

productivity to provide developing countries with both income opportunities and an adequate food supply,” according to Waseda University’s Professor Nishikawa.

At an African economic summit meeting in Yokohoma in May 2008 (TICAD IV) Japan pledged approximately US\$100 million in emergency food aid for the continent, and JICA said it would support a ‘Green Revolution’ to enable the continent to double its rice production in 10 years.

At a subsequent Group of Eight meeting in Hokkaido participants emphasized the need for higher productivity, the compatibility of biofuel and food security policies and a global partnership to abolish export restrictions. A World Food Summit in Rome announced an emergency Plan of Action including the need to expand agricultural productivity.

### Achieving Food Goals

Since its launch in 1974, JICA has given food production an integral place in its overall development strategy. Today, one of its guiding principles is ‘human security’ — a concept which emphasizes that aid must be shaped to ensure local communities achieve ‘security’ in such basic services as health, education—and enough food to eat each day. The

agency is also committed to achieving the 2015 UN Millennium Development Goals which includes ensuring stable food supplies.

Across the globe JICA is involved in projects throughout the entire food chain—from helping to promote the growth of more and better crops to ensuring their successful harvest and sale to rural and city populations alike.

Such a food cycle might typically begin on the slopes of Africa’s most majestic mountain, Kilimanjaro. Beginning as early as the 1970s, Japan provided soft loans to help farmers in Tanzania’s Lower Moshi district build new irrigation systems and grant aid helped them in buying equipment and opening up additional acreage for cultivation. New rice varieties and cultivation techniques were introduced.

Today, these farms produce around 6 tons of rice per hectare, triple the national average. The lessons learned here are being applied continent-wide (see page 6) and as far away as Timor-Leste. In many cases, participating farmers for the first time have often been able to both lift their families out of a simple subsistence lifestyle and also to send their children to school.

Producing better crop yields is only a first step, however, in developing a more efficient food chain. Because of the lack of adequate storage facilities, lack of transportation,



*The Corridor of Peace/JICA*

## Turning Forests into Farms

**T**wo decades ago the Walawe River area in southern Sri Lanka was virgin forest, home to elephants and other wildlife.

Annual monsoons regularly washed away the few dirt tracks and the seven-month-long dry season was so hot even subsistence farming was impossible.

Today, thanks in part to a long-term collaboration with JICA, it is a prosperous agricultural area, home to 9,000 families, schools, hospitals, electricity, paved roads and a food processing plant.

The transformation began in 1993 when Japanese grant aid facilitated the construction of a bridge linking the banks of the Walawe River and construction of a 31-kilometer all-weather path through the forests which was dubbed the JICA Road.

A yen loan helped bring water to the



*New irrigation scheme*

arid region and today there are 940 kilometers of irrigation canals channeling water to around 9,000 hectares of farmland.

As the development progressed farmers and their families for the first time were able to both grow and sell



*Wildlife neighbors*

crops and have access to health and education facilities.

Rice is the region’s traditional crop, but paddies need huge amounts of water and local agricultural advisor M.D. Piyatilaka said, “We have encouraged the production of crops



*A tomato harvest*

other than rice, but at first we had great difficulty persuading people to change their preconceptions that farming meant (only) rice.”

### Blooming Fields

No longer. Today fields bloom with all

kinds of exotic fruit including pine-apples, dragon fruit, bananas and papaya.

A human resource center, also funded through a yen loan, encourages research into higher-quality, disease-resistant seedlings and trial cultivation of new crops with dramatic results. In the first half of 2008, rice production rose 2.7-fold, papaya production 15-fold compared with four years earlier and bananas 64-fold.

A nearby factory processes the fruits into banana chips, juices and other products for sale.

A Japanese volunteer, Mariko Inada, has helped develop some 50 recipes for food not previously found in Sri Lanka including rice flour cakes, banana cake and curry-filled bread.

The area is full of individual success stories. Former construction worker Shantipala settled on a plot of cleared

land in 2003 and after rudimentary training “I grew my first crop of tomatoes. That harvest enabled me to repay all of my debts.”

In July, 2007, he wrote in his diary: “I saw a dream in which I lived in a tile house. Until now I have lived in a house with just one room, but the house in my dream had two floors.”

This dream is about to become a reality. A brand-new, two-story house will be completed using the income from his next harvest of papaya fruit.

The next step is for locals who have received training and assistance under the program to pass on their newly acquired knowledge to neighboring farmers and that eventually locally produced products could be exported to Japan.

“This is not the end of our project,” says local agricultural adviser M.D. Piyatilaka, “It’s just the beginning.”