

2017 Re-inventing Japan Program (Long Term)

Escola Superior de Agricultura “Luiz de Queiroz” (ESALQ) - Universidade de São Paulo (USP)

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I. Purpose of participating in the study abroad program:

1. To improve my Japanese skills (Japanese classes at Tokyo NODAI and contact with Japanese people).
2. To learn about Japanese culture (history, traditions, gastronomy, society) and Japanese agriculture (production scale, supply chain, food marketing, research and Japanese technologies, companies, familiar and organic agriculture and contact with farmers, agriculture history and importance to Japanese society).
2. To know about Tokyo NODAI (history, structure, campuses and practice areas, Faculties and Graduate School, careers, departments and laboratories, traditions, academic clubs and events such as NODAI Harvest Festival).
3. To attend classes related to my study field and have activities in the genetic laboratory at Tokyo NODAI to get practical experience.
4. To have an international experience and learn more about culture of other countries and to improve also my English skills.

II. Activities:

September:

I arrived in Japan on September 19th and my classes started on September 21th. I attended all the classes (in English) to choose the ones that were interesting and related to my study field. And I attend all Japanese classes to know my Japanese level. I chose the subjects Comparative Agriculture Development and Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. About Japanese classes, I chose to attend classes in the basic level.

Besides, I went to Bioscience Department to meet my host professor, Mr. Matsumoto. We planned the activities during my exchange in Japan. I also visited some laboratories, departments and the infrastructure of Tokyo NODAI.

October:

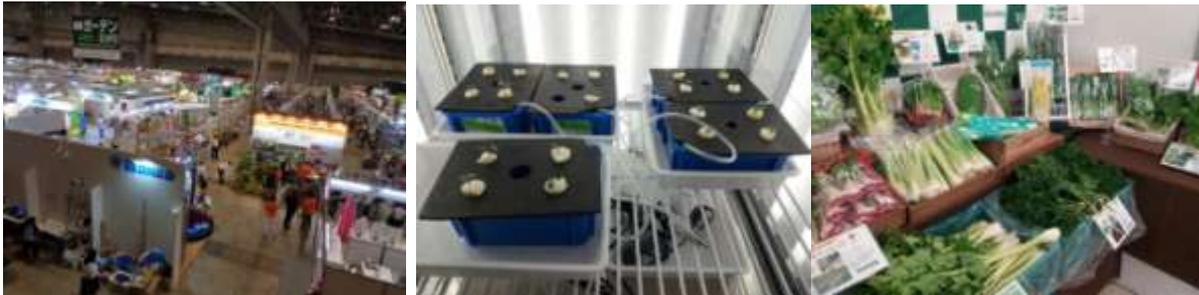
After I had met Tokyo NODAI, I visited many places related to my study field. I had the opportunity to visit an event in Chiba city, the Japan's largest flower & plant industry trade show where I could see about food science, flower and Japanese agriculture.

I also went to *Tsukiji* Market, the biggest fish market in the world where we can find a variety of sea food and the fair around the fish market (Japanese teas, candies, appetizers, dry fruits, vegetables etc).

A group of Brazilian students from São Paulo University (ESALQ/USP) and Rural Federal University of the Amazon (UFRA, in Portuguese) came to NODAI to stay one week in Japan. During this period of time, it happened a NODAI Welcome Party for all the Re-inventing Japan Program students and for this group too. I went with them to Shibuya and Akihabara to know more about Japanese young culture.

I also went the Horticulture Department at NODAI to visit Professor Shinohara's laboratory. He showed his greenhouses and presented me to the Development Agriculture Abroad study group. This group is composed by 20 people and they prepared a welcome party for me and I could help them in the preparations for NODAI Harvest Festival.

Besides, I went to Tsukuba University to meet Professor Hiroshi that works with tomato breeding. He showed me his laboratories, researches, greenhouses and he presented his masters and pH students. I also met his assistant professors. We had a meeting to discuss about the possibilities to do a master degree in Japan.



November:

In this month, I went to vegetable and wasabi farms in Nagano Prefecture and also to an orange farm in Shizuoka Prefecture. There, I helped farmers to harvest vegetables and oranges and they taught me a lot of things about Japanese agriculture techniques, packing house techniques, storage and logistic. I had the opportunity to experience the routine of a Japanese farmer. I could see that it is a routine of a lot of hard work and they give their best to produce food.

Besides, I went to an event related to Food Service in Gotanda and I learned more about the trends of Japanese food industry. There were many Japanese companies and farmers showing their products and services. And I went to the Farmers Market in Setagaya, organized by Japan Agriculture Cooperative (JA) and a traditional Japanese house next to it.

I was able to realize my dream of visiting Kyoto, Miyajima and Hiroshima. It was an immersion in the Japanese culture. I also went to Nikko to see the famous autumn leaves that there is not in Brazil.

At NODAI, it happened the traditional Harvest Festival where I saw students very united and hardworking showing what they are learning in the laboratories, researches, academic clubs etc. There were a lot of tents with food from many Japanese Prefectures and diverse countries too. I also helped my Brazilian *senpais* in the preparations for the festival. It was a very interesting experience. I was so surprised to see the effort that students made to show the “NODAI culture”.

In my Japanese class, we had a class about origami I also started to give some Portuguese classes to a NODAI student and she taught me Japanese too. And in my laboratory, I started my experiment with radish breeding and I learned techniques related to molecular breeding.



December:

At Tokyo University of Agriculture (TUA), I participated in many Christmas celebrations (International Student Development Group, Japanese Class, etc). In these parties, I made more friends and I learned how Christmas is commemorated and its meaning for Japanese people. I was surprised because Christmas is not a holiday in Japan. It is very different in Brazil, because all the families enjoy this holiday together and there is a religious meaning.

Besides, I had a very interesting experience in a tea ceremony in the house of a professor who teaches it to NODAI foreigner students. She taught me many techniques about how to prepare and drink tea, formalities etc.

I also went to Harajuku to see Japanese young culture, Yokohama and Chinatown to learn more about the differences and similar aspects between Chinese and Japanese culture; Odaiba to see an incredible artificial island and I went to Kamakura and I learned the influence of Buddhism in Japanese culture.



January:

First, I went to a *renkon* farm in Ibaraki Prefecture where I learned techniques about crop management, harvesting and packing house.

Second, I went to Ota market, the biggest fresh product market in Japan where products come from all prefectures of Japan and other countries. I learned about logistic and ripening process of bananas from Peru and the Philippines. After that, I visited the Kanagawa Research Institute where I learned more about onion, cabbage and radish breeding. There, I saw practical researches such as evaluation of spacing between plants

to increase productivity, size reduction of radish to facilitate harvesting, cold resistance etc. I also visited an orchid production and I was really surprised with the technology and methods to cultivate this flower.

Third, I could understand more about Japanese culture and gastronomy in a Japanese Culture Festival at Tokyo Dome. There was food from all the regions of Japan and I could see traditional dance and decoration. I also went to *Meiji Jingu* during the *oshougatsu* (the first three days in the New Year) and it was amazing to understand how it is important this holiday for Japanese people. I received *Nengajou* (New Year commemorative postcard), *Otoshidama* (envelope with money for children or teenagers during the New Year's holiday) and *Kagami Mochi* (a special decoration of the Japanese New Year to bring good luck and prosperity in the New Year) from Japanese professors and friends. A traditional event that I went was the *seijinshiki* (coming age ceremony, commemorated in the first Monday of January in the year that Japanese people complete 20 years old).

Besides, I went to the Real Palace to see the Japanese Real Family in the second day of January. I was a great opportunity to know the importance of the Real Family how it influences Japanese life. I learned that they have a lot of protocols to do during the year and they also pray for the Japanese society to have a peaceful and prosperous life.

And the international students went with the International Office to an elementary school next to NODAI and it was a good experience to observe how Japanese kids learn since they are a child about organization, cleaning, collective thinking and good values such as initiative, honest, altruism, posture, respect for others etc. We also visited a company called Plenus where they make *obento*, *teishoku* and other kinds of food. There, we attended a lecture about the important of rice in Japanese culture.

I also went with my roommates to Shirakawago, in Gifu Prefecture. It was my first time I saw snow during my exchange at NODAI. It is a very traditional village that everything is preserved and the houses were constructed in the traditional way called *Gassho-zukuri*.

Finally, all my classes in English finished and I was happy to have learned 500 *kanjis*. I also finished my experience with radish molecular breeding and I analyzed the results. I did a presentation about Brazil (culture, gastronomy and agriculture) for the Development Agriculture Abroad study group.





February:

The Re-inventing Japan Program students did an internship during five days of February. We participate in the Yokohama International Forum 2018 that was held at JICA, in Yokohama. We learned more about the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals and we met projects and other activities in execution to achieve them until 2030.

Our internship was conducted by ERECOM Headquarters staff and we attended many lectures about this organizations and projects in Asia, composing etc. We visited a charcoal making place made by volunteers and a village called Onoji Satoyama.

Besides, I visited Ueno and Asakusa to see *Sensou-ji* temple, some parks and museum such as Natural Science Museum. I could see the plum trees starting to open their flowers. It was very beautiful.

In this month, many Japanese friends and professors from NODAI made a party for me to say good bye and they were very kind. I really appreciate these moments with them and I think these friendships will continue for a long time.



III. What I accomplished and learned through this program:

First, the contact with farmers and Japanese society made me understand that work is seen as a good activity for our body and mind. I saw a lot of old-aged people with more than 70 years old working as volunteers in projects related to vegetable cultivation. And all the farmers who I met worked a lot and they feel really happy with this life style. In the occidental opinion, we work to get money and it is not a pleasant activity. Another thing that I was really surprised was even there are earthquake, typhoon, snow and other weather problems; the Japanese society is very strong and resilient.

Second, I learned a lot of things related to Japanese culture and I can conclude that the modern and traditional are constantly connected in this country. In my opinion, it is incredible because even the technology is very advanced, people try to preserve culture and millenary customs.

Comparing occidental countries and Japan, the education, good manners, organization and the respect to each other have a significant difference that we can find until in the Japanese language with *teineigo*, *keigo* and informal way to say the same thing. They really respect old people and there is until a day to celebrate the old age.

I also learned more about Japanese society problems, such as low rate of marriage and birth (30% of society is old people), high suicide rate (pressure, overwork, and stress), social relationship difficulties etc. However, all the countries have their problems too and I think it is very important to know more about them to understand the Japanese culture.

IV. How did this program shape your career and how are you going to apply what you have learned to your future:

The opportunity to study and improve my Japanese level will open infinite other opportunities in the future. I want to continue to study Japanese in Brazil too and do the Japanese Language Proficient Test this year.

In my laboratory in the Department of Bioscience, at Tokyo NODAI, I learned a lot of techniques about molecular plant breeding and I was able to gain laboratory experience. I also learned a lot of applicable techniques in the Molecular Biology and Biotechnology that I can use as breeding tools. This knowledge will be very important for me because I will start to work in a Brazilian company related to breeding when I come back to Brazil. And I am interested to do a master degree in this area too. So, everything I learned in this program will be very useful in my professional career.

Besides, all the knowledge I learned about agriculture in many countries and the differences between them was important to get a global vision of agriculture, something

very important for professionals that want to work with agribusiness. I think breeders need to have global vision to understand the demand of products for farmers and consumers.

Finally, the contact with people from different cultures gave me the opportunity to develop the sense of observation, the ability to deal with adverse situations and to improve my communication skills.

V. Any advice for future RPJ students:

I hope you enjoy this exchange and do your best to get the opportunities. I have a list of advices for you:

- 1) Bring a gift for your *senpais* (Brazilian students that arrived before you). They will help you a lot in many moments.
- 2) Try to participate in groups like International Student Forum (ISF) or academic clubs that you can make Japanese friends easily. There are a lot of student clubs at Tokyo NODAI: tea ceremony, team leaders, sumo, kendo, judo, development agriculture abroad, agriculture in Japan etc.
- 3) Try to visit a lot of laboratories of your interest and meet professors. They will open a lot of doors and give you many opportunities. If you want to study in Japan in the future to do a master degree or something like that, it is a great opportunity to make contact with professors.
- 4) Start to study Japanese in your country before come to Tokyo NODAI. You should learn *hiragana* and *katakana*. If you learn them before, you will enjoy more your exchange and you will be able to read some words and expressions in your daily life in Japan.
- 5) Try to visit a lot of farms, companies, events related to your area of interest. The contact with people that work in places related to your study will add a lot of knowledge to your professional career. So, do your best and do not wait some opportunity appear in front of you.
- 6) Do not forget the flag, traditional clothes, food and some souvenirs from your country. Japanese people want to know more about where you are from and there will be some parties to show your culture at Tokyo NODAI.

VI. Suggestions to improve the program:

1. I think the International Office could collect opinion about what to bring to Japan (kind of clothes, gifts to Japanese people, things that they missed during the exchange) from Re-inventing Japan Program's students. I know that it is personal, but this "list of things" can be useful for *kouhai* (new international students).

2. In my opinion, I suggest the International Office to change the Japanese classes in the second semester for international students that do not know basic level Japanese, because these classes in November were very difficult and some student could not continue to attend them.