The 10th International Cooperative Alliance-Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) Regional Assembly was held from November 26 to November 30 at the Kobe International Conference Center. In addition, as this year is the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) advocated by the United Nations, the 7th Cooperative Forum co-sponsored by ICA-AP, Japan Joint Committee of Cooperatives (JJC), and the Japan National Planning Committee for IYC 2012 was also held on November 28. Not only the representatives of the ICA-AP Regional Assembly but also many officials of cooperatives in Japan participated in the Forum, centering on the theme: “Role of Cooperatives in Times of Natural Disaster,” with a lecture given by former Hyogo Governor Toshitami Kaihara, a summary report by JA-Zenchu Executive Director Hajime Yaguchi on the Great East Japan Earthquake and effort towards recovery and reconstruction by Japanese cooperative

Panel discussions at the 7th Cooperative Forum
Dame Pauline Green, ICA President (left) and Mr. Akira Banzai, JA Zenchu President (left end of panelists’ table)

Yaguchi on the Great East Japan Earthquake and effort towards recovery and reconstruction by Japanese cooperative
REPORTS ON TRAINING COURSES

(I) JICA Agricultural Cooperatives Course

Commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), IDACA conducted a JICA group training course titled “Strengthening Management and Business Activities of Agricultural Cooperatives” over a two-month period between May 6 and July 14, 2012.

Participating in the training course were 17 government administrators from 13 countries of Africa and Southeast Asia.

Field study visits were conducted in Niigata Prefecture, Kochi Prefecture, and Nagano Prefecture. The participants visited JA Niigata Pre-fectural Union, JA Zennoh Niigata, Nagaoka Chuo General Hospital of the JA Niigata Welfare Federation, JA Echigo-Nagaoka, JA Niigata Mirai, Niigata City Central Wholesale Market, etc. in Niigata Prefecture; Agricultural Promotion Division of the Kochi Prefectural Government, JA Kochi Prefectural Union, JA Tosa Reihoku, Kochi Prefectural Agricultural Research Center, JA Kochi Haruno, Kochi Federation of Horticultural and Agricultural Cooperatives, JA Kochi-shi, JA Nangoku-shi, etc. in Kochi Prefecture; and Nagano Agricultural Cooperative Institute for Rural Development, Nagano Prefectural Rural Industry Research Institute, Nagano Kono Inc., JA Nagano, etc. in Nagano Prefecture. Finally, as the results, they formulated action plans for strengthening management and business activities of agricultural cooperatives to be put into practice in their respective countries.

Field study visit in Kochi Prefecture

(II) The 2nd ICA/Japan Training Course on Revitalization of Local Community by Rural Women

The ICA/Japan Training Course on Revitalization of Local Community by Rural Women, the main objective of which is to train rural women leaders of the Asian region, was held again this year from July 10 to August 4, 2012. Participating in the training course were 13 women from nine countries in the Asian region, including government administrators and cooperative personnel. They learned about the roles played by JA and the JA women’s associations in the local communities and case studies of various entrepreneurship activities conducted by women.

During the field study visits, the participants visited Fukushima Prefecture, which was severely affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and where the issue of the nuclear power plant accident still remains to be addressed. This field study visit came about at the request of Ms. Okawara, Chairperson of the Fukushima Prefectural Council of JA Women’s Associations, who wanted the participants from Asia to learn about the situation in Fukushima where the people are working hard to rise under such circumstances.

Following a lecture at the JA Prefectural Union, the participants engaged in an exchange meeting

Field study visit in Niigata Prefecture

Exchange meeting over lunch with members of the JA Aizu Women’s Association
After each lecture, field study visits were scheduled in Hachioji City, Fukushima Prefecture, and Yamanashi Prefecture. I was able to confirm the knowledge I gained in the lectures by actually going to the sites, so the program was very easy to follow.

The JAs in Japan play an important role in positioning themselves between the government and the farmers, and the successful case examples were very helpful. When we visited the disaster-stricken areas in Fukushima Prefecture, I was very amazed at the greatness of the Japanese people upon seeing reconstruction work proceeding at a very fast pace despite the fact that it was such a large-scale disaster.

During the training period, I met many energetic and hard-working Japanese women leaders. I believe that it was very meaningful for us to be able to share their experience and knowledge. In addition, I was able to obtain information during the programs on cooperatives in various countries from the participants of this training course, as well as training courses in Thailand and Japan, and I was also able to compare them with the situation in my own country. I would like to take back these valuable experiences and vast data to my own country and utilize them for the strengthening and development of cooperatives.

(3) “Capacity Building for Agribusiness Development Through Agricultural Cooperatives” Training Course Under the Project for Strengthening Japan-ASEAN Capacity Building

In view of its planned economic integration in 2015, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is engaged in efforts to implement policies for boosting the competitiveness of agricultural products, aiming at improving the quality of the agricultural products and enhancing food safety. As support measures, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries of Japan has provided contributions to the ASEAN Secretariat for the project costs. It has been decided that among various projects to be conducted by the ASEAN Secretariat, IDACA would accept participants for short-term training courses, which are a part of the projects contracted by JA Zenchu.

Designating such subjects as “Implementation of GAP through Agricultural Cooperatives” and “Improvement of the System to Obtain Adequate Price and Value Addition to Agricultural Products” as the topics of the training course, IDACA conducted the training course from August 6 to August 18, 2012, with participation by a total of 20 people from nine ASEAN member countries. During field study visits, the participants visited Nagano Prefecture, combined with lectures related to GAP practice and observation of agricultural products processing facilities.

Participants experienced camping on the weekend near IDACA, trying out the dishes of various countries.

“IT was a wonderful experience!”

Ms. Mariyam Simla
Senior Research Officer,
Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (Maldives)

After each lecture, field study visits were scheduled in Hachioji City, Fukushima Prefecture, and Yamanashi Prefecture. I was able to confirm the knowledge I gained in the lectures by actually going to the sites, so the program was very easy to follow. The JAs in Japan play an important role in positioning themselves between the government and the farmers, and the successful case examples were very helpful. When we visited the disaster-stricken areas in Fukushima Prefecture, I was very amazed at the greatness of the Japanese people upon seeing reconstruction work proceeding at a very fast pace despite the fact that it was such a large-scale disaster.

During the training period, I met many energetic and hard-working Japanese women leaders. I believe that it was very meaningful for us to be able to share their experience and knowledge. In addition, I was able to obtain information during the programs on cooperatives in various countries from the participants of this training course, as well as training courses in Thailand and Japan, and I was also able to compare them with the situation in my own country. I would like to take back these valuable experiences and vast data to my own country and utilize them for the strengthening and development of cooperatives.

(4) JICA “Planning of Agricultural Policy” Course

The “Planning of Agricultural Policy,” which is a training course commissioned by JICA, was conducted from August 28 to September 23. Following the basic subjects learned at IDACA and MAFF, the participants visited Kumamoto Prefecture for field study visits of the training course.

Participating in the training course for the current fiscal year were 15 government administrators from 13 countries of Asia, Middle East, Africa, and South America. With the viewpoints ranging from a prefec-
Participating in an Event Hosted by the Government of Bhutan in Commemoration of the International Year of Cooperatives

Hideya Suzuki
Manager, General Affairs Department, IDACA

To commemorate the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives, the Government of Bhutan hosted a three-day international seminar in Thimphu, the nation’s capital, from October 8 to October 10, designating “Empowering Rural Communities towards Gross National Happiness” as the theme of the seminar. Participating in the seminar were a total of 140 people, including 26 people from China, India, Thailand, Japan, and Nepal. IDACA also received a request to deliver a lecture, and I attended the seminar on behalf of our organization.

The purpose of this seminar was to promote the agricultural cooperative movement in Bhutan by raising public awareness of the importance and benefits of cooperatives and giving impetus to the development of cooperatives in Bhutan, as well as sharing advanced case examples of the cooperative movement in other countries.

“Valuable Experience in Japan”

Mr. Ahmad Zarif Mutaqi
General Manager of Agricultural Policies, Agriculture and Irrigation Department, Ministry of Economy (Afghanistan)

As everyone knows, Afghanistan has been devastated, with major infrastructures destroyed as a result of the lengthy civil war, and the reconstruction and development of this country is unthinkable without personnel with abundant knowledge and experience. I decided to participate in this training course, feeling that it was an obligation imposed on myself to gain various experience and knowledge. In addition, as Japan went through a similar experience during World War II and achieved remarkable recovery, and thus is an excellent example, I feel that this is indeed a goal that we must attain.

Also, the training course in Japan was very easy to understand, with a well-balanced combination of lectures, exercises, and visits. In particular, it was very useful in resolving our country's problems such as the government's agricultural product policy, agricultural cooperatives, distribution, and marketing. It could also be used for the analyzing and monitoring of agricultural development projects.

The Japanese society is very enlightening for me. It is clear that the Japanese people’s honesty, diligence, scrupulosity, and kind way of treating others will serve as good examples for me to follow. I would like to pay sincere respect to all of you at IDACA.

Overseas Business Trip Report

Participating in an Event Hosted by the Government of Bhutan in Commemoration of the International Year of Cooperatives

Hideya Suzuki
Manager, General Affairs Department, IDACA

Cooperatives. Currently, there are 16 cooperatives and 100 registered farmer groups in Bhutan. The Kingdom of Bhutan is pursuing a policy to promote these cooperatives and farmer groups as a major pillar for the economic development of the Bhutanese society.