

Safety and quality for food-processing SMEs

The APO multicountry observational study mission (OSM) on Best Practices and Systems for Food Safety and Quality Applicable to Food-processing SMEs was held in Japan, 12–17 November 2012, with 18 participants from 15 member countries. Food-processing SMEs generally have difficulty in establishing modern food safety management systems (FSMS) due to a lack of sufficient financial and human resources. This OSM aimed at seeking solutions for this by analyzing the essence of FSMS and observing the practices of SMEs in Shizuoka prefecture which successfully obtained certification in spite of their scales.

Besides the national HACCP system, Japan has regional HACCP systems to help local food-processing SMEs increase their safety levels. The OSM focused on the “Shizuoka mini-HACCP” model, which was developed in Shizuoka prefecture. The three prominent resource persons, Dr. Yataro Kokubo, Consultant Mitsuo Kato, and Dr. Emiko Araki of the Department of Fisheries, Tokai University, emphasized that the key element for successful HACCP implementation is establishment of the basic hygiene system called the Prerequisite Program (PRP), reiterating that, “Functional and operational HACCP cannot be established without a robust PRP”

Mission members visited six food manufacturing companies in Shizuoka, of which three had Shizuoka mini-HACCP certificates: Ichimaru Co., Ltd., a maker of precooked food; Tamaruya Co., Ltd., a processor of traditional

wasabi (Japanese horseradish) products; and Yamaei Co., Ltd., a green tea producer. The participants also visited Marukei Co., Ltd., which manufactures *katsuo-bushi* (dried bonito), a traditional basic seasoning ingredient in Japanese cuisine and is ISO 22000 certified; Hago-

romo Foods Co., Ltd., a leading tuna canner; and probiotic drink producer Yakult Co., Ltd. where they observed advanced, large-scale production facilities. Expert lectures and company visits illustrated the importance of employee education, PRP, and 5S as the foundations for sustainable HACCP operation. It was pointed out that HACCP does not necessarily require huge investments for physical facilities but can be operated by well-trained human resources. With all these conditions fulfilled, SMEs can establish HACCP and even more advanced systems. APO Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki joined the OSM for an afternoon and the following morning, when he paid a courtesy call on Shizuoka Mayor Nobuhiro Tanabe. ☺



Quality manager of Yamaei Co., Ltd., demonstrating how to ensure the safety and quality of green tea during the production process.