



Programs and Opportunities

U.S. Soybean Growers Celebrate 50 Years Of Market Development in Japan

By Bob Callanan

More than 50 years ago, U.S. soybean farmers set a course to explore and secure a large share of the global marketplace. That forward thinking, and many years of successful market development activities, led U.S. soybeans to become the single highest value U.S. agricultural export. In marketing year 2004, \$9 billion worth — 50 percent — of the U.S. soybean crop was exported as whole soybeans, processed meal and oil, and as a feed component of meat and poultry exports. The 2005 crop value is somewhat lower, \$17.4 billion, but total export value was still about \$9 billion. Much of this success can be attributed to U.S. soybean farmers' focusing marketing efforts on Japan, one of the top three U.S. agricultural markets for the past half century.

Japan's importance as an agricultural market will likely continue for the foreseeable future. In fiscal 2006, U.S. agricultural exports are forecast to reach \$67 billion, and Japan is forecast to be the third largest U.S. customer, with

purchases of \$8 billion. Soybeans make up most of Japan's oilseed imports, forecast to total 4.2 million metric tons in 2006, and the U.S. share should remain at the 2005 level, roughly 76 percent.

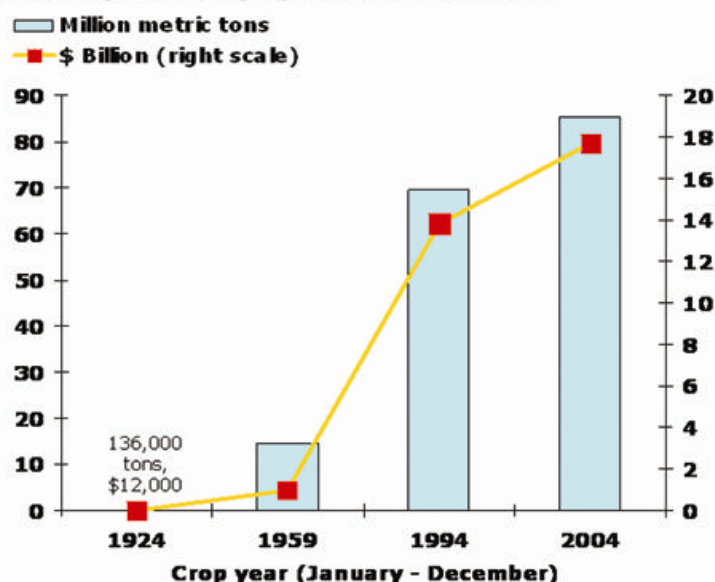
Based on 2005 purchases, ASA (the American Soybean Association) anticipates that Japan will be the second largest purchaser of U.S. soybeans and soybean products this year, buying more than \$1 billion, which includes nearly 100,708 metric tons of high-value, IP (identity preserved), food grade soybeans. The IP soybean market is driven by user requirements for specialty varieties.

Before 1940, the U.S. soybean industry was in its infancy, with production (and demand) far below commercial levels. But World War II fueled a massive expansion as supplies of tropical oils from Asia and other edible fats dried up. Between 1940 and 1946, U.S. soybean production nearly tripled, from 78 to 201 million bushels, driven primarily by the demand for oil. No longer was the soybean viewed as anything but a major oilseed contender. Ironically, following the war, Japan and Germany became two of the earliest international markets for U.S. soybeans, and today they remain very important customers.

Celebrating a Market

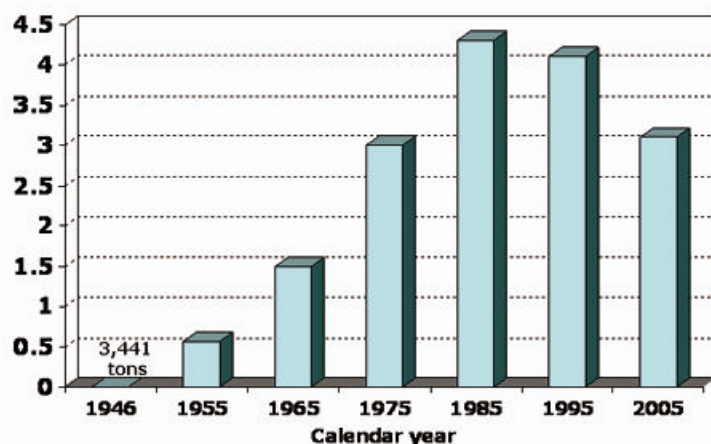
For U.S. soybean farmers, Japan proved the ideal market to begin export promotion activities. The soybean, in addition to its value in cooking oil and high-protein feed, was widely consumed in a variety of traditional Japanese foods. So Japan needed a reliable source of soybeans.

In the Past 80 Years, U.S. Soybean Production Has Grown Exponentially by Volume and Value



In the Past 60 Years, U.S. Exports of Soybeans to Japan Have Also Surged

Million metric tons



A series of soybean grower initiatives and U.S. government policies led to the opening of ASA's international marketing office in Japan in 1956. ASA's Japanese office was the very first foreign commodity office to receive FAS funding for market development.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the office, farmer leaders and staff of ASA, state affiliates, ASA-IM (ASA International Marketing), USSEC (the U.S. Soybean Export Council), and USB (the United Soybean Board) will hold a celebration this August in Tokyo with join members of JOPA (the Japanese Oilseed Processors Association), JOFEIA (the Japan Oil Fats

Companies, state agriculture officials, and individuals interested in participating in the events commemorating the 50th anniversary of ASA's Tokyo office may contact:
Alan F. Poock, USSEC Asia division manager
Phone: (314) 754-1309
E-mail: apoock@ussoyexports.org

Export Import Association), the Japan Federation of Miso Manufacturers Cooperative, and the Japan Tofu Association. USDA officials have also been invited. The celebration will coincide with partnership activities and the annual Food Bean Conference.

How It All Got Started

In the late 1940s, ASA representatives, prompted by increasing soybean production, began searching the far reaches of the globe for U.S. soybean markets. In 1955, ASA's first executive officer, George M. Strayer, wrote an editorial in *The Soybean Digest* calling for more exports.

Japan began importing small quantities of U.S. soybeans in 1946, when it bought 3,441 metric tons. By 1955, that quantity had soared to 572,052 tons. Also in that year, M. Hirano, managing director of Hohnen Oil Company and president of the Japan Oil and Fat Manufacturers Association, spoke at ASA's annual convention, where he stated two concerns limiting U.S. soybean sales: the inferior quality of U.S. beans compared with those from Manchuria, and the requirement for payment in U.S. dollars, which Japan did not have at the time.

ASA's Strayer and Howard Kurtz of USDA's Grain Grading Division studied how to overcome these problems. After much discussion, ASA and Japanese soybean industry groups decided to cooperate directly on market development programs, rather than working through the Japanese government.

In 1956, ASA became the official cooperator, using funds from P.L. 480 (Public Law 480, also known as Food for Peace) for soybean market promotion in Japan — the first time USDA funded a cooperator group to manage such activities.



Mr. and Mrs. George M. Strayer en route to Japan, October 1955. Strayer served as ASA's executive vice president and secretary-treasurer, 1940-67. Photos courtesy of the American Soybean Association, used by FAS with permission

Soybean Market Development Activities

The following points demonstrate the activities of ASA (the American Soybean Association), ASA-IM (ASA International Marketing) offices in Japan and other Asian countries, USB (the United Soybean Board), and USSEC (the U.S. Soybean Export Council) to develop, increase, and enhance foreign markets for U.S. soybeans.

Activities in Japan

- Masako Tateishi, marketing manager for ASA-IM Japan, tracks and reports on use of soybeans in foods. In the first 6 months of 2003, use of beans for soymilk surged to 8,195 metric tons, up 47 percent from the same period in 2002. A new type of soymilk has been marketed in Japan made by crushing whole soybeans without removing okara, the soybean pulp. This soymilk contains more nutrients and fibers than conventional types. A Japanese soymilk maker plans to switch from Chinese organic and Japanese beans to Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan beans, which are large and high in protein. One of Japan's top soymilk makers has switched from Canadian to U.S. beans. Soybean supplies among some of Japan's top soymilk makers are tight because of skyrocketing soymilk demand.
- In collaboration with a popular cooking school, ASA-IM Japan conducted soy menu seminars in Tokyo and Osaka to promote new recipes using a variety of traditional soy foods, targeting nutritionists in hospitals, schools, government institutions, and catering companies. ASA-IM Japan explained importation and popular uses of U.S. IP food grade soybeans in Japan. The recipes were designed to meet nutritionists' needs for tasty, easy, economical, and nutritionally balanced meals.
- Each year since 1985, ASA-IM Japan has hosted a Soybean Quality Conference to discuss customer concerns, provide the latest information on the quality of the new U.S. crop, and get the Japanese industry's insights and estimates of future needs. About 150-200 participants, from crushers and traders to food manufacturers and the media, attend each year. Its Soybean Quality Conference in Japan has proved so successful that ASA-IM now holds them in South Korea and China and on Taiwan.
- At these conferences, ASA shares results of the annual U.S. Soybean Quality Survey with participants. Importers, processors, and other customers rely on the survey results for timely information on the quality and quantity they can expect from the latest U.S. soybean crop. International buyers use the results in their purchasing decisions for the upcoming year.
- The U.S. Soybean Quality Survey results are derived from aggregate information from 1,400 randomly selected ASA farmer members across the United States. The farmers send in soybean samples for a free analysis of protein and oil levels.
- Every year, ASA-IM Japan publishes and distributes to key contacts in the Japanese feed and livestock industries a new technical brochure. Written by ASA-IM consultant Karl Sera, the brochure covers uses of soybean meal and soy-related products in poultry and livestock production. The industries have found the brochures good information sources, and ASA-IM Japan has fulfilled numerous requests from feed pre-mix companies, agricultural universities, and extension offices for additional copies for staff education.
- ASA-IM Japan publishes a monthly newsletter of technical and promotional articles on soybean meal on its Web site. Recent articles discussed the processing density of grain combined with soybean meal for cattle feed and comments on a recent report from Canadian and U.S. researchers on supplementary feeding of tryptophan to modify pigs' behavior. ASA-IM has allowed livestock and feed companies and universities sometimes to use those articles for staff education.
- Sera has also conducted technical seminars on uses of roasted soybeans and soybean meal in poultry, swine, and cattle production for major feed millers and related specialists in Kyusyu region. Seminars covered guidelines for, and problems with, feeding roasted soy, and technical concepts for customers with fairly large integrated systems.
- In the past decade, ASA IM-Japan has successfully marketed soy ink, capturing more than 60 percent of the newspaper and offset ink markets. Soy ink continues to gain popularity in Japan as corporations become more environmentally conscious and new types of ink emerge. The "Printed with Soy Ink" logo signifies that the company uses inks that meet ASA criteria. Companies must register with the National Soy Ink Information Center to display the SoySeal; Japan has more than 4,700 such users.



- ASA-IM featured soy-based coatings and paints at its booth at Japan's 2006 Paint Show, highlighting opportunities for soy-based alternatives to petroleum products and soybean oil as a renewable resource. More than 400 people visited the booth and learned about these products.

- An ASA-IM Japan seminar, Creating Environmental Solutions with Methyl Soyate, targeted manufacturers of industrial cleaners and fine chemicals, traders, and media. Presentations included methyl soyate specifications for solvents, U.S. success stories, market updates, and regulatory issues for volatile organic compounds. Attendees also visited Kaneda Co., a major vegetable oil trader, Kawakami Paints Co., a leading paint manufacturer, and Koyo Chemicals Inc., a major printing cleaners manufacturer. These efforts prompted a number of potential manufacturers and traders to inquire about more opportunities to use methyl soyate.
- Educating companies on U.S. agrichemical use and regulations is an important part of ASA-IM Japan's work. To this end, ASA-IM Japan, in cooperation with the U.S. Grains Council and U.S. Wheat Associates, held seminars on U.S. agri-chemical management in Tokyo and Osaka that attracted more than 500 soybean buyers and retailers. ASA-IM staff also have effectively explained to Japanese importers how the U.S. regulatory systems on pesticides ensure a safe supply of U.S. soybeans for food and feed. ASA-IM provided a statement that helped the soy industry communicate the safety of U.S. soybeans to food retailers and consumers.

Activities in the United States

- In 2005, ASA-IM Japan's country director Tom Nishio escorted 13 executives from Japanese soybean processors and importers, all preferred customers on a visit to the University of Minnesota soybean research facility, soybean farms, barge and rail loading facilities, and major suppliers. The visitors and U.S. farmer leaders exchanged information and views on their respective needs and concerns. The visitors also learned about U.S. soybean infrastructure from the farm to the export elevator.
- ASA-IM Japan brought Nisshin Oillio Group's new uses team to the United States, where they visited leading lubricant manufacturers, a soil remediation company, and government research institutions, and attended a solvents and plastics meeting. Nisshin's director visited an IP (identity preserved) soybean supplier in Ohio and met with growers in Michigan. Nisshin is planning to develop some of the ideas from the visit for its own use.
- ASA conducted an orientation for its soy food specialists based in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, and India. The specialists learned about the U.S. IP soybean system that produces and delivers specialty food grade varieties, including organic soybeans, from the farm to the customer. About 20 percent of Japan's purchases of U.S. soybeans is in the form of food grade beans. The team also established a dialog between Asian markets for specialty beans and U.S. suppliers.
- To produce a news program that focuses on technological advances and changes in food and agriculture, a team from Japan's Sapporo Television Broadcasting Company visited an organic soybean farm in North Dakota. The team then traveled to the Illinois farm of past ASA president Dwain Ford, where they looked over the fields and equipment. They also learned about the safety and benefits of soybean varieties derived from biotechnology and no-till production methods. The team also interviewed Stephen Censky, ASA's chief executive officer.
- USSEC officials met officials from JETRO, an arm of the Japanese government that collects information about countries abroad, as part of a fact-finding trip on U.S. biotech commodities. Japan's decisions will impact its delegation's stance at meetings of Biosafety Protocol member nations and of Codex Alimentarius (the international organization that formulates food and feed safety standards governing trade), which will be studying draft documents mandating labeling of every biotech component in food and feed ingredients. USSEC provided information showing that U.S. biotech crops benefit the environment and increase food and feed safety.
- IP food bean buying teams representing Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines visited the United States to evaluate the current soybean crop for food uses and establish relationships with exporters. USSEC Asia marketing manager Alan Pook accompanied the teams, along with ASA-IM staff from each country. The teams attended the Midwest Specialty Grains Conference & Trade Show, and then split up on separate tours to visit IP soybean farms, seed companies, and grain terminals. The Wisconsin, North Dakota, Missouri, and Iowa Qualified States Soybean Boards also hosted the teams for special events and introduced them to industry representatives in their states.
- ASA-IM Japan's Masako Tateishi escorted a team from the Japan Tofu Association to build food manufacturers' confidence in U.S. non-biotech soybeans. The team learned about the U.S. IP bean production and handling system and the quality and varieties of U.S. tofu beans available. The team met with U.S. food bean producers and suppliers. Tateishi arranged for the team to attend the 2004 Midwest Specialty Grains Conference & Trade Show to learn trends and future of the U.S. IP industry. Tateishi also presented Japanese tofu market and customer requirements for U.S. soy products.
- A team from the Japanese Tofu Association toured Minnesota, Indiana, and Michigan, where they met with IP soybean suppliers and exporters, researchers, and growers. The association membership represents 60 percent of Japan's tofu market. The team learned about the advantages of purchasing U.S. tofu beans, including the strong IP handling systems, and the research being conducted by U.S. companies and universities to improve food bean varieties.



Staff of the Japanese American Soybean Institute, July 1957. Left to right: Hidekido Sato, translator; Toshi Yonemura, interpreter and nutrition specialist; Shizuka Hayashi, managing director; Yoshiko Kojima, research and promotion specialist; and Yoko Takahashi, secretary

That first year, ASA established the Japan office to carry out the market development program, participated in the Osaka Trade Fair, and tested the quality of U.S. soybeans under new USDA grading standards. ASA organized a coalition of Japanese business interests for partnership activities. JASI, the Japanese American Soybean Institute, was set up,



Partnership programs have always been an integral part of ASA activities to build demand for U.S. soybeans and products. Bringing foreign customers to the United States to meet with growers provides opportunities for buyers to see firsthand the efficiency and quality of U.S. production. Visits to export destinations help U.S. farmers understand customer needs, and also give them a chance to thank customers in person for their purchases.

which provided the confirmation of understandings between ASA and representatives of the Japan Oil and Fats Manufacturers Association, Nippon Shoyu Association, Japan Miso Industrial Association, the Japan Tofu Association, and the Soybean Importers and Exporters Association. These Japanese associations contributed funds for activities, materials, and expenses that could not be covered with P.L. 480 funds.

Market Development Defined

Over the years, ASA's farmer leaders would define market development as "a combination of activities and programs directed at all levels that result in greater use of soybean products by the end user." This includes working with government officials, industry leaders at all stages from buyer to retailer, university and research technicians, and the technical and popular news media. The objective of market development is increased demand for end products in order to stimulate demand for the raw materials — U.S. soybeans, oil, and soybean meal.

These innovative farmers realized that their goal was to enlarge total demand for soybeans and soy products, and they took care not to confuse sales promotion with market development. Individual companies and organizations had to bear responsibility for capturing a greater share of the existing soy market for themselves; they could not afford to do market development work that could benefit their competitors, and were ineligible for government financing and other assistance.

ASA leaders also mandated that soy market development be carried out in a manner that would not jeopardize markets for other U.S. agricultural commodities.

In the 1950s and 1960s, ASA would open additional international marketing offices and begin market development activities on Taiwan and in Germany, and Iran. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, ASA would open offices in Austria, Belgium, China, Cyprus, India, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, and Venezuela. From these offices, ASA staff



Jack Yamashita of ASA, Tokyo, on receiving the FAS Incentive Award Certificate. Left to right: John D. Mortimer, deputy Far East director; Mitsunori Amano, bookkeeper/statistician; Robert W. Allewelt, FAS Fats and Oils Division; Kaoriko Shimodaira, executive secretary; Ralph Jackson, executive vice president, ASA Iowa; Jack Yamashita; David L. Hume, agricultural attaché, FAS Tokyo; Yoshiko Kitade, secretary; Noboru Korikoshi, administrative assistant.; Yoshiko Kojima, food section chief; and Scott Sawyers, Far East director

and consultants could reach out to customers in more than 80 countries around the world.

After nearly 50 years of successful U.S. soybean export activities, in 2005 ASA and USB formed USSEC to continue

e-Sources

For more information, visit the following Web sites:

ASA (the American Soybean Association):

<http://www.SoyGrowers.com>

ASA-IM Japan (ASA International Marketing Japan): <http://www.asajapan.org>

USSEC (the U.S. Soybean Export Council):

<http://www.asasoya.org>

USB (the United Soybean Board):

<http://www.unitedsoybean.org>

these efforts. Due to ASA's worldwide name recognition and excellent reputation, USSEC will continue to conduct market development activities under the name ASA-IM. These efforts are made possible by ASA's investment of cost-share funds from FAS and by producer checkoff dollars invested by USB and state soybean Councils. ■

Bob Callanan is the communications director of the American Soybean Association.

FAS Worldwide is an online magazine from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. Text of this magazine is in the public domain and may be reprinted freely. Photographs may not be reprinted without permission.

Use of commercial and trade names does not imply approval or constitute endorsement by USDA or by FAS.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Partners for Half a Century

In the fast-paced, disposable society we live, not many things last half a century. So when U.S. soybean producers talk about celebrating 50 years of partnership activities with Japan, it really does have special meaning.

What follows is a report about a series of meetings, activities and celebrations that took place in Tokyo during the third week of August in the year two thousand six. It chronicles the people and organizations that shared a momentous occasion in the history of the U.S. soybean industry.

The story begins with volunteer farmer-leaders saying goodbye to their families and driving to the airport. During the next 17 hours, these ambassadors of agriculture and their support staff would travel more than 6,000 miles through 10 time zones to begin the business of soybeans early Monday morning, August 21. This was the beginning of Soy Week in Japan.

Preparing for Success

The first order of business for a successful week of customer meetings was an orientation session conducted by staff from the American Soybean Association International Marketing (ASA-IM) Japan office and the United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC) for the farmer-leaders and staff of the American Soybean Association (ASA) and the United Soybean Board (USB).

In addition to an overview of ASA-IM program activities, Takehiko (Tom) Nishio, who became ASA's 12th Japan Country Director in 2002, provided the group with a few pointers on Japanese customs for greetings and business meetings, and a quick language lesson on basic Japanese phrases.

ASA-IM Japan Marketing Manager for Communications and Demand Building Kyoko Kawahara then provided a preview of the 50th anniversary reception that was scheduled for Thursday evening. Kawahara also shared with the group a sample of the special 50th anniversary commemorative plaques that would be presented to customers and representatives of trade groups.

The group was then briefed by ASA-IM Japan Marketing Manager for Food Soybeans Masi Tateishi on various food bean programs planned for the week, followed by general information about logistics and transportation provided by ASA-IM Japan Manager for Accounting and Marketing Support Akemi Ito.

Tateishi and USSEC International Marketing Manager Alan F. Pooch then worked with leaders and staff to review a series of PowerPoint slides that would be presented during the days ahead. USB Chair Curt Raasch, a producer from Odebolt, Iowa, USB Director John Wray, a producer from Ottawa, Kan., and ASA President Rick Ostlie, a producer from Northwood, N.Dak., as well as USB Executive Director Yvonne Dock, USSEC CEO Dan Duran, and ASA CEO Stephen Censky, would all be called upon to speak and give presentations.

Getting Down to Business

While part of the group went with USSEC Director of Trade Relations Paul Burke to the ASA-IM office for meetings with U.S. food soybean and soy product suppliers, the rest of the group taxied over to Keidanren Kaikan, an office building that houses the Japan Business Federation, for a roundtable with officers and members of the Japanese Oilseed Processors Association (JOPA) and the Japan Oil & Fat Importers & Exporters Association (JOFIEA).

This roundtable was the 10th Annual Partnership Forum between the U.S. and Japan. Every year the partnership forum is held in either Japan or the United States. This has provided U.S. soybean grower-leaders with direct knowledge of Japanese customer needs and concerns, and provided Japanese soy buyers with the opportunity to visit the U.S. to see how soybeans are grown, harvested and transported to Japan.

The roundtable began with opening remarks from JOPA International Committee Chair Akio Bannai, of J-Oil Mills. Afterwards, everyone introduced himself or herself, and then



(L to R) USB Chair Curt Raasch, ASA President Rick Ostlie, USSEC International Marketing Manager Alan F. Pooch, ASA-IM Japan Marketing Manager Food Soybeans Masi Tateishi, and Kyoko Kawahara review a PowerPoint presentation. (ASA photo by Bob Callanan)

Alan Pooch presented a review of the 2006 U.S. soybean crop condition.

Following a question and answer period, JOPA Managing Director Yoshinori Komura presented an overview of the Japan soybean and oil market. Komura described the relationship between ASA and the Japan oilseed industry as a “marriage.” He called the early years the “honeymoon period,” when the U.S. and Japan worked hand-in-hand to solve issues, develop new products and build market demand. Komura said the relationship has now matured into a mutual dependence that is beneficial to both partners because it provides Japan with the soybeans and technical assistance it needs, while providing U.S. soybean growers with a dependable export market.

After a question and answer period about the Japan soybean and oil market, closing comments were made by JOFIEA Soybean Committee Chair Nobuaki Hironaka of Itochu Corporation, and USB’s Curt Raasch expressed appreciation for the long-term customer relationship with the Japan soy industry.

That evening, at a reception hosted by JOPA and JOFIEA, JOPA Industry Committee Chair Hidetoshi Ogami, of Nisshin OilliO Group, made opening comments, followed by a speech from Daniel Berman, Minister-Counselor for Agricultural Affairs at the United States Embassy in Tokyo.

The first two 50th anniversary commemorative plaques were then presented; USB’s Curt Raasch presented to JOPA representative Hidetoshi Ogami, and ASA’s Rick Ostlie presented to JOPA President Shinji Sasaki. Closing comments were again made by Nobuaki Hironaka.

Partnership Meetings Get Underway

Tuesday began with a meeting at J-Oil Mills Company with its President & COO Shinji Sasaki, Senior Managing Director Kazuo Kawabata, and General Manager, Raw Materials Purchasing Division, Oilseed Meal Sales Division, Akio Bannai.

During this meeting, and several others during the week, customers expressed interest and concern about the impact biodiesel production in the U.S. was going to have on the supply of whole soybeans for export.

“We assured our Japanese customers that demand for biodiesel will not significantly impact our ability to supply them with the soybeans they need,” ASA’s Ostlie said. “Although we anticipate biodiesel utilization increasing from about 3.3 percent of this year’s soybean crop to 10 to 13 percent of our 2015 crop, we also anticipate in the next 10 years our yields will increase and more acres of soybeans will be planted.”

At the close of the meeting, Ostlie presented Sasaki with a 50th anniversary commemorative plaque.

Next the group traveled to the U.S. Embassy for a market and political briefing by Dan Berman and Agricultural Attaché Deanna Ayala.

Berman said, “The 50th anniversary of ASA’s office in Japan says two things; soybeans are important and Japan is important. We need to hold on to this market at all cost, as its virtually irreplaceable.”

Berman explained that because the Japanese population is not growing, Japan needs smart marketing and problem solvers. He urged the U.S. growers to help the Japanese crushers maintain a firm business footing in traditional uses, while also helping them to develop new markets.

Referring to the link between U.S. growers and the Japanese soy industry, Berman said, “This is a high-maintenance relationship. Japan can afford solutions and they need the best value. They need to have frequent contacts and a year-in, year-out, office presence from ASA. Japan is a customer that cannot be taken for granted—that would be a huge mistake.”

After departing from the Embassy, the group

traveled to the headquarters of Nisshin OilliO Group, where they met with its Chairman Jokei Akitani, President Kazuo Ogome, and Director General Manager, Oilseeds & Meals Department, Hidetoshi Ogami.

Customers here, and at other meetings, were particularly interested to listen to ASA and USB leaders talk about their on-farm use of crop protection products. This issue was raised because on May 29, 2006, Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare changed the way it regulates residues of approximately 283 agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines.

“We told our customers that as farmers we are very conscientious about our chemical handling and application,” Ostlie said. “I took out my certification card and explained how I have to re-certify every three years to handle agricultural chemicals.”

Ostlie also talked about ASA’s work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to get multiple fungicide products approved for use in advance of Asian soybean rust. ASA-IM has also been working in Japan to assist government regulators with information about residue levels for agri-chemicals registered for use on U.S. soybeans.

Regarding ASA’s role in helping to improve the business of soy customers in Japan during the past 50 years, Chairman Akitani said, “We have received a lot of information and technology proposals from the American



Nisshin OilliO Group Chairman Jokei Akitani receives a commemorative plaque from ASA President Rick Ostlie.

Soybean Association, and from the perspective of a heavy user like (Nisshin), we appreciate this organization very much."

Akitani said the relationship between U.S. soybean farmers and Japanese soy customers has also helped to bring the two countries closer together.

"A large amount of the food needed by the Japanese people must be imported, and since about 75 percent of the soybeans consumed in Japan is exported from the United States, a stable supply is critical," Akitani said. "We must have communication to maintain this relationship between our countries, and ASA has been serving a very important role as an intermediary between the two."

At the close of this meeting, Ostlie presented Akitani with a 50th anniversary commemorative plaque.



USB Chair Curt Raasch, Showa Sangyo President Shigeo Fukui, and ASA President Rick Ostlie discuss soy oil products.

The group then held its final meeting of the day with representatives of Mitsubishi Corporation, including Senior Vice President, Division COO, Foods (Commodity) Division, Living Essentials Group, Akira Fujii, who would receive a 50th anniversary commemorative plaque presented by USB's John Wray.

Following this meeting, Kyoko Kawahara and ASA Communications Director Bob Callanan traveled across town to meet with Toshihito Hirasawa, General Manager, Oilseeds, Fats & Oils, Marubeni (Commodity Trading) Corporation. Callanan interviewed Hirasawa for ASA's Soy Radio

Newsline, a national audio feed that is provided to U.S. farm broadcasters via the National Farm Broadcasting Service. This interview is available online at: www.SoyGrowers.com/newsroom/srn.htm.

On Wednesday, USB International Marketing Chair Benny Cooper, a producer from Kevil, Ky., ASA Chairman Bob Metz, a producer from West Browns Valley, S. Dak., and ASA Executive Committee member Gary Joachim, a producer from Owatonna, Minn., joined the U.S. soy grower delegation in Tokyo. Cooper, Metz and Joachim had flown into Japan Tuesday evening following a series of customer meetings in China.

At the Showa Sangyo Company, the group met with the company's President Shigeo Fukui, Senior Managing Director Tadao Kurihara, Officer, Oil & Fat Department Tetsuji Shinomiya, and Manager, Oil, Meal, & Oilseeds Section, Oil & Fat Division Naoya Tazuke.

"Our farmers and the staff of the American Soybean Association, the United Soybean Board, the U.S. Soybean Export Council, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are indebted to you, our Japanese friends, for believing in our industry," Curt Raasch said. "We look forward to many more years of strengthening the relationships that have developed over the past 50 years."

Food Bean Conference Opens

Wednesday afternoon, the group went to the Royal Hall of the Akasaka Prince Hotel for the Ninth Annual ASA-IM Food Bean Conference. Kyoko Kawahara emceed the event, and Tom Nishio and Dan Duran each



ASA President Rick Ostlie and USB Director John Wray provided a presentation on farm chemical usage and Asian Soybean Rust at the ASA-IM Food Bean Conference. (ASA photos by Bob Callanan)

provided greeting messages to the 200 conference participants.

Curt Raasch then provided an identity preserved food grade soybean crop report, which was of particular interest to these conference participants. Knowing the new chemical residue regulations would also be on everyone's mind, John Wray and Rick Ostlie gave a team presentation on U.S. farm chemical usage, and an update on Asian soybean rust disease.

Professor Emeritus Makoto Kitoh of Kyoko University gave a presentation on nutrition and physiological function of soybeans, and Professor James Orf of the University of Minnesota talked about the development of food grade soybean varieties for customers in Japan. Masi Tateishi provided a report on ASA-IM Japan activities, which was followed up by introductions of U.S. soy suppliers who were displaying their products at the trade show that followed.

The trade show featured a variety of products from 12 U.S. companies and 3 state soybean associations. Products ranged from specialty varieties of soybeans to packaged soy foods. The trade show ran concurrently with a customer reception.

The trade show and reception were opened by Tom Nishio, with remarks made by Stephen Censky, Yvonne Dock, and Eietsu Sakuraba, Director of Food Industry Promotion Division for Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Dan Berman provided a welcome address on behalf

of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. Masakazu Haga, representing the Japan Federation of Grain Cooperatives, then addressed participants and offered a ceremonial toast to 50 years of cooperation and partnership.

The Anniversary Day Arrives

Thursday was a busy day of preparation for ASA-IM Japan staff as they finalized details for an afternoon news conference and the 50th anniversary reception that evening.

Representing U.S. soybean growers at the news conference were grower-leaders Curt Raasch and Rick Ostlie, who were joined by staff members Dan Duran, Yvonne Dock, Stephen Censky and Tom Nishio. About 20 media representatives participated in the news conference.

Ostlie provided an overview of the partnership between U.S. growers and Japan's soy industry. Raasch provide an abbreviated version of his U.S. soybean crop report, and also talked about how little impact Asian soybean rust had on this year's crop.

Duran talked about the future and how U.S. soybean growers are prepared to meet the needs of Japanese customer. Dock expressed grower appreciation for Japan's purchases of U.S. soybean products, and Censky emphasized U.S. commitment to servicing the technical needs of customers in Japan.

"The 50th anniversary celebration of ASA's market development office in Japan really illustrated the importance of long-term relationships and trade servicing of important buyers," Censky said. "Japanese buyers and their trade associations truly value the information they have received from ASA, and the trust that has been built over the past 50 years. Yet they, as the third largest country buyer of U.S. soybeans in the world, also want to be reassured today that we still are paying attention to their needs."

The 50th anniversary celebration was held in the Fuji Room at the Imperial Hotel. As the excitement level was building toward the opening of the reception, Nishio, Raasch, Ostlie, Censky, Duran, Metz and Dock formed a receiving line to personally greet each and every soy customer as they prepared to enter the reception. Hostesses dressed in traditional Japanese costumes then offered refreshments to the 400 guests that attended.

At the reception, Nishio's welcome remarks were followed by speeches from U.S. farmer-leaders Metz and Raasch, Joseph R. Donovan, Jr., Deputy Chief of Mission for the U.S. Embassy in Japan, and Masaaki Okajima, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

"On this momentous anniversary marking 50 years of partnership between U.S. soybean farmers and the Japanese soybean industry, we would like to take this opportunity to say 'thank you,'" Raasch said. "Words can not express how significant the past 50 years of partnership between our two nations has been to U.S. soybean farmers. More than 151 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans have been exported to Japan over the past 50 years. It is our hope that these numbers will continue to grow as we move into the next 50 years of our partnership."

Following the speech by Okajima, Ostlie accepted a gift presented to ASA by Akira Fujii on behalf of JOFIEA. Then JOPA President Shinji Sasaki presented a toast to ASA's 50 years of marketing and customer support activities in Japan.

Guests were treated to a variety of



U.S. producer-leaders and staff hold a press conference at the Imperial Hotel Tokyo. Shown are (L to R) USSEC CEO Dan Duran, USB Executive Director Yvonne Dock, USB Chair Curt Raasch, ASA President Rick Ostlie, ASA CEO Stephen Censky, and ASA-IM Japan Country Director Tom Nishio. (ASA photo by Bob Callanan)

delicious foods, which were accompanied by contemporary Japanese music played by a group of female performers on traditional instruments.

Also on hand for the reception were ASA-IM Japan Animal Nutrition Advisor Emeritus Karl Sera, former ASA-Japan Country Director James Echle, ASA-IM China Country Director Phil Laney, ASA-IM Korea Country Director Say Young Jo, ASA Board member Scott Fritz, USSEC Director of Operations Joel Moore, Indiana Director of External Relations Melanie Batalis, Iowa Director Ray Gaesser and his wife Elaine, Dick Vegors from the Iowa Department of Economic Development, Iowa Soybean Association Executive Director Kirk Leeds, and North Carolina Soybean Producers Association Executive Director Charles Hall.

"While U.S. soybean producers want to show support and appreciation to Japanese customers, this occasion is really a celebration of the importance U.S. agricultural exports play in building trade relations around the world," said Dan Duran. "There is a great deal of history and many underlying events that have brought us to where we are today. The story is much bigger than just soybeans and Japan."