

# Branding of local food and agricultural products

**K**obe beef of Japan, Darjeeling tea of India, and Parmigiano-Reggiano of Italy are classic food brands known for specific features and high quality associated with climate, locality, and culture. The APO held a multicounty observational study mission on Branding of Local Food and Agricultural Products, 9–16 November 2010, in Japan to examine approaches to establishing and promoting agricultural product brands with geographic names, called “geographic indication.” The mission, attended by 14 participants from 10 APO member countries, covered branding strategy based on market theory, the European Union geographic indication system, Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery policy to promote agricultural branding, Kobe beef and Yubari melon brand strategies, and the Japanese system for region-based collective trademarking.



Participants visiting the Green Tea Farm of JA Hannan, Makinohara, Shizuoka prefecture. APO/Y. Endo

The mission visited several sites. A half-day trip to the Boshu Biwa (loquat) Club in Chiba prefecture showed how a branded fruit became a tool to promote local food-processing and tourism industries. A two-day field visit to

Shizuoka prefecture started with a briefing on the quality certificate system used to guarantee high-quality agricultural and fishery products. The mission then met Amela Tomato Producers' Association representatives and learned how the Amela (sweet) name became a successful brand commanding premium prices due to special water control technology that produces a high sugar content. The mission then visited the Yaizu Katsuibushi Association. *Katsuibushi* is dried, fermented bonito used as a flavoring and condiment in Japanese cuisine. The Yaizu district is a famous fishing port with a long tradition of bonito processing; records reveal that *katsuibushi* was being produced there some 1,300 years ago. The Yaizu Katsuibushi Association established production guidelines to protect the authenticity of the brand.

The next stop was the Green Tea Production Association, JA (Agricultural Co-operative) Hannan. Hannan developed a method to grow greener tea with improved quality. Using the brand name Nozomi tea, Hannan promoted tea consumption by women, thereby introducing a unique brand classification. The price of this branded green tea is higher than that of unbranded versions. The last field visit was to JA Mikkabi, where the branded Japanese mandarin orange Mikkabi *mikan* is produced. Mikkabi officials explained that soil conditions and specific regional climate result in sweet, high-quality mandarin oranges in this area and demonstrated a mechanized sorting system that ensures proper handling.

The reports and discussions of participants revealed that diverse branding initiatives are underway in member countries. The participants agreed to continue information exchanges on brand creation as a follow-up activity. 