

**Opening Remarks by Consul-General Masaki Shiga
"Idaho Japan Trade Brunch ", Boise, July 23, 2021**

The spoken word applies.

Good morning, everyone. I am so happy to finally have the chance to meet and talk with you all face to face. I have been in Portland for more than a year now. But because of the difficulties we have all faced, this is my first visit to Idaho. It is a great honor to be able to speak to so many people.

Thank you to all of the State Senators, government representatives, businesspeople, university staff, and all of the friends of Japan joining us here today.

The most important thing I would like to discuss with you this morning is that I feel there is great potential to create amazing opportunities by expanding and strengthening the relationship between Idaho and Japan. There is a lot of room for growth! Senator Anthon and a few others of you here today are already well aware of this potential. Senator Anthon, we are honored that you could be here and thank you so much for the work you are doing to build this relationship. I fully expect that today will showcase, yet again, the charms of Idaho and its vibrant connections with Japan. Our office is eager to support any Japanese industry hoping to do business in Idaho.

Traditionally speaking, agricultural products, such as grain, have been the main export from the Northwest to Japan. For example, more than 40% of Japan's domestic demand for wheat is met by exports from the United States and nearly all of that is grown and shipped from this region. But our business connections are growing more diverse. In recent years, Japanese companies have ramped up investment here, making Japan the largest foreign direct investor in the United States. In the Northwest, Japanese companies are expanding activity in the high tech and food processing industries. At this point these businesses are mostly concentrated in the Seattle and Portland areas, contributing significantly to the local economy.

But the Government of Japan is working with the U.S. government and companies across various industries to strengthen the international supply chain. By avoiding the concentration of production of such important products as semiconductors and encouraging decentralization, we plan to make the supply chain more agile and resilient in the face global challenges such as the one we face now. Due to the influence of the pandemic we have already seen that people's jobs and lives do not need to be concentrated in large cities. Instead, through technology, people can live and work where a higher quality of life is possible. I have heard that, throughout this time, the population of Idaho has continued to grow. I can sense that there is great opportunity here.

In Japan as well, new changes in daily life and work environments bring the potential for great stimulus and evolution to economic activity.

Japan offers countless benefits to businesses. Our strengths lie in our mature and established market, the rule of law and stable regulatory frameworks that protect long-term economic activity, a highly sophisticated infrastructure including widespread and efficient public transport systems, and a safe and livable society. These benefits are assets that we have nurtured over a long history or built step-by-step over the last 70 years through the framework of established democracy. In Japan, prices and wages are very stable. And, since the pandemic, there is growing interest in more flexible and efficient ways of working. If you are thinking of doing business in Asia, I think that connecting with Japan, with all the benefits we can offer, is a profitable path to take. Please consider investing in Japan and partnering with Japanese businesses to expand your reach in Asia.

Actually, some of our guests here today are Japanese companies that are currently doing business in Idaho. There are also many people here who have enthusiastically supported business relations with Japan and many leaders in the Japanese American community from all over the United States. I think there are many things we can learn and accomplish just among the people in this room.

So let's take this opportunity to expand trade between Idaho and Japan. I am sure that the Idaho State Government will happily support the export and sale of products from Idaho. We in Japan welcome this business. As trade increases, so does the flow of people and information, bringing us closer together in all ways. We are interested in forging and deepening relationships on a long-term basis, grounded in mutual trust and understanding. It is my sincere hope that through working together, a cooperative business relationship that benefits both Japan and the United States, including Idaho, will continue to grow.

If you ever have any questions or are in need of information, please feel free to contact us at any time. Here in Boise our trusted Honorary Consul Ed Klopfenstein is looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.