

Foreword



Our program ‘Program for Arid Land Science’ of the 21st Century COE Program finished at the end of financial year 2006 and was awarded the highest rating by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

In 2007, the Arid Land Research Center’s (ALRC’s) proposal of ‘Global Center of Excellence for Dryland Science’ was adopted as a Global COE Program funded by MEXT, which is the successor program of the 21st Century COE Program. This program provides funding support for establishing education and research centers that perform at the apex of global excellence to elevate the international competitiveness of the Japanese Universities. Our goal is to develop world-class human resources, who will go on to become world leaders in their respective fields, to propel world-class research activities, and to establish a global academic network in the field of dryland sciences. For further development of our dryland studies, we strengthened the network of international collaboration with the Desert Research Institute (DRI), Nevada, USA, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Aleppo, Syria.

The Core University Program by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) has already completed the seventh years. On September 24 and 25, 2007, Chinese Academy of Science (CAS) and JSPS jointly held a seminar on “Combating Desertification and Development in inland China” in Yangling, China. About 80 Japanese and Chinese researchers participated in the seminar and research results were presented.

In order to improve management of ALRC as a national joint-use research facility and an international research organization specialized in arid land studies, we held the meeting ‘the 2007 International External Review of the ALRC’ from 26 to 27 July 2007. The environment surrounding Japanese universities is changing rapidly, and universities themselves are also being strictly evaluated by Japanese society, though, we are learning how ALRC is perceived and doing our best to improve every aspect of ALRC.

It is necessary for Japan, as one of the countries who ratified the UNCCD, to help arid areas financially and technically. Arid Land Research Center is strengthening both domestic and international collaborations in arid land studies and distinguished itself as one of world’s leading universities in this field.

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