

# *Embassy of Japan*

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## *Press Release*

### ***Japan grants Two-Year Project for Strengthening Local Food Supply***

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Date: February 24, 2026  
Majuro, Marshall Islands

On Tuesday, February 24, 2026, His Excellency SOMA Hirohisa, Ambassador of Japan in the RMI, and Ms. Hilary Vanderwey, IOM Head of Sub-office in the RMI, signed the Exchange of Notes for Japan's grant aid totaling 203 million Japanese yen (equivalent to 1.3 million US dollars) for the Project for Strengthening Local Food Supply.

The signing ceremony was held at the Embassy of Japan's multipurpose hall and the signing was witnessed by Honorable Minister Kalani Kaneko and Secretary Isabela Silk from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Commissioner Junior Paul from the Public School System, Chief Randon Jack from the Division of Forestry of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce, Mr. Andrew McChesney and Ms. Anna Likholet, Co-Directors of Canvasback Wellness Center, and other officials and stakeholders.

This two-year initiative is designed to support community and school-based efforts to strengthen climate-resilient food systems in the RMI by introducing sustainable agricultural techniques and promoting healthy cooking skills using locally available ingredients. Aiming to revitalize local food production and consumption, this project ultimately seeks to reduce the nation's dependence on imported food and improve overall nutritional security.

The Embassy of Japan and the IOM Sub-Office in the RMI have been collaborating to address migration drivers by building community resilience through vital water and sanitation projects. This new project marks a new chapter in their partnership, expanding their reach to ensure the long-term health and self-sufficiency of the Marshallese people.

After the signing, Ambassador SOMA, remarked, "we are committed to providing a more affordable and healthier local food supply system by reevaluating and revitalizing access to traditional food sources," and expressed his sincere hope that "this project will be a resounding success and serve as a milestone in strengthening the partnership between Japan and the IOM to further improve the welfare of the people in the RMI."

Ms. Hilary Vanderwey expressed gratitude for the continued support of the Japanese Government and the people and Government of RMI and remarked "what makes this effort powerful is that it's hands-on and community-driven. [Throughout the project activities,] we help ease the pressures of climate shocks that disrupt daily life and livelihoods, and we help to address the underlying drivers of migration in the Marshall Islands."

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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Ambassador SOMA and Ms. Vanderwey (in front) with key partners



Ambassador SOMA making remarks



Ms. Vanderwey making remarks



Group photo after the signing