

Akita Inter-regional Council for Promotion of Foreign Student Exchange

Activity Name	Farm House <i>Minshuku</i> (private home inn) in Akita – Turning Hands-on Experience into a Lasting Interaction			
Dates	October 3 & 4, 2009 and November 7, 2009			
Location	Nishiki-cho, Semboku-shi, Akita			
Participants	International Students	Local Residents, Corporations	Other	Total
	39	18	30	87

<Activity Details>

The Akita Inter-regional Council for Promotion of Foreign Student Exchange conducted two sessions of “Farm House *Minshuku* (private home inn) in Akita – Turning Hands-on Experience into Lasting Interaction,” to give hands-on green tourism experience to international students.



Group photo in front of the Katakuri House

The participants experienced farm work and stayed at a *minshuku* in Nishiki-cho, Semboku-shi, Akita as part of the Farm Work Experience Tour held on October 3rd and 4th. After an orientation for all participants, each individual went to different farm houses and experienced a variety of farm work including picking up chestnuts, harvesting akebia, making *yubeshi* snacks, hulling, packaging, and stacking up the packages of newly-harvested rice, harvesting green soybeans, removing soybean pods, harvesting garland chrysanthemum, and making unique Akita *kiritanpo* (mushed rice on a chopstick). The participants spent the night at farmhouses, and enjoyed dinners made with local produce as they socialized. A meeting of the International Student Farm Work Experience group was held the next day at the Katakuri House in Nishiki-cho, Semboku-shi.

Each group discussed the positive aspects of experiencing farm work and staying at the farmhouses, as well as things that can be improved, then presented the results of their discussions. Each presentation was unique, and both the international students and the farmers seemed to listen attentively. After saying goodbye to their hosts, the participants went to the Tazawako Art Village and tried making hand-formed china bowls, vases, figurines, etc. with their imagination as their guides. They returned to the university after that, and promised to meet again in November before saying their goodbyes.

The students and farming families were happy to see each other at the Harvest Thanksgiving Tour held at the Katakuri House on November 7th. Some of the international students had a hard time handling the heavy pestle while making rice cakes the traditional way with mortar and pestle, but they had a good time as they called out “Dokkoisho!” The multicolored rice cakes that they made themselves decorated the tables for a lunchtime get-together, and participants cheered and smacked their lips at the sight. After lunch, an album with photos taken during the previous gathering was given to the host families as a thank-you gift. They exchanged name cards made of washi (Japanese paper) and promised to see each other again before finally leaving the Katakuri House.



Experiencing farm work



Making *kiritanpo* (mashed rice on a chopstick)

<Comments from The Participants>

Narangerel Khoserdene (Mongolia)

This is my 3rd year in Japan, but I hadn't had an opportunity to experience farm work or stay at a farmhouse, so it was great to have been able to participate in the Farm Work Experience Tour. I was able to have a variety of discussions with Japanese, Chinese, and Korean friends while savouring Japanese food, specifically the tasty food of Semboku City. I enjoyed picking up chestnuts the most. I'll never forget the hard work all of us put in to pick up chestnuts one by one, and cooking them in a variety of foods. Thank you very much.

Yu Xue (China)

I would like to try seeding in spring, and harvesting in autumn. It was a really fun experience. Thank you.



Harvest Thanksgiving



The meeting about the farming experience



Making rice cakes



Pestle and mortar rice cake making