

Asians thirsty for soymilk

LANCASTER — U.S. soybean farmers are helping quench a big thirst. People in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Singapore are thirsty for soymilk, a nutritious, high-protein drink made from soybeans. In fact, the Japanese are drinking ten times the amount of soymilk they were consuming three years ago.

The beverage is nothing new to the Orient. For centuries people in the Far East have consumed soymilk the same way Westerners consume cow's milk.

The Chinese discovered the process of making soymilk about two thousand years ago. Since then it's been a major contributor in helping ease the problem of protein malnutrition that's common in many of the rapidly swelling Asian populations.

"The soybean is an excellent source of protein," says Steve Chen, American Soybean Association director, Taiwan, and a prominent consultant on soymilk.

"Its protein content is high and of good quality. One of the easiest soybean products to make is soymilk. Consequently, soymilk is an inexpensive and easy way for protein-deficient people to upgrade their diets," he said.

Soy milk consumption in Asia has soared in the past few years. Japanese consumers drank about 130,000 tons of soymilk this year, up more than 200 percent from 1981 and about 10 times the amount consumed only three years ago.

Korean soymilk consumption reached almost 30,000 tons in 1981 and is expected to hit the mid-40s mark by the time this year is over, reports Kyung Lee, ASA Korean director. Only four years ago, Koreans consumed less than 4,000 tons of soymilk.

Taiwan consumers are currently drinking around 190,000 gallons of soymilk daily. The recent surge of soymilk consumption in Taiwan has been phenomenal, says Chen.

As soymilk consumption grows, so does the demand for soybeans. In Taiwan alone, the daily soymilk consumption requires more than 2,500 bushels of soybeans. And the combined 1982 soymilk con-

sumption in Japan, Korea and Taiwan will have used close to two million bushels of soybeans, almost all from the United States.

That's a big thirst soybean farmers are helping to quench. And this thirst continues to grow. Japanese soymilk industry sources estimate that by 1985, total usage of soybeans for soymilk in Japan alone will be greater than 3.6 million bushels — the production from more than 110,000 acres of U.S. farmland.

To reach these impressive growth rates, soymilk manufacturers have had to clear some major hurdles. For years, the biggest obstacle to widespread acceptance of soymilk was its "beany" taste which many people didn't like.

Interestingly enough, however, the Chinese have always liked this beany flavor. In fact, if the beany flavor is noticeably decreased, many Chinese consumers complain, says Ed Quinones, ASA division manager for Asia.

But to make soymilk more attractive to the large populations of Japan, Taiwan and Korea, new methods of production and flavoring were developed which reduced this beany, chalky flavor.

Research in soymilk production has been underway in the United States since the early 1900s. Notable achievements were made in the 1960s and '70s when researchers at Cornell University and the University of Illinois discovered new production techniques that eliminate soymilk's unappealing beany taste.

Basically, soymilk is made by soaking soybeans in water for several hours until they are saturated, then grinding the beans finely in water. The mixture of soybeans and water is then strained or filtered to remove any residue.

Cornell researchers found that slightly modifying the basic centuries-old production method and grinding the soybeans in boiling water creates a bland, pleasant-tasting soymilk minus the beany flavor.

Researchers at the University of



One of the easiest soybean products to make is soymilk. Here it is made on a small-scale operation in Indonesia.



Though soymilk is projected not to ever reach popularity in the United States due to taste, new methods of production and flavoring were developed which reduced its beany, chalky flavor, making it more attractive to the large populations of Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

Illinois found that blanching the soaked soybeans in boiling water for 10 minutes or putting the dry soybeans directly in boiling water for a certain time period would also eliminate the beany flavor.

Eliminating the beany flavor is one thing. Replacing it with more appealing flavors is another. ASA staff in Asia helped local manufacturers develop new flavors for soymilk.

Today, soymilk consumers can choose from several flavors including vanilla, strawberry, peanut, chocolate, milk, coffee and apple. The most popular flavor depends on the particular area. Peanut, for example, is the most widely-purchased soymilk flavor in Korea.

Soy milk has partially replaced soft drinks in many Asian countries. It can be purchased out of

vending machines, at supermarkets and is part of many schools' daily lunch programs. Soymilk is produced on a large-scale basis by at least fifteen companies in Japan, twelve companies in Taiwan and ten in Korea. These manufacturers, with the help of the U.S. soybean farmer, are busy trying to quench the growing Asian thirst for soymilk.



Soy milk is an inexpensive and easy way for protein-deficient people to upgrade their diets. This man is Singapore demonstrates the process used to produce the beverage.

Sheep president outlines industry opportunities

SAN ANTONIO, Tx. — The tremendous marketing and regional distribution opportunities available to the U.S. sheep industry were outlined by American Sheep Producers Council President Bill Pfluger in his address to attendees at the International Stockmen's School in San Antonio, Texas, last week.

"I've seen many years when sheep producers, organizations, feeders and packers have gone their separate ways. But today, all that has changed because we face common problems. During the past year, our industry has pulled together and created our own statement of problem, purpose and direction," explained Pfluger.

The lamb program at the ASPC

will become more consumer oriented, looking at management decisions based on the ASPC's knowledge of the markets. Attempts will be made to develop more cost-efficient ways to get lamb to market by moving consumption closer to production, raising the volume of direct lamb sales and the use of electronic marketing. The Council will stress the sale of lamb "cuts" rather than "carcasses" to increase lamb's value. Lamb consultants will work with retail stores to help them improve profits by properly pricing, displaying and advertising lamb for higher sales.

In the wool area, the ASPC will work to improve the quality of the American wool clip by using direct

mail and other educational tools. The wool program will shift its emphasis from advertising to marketing and sales. The ASPC staff will work directly with the mills, strengthening communication between the mill and the producer in order to increase the product's value and quality.

