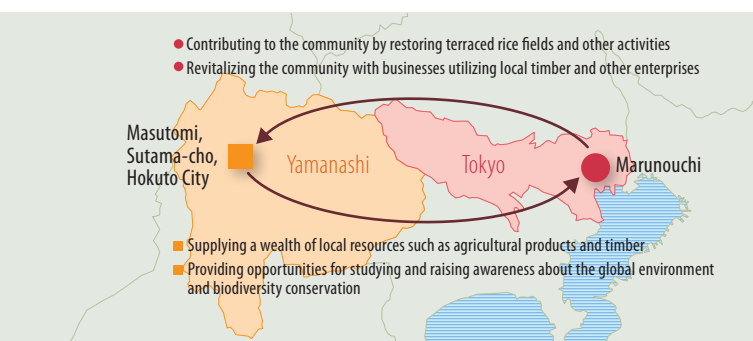


“Experience Nature” project brings together urban and rural communities

The Mitsubishi Estate Group supports the “Experience Nature” project, which gives Group employees and their families opportunities to experience land clearing and tree thinning in rural communities. The project is intended to foster a society in which urban and rural communities energize one another and contribute to each other’s development.



Creating a sustainable society where cities and rural communities support one another

The Mitsubishi Estate Group launched the “Experience Nature” project in 2008, with the goal of fostering a society where cities and rural communities revitalize each other. Mitsubishi Estate collaborates with the NPO Egao Tsunagete (which literally means “connecting smiles” in Japanese), at work in Hokuto City in Yamanashi Prefecture, to create opportunities for city residents to interact with people from the Masutomi area, which is suffering from population decline and aging. The project aims to promote awareness of the issues faced by urban areas and rural villages in order to help build a sustainable society where they support one another.

With this aim, Mitsubishi Estate holds a range of experiential programs for Mitsubishi Estate Group employees and residents of the condominiums managed by Mitsubishi Jisho Community Co., Ltd., including clearing fields at the “Experience Nature Farm” and thinning trees. In fiscal 2010, new experiential programs were planned to deepen interaction between the communities. One of these was the Community House Project, in

which local forest resources are used to build a space in which local residents and visitors from the city can interact. Using wood



Community house building

thinned from the nearby forest (*hinoki* cypress and larch), a simple resting space was built with the cooperation of Mitsubishi Estate Home Co., Ltd., using a 2x4 construction method. The participants became immersed in the construction work, breathing in the good aroma of the fresh wood under the clear blue sky.

Promoting community revitalization by integrating business activities and local resources

In addition, the Mitsubishi Estate Group is progressively incorporating programs to link the project with its business activities. Combining local resources such as timber and agricultural products with the company’s management resources to create new value revitalizes the community, and this is one of the key approaches of the Experience Nature project.

For example, Mitsubishi Estate Home Co., Ltd., which utilizes Japan-grown timber to ensure the sustainable and sound development of the Japanese timber industry, has previously considered using timber grown in Yamanashi Prefecture through the Experience Nature project, and decided to use products (I-type joists) marked as “Yamanashi Prefecture Timber” as a standard feature in custom-order homes.

Going forward, the company will take steps to ensure that materials can be procured and costs stabilized in anticipation of the standard adoption of Japan-grown timber for all structural components, while also building affiliations to raise customers’ awareness of Japan-grown forest resources.

In September 2010, with the aim of revitalizing the local community through agricultural products, the “Try Yamanashi” Fair was held (sponsored by the Yamanashi Prefectural Federation of Societies of Commerce and Industry). The fair offered dishes all using food produced in Yamanashi Prefecture, such as local beef and pork. The fair was held in the Marunouchi House, the food and drink area of the Shin-Marunouchi Building in the Marunouchi area. In October 2010, rice, wheat and other agricultural products grown on the Experience Nature Farm were sold at the “Blue Sky Market x Marunouchi Market,” also held in the Marunouchi Building. The event attracted many people such as office workers from the Marunouchi area, chefs from nearby restaurants and participants in the experiential tours.

Highlight

Project grows brewer's rice without agricultural chemicals

Sake made from rice grown in terraced rice fields sold in Marunouchi restaurants

The project to grow brewer's rice was an initiative aimed at creating sake using the Japan-grown brewer's rice Hitogokochi, grown without using agricultural chemicals.



Junmai-shu "Marunouchi" sake

Marunouchi area employees and Marunouchi Group employees had worked together with local residents to plant the rice seedlings and harvest the rice on rice terraces* that had been reclaimed by clearing unused agricultural land.

The rice seedlings were planted in May 2010 and harvested in October. Using the harvested rice, the *junmai-shu* ("pure rice sake") named "Marunouchi" was brewed by Yorozuya, a sake brewer that was founded over 210 years ago in Yamanashi Prefecture. It went on sale in Marunouchi area restaurants from late February 2011. Overall, the project



Tour of sake brewery

helped to promote the reclamation of wasteland and expand sales channels to the Tokyo metropolitan area, a major center of consumer activity.

* A rice terrace is a rice paddy on a series of steps on the slope of a mountain or hill. Rice terraces play many roles, including preventing landslides and flooding, replenishing groundwater as the rainwater and agricultural water permeates the soil, and preserving the abundant biodiversity.

Tours held in fiscal 2010

CSR Tour

(For Mitsubishi Estate Group employees)

- April 24: Land-clearing experience and Kanayama trek
- August 6 – 7: Parent-child camping trip to experience rural community
- October 20: Community House Project (building wall)

"Experience Nature" bus tour

(For residents of condominiums managed by Mitsubishi Jisho Community)

- May 22: Parent-child rice-planting experience and forest experience
- August 20: Parent-child summer vegetable-harvesting experience, experience with *buri-nawa* (using rope and two sticks to climb trees) and river play

Brewer's rice growing tour

(For Marunouchi area workers, Mitsubishi Estate Group employees)

- May 29: Rice-planting experience and sake-making seminar
- October 9: Rice-harvesting experience and naming workshop

Experience Nature Club event

(Experience Nature Club*, only for those who had registered)

- August 28 – 29: Community House Project (preparing floor)
- November 20: Harvest festival (miso-making event)
- February 12: Brewer's rice-growing tour (tour of sake brewery)

* The Experience Nature Club is an urban-rural community club for participants in the Experience Nature project.

Interaction between cities and rural communities revives Japan's fertile country landscape of *satoyama*, a habitat for diverse life forms

These rice terraces represent precious land that has been passed down through the generations, but those of us who inherited it, including me, left the land fallow, and it fell into ruin. In 2008, the land-clearing experience sponsored by the Experience Nature project was the trigger for a rice terrace restoration project the following year. In May, the laughter of the children who came to plant the rice seedlings echoed through the fields. We took up the challenge of making sake in 2010, and the sake we produced had a very special taste for me.



Kiyoaki Obi

Owner of a rice terrace, residing in Minami-Alps City, Yamanashi Prefecture

Realizing that the city's food comes from agricultural communities

In a light rain, we sheared the yellow stalks of rice with a sickle and set them out to dry in the sun. As someone who works with food every day, visiting the producing region and harvesting brewer's rice while getting a feel for the region itself was a valuable experience, and it made me realize again that the city's food comes from agricultural communities. When we offer the finished *junmai-shu* "Marunouchi" sake in our restaurant, I hope to describe my role in making it to customers and convey the appeal of sake, an integral part of Japan's traditional culture.



Mamoru Sugiyama

Manager of the sushi restaurant, Ginza Sushiko Honten

