

# Greening rice bowls

“Nothing is better than rice for your health,” was the strong belief of most Koreans prior to the rapid westernization of the nation’s diet accompanied by the diversification of food choices. Although their dietary habits have changed, rice remains the staple food for many Koreans and the major source of income for farmers, as is in many other Asian countries. However, excessive use of agricultural chemicals to achieve self-sufficiency in rice has been the cause of environmental pollution and the production of unhealthy rice in many areas. This is why ecofriendly paddy farming methods are now being developed in advanced rice-growing regions.

Twenty participants from nine Asian countries gathered in Japan to share their perspectives on this issue in the multicountry observational study mission on Green Technologies and Practices in Paddy Farming organized by the APO in collaboration with the Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry (JAICAF), 24–31 August. As a participant from the Republic of Korea, I was impressed with the completeness of the program, designed to be undertaken in stages to maximize participants’ understanding. The study mission comprised informative presentations by resource speakers, sufficient time for interaction among participants and country paper presentations, and a three-day site visit to five venues in Saitama and Nagano prefectures.

Participants had different views on effective green technologies. Some organic paddy farming practices were not deemed applicable in developing countries. The lower productivity of some organic methods, coupled with higher costs of production inputs, must be ruled out in countries where the quantity of production is given priority over quality. A niche market for expensive organic rice does not exist in those countries. Although rice produced organically is profitable in Japan and the Republic of Korea due to its high sales price, this is not the case in most other Asian countries. Participants concluded from the Japanese model that organic paddy farming can be productive and it may be



*Sun Jung Park's (left) group summarizing green paddy farming innovations*

possible to adapt the methods in developing countries with appropriate farming techniques, well-designed national policies, and the commitment of both consumers and producers to living more organically.

I believe that the advanced green technologies we examined in Japan, a country that has achieved optimum production as well as high quality in organic paddy farming, will be widely disseminated in participants’ countries. Personally, I would also like to introduce innovative technologies developed in the Republic of Korea to other APO member countries. I would also like to thank the APO and JAICAF for their excellent coordination of the best agricultural study project I have attended. 🌀

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