



CACCI Food & Agriculture Newsletter

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CACCI Organizes the 30th Conference and Celebrates 50th Anniversary in Taipei



(Left photo) H. E. Tsai Ing-Wen, President of the Republic of China (Taiwan), delivers her Special Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 30th CACCI Conference.

(Middle photo) CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili emphasizes the importance of Asia in his Opening Statement.

(Right photo) (Left to right) CNAIC Chairman Mr. Por-Fong Lin, CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili, President Ms. Tsai Ing-Wen, ANA CEO Mr. Osamu Shinobe and CIECA Chairman Mr. C. Y. Wang pose for a group photo.

The Confederation successfully held its 30th CACCI Conference in Taipei, Taiwan on November 23-25, 2016, with the participation of some 450 delegates composed largely of businessmen and chamber of commerce representatives from 22 Asia-Pacific countries, led by CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili from the Georgia.

Co-hosted by the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association (CIECA) and the Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce (CNAIC), with CTBC Bank as major sponsor, this year's Conference focused on the theme "The Rise of Asia: Taking a Bigger Role in the Global Economy." It

was designed to provide CACCI members and invited experts the venue to exchange views on measures that the business sector and governments in the region can undertake to take full advantage of the opportunities offered not just by markets in the Asia-Pacific region but also by countries in other parts of the world.

The Opening Ceremony featured **H. E. Tsai Ing-Wen**, President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) as Special Guest of Honor and Speaker. Invited as Special Guest during the Welcome Dinner on November 23 was **H. E. Mr. Lin Chuan**, Premier of the Republic of

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China (Taiwan). **Dr. Tain-Jy Chen**, Minister, National Development Council, Republic of China (Taiwan), was the speaker at the lunch hosted by CNAIC on November 24. **H. E. Mr. Javier Ching-shan Hou**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), was the Special Guest of Honor during the Gala Dinner on November 24.

The Taipei Conference also marked the **50th Anniversary of the Confederation**. Special activities were lined up to help commemorate this important milestone of the Confederation. One such activity was the CACCI Summit Meeting, which gathered together the presidents, chairmen and CEOs of all CACCI Primary Members primarily to: (a) review the accomplishments of the Confederation over the 50 years since its founding; (b) re-visit its vision and mission as well as its goals and objectives in light of the current conditions and recent developments in the regional and global market environment; and (c) prepare a road-map of its future direction.

As part of the commemoration of its 50th Anniversary, CACCI presented the Illustrious Distinguished Service Award to all members who



CACCI delegates listen to presentations made by Plenary Session Speakers.



Foreign and local delegates network with each other during the coffee break of the 30th CACCI Conference.



CACCI presents the Illustrious Distinguished Service Award to all members who had served as CACCI President.

had served as CACCI President. The Award was in recognition of their important contribution to the Confederation, their unwavering commitment to the CACCI objective of bringing businessmen in Asia together, and their continuing efforts to help promote regional cooperation and to further advance the interest of the region's business community.

The CACCI Council, which is the organization's governing body, elected the office bearers for the term 2017-2018. Mr. Jemal Inaishvili, Member of the Council of the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was re-elected CACCI President for a second term, and seven other members were elected as Vice Presidents.

CACCI announced the winners of the 7th Local Chamber Awards, the 6th Asia-Pacific Young Entrepreneur Award, the 1st Asia-Pacific Woman Entrepreneur Award, and the 2nd Hydropower and Clean Energy Excellence Award during the Gala Dinner of the Conference held on November 24, 2016. The winners received their awards from newly elected CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili and the chairmen of the respective Board of Judges of the Awards.

CACCI endorsed a policy paper entitled "Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women." In order to fight against slowing global economic growth, CACCI called on the business community to be proactive in improving productivity, and said that the economic empowerment of women is one key way through which this can be achieved. This increases participation in the workforce to support aging populations, generates innovation and better-decision making through diversity and provides incentives to continue learning and contributing to society.

CACCI signed a Partnership Agreement with the Sydney Business Chamber (SBC) and the ICC World Chambers Federation (ICC-WCF) covering their collaboration in the holding of the 31st CACCI Conference next year within the framework of the ICC WCF's 10th World Chambers Congress to be co-organized by SBC on September 19-21, 2017 in Sydney, Australia. ■

30th CACCI Conference Hosts Successful Roundtable Discussions on Food & Agriculture



(Left photo) Dr. Liang-Chou Hsia, President of Yu Chou Friendly Agriculture Research Institute from Taiwan, chairs the Roundtable Discussions on Food & Agriculture, and makes a presentation on the latest trend on the food industry.
(Middle photo) Dr. Wei Fang, Professor and Former Chairman, Department of Bio-Industrial Mechatronics Engineering, National Taiwan University, speaks of the idea of “plant factory” for solving worldwide challenge ahead.
(Right photo) Mr. Rommel Sim Gerodias, President and CEO, Sauber Professionals, Inc. from the Philippines, shares with the audience how to ensure food security.



(Left photo) Mr. Keiichiro Wakai, Chairman of Aomori Chamber of Commerce and Industry, makes a report titled: Developing a new era of exchange between Tohoku in Japan and Asia through dispelling reputational damages.
(Middle photo) Chairman and invited speakers take questions from the floor during the Q & A Session.
(Right photo) CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili presents tokens of appreciation to the session Chairman and invited speakers on behalf of CACCI.

In conjunction with the 30th CACCI Conference, Roundtable Discussions on Food & Agriculture were held on November 23, 2016 at Marriot Hotel in Taipei, Taiwan, with participation of more than 30 local and overseas delegates.

Under the chairmanship of Dr. Liang-Chou Hsia, President of Yu Chou Friendly Agriculture Research Institute from Taiwan, this session featured three other speakers from Taiwan, the Philippines and Japan, respectively, who shared with the audience the stories of food and agriculture in their respective countries.

Following his opening remarks, Dr. Hsia made a presentation on the latest global trends in the food industry. According to Dr. Hsia, in addition to the growing importance of food security, the shortage of food supply will be an inevitable development in the future, and people would need to not only avoid wasting food, but also explore more sources of nutrition, including even eating worms.

Dr. Wei Fang, Professor and Former Chairman, Department of Bio-Industrial Mechatronics Engineering,

National Taiwan University, was the first speaker who spoke of the idea of “plant factory” for solving worldwide challenge ahead. In his report, Dr. Fang brought about a question: is there any plant production system capable of producing mass amount of high quality products in the shortest time, use the least amount of resource (land, water, labor, energy, etc.) and has the least amount of impact on environment? The answer is yes. Plant factory (vertical farm) is considered one of the solutions. The presentation will introduce not only this innovated and integrated approach but also worldwide business opportunity within.

The second speaker of this session was Mr. Rommel Sim Gerodias, President and CEO, Sauber Professionals, Inc. from the Philippines whose presentation focused on food security. Mr. Gerodias analyzed the global burdens of foodborne disease, ways to evolve world and food security and shared his views on the future of food security. In conclusion, he indicated that in the future, people can expect an increasing number of devices and

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30th CACCI

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applications within food businesses to do more testing on an increasingly diverse range of parameters. With the technological developments, there is certainly scope to increase the ease and frequency of food product testing over and above standard tests from farm to fork.

The third speaker Mr. Keiichiro Wakai, Chairman of Aomori Chamber of Commerce and Industry, talked about the experience of Japan. In his presentation titled: Developing a new era of exchange between Tohoku in Japan and Asia through dispelling reputational damages, Mr. Wakai took the “Great East Japan Earthquake” as an example. Five years and eight months have passed since “the Great East Japan Earthquake” struck Tohoku region

and caused unprecedented damage. The reconstruction is underway thanks to the enormous support from the people in Japan and overseas, and the tireless effort of the people in the afflicted areas. Furthermore, the work towards decommissioning the disaster-hit TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant has been accelerated. Despite of the reputational damage that seriously affects its key industries such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and inbound tourism, the Tohoku Region very much looks forward to welcoming guest from all around the world with heartfelt hospitality.

At the end of the Session, CACCI President Mr. Jemal Inaishvili presented tokens of appreciation to the session Chairman and invited speakers on behalf of CACCI. ■

RP eyes regional collaboration on rice in ASEAN

By Philippine News Agency

The Philippines is pushing for a collaboration with ASEAN members and other rice-growing countries in Asia to make rice available and affordable across the region amid challenges posed by climate change.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) will present a 10-point Action Plan to the region’s top agriculture policymakers at the annual Senior Officials Meeting-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-AMAF) conference to be held next week in Palawan.

The Action Plan dovetails with the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and includes the ASEAN Plus 3 Germplasm Development and Breeding Initiative.

This initiative effectively creates a regional technology collaboration platform that could improve the genetic resources of rice varieties available to the ASEAN Plus 3 countries.

At the same time, it enables work on a bilateral basis to accelerate the development and deployment of climate-smart rice varieties adapted to region-specific conditions of drought, flooding and salinity brought on by climate change.

“Now is the time for ASEAN to make this commitment,” said Matthew Morell, IRRI director general.

“The rice industry feeds over 600 million people in the region each day. A joint investment in rice breeding can achieve food security for the entire region, as well as create inclusive economic growth in the rice industry,” he



Farmers in Patul, Santiago City, Isabela prepare an irrigated rice paddy for planting. The Magat River Integrated Irrigation System irrigates some 85,000 hectares of rice land in the province. (Ceasar M. Perante) /mb.com.ph

said.

Deliberations of the SOM-AMAF will take place on August 22-26.

Participating countries in the conference will include the 10 ASEAN member countries — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — plus China, Japan and South Korea.

Source: Manila Bulletin, August 19, 2016 ■

Five types of food to be added to Taiwan's food safety program

By Lee I-chia / Staff reporter, Taipei Times

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Taiwan said on September 19, 2016 manufacturers and importers of five types of food will be included in a food safety monitoring program, requiring them to register and conduct regular examinations.

The five types of food are agricultural plant products, noodles and vermicelli products, food-grade vinegar, egg products and grain mill products.

Companies manufacturing the five food types with capital exceeding NT\$30 million (US\$953,895) and firms that import the products are to be included in the program.

Division of Food Safety official Hsu Chao-kai said an estimated 4,700 companies will be added to the program, with the inclusion of the five food types bringing the total number of companies regulated by the program to about 19,000 operating in 23 industries.

“It includes almost all ingredients needed for food



processing,” he said, adding that the companies will be required to set food safety monitoring plans, conduct mandatory examinations at least once every season or every batch to ensure good hygiene and food safety.

The companies will be regulated by the program in different stages according to their area of operations, Hsu said.

Manufacturers of processed meat and dairy products must begin the examinations on Oct. 31, and all companies will be required to do the same by July 31, 2018, he said.

The FDA said that if a company fails to set monitoring plans or conduct examinations, the agency will ask it to make amends, but if it continues to ignore the requirements, it would face a fine of NT\$30,000 to NT\$3 million.

If the case is considered a serious one, the agency can order the company to shut down for a time, or terminate its business entirely, it said.

The agency said it would collect opinions and suggestions on the policy from the public until Oct. 19, and people can check a question-and-answer section on its Web site, www.fda.gov.tw.

Source: Taipei Times, September 20, 2016



Indian gov't unveils plan to double farmer incomes

By *Nirmala George, AP*

India pledged on February 29, 2016 to invest billions of dollars to improve the lives of farmers and boost the rural economy, drive consumer demand and stimulate growth.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitely proposed spending nearly US\$13 billion on rural development, promising higher incomes for farmers who form the majority of India's 1.2 billion people.

Presenting the annual budget for 2016-17, he forecast that India would grow by 7.6 percent in the year ending March 2016. The government intends to distribute the benefits of growth among the poorer sections of society, including the vast majority of India's farmers, he said.

"We plan to double farmers' income in five years," Jaitely said.

He outlined what he called the government's "nine pillars" of a "transformative agenda" for the economy.

They include a slew of measures to boost education, increase spending on roads, irrigation and other infrastructure, intensify oversight of government spending and reform India's complicated tax regime.

The Indian economy is doing well despite slowing growth in other emerging and leading economies, Jaitely said. His reference to a recent observation by the International Monetary Fund that India was the one bright



Indian workers put up scaffolding for group photographs of all the lawmakers from both the houses at parliament house in New Delhi, India, Monday, Feb. 29.(AP)

spot in the global outlook was vigorously applauded by fellow members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

"We inherited an economy of slow growth, high inflation and low faith in government ... amid global headwinds, the Indian economy has held its own," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led his Bharatiya Janata Party to a decisive win in national elections in May 2014, promising to overhaul the Indian economy and change archaic laws.

However, Modi's attempts to streamline taxes and overhaul antiquated labor and land acquisition laws to attract more investment mostly have been thwarted by opposition parties.

Investments in agriculture are urgently needed, since vast numbers of farmers in India's monsoon-dependent farm sector are suffering from two back-to-back years of poor rains, analysts say.

However, the focus on helping farmers likely also was done with an eye toward legislative assembly elections due in five states in the next few months.

In the last two years, the Modi government has pumped funds into infrastructure development. The recent drubbing the ruling party received in state elections in the farming state of Bihar inspired a change in emphasis.

Source: China Post, March 1, 2016



Security personnel with a sniffer dog check bags containing the copies of the federal budget for the year 2016-17, that will be distributed to lawmakers at the parliament house in New Delhi on Monday, Feb. 29.(AP)

Japanese Whisky Boom Drives Rice Farmers to Drink

By Aya Takada, Monami Yui and Hiromi Horie

Japan's burgeoning whisky business is driving rice farmer Hiroshi Tsubouchi to hit the booze.

With domestic rice consumption sliding, Tsubouchi, 36, says he's getting on the whisky bandwagon -- or, at least, switching to the barley used to make it. With Japanese whiskies ranking among the best -- and most expensive -- in the world, the profits of the local distillery industry are beginning to flow to the country's farmers.

Tsubouchi will reap his first crop next month, joining a dozen farmers in central Japan testing barley's

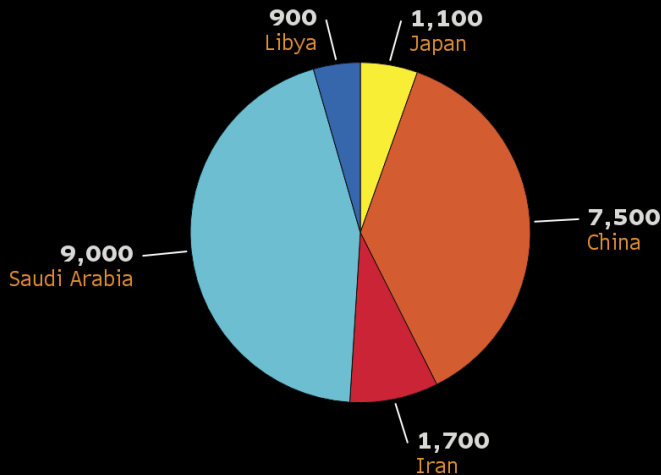
potential to bolster incomes and help feed the nation's malt-hungry spirit-makers. Japan is the world's fourth-largest importer of the grain and second-biggest buyer of malt, the barley product that's mashed and fermented to make whisky and beer. Imports of whisky-making malt jumped 20 percent last year and have almost quadrupled over the past decade, spurred by demand for Japanese whiskies from San Francisco to Hong Kong.

"I never expected our Japanese whiskies to be so popular overseas," said Ichiro Akuto, 50, whose single

malts sell for as much as 100,000 yen (\$920) a bottle. His distillery, Venture Whisky Ltd., in Chichibu in Saitama prefecture, is working with local farmers to establish a supply chain for a malting plant he built in 2013. "I want to produce whisky with the flavor of Chichibu -- something I believe would be admired around the world."

Biggest Barley Importers

Japan's imports of 1.1 million tons annually make it the world's fourth-largest buyer



Source: USDA

Bloomberg

World's Best

Akuto has already gained that level of recognition -- winning awards every year from 2007 to 2012. In Jim Murray's Whisky Bible for 2015, Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2013, a single malt made by Tokyo-based Suntory Holdings Ltd., was named "World Whisky of the Year," while Asahi Group Holdings Ltd.'s Nikka Taketsuru 17 Years won the "World's Best Blended Malt" title at the World Whiskies Awards last year.

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Japanese Whisky

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Ichiro Akuto

Photographer: Tomohiro Ohsumi/Bloomberg

That's propelled the popularity of Japanese whiskies, leading to shortages and surging prices. While global sales volumes from all producing countries increased an average of 5 percent a year from 2009 to 2014, they advanced at a 5.6 percent clip in Japan, data from Euromonitor International show. While most Japanese whisky is consumed domestically, last year the country sold a record 10.4 billion yen (\$95 million) of it abroad, an eleven-fold increase over the past decade.

"Two years ago, if you searched online for Japanese whisky in Hong Kong, you wouldn't find anything," said Aaron Chan, who collects the amber liquid and sells it in Club Qing, a bar he owns in the city. "Now in Chinese or English, you see interviews, articles on new whisky bars or PR statements about it. Japanese whisky is definitely getting more and more exposure."

Even the 12-year-old Yamazaki whisky that Chan considers "entry-level" is difficult to find and, where it is available, it goes for HK\$1,200 (\$155) a bottle, compared with a recommended price in Japan equivalent to about HK\$700.

A bottle of 1960 Karuizawa sold for HK\$918,750 at Bonhams in Hong Kong last August, setting an auction record for a Japanese whisky. One of only 41 bottles ever made, and after being aged 52 years in casks, the Karuizawa is considered the holy grail of Japanese whiskies by collectors.

Whisky supplies have become so tight that Suntory Holdings President Takeshi Niinami has asked his staff to follow his lead and try abstaining from the company's premium malts. The need to conserve sales inventory trumps the executive's desire to consume it himself, Niinami told reporters in January. "Hibiki is my favorite, but I can't," he said.

Suntory, the country's biggest distiller, will spend 5 billion yen in 2016 to expand production, adding to

the 7 billion yen spent on expansions since 2010, said spokeswoman Hasumi Ozawa.

Whisky maker Akuto, who worked at Suntory until 1995 as a salesman, expects shipments from his Chichibu distillery to increase by 20 percent a year. Last year, he sold 100,000 bottles -- a third of which went overseas to customers mostly in the U.K., France, the U.S. and Taiwan.

Increasing whisky production has been a boon for U.K. farmers, whose barley has become the backbone of Japanese distilling operations. Japanese malt imports totaled 4,744 tons last year, worth about 437 million yen.

Akuto's Venture Whisky imported 152 tons from England, Scotland and Germany last year. That reliance will lessen if his plan to source malt locally works.

National Pride

He wants to replace 10 percent of the distillery's grain requirement with barley grown by farmers in Chichibu. Even if it costs five times more to produce malt from locally grown barley than to import it, changing the source may improve the perception of the quality of the

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Hibiki Suntory Whisky served at a San Francisco bar.

Photographer: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg



A Venture Whisky employee holds malt barley.

Photographer: Tomohiro Ohsumi/Bloomberg

Japanese Whisky

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whisky, Akuto said.

Japanese whisky is a subject of “increasing national pride, due to rising international recognition and a TV dramatization of the life of Masataka Taketsuru, a pioneer in Japanese whisky distilling,” Euromonitor said in a report in October.

Also, farmers in Chichibu may be able to double their income by planting barley straight after they have harvested rice or buckwheat -- the grain used to make soba noodles. Farmland typically stays idle for six months after the rice and buckwheat harvest in November, a window that barley could fill in a crop-rotation program, says rice farmer Tsubouchi.

A restaurateur who began growing rice in 2011, Tsubouchi says barley may eventually be more lucrative than rice, consumption of which has been declining by about 80,000 tons a year in Japan, tracking the country’s shrinking population.

Golden Melon

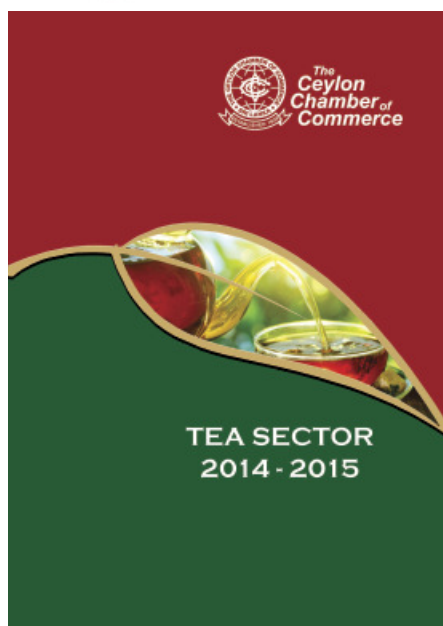
“I feel very proud of becoming a supplier to a whisky-maker,” Tsubouchi said in an interview. He bought and rented 0.6 hectares (1.5 acres) of uncultivated land from nearby farms to grow barley for Venture Whisky. He’s planting Golden Melon, a malting-barley variety recommended by Saitama agriculture authorities, who preserved the seed after farmers grew it successfully in the prefecture four decades ago.

If all goes to plan, 1.2 tons of grain will be harvested in May, Akuto said. That will be used in his Chichibu malting plant -- a 20 million-yen facility that has the capacity to produce 50 tons of malt a year.

“I am the happiest person in the world as my whisky is not only giving people a lot of pleasure, it is also creating a new industry here and reinvigorating farming,” he said.

Source: Bloomberg, April 20, 2016

Sri Lanka sees an upward trend in its ‘Instant tea’ and ‘Ready to Drink tea’ exports



Tea Sector 2015, an analytical source of comprehensive information regarding tea sector in Sri Lanka and its competitive markets can be now obtained from the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

This valuable publication consists of Sri Lanka’s top export markets, declining markets, market analysis for Russia, Turkey and Iran, fluctuation of tea prices, production of tea production in Sri Lanka with comparison of competitor markets, weekly tea auction prices in respect of Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Bangladesh and Malawi, Tea Industry experts overviews and news articles about the tea industry in 2015.

This publication also consists of HS Code wise statistical data of tea exports for 2014 and 2015. The report highlights reasons for decline of tea exports especially tea in packets, tea bags, instant tea and green tea contrary to an upward trend for the exports of instant and Ready to drink tea from Sri Lanka. The Colombo Tea Auction has yielded good prices among other auctions held in Kolkata, Kochi, Guwahati, Jakarta and Mombasa. Moreover, it will provide valuable information about new trends in the tea industry and to learn experts’ views of tea sector in Sri Lanka with an extended worldwide view.

If interested, you can obtain a copy of the ‘Tea Sector 2015’ from the Business Information Division of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. For further information contact 5588892 or email at info@chamber.lk.

Source: Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, July 13, 2016

Unique produce and other curiosities in today's agriculture industry

By Enru Lin

Farming has come a long way since the days of a man and his push plow.

Today, produce marketing gets help from Facebook and crop data is monitored from the sky. Here's a look at some of the more unique offerings of modern-day Taiwan agriculture.

Less-picky Silkworms

Finally, a silkworm that's not a fussy eater.

Schoolchildren and sericulturists alike will be able to appreciate the less-discriminating palate of "Bm-J10," a grub bred from Taiwanese, mainland Chinese and Japanese types.

It looks like any other silkworm in Taiwan, but is the only one bred for its willingness to stray from a strict diet of fresh mulberry leaves.

"We previously developed seven varieties for greater silk production," government researcher Lin Men-jin said at the BioTaiwan trade show in Taipei on July 21, 2016.

"This is the first type developed for its consistent willingness to eat man-made food."

Still, the as-yet unregistered "Bm-J10" doesn't eat everything but merely tolerates a chow made of soybean and dried mulberry leaves.

"The dry food does include mulberry, but we can use less of it," Lin said.

"What is nice about dried food is that it can be kept longer. Also, this way children don't need to run around looking for mulberry leaves — that's hard to do in a city."

'Michelle' and Other Produce

Taiwan, the kingdom of fruit, gets exciting additions this year.

There's Kaohsiung No. 5, or "Michelle," a peach-colored mango with the prized flavor of the American "Irwin."

Irwins are famously perishable, keeping two to three days at room temperature, but Michelle has a shelf life of up to eight and is expected to be a boon for retailers.

A Council of Agriculture (COA) project 10 years in the making, "Michelle" debuted on the market this summer.

Also new are two cantaloupe cultivars developed for their resistance to powdery mildew, a disease that can decimate fields.

There is also a new wax apple named Tainong No. 3, or "Brown Sugar Barbie," a crimson, aromatic and candy-like fruit that is larger than its conventional counterparts.

Ractopamine Home Test Kits

Now you can test for ractopamine in the privacy of your kitchen.

Taiwan Advance Bio-Pharmaceutical Inc., a biotech



A view of a mobile app under development by biotech firm Taiwan Advance Bio-Pharmaceutical Inc., Taipei, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The app allows users to share and search for the ractopamine test results of local businesses. (Enru Lin, The China Post)

firm founded with government support, has developed a range of low-cost test kits that can detect antibiotics in milk (NT\$50 per kit) and ractopamine in pork (NT\$100).

Designed for personal use, the kit hopes to help consumers keep fear at bay amid food safety scandals and relaxed restrictions for meat imports.

"To test meat for ractopamine, wait for its blood to drop to room temperature, deposit three drops on the cassette and wait," said Owen Chang, a deputy manager in the firm's diagnostics products division.

If two lines appear, the meat is all clear. If there's a single stripe, the meat contains leanness enhancers.

"The government offers tests but each costs about NT\$4,000. The difference is that theirs is precise and gives the exact residue level while ours is a simple test that tells you yes or no," Chang said.

The firm is now developing an app that lets users share test results for businesses. Data can be uploaded to the cloud and shared to create a map of "safe" restaurants.

Drones for Crop Surveys

Assessing crop losses gets faster with the help of drones.

A new unmanned vehicle gathers data that can be processed into exceptionally precise 3D maps of soil and crop conditions.

The drone was deployed to deliver rapid updates on agricultural damage after Typhoon Nepartak, said Lee Hung-hsi, vice director of the COA's department of science and technology.

A research and development project managed by the COA, the drone is at the forefront of Taiwan's "smart agriculture" movement.

As farmers argue that they face threats like population outflow and an aging workforce, the central government has rushed to build drones, farm management solutions and other human-replacement technologies.

Farmer's Academy

Established by the Council of Agriculture in 2011, the Farmer's Academy is meant to be a training ground

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Unique produce Continued from page 10

for aspiring farmers.

At subsidized tuition, the academy offers online classes and brick-and-mortar courses on topics like



Test kits for ractopamine residue in meat are displayed at the annual BioTaiwan trade show in Taipei, Thursday, July 21, 2016. (Enru Lin, The China Post) Silkworms nicknamed "Bm-J10" eat dried chow in a tray in Taipei, Thursday, July 21, 2016. (Enru Lin, The China Post) Source: China Post, July 25, 2016

Mushrooms fueled a scientist's flight from N. Korea

By Hyung-Jin Kim, AP

Lee T.B. fled North Korea not because he suffered from dire poverty or persecution at home, as many other defectors have. He did it for mushrooms, and to fulfill his wife's dying wish.

He has studied the fungi for decades and has created products with them that he believes may fight diseases including cancer, which killed his wife more than 25 years ago. He felt his work was constrained by, and ultimately even in some danger from, the North Korean government, so he fled to South Korea in 2005.

The years since, however, held a much different array of frustrations. He says he was hoodwinked by shady businessmen, and at one point was so financially strapped that he had to trade his mushroom products for groceries. Now, finally, the 66-year-old is working for a company that is starting to mass-produce and sell his products.

"I was educated under a socialist system and didn't know how human relations, the economy and businesses operate under a capitalistic system. So some people exploited my weaknesses," Lee said in an interview in his newly built laboratory in a quiet farming village in Hwaseong, just south of Seoul. Lee requested that his given name be identified only with initials because of worry about possible reprisals against his two grown children still in the North.

Elite defectors such as Lee are rare, and his decision to abandon the North in part to pursue academic freedom in the South is even less common. Yet his struggles in the South were similar to the many North Korean defectors who report difficulty fitting in with largely affluent, ultra-

beekeeping, organic farming, orchid cultivation, shrimp aquaculture and sales.

Hog keeping, a month-long program, teaches the basics of breeding, sanitation and common diseases at a government facility in Tainan.

Upon completing a set of courses at Farmer's Academy, students become eligible for funding, business consultations and other state assistance.

competitive, well-educated South Koreans.

Lee worked as a microbiologist for North Korea's State Academy of Science, which he says received one of the largest food rations in the country. The mushrooms he studied are a traditional Korean folk remedy, with a variety of antiviral, antioxidant and cholesterol-lowering properties. Some recent studies show mushrooms may help contain the growth of tumors.

Lee was allowed the unusual opportunity of working for a Siberian mushroom institute for several years in the 1980s. But his time in what was then the Soviet Union kept him away from his family, and he returned home five days after his wife's death in 1989.

"I didn't even know she had cancer," Lee said as he wiped away tears with a handkerchief. "She did her best not to be a burden to me and my work. She was just a great person."

A Workers' Party official who was with Lee's wife when she died told Lee that she requested that her two children support their father respectfully and that Lee work on cancer prevention.

Lee said he vowed to fulfill her last wish as he sat drinking alcohol at her gravesite. "When I was there, I could only say, 'I'm sorry. I'm really sorry,'" Lee said.

Granting his wife's wish wasn't easy. Like all other scientists in North Korea, he said, his research was controlled by others. He was told to use his fungus expertise to explore how pine needles and corn might be used to develop alternative sources of food.

After the food project fell apart because of

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Mushrooms fueled . . . Continued from page 11

corruption and a lack of electricity at his laboratory, Lee said, North Korea faced a devastating famine believed to have killed hundreds of thousands in the 1990s.

Then, in 2000, months after he started work at an agricultural science institute in the northeastern Chinese city of Yanbian, Lee was shocked to learn that his mushroom research was being partly funded by South Koreans who had invested, without the North's knowledge, in that Chinese organization. There would be serious consequences if Pyongyang discovered that archrival Seoul was funding the project.

Lee disobeyed an order to return home. He had always felt constrained by academic rules in the North; now he was also afraid of possible punishment. So he moved around China and continued his mushroom research. He said he was often surprised by the abundance of food in China, and by positive news on South Korea.

In 2005 he flew to South Korea with the help of South Korean officials so he could dedicate himself to mushroom studies among other Koreans. He's among about 29,000 North Koreans who have defected to South Korea since the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War.

In South Korea, Lee acquired six mushroom-related patents and developed products that he says will strengthen people's immune systems to help them fight cancer, diabetes, hay fever and other health problems. He extracts mycelia — tiny hair-like root structures — from a number of mushroom species, then lets them grow together in a lab before drying the result and crushing it into powder.

In 2008, a six-month test showed that mushroom products developed by Lee and given to rats suppressed the growth of cancer cells implanted in the animals, said Chun Kyung-Hee, a professor at Yonsei University College of Medicine in Seoul. Chun, who worked for the state-run National Cancer Center at the time of the test, said her experiments were conducted independently in her laboratory and that she has never been connected to Lee's research or business. The work has not been published or peer-reviewed.

Lee faced years of problems bringing his products to market.

After working for a pharmaceutical company in South Korea, Lee in 2010 partnered with a South Korean businessman who he said agreed to sell his products and share the profits with him. That deal collapsed in 2012 after Lee accused his partner of cheating him.

Lee also said he was deceived by "tricksters" but refused to elaborate.

Lee's financial troubles eventually became so serious that, with help from fellow defectors, he traded his mushroom products for rice, radishes, Chinese cabbages and other food.

Earlier this year, South Korean businessmen



In this May 3, 2011 photo, scientist Lee T.B. who fled North Korea to South Korea, speaks about medicinal mushrooms during an interview at his mushroom laboratory in Geumsan, South Korea. (AP)

contacted him after seeing a blog post about his mushroom products. They founded the Seoul-based Aleph BioChem after Lee decided to work with them.

Company officials said they've already signed about US\$430,000 worth of contracts to supply several businesses with Lee's previous mushroom products. They plan to roll out new products in coming weeks.

Lee said his technique for mycelia-mixing can boost mushrooms' medicinal effectiveness as they interact with each other.

Some fungi experts reached by The Associated Press said that while mushrooms have some health-boosting qualities, mixing mycelia from different kinds of mushrooms is an unusual, difficult technology. They questioned whether cultivated mycelia would have better medical properties than the mushrooms themselves. Lee declined to disclose details about his mycelia-mixing technology.

Woo Ho, a Korean traditional herbal medicine doctor, said he's bought and given Lee's mushroom products to 400 of his patients suffering from hay fever, asthma, enteritis, gout and other diseases since October. Woo, who is not linked to Lee's business or research, said many of them reported that their health problems have eased, particularly those with hay fever.

On a recent day at his new laboratory in Hwaseong, Lee worked with two fellow defectors among electrical wiring systems that weren't yet installed and empty shelves. Fungi were everywhere. In jars on a table were also moldy garlic, Jerusalem artichoke and peanuts along with a soccer-ball-sized chaga mushroom. Lee said he was experimenting with adding mushroom mycelia to these foods.

He wonders if his products could have saved his wife's life if he had been able to make them decades ago in North Korea.

"I still think about her when things get quiet," said Lee, who has not remarried. "I'm now concentrating all my efforts on trying to prevent people from getting cancer."

Source: China Post, June 24, 2016

Network promotes Japan's organic farming in a bid to keep industry alive

By Yuzo Suwa

A young entrepreneur is striving to create a network of consumers and farmers promoting pesticide-free agricultural products.

Kazuma Nishitsuji, 33, was born into a salary worker's family in Fukui Prefecture and had little to do with agriculture as a young boy. But he became interested in farming while in high school when idle rice paddies began to rise in number as the government pared back rice production.

Nishitsuji then joined the agriculture facility at Kyoto University, where he came to learn that one of the biggest problems faced by Japan was its farmers were aging with few young successors.

In 2007, he founded My Farm Inc. in Kyoto to achieve his goal of making effective use of farmland while encouraging new entrants into the industry. He also thought increasing the number of people who grow crops for local consumption would help the public fully realize the importance of agriculture.

Despite finding it difficult to lease farmland, even idle fields, from owners, he managed to start a program in which people can learn about agriculture from farmers. He upgraded the program to a farm school where he teaches organic, pesticide-free agriculture.

My Farm now has 100 farms across Japan that teach the basics of agriculture, and nearly 700 people have graduated from its school.

"It is my dream for graduates to become economically independent and leaders in their localities," Nishitsuji said.

On a recent visit to Hakui in Ishikawa Prefecture, he met with graduate Satoshi Nitta, 47, who grows crops such as renkon (lotus root) and shiitake.

Nitta was one of the first graduates of My Farm's six-month, ¥200,000 weekend course in the Kanto region. After finishing the course, he quit his company and moved to Hakui with his family in 2013 to work in agriculture.

However, he makes only ¥2.1 million a year in revenue from the farm business, and is supported by an annual ¥2.25 million government subsidy under a five-year program offered to new entrants in agriculture.

"I will decide whether I should continue agriculture before the subsidy program expires," Nitta said.

Nishitsuji said he recognized the hardships faced by new entrants like Nitta, especially in their first year. It's why My Farm buys their crops at asking prices, given the farmers do not have full access to established marketing channels.

"We plan to lease agricultural equipment to help



(Upper photo) Kazuma Nishitsuji (right), president of My Farm Inc., and Satoshi Nitta, who graduated from the company's farming school, chat in a paddy in Hakui, Ishikawa Prefecture, on May 8, 2016. | KYODO

(Left photo) People drill holes in logs to fill them with fungi at a shiitake farm in Shika, Ishikawa Prefecture. | KYODO

them cut production costs," he said.

My Farm was on the verge of bankruptcy after the Fukushima nuclear crisis, which started in March 2011 after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami and fanned public fears about the safety of open-field cultivation.

After the disaster started, Nishitsuji participated in voluntary activities to improve crop soil damaged by the tsunami in Miyagi Prefecture, irking employees at My Farm who wanted him to focus more on rebuilding the company.

Half of its workforce quit the company and Nishitsuji temporarily stepped down as president.

"I was sticking too much to what I thought I should do," Nishitsuji recalled.

Returning to the post of president, he now makes sure to discuss the role of My Farm with employees at a farm it owns in Miyagi every summer while harvesting crops.

The outlook for Japan's agriculture is unclear. In addition to the decreasing number of farming households, the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade accord, when it takes effect, will promote large-scale farming operations in Japan, making the business environment tougher for farmers clinging to the production of safe products for consumers.

"For the survival of such farmers, graduates from My Farm's classes need to be networked for mutual support and to establish closer ties with consumers," Nishitsuji said.

Source: Japan Times, June 27, 2016

Taiwanese Kids taught importance of farming

By Zac Sarian

A leisure farm in Taiwan has way of inculcating the importance of agriculture in the young minds of kids and their parents. This is at the Tongshan Rice and Tea Resort, a member of the Taiwan Leisure Farms Development Association based in Yilan county.

We visited the place recently in the company of other journalists and travel agents. What did we find when we arrived there? About a dozen kids less than ten years old accompanied by their mothers. The kids were really enjoying straining and mixing the medium for producing mushroom spawns.

Tongshan township is where 40,000 people, mostly farmers, reside. Several years back, Tammy Chien decided to convert an old warehouse into a learning center with focus on farming. The town's four main products are rice, mushroom, pomelo and tea.

At the learning center, the participants experience hands-on do-it-yourself educational activities. In mushroom culture, they don't only teach how to prepare the planting materials and to grow them. They are also taught to prepare the mushrooms into delicious dishes.

During our visit, shabu-shabu was served with different mushroom species as the main ingredients. The kids who were in a different long table prepared their own lunch also with mushrooms and other vegetables.

For a half-day session, the kids are charged a fee of 250 Taiwan dollars equivalent to P375 in Philippine money. Last year, about 8,000 kids participated in the



SWEETENING POPRICE – The poprice is sweetened by adding brown sugar as soon as it is taken from the pop machine. It takes only a few minutes to pop the rice in the machine. Here, a worker shows how to mix the sugar with the use of wooden ladles.

do-it-yourself educational activities, according to Tammy Chien, the lady CEO. That's apart from the adults who also take part in the activities.

In rice, planting rice is not the only topic that is discussed. To appreciate the rice that is cooked, there is a mini rice mill installed in the learning center where one can see how rice is milled. The rice mill can produce well polished rice. The learning center also shows how to produce brown rice that is richer in vitamins than its well-polished counterpart.

Then there is value-adding in rice. Installed in the learning center is a poprice machine that can convert milled rice into poprice. The small machine can make poprice in just a few minutes. The popped rice is whole not broken. One kilo of rice which costs NT\$100 can be worth NT\$400 when sold with little expense on brown sugar to sweeten it.



POPRICE MACHINE – Photo shows Jude Bacalso, a member of the Philippine group, placing a kilo of rice in the poprice machine. It only takes a few minutes for the rice to get popped. The machine is small and is used to educate visitors and learners on how value can be added to farm products like rice. When popped, rice increases in market value four times.



CLOSE UP OF POPPED RICE – The popped rice grains remain whole, not broken. Making poprice is one way in adding value to farm produce. When sold in the market, a kilo of rice that is made into poprice will fetch four times the original value of rice. The Tongshan Rice and Tea Resort is a leisure farm focused on teaching visitors the importance of agriculture.

The Tongshan Rice and Tea Resort has also put up a store where the farmers' produce are sold. Most of them are in processed form.

By the way, leisure farms in Taiwan have been promoted by the government for several years now to improve the economic status of farmers. Agritourism is being promoted by the Taiwan Leisure Farms Development Association (TLFDA) which is financially supported by the government.

The association assists members in putting up their own leisure farms in the form of training, assistance in business documentation and in promoting agritourism among local and foreign visitors.

TLFDA has been active in

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HANDS-ON FARMING EXPERIENCE FOR KIDS – At the Tongshan Tea and Rice Resort in Yilan, Taiwan, the importance of agriculture is inculcated early in the minds of young kids. In photo, for instance, the young kids are brought by their parents to experience preparing the growing medium for mushroom spawn. Later, the kids experience eating dishes using different species of mushrooms as the main ingredients.



SHABU-SHABU – The Tongshan Rice and Tea Resort, a member of the Taiwan Leisure Farms Development Association, also operates a restaurant which serves the organic products of farmers in the township. Aside from rice, the farmers produce mushroom, pomelo and tea. The products are also sold at the resort’s grocery store. Photo shows mushrooms and other produce used in shabu-shabu served in their restaurant.

attracting visitors from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and lately in the Philippines. In the last few years, an increasing number of Filipino visitors have visited Taiwan leisure farms. Recently, a group of Filipino Chinese students went on a 3-week orientation on environment as well as to practice their mandarin.

Filipino entrepreneurs who want to put up their own leisure farms can learn a lot from visiting some of farms in Taiwan. Most of them are family-owned, some occupying only a hectare although there are also much bigger ones.

Source: Manila Bulletin, August 31, 2016



MUSHROOM FRUITING BAG – Mavish Chien shows a mushroom fruiting bag. At the learning center, young kids experience preparing the growing medium used in the fruiting bag. Not only the kids become appreciative of the importance of agriculture but also the parents who accompany their children.



MINI RICE MILL – A mini rice mill is part of the learning equipment at the Tongshan Rice and Tea Resort where children as well as adults attend sessions to make them aware of the importance of agriculture in people’s lives. Here, a member of the Philippine group is placing palay in the machine for milling.



ROC President Tsai pledges food safety risk committee

By Stephanie Chao



President Tsai Ing-wen speaks at the 2016 Taiwan Food Safety Summit in Taipei, Tuesday, August 30, 2016. She announced the administration's next step in its food safety agenda — setting up a food safety risk assessment committee and increasing funding for food safety issues by 50 percent. (Photo Courtesy of the Presidential Office)

In a bid to improve food safety, President Tsai Ing-wen on August 30, 2016 vowed to set up a food safety risk assessment committee and to increase funding for food safety measures by 50 percent.

Tsai made the pledge during her opening remarks at the Taiwan Food Safety Summit on Tuesday. In addition to setting up the committee, the government will also implement an agency charged with managing harmful and toxic chemicals, Tsai said.

Increasing the government budget for food safety would also ensure that related agencies could beef up management and increase inspection quantity.

“Food safety is currently a focal issue globally — it is also a key policy of Taiwan’s government,” Tsai said during her opening remarks.

Stressing negotiations and communication between the government, manufacturers, enterprises and consumers as a key factor in ensuring safe food products, the president said a single wrong move in the production process could ignite food scandals.

The government will also lay out instructions for the Health Ministry, Council of Agriculture (COA), Environmental Protection Administration, Economics

Ministry and the Education Ministry to strengthen management of food safety issues.

More Gov’t Funding

Apart from setting up the risk-assessment committee — which will focus primarily on assessing the handling of major food scandals and strengthening inspections of products that failed tests in the past — Tsai has also vowed to increase government funding for food safety issues by 50 percent for next year.

The COA will oversee campus food safety inspections, Tsai added. The COA will be responsible for providing school lunches that include CAS-certified and organic produce, GAP-certified fruits and vegetables, products with Traceable Agricultural Products (TAP) certification and foods with QR code ingredient tracing systems.

The government also aims to simplify standards necessary for achieving the national seal of quality, in order to encourage agricultural development and food education, as well as to increase food safety incentives for manufacturers.

Rebuilding Nation’s Image

Also at the event, Legislative Speaker Su Jia-chyuan emphasized the importance of food culture in Taiwan, citing local idioms such as “food is a necessity of the people” and pointing to praise for Taiwan’s bubble milk tea and steamed dumplings from international media.

Yet food scandals in past years have not only harmed the health of Taiwanese nationals but also dented Taiwan’s image, Su said, naming scares such as those over toxic milk powder, plasticizer contamination and gutter oil in everyday cooking oils.

In order to rebuild Taiwan’s international reputation as a gastronomic paradise and to promote relevant legislation, Su vowed to see the implementation of food safety regulations, to carry out upstream and downstream management and to see the entire population commit to eliminating food scandals.

While on the campaign trail, Tsai laid out a plan to address food safety in Taiwan. These promises included an expansion of food inspections and revisions to food safety laws by increasing penalties and fines.

Source: *China Post*, August 31, 2016

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