

2016 Re-inventing Japan Project (Short-Term)
International Students Summit, Comprehensive International Education Program, RJP
Internship

Department of Soils · 2nd Year · Fernando de Jesús Montaña López

Japan has always been an amazing country for me, since I started studying Japanese my teachers have taught me many things about Japan and Japanese people, that is why I wanted to go to Japan when I saw the opportunity.

My main purpose of participating in the study abroad program was learning topics related to agriculture, environment and food; how Japanese scientists tackle the problems in these areas and how people participate in it. Moreover, not only about academic knowledge but also personal knowledge, Japan is a well-known country because the population have a healthy, respectful and honest lifestyle, they love working and helping each other. Therefore, visiting Japan wasn't only about learning science, it was about learning Japanese culture as well, feeling Japan as it is.

Other purpose was knowing people from different parts of the world to talk about what is happening in our countries and how we try to overcome problems, to share ideas and make friends.



During the first week in Japan we participated in the 16th International Students Summit (ISS) on Food, Agriculture and Environment in the New Century. The first days we gathered by Session, we checked our speeches and the PowerPoint presentations and we did some rehearsals. There, we had the opportunity to know each other, the problems our countries face and what we are doing in our universities.

After all the discussions in each session, we had a general meeting in which we were reorganized by groups of around seven people, there we did a workshop where we discussed some topics related to environment, sustainable development, education, biodiversity, agriculture, to name a few, and what are the current problems we have to solve as society, all these to try to give some solutions to improve the situation in economy, society and environment.

After putting in the table all the questions, each group proposed the topic for the next 17th International Students Summit in 2017. Then, the whole group of presenters and chairpersons decided the topic for the 17th ISS and a group of about seven people of all the presenters defined the objectives of next ISS to be held in Taiwan. By doing all these activities my knowledge about agriculture, environment and food around the globe increased, my view point about these affairs changed. That day, we went to the auditorium

where we were going to present or topic.



The ISS day we all were very excited because our academic advisors, Japanese students from Tokyo NODAI and now new friends were there. Everybody dressed smart and we talked to the audience about the paper we wrote. All presenters did well, we were a little bit nervous but we did it. There I improved my public speaking ability and I had the opportunity to listen to many international students.



The 16th International Students Summit concluded with success.

During the second week, we had many lectures. The Comprehensive International Education Program (CIEP) started with lectures and workshops on the first day. Then, we had an amazing field trip to Aoki Village in Nagano Prefecture. We learnt lots of things there. On first day, we met the major who was graduated from Tokyo University of Agriculture, he gave us a warm welcome, later we visited a local museum and then we went to the hotel.

On second day, in groups we harvested some fruits and learned from local farmers. Local smallholders taught me many things about loving agriculture, respecting environment, and agricultural practices. Japanese farmers are brave men and women that love their lands and they are committed to Japanese

agricultural development.

During another visit, teachers and local people introduced us the Japanese Agriculture Cooperative (JA) model that are regional co-ops in Japan that supply members with input for production, undertake packaging, transportation, and marketing of agricultural products, and provide financial services. I think learning what JAs were helped me to understand in a better way the condition of marketing agricultural products in Mexico and the problems we have, in order to establish associations like this one.

We had a cooking class too, we had lots of fun in trying to prepare Oyaki, where local people helped and taught to do this.



After having many lectures, visiting many places and knowing many incredible local people we went back to Tokyo NODAI.

Back in NODAI, we attended some other lectures and prepared a theme to present the final day, together with my team, we talked about Trade Liberalization or Protecting Economies in Asian countries. These activities helped me to understand some processes in economy, agriculture and environment. The CIEP concluded with many academic and personal knowledge learnt.



The last days in Japan, some students of Latin America including me, took a course about Sustainable Agriculture in the Institute of Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation (ERECON). There we took some other lectures given by the staff, and they guide us to agricultural lands inside Tokyo, where people cultivate some vegetables as an education service provided to little kids or people that don't know anything about agriculture. We met local farmers from outside Tokyo and they taught us agricultural practices. We walked through the forest as well.

We learnt the concept of Satoyama and we made biofertilizer pellets. All these activities encouraged because they were more related to soil science, the major I am studying, so I asked many questions about soil management in Satoyama and how do they study soil preservation and conservation in Japan.



Learning outcomes during my visit to Japan were many, not only about scientific knowledge but also about lifestyle and personal values. I realized about the situation in different parts of the world and Japan, the problems we are currently facing like poverty, climate change, food security, biodiversity deterioration to name a few; and alternative solutions to overcome them around the world and in Japan. In Agriculture and Environment, how Japanese people and government are trying to improve them by supporting programs, farming practices, market chains and research. Now, I think I can describe in a better way the importance of sustainable agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources in Japan, Asia and Mexico. I strongly believe that all the knowledge I obtained will help me to achieve better results in my life.

All the learning outcomes helped me to define my future career in soil science, but trying to focus all my experience learned on environmental protection and sustainable development. I am totally interested in keep learning Japanese culture and language as well as participate in other programs like this one to promote agriculture and environment sustainability in my country. Firstly, finishing my major and then trying to do a masters or doctors degree in Japan if possible. My travel to Japan really encouraged me to keep studying and working hard to reach all my objectives in professional and personal life.

I want to apply the knowledge of Satoyama and Japanese Agriculture Cooperatives in Mexico, I want to develop a program to support young farmers by giving them technical assistance, to raise awareness in young Mexican students about agriculture and environment. And develop a big project based on JA, because from my perspective that would be a key to help Mexican farmers. My next step is keep learning Japanese and try to study in Japan again and still learn Japanese culture as well as continue my major in

soil science in a better way.

Regarding suggestions, I would say that we should take more time during the ISS, like organizing dinners together after working to know each other better and then be able to share more information. However, all the program was perfect.