

Background and vision of Soyworld Science Museum

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Abstract

In 1998, a feasibility study on the establishment of a world soybean center in Korea was conducted by Dr. Tai-Wan Kwon, former President of Korea Food Research Institute, Prof. Shin-Han Kwon, Kyunghee University, Prof. Cherl-Ho Lee, Korea University and Dr. Eun-Hi Hong, former Director of Korea Rural Development Agency, under the sponsorship of Daesan Agriculture Foundation. In the report of the study the authors concluded that the origin of soybean is South Manchuria and Korean Peninsula and the first user of soybean as food is DongYi-tribe, the ancestor of Korean people.

Although there are many assumptions about the origin of soybean, botanists believe that it is South Manchuria and Korean Peninsula where most abundant wild species are found. Many of carbonated soybeans of late Neolithic(BC2000) and early Bronze (BC1500) ages are excavated in Korean Peninsula. The Primitive Pottery Age(BC6000) started at Korea Strait Region where fermentation technology in Northeast Asia was began, and this technology appeared to be used for soybean fermentation in this region at the early stage of soybean use.

A Chinese book Guanzi(管子) describes soybean was introduced into China from south Manchuria(山戎) in BC 7th century by Hwangong of Chi(齊), when he conquered Sanyung. Records on soybean foods and fermented soybean products are found in the relics of Han Dynasty(BC202-AD220). Soybean use as food appears to be introduced into Japan in AD 3rd century from Korea, and into southeastern Asian countries in AD 4-7 century from China. Soybean was introduced to Europe and to North America in the 18th -19th century.

As an origin of soybean and soybean foods, establishment of a soybean museum in Korea was considered a meaningful and desired project. In January 2001, Soy-world Museum Promotion Committee(SMPC) was formed, initiated by Prof. Tai-Wan Kwon, Founding Chairman, and searched for the museum site and fund raising. The committee worked for writing a book on soybean, and the book 'Soybean' containing 15 chapters(authors) on the history, archeology, breeding and cultivation, food processing and nutrition, and industrial use of soybean in 794 pages was published by Korea University Press in October 2005. This book became the basis of the Soyworld Science Museum. The Cyber Soy-world Museum and Home-page(www.soyworld.org) was open in April 2008.

In December 2008, an MOU was made between Korea Soybean Society and Yeongju City for the construction of Soyworld Science Museum in Yeongju. In May 2009, a Project for the Basic Plan

for the construction of Soyworld Science Museum was ordered by Yeongju City, and a Project for the Soy-world story telling was issued by the committee, SMPC.

In February 2013, the basic design of Soyworld Science Museum in Yeongju was completed, and the ground-breaking for the start of Museum construction was made in March 2013. Dr. Jae-Won Jung, the founder of Jung's Food Co., donated Soybean Growth Chamber for the museum, and the construction of Exhibition Hall, Activity Hall and Soybean Growth Chamber was completed in September 2014. The committee, SMPC, functioned as the supervisor of the contents of exhibition hall and activity hall.

Then why is Soyworld Science Museum in Yeongju? First of all, Yeongju is a home town cultivating soybean, and the name of a traditional soybean variety 'buseoktae' came from a famous temple, Buseoksa, in Yeongju. Secondly, the City Yeongju showed a great will to host the museum. The city offered the land and managed to support all the expenses for the construction. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism supported Yeongju City to open a science museum. The most elegant landscape around Buseoksa Temple and Sobaeksan National Park was another tip for inviting Soyworld Science Museum in Yeongju.

Soyworld Science Museum in Yeongju has three major visions. First, the Museum will be the center of soybean-theme town attracting soybean processing industries, soybean food courts and restaurants, and culture and activity spots related to soybean. The city already allocated sufficient land for the town construction. Second, a soybean information center named 'Soyworld Information Center, will be located in the museum, and the Korea Soybean Society will support the activity. The Soyworld Information Center will collect and disseminate soybean related news with both domestic and world-wide information network. Lastly, the Museum will foster hosting of an International Soybean Research Center to Yeongju.

A proposal to United Nations to establish UN International Soybean Research Institute(ISIR) in Yeongju is now under discussion. It is also a public promise of the Mayor Wook-Hyeon Jang of Yeongju City. The implementing organization of this project should be the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs(MAFRA), Republic of Korea, but the City Yeongju is willing to initiate the discussion and set up a Task Force for hosting UN ISRI to Korea under MAFRA performing feasibility study, national and local government budgets, Institute site, and etc., and contact to UN Food and Agriculture Organization.