Information to Make a Difference in Productivity

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APO NEWS

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The APO focuses on productivity in the context of economic growth and development in the Asia-Pacific region. Readers should take a moment to consider what exactly productivity is. "As a generalization, productivity is the ratio of output quantity versus the quantity of labor input," clarified Yasuko Asano, Secretariat Research and Planning Program Officer. "The key is to note that economic growth is derived heavily from labor productivity enhancement."

The APO Secretariat Research and Planning Department functions as a think tank, conducting research on the emerging needs of member countries as the basis for follow-up and in determining appropriate assistance. Utilizing her background as a United Nations program officer and belief in continuous learning, Asano is committed to organizing relevant productivity measurement research projects that will benefit APO member countries. "I feel that it is our duty and responsibility as an international organization to create a credible database that will help member countries improve their levels of productivity. It is therefore essential to determine these levels, based on official data from their respective national accounts."

Secretariat Research & Planning Officer Yasuko Asano checks the latest update of the Asian Quarterly Growth Map on her computer screen 19 May 2010.

"Every country has a different system of national accounts, data definitions, and coverage, and thus adjustments need to be made before the raw data can be used. It is necessary to create harmonized, scientifically sound methodology. After that, the quality of data has to be improved. We support our members in improving their national data and provide the APO methodology to develop productivity statistics that are comparable to those from other countries. It is a matter of accountability for the APO to comply with and provide international comparisons of productivity levels for our member countries."

"Data are powerful. This is the basis of our productivity measurement projects. Both regional and global comparisons are necessary, and you can see the wide range of data coverage provided in our Asian Quarterly Growth Map (http://www.apo-tokyo.org/AQGM.html), which goes beyond the Asia-Pacific. There cannot be much meaning to data unless they are compared on a global scale, including benchmark economies such as the USA and EU members. Productivity data have substantial value, allowing us to understand the changing status of the economy and to formulate sound, pro-growth economic policies. Data form a core public asset for any organization or nation."

Asano devotes her energies to the Research and Planning Department's pillar projects: the previously mentioned database; the Asian Quarterly Growth Map, which forms part of the database; and the annual *APO Productivity Databook* (http://www.apo-tokyo.org/PDB.html#apodbseries).

"With the database project, we developed the methodology, in the form of APO questionnaires. Under the databook project, we identified experts in each country who could gather the relevant national data in accordance with our detailed questionnaires on key indicators. The growth map is updated each month. We obtain statistics released by government

(Continued on page 5)

Exporting food, beverages, or dietary supplements to the USA? Pay close attention to product labeling requirements

The potential pitfalls for producers wishing to market their food and beverage products in the USA are many. Formula developers must ensure that each ingredient is generally recognized as safe. Manufacturers and processors must comply with current Good Manufacturing Practices. Relationships with importers and distributors must be fostered to ensure reliable trading. These challenges are well known, however, and successful exporters are therefore prepared to meet them. A more difficult challenge is confirming that products comply with US regulations before exportation.

An array of federal agencies is responsible for ensuring the safety of the US food supply, including both domestically produced and imported food and beverages. Together, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services; Food Safety and Inspection Service, part of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA); National Marine Fisheries Service, part of the Department of Commerce; and Environmental Protection Agency regulate these products.

Most exporters will primarily contend with the FDA, whose many regulations set forth requirements from the minimum type point size for specific statements to the maximum tolerance for limited ingredients. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act authorizes the FDA to take action in response to food that is "misbranded," or not appropriately labeled. Under this provision, the FDA has developed hundreds of pages of regulations defining what it means to be misbranded. While many of these regulations are codified in the Code of Federal Regulations, still more requirements are set forth in the *Federal Register*, the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of federal agencies and organizations. Individual agencies also issue guidance documents, which provide insight on how they intend to interpret the often vague, confusing regulations.

Faced with such a huge body of requirements, it is understandable that mistakes are frequently

made in labeling food products. The Economic Research Service (ERS), a research and analysis division of the USDA, stated that 33% of the violations reported from 1998 to 2004 were due to misbranding (ERS Report Summary, ERS, September 2008). While food and beverage products are frequently, even commonly, mislabeled, this does not mean that the FDA takes the offense lightly. Misbranding violations can cause financial, public, and private loss; fines and other expenses are compounded by the public reprimand, as violations are announced in the FDA's public database, and the private consequences, as violators can be held personally responsible and may even face jail time.

Some labeling violations are purposeful; the labeling is designed to mislead consumers in an effort to make the product more attractive. Examples of this kind include food labels that state a product will cure cancer or declare the net weight as 500 g, when actually the package contains far less. Frequently, though, the violations are unintentional, caused when an exporter has not invested the time or resources necessary to ensure that the labeling is compliant. Unfortunately for well-intentioned exporters, the FDA will not excuse a labeling violation simply because the exporter did not know any better.

The FDA does not offer any review or preapproval of labeling for food and beverage products. As a result, it is the burden of exporters to confirm that their product labeling is compliant. Furthermore, regulations are frequently changed. If a product is not in compliance when a new rule goes into effect, it will be deemed misbranded. Again, it is the responsibility of the exporter to make sure that labeling remains current with the requirements.

Some of the most common mistakes occur in formatting, stating the net quantity of contents, declaring the presence of major allergens, and using languages other than English. The FDA has extensive regulations regarding the various type point sizes of almost every statement that must appear on labeling. Some of these requirements are based on the size and shape of the container, so copying a competitor's label, even if correct for the competitor, may result in a label that does not meet type size requirements. The FDA even goes so far as to set regulations regarding the weight, or thickness, of lines in the Nutrition Facts chart. While these issues may seem minor, the FDA regards consistency in labeling as a way to allow customers to understand nutritional information easily and therefore takes this matter very seriously.

Regulations pertaining to the declaration of the net quantity of contents are extensive and concern even minute details. Minimum size requirements must be met, the position of the statement on the label is regulated, and even the required space that must be kept blank around the net quantity is defined. The FDA has specific requirements for how the net quantity may be stated, and, unlike most other countries, a metric statement alone is not sufficient. As the net quantity statement is one of only two statements to appear on the front panel, also known as the principal display panel, of labeling, it is subject to close scrutiny.

Packaged foods and beverages that contain a major food allergen must declare its presence on the product labeling. Major food allergens include ingredients from milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, and soybeans. These major food allergens account for 90% of all food allergies. As such, the FDA has required that they be declared since 1 January 2006, as a result of the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004.

When any language other than English is used, a separate set of regulations comes into effect. Food and beverages on the US retail market must include an English version of all required statements. This often comes as a surprise to those who intend to market their products to specialized markets, such as grocery chains that serve primarily Spanish-speaking consumers. Further, the FDA requires that if any declaration is made in a language other than English, all other required declarations must be made in English. This may be a concern for those who market products in packages too small for all information to be repeated.

While the regulations for labeling are extensive and can be confusing, the requirements for a product to qualify for an exemption from a regulation are even more difficult to determine. The following are a few examples of such exemptions:

- Under certain circumstances, the size requirements for declarations may be relaxed or waived altogether.
- The Nutrition Facts chart may be presented in a special format, such as tabular format, or replaced with a toll-free phone number through which consumers can obtain nutrition information.
- Certain products, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, may be exempt from allergen labeling if they meet other requirements.
- When only a product's brand name is in a non-English language, the product may not be required to repeat the required information in the non-English language.

Special exemptions may apply in these and other circumstances, but determining whether a product qualifies for an exemption takes thorough research and a full understanding of applicable regulations.

Mistakes in labeling can spell disaster for an exporter. In authorizing the FDA to take action in response to misbranded food and beverage products, the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act authorizes the FDA to detain the product. While in detention, fees for demurrage, analysis, and fines quickly add up. When a product is detained, the FDA district office will issue a Notice of FDA Action specifying the nature of the violation to the owner or consignee, who is entitled to an informal hearing to provide testimony regarding the admissibility of the product. If the owner fails to submit convincing evidence that the product is in compliance or an acceptable plan to bring it into compliance, the FDA will issue another Notice of FDA Action refusing admission to the product. The product then must be exported or destroyed within 90 days. To the costs already incurred, new costs for return freight or loss of product due to destruction are now added.

Even if a violation can be corrected by relabeling, the cost of doing so can be staggering and the time needed often means late or cancelled orders. Forward-thinking exporters will invest the time, money, and energy to

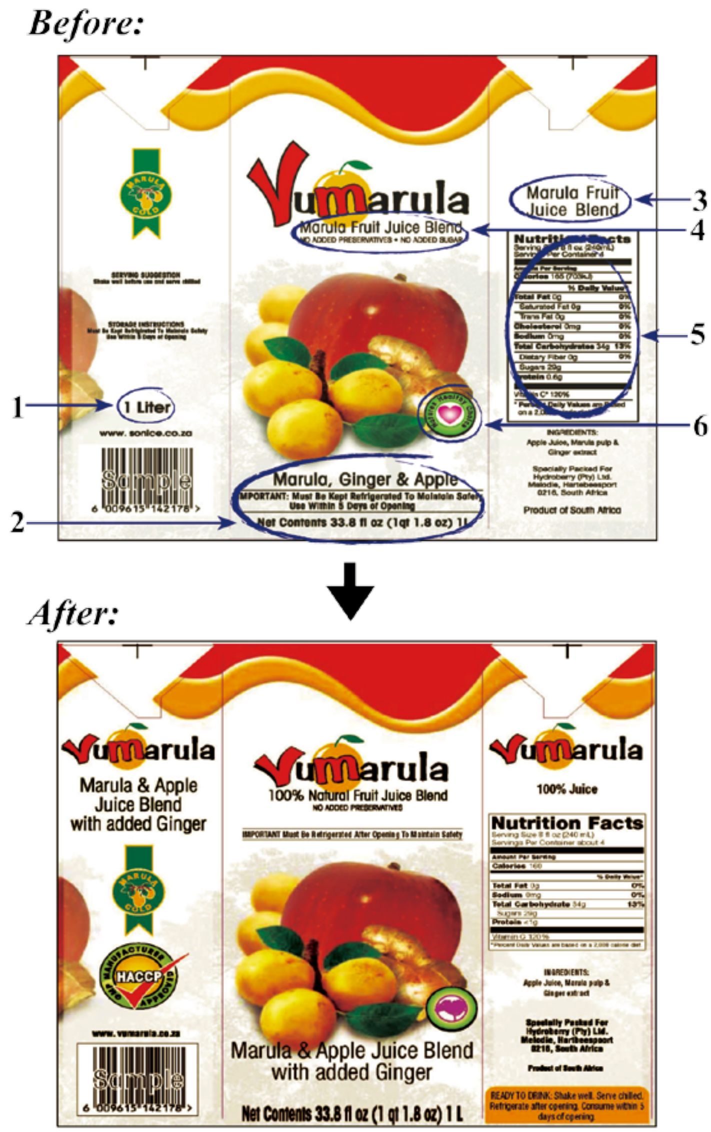


Figure. Noncompliant (upper panel) and compliant (lower panel) labeling under US FDA regulations

confirm that their product labeling complies with applicable requirements before shipping to the USA. Compliant, polished, professional labeling not only aids in successfully exporting products to the USA, but also meets US consumers' expectations for the appearance and content of food and beverage labels. By designing labeling in compliance with regulations, exporters can make their products more likely to receive approval not only from US inspectors and officials but also from US shoppers.

David Lennarz is Vice President of Registrar Corp based in Hampton, Virginia. Registrar Corp assists companies in complying with US FDA regulations. Lennarz has served as a Technical Expert for the US FDA and has over 15 years' experience in the food and beverage, drug, medical device, and cosmetic industries. He may be contacted at dlennarz@registrarcorp.com, or visit http://www.registrarcorp.com.

Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Supply chain management—Prof. James C. Chen

A supply chain is the network of raw material producers, component manufacturers, final product manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors, retailers, and customers, interconnected by several types of flows, including material, information, finance, and people flows. The figure shows a typical footwear and apparel supply chain network. The APICS (Association for Operations Management) dictionary defines supply chain management (SCM) as the "design, planning, execution, control, and monitoring of supply chain activities with the objective of creating net value, building a competitive infrastructure, leveraging worldwide logistics, synchronizing supply with demand, and measuring performance globally."

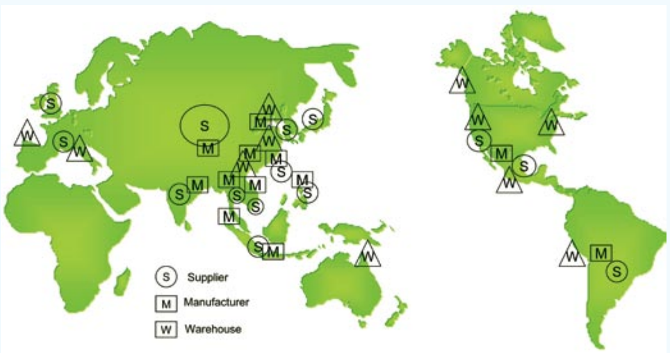


Figure. A typical footwear and apparel supply chain network

SCM and other similar terms (such as supply chain synchronization, integrated logistics, value chain management, and value stream management) have become increasingly popular in recent years, since SCM first received attention in the early 1980s. Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Walmart, Zara, 7-Eleven, Toyota, and ASUS are successful SCM players that manage supply chains well to gain and sustain a competitive edge in today's global business environment. The benefits of SCM include:

- heightened customer satisfaction;
- greater customer loyalty;
- higher competitiveness;
- higher profits;
- lower costs;
- higher quality;
- greater flexibility;
- higher productivity;
- better sustainability;
- lower inventory;
- less transportation;
- shorter lead times;
- shorter times to market;
- quicker decision making; and
- better data transparency.

As one example, *Case Studies of Manufacturing and Commerce Integration* published by the Ministry of Education, Republic of China, in 2004 cited ASUS, which implemented an e-logistics project to improve SCM by integrating its motherboard and notebook PC assembly factories with 200 component vendors, 50 logistics service providers, and three banks. This project developed an e-procurement and an e-payment system and integrated them with the enterprise resource planning system. A vendor-managed inventory model was introduced, and materials can be tracked through the entire supply chain on a real-time basis. The following results were achieved:

- 30% increase in productivity per man-year;
- 30% increase in customer service level;
- 30% reduction in processing time;
- US$10 million reduction in inventory value at the hub warehouse;
- reduction of order processing time from two days to one hour; and
- increase in on-time delivery rate from 85% to 99%.

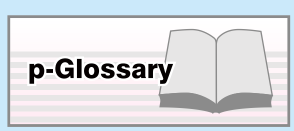
It is critical to have effective coordination and collaboration among the members in the supply chain, on the basis of trust and communication. The roles and responsibilities, cooperation mechanism, and conflict resolution model must be defined and clarified to facilitate mutual benefit and avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. A supply chain can help a company become an order winner rather than only an order qualifier, as the competition is not only among individual companies but also among their supply chains. Supply chain competitiveness can be increased by selecting a good supplier as a partner. The following are major evaluation factors: quality, price, lead time, on-time delivery, flexibility, location, reputation and financial stability, capacity, inventory policy, product and/or service, capability for the development and changes to products and/or services, globalization capability, and crisis/event management capability.

A bullwhip effect is widely observed in supply chains. The scale of demand oscillations increases from downstream customers to upstream raw material producers. As companies usually carry safety stock to manage unstable demand, the inventory level increases backward through the supply chain due to the amplified variation in demand upstream in a supply chain. Visibility through data transparency and information sharing are important in supply chains, as this can help upstream partners to manage the bullwhip effect better by looking ahead and making necessary preparations and adjustments in advance. Typical shared information includes order forecasts, order status, inventory, promotion, and shipment.

After 30 years of development in SCM, there is still room for improvement due to the following progress in recent years:

- emphasis on green/reverse supply chains (considering the recycling of products and components) and global supply chains;
- development of management philosophies such as collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment, the supply chain operations reference model, design chain operations reference model, and SCM 2.0; and
- advances in information and communication technologies, such as radio frequency identification and global positioning systems.

Contributed by Professor James C. Chen, Department of Industrial Management, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, Republic of China. Chen is the founder of Inforeverest (IET) of PouChen International Group and has been an expert for the APO TES Program.



To provide easy reference to productivity-related terms including methodologies, tools, and techniques, the APO developed the p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org).

Seeking strategies for SMEs

The two-day Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Competitive Strategies for Asian SMEs was held at the APO Secretariat in Tokyo on 15 and 16 April 2010. Emeritus Prof. Hirotaka Takeuchi of Hitotsubashi University, Japan, served as the chief expert. Formerly the Dean of the Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy, Prof. Takeuchi will soon become a full-time professor at Harvard Business School and teach courses on competitive strategy in tandem with Prof. Michael Porter. The meeting was held under the APO's Research Fund to investigate the possibility of applying new productivity concepts, tools, and techniques and whether they could specifically benefit SMEs in member countries.

Prof. Hirotaka Takeuchi outlining competitive strategy options for SMEs

The kickoff presentation by Prof. Takeuchi on Competitive Strategy was given to an audience of 35 including consultants, researchers, and government officials as well as Japan Productivity Center and APO Secretariat staff. Prof. Takeuchi emphasized that although "operational effectiveness," which is doing things better, is necessary for a company to achieve superior profitability, "strategic positioning," which is doing things differently than rivals, is even more crucial for a firm to achieve sustainable, superior profitability, especially in an unattractive industry. A competitive strategy is finding a unique positioning that allows an enterprise to compete in a distinctive way.

Prof. Takeuchi continued, "If a company is in an unattractive industry, it is important to be unique. That is where competitive strategy plays a role. If a firm is in an attractive industry, there is less need for it to be unique. The industry structure will make profits, not the strategy." He assured SME owners that there are advantages for them, stating, "Most SMEs are in an unattractive industry but SME owners have the guts and leadership to position themselves strategically to be unique in the industry." Numerous other strategic insights were covered, including five-forces analysis, specifically to allow SMEs to achieve competitiveness through appropriate strategy.

The APO has had a special focus on SMEs since its establishment. To improve their productivity, quality, speed, and marketability, tools such as 5S, total quality management, and kaizen have been transferred to SME owners and managers. The experts at the April meeting examined the concept of competitive strategy and how it could be applied effectively in the Asia-Pacific SME context. They were assisted by examples of the implementation of competitive strategy in case studies provided by Hitotsubashi University covering all the important elements needed.

The power of data

(Continued from page 1)

statistics offices in real time to ensure timely economic growth comparisons. The map covers 88 countries throughout the world, including Europe and the Americas, and we are working to expand to the Gulf States and oil-producing countries. By taking a look at quarterly movements, short-term economic growth fluctuations can be seen on a wide array of variables."

The R&P officer hopes that more people will make use of the resources offered. "Our information, of course, should be of value to national productivity organizations. The growth map can also help people looking for business and investment opportunities to examine the rapidly changing status of various Asian economies. The map is also useful for individual analyses. It can help policymakers to determine the true state of their economies in comparison with neighboring countries and the rest of the world."

Data are powerful, Asano reiterated. "I believe that we have been able to achieve tangible research outputs, based on solid methodology. These efforts could not have been realized without our collaboration framework with Keio University." Productivity specialist Prof. Koji Nomura at the Keio Economic Observatory, Keio University, has been a key player in the projects, providing invaluable contributions and support.

"On a cold March day three and a half years ago, I knocked on the door of Professor Koji Nomura's office in Tokyo and we ended up discussing the future APO productivity measurement project for six hours," recalled Asano. Prof. Nomura is a widely recognized expert in the fields of economic measurement and productivity analysis, with numerous publications and other accomplishments to his credit, including his tenure as Senior Research Fellow at the Economic and Social Research Institute, a "forum for knowledge" set up under former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

"I went to Professor Nomura with a desire to create a truly useful productivity measurement database that was scientifically sound and credible and that would become an asset for the APO and all of the Asia-Pacific region. Official statistics are, after all, part of the basic intellectual infrastructure of a country; I want to help transform the intangible infrastructure of our member countries into a key to further economic development. I told Prof. Nomura that while I was not an expert in the field, I was eager to learn and would handle all the coordination necessary for the collaboration between the APO Secretariat and Keio Economic Observatory. I needed his help and partnership to create the database as an important infrastructure for Asia."

The results and ongoing progress of the Research and Planning Department efforts can be seen on the APO Web site (http://www.apo-tokyo.org/PDB.html#apodb_data).

Bangladesh hosts KM practitioners

Knowledge management (KM) is effective in driving excellence and growth in business and has the potential to make a significant difference in the performance of SMEs. Interest in KM among NPOs and APO member countries has been on the rise, as evident in an e-learning course on Knowledge Management Concepts and Practices organized by the Secretariat in February and March in which over 300 participants from 15 member countries enrolled.

As a follow-up, an in-depth training course on Knowledge Management for NPO Trainers and Facilitators was hosted by the National Productivity Organisation of Bangladesh, 9–13 May 2010. Twenty participants from 14 APO member countries gathered in Dhaka to acquire advanced knowledge of KM tools and techniques and consolidate specialist skills in KM facilitation and consultancy. The course was designed to provide guided assistance to NPO trainers and consultants in the application of a specific skill set under the APO KM framework in practical, clear steps.

APO Expert Praba Nair briefs participants during a KM training group exercise in Dhaka 11 May 2010.

Inaugurating the course, the Hon. Dilip Barua, Minister of Industries, Government of Bangladesh, said that the present-day knowledge economy demands highly trained, efficient, skilled human resources, which are critical in "improving the living conditions of our common people and building a poverty-free, stable, democratic, and harmonious Bangladesh." He went on to commend the APO for strengthening the productivity movement in Bangladesh and its other member countries.

According to Secretariat Research and Planning Officer Kamlesh Prakash, the initial interest of the APO was in understanding what KM is and why it is relevant to member countries. However, the focus has now changed to how it can be implemented. For this reason, the APO developed an entire suite of KM training materials including the *KM Facilitators Guide*, *KM Case Studies*, and *KM Tools and Techniques Manual* and completed two KM demonstration projects in India and the Philippines. Another practical manual targeting SME owners is being developed.

An overview of the APO's KM framework was presented by Elena Cruz, of the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP). She also gave a detailed case study of Moonbake, Inc., a snack producer that is a member of the SME Benchmarking Group set up by the DAP. Moonbake's KM results have been positive, encouraging other SMEs in the Philippines and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific to undertake similar efforts.

The e-learning course and the face-to-face training in Bangladesh were sufficient to prepare Noshaba Iftikhar, a trainer in the NPO of Pakistan in Islamabad, to initiate KM projects within the NPO and SMEs in Pakistan. She remarked, "I particularly liked the sessions on communities of practice and the knowledge café, and look forward to the opportunity to apply them in Pakistan."

Aek-orn Pramotekul, of the Human Resources Department of Bangchak Petroleum Co., Ltd., Thailand, was grateful for being selected as a participant in the KM e-learning course in February as well as the Dhaka face-to-face course. "The e-learning was a blessing for me, and I acquired practical knowledge of KM tools like storytelling, communities of practice, and collaborative workspaces in Bangladesh. Now I can apply these techniques in my company and I can't wait," she commented. Aek-orn currently convenes four communities of practice in Bangchak Petroleum and plans to introduce more KM tools.

Collaborative workspaces were one feature of the presentation by Naoki Ogiwara, of Fuji Xerox, Japan. They are a low-cost yet surprisingly effective method of creating and sharing group knowledge. Ogiwara pointed out that while a formal meeting room is not necessarily a good place for team collaboration, small spaces equipped with simple devices like paper, magnetic strips, and magnets allow team members to organize, rearrange, and discuss ideas. One key to making collaborative workspaces effective is to give employees a reason to return there, which could include the placement of mailboxes, printers, or copy machines or the provision of drinks, snacks, and professional journals and newspapers.

The concept of the knowledge café, pioneered by David Gurteen, was explained in detail by Praba Nair, of KDi Asia, Singapore. He described it as "a group discussion to reflect and to develop and share any thoughts and insights that will emerge in a very nonconfrontational way." The guidelines for a meaningful knowledge café are: 1) comprised of between 15 and 50 participants, with 30 being ideal; 2) taking one to two hours; 3) a focus on conversation, with presentations and feedback sessions not required; and 4) conducted at any point in time, depending on workloads and organizational culture. Ideally, after participation in a knowledge café, each member leaves feeling more motivated and inspired.

Dr. Rajat Sharma, Deputy Director, Economic Services of the National Productivity Council of India, stated, "I was excited to undertake the e-learning course on KM along with others from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, and there was a lot of sharing among us. The course in Bangladesh offered the chance to meet fellow participants and experience real-time, interactive training. This made KM easy for me to understand and customize for our clients back home."

As part of the course, the participants formulated individual action plans and were eager to implement them upon returning home.

Program calendar

August

Sri Lanka

Training Course on Planning and Management of Community-based Rural Tourism and Agrotourism Enterprises, 10–17 August 2010.

▶ Objectives: To equip participants with knowledge of the concept of rural tourism and help them develop skills in planning, managing, and marketing rural tourism projects and products.

▶ Participants: Managers and officers of rural tourism-oriented enterprises, national and local governments, and NGOs involved in the promotion and/or management of community-based rural tourism projects, or academics involved in the provision of extension and training to local tourism stakeholders.

Republic of Korea

Training Course on the Food Safety Management System ISO22000:2005 for Auditors/Lead Auditors, 23–27 August 2010.

▶ Objectives: To acquire the knowledge and skills to audit according to the ISO22000:2005 food safety management system (FSMS) and satisfy the requirements for registration as an FSMS auditor.

▶ Participants: Management personnel working in organizations related to the food chain, or personnel in charge of ISO22000 implementation/ ISO22000/HACCP auditors; and consultants of NPOs or other organizations involved in FSMS or in charge of promoting ISO22000.

Study Meeting on the Eco-products Database, 31 August–3 September 2010.

▶ Objectives: To review recent developments in the *Eco-products Directory*; formulate practical measures for collecting eco-product data and promoting the directory to enhance Green Productivity; discuss the criteria for eco-products and -services in the region; and develop plans for producing eco-product directories at national level.

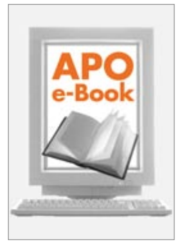
▶ Participants: Managers and officers from Green Purchasing Networks and ecolabeling organizations and senior officials from environmental ministries in charge of ecolabeling/certification.

Please contact your NPO for details of future activities, including eligibility for participation. The project details along with the address of your NPO are available from the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

Photo op

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka (L) smiles as he presents Agriculture Program Officer Muhammad Saeed with a Long Service Award recognizing his 10 years with the Secretariat during a ceremony marking the 49th anniversary of the establishment of the APO 10 May 2010.

New APO publication



ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS: Innovations and Fundamentals

APO 146 pp. May 2010
ISBN: 92-833-7090-2 (e-edition)

APO/NPO Update

New Acting Director of the Agriculture Department in APO Secretariat

Mr. Joselito Cruz Bernardo, Senior Program Officer, Secretariat Agriculture Department, was appointed Acting Director of the Agriculture Department, w.e.f. 8 May 2010.

The August deadline is approaching for this year's APO Productivity Photo Contest.
We're waiting for pictures that illustrate efforts in productivity (people working together for improvement in agriculture, industry, schools, communities... there are topics all around us). For details, see our Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org).

A scene of daily life captured in Chonburi, Thailand, by Nanuch Nijnananant, Thailand, Merit Prize, APO Photo Contest 2001

20th Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Eco-products International Fair

The 20th Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) was held at the APO Secretariat in Tokyo on 19 May 2010. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Takashi Yamagishi, new chairperson of the EPIF Preparatory Committee and Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer of Teijin Limited, and attended by around 30 members who are also members of the Green Productivity Advisory Committee (GPAC), officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Ministry of the Environment of Japan, and others.

Teijin Ltd. Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer and newly elected EPIF Preparatory Committee Chairperson Takashi Yamagishi (standing) reviewing the 2010 EPIF

Chairperson Yamagishi highly evaluated the implementation results of the sixth EPIF in Jakarta, Indonesia, 4–7 March 2010. The event attracted 90,004 visitors over four days. Chairperson Yamagishi emphasized that the sixth EPIF had contributed to the promotion of environmentally friendly products and services in Indonesia. Based on the experience with the sixth EPIF, the Preparatory Committee meeting acknowledged the importance of incorporating environmental factors at the center of a company's business policy. Japanese businesses are taking a leading role in conserving the global environment and conveying this concept to the world.

Another major subject of the meeting was the report on the preparation status of the next EPIF scheduled to be held in New Delhi, India, 3–6 March 2011. The Secretariat reported general information on the preparatory work and the new implementation structure for the EPIF 2011 to the committee members. It was decided that further deliberations on ideas and suggestions for the 2011 fair would be necessary. Other topics discussed during the meeting include the promotion plan for the EPIF 2011 across India and other APO member countries, measures to promote environmentally friendly products and services among consumers and business partners, and forging stronger networks to work for the global environment.

In wrapping up the meeting, Chairperson Yamagishi reiterated the role of the EPIF Preparatory Committee in organizing the seventh EPIF in New Delhi, encouraging members to bring innovative ideas and information to the table to ensure sound foundations for promoting Green Productivity through the event and to expand networks in the region and beyond to support conservation globally.

People behind the scenes: Alwina binti Alwi Tan

This young lady who hails from Malaysia likes sports, shopping, watching movies, and cooking during her free time.

Alwina is in the Customer Relation Unit of the Strategic Planning and Corporate Communication Department, which is in charge of handling customers' complaints, feedback, inquiries, and the Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) Business Information Centre. In addition, she represents the MPC on a committee for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry's weekly bulletin and other corporate communication tasks.

The 52nd session of the APO Governing Body (GBM) was the first international program Alwina handled. She still feels the sense of excitement that ran through her when she was first informed that she would be part of the MPC's GBM team. "It was truly a challenge for me to be directly involved in an international program such as the GBM," she confirmed.

The preparations for the GBM started five months prior to the day the delegates and advisers arrived in Kuala Lumpur. Aside from having a detailed checklist, Alwina made sure that discussions and meetings were held regularly with her superior and colleagues to troubleshoot anything that might possibly occur.

She was lucky to have a good team to work with, she acknowledged. Regular communication, especially through e-mail messages with the APO Secretariat, APO Conference Officer, APO Liaison Officer for Malaysia, and other colleagues all helped to make the GBM a success.

Reminiscing about the good times enjoyed during the GBM and preparatory period, when her specific role included assisting with hotel logistics, flight schedules, and arranging the welcome dinner, Alwina recalled that the toughest aspects were last-minute changes in either flights or the names of delegates. These continued to occur even up until the day before the GBM convened, but all were coped with smoothly. "However, once the participants arrived in Kuala Lumpur, all my worries began to fade. I felt happy and relieved, but know that the next challenge awaits," she said. "Even though not everything went as expected, as there were last-minute changes, we managed to overcome them with the help of our Conference Officer and the APO Secretariat staff."

Alwina was sure that all the APO delegates enjoyed their stay in Malaysia based on their smiling faces. She regarded the GBM as a valuable experience, allowing her to work behind the scenes and get to know people and cultures from different countries. She also appreciated the experience she gained from working with the APO Secretariat staff. Alwina's advice for others who would like to take on similar responsibilities in event preparation is to be diligent. "This kind of job requires a lot of preparation, continuous communication, and commitment. Always be prepared and ready to act if there is any unexpected or sudden change in the flow of the program."

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