

Pavilion Organizer - PARAGUAY

EMBASSY OF PARAGUAY
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**Q: What are your main activities as an ambassador?**

My principal mission is to promote trade and investment in Paraguay. Paraguay and Japan share a historically friendly and peaceful relationship and both countries have equal valuations for each other. However, the food production of both countries is obviously different. We are strong exporters of soybeans, beef, corn, yucca starch, wheat and sesame seeds. We also export chia seeds, mate, and stevia. I help promote these products to Japan.

Q: Please tell us more about each product.

Let me begin with soybeans. Japan and Paraguay are closely connected through soybeans. In fact, the Japanese farmers were the ones who brought soybeans to Paraguay. After WWII,

many Japanese who returned from Manchuria and other southern countries were encouraged by the Japanese government to emigrate. Paraguay accepted new Japanese immigrants when other countries were reluctant to accept them anymore. The Japanese government promoted planned immigration with JICA, which purchased fertile woods and lands of Paraguay to bring in Japanese farmers. For the Japanese people, soy sauce and miso are essential food items. Since the Japanese immigrants needed soybeans in order to make these two items, they brought seeds from Japan, began farming, and it all started from there. Currently, Paraguay is the sixth largest soybean producer in the world and fourth largest exporter.

Another product that we want to promote in Japan is sesame seed. We are especially focusing on white sesame. The current production volume in Paraguay is 30,000 tons, but we are working on increasing this figure to 60,000 tons. Eighty percent of all Paraguayan sesame comes to Japan. Sesame is important for us because it has a high economic and social impact for our smallholder farmers. Because they are the ones producing all the sesame, our Government is putting great effort into promoting its exports. Paraguayan sesame tastes good and is high in quality.

Paraguay is also strong in producing beef, and we are the fifth largest exporter in the world after India, Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition to Russia, the number one importer of Paraguayan beef, Chile and Brazil are also major importing countries.



Q: Tell us about the potentials of Paraguay.

Products are highly competitive these days and there are many types of customers. I work with our exporters to let them know what the Japanese customers' demands are, so they can

comply with them.

Q: Is this way of thinking accepted by people of Paraguay?

It's accepted. They have a strong passion to export to Japan. We are putting all our efforts into adjusting our standards to the Japanese market.

Q: What are other products of Paraguay?

I do not think many people know about this, but mate tea (*ilex paraguariensis*) is native from Paraguay. Hot tea is called mate and cold tea is called terere. Both are made from the same tealeaf, but we drink mostly terere especially in the summer time throughout the day. There is also "mate cocido", a tea prepared by roasting tealeaves with sugar. In Japan, we sell three types of mate: tealeaves, tea bags, and instant. The ready to drink mate tea sold in Japan is mostly the roasted type but without sugar.

Another product is stevia. Stevia is a type of leaf, also native from our country, that naturally grows in the forest. Native people of Paraguay used stevia as a type of medicine. A Japanese importer found this product interesting and sent dried stevia to Japan. Currently, crystalized stevia has the highest demand since it can be used in the same way as sugar. Recently, we have been exporting dried stevia to Japan to use it as a fertilizer. For example, the sugar content of the cherry increased 20% when dried stevia was used as a fertilizer. Dried stevia can also be used as animal feed for cows.

Q: Tell us about Paraguayan food culture.

We have a very unique cuisine that you will not find anywhere else in Latin America. Basically, Paraguayan cuisine is a mix of our native food culture and the influence of Spanish colonization. Our basic ingredients are corn, cassava, starch, and beans from the native culture, and beef, potato, vegetable, and rice from the Spanish. Of course, we also have mate and terere. There is a Paraguayan restaurant in Matsudo, Chiba where you can enjoy Paraguayan food.



In Paraguay, barbeque is part of our culture. Families would gather on Sundays for a family barbeque and men in the house would prepare the meat. We slowly cook it with charcoal using the barbeque grill that is built into the house and cut it into thick slices. Most houses have a big barbeque grill. We often say that if you do not have a barbeque grill, your house is not complete.

Q: What kind of investment promotion activities are you engaged in?

What I put the most emphasis on is the economic activities. The population of Paraguay is continuing to increase and 74% are under the age of 34. This is the opposite of Japan. Since there are many young workers in Paraguay, we are trying to increase foreign investments. The minimum monthly wage of Paraguay is about \$400 and is much lower compared to neighboring countries. Since the industrial sector is growing in Paraguay, I am inviting Japanese companies to set up new factories and recruit a large number of the local population. For example, I helped promote the entry of an automobile factory. There is a process called wire harnessing where you combine the different automobile parts together. This is purely based on human labor, so many people were recruited at this factory. Currently, there are three Japanese companies from the auto parts sector in Paraguay.

In addition to that, due to the country's high economic growth in recent years, Paraguay needs lots of investments in infrastructure. In order to improve this situation, we are working on public-private partnerships, especially on infrastructure development for roads and waterways. Actually, one of the Japanese companies that are in Paraguay is manufacturing barges that can carry heavy cargo on inland waterways and ports.

Q: What were the achievements of Foodex?

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Q: What are your future views for trade with Japan?

Trade with Japan has been one way for many decades, mainly Japanese manufactured products coming into our country. Since Paraguay has a free market and free trade policy, we will never restrict imports from Japan even if it is one way, but we do want to balance our bilateral trade and have more Paraguayan products in the Japanese market too.