

Kansas Students Participate in Taiwan Agricultural Youth Exchange

Two Kansas students traveled to Taiwan Oct. 26-Nov. 3, 2019, to represent the state as part of a long-standing student exchange program to learn about Taiwan's agricultural industry and how Kansas agriculture exports benefit both Kansas and Taiwan. The students were selected for the Taiwan Agricultural Youth Exchange Program by the Kansas Department of Agriculture based on their exceptional leadership and communication skills, appreciation for international travel, and passion for Kansas agriculture.

"This exchange offers students an opportunity of a lifetime to experience another country's agriculture, technology and culture," said Suzanne Ryan-Numrich, international trade director at KDA. "The students who went on this exchange came home with a broader understanding of the global economy we live in."

The two students who participated were Jeffrey Garcia from Cassoday, a freshman at Butler Community College majoring in Agribusiness; and Katherine Sleichter from Clay Center, a freshman at Kansas State University majoring in agribusiness (international option), Global Food Systems Leadership, and minoring in Spanish.

The students traveled with students from Missouri. Their visit included tours of the National Chung Hsing University, interaction with Taiwanese students, meetings with the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and visits to local farms and research institutes across Taiwan.

"It was interesting to me to see the difference between Kansas agriculture and Taiwanese agriculture," said Sleichter. "While in Taiwan we had the opportunity to tour a variety of different farming operations, specifically fruit farms. We toured a passion fruit farm, a dragon fruit farm, an organic tea farm, a guava farm, a tomato farm, and a cocoa farm. The farm tours opened my eyes to the diversity of agriculture, and that there is more than just the type of farms that are common in the United States."

Garcia agreed that it was a great experience. "I really enjoyed trying all the new food and seeing how they grow all the fruit and vegetables they grow in Taiwan."

The trip is coordinated by KDA and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Denver, Colorado, and is sponsored by TECO.

Opportunities such as the Taiwan Agricultural Youth Exchange Program provide tremendous knowledge and networking to the delegates. In 2018, Kansas exported over \$167 million in agriculture commodities to Taiwan and it was the fifth-ranked export destination for Kansas products. International relationships with countries such as Taiwan help open opportunities for more exports in the future.

Each fall, KDA coordinates the Taiwan Agricultural Youth Exchange Program application process which is open to high school seniors or college freshmen. For more information, please contact Robin Blume, education and events coordinator at KDA, at 785-564-6756 or robin.blume@ks.gov.