

January 15, 2009

JAPANESE INDUSTRY CELEBRATES NEW YEAR

The observance of the New Year in Japan is an important and elaborate business tradition which began here on January 4, 2009 as businesses and organizations re-open after the long holiday. New Year receptions and visits to customers to offer greetings for the New Year mark the official start of the coming year.

ASA-IM Japan Country Director LaVerne E. Brabant and ASA-IM staff participated in a round of New Year celebrations, meetings, receptions, and visits related to the edible oil, feed, and wholesale industries the week of January 5. where industry leaders, key trade contacts, and customers exchanged wishes for a healthy, and prosperous New Year as well as using the occasions to discuss current challenges and opportunities this year.

A number of the edible oil trade commented that while oilseeds, oil and freight costs are down from last year, they are looking for even lower prices. As for 2009, most traders believe the current difficult situation will continue as they face tariff and other issues. One trader told us they want to bring "change" just like President Elect Obama's slogan so they can enhance the values of their products. The feed sector expressed concerns over the current market situation but appear to be happy with the prices they can receive. Due to the soaring appreciation of the Yen relative to the Dollar, imported feed ingredient prices are declining. While good news for feed manufacturers in the short term, longer term it supports rising livestock product imports and declining feed production in Japan.