●Knowledge Cluster Initiative

Transition of Cluster Policy

1st Science and Technology Basic Plan (FY1996 ~ FY2000) —Foundation of Regional R&D—

- Increasing public awareness of S&T, promoting both basic and pioneering R&D, and constructing S&T-related facilities
- Creating and expanding various research systems in which national and public universities/research institutions and privatefirms participate, and enhancing their coordination
- Supporting public research institutions

2nd Science and Technology Basic Plan (FY2001 ~ FY2005) —Start of Cluster Policy—

○S&T Promotion in regions

- Establishment of "intellectual cluster" in the region

An "intellectual cluster" is a system of technological innovation under the incentive of the region, in which a public research organization leads companies in/around the region with its originality and potential.
More specifically, in the system through a human resource network and systematic collaborative researches, technical seeds of public research organization and business needs of companies stimulates each other resulting in a chain of technological innovation and new industry creation. Regional development with such system is able to bring successful technological innovation of world class. Therefore it is needed for Japan to establish and support the intellectual clusters in each region.

3rd Science and Technology Basic Plan (FY2006 ~ FY2010) —Development of Cluster Policy—

○Building regional innovation systems and creating vital regions
Because the promotion of S&T in regions contributes to building regional innovation systems and creating vital regions—thus enhancing the sophistication and diversification of S&T of Japan as a whole, along with the competitive edge of innovation systems—the government will actively encourage such promotion.

- Forming regional clusters

Formation of regional clusters not only requires R&D by industry-university-government collaboration; it also needs, various activities such as facilitation of finance, support of new business creation, development of the market environment, and building of cooperative networks. As such, the government will proceed with long term efforts based on the strategic initiative of regions and the collaboration of relevant organizations.
The government will continue to provide competitive support for cluster forming activities carried out under local initiatives. In so doing, the government will provide selective support to regions that have the potential to develop as world-class clusters, by assessing the global competitive edge of each region according to the progress of cluster formation and develop clusters across Japan with strengths that utilize regional characteristics, however small in scale.

Reference: Innovative-related Policies

○Strategy for Regional Empowerment through Science and Technology (Council for Science and Technology Policy, May 19, 2008)
It is necessary for Japan to create diverse regional hubs for science and technology, and out of such diversity, to develop and expand "global" technology and science hubs, which can become a world-class development center in Japan.

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Outline of the Knowledge Cluster Initiative

As part of policies to achieve their cluster vision, local governments will, based on a cluster vision for an individual region, implement the following in concert with other measures (of their own or of other ministries and agencies):

(1) Conducting joint research by industry, academia, and government

- Conducting joint research by industry-academia-government at university joint research centers or other institutions to produce new technology seeds in light of corporate needs
- Patenting research results and conducting R&D relating to incubation

(2) Using projects by local governments, related ministries, etc.

- Fully implementing projects, from R&D to commercialization, and using R&D systems controlled by related agencies and ministries like the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)

(3) Other

- Setting up a "Knowledge Cluster Headquarters" in each region as a control center for project implementation (staffed by a President, Project Director, Chief Scientist, and others)
- Assigning science and technology coordinators (experts), with emphasis on expertise, and using advisers like patent attorneys
- Holding forums and other meetings to announce and discuss research results

MEXT

MEXT selects a region and provides funds to core organizations in order to realize the cluster vision for the local region