Reports on activities of ex-participants from Central America <Part 2>

This is part 2 of the report on the post-training activities of the ex-participants of vegetable cultivation technology training course from Central America. Here I report on 4 ex-participants whom I visited in El Salvador.

Mr. Walter Alexander Cosme Linares (2011)
Cosme who works at the Catholic University was appointed as the Coordinator for the Investigation and Research Section, as recognition of his experiences of planning and conducting individual experiments on drip-fertigation during his training in Japan. He is now in charge of overseeing the research results of the 35 researchers attached to the facility and will also be in charge of maintenance of the new rain shelter cultivation establishment which the university is planning to build. This will be used for small scale farmer training.

Mr. Roberto Carlos Diaz Vanegas (2012)
Roberto is working at the same Catholic University as Cosme. He is in the Social Unit. His main duty is to develop and implement rural development projects. I had the chance to see his boss. "I hope I see that he has gained an ability to identify issues at the work place and analyze them," said his boss. He was eager to start basic investigation and experiments of paprika, to start a new project on paprika cultivation using chicken manure. There will be a review of the Social Unit's project plan after the normal three years project period. His action plan derived from his time spent training in Japan.


Roberto (right) and his boss (left)

Mr. Luis Ernesto Trujillo Rodriguez (2011)
Louis who belongs to the National Center of Farming and Forest Technology (CENTA) listed in his action plan the establishment of grafting technology to prevent bacterial wilt disease of tomato. Within one year after returning home, he managed to collect seven strains of wild tomato that have the potential as root stock for grafting and propagated their seeds. In addition to implementing his action plans, he has been actively working to utilize what he learned in the training in Japan including making of the Bokashi fertilizer (Japanese traditional fermented organic fertilizer) and rice straw compost. In terms of improving cultivation techniques, he solved the problem of carrot not growing sufficiently large because of hard soil in his area by mixing sands in the soil and making raised beds for planting. He was also in charge of developing curricula for the training school for farmers which the CENTA provides. He expressed his enthusiasm to develop a curriculum which links lectures and practices as he experienced it in the training in Japan.


Carrot growing well in raised planting beds

Mr. Cesar Orlando Mejicano Cruz (2010)
Cesar also works at the CENTA, and has been counterpart in the Project for Supporting Small-Scale Farmer in the Eastern Region until March 2012. He still instructs vegetable cultivation technology continuing the same duties. Bacterial wilt disease was also a serious problem in his area. However, by making 15 cm high planting beds with mixed mountain soil and Bokashi fertilizer, he had successful outcomes avoiding soil-borne disease. He thought of this method after seeing the rows of raised earth for planting in Japan. The effectiveness of this method was confirmed by a plant pathologist in Japan. The pathologist commented that the Bokashi fertilizer improves the composition of microorganisms in the soil, and combined with better drainage due to the raised planting beds and water saving management using drip irrigation makes a very rational formula for preventing bacterial outbreak. Another problem in the area caused by virus disease was conquered by the net house cultivation which was introduced by the project. He provided technical guidance to 40 farmers. 17 out of the 40 farmers are currently using the above mentioned cultivation method. In 2013, an additional 7 farmers are planning to introduce the method.


Raised planting beds with mixture of the Bokashi fertilizer and mountain soil


Green pepper growing healthily with no sign of the bacterial wilt disease

Both Luis and Cesar have been showing concrete examples of active use of what they learned in the training in Japan. While project counterpart Cesar's efforts attracted support, it seemed difficult for Luis to gain full backing from his boss at first. He was initially permitted only to work on the action plan "within a certain limit with no harm for his core work." Happily, he has since been able to implement his action plans after a great deal of effort. This experience indicates that project counterparts are more likely to be able to utilize the results of the training in Japan because they are supported in their efforts.

I received communication from Luis shortly after I came back to Japan. He informed me that his action plan and his steady efforts have been recognized by the research unit management, and he will be able to work fully on the action plan as the research unit's core work. His challenge is starting in full!