

**Speech draft for Mr. Nomura, President of JAJA, encouraging
journalists to participate the 51st Congress of IFAJ in Japan.**

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President of the Japan Agricultural Journalists' Association

Yokoso Nippon, or Welcome to Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are very happy to invite all of the IFAJ members to participate in the 51 Congress in Japan next year.

It is the first IFAJ Congress held in Asia. We all have to celebrate that the first Congress of the IFAJ, right after its half-a-century history, is going to take place in Asia. The IFAJ is changing rapidly toward more diverse organization, because the whole picture of the world agriculture is changing. We are very happy to show you different style of agriculture from that of traditional western style.

Asia is the largest of the seven continents. It covers about one-third of the world's total land area. Asia has more than 3.2 billion population and it is experiencing the strategic changes economically, politically, and socially.

It is impossible for you to be a real international agricultural journalist unless you visit and cover the Asian agriculture. It is simply because Asian agriculture is too important to ignore. It feeds three-fifths of the world's population. And believe it or not, an average grain output per hectare is 34 tons, just a few percents bellow the level of Norway. It is higher than that of Spain, Portugal, Finland, Poland, Israel, Canada or Australia.

Did you know that? So visiting Japan next year is a great chance for you to cover what is going on in the area.

As the only member in the region, the Japan Agricultural Journalists' Association is pleased to invite you to a country where Asian traditions and modern lifestyles are living together.

Theme of the Congress is “Explore the land of Mizuho.” Mizuho is the meaning of “Ear of rice” in Japanese. With a history of more than thousands years with rice, we call our country the land of Mizuho. Every September is the time to harvest for rice. In 2007, you will discover secrets of the land of Mizuho.

Late September is the best season to visit the country, especially in northern area. Autumn paints the land with stunning blend of red and yellow hues, attracting many visitors and hikers on excursions.

During your tour, you will visit Satoyama, a small village located at the valley that is surrounded by hills and woods of miscellaneous trees. Although it was driven to the verge of extinction from 1960s to 1990s, because of land development, there are still numerous satoyamas, where people are living in the environment and sharing the gifts of nature, such as insects, frogs, and birds in Japan.

Rice paddies have played an important roll in maintaining satoyamas.

Why? You will see the reasons during the excursions of the 51st Congress next year.

Not only secrets of rice, but also secrets of high quality Wagyu beef production will be covered during the Congress. Is it true to feed a big volume of beer to cattle to have more marble? Is it true a price of one head of high quality beef cattle destine to a slaughter house is sometimes higher than that of a car made by Mercedes?

Good questions, ladies and gentlemen. Just come and see.

On a way to Norway, we saw lots of ‘Japanese food’ in Europe. European Commission’s Ambassador to Japan told me the other day Japanese restaurants are mashurooming in Europe. But we can tell you most of them are not real Japanese food, even if they look like Japanese food, smell like Japanese food, taste like Japanese food, and cost like Japanese food.

I promise you. We will serve you real Japanese food during your stay. Several major food companies such as Kikkoman, and the food service industry will entertain you with high quality Japanese cuisine in various places.

The Congress is divided into two parts. Registration will be done in Tokyo, where you will stay 2 nights and see the food market. Japan is the biggest net food importer in the world, so you can report various stories related to the market for your readers and viewers who are also exporting their farm products to our country.

A mini session will be held at the campus of the Tokyo University of Agriculture. There are more than a dozen themes, including “Secrets of Wagyu,” “Trends of Japanese food business,” and “High-tech in farming.” All of these topics will be ready for your reports. It should be very difficult for you to decide which one to choose.

You are going to move north from Tokyo by Shinkansen, or a world famous bullet train, and stay in Miyagi prefecture. There, you will enjoy traditional Japanese hot spring and cultural events, as well as seeing the latest technologies applied to the modern Japanese farming.

Don't you think seeing an unmanned rice planting machine equipped with GPS is a good chance to write an interesting story?

The 51st Congress will be concluded with a symposium to discuss the international agriculture, food, and tradition from journalists' point of view. We are going to organize the meeting with NHK, a national public TV station.

I would like to tell you one important message. Japan is famous for its notorious cost of living or traveling. Yes, everything except our salary is very expensive. However, we can give you very attractive offer. The participating fee including 6 nights accommodation will be less than 1000 Euros. More discounts will be applied for young journalists and journalists from developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen. Please check the website of the Japanese Congress committee frequently. We will update information accordingly and the online registration service will be available from the beginning of next year. Earlier you pay, more discounts you receive.

Please prepare for exploring the land of Mizuho. We expect to have you all in Japan. Please save your money. Ask your boss. Register earlier, and book the flight.

We look forward to seeing you in Japan. Yokoso Nippon. Welcome to Japan. Thank you very much for your attention.