

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

Faculty of Agronomy • Department of Horticulture • 5<sup>th</sup> Year  
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My purpose of participating in this program was learning more about agriculture, food and environmental issues, share experiences and discuss with people from around the world with different points of view. As a student, I think is important to know what other universities or countries are doing to face their problems because we can open our mind and propose new alternatives adapted to our country, and we had that opportunity in the International Students Summit (ISS).

We started the ISS program dividing in sessions about our presentation's theme. I was in Session 2-2 called Students' actions in the field of agricultural development There we shared our projects and worked in it to improve for the presentation day. Then, we tried to identify the common points for our session conclusion. At the beginning it was a little difficult because in my session we had different kinds of projects but I think it helped to discuss more and deeper about our projects and our role as a student to achieve sustainable agricultural development.

The third day, we joined with the other sessions to write the general conclusion and decide the theme for the next ISS. So, we were divided in new workgroups. In there, we discussed and answered some questions about our action fields. Then, we share our conclusions with all the people and identify common points for our general conclusion. Finally, we had two day of presentations. I could see that develop and developing countries, in general, have similar problems but the way they face and their ability to deal with those challenges are different. The work was hard but success.

I think that kind of discussion is important to understand challenges and opportunities in other countries. As a student, I realize my role to develop a sustainable agriculture and strengthen my commitment to work in that. Share all that kind of projects makes me feel that we have hope in the future because we are working now to build a better world.



Session 2.2: Students' actions in the field of agricultural development

The second week, we started with the Comprehensive International Education Program (CIEP). That course was about Asian agriculture focus in Japanese sustainable agriculture, consumption and the emerging problems in food, agriculture, environment and energy.

We started with lectures to have an overview about Japanese agriculture. We reviewed some statistics, characteristics and challenges, and formed workgroups for a debate.

The second day we went to our field trip in Aoki village, in Nagano. We stayed there in a traditional hotel for 3 nights and 4 days. Our intention was to observe the rural area and recognize some challenges for our debate theme. Moreover, we did some agricultural practices like natzuhase, rice and apple harvesting with farmers and cooking a traditional dish. We visited the Japanese Agriculture Shinshu Ueda Distribution Center and saw post-harvest and packing process of some products like flowers, grapes, apples, tomatoes and other vegetables. We complement our farmer practices with lectures and workshops. The last day in Nagano, we visited Ueda Park.

Back in Tokyo we continued with workshops and lectures. I really enjoyed the lecture about Agroecology and sustainable farming in Asia because I am very interested in that theme. We discussed a little about land distribution and how Japanese tradition influence in that. The professor explained us that they divide the mountain in three. The lower and the middle part of the mountain are for agriculture, logging and other human activities but the higher part is sacred because gods and spirits live there. That reminds me some traditions in Peruvian highland where some mountains are sacred and consider like protective spirits called Apus, and of course is not for human activities. Also she talked how the migration of young people to cities not only affects the production in rural areas, it also contributes to loss traditions. I like that approach because I think in agriculture in a holistic way, not only as a production activity.

In our workshops we analysed deeper our issue and prepared for our debate. The themes that were presented the last day was about MGO, Japanese Agriculture cooperative (JA), use of pesticides focus in glyphosate, plastic packaging and nuclear energy. I think that the debate was successful because we can learn about many topics in a short time and a broader view about Japanese challenges.

At the end of the program, I could find some common point between Japanese and Peruvian agriculture. First of all, the land distribution. Both are mountain countries with a low percentage of arable land. Second, the small land farm property area because is small as in Peru but in Japan the agriculture is intensive and diversified. Third, the aging of farmers and the absence of young people in the countryside. Fourth, some traditional customs in relation with nature.



Re-Inventing Japan Project (RJP) Internship was the last program. I was carried out at the Institute of

Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation (ERECON), in Machida, Tokyo. The objective of this course was understand the importance of sustainable use of natural resources in Japan and learn more about sustainable farming practices.

We start with a presentation and a lecture. Then we visited a local farm and there we could see many crops. The farmers explain us about their system. I was very surprised because they have a diversified and small land. They plant vegetables and fruit trees and use technology like plastic or greenhouse. After that, we did a trekking and saw more farms with many crops through the route. To complement the field trip, we had a lecture about Satoyama Initiative. That system was new for me. I am agree with propose to develop societies that live in harmony with nature, to conserve the rural landscape and the agro-ecological approach. I think that in the future I could work with this initiative as an alternative in some rural areas in my country.

The next day we learnt more about ERECON's projects in Asia and did some practices like preparing compost in pellets and helping in a community activity: Planting flowers in front of the Institute with that compost.

I think that compost in pellets is a good innovation that can help to reduce soil erosion as they explain.

In general, I think that the three programs were successful because I learnt a lot about challenges and actions around the world in the field of agriculture and environment. I have an overview about Japanese agriculture and the emerging problems and finally, I think that we need a different approach where humans and nature are considered, we need to work with agro-ecological system for a sustainable development. Now, I realize the importance of student's role in the sustainable development of agriculture and strengthen my commitment to work in that.



I have some suggestion to improve the program and could help to have a more comfortable stay:

- Give a map with a route to the train station
- The Jasso scholarship is very helpful but maybe the amount could increase to 90 000 yenes.
- In the ISS: I think the organization could tell to the presenters that they will need a script so they can work on it before travelling to Japan.

- One more day for sightseeing: Tokyo is amazing but it is a little difficult to visit many places specially because as a foreign I didn't know the transportation system and some of our students assistance didn't know too, so we expend a lot of time to go to one place for another. Also because the work was hard and took more time than the schedule.