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Visit to Fukushima "Life and Agriculture after Tohoku Earthquake and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster".

On Monday the 17th of December 2012 we made a visit to Towa and Nihonmatsu city all located in Fukushima Prefecture. The departure time from campus was 7:00am and arrived in Towa at about 11:40am. On arrival we were welcomed by the organic farmers association in Towa where we were taken through what has been happening after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The president of the association, Mr. Masatoshi Muto gave a lecture about what has been happening in Towa after the accident. He made mention of the fact that after the disaster they have been undertaking some disaster reconstruction programs which include assisting of affected members for compensation, safety check of members agricultural products, research and regeneration activity of production zone of members, extension of agricultural product sales and protection of member's and their families. Currently the research being undertaken was about the amount of radiation the human body has accumulated.

From there, we visited research sites of Professor's Kimura and Gomi who were undertaking research to find ways of reducing the radiation levels in the soil and atmosphere as a support from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology. At Prof. Kimura's field she was trying to grow leafy and root vegetables like carrots which are known to take high amounts of Caesium. Also mulch materials such as maize stalk, dry grass and polythene sheets were also being experimented on. At the site the radiation level my group measured ranged from 0.45 to 0.5 μSv/h. At Prof. Gomi's field he was

trying to use forest tree species to reduce the radiation level. From there my group spent the rest of the day in Mr. Saito's house who is an apple farmer and has about three hectares of apple. He said he has been growing apple for about forty years and he took us through some of his experiences in apple production before and after the Fukushima accident.

The next day on the 18th of December 2012 we continued the trip to Minami Soma City where lectures were given by Mrs. Mikako Takahashi, Mr. Koji and Mr. Masami Yoshizawa about the challenges they face after the Fukushima accident. Some of the problems they highlighted were: Loss of infrastructure, broken homes and families, low patronage of products produced in the area, lack of support from the government in addressing some of their grievances, high radiation levels, contaminated water, low economic activities in the area, loss of animal species and also polluted agricultural fields which have affected production volumes in the area. The radiation level in the area was about 0.28 μSv/h. From there we visited the farm sanctuary in Odaka which was the area affected by the tsunami. The radiation levels in the area were as high as 5 to 6 μSv/h. Finally we went through Odaka town to witness the extent of damage caused by the tsunami and returned to TUAT at about 9:00 pm.

The hopes after the fukushima nuclear disaster are that, the radiation level is decreasing, more research is being undertaken by scientist to solve the problems in the short to long-term and also people living in the area are also creating awareness so that in the future other alternatives of power generation can be looked at so that such a disaster may not occur again.

The lessons I learnt from this trip was that as an upcoming scientist in the environmental sector there is the need for me to be upright in my decision making so

that events like this may not occur in my country. There is also the need for me to educate people about problems they are likely to encounter when bad policies are implemented base on this experience.

The way forward for people in Fukushima is that, I will advise the government to come closer to the doorstep of the people so that in the short term broken families especially the young ones who are the future hope of the community can be reconciled with their families and also address their concerns so that economic activities in the area can be strengthened. Also companies who are major beneficiaries of power from Fukushima should also play a big role in reviving the community through the establishment of infrastructure such as houses, schools, hospitals, etc. The media should also educate people more about the progress being made in the area so that the negative perception people have about Fukushima can easily be averted so that production of agricultural products can return to normalcy so that food insufficiency may not arise in the community and the country at large. The government can also consider renewable energy sources such as the sun, wind and biomass which can help solve the energy crises in the long-term.