

AAI and Me – Shigeya Hasegawa <Part-3>

The encounter in the KAF project led to JICA Tsukuba training work

After the oil crisis, KOC (Kashima Oil Co., Ltd.) planned to strengthen relations with oil-producing countries by leveraging sandponics and was considering where to go. In 1979, it was decided to implement the Kashima Abu Dhabi Farm (KAF) project as a verification test at a government farm in Al Ain, UAE. There was a connection with Abu Dhabi Oil Co., Ltd. (ADOC) where a boss and a colleague from the current Cosmo Oil Co., Ltd. was working. ADOC had a close relationship with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) which was in charge of Abu Dhabi's oil and natural gas policy. The biggest deciding factor was, however, an encounter with Mr. Hiroyasu Onuma, the AAI founder, in a field survey in 1980. He was working in a project of the Desert Development Institute Japan (DDIJ), which conducted a vegetable cultivation experiment by laying asphalt in the soil layer at the desert of our planned verification test area. Mr. Onuma's extensive experience was thought-provoking in ways which could not be obtained from the business report.



Mr. Onuma, Author, Dr Kojima at Fish Farm in UAQ

It was valuable for me to take care of the test farm, by interacting with engineers from Jordan, Sudan, Iraq, etc. and workers from Pakistan and Afghanistan who carried out the physical labor, and to treat them all as colleagues with respect. Looking back now, it was at this time that I met people from the same countries that were home to the trainees at JICA Tsukuba. From the KAF project, I learned that it is important to formulate a goal (Vision) and make efforts to achieve it (Hard Work), but it was also a time of encounter that led to the successive big job which is JICA Tsukuba training work.



With engineers at the site in the government farm

The encounter with Dr. Yoshihisa Zaitzu and Mr. Akira Koto was through the Dubai Suburbs Landscape Greening Project, which AAI started as the company's first work in 1985, and Joint Study Project on Improvement of Arid Land Agriculture by the Faculty of Agriculture, Shizuoka

University and the Faculty of Agriculture, United Arab Emirates University. One of the reasons why I was able to join in the training work at JICA Tsukuba, which I was involved in for nearly 20 years, was that Mr. Kozo Toshimitsu, who was a colleague of Mr. Onuma in the project of DDIJ, was working in the training operation section.



Dr. Ikeda during diagnosis of hydroponic paprika

The next connection is that I met the people who took care of the KAF project again at JICA Tsukuba. Professor Hideo Ikeda of Osaka Prefecture University (at that time) taught me the relationship between cultivation with desert sand and nutrient deficiency. Mr. Hisashi Funakushi, who was the farm manager of the breeding farm of Mikado Seed Co., Ltd., handled long wartless greenhouse cucumber seeds, which was rare in Japan at that time. Both of them have been involved in the training for many years as external lecturers of the group training, "Vegetable Cultivation Technology" course. They are reliable external lecturers in plant physiology technology and production environment maintenance technology that are indispensable for learning the practice and also in seed production related technology as the second goal of the training. I was able to work together with the late Dr. Takahiro Okubo, who had been active in the field of upland farming especially in the crop rotation and cropping system and who had just retired from the position of training instructor of JICA Tsukuba and returned to the training course in Tajikistan. It was thanks to Dr. Okubo's network extending from Hokkaido to Kyushu region that it was easy to coordinate with the inspection tour destinations and lecturers related to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. For a total of 19 years, I was involved in training work on vegetable and field crop cultivation techniques for 208 trainees from 47 countries, and I think it was a result of the many encounters described above.



Dr. Okubo (front right), Dr. Zaitzu and Mr. Koto evaluating results of an experiment in Tajikistan course