

Environment-friendly farming in Japan

With the emergence of consumer power in the food market comes the demand for safer, better-quality food products. The need to produce food free from hazardous chemicals in environment-friendly systems is changing the entire farm production landscape. Farmers are becoming more responsive to consumers by switching to organic farming and other environmentally acceptable techniques. Japan is at the forefront of this change, with the government proactively promoting natural farming technologies. The APO organized a multicountry observational study mission on Environment-friendly Farming Technologies to Japan, 2–7 February, in collaboration with the Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry.

The highlights of the mission were field visits allowing participants to observe environment-friendly farming technologies including organic fertilizers and biofertilizers and the biopesticide production and marketing processes. Participants also witnessed the collective efforts of farmers, private-sector enterprises, NGOs, and local governments to change to organic farming methods. “Through those site visits, we acquired new knowledge and technology updates on organic farming, marketing systems, and agricultural cooperatives,” commented Regional Technical Director Dr. Joyce S. Wendam, Department of Agriculture, the Philippines.

Participants visited the National Agricultural Research Center in Tsukuba, which develops systematized production techniques and sustainability assessment tools for organic agriculture. A dairy farm in Asahi showcased the use of whole crop rice silage and production of organic fertilizers from farm waste. Wagoen Agricultural Producers’ Cooperative Corporation follows the natural cycle farming model from production to marketing. Yamada Biomass Plant in Katori demonstrated the use of manure and farm waste to produce methane for use in vehicles and as liquid and organic fertilizer.



A member of Deco-Pon Farmers’ Union demonstrating eco-farming techniques

The visit to Deco-Pon Farmers’ Union Co., Ltd. in Narita, Chiba prefecture, was particularly appreciated since it illustrated the importance of strategic partnerships among farmers, the private sector, and consumers. Farmers grow safe, delicious agricultural products that are distributed by Deco-Pon, a private company, to its customers who “invest” a specified amount in the union and receive fresh produce delivered to their doors as “interest.” “That provided a great example of how farmers can secure a market for their produce,” commented Director Dr. Arabinda K. Padhee, Department of Agriculture, Orissa State, India. “Deco-Pon also showed that farming can be enjoyable and promising. The financial growth of the company was both remarkable and sustainable.”

At the end of the mission, participants intended to disseminate what they had learned. They suggested follow-up action in the form of technology demonstrations, national seminars, training courses, presentations at farmer field schools, and observational visits to other countries. The use of print and broadcast media was suggested for these. 🌱