

3. Attending the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Organic World Congress: Active Organic Agriculture Movements in Asia

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Moved by Bhutan's "100% Organic" Declaration

From October 13 to 15, 2014, I attended the IFOAM Organic World Congress held at a conference center in Turkey's ancient capital Istanbul. The theme for this congress was "Building Organic Bridges," and within it one could sense the power of Turkey in promoting their organic produce to the world like dry fruits and dairy products. 900 people from about 80 nations around the world participated, and the active and lively presence of Asian nations such as China, South Korea, India, Cambodia, and Bhutan were highly visible. IFOAM Asia's Secretary General is a Korean woman, and she reached out to Japan to join the regional body. India, Brazil, China, and Russia lobbied extravagantly to be the host for the next World Congress to be held in three years, and China was especially notable in making an active appeal. India was chosen as the next host after all, and was publicizing the next congress as one where producers will take center stage. In fact, only few farmers attended this World Congress as opposed to the many environmental groups, distribution groups, and academic scholars present.



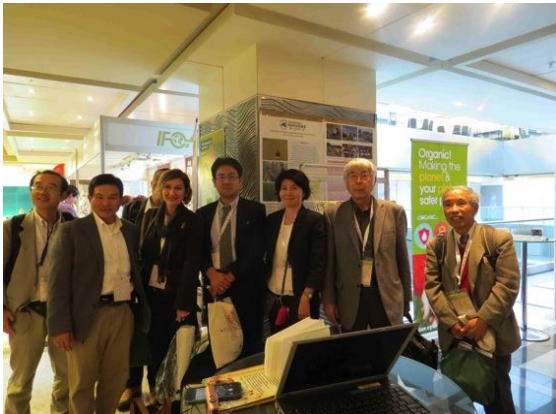
The Minister of Agriculture and Forests and Mr. Sugeno

Bhutan caught my attention the most among the Asian nations. The highlight was when the Bhutanese Minister of Agriculture and Forests announced in his speech that "Bhutan aims to go 100% organic by 2020." It is wonderful that the Minister of Agriculture and Forests attended this World Congress and made this declaration. In contrast, it was unfortunate that the only person in attendance from Japanese government agencies was a staff person from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in charge of promoting organic agriculture in Southeast Asia.

In November 2013, when I visited the Araku Region, which is a mountainous area in southeast India, I noticed family farming and community farming alive and well in the region's rice production, dairy farming, and coffee bean cultivation. I found it important that we form alliances in Asia based on the power of these organic agriculture initiatives that are small-scale, family-owned, and collectively-operated.

"The Appeal from Fukushima" and the Sustainable Society

The largest objective in attending the Organic World Congress was to speak to the world about the conditions caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the nuclear accident, and to make an appeal based on the lessons learned from the disaster.



In front of the Fukushima exhibition booth at IFOAM

Another main objective was to relay the voices of organic farmers from all around Japan who have stated that “nuclear power plants and organic agriculture cannot coexist” and that we must “switch to renewable energy” at the “Revival! 3 Years Since the Fukushima Nuclear Accident – Fukushima Live-and-Plough Organic Agriculture Meeting” held in Fukushima in August 2014.

In the morning of the second day of the Congress, I delivered the message through “The Appeal from Fukushima” (see page 18 for full text). I asked Ms. Kaori Kuroda of CSO Network to serve as interpreter for me, and thanks to her I could solemnly and firmly

convey our message to the world. I emphasized that while radioactive contamination occurred in all types of soil, it was the fertile soil that is richer in organic materials that was more likely to have radioactive cesium absorbed and fixed in it. I wanted to tell the audience that the soil is powerful, and consequently this power of soil and hence the power of organic agriculture can be the light of hope for revitalization of the region. Furthermore, I appealed to the audience that Fukushima illuminates the role and sustainable value of environmentally-friendly agriculture even more as a result of the radioactive contamination that it has suffered. I also spoke about how all of the support received from citizens made it clear that urban-rural coexistence was crucial. I felt a sense of accomplishment after the speech as several people showered me with compliments and asked to shake my hand.

On the third day of the Congress, a special Fukushima booth was set up near the IFOAM International Head Office space, and we distributed posters, Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network flyers, and "The Appeal from Fukushima" text. Many people stopped by to take a look at our materials. A person from Romania asked us if we could teach them the technology to turn vegetable oil into running tractors.

We also got to meet Ms. Pinar Demircan, an anti-nuclear activist from Turkey, and heard from her that "at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, radioactive contamination had spread to the northeastern part of Turkey, but the government conducted no field investigation whatsoever on it." We also heard that there is a plan to move forward the construction of two nuclear power reactors in Turkey using Japanese technology. "Just from observing Fukushima at a distance from Turkey, I felt that it will be impossible to take up agriculture in contaminated Fukushima again, but I am glad I could hear directly from you on this matter," she said, and these words of hers left a strong impression on me.



Mr. Ishi, Mr. Okawara and Mr. Sugeno

IFOAM's General Assembly took place on the fourth day of the Congress. Three of us who came to Turkey together – Mr. Kai Okawara, a board member of the Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network; Professor Hideki Ishii, a Special Appointed Associate Professor at Fukushima University; and myself – made an appeal together at the General Assembly. Mr. Okawara took up agriculture after the 2011 disaster by starting to grow vegetables and apples, and he has since started up a citizens' radioactivity measuring station at his own home; he is considered a promising young agriculturalist who is proactive in promoting Fukushima produce. Professor Ishii started his position at Fukushima University also after the 2011 disaster, and, in cooperation with the Agricultural Cooperative and farmers, he has gone all around the prefecture to conduct field investigation including soil measurement; he has also been publicizing test results of Fukushima produce. There was a large round of applause after the three of us presented. At this General Assembly, the motion by IFOAM Japan to "advocate anti-nuclear pro-renewable energy through action" was passed.



Making Pomegranate juice by traditional way 1

It has become clear to me through attending this IFOAM Organic World Congress that when it comes to the various challenges the world faces – such as poverty, hunger, climate change, environmental and soil degradation, and protection of biodiversity – going "organic" is



Making Pomegranate juice by traditional way 2

one of the biggest keys and "sustainability" a key word. There is great need for the grassroots movement in support of organic farming to further develop. There is also great demand on the governments around the world to understand the complex situations in which the world is placed and to make sound decisions, with Bhutan's 100% organic declaration being one such example. As a country that is responsible for the nuclear accident, the Japanese government must make the decision for a change in its direction, with a shift away from nuclear power generation and a shift toward renewable energy, in the same way that Article 9 of the Constitution was borne as a

country responsible for marching into war and for all the sacrifices as a result.

In attending the IFOAM Organic World Congress, we owe our thanks to Mr. Katsushige Murayama, President of IFOAM Japan. We are grateful for his coordination with the IFOAM International Head Office so that "The Appeal from Fukushima" could be scheduled in the program. We are also grateful for Mr. Yu Watanabe of the IFOAM Japan Office for arranging our accommodation and travel, and for his assistance with setting up for the speech at the

Congress site. We extend our appreciation to both here once again.

Visiting the University of the Aegean and the Organic Farms

We spent the two days after the General Assembly visiting the University of the Aegean and the organic farms thanks to Professor Masanori Nonaka of Niigata University making connections for us.

At the Izmir Airport in the Aegean Region, Professor Oguz Can Turgay and Mr. Kazuki Suzuki awaited us. Professor Can had once studied at Niigata University in Japan, while Mr. Suzuki was from Niigata University and was studying at Ankara University at the time. Both of them deserve our deep appreciation for having made various arrangements for us, from the rental car to our visit to the University of the Aegean.

At the University of the Aegean, we met with the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, and we were able to let him know the conditions of Fukushima in his office. We were warmly welcomed, and following the suggestion made by Professor Ishii of Fukushima University, the plans for partnership between Fukushima University and the University of the Aegean had moved forward. After our meeting, thanks to the Dean's identification of our appeal as an important matter for Fukushima, the three of us from Fukushima were provided with an opportunity to present "The Appeal from Fukushima" to thirty pedology students. The message was also posted on the University of the Aegean's website, and we are grateful for that as well.

In the afternoon, we made an observation visit to a large-scale organic farm, which is collectively operated by thirteen families. This specific farm belonging to the Tombul Family contains livestock, grains, and pomegranate, as well as a processing facility. Its vast size of around 500 hectares, including multiple sites, reminded me of a theme park. I was amazed by the cyclical system which incorporates livestock, grain production, and processing. There was a machine in the biomass plant that could convert waste from the dairy cows into liquid fertilizer and barnyard manure, and amidst this modernized system, a traditional technique handed down from generation to generation was employed, where pomegranate was being stomped on in order to make the most of its special nutritional component. Also, cutting-edge technique utilizing information technology was used to ensure safety and sanitation. There was a well-

balanced coexistence of good traditional practices worth preserving and innovative procedures.



*At Ege University with a professor in
Agriculture*

the friendliness of our Turkish hosts.

In the collectively-operated farm system, full health and welfare benefits are offered on top of the wages paid to each family. There was also a museum on their premise, and they had an easy-to-understand exhibit on the history of olive production which has taken place in Turkey since the olden days. I was moved by seeing how the cyclical system of sustainable agriculture had been thoroughly incorporated here despite the farm's large scale.

The final evening was spent socializing around a Turkish meal, which allowed me to understand