

Accelerating the Realisation of the South Food Valley in Kumamoto Prefecture through the Food Valley Agribusiness Centre

Kumamoto Prefecture



Background



The Food Valley Agribusiness Centre

In March 2013, Kumamoto Prefecture developed the idea of a “Food Valley” in Southern Kumamoto Prefecture, a vision that aims to maximise the area’s potential, including an abundance of agricultural and marine produce, promote food-related industries, and revitalise the whole southern part of the prefecture.

To accelerate the realisation of this vision and serve as a base of open innovation that provides support for companies and agriculturalists based on their needs, the Food Valley Agribusiness Centre was developed and began operating in April 2015.

Purpose of project

The Centre conducts research and development in physiological functionality, or maintaining the freshness of produce for higher

added value, and also provides support, such as a place for agriculturalists and food businesses to seek advice. The Centre also conducts product development and market exploration and brings together agriculturalists and companies. Through these efforts, we intend to nurture leaders who can address the “sixth industrialisation” of agriculture and create new business models, leading to the revitalisation of the region.

Outline of project

- ◆ Analysis of components of functionality and research and development of distribution and methods to maintain freshness for longer
- ◆ Support for manufacturing or the development of prototypes by producers or businesses, by offering facilities or manufacturing equipment without charge
- ◆ Coordination to bring together producers and businesses
- ◆ Support for effective marketing and market exploration tailored to products and production size
- ◆ Professional support for producers in their commercial transactions

Characteristics and advanced features

The centre is one of the most innovative facilities in the nation, and consistently provides

tests related to agricultural production technologies and high value-added technologies, including produce functionality and technologies for maintaining freshness, as well as support ranging from product development and market exploration to business expansion.

Effects of project

In the two years since its establishment, the number of users of the Centre now exceeds 1,400, and 48 new products have been created through its support for product development and business matching.

Cases that can serve as models for developing new businesses and fostering production areas are identified as projects and are provided support with the cooperation of a wide range of organisations.

Ongoing research and development relating to the potential growth of new businesses, including analysis of the functionality of variety or cultivation techniques, and tests relating to maintaining produce freshness through new technologies, is being conducted.

◆Examples of new products



A pancake produced with processed pear, a local specialty that is sold at convenience stores



Akazake and yuzu-flavoured soy sauce that was developed in coordination with businesses in the prefecture



Exploration of new markets such as service areas through proposals of new types of products



Rice with bamboo shoots produced in coordination with a high-end supermarket and support for product development

◆Project examples

Support for the revival of adlay, which is associated with the region and the development of new adlay products

<Context leading to the support>

Adlay is an agricultural product that is both a food and a medicinal ingredient (Yokuinin, or coix seed, is used in Chinese herbal medicine). One historical record shows that in the 1630s, sweets for tea ceremonies using adlay, or “Yokuininto,” were made in the Yatsushiro region. Advice on the revival of adlay was sought by Okashi-no-Hikoichihonpo, a local sweets producer, and Mr. Yanaguchi, a grower.



Adlay cereal products

<Business matching>

One issue was that we had no processing companies connecting growers who cultivate the grain and sweets producers who need refined adlay. In addition, a survey on the demand for adlay grown in Japan revealed that a huge demand exists for quality-assured adlay.

Based on these facts, we asked Nishida Seibaku, a company that refines barley in Yatsushiro City, to join the partnership. The supply chain from cultivation to processing to production was then complete.

<Support for the establishment of cultivation technologies in coordination with relevant organisations>

Along with the dispatching of cultivation professionals to establish production technologies for adlay, standards on tilling and sowing were developed under the leadership of the Department of Agriculture Prevalence and Promotion of the Division of Wide Area in the Southern Part of the Prefecture.

<Support for product development using adlay>

As a step toward the revival of “Yokuininto,” technical support for roasting was provided. Furthermore, technical support for swelling conditions (pressure and aqueous rate) and commercialisation was provided to develop cereal products targeted at women.

Problems and responses

- ◆ Support for the development of products with high potential through the establishment of a value chain

We have a growing number of requests for advice on new product development using regional resources. To accelerate the development of products that have potential, we provide support for developing products in coordination with businesses.

- ◆ Support for creating a system to encourage collaboration between processing companies and production areas

To promote collaborative businesses between processing companies that wish to cooperate with production areas and agricultural corporations or community farming organisations, we provide support in creating a system that identifies agriculturalists who can act as key players, which helps establish relations.

- ◆ Support for creating a base for initial processing efforts in the southern part of the prefecture

As the needs for B to B processing in production areas grow, we provide support to businesses that plan to develop facilities for food processing for business use, with planning development, the selection of equipment and quality, as well as sanitation controls, along with

access to external advisors.

Outlook

1. Improved consultation function by creating a database of consultation information
2. Promotion of the use of facilities and equipment, and support for the development of products with potential, focusing on a market-oriented approach by undertaking requested analysis
3. Support that focuses on the creation of new business models along with the use of external advisors

Reference URL

<http://www.abc-kumamoto.jp>

(Homepage of Food Valley Agribusiness Centre)

Contacts

Department in charge:

Kumamoto Prefectural Agricultural Research Centre, Agrisystem Research Institute

Tel: +81-965-52-0500

Email: info@abc-kumamoto.jp