

Remarks

Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth

On the occasion of the Welcome Dinner hosted by the Government of WA,

in honour of the Japan Flour Millers Association (JFMA) delegation

Thursday May 25, 2023

- The Hon Sandra Carr MLC, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; Small Business, Government of Western Australia,
 - Mr Atsuhiko Shiomi, the Head of the Japan Flour Millers Association (JFMA),
 - Mr Yasushi Uchikawa, Managing Director of JFMA,
 - Mr Masaru Iijima, Director of Grain Trading Team, Crop Production Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan,
 - Ms Heather Brayford, Director General of DPIRD,
 - Mr Peter Rees, Chair of GIWA Wheat Council,
 - Mr Simon Stead, Chair of CBH,
 - Mr Ben Macnamara, CEO of CBH,
 - Ms Karlie Mucjanko, Chair of InterGrain & Director of AEGIC,
 - Mr Richard Simonaitis, CEO of Grain Australia,
 - Ms Tress Walmsley, CEO of InterGrain,
 - Mr Pat O'Shannassy, CEO of Grain Trade Australia,
 - Dr Larisa Cato, AEGIC,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, the Hon Carr for your warm welcome of the Japanese delegation. The people gathered here tonight are an all-star cast of important people supporting the value chain of your high quality grains, especially noodle wheat. We are delighted to have this JFMA delegation visiting Western Australia at last, after a difficult three years due to the pandemic. I sincerely hope the three-day program that finishes tomorrow will be productive.

Bilateral relations between Japan and Australia, especially with Western Australia is at an all-time high. After the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to Perth October last year, we were honoured to receive Premier McGowan in Japan in January and Minister Bill Johnston in March. The Western Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan has also been launched this year.

Last weekend, we had an important development at the G7 Hiroshima Summit. Prime Minister Kishida invited leaders of major economies of the world to the G7 Hiroshima Summit including Prime Minister Albanese from Australia. Although we had the unfortunate cancellation of the visit by US President Biden to Australia, which led to the cancellation of the Quad Leaders' Meeting planned in Sydney, the close partnership of our two Prime Ministers worked effectively to materialize the meeting on the sidelines of the G7 Hiroshima Summit. Quad in Hiroshima was arranged in just a few days and we were able to pronounce important agreement, including the Quad Investment Network and Quad Fellowship. We were able to turn the crisis to a breakthrough.

In Hiroshima, G7 and invited leaders have agreed on a number of documents including the "Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security." Our two Prime Ministers had bilateral talks and confirmed their commitment to strengthen the "Special Strategic Partnership."

Out of total the imports to Japan, more than 50% of iron ore, 35% of gas, and 15% of wheat is from Western Australia. On top of that, Minister Jarvis told me that WA became the biggest exporter of canola seeds to Japan last year, overtaking Canada. It is difficult to think of daily life in Japan without the support of Western Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to everyone present here contributing to the value chain of the grain trade with Japan over many years. When I visited AEGIC in January with a MAFF mission, I was amazed to see the different types of noodle wheat varieties that have been developed, including Zen, Ninja and Kinsei, which are all suited for udon noodles but with different sowing timing and yield feature, ensuring a stable supply even under a changing climate. This is only possible with a deep understanding of the Japanese market and preference.

Recently a NHK news program featured WA udon noodle wheat that illustrated the efforts of research to improve the quality of noodle wheat to fit to the tastes of Japanese customers. They include not only the color and flavor but even the 'mochi mochi' texture explained by Dr Larisa Cato from AEGIC, who is known as a noodle doctor. In an interview, a stubborn Japanese noodle craftsman of an udon shop was saying he trusts using Australian wheat just suited to his udon noodles. Japanese viewers were amazed, with the depth of understanding and extent of the sustained research efforts by Western Australian experts for more than 30 years.

Thus, the Grain partnership between Japan and Western Australia definitely consists of an important element of friendship between Japan and Australia. I once again thank everyone for your cooperation.

We have participated in the launch event in February of “EvokeAG.2024” and have been following the development since. We agree that the promotion of innovation in Agribusiness is critically important for our shared goal toward net-zero.

Soon we will celebrate the resumption of direct flights by All Nippon Airway in late October. It will connect Perth to Tokyo in less than 10 hours and I am confident it will make an impact on expanding exchanges and trade between Japan and Western Australia.

Lastly, I wish to share with you that today we have four officers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, Director Mr Iijima, Mr Otsuka, Ms Ota and Ms Murata - all of whom have been or will be seconded to the Consulate-General of Japan in Perth, in the past, presently and in the future. This continuity is a testament of the sustained partnership. We are glad to have a liaison officer always representing MAFF of the Japanese Government near you, and this shows the extent of our commitment to facilitate our important relationship.

Here, I wish to thank you for your support to Ms Mariko Ota of the Consulate who after serving three years, and is leaving in 10 days-time, and wish to introduce Ms Nahoko Murata as your contact person for future collaboration.

I would like to thank you again for your wonderful hospitality to the JFMA delegation tonight and I wish lasting friendship between Japan and Western Australia. Thank you for your attention.

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