

Foreword



Our previous director, Professor Shinobu Inanaga, has been transferred to the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS), and new members are now advancing our studies. The Core University Program established by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) has already celebrated its the fifth year and will receive an intermediate evaluation this year. On September 3 and 4, 2005, the Japan-China joint open seminar titled “Japan-China Joint Open Seminar on Combating Desertification and Enhancing Rural Development in Inland China” was held in Yangling, China. More than 60 Japanese and Chinese

researchers attended the seminar, where they announced research results and actively exchanged opinions. Both Japanese and Chinese researchers agreed with the newly established research field and the second stage plan.

The 21st Century COE Program “Program for Arid Land Science” has entered its fourth year. We are developing a new arid-land science that is without precedent to educate young researchers for fulfilling stated objectives. The program will be based on the knowledge and technologies in the agricultural field established by our university, and overseas research and educational bases, such as the Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, CAS, Xinjiang Agricultural University in China, and ICARDA in Syria, will be established in the arid regions of the world.

It is necessary for Japan, as a ratifying country of UNCCD, to help arid areas financially and technically. The Arid Land Research Center is strengthening both domestic and international collaboration in arid-land studies.

International society is taking measures against environmental problems, poverty and starvation around the globe. The arid-land studies and these problems are closely related, and close cooperation spanning international boundaries and generations is becoming more and more important.

Next year, 2006, will be the international year of deserts and desertification. The Arid Land Research Center, as a national joint-use research facility and an international research organization specializing in arid-land studies, plans to hold a symposium on arid-land studies in the last year of the 21st Century COE Program.

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