



Sesame for Your Smile.

WINA Associate member: Kadoya Sesame Mills inc.



Kadoya Sesame Mills inc. founded in Shodoshima Island, Kagawa Prefecture, Japan, is a manufacturer and distributor of products such as sesame oil and edible sesame seed products. With its establishment in 1858, the company's long history and tradition are a standout among members of the World Instant Noodles Association (WINA). Shodoshima's local specialty is somen noodles, and supplying sesame oil necessary for their production is how the business of Kadoya Sesame Mills originally started.

Sesame oil, sesame paste, and other products that the company make today have become important ingredients indispensable for instant noodles.

—You established your Sustainability Policy last year and have been proactively rolling out related activities. Please share with us your principles—which have been maintained since your founding and tie into your current endeavors—as well as your journey thus far.

Since our founding, we have been committed to realizing a sustainable society under our management philosophy of “Contributing to a healthier and richer dietary life for people due to offering safe, secure and valuable sesame products, while keeping sincere gratitude for customers in mind.” In addition to sesame oil and other conventional products, we are currently working to provide products that exhaustively use sesame resources, the yield of which is not abundant around the world.

Example efforts include applying sesamin, a nutrient component of sesame, to supplements, and repurposing the residue of sesame oil extraction as animal feed.

Given that sesame is a crop product that can only be cultivated in certain regions, we also aim to further support farmers and develop a sustainable supply chain.

Back side: Mr. Tomohiko Kitagawa
(Operating Officer, Overseas Business Department, COO)

Front side: Mr. Shinya Yarita (Osaka Branch Manager)



—Your support for farmers is very interesting, as it ties into the “Responsible supply chain” idea stated in WINA’s General Direction formulated last year. Are there any challenges you have faced when undertaking overseas support projects?

Sesame production is limited in Japan, and 99.9% of the country’s entire consumption relies on imports from Africa, Central and South America, among other places. Given the rise in global demand, the current yield will likely become insufficient down the line. We launched a project around three years ago that supports farmers in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Paraguay to develop a sustainable supply chain that allows the locals of the production sites to earn a stable income through sesame cultivation, and enables business operators, including us, to stably procure sesame. In these countries, we develop new sesame production sites and provide technical guidance, but the situation differs from place to place. For example, in Tanzania, where sesame is not usually eaten, people are unfamiliar with how Japan and other regions consume the plant. In another example, a particular Paraguayan village had no previous experience in sesame cultivation.



We have started with the most fundamental, low-key activities, such as having farmers taste meals using sesame products and teaching from scratch how to cultivate the plant.

In one instance, a sesame cultivation project was launched four to five years ago by the local government and suppliers at a small Paraguayan village called Chupa Pou with a population of around 100, considering the limitations of the self-sufficient lifestyle the indigenous people there had been leading. With buyers subsequently becoming necessary for the produced sesame, Kadoya Sesame Mills joined the project three years ago. The village’s yield is small-scale compared with Africa, still standing at around several tens of tons, but they have successfully reaped a harvest from the beginning of the project.

These days, however, extreme weather conditions are occurring worldwide, sometimes causing lower-than-expected yields in South America and other production regions because of heat waves and cold snaps. With good yield results, the farmers will be happy to engage in sesame production, but their motivation could wane otherwise. We are therefore taking a cut-and-try approach, maintaining persistent dialogue with them and taking other steps. Another burden for business operators in having farmers maintain sesame production is that sesame is an annual plant. Coffee, for instance, is perennial, and once its seedling is planted, it will likely be produced for some long period of time. In contrast, the characteristics of sesame allow for the cultivation of different crops in the same field the next year. The key is to offer a steady hand to motivate the farmers to keep planting sesame, and accordingly making stable sesame production possible.

Further, being guaranteed with a buyer is likely a reassuring factor for the farmers. We have communicated to them that we will responsibly purchase all the sesame produced through these projects. However, the final decision as to which buyer to sell the yield lies with the farmers. This is because, for example, if there is a business operator willing to purchase at a higher price, selling to them would be more profitable for the farmers. Needless to say, we would appreciate if we—the project operator—could purchase the entire yield, but our primary concern is for the local sites to maintain proper sesame production for decades. As a sesame-devoted company, we believe we should take the initiative.

It would be nice if we could commercialize sesame oil in the future, exclusively using sesame produced in the regions we support, though this will depend on the extent to which we can stably procure the plant.

—Whereas sustainability efforts are important, the required cost is likely a tricky issue for companies as they should pursue profit as well. What is your take on sustainability initiatives?

The cost of supporting farmers does present a challenge, but we—a player in the first stage of sesame consumption—need to responsibly initiate efforts. Stable medium- to long-term production of sesame not only benefits farmers but also us, which is why sustainability efforts should be taken as a corporate endeavor, even at the expense of cost.

On the domestic front, we introduced a solar power system at the Sodegaura Plant (Chiba Prefecture, Japan) last year as an initiative to reduce CO2 emissions.

How much can these efforts justify the investment remains an open question, but we are undertaking these activities with a do-what-we-should mindset.

—Could you share new areas and projects you hope to delve into moving forward?

We hope to keep making sesame-centered products that can contribute to society. Last year, we opened in Tokyo “goma to,” a café specializing in sesame. This year, we also started marketing cosmetics that utilize sesame oil, both online and through other channels.

Recently, upcycling has been actively discussed in the company. While the residue from the sesame oil extraction process is currently offered as animal feed, there must be other applications. We have tried our hand at creating an SDGs badge that contains at least 50% of the residue, and chopsticks as well.

The latter effort is still in a trial-and-error phase, as we cannot eliminate the distinctive aroma of sesame.

We will continue to be committed to R&D efforts, as many factors of sesame remain unknown.



Mr. Yarita

Mr. Kitagawa

Ms. Shimizu, WINA

Ms. Shimbara, WINA