

January 22, 2009

## IM-JAPAN MEETS JAPAN'S SOYBEAN INDUSTRY AT THE START OF 2009

Japan Country Director, LaVerne E. Brabant, and Masi Tateishi, Marketing Manager of ASA-IM Japan participated in annual New Year meetings, and receptions of our food soybean industry customers. These included: The Tokyo Soybean Wholesalers Association, Japan Tofu Association, and Japan Soymilk Association.

While the mood is somewhat guarded this year with the threat of further economic contraction in Japan as the economy slows in relation to the global financial crisis, a majority of our customers point out there may still be opportunities. This is particularly true for new high-value and value-added soy products that appeal to consumers during times of economic slowdowns like now. There is even a saying in the Japanese Food Industry that traditional soy products such as tofu, natto and particularly miso are more or less immune to economy slowdowns given consumers tend to stop going out to eat and return home to cook with moderately priced ingredients like protein and nutrition rich like soy. For the most part the soy food industry appears optimistic.

At the Soybean Wholesalers Association meeting, ASA-IM Country Director LaVerne Brabant provided introductory New Year's remarks and pointed out that the US soybean industry is committed to supplying soybeans to the Japanese market as well as working with our customers by listening to them about how we can improve our already good relationship. He went on to say that working together, American and Japanese industries will be in a better position to weather our many market challenges as well as exploit opportunities which still very much exist in Japan.

The Government of Japan (GOJ) introduced a national (mandatory) Chronic Disease Prevention Program with medical examinations focused on Metabolic Syndrome (obesity) required under the new Ministry of the Health, Labor and Welfare Law as of April 2008. As the result, many food manufacturers are marketing soy based products for the prevention of "Metabolic Syndrome" (obesity). This is good news, figuratively and literally, for Japanese soy food, healthcare and pharmaceutical makers.



Pictures: Image Picture: Soymilk Yogurt and Soy Sauce

