There, we were able to learn about traditional Japanese lifestyle, including adapted mountainous agriculture methods. In the second day, we watched some lectures given by the advisors. That way, we learned about some researches held in each participant country. In the afternoon, we had rehearsals for the next day presentations. In the third day, began the presentations of each participant. In the morning, there were two sessions: Agriculture and Environment. I stayed at the Environment session, where I presented my study. Then, there was a discussion about the theme and the studies presented. Since I presented in this day, the next day was just of discussion and watching my colleagues’ presentations. In September 20th, we reunited to discuss about the next year theme and our groups general conclusion. In the last day, there was an overall session in the Yokoi hall, where we each group exposed its conclusion about the event and relevant subjects. In the same day, some high school students presented some interesting researches in posters. At the end, there was a reception party in the university restaurant, where our certificates were delivered. It was a great week of discussion, learning and meeting new people.

Figure 3. General group discussion.



Author: Salvador P. Catelo (2019)

Through this program I was able to know another culture, know new people and acquire a lot of knowledge about food, environment and agriculture. To know another reality besides our own country is a great experience. The Japanese agriculture is a lesson in adaptability, in how to do agriculture with little space, in resiliency given the natural disasters, in value the product quality. To see how other cultures deal with environmental problems and food security helps to come up with new solutions for our own country's problems. Besides the knowledge about the themes, I was able to learn about other cultures, to practice the respect for other customs, to listen and respect different opinions. Lastly, I was able to practice the English language, improving it for future occasions.

This experience provided me the capacity to discuss about several issues through a global point of view. It was an invitation for getting out of my bubble and seeing the food, environment and agriculture issue through the bigger picture. Besides, the international experience provides greater value to the curriculum, what is very important to open new doors, either from employment, either for studying in better universities. For all of that, I am very grateful to the Tokyo University of Agriculture, for the opportunity to have this unique experience, which I will remember all my life.