

Career Building Programs

1. NIAES Model Program for Female Researchers

As part of the efforts to promote gender equality, we launched programs to support female researchers. In the “NIAES Model of the Bi-directional Career Building Program”, a project for the support of female researchers funded by the Science and Technology Promotion Fund of the Ministry of Education (2009 - 2011), both providers and recipients of the support aim through their mutual efforts to build the recipient’s career and experience. This program has three goals such as: formation of a research career, assistance for work-life balance, and the expansion of the pool of the next generation of researchers. Major support actions include:

- 1 Mentor program
- 2 Lectures on playing role models
- 3 Employment of assistant researchers
- 4 Health and mental health counseling
- 5 Outreach activities (Visiting lectures, Science Café, etc.)

We have also started to reform the system within our institution. As part of this effort, we have established a special support fund to begin providing support for the development of female researchers’ careers through assistance with expenses for overseas trips and editing of English language papers for publication.

Some events were held as follows :

(1) NIAES Science Café: Metamorphosis of Suspect N

November 14 The NIAES Science Café event “Metamorphosis of Suspect N” was held at Restaurant Taki inside the Tsukuba Expo Center. The Science Café is a place for experts and non-experts to discuss science in a relaxed atmosphere over a cup of coffee or tea. Twenty-five people participated in this café event including junior and high school students.

First, Junko Shindo, Senior Researcher of the Carbon and Nutrient Cycles Division gave the participants graphic presentations of the nitrogen that enters Japan through food production and consumption; nitrogen that circulates through crops, soil, livestock and humans; and the flow of nitrogen that enters the environment. She then described by using Japan and China as examples how the scale of these flows changes according to the changes in human activities. Next, she had the participants think what impact the increased food production might have on the environment and



Senior Researcher Junko Shindo giving a lecture to her audience

what we could do to mitigate its impact. The participants had a lot of comments concerning the environment. This event was a great opportunity to think about a relationship between agriculture and the environment.

(2) Lecture on foreign examples of role models for female researchers

“Opportunities and Constraints for Female Scientists in France for Maintaining a Work-Life Balance”

We invited Dr. Delphine Luquet of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) to give a lecture on the work environment at the CIRAD as well as a typical week in her personal life on October 7. Dr. Luquet told us that, thanks to child care support from the national



Dr. Luquet from France talking to her audience

government coupled with France's laid-back approach to marriage and supportive partners, the gender ratio among young researchers at CIRAD was 1:1 in spite of there being no "affirmative action" to ensure the hiring of female researchers. The balancing of child care and research activities relied not only on assistance from her employer and her husband but also on considerable efforts of her own. Still, she assured us that she was enjoying raising children and engaging in her hobbies. Her lecture stretched for nearly forty minutes, including the question-and-answer period with discussions in a lively spirit. The participants, who accounted for more than 10% of our employees of the NIAES, and nearly 80% of our female researchers, listened to Dr. Luquet's lecture with intense interest.

(3) Visiting lectures at universities and high schools

We launched a new activity program under which our female researchers visit universities and high school and talk about their research as well as their backgrounds so as to showcase "researcher" as a profession to female students. This year, we had classes at Kyoto University, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, Ibaraki Prefectural Mito Second High School, and Tokyo Metropolitan Koishikawa Secondary Education School. We believe we have successfully sent our message to undergraduate and post-graduate students who have contact with their professors rather than researchers outside of their schools. In addition, for the high school students, they got more interested in specific research activities after observing the actual insects used in the experiment.



Senior Researcher Noguchi giving a lesson at Mito Second High School

2. 2009 (Second) NIAES Young Researchers Encouragement Awards

Senior Researcher Baba (Organochemicals Division) was awarded for the "Study of Analytical Method for Cadmium and Arsenic", and Senior Researcher Yamanaka (Biodiversity Division) was awarded for the "Analysis of Occurrence Patterns of Diverse Insect Fauna Living in the Agricultural Environment".

These awards are given to researchers employed by NIAES (regular researchers and NIAES special researchers) who are 40 years old or younger and have achieved notable success in their research efforts.



Senior Researcher Baba giving an award-winner lecture



Senior Researcher Nakayama at the podium receiving his award