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Ambassador John V. Roos speaks about Partners in Agriculture and strong U.S. – Japan agricultural relations

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Report Highlights: On March 2, 2010 FAS Japan held a successful press event to emphasize the long standing agriculture partnership between Japan and the United States and launch the *Partners in Agriculture* series of events. Ambassador John Roos spoke about the history of the relationship between the United States and Japan with a focus on agriculture and the 50th year of the sister state relationship between Yamanashi Prefecture and the State of Iowa, setting the basis for *Partners in Agriculture*.

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Introduction

On March 2, to correspond with the opening day of the FOOD EX Trade Exhibition, FAS Japan held a successful press conference at the International Conference Hall on the Makuhari Messe exhibition site. The focus of the conference was to kick off the *Partners in Agriculture* series of events and to highlight the long standing partnership in Agriculture between Japan and the United States.

About Partners in Agriculture

Partners in Agriculture is a series of events to take place from March through mid-summer of 2010 and aims to commemorate the success of the cooperator program, the special agricultural relationship between the United States and Japan, the famous *hog lift*, the 50th anniversary of the Grains Council, and the 50th anniversary of the Iowa-Yamanashi sister-state relationship. The focal point of the celebration will take place in Kofu, the capital of Yamanashi Prefecture, on April 8 and 9. FAS Japan is petitioning for Ministerial-level participation of agricultural officials from both countries for key events.

Since 1946, the United States has exported over \$280 billion worth of food and agricultural products to this small but densely-populated, and wealthy island nation. The genesis of this tremendous market can be traced back to the famous *hog lift*, when in 1959 Iowa farmers and FAS assisted Yamanashi in recovering its hog industry after two typhoons devastated the prefecture. The people-to-people legacy of the *hog lift* has been equally impressive. Iowa and Yamanashi Prefecture established a sister-state relationship in 1960, the first of its kind between the United States and Japan.

The *hog lift* experience helped lay the foundation for the U.S. Grains Council, which set up its first overseas office in Japan in 1961. The access to high quality feed led to the development of the Japanese domestic meat industry. This provided the incentive for U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) to open its first overseas office in Japan in 1977. There are now about fifty cooperators active in the Japanese market.

Japan is the perfect example of how the partnership between FAS and cooperators has been one of the most successful public-private partnerships in the United States, facilitating billions of dollars in U.S. agricultural exports and creating millions of jobs. Today, Japan is our largest commercial market for feed grains and pork, for wheat, potatoes and rice, and will return to being our largest market for beef. It is also the world's largest net importer of consumer ready food products. Japan's purchases have been essential contributors to the health of the U.S. economy and will continue to be critical for U.S. agriculture in the future.

The Press Conference

Geoffrey Wiggin, Minister Counselor for Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Tokyo

Geoffrey Wiggin, Minister Counselor for Agricultural Affairs, opened the press conference with an overview of the agricultural relationship between the United States and Japan. He emphasized the importance of the United States to Japan as a stable supplier of food and Japan's importance to the United States as the third largest importer of U.S. Agricultural products and largest overseas buyer.



Geoffrey Wiggin

He then went on to welcome four guest speakers – all key figures in Japanese food and agriculture – who shared their experiences and appreciation for U.S. Agriculture.

Jiro Shiwaku, President Japan Agricultural Exchange Council (JAEC)

Mr. Jiro Shiwaku was welcomed to the podium to speak about the JAEC organization, history and his appreciation for the partnership in agriculture between Japan and the United States. The purpose of JAEC is to offer Japanese young farmers opportunities to cultivate their international awareness and to expand their abilities by participating as agricultural trainees overseas. Mr. Shiwaku shared his insights on the opportunities for young Japanese farmers through the Exchange Council and its partnership with the United States. From the start of the Japanese training program in 1952 to 2008, 12,279 young Japanese farmers have gone to the United States.

Thomas C. Dorr, President and CEO of the United States Grains Council

Thomas C. Dorr is president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the U.S. Grains Council, a non-profit organization that promotes the use of U.S. barley, corn and sorghum and related products worldwide. Dorr coordinates the council's worldwide staff and oversees market development activities in more than 50 countries around the world.

2010 will mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the *U.S. Feed Grains Council*, which later took its current name of *U.S. Grains Council*. Mr. Dorr spoke of the history and partnership between the Grains Council and Japan, starting with shipments of U.S. corn to help reestablish the hog industry in Japan with the *hog lift* of 1959. He emphasized his confidence in U.S. agriculture contributing to Japan's food supply in the future as it has over the past 50 years.

Kunihito Hisaki, President, AEON TOPVALU Co., Ltd.

In addition to his duties as President of TOPVALU Co. Ltd, Mr. Hisaki is also chief merchandising officer for AEON, one of the largest supermarkets in Japan. With this, Mr. Hisaki spoke at the press conference to share his history as a buyer of U.S. products and an appreciation for the United States as a reliable and stable supplier of food products to Japan.

Norio Yamaguchi, Representative Director, Chairman of the Board, Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

As well as Chairman of the Board at Ajinomoto, Mr. Yamaguchi is also President of the Japan Management Association. He noted the Japan Management Association's 30 year relationship with the Agricultural Trade Office in creating many successes for American exporters. He also expressed his hope that agricultural cooperation between Japan and the United States would continue in to the future.



Norio Yamaguchi

John V. Roos, United States Ambassador to Japan

Mr. Roos shared a unique perspective on U.S. – Japan relations. Though the relationship is rooted in security, he emphasized that the United States and Japan have perhaps the closest agricultural relationship in the world. The ambassador announced the launch of the *Partners in Agriculture* program. He spoke of the agricultural relationship between Japan and the United States starting at the time of commodore Matthew Perry, the following plant trade and subsequent development of the soy industry and the Japanese cherry trees that bring enjoyment to visitors of the U.S. capital.



Ambassador Roos

He emphasized that the substantial relationship in agriculture between the United States and Japan is the basis for an upcoming visit by the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, as part of the Partners in Agriculture series of events. Mr. Roos then welcomed the other guest speakers as representatives of the current ongoing agricultural relationship between Japan and the United States.

Media Coverage

The press conference received wide media coverage with roughly 45 journalists attending the event. Major news providers attending include the Mainichi Newspaper, Kyodo News and TBS television. Initial television news coverage was broadcast on the evening of March 2 and the morning of March 3.

A video of the event can be found on the TBS television station (Japanese) website at:

http://news.tbs.co.jp/20100302/newseye/tbs_newseye4369290.html

Web based news articles can be found at:

Mainichi Shimbun (Japanese)

<http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20100303-00000003-mai-int>

Japan Agricultural Communications (Japanese):

<http://www.jacom.or.jp/news/2010/03/news100303-8314.php>