



The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population

NEWS LETTER

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Population and Food Security Forum Toward Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - III

On 6 November, the Population and Food Security Forum Toward Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - III was held in the First Members' Office Building of the House of Representatives. The conference was organized by the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and co-hosted by the Food Security Committee of Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF), with the support of Syngenta Japan K.K. and the cooperation of RESULTS Japan.

[Introduction]

Established at the kick-off conference in 2016, the project has entered its third year. At the 2016 conference, participants took stock of population and food in the context of limitations of the global environment. At the 2017 conference, participants concluded that nutrition was an essential component of food security in terms of quality, and highlighted the link between corporate activities, including environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing, and the SDGs. Following on these results, the Forum this year focused on discussing the technical aspects that play an important role in food security. Hon. Chiaki Takahashi (former State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chair of Japan Agricultural Products Exporters Association) served as the master of ceremonies.



[Opening ceremony]



At the opening, Hon. Yasuo Fukuda (Chair of APDA, Honorary Chair of JPPF, and former Prime Minister of Japan) delivered a welcome address, followed by an address by Mr. Minoru Matoba (Representative Director and President of Syngenta Japan K.K.) and a keynote speech by Hon. Asahiko Mihara (Chair of the Food Security Committee of JPPF).

In the welcome address, Hon. Fukuda, expressing appreciation to those concerned for their cooperation, noted that the growing world population would offset any optimism we might have on the issue of food and that advancement in science and technology, as well as our wisdom in leveraging it, is a key factor in solving this issue. He observed that political will is necessary for achieving these aims, and expressed hope that this conference would serve as a platform for promoting such understanding.

Mr. Matoba congratulated the organizers for holding the conference. He pointed out, from the perspective of the world's leading company of agricultural chemicals and seeds, that while large-scale agricultural producers dominate the world's production, small-scale producers, who make up the majority of the world's agricultural producers, have problems securing sufficient yields. He expressed his resolve for contributing to the world's food security.



In the keynote speech, Hon. Mihara called attention to the prodigious amount of food discarded every day even when population continues to increase, particularly in Africa, and many are suffering from hunger. "Some say that if we stopped discarding food, we can solve the problem of hunger", he said. "But if such contradicting situation is the result of the rationality of today's economic system, then it will not be easy to solve this problem".

He noted the importance of technology and marketing. Without advancement in technology to secure ample food supply or rediscovery of the value of indigenous foods, people facing food shortage can never be saved. Pointing to the example of NERICA rice field in Tanzania, he explained that “reclamation efforts 30 years ago made the land fertile and productive, but there is now complexity in land ownership from partition of land through inheritance”, with further partition expected among the next generation of heirs. Hon. Mihara raised the issue that “technology can be used to reclaim land, but food security can never be ensured without addressing the issues of population and properly implementing social systems”.



[Sessions]

Part I. Current Status and Challenges

Ms. Sachiko Matsuoka, Partnership Specialist of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office in Japan, gave a presentation titled, “*The Situation Surrounding the World’s Agriculture and Food Supply: From the Perspective of the World’s Food Security and Nutrition*”, in which she explained the activities of FAO and spoke of the need to increase agricultural output for achievement of the SDGs. She recommended that as the UN cannot achieve this goal alone, it was essential to work in partnership with private firms and civil society.



Mr. Tetsuhide Mikamo, Advisor to Marubeni Research Institute of Marubeni Corporation, gave a presentation titled, “*Changes in the Environment Surrounding Food Production and Trade Trends*”, from the perspective of a food trading company. He reported on changes in the U.S., Brazil, and other food producing countries and in international food distribution and on the impact of a trade war between the U.S. and China.

Dr. Shozo Kubo, Executive Vice President of the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations (ZEN-NOH), gave a presentation titled, “*Japan’s Agriculture: Current Status and the Future*”, from the perspective of a food producer. He discussed changes in Japan’s agriculture and its potential for competing in international markets.



Part II. Innovation’s Potential for Solving Problems and Contributing to SDGs

Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada, Member of the House of Representatives, noted that advancement in technology was bringing about a major change not only in agriculture but also in other areas generally, and commented that “given that population issues represent how individuals live and that intervention is not the way to address these issues, we should realize that we cannot hope for a reversal in the declining population in the short term and work towards building a society that can get by with a declining population”. Recognizing the important role that technology can play, he explained how Japan’s GPS satellite Michibiki could be used as a platform for self-driving technology. He then introduced the next speaker, Dr. Noboru Noguchi, as the leading expert on the application of the technology in agriculture.



Following the introduction, Dr. Noboru Noguchi, Professor of Hokkaido University Research Faculty of Agriculture delivered a presentation titled, “*The Role of Technological Innovation in Future Agriculture: SIP Innovation for the Next-Generation Agricultural Industry*”, in which he showed a video to describe progress made in agricultural automation and pointed out that a legal framework needs to be instituted for use of these applications.

Dr. Hiroshi Ezura, Professor of the University of Tsukuba Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences and Director of Tsukuba Plant Innovation Research Center, then gave a presentation titled, “*Genome Editing as the State-of-the-Art*”



Agriculture Innovation Technology". Emphasizing seed improvement as a task that should and will always continue, he explained that genome editing was about making cross-breeding more efficient and selecting components and functions of vegetables and fruits that are beneficial and economically advantageous for humans, and that it encompassed a broad field not limited to the creation of disease- or pest-resistant genetically modified organisms (GMOs).



Part III. Panel Discussion “Building a Sustainable Agricultural System Towards Contributing to the SDGs”

Mr. Hiroki Ose, Executive Commentator of the News Commentators Bureau of Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), served as a facilitator for this session. In addition to the speakers in Part I and Part II, Hon. Tatsuo Hirano (Member of the House of Councillors and former Minister for Reconstruction), Mr. Toshihiro Butta (Representative Director and President of Butta Agricultural Products Corp.), Mr. Yasuaki Fukunaga (President of Aeon Agri Create Co., Ltd.), and Ms. Yasuko Kono (Executive Director of Japan Consumers’ Association) each gave a presentation. Lively discussions ensued with the participation of the audience.



[Closing]

At the closing of the conference, Hon. Takahashi remarked that activities should continue until 2020 when the Nutrition Summit will be held alongside the Tokyo Olympic Games, and called on all to maintain interest in this issue of population and food security.



[Reception]

After the conference, a reception was held in the Multi-Purpose Hall with a toast given by Hon. Yuichiro Hata (former Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism). Hon. Fukuda was there to deepen exchange with participants. There was active exchange of opinions and views among the speakers and participants.

