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

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Report Highlights:

On September 28, 2012, Ambassador John Roos hosted a lunch the 2nd annual U.S.-Japan Agricultural Trade Hall of Fame (HOF) in Japan induction. 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 five honorees represent some of the most influential food-related companies in Japan. The U.S.-Japan Ag Trade HOF project benefits both FAS Japan and Japanese companies by enhancing key trade relationships. The HOF can be found on the USDAJAPAN.org website in both English and Japanese.

General Information:

Background:

The purpose of the U.S.-Japan Agricultural Trade Hall of Fame (HOF) project is to recognize prominent Japanese food industry members who have made significant contributions to expanding U.S. agricultural exports to Japan. The project provides a means for FAS Japan 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 publicity through in-house web sites. ATO Japan and OAA Japan collaborated to organize the HOF project and recognize five food industry senior executives in the food processing sector, HRI, and food wholesale/import arena that have made exceptional contributions to U.S. food trade with Japan. The five Japanese companies have imported millions of dollars of U.S. products, and have been pioneers in the market.

Outcome:

On September 26, 2012, Ambassador John Roos hosted a special ceremony held at the Ambassador's residence, followed by a luncheon in the 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.

Dinning table at the Ambassador's residence



Last year, ATO Japan created a special website page for the Hall of Fame in both English and Japanese.

The HOF website URL (English):

http://www.usdajapan.org/en/newsroom/Hall_of_Fame/index_HOF_YR_List_E.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.

2012 Inductees:

Group Photo with the Ambassador Roos



The Second HOF Inductees (from right):

Mr. Tatsuo Amano, Managing Director of Nippon Flour Mills

Nippon Flour Mills (Nippon) is one of the largest customers for U.S. wheat (in addition to being an important investor in wheat processing facilities in the United States). The company Chairman, Mr. Hiraoshi Sawada, is the former chairman of Japan's Flour Millers' Association.

Mr. Yoshiaki Morimura, President, Ushiwaka Shoji Co., Ltd

Ushiwaka Shoji Co., Ltd, is a major supplier of U.S. beef and pork to high-end restaurants and hotels in Tokyo and Western Japan, and has been an enthusiastic supporter of U.S. meat exports for over 30 years. Since 1993, Ushiwaka, working with the U.S. Meat Export Federation, has promoted U.S. products through educational outreach programs, such as the "U.S. Meat Renaissance", for local chefs and high-end hotel/restaurant executives.

Mr. Yoshiyuki Otsuka, Chairman of Japan Imported Cheese Promotion Association (JICPA)

JICPA has supported the U.S. cheese industry in its marketing efforts in Japan. This collaboration has led to a record year for U.S. imports, with Japan importing around 21,500 metric tons of U.S. cheese in 2011, an increase of 57 percent over the previous year. 2012 is also expected to be a record year due to the efforts of JICPA and U.S. cheese producers. Mr. Otsuka is also Chairman of Chesco Ltd. one of major U.S. cheese importers.

Mr. Yuzaburo Mogi, Honorary CEO of Kikkoman

Kikkoman is the world's #1 producer of soy sauce and has been one of most significant U.S. soy bean users in Japan. Mr. Mogi was responsible for opening Kikkoman factories in Walworth, Wisconsin in 1972 and Folsom, California in 1998. In April 2012, he gave a presentation at the U.S. Embassy's "Food 2040" symposium with Keidanren representing the Japanese food industry.

Ambassador John Roos

Mr. Ken Shimizu, President of WDI Group

WDI Group has introduced a number of upscale U.S. restaurants into Japan, including Hard Rock Café, Ile Mulino NY, Tony Roma's, Grand Central Oyster Bar & Restaurant, Bubba Gump Shrimp, California Pizza Kitchen and Sarabeth's Kitchen in NY. WDI has also shared valuable information about U.S. food culture and upgraded the image of U.S. food and agricultural products through its restaurant businesses in Japan.

Mr. Steve Shnitzler, ATO Japan Director

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.

The HOF is one of the most cost effective projects ever conducted by the ATO. The amount of goodwill and relationship building cannot be overstated.

Soon after the luncheon, a prominent U.S. beef exporter noted that Mr. Morimura of Ushiwaka Shoji is so pleased with the honor that he has placed the Ambassador's letter in the most prominent area of his company and told the U.S. contact that we have built a friendship for life.

This project cost only US\$460, including luncheon expenditure, for a total of 10 participants and payment for the frames of the Ambassador's letters. ATO Japan created the HOF homepages at no expense to the office budget.