Meeting Report of Starch Symposium-2002 in Tokyo

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On September 15–16, 2002, the international symposium entitled "New Approaches in Starch Science and Carbohydrate-Active Enzymes" was held at Kanda Campus of Kyoritsu Women’s University in Tokyo. In the Starch Symposium, 24 internationally known and respected experts who came from 10 countries gave lectures in Session I: Structure of Starch and Its Biosynthesis and Session II: Molecular Anatomy and New Application of Carbohydrate-Active Enzymes.

In Session I, we could realize that starch science is in a new era where we can and should examine the whole scope of distinct starch metabolism, in which numerous enzymes interact in both aqueous and non-aqueous compartments of plastids in higher plants. The excellent presentations included AGPase, starch synthase, branching enzymes, debranching enzymes, phosphorylase, D-enzyme, R1 protein, and so on. New understandings on starch granule morphology and new techniques for analyzing amylpectin fine structure were also presented. The Session II began with a review of the genomic era and a discussion on the future prospect of family classification of carbohydrate-active enzymes. New insight to structure-function relationship and the catalytic mechanism of glucan hydrolases, and approach for engineering glycosynthases were introduced. The hot area, cellulose degrading/synthesis and the enzyme world of extremophiles, were also highlighted. Two lectures were focused on the starch modifying enzymes from the viewpoints of both science and industry. The future prospect in the next decade of applied glycoscience focusing on proteome era concluded this session.

The meeting room was filled over 300 attendees gathered from all over Japan or overseas and they were intellectually satisfied by new knowledge and technology although some of them had to stand due to shortage of available seats.

The major highlight included the poster session which was held during the lunch time (11:30 to 13:30) on the second day at Gakushi Kaikan. Although we needed a 10 min-walk to get there in the rainy weather, almost all of the attendees joined the discussion in fronts of 42 posters. Indeed, sandwiches and drinks had to be added a couple of times. Two-hour session was too short to focus on about a variety of excellent exhibitions, but in particular it was a great opportunity for young Japanese scientists to exchange mutual ideas with famous foreign scientists face to face.

After the program some of volunteers continued their discussion in a traditional restaurant, where a full course of Toru foods cheered up them with Toru wine. Young attendees could express their desire to touch Japanese culture in a Karaoke shop until midnight. It was a great chance for them to deepen mutual friendship by knowing their personalities each other.

The success of Starch Symposium-2002 in Tokyo is recorded in this special issue of J. Applied Glycoscience. The proceedings including almost all of oral and poster presentations will recall us to what extent we can understand the starch dynamism for the present time and show that the meeting is a milestone for starch science history.

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