

"Vilsack Commemorates 50th Anniversary of the Iowa 'Hog Lift' in Yamanashi" Article, April 8, 2010

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During the third day of his visit to Japan, Agriculture Secretary Vilsack had another packed day – starting with a successful bilateral meeting with his Japanese counterpart, and concluding with a series of events commemorating the 50th anniversary of a 1959 'hog lift' in which Iowa farmers sent 36 hogs to Yamanashi, Japan.

Prior to traveling to Yamanashi, Secretary Vilsack met with the Minister of Agriculture Hirotaka Akamatsu to discuss a wide range of agriculture topics of interest to both the United States and Japan. During their meeting, they discussed science-based solutions to U.S. beef and beef products and global food security. Additionally, Vilsack reiterated the United States' commitment to achieving an ambitious and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round and his belief that a Doha success can be achieved if all major economies—including Japan—are willing to come to the negotiating table.

Vilsack said, "This [beef] issue remains a high priority for the United States and the U.S. objective remains a framework that is consistent with science and international standards. Minister Akamatsu and I concluded our meeting by confirming that the U.S. - Japan bilateral relationship in agriculture is a strong and positive one and vowed to continue in this direction."

On the heels of his meeting with Minister Akamatsu, Secretary Vilsack boarded a train traditionally used by the Emperor for a scenic two hour ride to Kofu in the Yamanashi Prefecture for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the now-famous "hog lift" – when generous Iowa farmers sent a group of 36 hogs to Yamanashi after Japan's hogs were nearly wiped out by a major typhoon. Three years after the hogs' arrival, the original hogs had multiplied to more than 500. Vilsack had previously traveled to Japan to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the event.

Upon arrival in Kofu, the Secretary, his wife, and the rest of the U.S. delegation were greeted by local elementary school children singing and playing traditional Japanese taiko drums – an event that included Yamanashi Governor Shomei Yokouchi and other Prefecture officials.

Secretary Vilsack then paid a visit to the Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Art where he participated in a tree-planting ceremony of an oak tree—Iowa's official state tree—on the grounds of the museum to mark the 50th anniversary. In his dedication, Secretary Vilsack stressed the importance of the diplomatic bond that had been formed between the United States and Japan as a result of this event, noting that just as the tree planted today will continue to grow stronger roots and larger branches, so too would the relationship between Japan and the U.S. grow more solid over the next 50 years of friendship and cooperation.

Later that evening, Vilsack offered congratulatory remarks at the 50th anniversary ceremony where he celebrated the sister-state relationship that has been formed between Iowa and Yamanashi and how this reminds us of the benefits of cooperation and trade. After the traditional breaking of the sake barrel to begin the festivities, Iron Chef Yukio Hattori presented an award to the winners of contest to come up with the best recipe using products grown in Iowa and Yamanashi.