CACCI
Food & Agriculture Newsletter

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Message from CACCI Director-General

As Director-General of CACCI, I am pleased to present the fourteenth issue of the Newsletter of the Asian Council on Food and Agriculture (ACFA) to all our colleagues in the food and agriculture sectors.

This issue highlights the trends, the latest news and interesting reports on food and agriculture in the Asia-Pacific region. I hope that you will find the articles included in this Newsletter of great value, and look forward to your contribution to the Newsletter in the future.

As many of you may know, this Council has been a valuable platform for information exchange and networking for all representatives from the region's food and agriculture industries. Therefore, all CACCI members are encouraged to take advantage of the Council and the Newsletter as channels to voice their opinions and viewpoints.

My Best Wishes

Ernest Lin
Director-General
The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI)

Urban farming flourishes in cities with Covid-19 lockdowns

Urban farming including vertical and rooftop farms, is fast becoming popular among city dwellers. (Rawpixel pic)

Covid-19 lockdowns are pushing more city dwellers to grow fruit and vegetables in their homes, providing a potentially lasting boost to urban farming, architects and food experts said on April 7, 2020.

Confirmed cases of Covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, total more than 1.3 million, with about 74,000 deaths worldwide, according to a Reuters tally.

Panic buying in some countries during the crisis has led to empty supermarket shelves and an uptick in the purchase of seeds, according to media reports.

"More people are thinking about where their food comes from, how easily it can be disrupted, and how to reduce disruptions," said landscape architect Kotchakorn Voraakhom, who designed Asia's largest urban rooftop farm in Bangkok.

"People, planners and governments should all be rethinking how land is used in cities. Urban farming can improve food security and nutrition, reduce climate change impacts, and lower stress," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

More than two-thirds of the world's population is forecast to live in cities by 2050, according to the United Nations.

Urban agriculture can be crucial to feeding them, potentially producing as much as 180 million tonnes of food a year – or about 10% of the global output of pulses and vegetables, according to a 2018 study published in the journal Earth's Future.

The Covid-19 outbreak is not be the first time that concerns about food security have led to more kitchen gardens.

During World War One, US President Woodrow Wilson asked Americans to plant "Victory Gardens" to prevent food shortages.

The effort continued during World War Two, with vegetable gardens in backyards and schoolyards, on unused land, and even the front lawn of the White House.

In recent decades, the fast pace of urbanisation in developing countries is causing urban malnutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organisation said, calling on planners to become "nutrition partners" and pay attention to food security.

Despite pressure on land to build homes and roads, there is more than enough urban land available within UK cities to meet the fruit and vegetable requirements of its population, researchers at the Institute for Sustainable Food at Britain's University of Sheffield said in a study in March 2020.

In tiny Singapore, one of the wealthiest nations in Asia that imports more than 90% of its food, urban farming including vertical and rooftop farms, is fast becoming popular.

The city-state, which ranks on top of the Economist Intelligence Unit's global food security index for 2019, aims to produce 30% of its nutritional needs by 2030, by increasing the local supply of fruits, vegetables and protein from meat and fish.

On April 6, 2020, Singapore lawmaker Ang Wei Neng said that during the coronavirus outbreak, “it would be wise for us to think of how to invest in homegrown food”.

For Allan Lim, chief executive of ComCrop, a commercial urban farm in Singapore, the pandemic is a reminder that disruptions to food supplies can take place at any time.

“It has definitely sparked more interest in local produce. Urban farms can be a shock absorber during disruptions such as this,” he said.

Thomson Reuters Foundation

Taiwanese pineapples land in Japanese supermarket chain

Six tons of fruit from southern Taiwan to be sold at more than 300 Japanese supermarkets

By Ching-Tse Cheng

Taiwanese pineapples to be sold at more than 300 Seiyu supermarkets.
(Central News Agency photo)

A batch of Taiwanese pineapples from Pingtung County on April 14, 2020 left for Japan, where the fruits will be sold at more than 300 branches of a major supermarket chain.

As the Wuhan coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic inflicts substantial damage on the Taiwanese agriculture industry, Seiyu Supermarket has placed a large order of pineapples from the Pingtung County Government. According to United Daily News (UDN), the deal was signed a year ago, and more than 600 tons of the tropical fruit is expected to be shipped to Taiwan's neighbor over the next few months.

During a press conference on the morning of April 14, Pingtung Magistrate Pan Men-an said that the southern Taiwanese county harvests more than half of the country's pineapples and that many cities in Japan, including Tokyo, Kobe, and Osaka, have requested shipments since January. He said the deal with Seiyu Supermarket is exhilarating because it has opened a whole new destination for Taiwan's agriculture products, reported HiNet.

Pingtung County Department of Agriculture Director-General Huang Kuo-jung pointed out that the Taiwanese pineapple, while sold at a slightly higher price than its Southeast Asian counterparts, is sweeter and can last longer. He promised that Japanese consumers will now be able to enjoy the same high-quality fruit as the Taiwanese, who can find Pingtung pineapples at PX Mart locations nationwide, reported *Liberty Times*.

Pingtung Magistrate Pan Men-an (Center) helps with pineapple shipment April 14. (Central News Agency photo)

Taiwan News

Regenerative Is the New Sustainable in Agriculture

By Sandra Seru, U.S. Director of Forum for the Future and
Lesley Mitchell, Associate Director of Sustainable Nutrition at Forum for the Future

With a new decade comes a new era of sustainability leadership.

The 2020s herald a pivotal chance to deliver on our great climate, environment and development challenges, and the scale and pace of change will require truly transformative thinking. We will need to move beyond efficiency and doing less harm and base strategies on new goals that ensure business success also meets the needs of people and the planet. It's time to step up a gear or three on our journey toward a sustainable future. But what does this mean for how we do business?

A farm worker labors in a field near the town of Arvin, California. With a new decade comes a new era of sustainability leadership, moving toward "regenerative" rather than just "less extractive" business strategies.

Photo: David McNew/Getty Images

At the heart of this shift is a move toward "regenerative" rather than just "less extractive" business strategies. With growing public commitments to "carbon-zero" targets, businesses are refocusing on how to work in ways that return more to society, the environment and the global economy than they take from it. This sounds like an abstract goal on the surface, but in real terms, it is a powerful reframing of mindset and action.

Organizations taking this approach share an ambition to grow their brands, have strong financial performance, attract the brightest talent and, most important, be future-fit; but these thriving organizations also deliver benefits that align traditional business boundaries of profit margin and shareholder value with wider societal goals.

The Industry's Precarious Position

One of the most impactful areas for intervention is in agriculture. Any business based on agricultural raw materials is vulnerable to

increasing insecurity and volatility of supply, as weather patterns shift and natural resources dwindle.

The Nature Conservancy estimates that the United States loses 996 million metric tons of soil through erosion, and the societal and environmental costs of mainstream agriculture are around $85 billion every year. This is part of a global picture, with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimating that 24 billion metric tons of topsoil are lost globally each year. Agriculture is responsible for 8%-10% of U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, driving climate change, which is expected to reduce the yield and protein value of staple crops. Even before flooding devastated the Midwest in 2019, farms filing for bankruptcy protection rose by 19% in 2018, the highest level in a decade, according to the Farm Bureau. But there is hope. A transition toward regenerative practices could bring a huge win-win for farmers, food companies and the environment.

Our degraded soils could serve as a major carbon sink, locking away carbon, building drought resilience and increasing soil health, supporting productivity and farmer livelihoods. Indeed, changing agricultural and land management practices so that the carbon content of soils increases represents a huge opportunity to counter, and perhaps even reverse, human contribution to atmospheric GHG emissions. Some estimates of the potential for soils to capture atmospheric carbon are huge; figures in the billions of metric tons per annum are frequently cited.

So what does this mean for supply chains and how businesses work with farmers and ranchers?

Barriers to Change

Regeneration includes a suite of practices that protect and enhance soils, support thriving biodiversity and improve water quality — from planting cover crops, drilling rather than tilling the land to prevent disturbance and keeping healthy roots binding the soil all year round. While successful regenerative agriculture approaches have common principles and ambition, it is also highly context-specific. A regenerative farm might look very different in India than in the Midwest United States.

But if it is so simple, why isn't everyone already regenerative? The last 40 years of agriculture have been incredibly successful in growing productivity but often have externalized other costs such as degrading soils — paying for our ability to farm now with the resources we will need in the future.

Shifting to regenerative agriculture requires a fundamental shift in the goals of our agriculture system, from one focused exclusively on maximizing yield and efficiency to one that pursues economic and social outcomes alongside productivity.

Research with farmers and ranchers in the United States and internationally has shown major barriers to change and scaling: Farmers need confidence and resources to take the risk of reinvesting in new equipment. They need knowledge transfer, capacity-building and peer support to implement new practices. And the market, investors and policy environment need to incentivize the transition toward new supply chain models that drive this innovation. Actors across the food system, especially food businesses, can claim major wins in enabling this transformation.

With funding from the Walmart Foundation, stakeholders from across the agriculture system and Forum for the Future will be leading a collaborative process to identify the key opportunities to scale regenerative agriculture in the United States, based on an understanding of current activities and initiatives. Our goal is to create a joined-up approach to driving action on the ground.

The Role of Business

The urgent need to regenerate our agricultural supply base can be seen in the emerging business strategies of major actors in the food sector.

For example, Danone sees regenerative agriculture as resting on three pillars: protecting soil, empowering a new generation of farmers and promoting animal welfare. It has played a pivotal role as part of the 4 per 1000 Initiative, launched during the climate change COP 21 meeting, to catalyze collaboration on soil health and soil carbon sequestration, alongside helping farmers to access training, equipment and financing. It has addressed market incentives, introducing longer-term contracts and a new price management system according to the evolution of production costs rather than the market. Its global alliance, Farming for Generations, brings together eight major businesses to build regenerative practices into dairy supply.

Meanwhile, General Mills has committed to advance regenerative agriculture practices on 1 million acres of farmland by 2030, developing training and technical support for land conservation, research and certification.

Global agricultural commodity company Olam has built regeneration into the core of its business strategy, adopting a "living landscapes" policy that explicitly supports a net-positive approach to sustainable development in agricultural supply chains and landscape management. This aims to support the

coexistence of prosperous farmers and food systems, with thriving communities and healthy ecosystems to regenerate the living world.

These companies are just a few examples of those already beginning to realize the benefits of regenerative business models and, in an increasingly volatile world, aligning purpose and profit. And while we have focused on food supply, these challenges are relevant across a broad range of sectors as companies move toward the goal of returning more to society and the environment than they take.

A version of this article originally appeared on GreenBiz.

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Brink

Japan's agriculture ministry to keep food self-sufficiency target at 45%

JIJI

A farmer holds ears of rice in a paddy field in Tohnosho, Chiba Prefecture, in August 2018. | BLOOMBERG

The agriculture ministry revealed on March 10, 2020 that it would maintain its goal of increasing the country's calorie-based food self-sufficiency rate to 45 percent by fiscal 2030, unchanged from the current target for years through fiscal 2025.

In fiscal 2018, which ended in March 2019, the food self-sufficiency rate fell to a record low of 37 percent as diversified diets led to a fall in domestic consumption of rice — which had been supporting the country's food self-sufficiency rate. The figure was seen as far behind the current target of raising the rate to 45 percent by fiscal 2025.

The target is included in a draft basic program for agricultural policy over the next 10 years.

The ministry plans to increase the value of the nation's food exports, including agricultural and fishery products, to ¥5 trillion by calendar 2030 — over five times the 2019 level — to help raise the country's slumping food self-sufficiency rate.

The rate shows how much domestic consumption is met by domestic production. It is necessary for a country to improve the rate to deal with contingencies such as poor harvests and suspensions of food imports. Increasing exports can contribute to an improvement in the self-sufficiency rate, as it expands domestic production.

The ministry reviews the 10-year policy every five years.

The new draft basic plan also includes a policy to encourage more into farming, including small-scale farming, to strengthen the country's production bases.

The ministry plans to promote exports through measures such as helping cattle farmers increase their production of *wagyu* beef, which is popular as a luxury item around the world.

In its policy, the ministry also set a goal of increasing the country's self-sufficiency rate based on output value by 9 percentage points from fiscal 2018 to reach 75 percent by fiscal 2030.

Japan Times

G20 farm ministers vow to oppose measures disrupting global food supply

KYODO

Farm ministers from the Group of 20 major economies on April 21, 2020 vowed to oppose any restrictive measures that would threaten food security and disrupt global food supply chains amid the coronavirus pandemic.

More than a dozen countries, including Russia, Cambodia and Thailand, have imposed export restrictions on agricultural products and other supplies as of April 20, according to the Japanese farm ministry. The restrictions center on grain.

Japan's farm minister Taku Eto participates in a videoconference with Group of 20 farm ministers on the evening of April 21, 2020 to discuss steps deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. | AGRICULTURE,

Some countries are apparently concerned that the spread of the pandemic, which has triggered governments around the world to implement various types of lockdown measures, could affect agricultural systems and cause nations to prioritize their domestic markets.

"We will guard against any unjustified restrictive measures that could lead to excessive food price volatility in international markets and threaten the food security and nutrition of large proportions of the world population, especially the most vulnerable

living in environments of low food security," the G20 agriculture ministers said in a statement following a videoconference.

The statement also said the G20 countries agree that emergency measures taken in the context of the current pandemic must be "targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary" actions that "do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global food supply chains."

During the virtual meeting, Japanese farm minister Taku Eto said the pandemic should not be used as an excuse for countries to impose unnecessary restrictions on imports and exports, according to the agriculture ministry.

In Japan, imports accounted for 88 percent of domestic wheat consumption, 92 percent of soybean consumption and nearly all of the country's corn consumption in fiscal 2018. Its major suppliers include the United States, Canada and Brazil.

So far, Japan has not experienced any major disruption in food supplies but officials are expected to continue to monitor the situation.

Among export restrictions seen worldwide, Russia has set a 7 million-ton cap on grain exports. Cambodia has banned the exports of fish and rice, and Thailand has prohibited the export of chicken eggs, according to the farm ministry.

Japan Times

Coronavirus: New $30m grant launched to speed up local production of eggs, vegetables and fish

By Vanessa Liu

A $30 million grant has been launched to help local farms ramp up their production of eggs, leafy vegetables and fish over the next six to 24 months.

The 30x30 Express grant will help accelerate local food production in the shortest time possible, said the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources in a joint statement on Wednesday (April 8).

The 30 by 30 goal - to produce enough food here to meet 30 per cent of the country's nutritional needs by 2030 - is part of the Republic's strategies towards achieving long-term food security. Currently, less than 10 per cent of food is grown locally.

The open grant call, which will be launched in the middle of April 2020, will call on local agri-food players producing the three food types to submit their proposals to grow more, and faster.

The grant will let successful applicants defray upfront costs to increase production capacity within the next six to 24 months, including the co-funding of technology systems that will raise productivity on the farms.

In 2019, local farms produced 14 per cent of leafy vegetables consumed here. PHOTO: ST FILE

Fish, leafy vegetables and eggs are the three most commonly consumed food items in Singapore. In 2019, local farms produced 14 per cent of leafy vegetables, 26 per cent of eggs and 10 per cent of fish consumed here.

During the supplementary budget debate on April 7, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said that Covid-19 has underscored the importance of further strengthening Singapore's supply chain resilience and food security, adding that several Members of Parliament have urged the Government to further develop local food production capabilities.

"In my ministerial statement on the Resilience Budget, I spoke about our efforts to deal with the immediate challenges, by having a robust, multi-pronged strategy to ensure a stable supply of safe food and essential items. We have been working on this for years, and will continue to do so, " Mr Heng, who is also Finance Minister, said.

Co-founder of Comcrop Allan Lim said that the grant will help accelerate plans to scale up production.

The company, which set up the first commercial urban rooftop farm here in 2014, is now test-bedding the growth of leafy Asian greens such as xiao bai cai and cai xin in the 6,000 sq ft greenhouse atop an industrial building in Woodlands. It produces 50kg of leafy greens every day to supply to supermarkets here.

The firm hopes to build seven more such greenhouses on the rooftop farm – which is about 80,000 sq ft – within the next six to eight months and expand production capacity by up to 10 times, said Mr Lim.

He added that the farm has spent years acquiring and test-bedding advanced farming systems, and figuring out what works.

"It's time to put into use what we already know. We are all ready to scale up."

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli said: "It is important that these efforts are augmented by the support of consumers.

"Demand from consumers will spur our farmers to become more productive, and allow them to reap the benefits of economies of scale. This, in turn, will bolster our food security, and create good jobs for our people."

The new grant will serve to complement SFA's existing Agriculture Productivity Fund, which aims to help farms here boost productivity by incorporating sustainable technologies into their farming systems.

To further bolster food production, the agencies will also work to identify industrial spaces and vacant sites that can double as alternative farming spaces.

From May 2020, the SFA will launch a tender for rooftop spaces on HDB multi-storey carparks to be used for urban farming.

In addition, a multi-agency task force, headed by Mr Masagos, has also been formed to drive inter-agency efforts. The task force will address challenges in the setting up and expansion of farms and ensure that the farms are highly productive, sustainable and resilient, said the agencies.

The Straits Times

Department of Agriculture of the Philippines implementing new tech to aid in food security

Cloud technology and RFIDs will be in use to track movement of goods, to identify where delays are happening, and to monitor where goods are needed

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is making use of new technologies that will make the farm-to-table chain run faster.

Secretary William Dar announced the department is partnering with ridesharing app Grab and other businesses with online platforms to speed up the transportation of food from the provinces.

A program called "Kadiwa Express" will make use of the cloud, radio frequency identification (RFID) and other modern info-tech systems to track the movement of these goods, including where they may be delays due to lockdown blockades. Wastage has been an issue as goods go undelivered because of the lockdown, leading to higher prices. The hope is that the new monitoring tools will allow the supply chain to function more efficiently.

"Kadiwa on Wheels" will also be able to monitor where the goods may be most needed, and upon identification of these areas, the mobile market of sorts will be able to reach consumers directly.

“Because of COVID-19, food affordability, not only availability, becomes critical. The threat of food affordability is as real as hunger itself. If the supply chain is disrupted, food produced in rural areas just go to waste,” said Dar.

The Balagtas municipal government in Bulacan buys Cordilleran vegetables through the Department of Agriculture's Kadiwa 'Express' program.

Photo from the DA Facebook page

Another program called "e-Kadiwa" will let consumers buy goods using smartphones and other devices.

Rappler.com

S. Korea to Nurture Smart Farming Industry, Promote Exports

Yonhap

Smart farming technology centers on automatically controlling the environment to raise different crops and animals based on a customized database. (Yonhap)

South Korea said on December 23, 2019 it will launch a set of programs in 2020 to nurture its smart farming industry with an aim to become one of the world’s major exporters in the sector.

Under the vision, South Korea’s annual exports of smart farm solutions will hit US$300 million in 2025, growing threefold from $100 million posted in 2018, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The concept of smart farming centers on the application of cutting-edge technologies, such as big data, to provide optimized cultivating environments for various crops that can lead to an improvement in production quality and more efficient management of resources.

The area is considered one of the key future growth engines by the Moon Jae-in administration.

While the global market for the smart farming industry, estimated at $7.5 billion in 2018, is currently dominated by a few advanced nations, such as the United States and the Netherlands, South Korea said it can still find new opportunities on the back of its technical prowess.

Starting 2020, South Korea plans to build two prototype smart farms overseas, which will serve as the hub for the country's exports of related solutions. The locations will be selected after carrying out more research.

To nurture the domestic firms, the country also will provide them with low-interest loans and other financial support.

South Korea will invest 386.7 billion won (US$332 million) to carry out smart farming-related R&D projects from 2021 to 2027, which will allow the country to export premium smart farming packages.

The on-going project to establish so-called smart farm valleys in four locations in the country by 2022 will be commenced without any delay, according to the ministry.

The valleys will serve as test beds for the smart farming industry, where farmers can rent plots of land at reasonable fees.

South Korea plans to especially focus on promoting exports of smart farm solutions to emerging economies.

Under the blueprint, the country will apply smart farms to official development assistance (ODA) projects for Vietnam and Uzbekistan, providing them with the South Korean model of smart farms.

Seoul is also currently seeking to join deeper ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar in the smart farming industry, which would pave the way for South Korea to penetrate deeper into the Middle Eastern market.

Korea Bizwire

Taiwan sets up hydroponics demo area in Marshall Islands

By Emerson Lim

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hsu Szu-chien (third from right) and Marshall Islands' Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce Sandy Alfred (partly hidden) tour the hydroponics demonstration farm with other officials on January 18, 2020. Photo courtesy of the ICDF.

A hydroponics demonstration area has been established by Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) in the Marshall Islands to help the people there to achieve better self-sufficiency in food.

Many Pacific island states are facing agricultural hurdles due to the impact of climate change and nutritional deficiencies in soil, posing a threat to food security and dietary balance, the ICDF said on February 25, 2020.

Through the demo farm, Taiwan's smart agriculture technologies have been introduced to the country with the aim of increasing and diversifying local vegetable and fruit production, according to the ICDF, a development aid agency founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

The project is also aimed at helping local farmers earn more through increased production and ensuring that its people have a balanced diet, so that rates of health conditions such as malnutrition, obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes can be lowered, the ICDF said.

The inauguration of the demo farm was held January 18, 2020, with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hsu Szu-chien and Sandy Alfred, Marshall Islands' minister of natural resources and commerce, in attendance, the ICDF said.

The project involves transferring knowledge on hydroponics techniques, crop management and nutrition education, the ICDF said.

Hydroponics farming, a method of growing plants using nutrient solutions in a water solvent instead of soil, is a "suitable method of food production for countries that lack fertile soil, such as the Marshall Islands," said Lin Yen-jen, head of the ICDF technical mission to the Marshall Islands.

The Marshall Islands is one of Taiwan's four diplomatic allies in the Pacific region, along with Palau, Nauru and Tuvalu.

The project is scheduled to be implemented for five years, with an initial goal of increasing vegetable and fruit production by around 100 kilograms per month. Additional facilities will later be set up to increase production if the initial phase shows favorable results, according to the ICDF.

Central News Agency (CNA)

Turkey launches digital market for agriculture

By Anadolu Agency

Turkey on April 29, 2020 set up a digital ecosystem for its agriculture sector to establish a direct link between the cultivator and the consumer.

Launching the Digital Agriculture Market, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry said that it will enable stakeholders dealing with agricultural supply and demand to meet in the digital marketplace and ensure that farmers will earn more income. It will also help consumers access cheaper agricultural products.

Addressing an online news conference, Agriculture and Forestry Minister Bekir Pakdemirli described the project as a milestone in the way of planned agriculture.

Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan and the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu also attended the news conference.

(İHA Photo)

"This project is a milestone in planned agriculture, aiming to cover 10% of Turkey's fruit and vegetable production in its first stage," Pakdemirli said. He said the project will not only bring the supply and demand into one place, but it will also help in planned cultivation.

"Thanks to this system, where the entire chain from seed to fork can be tracked and sustainable production is provided, small farmers will get the same good prices in competitive conditions as large farmers," he said.

The system will also ensure zero waste in the agricultural production chain. The minister recalled that one of every three agricultural products produced in the world goes to waste.

The first phase of the project will involve vegetables, fruits and legumes besides agriculture inputs like livestock, fertilizers, medicine and seeds, said the minister.

COVID-19 raises fears about food security

He said that the COVID-19 pandemic has raised fears about food security and has highlighted the importance of agriculture.

"By managing the pandemic era well, we need to prepare the Turkish agriculture sector for the post-coronavirus period," the minister said.

The minister explained that the project will be enhanced to cover the entire agriculture sector to include cooperatives to unions, farmers, producers, fertilizers, pesticides, financing sectors and the insurance sector.

He said that Turkey's strategic geographical position allows the country to reach 40% of the world population. The minister added that this will allow building contact with a $1.9 trillion agricultural economy.

"Turkey is among the few countries in the world in terms of vegetable and animal production. In agriculture production, it is ranked first in Europe and 10th in the world," the minister said.

He emphasized that Turkey should continue to hold this position by further developing strategies to increase competitiveness.

Trade Minister Pekcan said her ministry will try to use this platform with all stakeholders.

Finance Minister Albayrak said the digital agriculture market is valuable in setting up a healthy food chain with limitless opportunities for producers.

"Today, the debate on domestic production and self-sufficiency in the world has reignited," said TOBB's president Hisarcıklıoğlu.

He added that concepts such as efficiency in agriculture, domestic production and food safety have gained more importance.

"The digital agriculture market will increase the efficiency of Turkey's agricultural ecosystem, balancing the supply and demand in the market," he said. He also added that this digital market will also halt the seasonal price fluctuations of agricultural products.

Daily Sabah

Farming just got more technical

By Sorn Sarath

Cambodian farmers harvest water mimosa, a popular vegetable dish, at a farm in Phnom Penh on February 13, 2019. (Photo by TANG CHHIN Sothy / AFP)

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Ministry of Agriculture will launch a farmer app, called "Chamka" in May 2020 to help farmers in agricultural products development, according to IFAD's country manager.

Meng Sakphouseth, IFAD's country programme officer to Cambodia, said the app will be launched in May 2020, which in now it already developed that can be found on Andrio's play store and Apple store.

He said the Chamka app is to help farmers to receive and improve their technical knowledge and selling agricultural products.

"The app will allow farmers to report issues with their farming techniques to experts and the problem will be solved by the guideline provided by via the app," he said. "It provides technical

assistance related to farming and crops to farmers. The app is a market place for farmers.

"We are now trying to recruit agriculture experts and bring input suppliers to the platform first before we release it to farmers in June 2020. We will push hard to reach this deadline."

According to Sakphou-seth, farmers will be able to benefit from it starting from the first week of June.

To respond to the spread of Coronavirus. IFAD is now working with the government to implement it to support farmer groups and value chain partners.

According to IFAD, travel from the capital and large urban centres have been restricted but greater autonomy has been granted to provincial staff, who are providing direct support to farmers.

Extension services to existing and returnee farmers are also being delivered through online and tele-based services.

Khmer Times

Breaking ground: Young farmers embrace urban agriculture in Tokyo

Kei Kawana is one of several dozen Tokyo Metropolitan Government-supported young farmers growing fresh produce for their neighborhood in the heart of the metropolis.

By Chiara Terzuolo

Kei Kawana's kingdom is Neighbor's Farm, a 2,000-square-meter plot overlooked by the Tama Monorail, which regularly zips by overhead. In March 2020, she celebrated her first year of agricultural activity, the culmination of many years of patient work, planning and wading through bureaucracy.

Kawana, an alumna of the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is part of a growing trend of young farmers from nonfarming backgrounds seeking to enrich their communities by producing healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables. At just 28, she is bringing fresh blood into a business where the typical Japanese farmer is swiftly approaching retirement — as of 2015, Tokyo farmers had an average age of 63.9, only slightly lower than the national average of 66.4.

Sticking to her roots: It took Kei Kawana two years to find a plot to rent in Tokyo for Neighbor's Farm, which celebrated its first anniversary in March 2020. | CHIARA TERZUOLO

Although the number of farmers in the greater Tokyo area is dropping, there are still around 12,000 active farms, growing a variety of produce ranging from *komatsuna* (mustard spinach) in the relatively central wards of Setagaya and Edogawa to the more exotic passion fruit of the outlying Ogasawara Islands.

Tomotoshi Nose, from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Division at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, explains that while it is certainly not easy to make a living cultivating crops on some of Japan's most expensive real estate, Tokyo's large budget dedicated to supporting farmers means that farming in the capital does

have its perks.

The Tokyo Agriculture Promotion Plan, last updated in 2017, takes a four-pronged approach to secure the future of agriculture in the prefecture. It aims to preserve and increase land for agriculture, reduce the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, find appropriate solutions for the area's surprisingly diverse ecosystems and, most importantly, provide support for new farmers.

Generous grants cover most of the costs farmers need to purchase machinery, infrastructure or other equipment, or to restore abandoned or paved land into fertile soil. "But finding land to rent is difficult for aspiring farmers who do not have a background in agriculture," explains Nose, who says there are currently between 50 and 55 such "new farmers" in the program.

Home-grown: Currently, Neighbor's Farm grows a range of leafy vegetables, including komatsuna (mustard greens) and norabōna (a variety of rapeseed). | COURTESY OF NEIGHBOR'S FARM

Another such perk is that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has put its money where its mouth is: The staff cafeteria in the second Tokyo Metropolitan Government building features Tokyo-grown produce in its daily specials.

The small farms dotted around Tokyo are protected by the Law on Productive Green Areas (*seisan ryokuchi hō*), which was established in 1992 to relieve the tax burden on farmers. These laws also made it almost impossible for landowners to sublet their land, even to younger newcomers interested in breaking into the field: Renting out a plot would make them ineligible for tax breaks and, even if they could, rights over the rented land were limited.

Kawana was initially advised to give up when she began looking for a plot to rent in 2016. She finally got her lucky break in 2018, when the law was changed to make it possible for farmers to rent out their land while still benefiting from the tax breaks.

Interestingly, the change in law did not automatically lead to an increase in agricultural land for rent. Landowners are often wary of renting out any idle parts of their land to new farmers, and the cost of rent in areas near the city is high: In 2018, the average cost of a square meter in Tokyo was about ¥1 million.

"It took me two years to finally find this plot," Kawana says as she overlooks her bright green komatsuna and leafy heritage *norabōna* (a variety of rapeseed). "I was very fortunate. I don't think many places like it exist anymore, especially so close to (Takahatafudo Station). The landowner was interested in my ideas, and we fortunately developed trust quickly."

Although Kawana spent 2019 growing a variety of seasonal produce, her ultimate goal is to focus on growing greenhouse tomatoes, a crop she became passionate about during her time working at a large tomato farm in Fukui Prefecture. "It's a crop that really thrives under carefully controlled conditions," she says. "I love that the more effort you put in, the more delicious the flavor becomes."

Kawana says that the Tokyo Chamber of Agriculture provided invaluable assistance when she sought a 30-year rental contract for the land to establish Neighbor's Farm, and that receiving economic support from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Division and the city of Hino, where the farm is based, is the only realistic way for a new farmer like her to start up a business.

But she expresses some concerns about the promptness of decision making and subsidy payments. Despite hoping to start growing tomatoes in 2020, she is still waiting to hear whether her grant application to build the necessary greenhouses has been approved.

"It's not clear when decisions will be made or when we can expect to hear back. This makes

deciding the planting schedule for my business very difficult, as farmers on small plots need to plan a year in advance," she says.

Kawana's current efforts, however, have not gone unnoticed, and she already has a steady stream of customers from nearby households, who regularly pop by to ask when she will refill the vending machine near her fields with fresh produce. "I'm excited about creating a solid local economy, and love being able to talk directly with the people who buy my vegetables," she says.

Much like Kawana, local residents are also waiting with bated breath for the day they can finally taste her Hino-grown tomatoes.

Japan Times

It's time we invest in healthy food systems for a safer world

By Martien van Nieuwkoop

The World Bank Group in the week of March 2, 2020 announced it would make available a package of $12 billion -- an unprecedented level of financing to help developing countries and businesses cope with the health and economic impacts caused by COVID-19. Much of that support will naturally be reactive, financing immediate measures designed to strengthen our response to a brand-new threat. But some of the financing will also be preventative -- as it should be, if we are to learn our lessons from the past and strengthen our collective hand before the next bug hits.

The COVID-19 crisis, like SARS, MERS, Ebola and the avian and swine flus before it, presents countries with a new opportunity to do the right thing and tackle some of the root causes of emerging infectious diseases: the uncontrolled risk of pathogen transmission from animals to humans in a rapidly changing environment.

Over 60% of emerging infectious diseases are caused by non-human, animal sources.
Photo: © Flore de Preneuf/World Bank

Experts in this field call for a "One Health" approach based on better understanding the linkages between poor management of livestock, unsafe food handling, environmental degradation, encroachments on wildlife habitats, and human illness. Simply put, animal health, people's health and planetary health are interconnected and food systems provide an array of drivers for the emergence of diseases.

Those food systems are currently challenged by significant increases in production and consumption, fueled by growing populations and incomes. Under pressure from agriculture, natural systems in turn are near breaking point after decades of deforestation, soil degradation, nutrient mismanagement, biodiversity loss and climate change. Increased movements and trade have also multiplied the capacity to rapidly spread diseases. As a result, we've seen an increase in both the frequency and economic impact of these emerging infectious diseases, most of which originated in animals.

It's time we invest in better managing food systems to create a safer world.

The good news is that we are not starting from scratch. Fourteen years ago, the World Bank led a robust program to address avian influenza, zoonotic diseases, and pandemic preparedness and response. Thanks to the Global Program for Avian Influenza Control and Human Pandemic Preparedness and

Response, approved in 2006, both countries severely affected by the disease and unaffected but vigilant countries were able to draw on financial and technical support to strengthen their capacity for early and effective disease control. The multisectoral program was active in 62 countries and contributed to avert a costly pandemic through biosecurity, surveillance, improved capacity in diagnosis, information, and communications, and response.

A key lesson from that crisis was that it pays to invest in prevention, in all the countries that request help, no matter the severity of a particular crisis or its geographical footprint. The public health and economic benefits were substantial both to the borrowing countries and to the world.

Another lesson from that time is more sobering: the window of opportunity to act eventually came to a close. Though the program provided support for 83 operations between 2006 and 2013, the financial crisis and the food price crisis of 2008-2009 shifted the world's attention and priorities. Demand for prevention dropped. Yet serious risks remained, as can be seen with the outbreaks that have followed since.

Our analytical work also provides solid economic arguments for investing in prevention. In People, Pathogens and Our Planet: The Economics of One Health, we estimated that only US$ 3 billion per year would be needed to build and operate One Health systems for effective disease control in low and middle-income countries, and that these systems would yield as much as $37 billion in savings from reduced epidemics and pandemics – a net win of $34 billion annually. Other analytical work estimated the cost of food-borne illness at $110 billion in lost productivity and medical expenses in low and middle-income countries each year (The Safe Food Imperative) and found that the cost of unchecked antimicrobial resistance could be as large as the losses provoked by the 2008 global financial crisis (Drug-Resistant Infections: A Threat to Our Economic Future).

Today, at a time of immense uncertainty and immediate pain felt by people in a growing number countries, we should build on our knowledge and experience and invest in long-term systems such as improved animal husbandry, food safety, veterinary services, animal wellbeing and tracking of zoonotic diseases at the source.

As Dr. Peter Daszak, President of EcoHealth Alliance, said recently in a CNN interview, "We look at pandemics in the wrong way. If they're the product of what we do on the planet, things like the wildlife trade, and human expansion into new areas, then we should treat them as a risk of doing that." In other words, if pandemics are the result of human activity, we need programs to manage upstream risks and prevent pandemics from happening.

At the World Bank, we stand ready to work with countries on long-term prevention. We are committed to help countries invest in risk reduction and risk management, particularly by getting a handle on the way we manage agriculture and livestock. Only then can food systems become part of the solution for a safer world.

About the Author:

Martien van Nieuwkoop

Director, Agriculture Global Practice

As a Director in the World Bank's Agriculture Global Practice, Martien provides leadership and global oversight to the agriculture sector dialogue, portfolio management, and partnership relationships, covering a wide range of issues, including food security and food safety; agricultural productivity and competitiveness; agribusiness and post-harvest value-addition; and climate resilient agriculture. Prior to his current position, he has held numerous managerial and leadership positions covering the Bank's engagement on agriculture in Africa, Latin-America and South Asia. Martien is a Dutch national, who holds post-graduate degrees in Agricultural Economics from Wageningen University, The Netherlands, and in Business Administration from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C, USA.

Voices Blog, World Bank

Amid COVID-19, the time to act is now to protect food security

With the impacts of the pandemic on food and nutrition being felt around the region, planning is needed to avoid higher food prices, decreased nutrition and reduced food security.

By Hans Woldring, Susann Roth

With the closure of many public markets in Asia, vendors are looking for other ways to get their food to the people who need it. Photo: Megan Thomas

COVID-19 has captured the full attention of governments across the world. Their immediate focus has been on strategies to manage both the pandemic from a public health perspective and the economic and financial fallout through the implementation of varying economic rescue packages. While understandably these are key priorities, people living in the locked down cities of Asia and the Pacific are worrying about fresh food markets that are closed, dwindling stocks in supermarkets and the broken supply chains of local fruit and vegetable deliveries while food is held up on the wharves. It's getting harder every day to get food.

We need to start thinking about the possible impacts of the current crisis on food and nutrition security, and what options exist for governments to minimize food and nutrition security risks.

Reduced working hours or unemployment will cut incomes for tens of millions of workers in Asia. This reality is well underway. For many, household income could easily fall to levels that cause severe financial hardship, and both the quantity and quality of the weekly food basket will deteriorate. For families who live paycheck to paycheck, their resilience to reduced incomes is often limited, and the impact of reduced income will be rapid and potentially severe.

While efforts are underway to hand out basic food, it may not cover the nutrition needs of populations and definitely not those of children and pregnant women. Low nutrition food, even when consumed for just for a couple of months, has long-term impacts on children's brain development and overall health.

Although businesses working in the essential services area, including food imports, deliveries and sales, are typically open for business, functionality is low as staff are unable to come to work, or are caught up with 14-day self-isolation. Clearing food imports at the ports has slowed down with a shortage of workers. The entire whole food processing sector is likely to suffer from worker shortages, at least in the coming 3 to 4 months.

As a result, supply chains are functioning at reduced capacity, causing supply side stresses. With food consumption being relatively constant, buffer stocks currently allow supplies to be maintained, however supply side shortages can

easily flow through to price rises. In some countries, we can already observe increased prices in distant provinces. There is evidence that fruit and vegetable farmers using e-commerce platforms are already demanding higher prices.

Lower income households disproportionately feel the impact of reduced financial resources and the effect of increased food prices. The flow-on effects of poor food and nutrition security at the household level in varying contexts are well-documented and have impacts far beyond health and nutrition. Countries are varied in their safety net mitigation mechanisms, but fundamentally well targeted assistance is required, whether through direct household cash transfers, food banks, food stamps or other similar means.

Timeliness is critical, and governments need to develop responsive policies and programs without hesitation. In response to the food price hikes of 2010/2011, many governments designed programs which were implemented to address the stresses at the time. New programs should consider the lessons learned from that period and be targeted for effectiveness within the constraints of a supply chain operating in a partial lockdown situation.

Looking forward 3 to 6 months, of real concern is the impact of COVID-19 on food production and supply. We know in many countries there are currently farm labor shortages as workers can't travel to farms, are quarantined, ill, or caring for ill family members. This will affect the timeliness of farm operations, and the ability to complete various farm operations. Fertilizer shortages are being reported as supply chains in the production and transport phases are disrupted, and this will translate to a reduction in crop yields.

Some countries have implemented or are considering implementing a ban on rice exports, as in 2010/2011 which could cause alarm that protectionism has not been abandoned. Rice export bans in 2011 were a key reason behind rice price hikes at that time.

Countries vary in the level of buffer stocks they carry in the public and private sector. However, a slowdown in the supply chain from upstream of the farm gate, at the producer level, and post farm through processor to the fresh market or supermarket is underway, reducing stocks. Processed food items, with more complex supply chains, have a greater risk of shortages. It will be critical that governments prioritize policies and investments in the food production value chain to reduce the level of COVID-19 impacts on the supply chain to control food price rises.

Governments can take a range of short-term actions to ensure domestic food supplies. Local food systems will have enhanced importance. Open borders and regular revision towards more targeted local lockdown policies to keep transport links open and food processors working are essential. Depending on the situation, each DMC should study its circumstances to ease the burden of access to inputs. Short term output-based stimulus payments can act as an incentive for farmers, including bonus payments per ton delivered, or matching grant programs for rapid adoption of proven and simple on farm drying and storage technologies to reduce losses.

The focus should be on staples food products and fruit and vegetables. With the closure of markets, food delivery services and mobile food vans will be important, which can be brought to operation by the hundreds of stall holders from the now defunct markets. It will be crucial to help farmers stay connected with through the crises and lock downs increasingly decentralized markets and consumers. In the medium term, investments need to be made in upgrading of wholesale markets with proper cold storage facilities, which has been neglected for years.

Ultimately, the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security are just beginning to emerge and many additional tensions will arise in the coming weeks, months and even years. While the focus of most governments is presently on health, financial and economic impacts, planning is required today to avoid higher food prices, impact on populations' nutrition status and reduced food security.

Reducing shocks in the food supply chain will help contain food price rises and will be a lower cost solution than managing food shortages, higher prices and the risk of social instability. The time to act is now, not later.

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Hans joined ADB in 2007 and has worked in the Central and West Asia and South Asia Departments, and served in two resident missions. He led with major assignments for ADB in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Nepal, and has worked in the Central Asia region since 1994. Prior to joining ADB, he worked for 4 years for the International Finance Corporation in their advisory services in Central Asia. From 1981 to 2001, he worked as a consultant to private and corporate famers in Australia, specializing in resource management, farm management and agronomy advisory, as well as international consulting assignments in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China and Cameroon. He has 39 years of professional experience, with 26 years in the field. Hans, a national of Australia, holds a Bachelor of Rural Science from the University of New England, a Master of Integrated Water Management from the University of Queensland, and is a Graduate of the ADB/Harvard Breakthrough Leadership program.

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Asian Development Bank (ADB) Blog

Coronavirus Is Changing Consumer Habits in the Food Industry

By Amir Sharif, Associate Dean at University of Bradford School of Management

Hopefully post-pandemic, there is even more pressure on food manufacturers to cut back on packaging and to renew efforts to cut back on waste within the food supply chain. Photo: Shutterstock

We know that in the current global pandemic, disruption is the new normal. One of the key anxieties early in the crisis was in relation to the continued supply of food. However, beyond specific shortages artificially created by panic-buying and stockpiling of a few essentials, widespread food availability has generally not been adversely affected.

COVID-19 Has Demonstrated the Resilience of the Food System

In developing countries, the World Food Programme has noted that the number of people who will face acute food insecurity (availability, access and use of food) will double during 2020.

Yet in the developed world, we haven't seen headlines about mass food supply chain collapse. Despite the complexity of food supply chains, with many different foodstuffs, approaches and stakeholders involved (farmers/producers, suppliers, distributors and consumers), the food supply "machine" continues to work well.

The food industry has been ahead of the curve in its management of risk and planning for contingency over many years. It has become a sophisticated and mature operation, learning from mistakes, successes and opportunities to tighten collaboration across multiple countries and jurisdictions.

More Ahead of the Curve Than Health Care Chains

This is in stark contrast with what we observe with health care supply chains. Notwithstanding the complexity of disease management, disease control and population safety, a number of factors have had an adverse impact on patients and health care professionals, including fragility in inventory, procurement decision-making and governance, disconnections and differing views between country approaches and a lack of supply chain resilience.

Comparatively, food supply chains have not been similarly impacted. In the United Kingdom, learning from historical events has been key. Examples include salmonella contamination in eggs, the so-called mad cow disease affecting the beef supply chain and numerous outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease across U.K. farms. There have also been unintended consequences, such as the impact on KFC restaurants when the company changed distributors, leading to a lack of chicken being supplied to their branches, and more recently, the question of a long-term impact on food supply chains from Brexit.

In these U.K.-specific cases, though, any disruption to the food supply chain was a "local" issue, confined to the industry and fast-moving consumer goods sector, with the remaining part of the economy and daily life carrying on as normal.

Long-Term Impacts for the Food Industry

Although most developed nations have relatively strong food security, that doesn't mean there aren't going to be significant and long-lasting impacts to the food industry, post-COVID-19. Living in lockdown conditions for almost a quarter of the world's population means that the ebb and flow of normal consumption patterns have been drastically affected and have led to new consumer behaviors. Once we emerge from this situation, some forecasters are even warning that we may experience a return to a world that looks and feels more like a post-war era.

Food supply can't be decoupled from how it is distributed. Even with a highly collaborative, technologically sophisticated global supply chain, the logistics and distribution of any product will always suffer from the "last mile" logistics problem.

The greatest impact can be seen in large cities, where populations rely heavily on external, incoming supplies to municipal centers that now are either experiencing an unusually high round-the-clock demand pattern or a discontinuous, lumpy supply dynamic. By contrast, non-urbanized areas that might have normally relied upon food supply also from the "outside" are looking to draw upon local food production sources, particularly those in rural and agricultural areas.

Opportunity to Develop a Circular Economy

There may be an opportunity for individuals and organizations to leverage the benefits of the immediate community instead of global supply chains, adopting principles of redesign, reduce, reuse and recycle (i.e., circular economy concepts). Food supply chains of the future may shift back to seasonal produce and local growth and supply.

Weeks and months of lockdown are beginning to alter food choices, consumption and resulting food waste behaviors. We are becoming more aware of our relationship with food and packaging. While many of us may also have become more health-conscious as a result of this global pandemic, I am sure there is a suitably large number of people worldwide who are now seeking solace in preprepared and carryout food. In turn, reversing the previous consumer trends for fresh and healthy food could potentially lead to unintended post-pandemic

health effects such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Responsibility for Waste Needs to Return

Likewise, previously held concerns for climate change and achieving a zero-waste society has visibly dissolved. Where has that gone and when will it return?

Pre-COVID-19, there had been a growing global realization about the impact of consumption and waste on the natural environment. The principle of responsibility behind this is known as EPR (extended producer responsibility), where the producer of a product or service — rather than the consumer — takes ultimate responsibility for how to dispose of their product.

The emergence of initiatives such as plastic bottle deposit return schemes in the U.K. and elsewhere harkens back to a time some 40 or more years ago when you effectively "rented" a glass bottle to access the soft drink inside and then returned the bottle to get back your deposit.

In recent weeks, consumption in households may well have increased, which will also result in an increase in waste. In some areas and municipalities, reduced curbside waste collections and waste services have only heightened attention to household waste. We can only hope this might have a reverse effect once the pandemic is over, leading to even more pressure on food manufacturers to cut back on packaging and to renew efforts to cut back on waste within the food supply chain.

We should be thankful for strong and resilient food supply chains that are ensuring food security for the majority of us. Focusing on local and closed-loop production, distribution, consumption and careful management of waste will undoubtedly be our savior going forward. Regulatory and patient safety issues notwithstanding, these are aspects that health care systems can learn from.

About the Author:

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Associate Dean at University of Bradford School of Management

Professor Amir Sharif is associate dean at the University of Bradford School of Management. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, the Chartered Institute for Logistics and Transport and the Institute of Leadership and Management, and also a member of the Chartered Management Institute.

Brink

Online vegan cooking classes getting pandemic cut-through

By Su Xincheng

A Japanese cooking school has been enticing vegans confined to their homes during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic to try out their unique animal product-free educational offerings.

Instructors at the Vegan-Vegetarian Japanese Cooking Class Society launched online lessons in April 2020 to allow people who are stuck in isolation abroad and in Japan to experience the joys of cooking, with virtual demonstrations of how to prepare Japanese-style vegan dishes.

"We have received many requests about online courses since March when the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan fell sharply due to the virus outbreak and people around the world had to stay home," said Akiko Sugawara, 41, chief executive officer and head chef of the school, known as BentoYa Cooking.

The school, based in Yokohama, began targeting foreigners both inside and outside Japan in 2018 for on-site lessons, showing them how to cook Japanese dishes made from plant-based ingredients to take advantage of a boom in vegetarianism and veganism and an increasing number of people eating with dietary restrictions in mind.

Vegan and vegetarian dishes have also become seen as a more environmentally friendly dietary option, partly because they limit people's global warming-causing gas contributions by cutting the consumption of methane-emitting livestock.

But the pandemic has presented an opportunity for the cooking school to go virtual. The online courses usually run for about an hour and are conducted in English since nearly 90 percent of students are non-Japanese.

Those who take the courses can learn how to cook typical Japanese cuisine like sushi, ramen noodles and gyoza dumplings -- minus the meat or fish.

They are also taught how to make miso fermented soybean paste from "okara," the leftover fiber-rich by-product from the tofu production process that remains when soymilk is made.

As plant-based ingredients have a long shelf life, they are gaining popularity from people around the world who are trying to limit the number of times they venture out to grocers to buy fresh foods due to the virus risks.

Add the extra benefit to immunity that is said to come from consuming fermented seasonings used and it is a win-win for students, the school said.

"We have had about 30 students taking online classes," said Rina Ikeda, an employee of Japan's e-commerce giant Rakuten Inc. who instructs cooking classes on weekends.

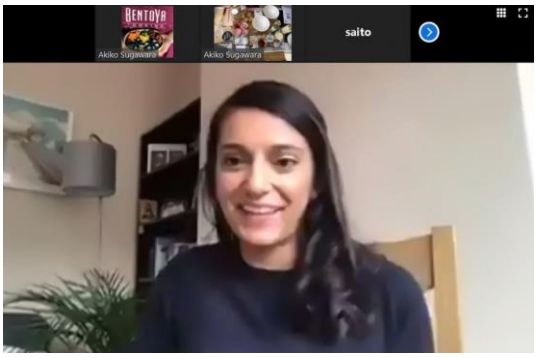
(Supplied photo shows Rina Ikeda (L), an employee of Japan's e-commerce giant Rakuten Inc. who instructs cooking classes on weekends and Akiko Sugawara, chief executive officer and head chef of BentoYa Cooking.) [Photo courtesy of the school]

"Regardless of whether or not we help slow the spread of the virus, the courses will continue as long as we receive applications," Ikeda, 31, told Kyodo News.

Ikeda said she used to teach Japanese cooking to international students in Japan when she was a college student. At the time, many students were not able to enjoy Japanese cuisine in the absence of the availability of Halal or vegetarian foods.

Of those participating in the online classes, 60 percent live abroad while over 20 percent are foreign residents of Japan.

Students pay 2,000 yen ($19) per lesson and a portion of the proceeds go to Katariba, a Tokyo-based nonprofit organization that provides educational support to teenagers experiencing financial difficulties in this time of crisis.



(Supplied photo shows Inderpal Kaur taking an online cooking lesson on how to cook Sake lees baked vegan cheesecake and miso muffin.) [Photo courtesy of BentoYa Cooking]

"We would like to support people who are in trouble due to the coronavirus," Ikeda said.

Inderpal Kaur, who lives in Britain, values healthy and nutritious foods.

"I'm really happy I had made the decision," Kaur said, who has taken four of the cooking classes.

Despite having to maintain social distancing in Britain, "It's nice to make contact with somebody who lives in Japan and stay connected with different people," the 37-year-old said in a video chat following her cooking class.

The cooking school plans to invite professional chefs in Japan and abroad to teach "shojin ryori," the Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, from mid-May.

The decision was made to give chefs whose incomes have taken a hit a way to earn money with restaurants forced to shut temporarily amid the outbreak.

(Supplied photo shows Akiko Sugawara, chief executive officer and head chef of the Vegan-Vegetarian Japanese Cooking Class Society, known as BentoYa Cooking, showing foreign learners with virtual demonstrations of how to prepare Japanese-style vegan dishes) [Photo courtesy of the school]

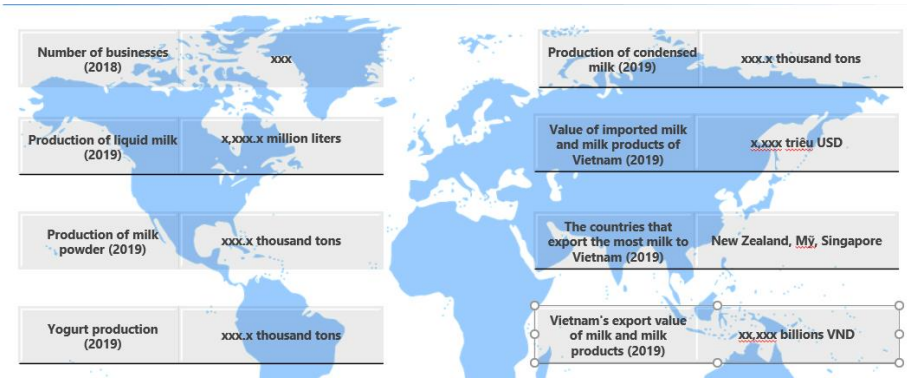
"I think the effects of the coronavirus will be prolonged, and we hope to contribute in some way with the online classes, through which we can teach cooking to anyone, regardless of where they live in the world," Sugawara said.

Sugawara, who lived in Canada for over 10 years and ran a Japanese food catering company there, also said the pandemic has provided an opportunity for Japan, which lags behind the West when it comes to providing for vegans or vegetarians, to mark its place on the map.

"I hope vegan Japanese food will be able to spread around the world," she said.

KYODO NEWS

Prospects of Vietnam's dairy industry in 2020

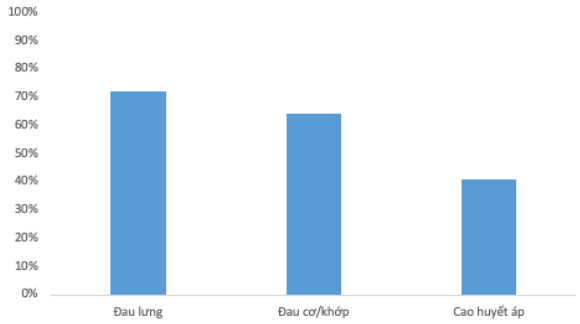


Looking back on a year of stable growth for the dairy industry in 2019

Vietnam's dairy industry in 2019 has relatively good growth, especially liquid milk, yogurt and condensed milk. According to statistics from the General Statistics Office, liquid milk production in 2019 reached over 1 million liters, up 8.32% compared to 2018. The country produced about 390 thousand tons of yogurt, an increase of 17.65%; condensed milk production was over 150 thousand tons, down 4.98% from the previous year.

Regarding sales revenue, liquid milk increased by 8.32%, yogurt increased by 17.8% and condensed milk increased by about 5% compared to 2018. According to VIRAC, the condensed milk market, although growing slowly, will still maintain the

growth rate. Stable growth is around 5%/year for the next 5 years.



Proportion of elderly Vietnamese with health problems, 2019. Source: VIRAC

Import turnover of milk and milk products to Vietnam reached over 1 million USD in 2019, up 8.8% over the same period in 2018, mainly through markets: New Zealand, Southeast Asia, EU and US. The export of milk and milk products of Vietnam has also achieved significant progress, starting from only 3 enterprises exporting to 10 countries in 2015, but now it has sharply increased with about 10 enterprises exporting to more than 50 countries. Nationally, mainly Vinamilk, TH True Milk, Moc Chau Milk… Export turnover of milk and milk products is estimated to reach over 10 trillion VND in 2019, up 13.46% compared to 2018.

Typical trends of the dairy industry in early 2020

Choose plant milk like soy milk and barley milk instead of cow's milk. Thanks to its high protein content, rich in nutrients, the consumption of plant milk has significantly increased in recent years. According to Nielsen, the total value of branded soy milk consumption increased by 13% in the first 10 months of 2019, and Vinasoy's revenue growth reached 15% after the first 9 months of 2019.

Develop nutritious milk products for the elderly. Although the prevalence of health problems among the elderly in Vietnam is high, the use of nutritional supplements such as milk in this age group is very limited. In 2019, the powdered milk market for adults in Vietnam grows to 11%. This shows the potential for good growth of nutritious milk products for the elderly in Vietnam in 2020.

Raw milk prices and average selling prices both increased. Many dairy companies have been planning to adjust the price increase within 5% compared to the previous declared level. Price advantage is important, but for sensitive products like milk, consumers will be willing to pay the extra cost in exchange for quality assurance.

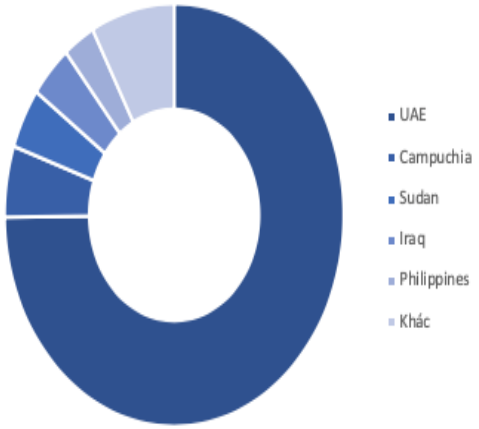
The trend of distribution through e-commerce channels is particularly interested. Specifically, revenue from these channels has grown double digits for many quarters of 2019. Sales through modern trade is a challenging segment for dairy companies, due to fierce competition and low barriers to entry.

Promote exports to potential markets. Typically it is Vinamilk – an active business in foreign markets. In the first 3 months of 2020, Vinamilk's main export is the UAE (accounting for 75% of export sales). In addition to the Philippines, Cambodia, and Vinamilk markets, Vinamilk has exported 100% Organic milk according to European standards to the Singapore market – a famous capital market, and has been well received.

Particularly in the Chinese market until the end of 2019, Vinamilk's products are available in these 8 provinces and cities and are present in big supermarket chains such as Hema of Alibaba.

Prospects of the dairy industry 2020 and future M&A deals

VIRAC forecasts that the dairy industry prospect in 2020 will continue to grow at a high level, increase investment capital in dairy farms to reduce dependence on imported milk and to meet the



Vinamilk export market in the first 3 months of 2020. Source: VIRAC

needs of people's domestic consumption. The goal for 2020 is to produce 2.6 billion liters of liquid milk, with an average consumption of 27 liters/person/year. Domestic fresh milk will reach 1 billion liters to meet 38% of demand, export turnover will reach 120-130 million USD.

Besides, the dairy industry is an attractive potential market for businesses, but it is also not a

"piece of cake". Up to now, Vietnam milk market has had fierce competition between big and familiar names such as Vinamilk, TH True Milk,… and the "large enterprises about milk" in the world such as Nestle, Abbott,… M&A deals are considered to be the best solution for current dairy companies to strengthen their position in the market.

In addition, Vingroup and Masan – two multidisciplinary business giants are eager to find opportunities to enter the Vietnamese dairy market with M&A deals. With the promise of huge revenue and profit from the market of nearly 100 million Vietnamese people, as a stepping stone to develop in the market of 600 million ASEAN people, furthermore, it is an opportunity to step into the Chinese billion market, the Vingroup and Masan join the game is just a story sooner or later.

Vietnam Industry Research and Consultancy (VIRAC)

ABOUT CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization (NGO) serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1996, CACCI has grown into a network of national chamber of commerce with a total now of 29 primary Members from 27 Asian countries and independent economies. It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

As an NGO, CACCI is granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations. It is a member of the Conference on NGOs (CoNGO), an association of NGOs with UN consultative status.

For more information, please visit www.cacci.biz.

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