



Nakatsu City
WELCOME Yamakuni Ltd.
ASKA and Morino Ebi, Ritsumeikan APU
Tokiwa Industry Co., Inc.
Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

Creating Valuable Assets Out of Unharvested Agricultural Produce in Collaboration with Generation Z Members

- Contributing to SDGs: Demonstration of Circular Economy through
Industry-Government-Academia Collaboration ^(Note 1)

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Nakatsu City (Mayor: Masanori Okuzuka) will, in collaboration with student organizations of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), “ASKA and Morino Ebi (both of which are represented by Kaito Wakabayashi),” WELCOME Yamakuni (Representative: Fumihiro Mizutani), Tokiwa Industry Co. Inc. (President: Takashi Hatano), and Ajinomoto Co. Inc. (President: Taro Fujie), launch a demonstration project to create valuable assets from unharvested agricultural produce, encourage the elimination of food loss, promote local production for local consumption, and build a circular economy.

■ Background of the demonstration project

- Upon conducting a monitor tour organized by Nakatsu Yabakei Tourism Association, the City held a workshop themed on “utilization of unharvested produce” at SHIBUYA QWS, a co-creation facility (June 2021). This led to the joint proposal of the project with Generation Z Business Creation Department of Ajinomoto, who was participating in the workshop as a corporate member of SHIBUYA QWS.
- Following various discussions with the participating organizations, we decided to hold a preliminary online workshop to further deepen the learning of the participating students, have them experience harvesting and processing of the produce, and then have the students conduct a questionnaire/feedback session.

(1) The aims of Nakatsu City and WELCOME Yamakuni

Rural regions of Japan are suffering from population decline as a result of aging and dwindling birthrates combined with population drain to urban areas. There is a shortage of agricultural successors, and farmlands/groves are left unattended without anyone to harvest.



This time, the demonstration project will focus on bamboo shoots. Students will participate in building schemes to solve local problems by restoring abandoned bamboo groves and creating local employment, while at the same time learning about Sustainable Development Goals ^(Note 2). We will also aim to create fans and supporters of Nakatsu City by delivering to consumers products that carry an inspirational message and interesting stories.

(2) The aims of ASKA and Morino Ebi of Ritsumeikan APU

ASKA is a student organization devoted to making SDGs known to more people and Morino Ebi aspires to overcome global food problems. Through this project, the two organizations aim to experience and deeply learn about the challenges faced by rural communities of Japan and to propose solutions to those challenges leveraging the insight and ideas of the digital native Generation Z ^(Note 3) as feedback to the local community. We hope this project will lead to new initiatives in the years ahead.

(3) The aims of Tokiwa Industry

Tokiwa Industry makes it our mission to deliver the fresh and delicious food of Oita and lifestyles rooted in the fertile land, in hope for the safety, peace of mind, and health of our customers in the local community. We uphold the principles of building close ties with the local community, local production for local consumption, and dietary education, and propose enriching lifestyles to our customers through an attractive selection of products and cordial customer service. Through this project, we will promote local production for local consumption together with farmers and food manufacturers to provide safe and secure fresh foods as well as processed food products whose producers we know in person.

(4) The aims of Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

Founded over a century ago with an aspiration to “Eat Well and Live Well,” Ajinomoto Group, working together with over 30 thousand employees, provides products to more than 700 million consumers in over 135 areas across the world, as a company that provides solutions to problems related to food and health. Through this demonstration project, we aim to co-create social and economic values while solving the social problems facing rural communities.

When the collaborators found their intentions fell into line with each other, the collaboration moved forward and took shape as an “Industry-Government-Academia Collaboration Circular Economy Development” project that aims to reduce food loss and promote local production



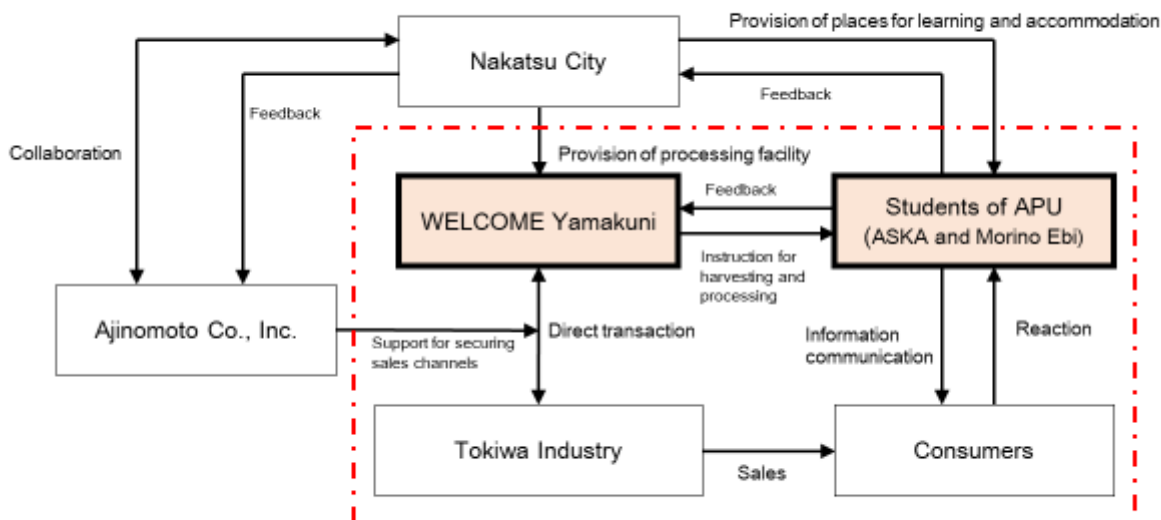
for local consumption by utilizing unharvested agricultural produce.

The demonstration project will be mainly implemented by the students of Ritsumeikan APU. They will harvest bamboo shoots from abandoned bamboo groves. When bamboo groves are left unattended and unmanaged, the bamboos will aggressively spread their roots outwards, block sunlight from smaller trees, and expand to the surrounding areas. Furthermore, by expanding into residential areas, bamboos will attract unwanted wild animals such as boars by providing feeding and hiding grounds, rendering significant damage to residential properties. Appropriately harvesting bamboo shoots not only contributes to reducing food loss and promoting local production for local consumption but will also help maintain the village forests in a sustainable way. In addition, the demonstration project will offer the participating students a valuable opportunity to experience the process from harvesting to processing bamboo shoots and learn about the reality of agriculture including its difficulties and joys.

We are also planning to sell the processed and boiled bamboo shoots within Oita Prefecture through cooperation between Tokiwa Industry and Ajinomoto. The harvest period is projected to be from April 22 to May 1.



■ Flow chart of the demonstration project



■ Flow of the overall project

April 16	Preliminary event	Online workshop
Late April	Chapter 1	Students' experience of harvesting and processing (Two groups of four APU students; each group staying for 2 nights and 3 days)
Mid-May	Chapter 2	Students' questionnaire/feedback session
From June		Sales of boiled bamboo shoots

[Preliminary online workshop]

Schedule: Saturday, April 16 (completed)

Description: After sharing their thoughts and the activities of their affiliated organizations and learning about the current situation and challenges of the local community, students engaged in discussions, presentations, and reviews.

[Chapter 1: Harvesting and processing]

Schedule: Two groups of students will visit, with the first group staying from April 22nd (Fri) to 24th (Sun)

Description: Students will experience harvesting and processing of bamboo shoots under the instructions of the members of WELCOME Yamakuni. In their spare time, students will also visit abandoned farmlands and places where unharvested produce can be found to learn about the reality of rural communities.



[Chapter 2: Students questionnaire/feedback session]

Schedule: Mid-May

Description: After the two student groups have completed their visits and harvesting experience, members of ASKA and Morino Ebi will organize a questionnaire/feedback session and make proposals for future initiatives and potential solutions.

[Sales of boiled bamboo shoots]

Plan to start selling boiled bamboo shoots at all Tokiwa Industry stores in June.

[For reference]

Note 1: Circular economy

A circular economy is a circulating type of economic model that turns waste into value by recycling and reusing natural resources as long as possible. Its antonym is linear economy.

Note 2: The demonstration project in the context of SDGs

We believe the demonstration project will contribute to achieving the following three Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 11: Sustainable cities and human settlements	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
Goal 12: Sustainable consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 15: Life on land	Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Note 3: Generation Z

Generation Z refers to people who were born between mid-to-late 1990s and the 2000s. They were given the name “Z” as the cohort following “X” and “Y” because those born from 1960 to the 1970s are called the Generation X, and those born during the 1980s and 1990s are called Generation Y (or the Millennials).

- Photo of an abandoned bamboo grove and bamboo shoot





■ To media reporters

We are more than happy to welcome media coverage. Reporters are cordially invited to come and cover the harvesting and processing which will take place as described below. We will be entering bushes up in the mountains, so please make sure to wear suitable clothes.

○Participants: Students of Ritsumeikan APU, WELCOME Yamakuni, Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Nakatsu City

○Bamboo shoots harvesting experience

Time and date Saturday, April 23, 2022 AM 8:00 – 10:30 (planned)

Meeting place Tsukinoki Koryu Center (Tsukinoki 1075, Yamakuni Town, Nakatsu City) *After everyone has arrived at the meeting place, we will move to the bamboo grove.



○ Processing of the bamboo shoots

Time and date: After the harvesting is over (planned to be AM 10:30 – PM 4:00)

Place: Development and test production facility for local industries (Hiraono 271-1, Yamakuni Town, Nakatsu City)

