

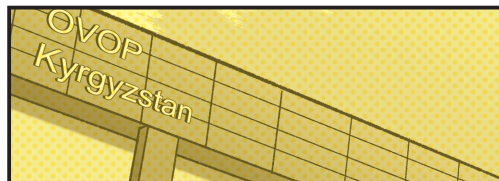


**Kyrgyz
Republic**

Project History (Manga Edition)

Pursuing Quality and Bringing Kyrgyz Brands to the World

**The One Village One Product Project:
A New Way to Support Developing Countries**



Original Story & Supervision: Haraguchi Akihisa
Manga: tami

The One Village One Product (OVOP) project focuses on local specialties, improves one product to raise its value, and helps communities support themselves



JICA has introduced this idea to developing countries, achieving results in many, including the Kyrgyz Republic



However



this Kyrgyz project had many challenges

The Kyrgyz Republic is surrounded by 3,000 m tall mountains and is known as an idyllic summer retreat

People make their livings from the mountains, growing fruit and raising animals

Kyrgyz Republic

But after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a lack of distribution and technical support meant the economy worsened

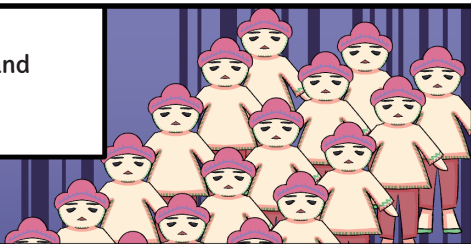
With no jobs in rural areas, young people left for cities or overseas, worsening poverty

In 2007, JICA launched an OVOP project in Issyk-Kul, a region with untapped tourism potential

START!

Issyk-Kul Region

Locals were making goods like jam and felt products...



but profits didn't rise, participants fell,
and the project was in crisis

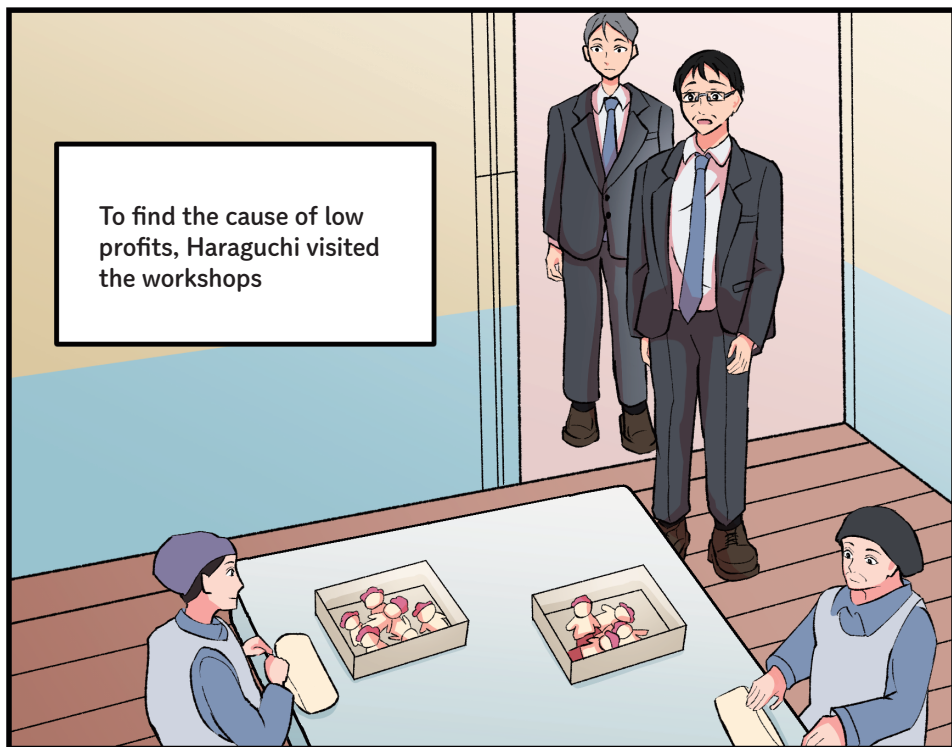
Haraguchi Akihisa decided to take
action



With so much OVOP potential,
it'd be a waste to let it end...!

Haraguchi Akihisa
Assigned to JICA's Kyrgyz office in
January 2009

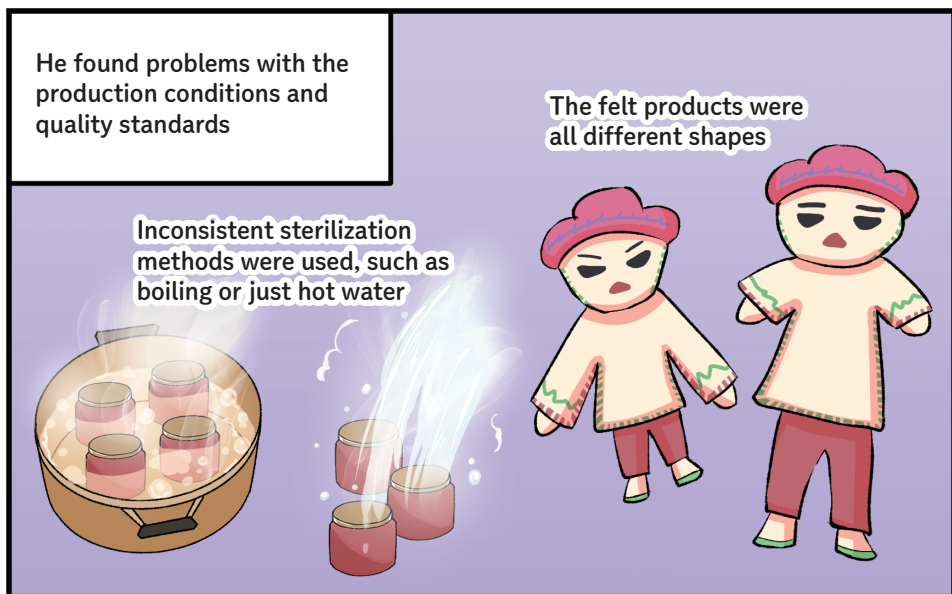
To find the cause of low profits, Haraguchi visited the workshops

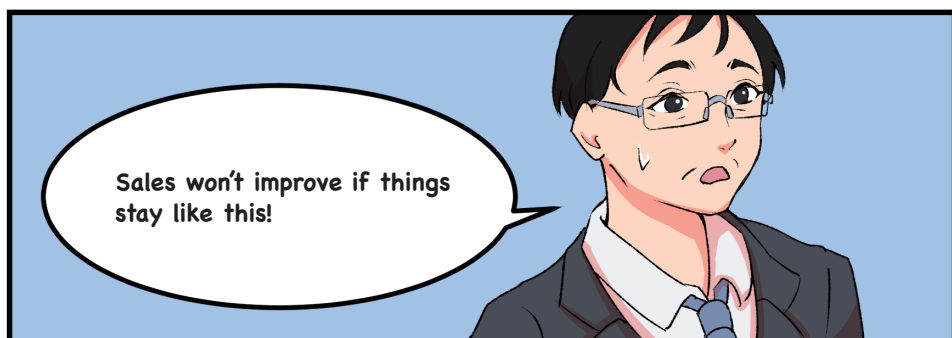


He found problems with the production conditions and quality standards

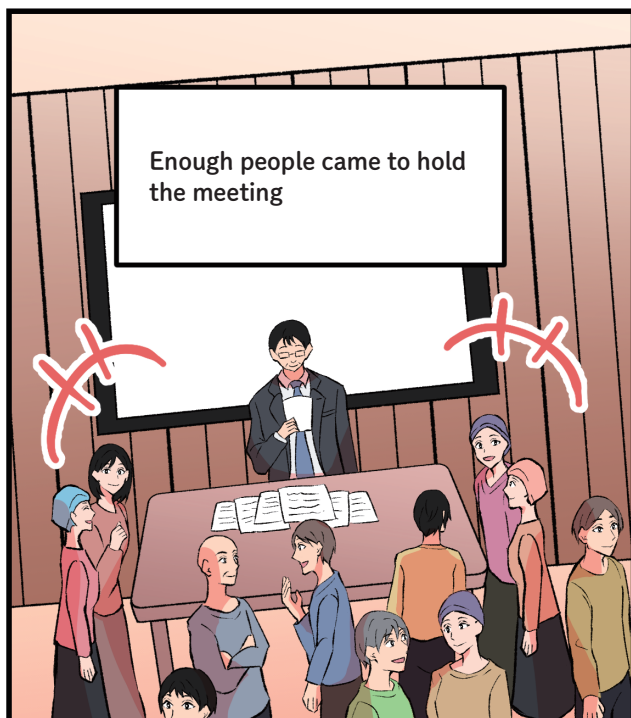
Inconsistent sterilization methods were used, such as boiling or just hot water

The felt products were all different shapes











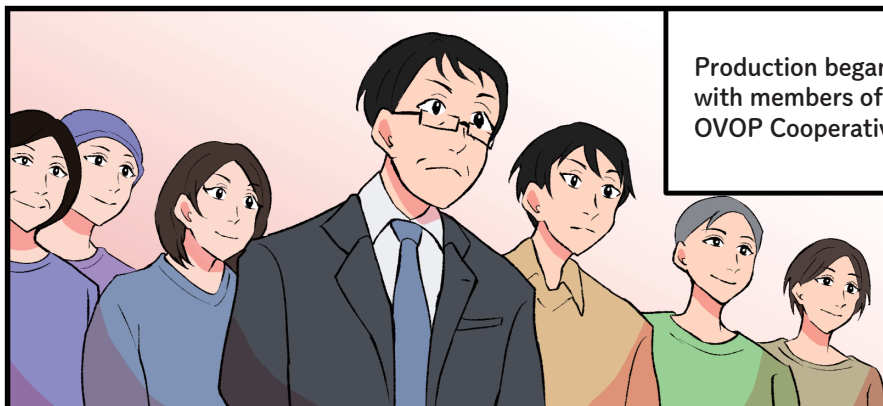
* A Japanese brand offering simple, high-quality products with a focus on sustainability



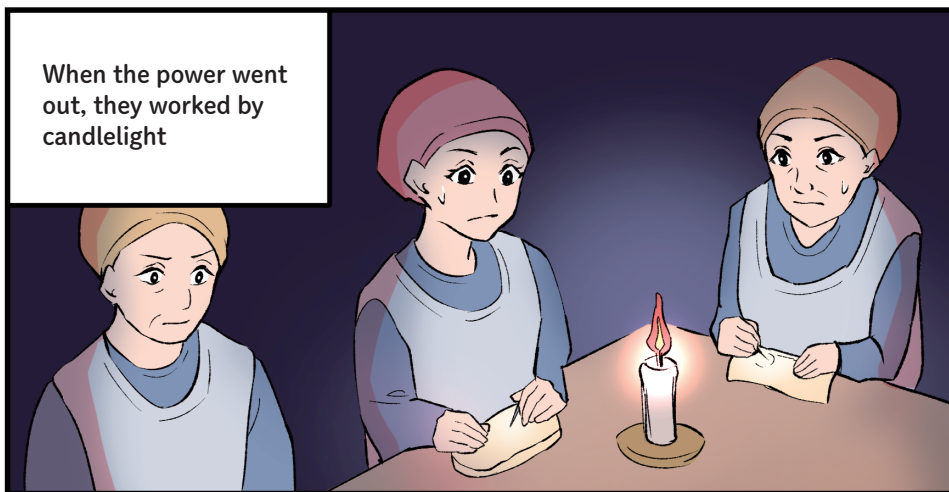
After talking with MUJI, which has strict materials and manufacturing rules, the project decided to make felt pen cases and felt balls using Kyrgyz wool



Production began with members of the OVOP Cooperative



When the power went out, they worked by candlelight



Despite frequent blackouts and tough conditions, everyone worked hard to complete the order



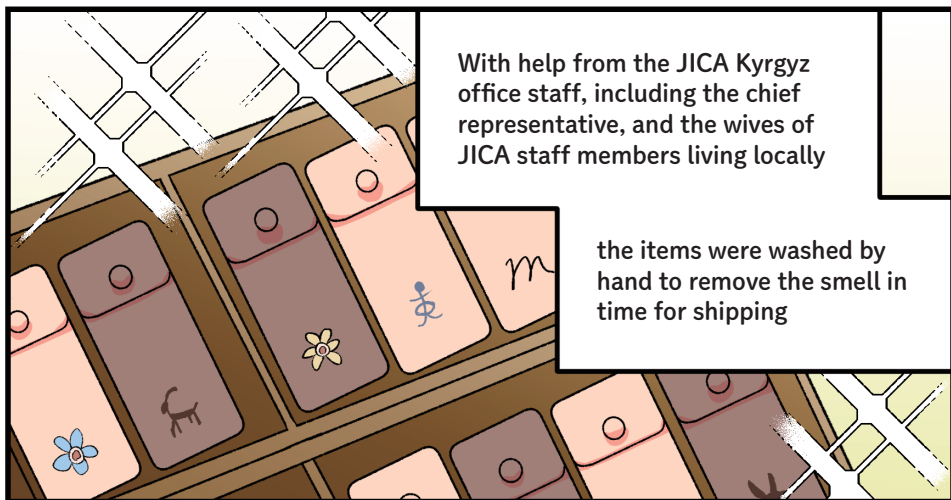
Ugh...
it stinks!

But just before shipping,
there was a problem with
the products' smell



With help from the JICA Kyrgyz
office staff, including the chief
representative, and the wives of
JICA staff members living locally

the items were washed by
hand to remove the smell in
time for shipping



Six months after production began the producers hadn't been paid yet

Were we scammed...?

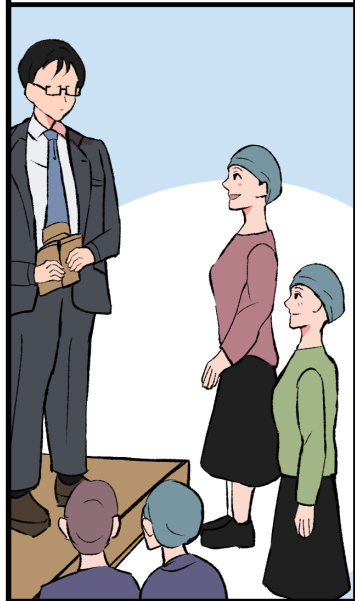
What's going on?

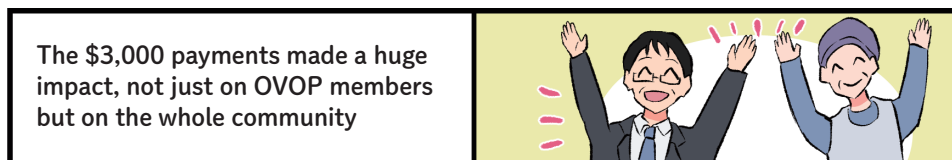
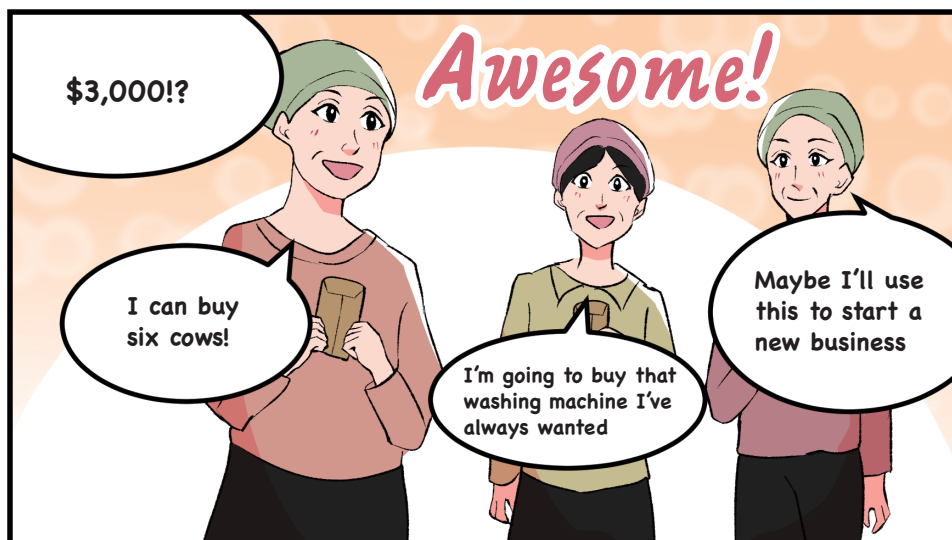
It's been six months and no payment...

This made them anxious and doubtful

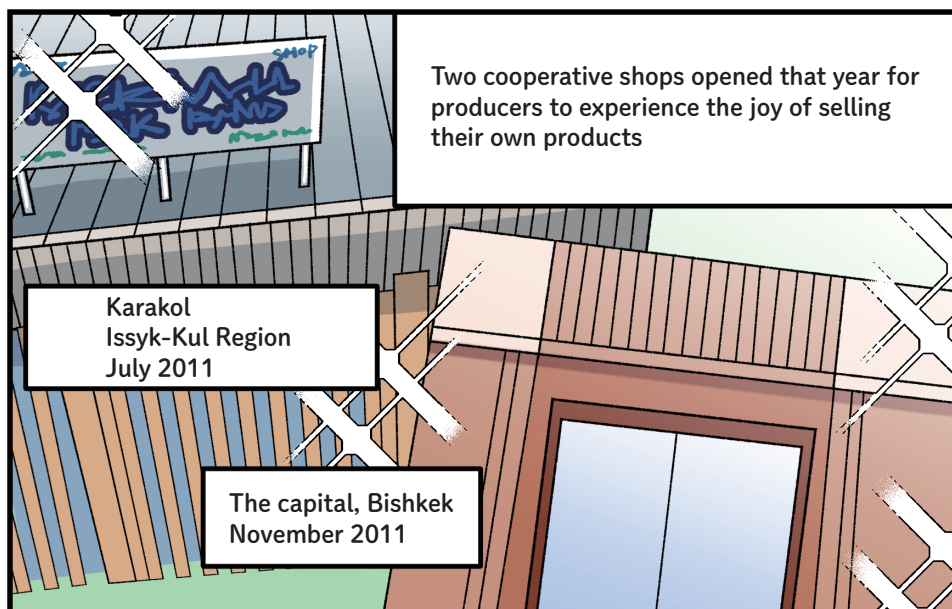
But, seven months after production began, in November 2011, payment was finally made

Your payment is... \$3,000





The \$3,000 payments made a huge impact, not just on OVOP members but on the whole community



Two cooperative shops opened that year for producers to experience the joy of selling their own products

Karakol
Issyk-Kul Region
July 2011

The capital, Bishkek
November 2011

2012

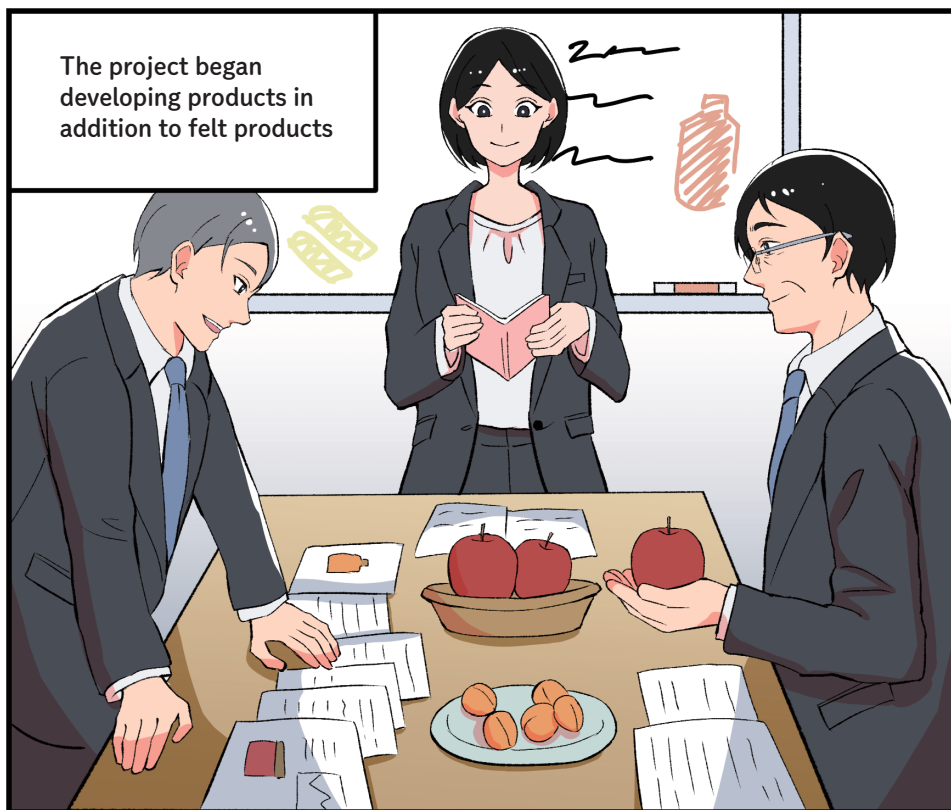
Haraguchi became chief advisor of the OVOP project



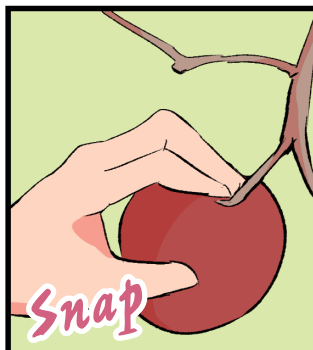
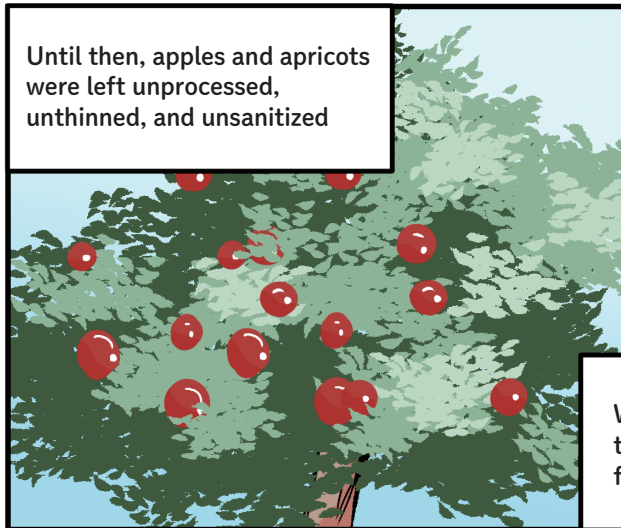
I'll set clear guidelines and lead with the project's principles to ensure success!



The project began developing products in addition to felt products



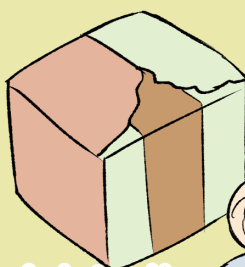
Until then, apples and apricots were left unprocessed, unthinned, and unsanitized



When harvest season came, they'd be gathered and sold for almost nothing

The project began making the fruit into Kyrgyz-branded jams and juices

Jam made with
apricots, apples,
and wild berries



Apricot cookies



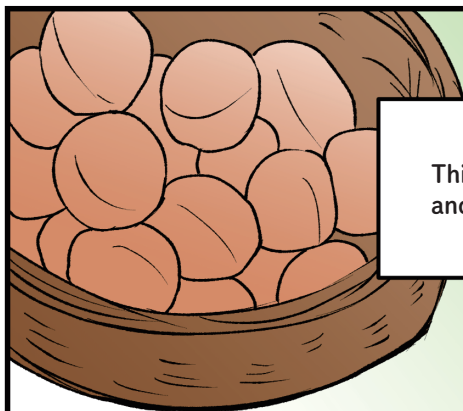
Dried plums



Raspberry juice

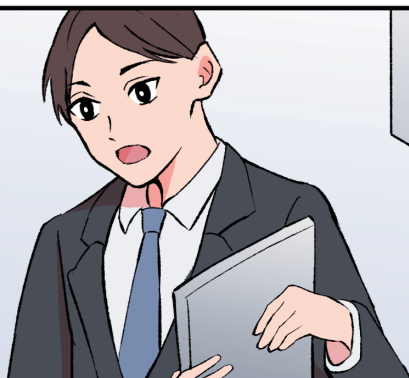
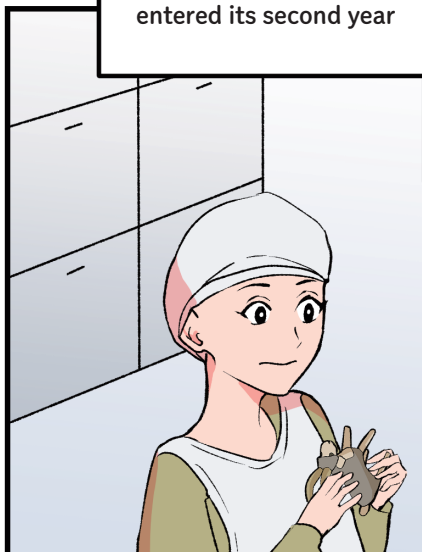


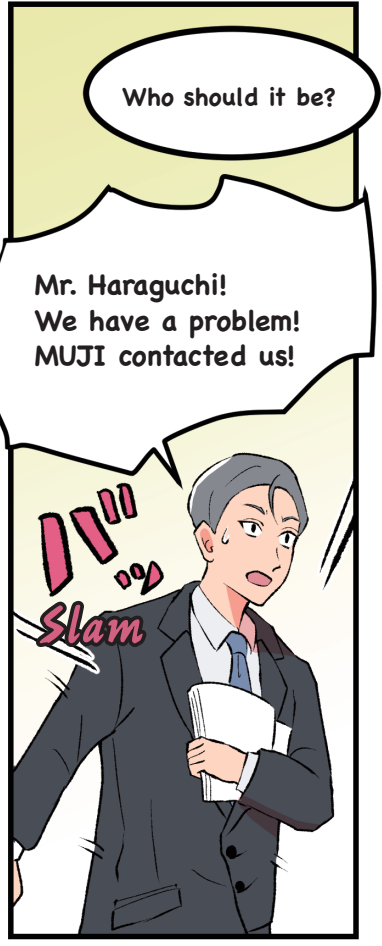
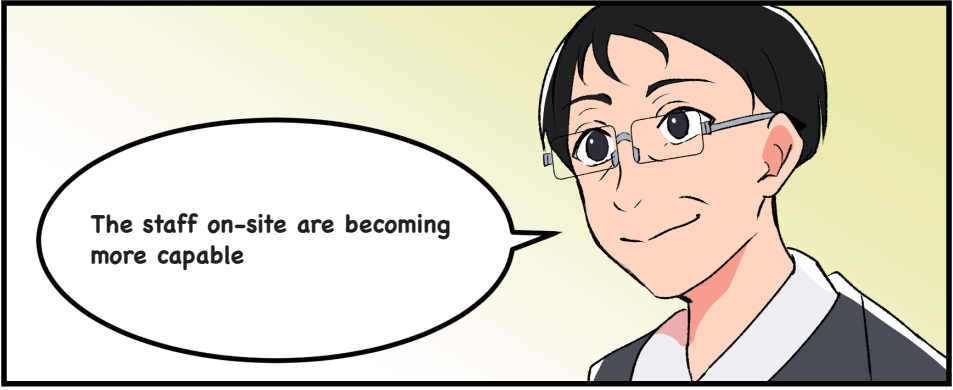
This was named “Naturally Farmed Fruit,”
and rebranded as “organically delicious”

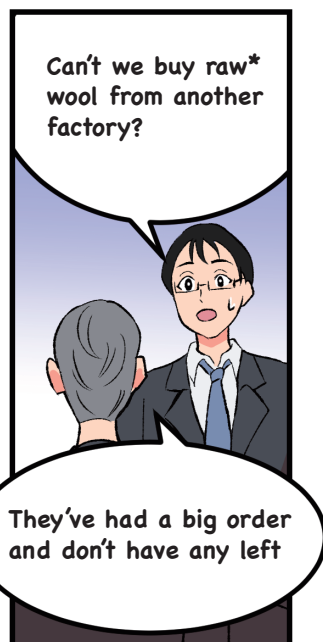


Production for MUJI
entered its second year

With guidance from the company,
manuals were created, and the
workflow improved in many ways



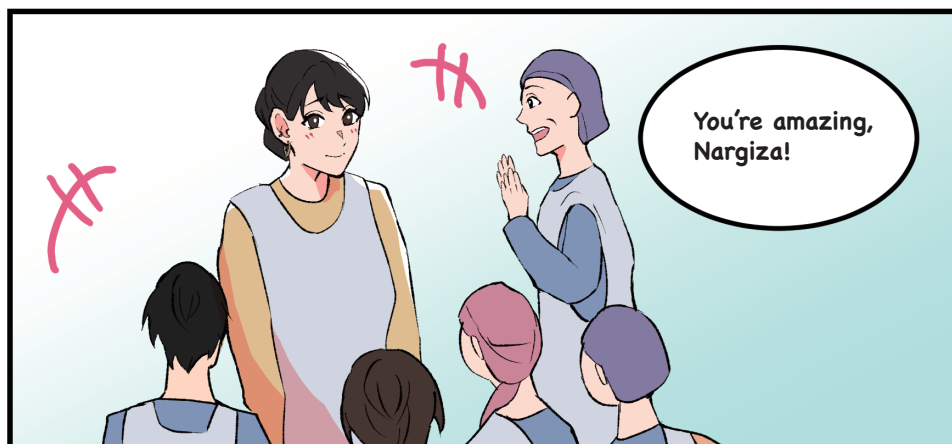





* Yarn and fabric that's not processed or dyed

It meant a loss of money, but
the negotiations with the
factory succeeded

Production continued with
the raw wool, and the second
year's delivery to MUJI was a
success





Her name is
Nargiza Erkinbaeva

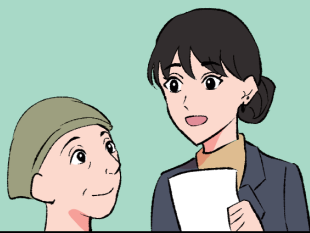
Her strong sense of responsibility
and creativeness helped overcome
the crisis

Cheering

Nargiza



Nargiza became the leader of OVOP+1, a new group to support the OVOP Cooperative's operations and business

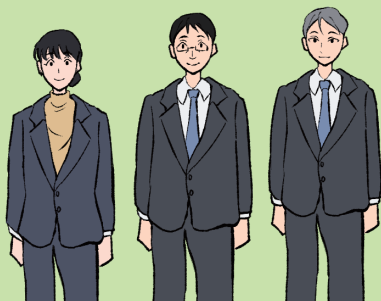


At OVOP+1, she worked on staff development, teaching accounting, sales,

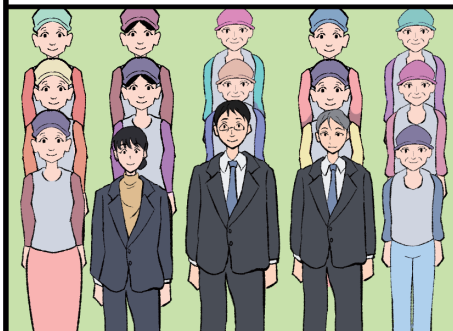
Thank you very much!

and shopkeeper duties to local people

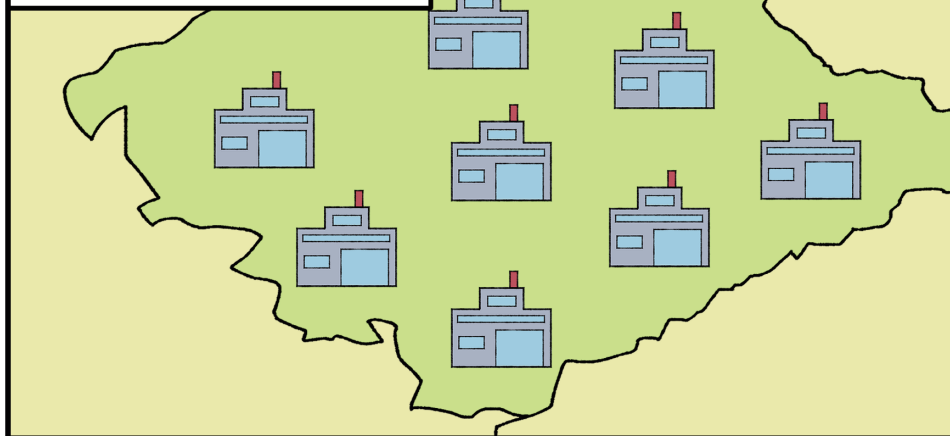
At first, there were only three staff members



but by December 2023, there were 49



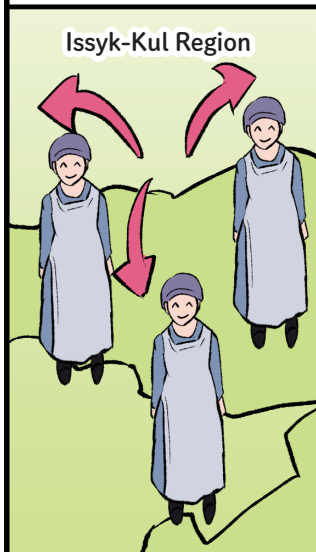
They aimed to expand business by setting up small factories across the region and increasing production



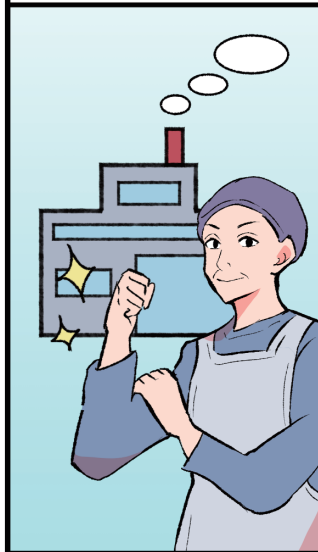
First, small groups of 3 to 8 people practiced making products



They then trained others in the region



A village factory was built where producers could work together



Work sites were upgraded
for better working
conditions

Warmth

and a system was
introduced to pay by
production quantity

Chatter

I love coming to
work every day

It feels like
working in a
factory in the city

I'll work for
8 hours today!

I have things to do
today, so I'll just
work for 2 hours

Thanks to the success in Issyk-Kul, the project expanded nationwide and many new products were developed

Issyk-Kul Region

Esparset honey, the jewel of the Kyrgyz Republic

Honey from esparset grass flowers

A white honey with a mild floral scent that is very popular in Japan



Juice and cosmetic oil made with sea buckthorn fruit

A superfood

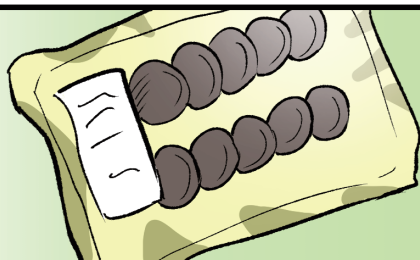
Products using sea buckthorn



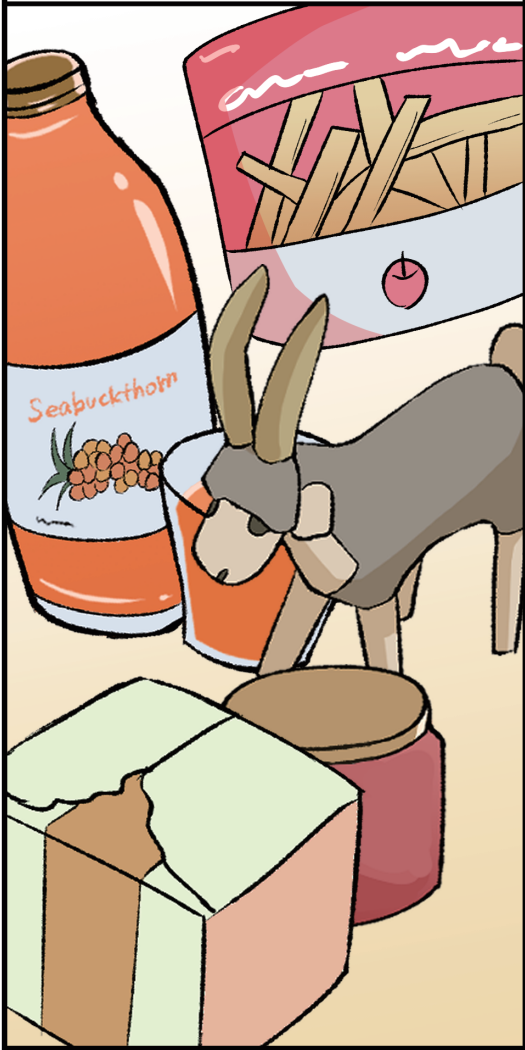
Sliced smoked horse sausage

A traditional Kyrgyz food

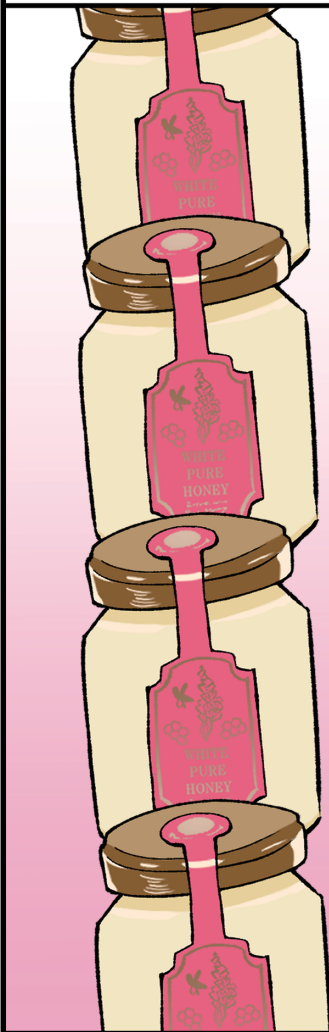
Horse sausage made into a smaller size for overseas markets



Every OVOP product involves Kyrgyz tradition, culture, and a story; none are made or sold at random



A dedicated OVOP designer was hired to unify and strengthen the Kyrgyz brand



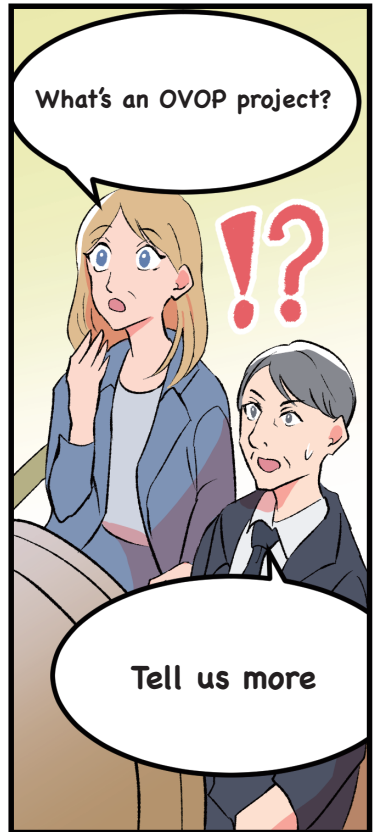
In 2017, the 100 m² OVOP Center specialty shop

opened in the capital, Bishkek, selling only branded items

People working abroad also buy them as gifts when they go back home

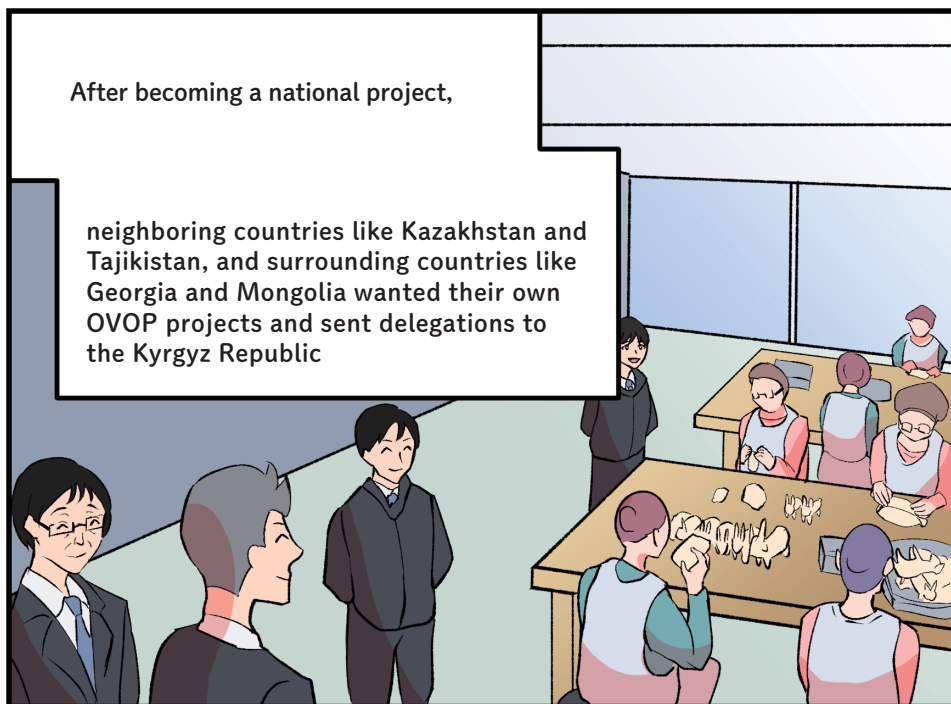
Posts about OVOP products increased on social media

The Center also helped get products into airport duty-free shops

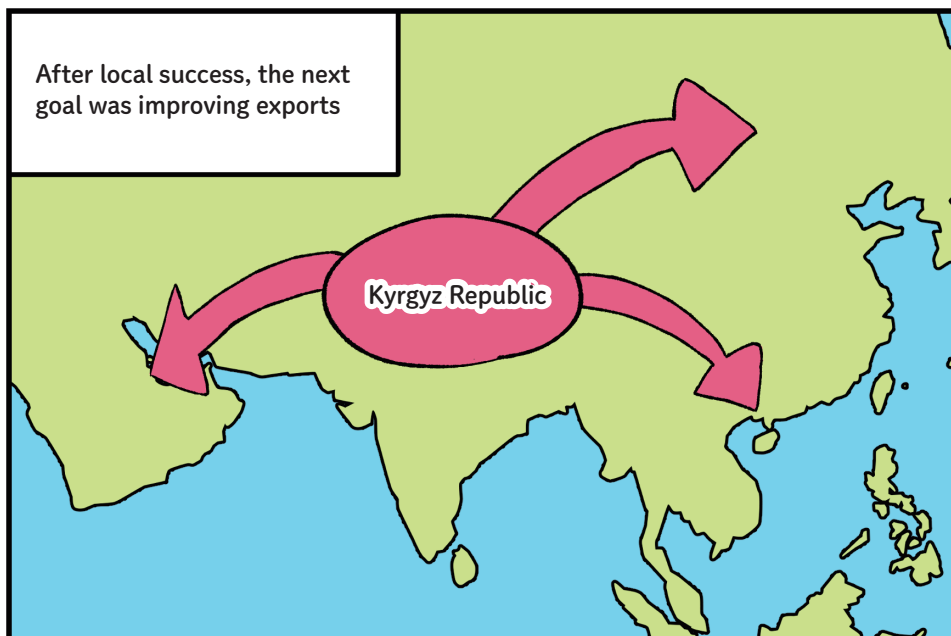


After becoming a national project,

neighboring countries like Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and surrounding countries like Georgia and Mongolia wanted their own OVOP projects and sent delegations to the Kyrgyz Republic

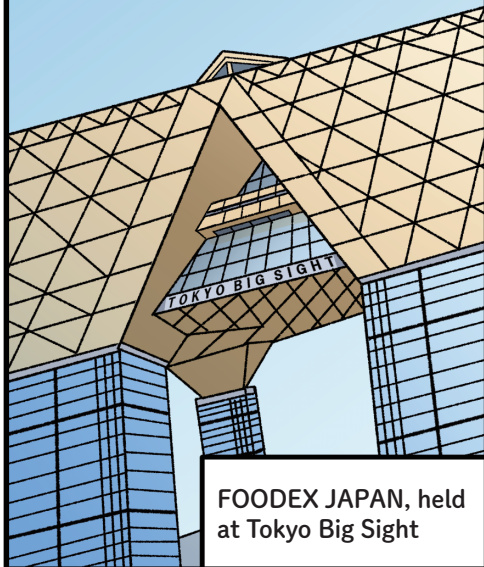


After local success, the next goal was improving exports



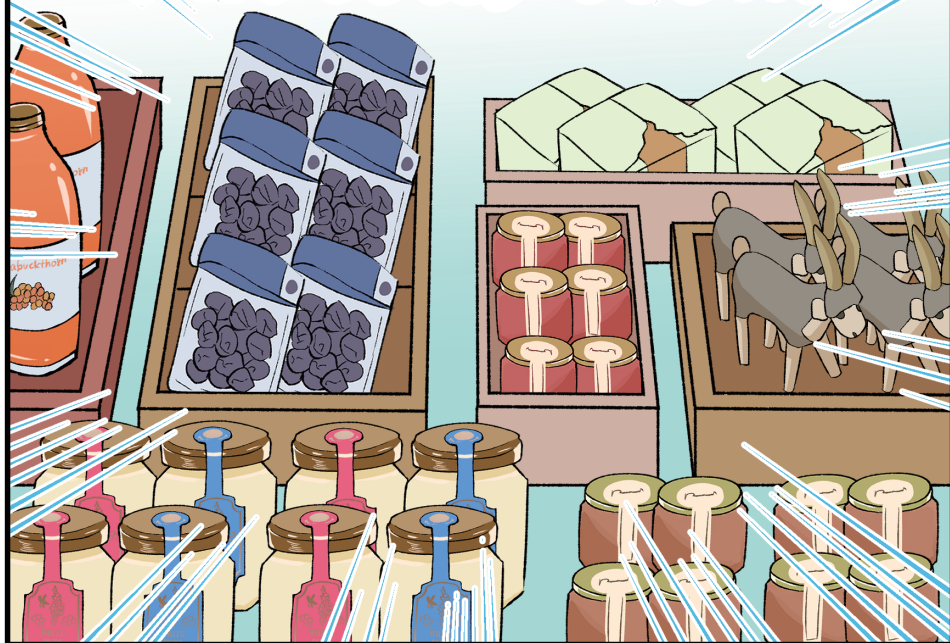
Our sales target is
50% local, 50% export

Let's try exhibiting at
overseas events!

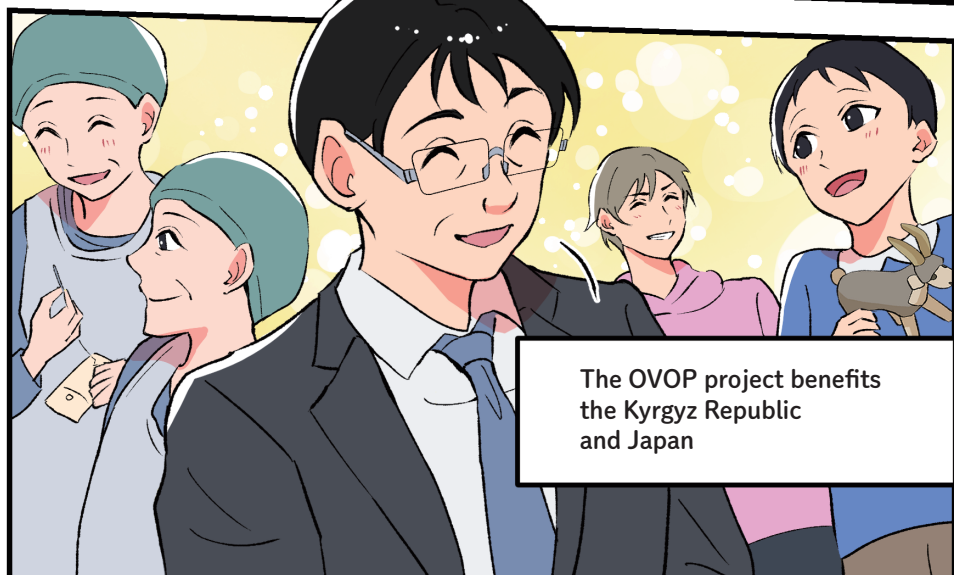
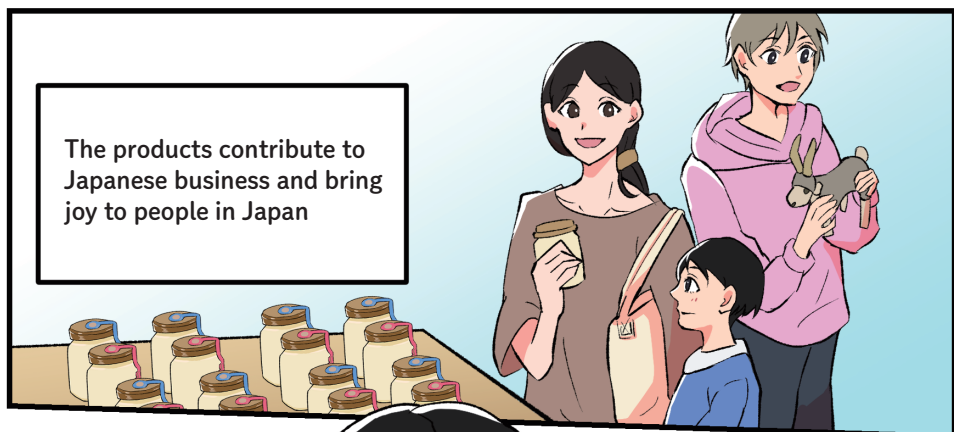
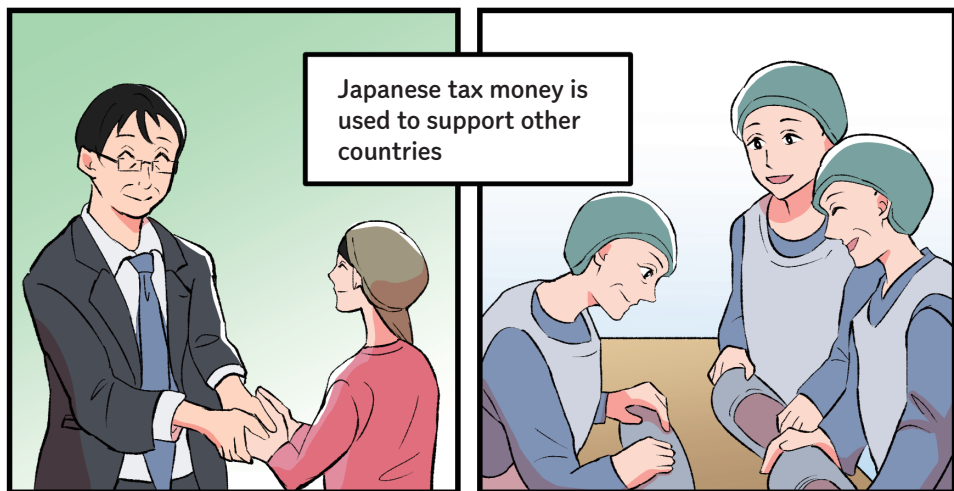


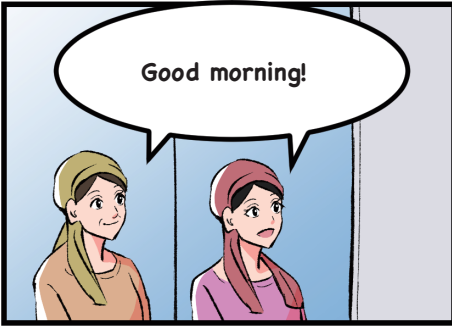
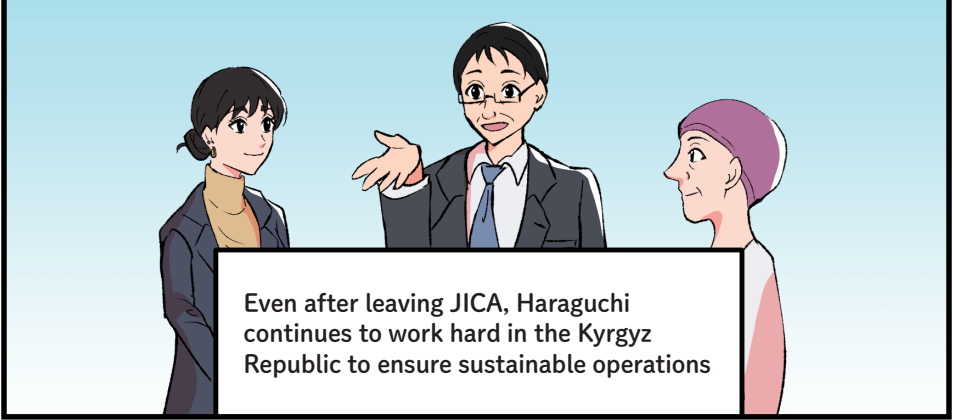
FOODEX JAPAN, held
at Tokyo Big Sight

Various items











The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to promote international cooperation and provide assistance to developing countries, as the sole Japanese governmental agency in charge of Official Development Assistance (ODA) implementation. With “Leading the World with Trust” as its vision, JICA, with its partners, will take the lead in forging bonds of trust across the world, aspiring for a free, peaceful and prosperous world where people can hope for a better future and explore their diverse potentials.

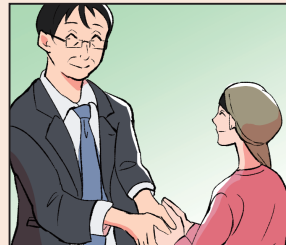
Building a cycle for economic independence

The One Village One Product (OVOP) project, born in Oita Prefecture, Japan, is a project that creates local specialties using regional materials to revitalize communities.

JICA has supported OVOP in many countries and saw excellent results in the mountainous Kyrgyz Republic, in particular.

Besides product development, JICA helped build various systems, including organizing producer cooperatives, running shops, stabilizing distribution, and launching products overseas.

With JICA’s support, the OVOP project’s achievements led to its adoption as a national project in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2023.



For more information
please check this out!



Connecting Japan and countries across Central Asia

JICA's OVOP project also seeks to export products. One of its projects involves exhibits at trade fairs and business matching events in Japan and other countries to find new customers.

International trade helps increase income, as well as improve product quality and the business skills of participants, further growing Kyrgyz businesses.

Through events like FOOD EX JAPAN and the Tokyo International Gift Show (TIGS), exports of products like felt products, honey, and wild berries to Japan are growing.

Creating business between the Kyrgyz Republic and Japan helps strengthen ties and create economic growth in both countries.

The OVOP efforts have been highly praised by surrounding countries as well.

Now, OVOP is expanding to all of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia.



Check out
the Project History Book
here

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Manga created by : tami

Script written/ Designed by : KADOKAWA ACSII Research Laboratories, Inc. /
Sideranch Inc.

Issued in : November 2025



This manga is an adaptation of a book written about real-life events titled "Pursuing Quality and Bringing Kyrgyz Brands to the World: Support through the One Village One Product Project, a New Approach to Development."