

Speech for Chief Representative SAKAMOTO Takema

Inauguration Ceremony of Mulberry Tea Processing Plant under the “VERIFICATION SURVEY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR DISSEMINATING JAPANESE TECHNOLOGIES FOR MULBERRY TEA LEAVES PROJECT IN PAMPANGA (June 08, 2023 | PSAU)

All distinguished Guests and Participants,

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat!

こんにちは。

I am deeply honored to be part of the Inauguration Ceremony for the “first-ever” Mulberry Tea Processing Plant in the Philippines, under JICA’s “Verification Survey with the Private Sector for Disseminating Japanese Technologies for Mulberry Tea Leaves Project in Pampanga” .

For over five decades, the Philippines and Japan have been exceptionally important “Strategic Partners” , which developed into the historic highest level nowadays. It is even called as “friends closer than brothers” .

Consequently, JICA is extremely enthusiastic to expand our various active cooperation in this lovely country. We would like to contribute to a more prosperous future for

Filipino friends, and to more robust bonds between two nations, as well.

As you know, JICA has been extending powerful Official Development Assistance to the Philippines, on a Government-to-Government basis. JICA is providing our ODA supports through wide-ranging support instruments, such as provision of ①soft loans, ②grant assistance and ③technical cooperation.

Apart from these conventional ODA support programs, recently, JICA has been putting higher priority on Public-Private Partnership promotion.

This PPP promotion program aims for win-win impacts both for beneficiary countries, such as the Philippines, and Japanese companies' business deployment. This program can contribute to solve wide range of development challenges, and also to boost further socio-economic growth of our partner countries, like the Philippines. It is expected to work up business appetite of Japanese companies in promising overseas markets, like the Philippines.

Today, through the unwavering commitment of our partners from the PSAU and Kuwanosato Inc., we could finally inaugurate this promising mulberry tea processing plant.

I reiterate that this is the first-ever mulberry tea processing plant in the Philippines. We all should be proud of that.

We, as the first runner, can contribute to ①agro-industry development, ②job creation, ③income generation, ④healthier lifestyle, ⑤stronger business partnership, and so on.

Actually, the equipment is already installed here in PSAU in early 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inauguration ceremony and other project activities have been put on hold. Until now, unfortunately, we have been limited to remote communication for a few years.

But, today, we are making the history!
We are opening the new chapter!!

It is your diligent and patient work that made it possible for us to reach this very momentous occasion.

Our private sector partner, Kuwanosato Inc., has introduced and transferred to PSAU its unique and advanced technology and business model for mulberry tea production, covering the whole supply chain from mulberry ① cultivation, ②processing, up to ③distribution.

One of Kuwanosato's strengths is its cultivation technique for stable mulberry leaf production even in disadvantaged areas.

Agriculture productivity in this esteemed province, Pampanga has been affected by low soil fertility after the Mount Pinatubo eruption, back in the early 90s. However, the feasibility survey by Kuwanosato was conducted to overcome such a dis-advantage, under the same JICA PPP promotion scheme which was completed in 2017. Eventually, the F/S confirmed a high yield potential in Pampanga, despite the low soil fertility in the province.

Recently, we duly witness a huge market potential, with a positive sales growth for tea in the Philippines, which is fueled by the shift to healthier lifestyles among consumers.

Kuwanosato's experiences in various product development are remarkably rich. Kuwanosato has know-how to develop "business-to-consumer" sales marketing, in response to the growing consumers' demand for healthier life, too.

As such, I am quite sure that this project will bring amazing positive impacts to the agro-industry development in Pampanga, also known as "Culinary Capital," and in the Philippines as a whole.

As mentioned, this project also can contribute to job creation and income generation for our mulberry farmers and processors.

Furthermore, this project is envisioned to promote better health and quality of life among Filipino consumers. Mulberry tea is a well-known natural and caffeine-free drink. It is also useful for ①weight loss, ②cholesterol reduction, and ③diabetes control, among others.

We are bringing a social innovation!

Now, we are nearing the completion of this project. And I would like to convey my sincerest appreciation to all of you for your strong and productive collaboration for almost a decade. I am so excited to witness the results and impacts of this technology in the decades to come!

I congratulate everyone on the success of our cooperation now. And it is also my hope that the robust bonds that we have developed in this project will continue to grow even stronger in the coming years.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.

Mabuhay, and good afternoon to all of you!

ありがとうございました.