

People behind the scenes: Yoshikazu Kihira

The man behind the *Eco-Products Directory*

"Polite, respectful, open-minded, reliable, a whiz with data, figures, and analysis" and "the proper Japanese gentleman, shy but funny when you get to know him" are how colleagues describe Secretariat Industry Department Program Officer Yoshikazu Kihira, the person behind the *Eco-products Directory*.

"The *Eco-products Directory* provides a wealth of information on available eco-products for companies or governments looking for suppliers," says Kihira, who joined the APO in 2007 and has since been working on its content and distribution. The directory is sent to member country governments, environment-related organizations, and eco-product exhibitions, as well as environment ministers of Australia, New Zealand, the EU, North America, and other Asian countries.

Although there is no exact definition, "eco-products" generally refer to environmentally friendly items. Since 2004, the APO has published the *Eco-products Directory* each year, offering a comprehensive guide to eco-products and -services currently available on the market; 3,400 have been included to date. The 2010 edition offers listings of 1,000 leading-edge eco-products, with clear explanations of their features.

The 2010 directory defines eco-products as "products and services that comply with environmental regulations or are environment-friendly, reflecting manufacturers'

voluntary efforts to care for the environment." Besides industrially oriented items, products and services related to agriculture, tourism, and finance are included, as well as eco-businesses aimed directly at environmental impact reduction. Many of the listings include environmental labels that state product features to inform and appeal to consumers, certifying that items are eco-products in compliance with the independent standards set by countries, regions, organizations, and industry associations.

"We want to promote the directory extensively among all APO member countries through their NPOs. We want to expand the number of entries to benefit everyone who is concerned about our environment," Kihira explained. "Many NPOs are not very heavily involved in environmental matters, but we need to find more eco-label organizations in the region. Despite different environmental criteria among member countries, we would like to move ahead and seek more support from major companies." A study meeting is to be held in Seoul in September to discuss how to adjust the eco-criteria. The APO seeks to enhance its network with the public and private sectors to publicize the directory, especially by utilizing the private-sector network of the Japan Productivity Center, where Kihira was previously employed for 17 years.

In his free time, the tireless program officer enjoys trekking in the mountains with his wife. 

