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AAINews

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Counterpart Training Course for Syria's Water Saving Irrigation Project

A one-month project counterpart training course was held in Japan for Syria's water saving irrigation technicians. Two participants came from Syria. This training course did not follow the curriculum of existing courses, but was tailor made for the contents of the on-going technical assistance project. Main training contents included irrigation techniques, extension and training, all of which are important aspects of the technical assistance project, links between experimental research and extension activities, mechanisms and roles of agricultural cooperatives, and organization and participation of local people.

During the training course, we, as technical assistance project members, tried to share experiences with the trainees, joining them for field visits and lectures. We considered that the sharing of experience would enhance the effectiveness of the course, as well as benefit future technical assistance project management.With the presence of technical assistance project members at the counterpart training course, it is considered that discussions at lectures and understanding of the lectures was much enhanced. In addition, field visits became highly meaningful rather than merely fun visits.

The following table summarises the main field visits and lectures by category:

Category	Field Visit Destination / Lecture	Main Contents
Irrigation Technologies	Miyako land improvement area (Miyako Island)	Construction of underground dam and consolidation of irrigation agriculture
	Sprinkler factory	Sprinkler manufacturing and product testing methods
	Lecture on irrigation technologies	Introduction to Japan's irrigation technologies and ground water simulation models
Agricultural Experimental Research and Extension	Agricultural extension in Japan	Lecture on history and mechanism of agricultural extension in Japan
	Visit to agricultural experimental center	Role of agricultural experimental centers and relationship between experimental research and extension
	Visit to farmers	Understanding of the reality of agricultural production
Role of Agricultural Cooperatives / Agricultural Product Distribution	Lectures on agricultural cooperatives	Lecture on history of agricultural cooperatives, their mechanisms and roles
	Visit to an agricultural cooperative	Observation of facilities such as a distribution center and a storage system run by the cooperative
	Visit to the Ohta Market	Observation of mechanisms of vegetable and fruit distribution and auction procedures
Others	Training planning and evaluation methods	Lecture on formulation of training plans and impact monitoring and evaluation
	Participatory development	Visit to the Groundwork Project
	Tsukuba International Center (TBIC)	Examples of practical training courses

Furthermore, shortly before completion of the training course, we held an evaluation meeting with the counterpart participants, reflecting on the training contents and results. In the meeting, our discussion included how we will make use of the training in future implementation of the project. As situations differ between Japan and Syria, one cannot simply apply Japan's technologies and methods in Syria. However, it would be beneficial to try to make necessary modifications suited to Syria's situations or to apply technologies and methods in phases. What is important here is that the training courses in Japan do not only offer information and the opportunity to acquire technologies, but also offer the chance to understand how Japan's culture and Japanese mentality is connected to development and establishment of technologies and their progress and repercussions. Considering these points, it is expected that the impact of the training course will be further enhanced through the project implementation, by making the most of the experiences shared with the counterparts during the training, by further discussions, as well as by investigating how acquired technologies can be applied in Syria under varied conditions. By Koto (after the counterpart training course)

Production of value added high sugar content tomatoes using a water-saving cultivation method – Farmer in Shizuoka

A tomato selection center run by an agricultural cooperative – JA Chiba Midori, Chiba Prefecture

Improved and more natural river course created by local residents – Groundwork Mishima Project