

## The ARI Retreat

Other than it was for free, why did I join the ARI retreat? Well, it would be nice to see the countryside. In studying here in Japan, I have adopted this motto to make the most of my stay here and that includes going to different places within Japan, gaining new Japanese friends, learning more of Japanese culture and discipline.

I really have no deeper expectations on the retreat other than those recounted to us by the sempais. The farm work, kitchen work, onsen, etc. For years, I have secluded myself from the other facets of life other than myself, my family, my few friends and personal relationships, and my work. The realities of my work in my country were for me too big and burdensome that if I include more causes to my life, I would have not enough left for myself. So I purported myself as being shallow or ignorant on matters other than my passions in life. But this doesn't mean I do not care.

Going to ARI made me realized that despite Japan's industrialized and modern global reputation, there exists a little nook in the country devoted for propagation organic farming not only for Japan but also through out the world. It is amazing to learn ARI's vision and the basic connection of food and life, and to observe how trainees from all over the world mix and interact, work, live, eat, and worship together, despite diversity of culture, language, religion, and the likes. It is a good exposure for young students, who have not really seen much of the realities of life other than the make ups and prosthetics of the modern world.

I wish that the experience would have an impact to the participants and, in one way or another influence their outlooks if not aspirations in life. As for me, the experience adds up my continuing and growing amazement and respect of this country and its people, once a stranger and a historical aggressor. Gaining new experiences, learning new lessons, and meeting new friends were the perks and bonuses.

