

Update on activities of our interviewees

As preparatory steps for us to have concrete involvement in promoting Japan's agriculture, the most important activities are to have continuous engagement with individual organizations. Finding areas for collaboration to complement each other would lead to continued cooperation. For example, whenever possible, AAI staff attend the monthly meetings in Satomi. In Hamamatsu, we have been exploring ways to contribute to human resource development programs. We will cultivate activities in the next round of our joint work through promoting cooperation. To start with, it may be meaningful for AAI and our partners to arrange an information exchange meeting bringing together all the four organizations we are working with. The following is an update of each organization's activities since we first reported their work in AAI News.

Satomi (Ibaraki)

- Satomi Group was requested to host trainees from the vegetable cultivation technique courses at JICA Tsukuba, and a practical session program was organized for the trainees to experience organic farming through participating in farming work in Satomi.
- AAI has been purchasing organic vegetables from Satomi through their home delivery service.

Ushimado (Okayama)

- In November 2008, a symposium entitled "Agriculture in Ernest" and "*Chisan Chisho* (local production for local consumption) Forum" was organized by Ushimado Group and Okayama University, in which AAI representatives participated.
- Through the new farmer support project and practical sessions on farms which were organized last year, four people decided to become farmers. It seems that all of them will join the Setouchi Farmers' Club.

Kanra (Gunma)

- Kanra again hosted supplementary training courses for JOCV volunteers this year. Volunteers who will be working in the field of vegetable cultivation support and village development were received.
- Possible joint implementation of Tsukuba training project was explored. Unfortunately, it did not lead to actual implementation this time, however, this provided an opportunity to explore potential for future collaboration.

Hamamatsu (Shizuoka)

- "Shizuoka Agricultural Business Training Course" has been jointly organized by Shizuoka University and the agricultural industry in the prefecture since April 2009. Mr. S and Mr. K from Hamamatsu have been participating in the course.



Symposium: Agriculture in Ernest



Farm Product Direct Sales Market -
Wacca Farm



Chisan chisho (local production for
local consumption) Forum

Incidentally, there is a TV program called "Tetsuwan Dash Village", which could be literally translated as "village with strong arms making things happen". It is a program following a project by a popular rock band called TOKIO to create their own village. They refurbish an old farm house, work in the fields producing their own vegetables and sweat to cultivate rice, celebrating their harvests in autumn. Many people dream of living on the land and living in the country side, however it is difficult for them to make dream a reality. There is also a choice of "farming and X livelihood", as in farming and fishing livelihood. In this case the "X" part can be any other professions or activities. Having one's own mission in addition to farming activities may look, in the eyes of full time farmers, as not a serious commitment to 'real' farming. However, it may be a necessary effort to broaden the base of Japan's agriculture by creating a mechanism for people to play a part in agriculture in varied ways.