

Agricultural Training Graduation Ceremony Speech – 10/8/2013

President Leas, graduates, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I would like to congratulate the trainees who are graduating today and also to express my appreciation to Big Bend Community College and the Big Bend Community College Foundation, UC Davis, the host farmers and host families, and everyone involved in the Japanese Agricultural Training Program who has strived to make the program such a success. Your dedication and commitment have truly paid off and I hope that all of you will continue to support this wonderful program for many years to come.

Graduates, as you prepare to move on to the next stage in your lives I encourage you to reflect upon your experiences in the US and consider how you can best utilize this valuable training in the future. You have had the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that you would not have been able to acquire in Japan and I believe that this experience has helped you grow. You are now in the perfect position to give back and serve as leaders in your local communities.

Japanese agriculture is in a tough situation. The earthquake and tsunami damaged farmland and agricultural facilities and there is still a long road ahead. But rather than simply restore the affected areas, the focus throughout Japan has turned to reconstruction and developing even better systems of agriculture. To accomplish these forward-looking goals, Japan needs people like all of you to take on an active role, not just in Tohoku, but wherever you go.

It is our sincerest hope that you will continue to pursue lifelong learning, even while you demonstrate the skills you have learned over the past 18 months, to keep up with this competitive and ever-changing world. Congratulations and good luck.

Thank you.