

[FY2025 edition]

Best Practices on Acceptance of Specified Skilled Workers in the Agricultural Field

Japan Vegetable Co., Ltd. (Nihon Agri, Inc.)

– Developing sweet potato export business, with a foreign worker as the production team leader –

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| <p>Basic information Location: Kakegawa City, Shizuoka Prefecture Parent company: Nihon Agri, Inc. Cultivation area: 6 ha (open field), 2 greenhouses Main crop: Sweet potato Employee composition: 28 Japanese + 6 foreigners (all Indonesians) Specified skilled worker (ii): 2 workers</p> |  |
| <p>Characteristic initiatives (support for career advancement and capacity building)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) The company shows the path to be promoted to leaders regardless of whether they are Japanese or foreign workers. Currently, the leader of the production team is a foreign worker who drafts the annual production plan, manages the progress, and also visits farmers in large-scale production areas for inspection.(2) The company will provide a 100% subsidy for obtaining driver's licenses for automobiles, heavy machinery, forklifts, etc. | |
| <p>[New entry to develop the sweet potato export business]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) The parent company exports apples and has a working knowledge of exports. Therefore, we started operating in Shizuoka as a place for the production and export of sweet potatoes, which are popular in Asia. When we were having trouble securing human resources, we heard that local companies were hiring foreign nationals who were very good workers, so we accepted specified skilled workers at the same time as we launched our business. Securing talented human resources was an urgent task for our business to regenerate devastated land and expand production.(2) At first, we paid the support fee to a registered support organization, but because of the high cost, we switched to supporting ourselves. It was difficult to prepare documents, but we were able to allot this expense to further expand the recruitment of talented foreign workers. This has become a major contribution to our business development. | |
| <p>[Initiatives for career advancement and support for capacity building]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Initiatives for career advancement<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Twice a year, employees are given the opportunity to receive a salary increase or promotion based on personnel performance evaluation and interviews, using an evaluation sheet of the job description written by the employee in question. This provides a path to be promoted to team leaders, such as farm manager, site manager, and instructor, regardless of whether they are Japanese or foreign workers.2) Before an interview with the representative or the general manager of the production division for personnel performance evaluation, all members of | |

the production team and the staff of the Corporate Planning Office hold a meeting to confirm that the contents of the evaluation sheet properly reflect the individual's abilities.

3) The current leader of the production team is the specified skilled worker (i) who has been employed since the start of the business.

(2) Initiatives and support for capacity building

1) Team leaders also take part in visits to large-scale production areas where they learn techniques from other farmers.

2) By providing PCs, we have started to take initiatives to manage inventory, enter daily reports to monitor the progress status, and manage figures, such as drafting annual production plans.

3) For obtaining driver's licenses for automobiles, heavy machinery, forklifts, etc., 100% of the training fee is subsidized. Moreover, training hours are also subject to salary payments, and we provide transportation to and from the driving school so that they don't have to pay for commuting to the school. Currently, five out of six employees have obtained some kind of licenses; four of them have a forklift license, and two each have a special large motor vehicle license, a mid-sized motor vehicle license, and a standard motor vehicle license.

4) As for the exam for Specified Skilled Worker (ii), we provided support for documents. As a company, we are not ready to provide support, but the content of the study is advanced, and if they don't pass, their status of residence will no longer be valid. Therefore, we provided support for the examination procedures and printing of textbooks. There are currently two workers who have passed the exam (ii), and they are leading our business. It is very reassuring that they can be enrolled without any limitation on the period of stay as colleagues who will develop the business together.

[Interviews with foreign workers]



Mr. Rio (specified skilled worker (ii) status holder)



Left: Mr. Randy (specified skilled worker (i) status holder, Production Team Leader)
Right: Mr. Handoko (specified skilled worker (ii) status holder)

(1) Why are you working in Japan and how long are you planning to work in Japan?

Rio: There weren't many jobs in my home country, and the income in Japan is higher than back home, so I wanted to earn enough for my family. I also

wanted to learn about the culture and how to work in Japan. I would like to work for a few more years.

Handoko: I thought I could earn more income in Japan than in my own country. Other than that, I want to study how to engage in farming, especially growing sweet potatoes. I haven't decided when to go back yet. I passed the exam for Specified Skilled Worker (ii) last year.

Randy: The reason is because of a high income and my desire to learn the techniques of farming. I came to Japan in 2016, and after working as a technical intern trainee at another farm, I took the exam for Specified Skilled Worker (i). Next year, I will take the exam for Specified Skilled Worker (ii). If possible, I would like to bring my family in the future.

(2) Please tell us about your work.

Rio: I work as a leader for part-timers in fruit selection. I set up a work schedule for the day, such as what kind of sweet potato to ship by what time and how many boxes to where, and manage the entire process so that orders can be fulfilled while giving instructions on-site.

Randy: I do everything from raising sweet potato seedlings to cultivating fields and harvesting.

Handoko: I have the same work as Randy. We're working together.

(3) Is your workplace easy to work in? What makes it worthwhile?

Randy: It is comfortable to work. I think it's great that, in this workplace, there is an atmosphere of working hard together, regardless of nationality. Now I'm a leader in the production department, and it's very rewarding to see the path of my career.

Handoko: They let me have different tasks, and I feel like we're all companions and work hard together, so it's quite easy to work. Our nationality doesn't determine our roles or the content of work.

(4) Are you communicating well in your workplace? Are there any points you focus on to facilitate it?

Rio: In our work at the fruit sorting center, we have over 20 Japanese part-timers. I consult with their coordinators and ask to convey to them my instructions on work. In addition, they are following me not just because of what I say but because I take the initiative.

(5) Is there anything you pay particular attention to in terms of safety and health at work?

Rio: When I drive a forklift to stack up containers for shipping, I need to be very careful because I pass by many workers. Each container weighs more than 20 kg, and 24 containers are placed on one pallet, which is stacked in 3 or 4 tiers. Several forklifts are operated at the same time, so I am especially careful to ensure there are no dangers.

Randy: I drive with extra care when transporting during harvest.

Handoko: I was careful about how I handled the machines and how I sprayed pesticides, but since last year, we started using drones to spray chemicals.

(6) How is your residence and interaction with local residents?

Rio: My house is very close to the fruit sorting center, about 3 minutes by bicycle, which is very nice.

Since my friend invited me, I play volleyball at the local gymnasium.

Randy: I live in the same place as Rio. The room is for two people, and each has a private room. I don't feel any inconvenience. I participate in volleyball with Rio. It's a club that both foreigners and Japanese can enjoy together.

(7) How did you study for the exam for Specified Skilled Worker (ii)?

Rio: I'm not good at studying by looking at books, but for about a month before the exam, I studied by seeing YouTube videos and looking at textbooks and workbooks on mobile phones and computers. At the local community center, there is a volunteer who teaches Japanese and prepared a book for the Japanese test.

Handoko: I studied by reading texts posted on the website and watching YouTube. YouTube has something like a live streaming class, and it's sorted by items, which makes it easy to study. I also went to study Japanese at the community center. Japanese people are amazing, as they volunteer to do such things.

(8) What are your future goals, and the future plan in your home country?

Rio: I don't know how many years from now it will be, but when I go back to my country, I want to make an oil palm field (for palm oil).

Handoko: I'm not planning to go home right away, but I would like to open my own store. It will be like a Japanese supermarket.

Randy: My wife likes to cook, so we'd like to have a cafe or something.