

Participating in a symposium in Tunisia

I accepted the invitation to participate in “Valorization of Scientific Research Achievements in Water Sector” in Tunisia from March 17-18 in 2015 with an initial degree of hesitancy. I was new to Tunisia but the invitation came from a university professor with whom I was acquainted and it seemed that my experiences in Syria might be relevant and useful. This symposium was organized as part of the Industrial Study Cooperation Support project at the Borj Cedria Techno Park, aiming to link challenges in water sector and research achievements. Water in these lands is so important and the Japan link was obvious - The Borj Cedria Techno Park was built with a yen loan as part of the project.

The 2-day symposium started with official remarks by the Minister of Agriculture, the Japanese Counselor from the Embassy, Director of JICA Tunisia and other dignitaries. Then the symposium had 4 water related themes – water as a resource, drinking water, waste water, and water and irrigation. For each theme, research results and activity reports were presented by Tunisian counterparts as well as by Japanese participants. After presentations on each theme, there was an active discussion session by participants.

In my lecture I introduced our Development of Efficient Irrigation Techniques and Extension (DEITEX) project which we were involved with in Syria between 2005 and 2012, including the irrigation extension tools which we developed (See AAINews No. 79-84) and the situation of agriculture in Syria at that time. Both Tunisia and Syria use 80-90% of their water resources for irrigation, therefore water saving in the agricultural sector is a major issue. After my presentation there were questions from the audience regarding Syria and I sensed the high level of interest of the audience in neighboring countries.

In order to prepare for my lecture, I pulled out documents from the days I worked in Syria and contacted my former counterparts. They were all very happy to hear that I would be talking about DEITEX in Tunisia and I was pleased to feel that their friendship was still well and alive.

During the three-night stay in Tunisia, there was an incident. Some men barricaded themselves inside the museum in Tunis. In recent years so many people have died here and there and one tends to get numbed about tragedies. I pray for the return of peace in the Arab region as soon as possible. (Nakayama, April 2015)



Symposium venue



Presentation with the theme “irrigation”



Responding to questions from the audience

QGIS Study Group Started

Geographical Information System (GIS) was formerly regarded as a specialized technology, however, one can see that now there is a high demand on GIS for daily use. AAINews introduced “You can do it! Remote Sensing Analysis” in its early editions (No. 1-6). In March we held the first study session on GIS operation using the free GIS software QGIS. It is not that AAI staff who are leading the course are expert in the software. Instead, the motto of the course is for every participant to offer his/her wisdom to enhance understanding collaboratively. The course is open for anybody. Two other companies are also participating via skype. We plan to hold it once a month. (Zaitsu, April 2015)

