



from wine to processed seafood, tea to snacks. Japanese Food and Beverage Days 2022 Another example is the OCCI's Made in Japan Fair, a popular event that arranges meetings between local businesses and overseas buyers. It is an ideal opportunity for the overseas buyers to discover the best of Japan and for local businesses to open up international sales channels. The 2022 fair, held February 15 to 18, was conducted online due to Covid-19. This year's focus was on food and beverages, matching buyers from Europe and local suppliers via a dedicated platform. The fair resulted in more than 33 meetings between buyers and suppliers. In addition, help was on hand to ensure all parties could fully harness the tax advantages of Japan's economic partnership agreements with the EU and the UK, and hopefully boost Japanese exports to the region.

The OCCI is eager to hear from any business interested in sourcing top-quality products from Japan.

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## **2. FASCINATING, INSPIRING IDEAS WIN PRIZES AT THE AI BUSINESS IDEA CONTEST 2022**

The AI Business Idea Contest 2022, hosted by OCCI and the AI Technology Consortium (AITec, an initiative of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology), attracted a variety of fascinating, inspiring ideas from individuals and corporations. The OCCI Chairperson's Award, which comes with a million yen in prize money, went to a clinical engineer who submitted an idea for medical device maintenance and user training system that harnesses Japanese clinical engineering technologies to support medical infrastructure in developing nations. This year saw the addition of a new prize, the Innovators Award, which is intended to encourage entries from students and sow the seeds for future startups. The inaugural Innovators Award went to a university student who submitted an idea for using AI to allow dining-industry businesses to measure crowd traffic.

A total of 15 entries were received from around Japan for this year's contest during the application period between September and November 2021. Seven of those entries made it through document screening to the final round, where the finalists underwent an online Q&A session with the judging panel, which included OCCI Chairperson Hiroshi Ozaki, AITeC Chairman Yoichi Motomura, directors from both organizations, academics,

and venture capitalists.

The AITeC Chairman’s Award, which comes with a year’s use of AITeC facilities and support, went to a technical college student who submitted an idea for sustainable smart vegetable farming. Other prizes included those from sponsors, such as the On the Umeda Award, which went to a high school student who submitted an idea for farming subscriptions, and the Tokyu Agency Award, which went to a software and hardware development company, for its idea for an AI system for holistic healthcare.

OCCI and AITeC are committed to offering award winners support to help develop their business ideas into practical applications, and to ongoing support for the creation of new businesses that harness the potential of AI.

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### **3. GLOBAL INNOVATION FORUM UPDATES OSAKA WASHINGTON CLEAN-TECH ONLINE MEETUP**

Clean-tech enterprises from Washington state will have an opportunity to pitch their solutions to Japanese businesses at the Osaka Washington Clean-Tech Online Meetup on March 15, 2022. Hosted jointly by the Osaka Business and Investment Center (O-BIC) and the Washington state government as part of Global Innovation Forum (GIF) Osaka, the meetup adds further momentum to GIF Osaka’s quest to link Osaka businesses with outstanding overseas startups and technologies.

Ten Washington-based enterprises will give presentations on their clean-tech solutions, followed by one-on-one meetings with Japanese companies.

The Osaka Washington Clean-Tech Online Meetup and the Japan Seattle AI Online Meetup held in late January 2022 further strengthen the OCCI’s close ties with Washington state. Washington’s environmental credentials are prominent among US states: its environmental awareness is illustrated by laws aimed at converting to 100% clean energy sources statewide, and a number of exciting clean-tech startups have emerged recently from the

Seattle tech hub.

The meetup is supported by the SWAN Venture Group, one of GIF Osaka's partners who brought a number of participating companies to the GIF Osaka event in 2021.

With its extensive roster of Osaka-based companies eager to partner with overseas businesses, GIF Osaka will continue to provide opportunities for Japanese and US startups to pursue open innovation.

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#### **4. REGISTRATION OPEN-DUBAI & OSAKA SYMPOSIUM: THE FOREFRONT OF BUSINESS IN DUBAI**

Starting February 22nd, the Dubai & Osaka Symposium will feature a series of virtual discussions on the Dubai market and its strategic advantages as a global business hub. This event is hosted by the OCCI together with Osaka Prefecture, the Consortium for International Business Development and Connections in Osaka, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), and the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Session topics will include the Dubai government's latest economic growth initiatives and key industry sectors and feature panel discussions on local business opportunities for Japanese companies along with case studies of Osaka-based companies making inroads in the Dubai market.

As a world-class distribution hub and nexus of the Middle Eastern and African markets, Dubai is a metropolis that offers beneficial opportunities even for Japanese businesses.

Dubai has garnered international attention in recent years, becoming the first ever Middle Eastern host of the World Expo in 2021. With 2022 marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the UAE and Japan, business collaboration opportunities between Dubai and Osaka have also been on the rise, highlighted by the large number of participants in a recent Osaka-Dubai business networking session held

in December 2021 by Osaka Business and Investment Center (O-BIC), an organization run in part by the OCCI.

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## **5. OSAKA ENTREPRENEUR - SHINJIRO TORII, SUNTORY HOLDINGS LIMITED -**

The founder of Suntory with a pioneer spirit that paved the way for western liquors in Japan

Shinjiro Torii was often heard to tell his employees “Yatte minahare”. More than just an exhortation to go for it, “Yatte minahare” is Suntory’s philosophy, to dare challenge the unknown, to take risks and create values from the unknown. From the launch of the Akadama Port Wine in 1907 and Japan’s first whisky making operation in 1923, this frontier spirit of Shinjiro run in the veins of Suntory.

These were also the words of Shinjiro Torii’s to Keizo Saji, the company’s second president, when he announced his ambition to enter the beer market.

>From the company’s inception to the present day, “Yatte minahare” has driven Suntory throughout the ages to offer new values, and to always be pioneers of the next era.

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## **6. OCCI REQUESTS TO THE GOVERNMENT ARE REFLECTED IN THE NATIONAL POLICY AND BUDGET**

The OCCI is pleased to note that the requests it submitted to the government regarding revisions to national taxation are reflected in the latest budget. This outcome is the result of consistent efforts on the part of OCCI representatives such as Tax System Committee Chairman Teiichi Nishimura (President, Sakura Color Products Holdings Corporation) and Small and Medium-sized Business Committee Chairman Yusuke Saraya (president of Saraya Co., Ltd.) calling for expanded support to help businesses stay afloat amid the chaos of Covid-19 and seek new growth in the post-Covid period.

This is the second year in a row the government has adjusted its tax policy to further encourage wage rises. It includes increased deductibles for large and small businesses, as well as special provisions regarding claiming entertainment expense deductions and an extension of the special provisions for including petty-sum depreciable assets in deductible expenses. There was further relief for businesses struggling with the impact of Covid-19, with commercial property fixed asset tax relief and a one-year extension of the deadline for submitting plans required for exemptions under the business ownership succession tax system.

The budget for fiscal 2022 and the revised 2021 budget provide recovery assistance Covid-affected businesses (Business Recovery Support Fund; 2,803.2 billion yen {revised budget}) as well as other assistance such as the SME Productivity Innovation Initiative (200.1 billion yen {revised budget}), and grants for manufacturing, business continuity, and adoption of IT. In addition, the SME Business Reconstruction Fund (612.3 billion yen {revised budget}) has a special category aimed at helping business rebuild in “green” sectors. There was also new and expanded support measures for business ownership succession and rebuilding.

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**INFORMATION FOR COVID-19**

Japanese Government

<https://japan.kantei.go.jp/>

Osaka Prefecture Government

<https://covid19-osaka.info/en/>

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[O-BIC as one-stop service center for creating a foothold in Osaka]

<http://o-bic.net/>

[Information about scheduled events (in Japanese only)]

<https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/event/index.php>



Chief Editor :Takayoshi Negoro(Mr.), Director of International

Division, OCCI

Mailed by : Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, International

Division

Address : 2-8 Hommachi-bashi, Chuo-ku, Osaka, Japan 540-0029

Tel : +81-(0)6-6944-6400

Fax : +81-(0)6-6944-6293

Contact Persons : Kentaro NAGAO (Mr.), Risa TAKESHIMA (Ms.)

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