

Inside this issue

“We can’t go back to the past, but only leap towards the future!” 1 + 2

JETRO Global Trade and Investment Report 2020: 1) Trade in 2019 3

COVID causes the worst quarter ever for the Japanese economy 3

Robots have become a reality for the construction industry in Japan 4

会見

INTERVIEW

“We can’t go back to the past, but only leap towards the future!”

Interview with Mr. Satoshi Fukui, Vice-President of Santen

Santen is a century-old company dedicated fully to ophthalmology. A leader in Asia, the company is expanding its business around the world. In 2014, Geneva was chosen to host Santen’s EMEA (Europe, Middle-East, Africa) regional office ([here](#) is our interview about it). The company and its employees were already committed to charity work before Covid-19. Since the outbreak, the company and its staff have increased their efforts to support patients and families affected by the crisis.

Mr. Satoshi Fukui, Vice-President and General Manager of the EMEA office, kindly answered our questions.

Can you briefly introduce Santen and its business in Switzerland?

Santen is a global pharmaceutical company founded in 1890 in Osaka, Japan. We are 100% dedicated to ophthalmology (eye disease), and we are present globally but we have a particularly strong presence in Japan and Asia (#1 in Japan/Korea, #2 in China).

The EMEA regional management office is located in Geneva



Mr Satoshi Fukui in the garden of Santen office in Geneva

since 2014. Over 60 staff members are supporting business in over 50 countries. We also drive business in Switzerland, where we are the 2nd largest player in Glaucoma, which is one of the leading causes of blindness.

The Covid-19 epidemic has been a shock for everyone, how have you reacted to it?

Given our presence in Asia, we have been following the pandemic very closely since the very beginning, and we were quick to respond. Our focus has always been to 1) Ensure a stable product supply, 2) Prevent the spread

of the virus, and 3) Continue to drive innovation. We prohibited all intercontinental travel in February, and on March 6th we instructed our office-based staff across EMEA to work from home; which we will continue to do for the foreseeable future. Thanks to the strong commitment and resilience of our staff, we have managed to adapt very quickly, and we have so far managed to continue to distribute our products to our patients without delay.

(continued on page 2)

“We can’t go back to the past, but only leap towards the future!”

Interview with Mr. Satoshi Fukui, Vice-President of Santen

会見

INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

What kind of measures have you implemented inside the company?

We have set up an EMEA regional crisis management committee comprised of about 20 leaders working on 8 themes - from internal and external communications, to SCM, to office management. Subgroup members continue to work on their respective themes, and the leaders get together bi-weekly to discuss priorities and confirm the progress of various projects we agreed to implement. We immediately cascaded the information to the entire EMEA organization, around 700 staff members. Each office also conducts weekly or bi-weekly town hall meetings to ensure continued communication with all staff. In April, we started to distribute surgical face masks to all employees to ensure they and their families stay safe; we have also provided a lump sum cash contribution to all employees to facilitate the set-up of a productive home office environment.

Employee health and safety is paramount to ensure business continuity during a pandemic, and we are asking our employees to continue to Work From Home (WFH) if at all possible. At the same time, we have “COVID-19-proofed” our office, where the capacity has been reduced to less than 1/3 and comprehensive distancing and hygiene measures are implemented. Our

staff has already nicely adapted to the new normal, and we rarely see any staff coming to the office these days.

Your employees have been very willing to help, can you tell us how?

We have a community engagement program called “The 10,000 hours initiative”, which we started 2 years ago, where each employee can donate its working time to the communities which we operate with, doing various charity work. Given the unique situation with COVID-19, our staff came up with an idea to donate part of their salary to support those in need during the COVID-19 crisis. In Geneva, our staff has donated about 60 hours’ worth of their salaries, which the company matched in full, to benefit an association in Switzerland that supports patients and their families connect with each other to educate and learn from each other’s experiences managing eye disease.

We have been helping the association members to hold webinars as a way to exchange and dialogue, given that the regular face-to-face meetings had to be canceled. Since patients with eye disorders are suffering even more from lack of social interaction, we hope that these webinars will help keep them connected and informed during the pandemic.

Why is it important to continue ophthalmic treatments for people suffering from Covid-19?

Many eye disorders are chronic, which means continued treatment and medication is needed to ensure disease will continue to be monitored and controlled.

Why was it important for you to do something?

Santen’s mission is to contribute to the well-being of patients, their loved ones, and consequently to society. Most eye disorders are age-driven, which means that the majority of our patients are the elderly, which happens to be the single-largest risk group for COVID-19. Many of our patients are feeling quite vulnerable, scared, and maybe isolated. Many are having to limit interaction with their caretakers and family members to minimize infection risk. It is therefore extremely important for us to be able to support them through this crisis.

What do you expect in the coming months?

We don’t expect the situation to change until there is a cure or a vaccine. Managing this pandemic will be a marathon and not a sprint, so we are asking our employees to remain focused on serving our patients, and embrace the new reality, rather than be sentimentally hoping they can return to the good old days. We can’t go back to the past, but only leap towards the future!

JETRO Global Trade and Investment Report 2020: 1) Trade in 2019

On July 30th, JETRO published the 10th edition of the Global Trade and Investment Report. The report covers 2019 and the first quarter of 2020. The three key points are as follows:

1. World trade in 2019 decreased in both trade value and volume
2. World trade in 2020 Q1 dropped sharply due to COVID-19
3. Japanese companies are seeking new business strategies to cope with the increasing uncertainty

In 2019, global trade deteriorated in both trade and volume for the first time in 10 years. The decrease in value (-2.9%) was more significant than the decrease in volume (-0.1%). The tensions in global trade in general and the escalation between China and the USA have significantly contributed to this decrease. The newly established

trade barriers between the two countries are also redirecting the trade-flows. While direct trade between the two rival economies has decreased because of the tariff, Asian countries are benefiting from it. Indeed, China has increased its exports to Asian countries which are exporting more to the USA.

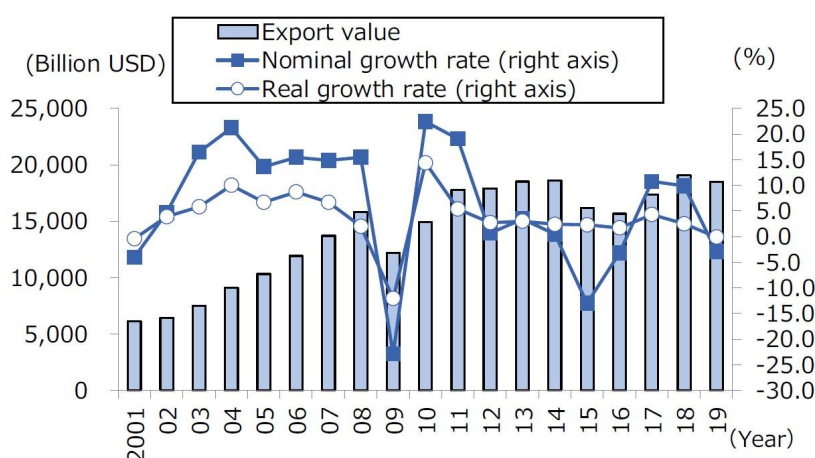
Japan has also been affected by this slowdown with a decrease of exports in both value (-4.4%) and volume (-2%).

Next month we will focus on the first findings from early-2020 trading trends.

活動

ACTIVITY

Trends in world trade (export basis)



Source: JETRO's estimates based on the trade statistics of respective countries, and WTO data

Source: [JETRO](#)

COVID causes the worst quarter ever for the Japanese economy

The Japanese economy recorded a 7.8% contraction from April to June (second quarter of 2020 - quarter to quarter figures, real growth rate, seasonally adjusted). This result for the GDP quarterly figures is unprecedented from when the country started to use this method back in 1955. It is also the third negative quarter in a row for the world's third largest

economy. Accordingly, Japanese economy is currently in recession. The VAT increase and natural disasters in autumn have weighed on domestic consumption and production. During the first months of 2020, the demand from China affected by COVID also impacted exports. In fact, exports are the component that has been the most affected,

with an unprecedented drop of -56%. As for domestic final demand, private demand also plummeted with a 23.5% drop. It was only public demand that remained stable (-0.1%) thanks to an increase of public investments (+4.7%)

Source: [Cabinet Office](#)

動向

TREND

革新

INNOVATION

Robots have become a reality for the construction industry in Japan

Nikkei Asian Review has published a [very interesting article](#) on the use of robots in the construction industry. The focus is on the company Obayashi Gumi, which is building a water dam in the Mie prefecture using robots for the first time. Because of the shortage of manpower, construction companies need to find new ways to carry out major infrastructure projects. The 84-meter high concrete dam is expected to be completed in 2023. Water dams require strong expertise, heavy machinery and qualified workers to carefully place each piece. Part of the work can now be operated remotely using autonomous robots, depending on the work.

The increase in productivity is

about 10% for the current project, but the company is looking forward and expects the building time to be reduced by 30% in the future thanks to improvements and accumulated experiences. Obayashi is not the only contractor to test ro-

bots on building sites. Kajima and Takenaka are also exploring what could become a strong asset in a highly competitive market.



Obayashi's construction site (photo copyright Obayashi)

Agenda

活動

AGENDA

✓ Stay tuned

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva
80, Rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva
Phone: 022 732 13 04
Fax: 022 732 07 72
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp