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The U.S. – Japan Agricultural Trade Hall Of Fame

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Report Highlights:

On September 26, 2011, Ambassador John Roos hosted a lunch to honor FAS' first entrants into the U.S. Agriculture Hall of Fame (HOF) in Japan. The Hall of Fame is intended to honor those companies that have been stalwart supporters of U.S. agriculture and food throughout the years. The seven honorees represent some of the most powerful companies in Japan. The U.S.-Japan AG HOF project benefits FAS Japan and Japanese companies by enhancing key trade relationships. ATO Japan built the HOF web sites both in English and Japanese.

General Information:

The purpose of the Hall of Fame project is to recognize prominent Japanese food industry members who have made significant contributions to expanding U.S. agricultural exports to Japan. The project allows the Foreign Agricultural Service of the United States Department of Agriculture to show its appreciation by honoring the Japanese VIPs on our websites and with the Ambassador.

The HOF project included a selection process of inductees, award ceremony and publicizing through in-house web sites. ATO Japan collaborated with AAO Japan to organize the HOF project to recognize seven food industry senior executives in the retail, HRI, food processing sector and food safety arena that have made exceptional contributions to U.S. food trade with Japan. The six Japanese companies have imported millions of dollars of U.S. products, and have been pioneers in the market. The inductee from the food safety academy has been very supportive of our science-based food safety regulatory efforts in Japan.

On September 26, 2011, Ambassador John Roos hosted a special ceremony held at the Ambassador's residence, followed by a luncheon at its prestigious dining room. Each honoree was recognized with a framed letter presented by Ambassador Roos that included his thanks and appreciation. The Ambassador thanked the group for their foresight, innovation, and most importantly, their courage to continue to support U.S. foods, despite some controversy.

Luncheon at the Ambassador's residence



After the ceremony, ATO Japan created a special website page in-house for the Hall of Fame in both English and Japanese. The HOF websites benefit Japanese importers and FAS Japan by having direct access to the project. The websites can also provide a means for uplifting trade relationships that are enhanced and supported by FAS Japan while showing our appreciation.

The HOF website URL (English):

http://www.usdajapan.org/en/newsroom/Hall_of_Fame/index_HOF_3.html

FAS Japan took the lead in organizing a taskforce for a special Agriculture Hall of Fame project, which fostered appreciation and goodwill from the companies that rank among the United States' best customers for food and agricultural exports across the product spectrum. FAS Japan intends to conduct this program where all honorees, present and future, will be acknowledged year after year.

Inductees;

Snap shot: Group Photo with the Ambassador Roos



The First HOF Inductees (from left):

Mr. Hidemitsu Honda, Senior Managing Director, Shoei Food Corporation

Shoei is one of the major importers of U.S. dried fruit and nuts. Shoei is also a leader in processing dried fruit and nuts in Japan, preparing ready-to-use products for confectionary stores and bakers, and has processing facilities in California and China.

Mr. Shuji Ito, President, Calbee Corporation

Calbee has pioneered importing fresh potatoes from the United States for chip production in Japan. Calbee worked with the U.S. potato industry and USDA to open the Japanese market for U.S. fresh potatoes. Imports of fresh potatoes from the United States have been increasing every year, and USDA Tokyo continues to work closely with Calbee to increase U.S. potato access to this market.

Mr. Hiroshi Ogino, Chairman, Nihon Hotel Co., Ltd.

Mr. Ogino was highly supportive of the Office of Ag Affairs "Partner's in Agriculture" project in 2010, and helped arrange special bento boxes using Iowa pork and U.S. vegetables for Secretary Vilsack's train to Yamanashi.

Ambassador John Roos

Mr. Shuji Abe, CEO, Yoshinoya Co., Ltd.

Yoshinoya is the second largest beef bowl restaurant chain in Japan. After the BSE incident in the U.S. Yoshinoya was the first major company of any kind to reintroduce U.S. beef into the Japanese market

Mr. Yasuhide Chikazawa, Vice President, AEON Group

AEON is the largest retailer in Japan and has been very supportive of U.S. products over the years. They hold the largest American Fair every year in May to coincide with the arrival of cherries from California.

Mr. Robert Susaki, President, Nishimoto Trading Co., Ltd.

Nishimoto Trading is a pioneer of citrus imports from the United States. Nishimoto was Sunkist's sole agent (importer) in Japan for many years and today Nishimoto imports about 70% of Sunkist products in Japan.

Dr. Hideaki Karaki, Tokyo University, and Vice Chairman of the Science Council of Japan

Dr. Karaki has been very supportive of our biotech efforts in Japan and was instrumental in getting the biotech approval process back on track, resulting in getting biotech papaya approved for import last summer (not present).

Recommendations and follow-up

Any FAS post can copy the project in order to establish strong ties with prominent food importers and players who have contributed to U.S. agricultural trade expansion.

This project cost only US\$470, including luncheon expenditure, for a total of 11 participants and payment for the frames of the Ambassador's letters. ATO Japan created the HOF homepages at no expense to the office budget.