

Onion drying project in arid regions -Joint work between AAI and the drying machine maker Taikisangyo Co., Ltd.- <part 4>

Summary, recent activities, and the way forward

This mini-series has introduced the onion drying project three times, which is a collaboration work with Taikisangyo Co., Ltd. and NOTA (National Organization for Technology Assimilation), a local NGO in Sudan. We have already reported in a detailed story about the start-up process of the small-scale production system, followed by the field work in JICA's needs survey and feasibility study implemented for about a year from 2015, as well as reporting on the local response to the introduced electric dryer.

It has already been a year and a half since the project started, and NOTA has been conducting steady efforts in the field. Meanwhile, the



Peeling by village women

electric dryers of Taikisangyo were adopted by a grant project, Economic and Social Development Plan of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and more than 20 electric dryers have been exported to be deployed additionally in Kassala and River Nile states. In addition, field work including training for farmers and rural women's unions will be resumed from this autumn through a verification survey for disseminating technologies by JICA.

In this way, this project will continue in various forms from now on while expanding the channels of activities. As mentioned in the first issue, this project started with supporting NOTA, which was originally involved in field work of a technical cooperation project.

We have realized the necessity of electric dryers through serious discussion with NOTA members on restoration of the abandoned onion dry factory in Kassala with a small-scale union system. The source of the idea was the *Shiitake* mushroom dryer which I used to see in a farmer's warehouse, when I lived in a

mountain village in Oita Prefecture.

Based on that experience and discussions with NOTA, I got a specific picture that it would be

worthwhile to try in Sudan. We had the confidence to put the plan into practice, since local needs had already been examined in various ways with them.

By the way, as mentioned earlier, it was decided to apply for the JICA's verification survey under the scheme of supporting small private sectors in overseas business expansion. Different from technical cooperation and/or development surveys, it was fun to design and propose a project based on our own idea without following operation instructions. The role of the consultant, who is defined as an external human resource in the survey, is to coordinate the company (in this case, Taikisangyo) with the country of Sudan. It was fortunate for us to be able to meet a trusted product and company. Concerning the implementation of field work in Sudan, it was carried out relatively easily because we were familiar with the circumstances in Sudan. There would not be only one correct answer in the coordination method. However, we believe that starting from careful consideration of local needs could be a reliable way to move forward avoiding unnecessary mistakes in supporting small private sectors in overseas business. We would like to meet the challenge of the second and third supporting projects based on these experiences.



Visiting the onion drying factory by the then Japanese ambassador in Sudan



A dinner party with high-level government officers of Sudan and Mr. Yasuhara, the president of Taikisangyo