



# AFICAT Newsletter (All Countries No. 1)

Issued on August 8, 2023

This newsletter presents the activities of the Africa Field Innovation Center for Agricultural Technology (AFICAT). This issue is prepared for all the five countries where AFICAT is working to introduce activities of the Invitation Program to Japan held in May 2023.

## Business Forum

From May 22nd to 26th, 2023, nine government officials and private sector officials related to agricultural mechanization from the five AFICAT countries—Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana (hereinafter, referred to as “invitees”)—stayed in Japan and participated in the Invitation Program to Japan coordinated by JICA and the AFICAT team. A business forum, the first big event of the program, was held at Hotel New Otani Tokyo on the 22nd, and was attended by nearly 100 participants from Japanese companies and other stakeholders interested in AFICAT.

In the first part of the forum, government officials from African countries presented the current situation and issues related to agricultural mechanization in their respective countries, as well as their expectations of Japanese companies interested in doing business in Africa. Private sector officials explained their organizations and proposed the possibility of collaboration with Japanese companies.



*The first part of the seminar in the business forum*

In response to these presentations, AFICAT’s senior advisors shared the importance of introducing agricultural machinery that meets Africa’s actual needs, while considering mechanization across the entire agricultural value chain. The participants shared ideas, such as the importance of establishing a local agricultural machinery maintenance system and fostering local maintenance personnel led by Japanese companies.



*Presentation from the invitees from Kenya*



*Presentation from the invitee from Tanzania*



Presentation from the invitee from Ghana



Presentation from the invitee from Ghana

Following the first part, a business networking session was conducted in the second part of the forum. Many participants, mainly Japanese agricultural machinery and input manufacturers, actively joined the session and exchanged business cards and information with invitees.



The business networking session of the business forum

Some Japanese media such as NHK World-Japan and industry journal companies in the fields of

agriculture, business, and machinery came to the business forum. NHK World-Japan conducted interviews with invitees from Kenya and Tanzania that were broadcast on a radio program in Swahili.

- Introduction of the interview program in NHK World-Japan website:

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/sw/radio/istener/202306040600/>

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/sw/radio/istener/202306110600/>

The business forum provided a good networking opportunity for invitees, Japanese companies, and other stakeholders interested in developing the agricultural sector in African countries. The presentation materials for each invitee are posted on the [JICA AFICAT website](#) as written in the editor's postscript at the bottom of this newsletter.

### Visiting Japanese Agricultural Companies and Organization

From May 23rd to 25th, the invitees visited five Japanese companies and a research institute. During these visits, they were provided with opportunities to witness their facilities and exchange opinions.

- (1) [Kett Electric Laboratory Co. Ltd.](#) (Kett)



Mr. Yoshida of KETT explaining the setting of the calibration curve

Kett is a manufacturer of measuring instruments for agricultural products such as moisture testers for grains, wood, paper, and other materials. Kett has instructed seminars in five AFICAT countries,





with the support of the AFICAT team. This time, the invitees took enough time to receive explanations of the products at the Kett head office, and toured its research facilities. They seemed to recognize the high technical capabilities of the company and its products. In particular, they showed strong interest in setting the calibration curve of a moisture meter to obtain the correct moisture value for different crops, which is an important procedure for maintaining accuracy.

The invitees requested a stick-type moisture meter based on the actual situation in real fields in their countries. They proposed training for both local distributors and users on operating Kett's products.

## (2) [Honda Motor Co., Ltd.](#) (Honda)

Honda, the largest motorcycle manufacturer worldwide, produces agricultural power products. After receiving an explanation of Honda's history and products, invitees exchanged opinions with the staff of Honda's Power Products Business Unit. Honda primarily develops agricultural products targeting small-scale farmers. One of the invitees commented on the importance of mechanization for small-scale farmers, and Honda responded that its power tiller is suitable for use in greenhouses and backyard gardens.

The different opinions shared by the invitees were: there are imitations of Honda products in local markets in African countries; small farmers cannot afford to pay the initial cost of purchasing a Honda power tiller; it is necessary to customize Honda products according to local agricultural conditions, such as local soil; and there is a need for machines that are easy for women to use. These opinions were based on agricultural issues observed in African countries.

Invitees from the private sector introduced local financial institutions in their countries and proposed providing webinars targeting people there. Honda could build a good relationship with the invitees that would serve as a foothold for future business development, leading to



agricultural development in these countries.



*Touching and checking Honda power tiller*

## (3) [Institute of Agricultural Machinery, NARO](#) (IAM/NARO)

The National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) conducts research and development in a wide range of fields, from basic to applied, to develop Japan's agriculture and food industries.

The invitees visited one of the research institutes of NARO, the Institute of Agricultural Machinery (IAM), and were given an overview of its activities, including research on the development and improvement of agricultural machinery and inspections, before visiting a facility where the safety of agricultural machinery was inspected.

The invitees understood the following points: ① IAM's role and history as a public research institute, where IAM and agricultural machinery manufacturers work together to develop new and safer agricultural machinery based on market and government needs; and ② The scheme in which IAM intervenes to ensure the safety of agricultural machinery.

An invitee from the private sector commented that since private companies usually focus on profit, they mainly test the functionality required by users rather than safety. Thus, safety testing is still not recognized as important in their country.

This visit appeared to have made the invitees reaffirmed of the importance of research on the safety of agricultural machinery, in addition to functionality and durability.



Explanation about safety cab and frame inspection of a tractor

#### (4) [Kubota Corporation](#) (Kubota)

Kubota Corporation is the third largest agricultural machinery manufacturer in the world, manufacturing and selling a wide range of agricultural machinery. Kubota products are known for their durability and high energy efficiency. Kubota also manufactures lightweight, water-resistant tractors designed for paddy fields. This feature is crucial. For example, a heavy tractor can sink and destroy a hard pan, making efficient work in paddy fields impossible. Furthermore, Kubota is dedicated to enhancing customer satisfaction, and offers comprehensive tractor maintenance training to distributors and dealers in their respective countries. These efforts deeply impressed the invitees.

After listening to a presentation on Kubota's business development in Africa at Kubota's headquarters in Tokyo, the invitees exchanged opinions with the staff. In particular, the discussion centered on topics such as the supply of spare parts in African countries and the selection of local distributors.

#### Opinions from the invitees

- In Kenya, local distributors are generally small companies. Currently, many of them do not support online payments; thus, it would be nice to be able to make online payments in the future.
- Generally speaking, when a Japanese company selects a local distributor, it should

first make sure that the candidate distributor has sufficient funds for transaction.

- Having local distributors exhibit Kubota's technology locally is a good opportunity to introduce their products. If a local private sector network is utilized, a smooth exhibition will be possible.



The invitees exchanging opinions with Kubota

#### (5) [Yanmar Holdings Co., Ltd.](#) (Yanmar)

Yanmar is the second largest agricultural machinery manufacturer in Japan, with a wide range of machinery, such as tractors, combine harvesters, power tillers, threshers, and rice mills.

The invitees visited Yanmar Synergy Square in Amagasaki City, Hyogo Prefecture, southwestern Japan. At this location, which is the service delivery base of the Yanmar Group, they first learned about Yanmar's history and customer service using ICT.

In the after-mentioned wrap-up session on the final day of the Invitation Program, an invitee who was amazed by a sophisticated presentation by Yanmar, commented, "if a Japanese company gives a presentation like that, local distributor candidates will be interested in the company and its products." Invitees from the private sector suggested linking Yanmar's advanced ICT with local companies in Africa, because some local companies provide ICT-based monitoring services for tractor activities.



*The invitees visiting Yanmar Synergy Square*



*Listening to an explanation of optical sorting machines*

### (6) [Satake Corporation](#) (Satake)

At Satake's headquarters in Hiroshima Prefecture, invitees first received an explanation of Satake's business. Satake is a Japanese manufacturer of machines and equipment for the food industry and food products, and has expertise in rice milling and related equipment. In particular, they deepened their understanding of how Satake products contribute to quality improvement during the drying and milling of rice. Additionally, they learned about the mechanisms of Satake's various high-performance optical sorting machines using actual equipment in Satake's showroom, and expressed their admiration.

In exchange of opinions, not only small-scale rice milling systems and large-scale plant sets, but also individual equipment sales were desired by the invitees, and some were interested in introducing such individual equipment to their own countries.

In particular, the optical sorting machine attracted the interest of invitees from the private sector because it can set sorting criteria according to local rice quality.

### Activities at JICA Tsukuba Center

On May 26th, the final day of the Invitation Program, the invitees visited [JICA Tsukuba Center](#) and received an explanation of the various initiatives led by JICA Tsukuba, such as Agriculture Co-creation Hub and agricultural training projects for trainees from various developing countries.

In addition to visiting facilities such as practice building for agricultural mechanization, the invitees also participated in the "Agriculture Co-Creation Seminar 2023," an event where international students and trainees were introduced to the products and technologies of Japanese companies and exchanged opinions at fields and training facilities at JICA Tsukuba Center.



*Touring the practice building for agricultural mechanization in JICA Tsukuba Center*

At the seminar, the invitees visited three booths of Japanese companies, received explanations about the specific services and products developed by each company, and held a Q&A session. At the





booth of Yanmar Agribusiness Co., Ltd., they witnessed a demonstration of a rice transplanter, and actively asked questions about the estimated local sales price, spacing between rows and hills, making nursery boxes, and the structure of the planting fingers.



*At the booth of Yanmar Agribusiness Co., Ltd.*

There was also an opportunity for free discussions and business networking with Japanese companies that participated in the seminar, and lively discussions between invitees and Japanese companies interested in expanding into Africa were observed.

Thereafter, a wrap-up meeting was held among the invitees, JICA officials, and the AFICAT team to discuss the future development of AFICAT as the final part of the Invitation Program. It is expected that invitees will make use of the knowledge and experience gained through this program in their home countries for further development of the agricultural sector and collaboration between African countries and Japan.



*A group photo of the invitees at JICA Tsukuba Center*



## Editors' postscript

We hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. Past newsletters for each of the five countries can be accessed from this URL on the AFICAT website:

<https://www.jica.go.jp/Resource/activities/issuess/agricul/aficat/index.html>

We will prepare newsletters for each country that will present the future activities of AFICAT, and hope that you will continue to read our newsletters.

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AFICAT HP (only in Japanese):

(<https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/agricul/aficat/index.html>)

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