

2019 Re-inventing Japan Project (Short-term),

19<sup>th</sup> International Students Summit

Final Report

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3<sup>rd</sup> year • João Vitor Napolitano Viotto

1. Purpose of participating in this study abroad program

I am member of the International Students Forum – Brazil, which holds weekly meetings at the Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture campus (University of São Paulo/USP). With other participants, we have been discussing topics related to this year's ISS for the entire last year, looking for inspiration and understanding of the ideas discussed in the 18<sup>th</sup> ISS, in order to be able to contribute to the overall discussions of this year's Summit. The aim of the group is to exercise and increase awareness of aspects of sustainability in agriculture worldwide, linking our studies at the university with the reality of the different countries in the world.

The main purpose of my participation in the Re-inventing Japan Project (Short-term) and in the 19th International Students Summit in Tokyo was to represent our group, my university and my country. In addition, to bring our views on the subjects related to this year's theme, in order to contribute to the main goal of the program, which is to discuss the students' actions towards more sustainable agricultural practices across the globe.

Another purpose is to observe the discussions, return to my university and bring the ideas and learnings from all the different country representatives in the program. I hope that we will be able to put the outcomes achieved in the discussions into practice. In the International Students Forum – Brazil, the representative(s) sent to the ISS are responsible for leading the group in the following twelve months towards a concrete and solid output, which will be presented in the next year's program.

I can also list personal reasons for attending the program. Throughout the last 5 years I have visited and lived in different countries, and had the opportunity to experience the local agriculture in many of them, which makes me able to contribute with valuable experience to the debates held during the program, and also is the main reason why I intend to pursue a career related to international cooperation and development on agriculture. For this reason, participating in programs such as the Re-inventing Japan Project and in the International Students Summit have a deep contribution to my career goals, and that added to the fact that I can contribute actively to the program as well makes it so interesting for me.

2. Activities carried out during the program and relation to the purpose of participating in the program

During the Re-inventing Japan Project (Short-term) and the 19th International Students Summit we engaged in different types of activities. We learned about different practices and aspects of the Japanese culture and agriculture, as well as discussed common issues with representatives of different countries and backgrounds.

There were three main activities regarding Japan specifically: a lecture about some graduate research that is being carried out at Tokyo Nodai, a guided visit to a part of Tokyo Prefecture, where we could observe the Satoyama and the visit to Kosuge Village (Kitatsuru – Japan), where we could

learn about the dynamics of the villagers through the past recent years, their challenges, their cultivating techniques and also their insertion in the national agricultural scenario.

The research presented to us during the Re-inventing Japan Project was related to composting and its different approaches, with special attention paid to the pellet compost technique and its usage in some Asian countries. This lecture was followed by some practice on how to pellet the compost.

This was very aligned with the purposes of the project, and added some valuable information to us, as it seems to be a interesting alternative for farmers, and I had never had any contact with it before, in Brazil. Personally, it was also interesting for me, as it could be a feasible alternative to overcome some difficulties that I am having in one of my own research projects.

The observation of Satoyama was also very much appreciated. The agricultural land we visited to observe Satoyama was very diverse, and it was explained to us about how the agriculture in areas like that co-exist with the people living nearby, the city and the nature that surrounds the area as well. This kind of environment is quite unique, and is completely related to sustainability, which was the main topic discussed during our time in Japan.

One point that stands out and exemplifies well how important is th harmony between villagers, the agriculture, the nature and the city and its inhabitants is the fact that a considerable part of the fresh water that is provided to the Tokyo citizens in the city comes from that area. Therefore, the care taken by both government and villagers is very well coordinated, and people who live from agricultural activities in that area manage to make a living while maintaining the water source in good quality for the others.

The visit to Kosuge village was also very impressive. In the village, the aging of the population is astonishing, with many houses already empty, and the number of villagers decreasing year after year. Despite that, older farmers still keep their traditions and cultivate different crops, also in harmony with the nature that surrounds the place. The initiatives to tackle such problem were presented to us, and teach us a lot about the ongoing efforts to preserve the traditions in remote areas like Kosuge.

So from these three activities, we could learn a lot about different realities and part of what is going on in Japan, regarding the agriculture in different scenarios, and as it all happened before the discussions with representatives from many different countries on the sustainability topic, they contributed to level the understanding of the Japanese reality, allowing us to better understand th motivations for the Japanese institutions to host events such as the Re-inventing Japan Project and the International Students Summit.

From Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of September until Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of September activities with all the participating countries' representatives started, for the 19th International Students Summit. During these days, different activities were performed, and for that, at first, we were separated into groups, separating projects related to agriculture, food, environment and education.

I participated in the group session related to students' actions in the field of education, along with other participants from The United States of America, Republic of Korea, México, The Philippines, as well as the group coordinators from Tokio University of Agriculture, who were also from different countries, including Japan.

One of the proposed activities was a personal presentation from each student, which was performed either in a poster session or in a oral presentation. In my case, I performed an oral presentation on the Brazilian sugar-energy sector, and more specifically inside such topic, on how the youth (the students at the University of São Paulo) have been engaged through research to help and find solutions to problems with residue management inside this sector, with a special focus on vinasse from ethanol production.

All the presentations allowed us to gain a broader understanding of the issues found in all the different participating countries, in relation to sustainability in the agricultural field. The exchange afterwards, with the questions and answers, and also with the time allowed to chat at the lobby contributed to that as well.

The rest of the time during the Summit, there were the group discussions, in which the group members tried to identify, first individually and then collectively the main challenges during each one's project and the main problems targeted by them, in the different countries and situations related to each project.

Once that was accomplished, the groups gathered a few times to share these primary conclusions with all the other groups, looking to find common points and to start shaping a general conclusion, which would represent as well as possible the main issues found and targeted by all participants.

The conclusions were then discussed once again with all the participants divided into 7 groups, all containing representatives from each different session, so we all could bring up and also listen to everyone else's conclusion in a organized way, sharing once again at the end our general impressions.

On Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of September there were two final sessions presented and open to the whole community who was willing to attend it, at the Tokyo University of Agriculture. The first one was the session conclusion, where we presented those final conclusions from each session, but this time not only between the participants, but also to all the advisors, to members of the staff, other students, and many others at the university.

The second final session was the general conclusion, where 6 students were on stage pointing out the main topics found to be common between most of us, explaining what challenges we agreed to be facing together as world prospect actors on the agricultural field, and also proposing measures that can be taken by students.

As the last topic of the whole event, the new title for the next edition (20th International Students Summit in 2020) was presented, which also was conceived after the all the discussions and conclusions we had as a group. I was one of the 6 students who gave a speech at the end of the event, preparing for its closure.

### 3. Accomplishments and what was learned through this program

The main outcome of the program was the network created between all of us, students, professors and staffs, which will allow us to act together in the future, on the pursuit of sustainability in agriculture.

Another great result from joining the program was the new perspective I and all the other participants obtained, regarding the world's most different countries. With information, contacts and examples of practices in agriculture, we are enabled to bring back to our universities, work and communities a broad view that integrates the issues found in the world, which are very often not visible to us in our own realities and environments, but that can contribute to a greater cooperation in the future.

### 4. How did this program shape my career

I have great interest in the area of international relations. For a career, I look to a path that can allow me to work with different situations worldwide. The opportunity to meet representatives

from so many countries, and being able to experience a little of the agricultural reality in Japan has encouraged me to engage even more in this field.

Finally, the opportunity to exchange information and knowledge with so many people from so many different backgrounds definitely gave me some extra tools to deal with challenges I may encounter during my career.