

Advisory Council 2007

The Advisory Council 2007 met on 19 March 2008 at NIAES to provide outside opinions and recommendations on the management of NIAES. The members of the council are external experts and include a professor, a consumer representative, and the directors of other independent administrative institutions (see Appendix).

The following comments were made:

- (1) NIAES's mission is closely linked with national policy, and it deserves praise for producing a steady stream of research results, but I hope that it also dares to tackle difficult research themes.
- (2) Insofar as most people are now aware of the issue of global warming, and the cultivation of GM crops is fast becoming an issue that can no longer be ignored, the research being carried out by NIAES is of considerable interest to the general public. NIAES should endeavor to accelerate research in line with the needs of the age, and to inform the public of the results of its research to date.
- (3) NIAES needs to produce research results that can be used at the front line of agriculture. NIAES conducts a lot of basic research, but it should also focus on activities aimed at promoting the practical application of results that lend themselves to such endeavor.
- (4) One gets the impression that NIAES does not forge particularly close ties with farmers. I think that it is important for NIAES researchers to mix with farmers and ascertain if and how those on the agricultural front line are benefiting from their research.
- (5) NIAES conducts research in biodiversity, and I would like it to present convincing arguments for the importance of biodiversity to agriculture from the perspective of agriculture. I also think that working with other environment-related research organizations would enable NIAES to conduct more efficient research.
- (6) It is important to conduct research that addresses changing social circumstances. For example, NIAES should look into whether it needs to carry out research on biofuels in view of rising concern over the environmental impact of biofuel production overseas.
- (7) Regarding the Monsoon Asia Agro-Environmental Research Consortium (MARCO), it is important for NIAES to consider the role it can play with respect not only to Japan but to the whole Asian region. I hope to see NIAES playing a central role in driving the initiative.
- (8) NIAES symposiums and similar activities — particularly soil surveys and statistical training and such like — are very worthwhile to prefectural governments and public research organizations, and I hope NIAES continues to contribute to the regions through such activities.
- (9) The presentation skills of NIAES researchers at seminars and symposiums have risen markedly, and they deserve praise.
- (10) I appreciate the way NIAES enables individual researchers to build up their research careers, but I think it should also pay attention to its responsibility to society to nurture researchers over the medium to long term.
- (11) NIAES is slated to be combined with two other research institutes in 2011 to create a new organization, and it is currently engaged in constructive planning for this development. I think that with regard to its position in the new organization, NIAES should be aware of the fact that its areas of research cannot be measured by the impact of research papers alone.