

# Cluster approach for local agrofood industry development

**A** geographic concentration of interconnected enterprises, suppliers, service providers, and research institutes in a specific industry constitutes a cluster in which collaboration can increase productivity. This approach is particularly applicable to the agrofood industry. The APO organized an observational study mission in Japan, 8–15 December, to study successful examples of agricultural clustering with 14 participants from 11 member countries.

Numerous site visits were arranged to showcase examples. A visit to the Katsunuma wine country in Yamanashi prefecture, 100 km west of Tokyo, was the first. Katsunuma is famous for the quality of its grapes, and several large-scale wine producers as well as small and medium ones currently operate there. With the assistance of the Institute of Enology and Viticulture, University of Yamanashi, the vineyards developed new wines using a local grape variety called *kosyu*. Local government support was also provided to wine producers and grape farmers. As a result of that collaboration, Katsunuma has become a major wine-producing region in Japan, and wines from *kosyu* grapes have won awards in several international competitions.

“Japanese cluster organizers we met possessed unique leadership qualities and styles, along with determination, sensibility, honesty, and confidence,” said Market Specialist Ramon Morato Policarpio, Department of Agriculture, the Philippines. The strong leadership qualities needed were confirmed in Tochigi prefecture, where confectioneries made from indigenous two-rowed barley, which has a higher sugar content than the more common six-rowed type, were the focus. Yoshimitsu Hasegawa, a barley

farmer, and Yutaka Uetake, a manager of the confectionery shop Omugi Kobo Roa, developed new types of baked sweets and cereal products. Their dedication attracted cooperation from other relevant industries. The new products now have a broad base of satisfied customers. Mission participants also recognized the leadership of Hibiki Corporation President Yoshiharu Hibiki, who along with other local food processors and restaurants established Kawagoe City as a brand. Tokyo’s Shinagawa district demonstrated how to organize collaborative activities by local industries to promote specific products. Several food retailers there cooperate to promote unique food items based on traditional, region-specific vegetables.



*Taste-testing Katsunuma wine in Yamanashi prefecture*

“All the field visits and lectures were more than expected,” said Director Fatima Alvi, Alvi Corporation Pvt. Ltd., Pakistan. “I am planning to set up a goat farm in Pakistan and this study mission gave me a lot of good ideas on how to utilize the cluster concept.” Other participants agreed that they had acquired useful information and inspiration for future plans. 🌀