

# **Silk Road Tree-Planting Activities**

(1) **Tongwei County, Gansu Province, China**

6-10 July 2010

An evaluation exercise has been conducted on the Tree-Planting Activities in Gansu Province. Mr. Tatsuya Tomizawa, Director of CSR and Environment Office, Cosmo Oil Co., Ltd (our sponsor), joined this exercise so that he may see with his own eyes how the project is being carried out.

On 6 July, we visited a nursery, run by Mr. Su Benshan, located close to the Lanzhou Airport. We examined how seedlings are growing, how they are responding to the plant growth agent, ALA, developed by Cosmo Oil Co. in comparison with locally available ones, and how female labourers are performing on the farm. Mr. Su



seems to feel that ALA is more effective than the Chinese counterparts, although the final conclusion has yet to be obtained. With regard to the labour cost which is creeping up in China, Mr. Su informed us that it doubled this year from 25 Yuan to 50 Yuan a day, a 100 % increase, and it was increasingly difficult to secure enough labourers at the nursery. The production of seedlings was significantly delayed this year because of the cold wave that hit the area during March, April and May. The production was in full swing though at the beginning of July. Planted seedlings are growing steadily and altogether 6 million seedlings will be produced this year at this nursery. They have started to raise 4000 chickens on the farm to assist farmers to obtain extra income.

According to Mr. Su, seedlings are growing nicely at another nursery in Tongwei District, despite the said cold wave. This project is being supported by a British environmental organisation, Chinese firms, the China Greenery Fund, and the UN Environment Programme. In addition, the Forestry Agency of Gansu Province funded 2 million Yuan for the tree-planting activities at Tongwei and 450,000 RMB was specifically assigned for distributing Seabuckthorn seedlings free of charges to the farmers engaged in tree-planting activities. At the moment, two million seedlings are being grown at the local nursery. Thus, the Tree-Planting campaign in Tongwei is in full swing on a self-sustained basis.

A Seabuckthorn juice processing plant is expected to be built in 2013. Mr. Su is negotiating with a foreign company for joint financing of 25 million RMB. While we were there, Mr. Su and this company reached an informal agreement to



establish the plant in principle.

On 7 and 8 July, we examined 5 areas where we have planted Seabuckthorn in the past three years. Generally speaking, we could observe that the survival rate is around 80 %, and we were pleased at the record. On the other hand, however, on some southern slopes, Alfalfa dominated the land and the Seabuckthorn survival rate was about 20 %. It was agreed therefore that there will be a supplementary planting activity prior to the scheduled one for October/November.

On our last day in Gansu, we had a meeting with the officials of the Forestry Department to review our findings.

It was agreed that:

- 1) Now the farmers are motivated and the project is progressing on a self-help and sustained basis,
- 2) Both the Chinese and Japanese partners should continue their present levels of support to this project a few more years so that it will be on its own feet,
- 3) Both sides should strive to publicize the success of this project in each country as a good example of joint efforts which nurtured a self-help spirit among the local farmers.



### **Yulin City, Shaanxi Province**

(12-15 July)

We have been planting trees in this particular area in the past 3 years; 15 hectares each year from 2007 through 2009, with a support from the Greenery Fund, Japan and 5 hectares this year supported by the Aeon Environment Fund. We have been striving to promote a self-help spirit among the local farmers so that tree-planting activities may



be undertaken independently as soon as possible. Our repeated discussions and agreements with the local leader, Mr. Zhang, have not produced tangible results in this respect. Therefore, we were determined to inform Mr. Zhang of our disappointment and that unless some tangible results are not shown immediately, we would discontinue our support as of next year.

We found upon our arrival that Mr. Zhang had established a local nursery in August last year in order to produce seedlings for sale in the local market and that he had negotiated with the Water Resources Bureau to lease a piece land



where Seabuckthorn seedlings would be grown for our tree-planting activities and for our farmers. These were welcome developments that encourage our continued involvement.█



In addition, a Mr. Wang, representing farmers from a village nearby offered to start tree planting activities on their own and requested out support. Upon inspection, we have found that this group had a nursery of their own and three large areas suitable for tree planting. We gave Mr. Wang a supply of Seabuckthorn seeds and told him to start raising seedlings immediately so that they may transplant them

next year. Another group of farmers also approached us for support as they had a large desert area transformed into a farm where they wanted to grow Seabuckthorn. Upon inspection, the farm concerned was near the area where the Yulin Seabuckthorn Association successfully contained advancing deserts and the sand was moist as a large reservoir was nearby. We therefore advised this group that they should approach the Yulin Seabuckthorn Association for assistance.

Our examination of planted areas indicated that the survival rate was about 50% due mainly to the drought going on (only three rain-falls so far this year) and, as in the case of some areas of Tongwei, Gansu, Alafalfa domination.█



We had a meeting with the City Water Resources Bureau and agreed that it should coordinate all Seabuckthorn planting activities in the area and give appropriate guidance, the farmers would now organize supplementary planting in October to replace all dead seedlings, and the famers groups would now come up with a local agreement so that they may help each other.

It would now appear that everyone concerned is interested in mutual cooperation under the guidance of the Water Resources Bureau and it gives us a hope that the tree-planting activities will be progressing positively from now on.