

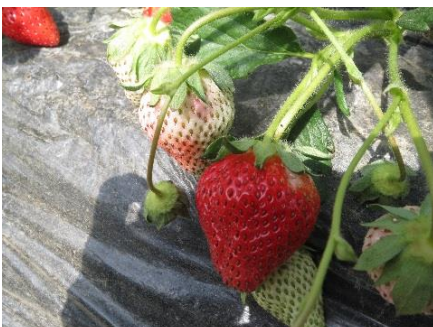


Booklet 2014

Visiting sustainable communities

—A Pursuit to Build the Community Power Assessment Tool—

CSO Network Japan



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Preface

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Executive Director

In late January of this year, an NPO called *Yuki-no-Sato Towa Furusato-zukuri Kyogikai* (or Council for Hometown Development of Organic Farm Village Towa) was awarded the semi-grand prize for the Fifth Annual Regional Revitalization Prize. Yuki-no-Sato Towa works towards the revitalization of the community and the forests that surround it in the Towa district of Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture, and this prize was founded by 45 local newspapers nationwide and Kyodo News to support organization that are working for regional revitalization.

Yuki-no-Sato Towa is an incorporated nonprofit organization that was set up by organic farmers, the local shopping districts, and the agricultural cooperatives at the time of the so-called “great Heisei municipal mergers” in 2005. They felt alarmed by the declining population, and formed the organization to promote hometown development measures based on organic agriculture and regional resource circulation. Since its foundation, they have been proactive in developing new industries using local resources, receiving new farmers, and promoting green tourism while operating a roadside stand. With external networks being added to the district, which had always been rich in its internal social capital, the Towa district was becoming ripe for endogenous growth. The district was heavily affected by the nuclear accident as a result of the Great East Japan Earthquake, but they were quick to regain vitality in the region. They have been exhibiting their resilience and vitality to the fullest as a new wine company started, more farmhouse inns began their operation, and exchange programs with urban areas flourished. Their achievements have gathered attention from not only the rest of Japan but also internationally as well

Forum of Community Power, for which CSO network plays the secretariat role, has visited Ohnan Town and former Kakinoki Village (current Yoshika Town) in Shimane Prefecture, and the Okitama Region in Yamagata Prefecture this fiscal year. As you will find out more details in the chapters to follow, Ohnan Town has set their goals to become the “Class-A Gourmet Town” and the “Best Village in Japan to Raise Children,” while the former Kakinoki Village has engaged in community development through organic agriculture. Both have actively sought and received new settlers from outside of their community. Meanwhile in Yamagata Prefecture’s Okitama Region, the three cities and five towns in the region are regarded as one “self-sufficiency zone,” and they have embarked on a grand effort to generate industry and employment based on rich local resources within the region, with the goal of creating a positive local economic cycle.

These are a few examples of the unlimited potential of the regional community. Rural areas have bountiful treasures in their regional resources and the unspoiled traditional landscape of beautiful pastoral scenery. Currently, the Japanese government is promoting regional revitalization. This is seen by some as a business opportunity for starting up new projects and industries through the use of local regional resources, but external forces must not do harm to the “community power” that has been cultivated by the community itself. It is our hope that we see more examples of revitalization success, and that revitalization measures suitable for each community will be truly valued.



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1. Observation Report on Ohnan Town and Yoshika Town, Shimane Prefecture

Tomoyo Negishi, Researcher, CSO network Officer

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According to the Japan Policy Council estimate, by 2040, 896 of the 1799 municipalities (cities, wards, towns, and villages) nationwide (or 49.8%) will fit the description of a “Municipality in Jeopardy of Extinction¹.” Of all the municipalities in Shimane Prefecture, which was the target of our observations, 84.2% is considered to be “in jeopardy of extinction,” and this proportion is third highest among all the prefectures in Japan, after Akita and Aomori Prefectures.



Yoshika Town

On the other hand, according to the Shimane Prefectural Mountainous Regions Research Center’s study, which looked at population shifts by community center and elementary school districts, 73 districts (or 33%) have seen an increase in 2013 in the population of children age four and younger compared to 2008 figures; this increase is more prevalent in mountainous regions. Members of the Regional Community Power Forum visited Ohnan Town and Yoshika Town in Shimane Prefecture in October 2014 and observed examples of rural return migration.

Ohnan Town was created in October 2004 as a result of a merger of Hasumi Village, Mizuho Town, and Iwami Town, and Ohnan has actively sought newcomers to settle under the leadership of Mayor Ryoji Ishibashi. The town population has seen an annual increase by 20 persons in 2013. The population had decreased by 85 the year after the merger, while in 2012 it was only a 14-person decrease, and in the nine years since the merger the demographic trend has shifted to growth.

Aiming to Become the Best Village in Japan to Raise Children

In the 2010 Population Census of Japan, the total population of Ohnan Town had decreased by slightly under 1,000 persons since the last census, with a drop of over 200 persons from the cohort consisting of 18-year-olds and younger. This propelled the town to set a goal of “increasing our 18-and-under population to 1,800 persons” in ten years starting in 2011, and the

¹ Municipalities that expect a decline in the young female population, between ages 20 and 39, to less than half the 2010 standards by 2040.

town is promoting aid for families raising children. (The population count for 18-year-olds and younger in 2010 was 1,660.) Specifically, the town set policies to promote the following: free child care after the second child, free meals at child care facilities, and free medical care until a child graduates from junior high school. Besides these new policies, the town invited an obstetrician-gynecologist whom the town previously lacked, and provided up to sixteen prenatal exams to expecting mothers for free. Five-year funding was secured for these programs through the Promotion Fund to Make Ohnan the Best Village in Japan to Raise Children, which was created by utilizing the Japanese government's Anti-Depopulation Measure Project Bond for public services enhancing the town's soft infrastructure. A total of 250 million yen had been accumulated for this purpose.

In 2013, Japan's total fertility rate (or the average number of children a woman gives birth to in her lifetime) was 1.43, but Ohnan Town greatly surpassed the national average with the past five-year average rate of 2.20 and the 2013 rate of 2.65. Magazines and television shows featured this effort to create an environment conducive to having and raising children, and to make the town more woman-friendly in general, and the town has been gaining a reputation for being a "single mother-friendly town."

"Development of a Class-A Gourmet Town"



Ajikura, a former Sake Brewery

In 2011, Ohnan Town's Vision for Cooperation among Agriculture, Forestry, Commerce, and Industry was formulated, and efforts to become a "Class-A Gourmet Town" also began. This is an initiative aimed at creating employment for newcomers and return-migrants from the perspective of food and agriculture (Oe, 2014). Class-A gourmet is defined as "meals and experiences that can only be experienced here." From Ajikura, a restaurant managed directly by the town's tourism bureau, the town promotes their class-A gourmet, or the delicious meals prepared with local rice, Iwami Wagyu beef, Iwami pork, vegetables, and herbs. At Ajikura, which is a former *sake* brewery that was converted into a restaurant, guests can enjoy an Italian course meal using local ingredients grown and raised with local pride. Providing class-A gourmet has also served as a movement to change the awareness of local residents into having a sense of "village pride."

There is another restaurant called Petit Ajikura within Ohnan Town, and a total of nine people are working at these two sites. Among the nine, five are trainees who are called "Cultivating Chefs," and all five also serve on the Community Revitalization Cooperation Corps. The name, Cultivating Chefs, was coined with the hope that these chefs "not only cook meals but grow vegetables with their own hands, cultivate people's potentials, and cultivate the community." Until October 2013, these trainees received training from Mr. Misao Yoneda, a local expert on natural and organic farming. They are expected to become successors to the class-A gourmet through their involvement in not only cooking but agriculture as well.

Ohnan Town also has a young entrepreneur who is operating a natural-grazing dairy farm. Mr. Masaaki Suhamu of Sixth Produce, Ltd., was born to a dairy-farming family, and started his own farm after learning about natural grazing while in college. He grazes his cows at the stocking rate

of one cow per hectare, and has built a repeat customer base who enjoy his milk that is made the good old-fashioned way.

Supporting Newcomers

Ohnan Town provides “thorough care for newcomers” in order to build a town community that accommodates the needs of newcomers and return migrants. For this endeavor, the Settlement Support Coordinator serves an important role. One staff from the town’s Settlement Promotion Department serves full-time in this position, and the current coordinator, Mr. Ryu Yokosu, himself is a newcomer. Mr. Yokosu not only supports newcomers in locating housing and employment, but also provides guidance on everyday issues such as neighborhood relations. “Thorough care” for newcomers do not stop at the point of settling, but extends to follow-up care upon settlement as well, and this support system provides the backdrop of the increase they have seen in newcomers.



a stage to be processed at a working union

Community Development through Organic Farming in Former Kakinoki Village

Yoshika Town, Shimane Prefecture, is located in the mountainous region two and a half hours away by car from the Hiroshima Airport. The town was created as a result of a merger between Muikaichi Town and Kakinoki Village in October 2005. The village is surrounded by a 1,000-meter mountain range, and the Takatsu River, touted the cleanest river in Japan, runs through beautiful pastoral scenery.

The former Kakinoki Village started reaching out to and receiving newcomers in fiscal year 2003, and a total of 116 persons (53 households) have migrated, with 85 of them (40 households) permanently settling in the past 11 years. Fiscal year 2011 was a notable year that saw an increase of newcomers reaching 29 persons, compared to ten or so in the previous years. This may have something to do with the trend in relocating to western Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

The oil crisis of 1973 was a turning point for the former Kakinoki Village, which had since engaged in community development through organic farming. Mr. Atsushi Fukuhara, a former Kakinoki village employee, has been in the central role in this effort, and he is the current president of an NPO called “Yukibito.” Mr. Fukuhara says that when the oil crisis occurred while Japan was still experiencing rapid economic growth, he realized the importance of raising self-sufficiency rates in order for the people to live a richer life in the village. He proposed raising self-sufficiency to a local group of farming successors, but was initially received poorly because the current of the times then was to pursue cash crops.

Around the same time, Mr. Fukuhara attended an organic farming study group meeting in Yamaguchi Prefecture, and met a consumer group mostly made up of women. When he found out that the group members desired “not rice and vegetables produced for sale, but ingredients the farmers produce for their own families to eat,” he was convinced that this indeed was “farming that is an extension of self-sufficiency.” “Let’s provide our excess produce,” he thought, and started providing vegetables. This was back in 1980. As this movement began, Mr. Fukuhara’s group, along with the supporters from the agricultural cooperative’s women’s bureau, launched the Kakinoki Village Organic Farming Study Group. This was the beginning of the history of



Organic production sold at a roadside station

Kakinoki Village’s organic farming.

Shipping to Various Places, Making the Most of Its Optimal Location

The mountainous region of Shimane Prefecture is characterized by its great transportation access. From Kakinoki Village, it takes less than two hours to reach Hiroshima City, with its population of one million, and the industrial cities on the coast of Seto Inland Sea are also close by. The news of Mr. Fukuhara and his colleagues’ work spread by word of mouth to cities such as Iwakuni and Tokuyama (both of Hiroshima Prefecture) and Masuda (of Shimane Prefecture), and for over thirty years, they have been engaging in farming that prioritize self-sufficiency, producing safe vegetables and rice, and sharing their excess produce to others.

Currently, a community action organization called Kakinoki Village Food and Agricultural Enterprise Cooperative serves as the hub, and each small production group – such as the Organic Farming Study Group, processing cooperatives, and school lunch production group – produces what each wants to produce. Their produce are shipped to various places, with the market having been established to roadside rest areas, the Consumers’ Co-operative Union (and their Green Co-op Union), supermarkets in Hiroshima City and Yamaguchi City, natural foods restaurants, and the so-called “antenna shops” which introduce local produce and products to other regions of Japan.

Connecting to the Flow of Newcomer Settlement

Newcomer settlers and new farmers tend to enjoy the lifestyle of Half Farmer and Half X, engaging in forestry or other agricultural businesses on the side. With an environment that welcomes taking on different things, newcomer settlers deepen their relationships with each other by holding their own study groups or gathering at a farmer-restaurant that has been renovated from an old-style house.

Information on moving to Yoshika Town can be found at the town’s official Newcomer Settlement Exchange Portal Site. The site supports newcomer settlement by introducing all the charming and attractive aspects of living in Yoshika Town, providing information on the settlement experience program, and posting first-hand accounts of newcomer settlers as “Yoshika Resident Voices.”

2. Visiting *Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone* and *Shirataka Nora Society* in Okitama Region, Yamagata Prefecture

Masako Hasegawa, Program Officer, CSO network Japan
Haruka Yokoyama, Intern, CSO network Japan

Okitama region lies in the southern part of Yamagata Prefecture. Regarding the three cities and five towns in this region with an idea of one self-sufficiency zone, Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone was founded in August 2014 to generate industry and employment based on rich local resources within the region, with the goal of creating a positive local economic cycle. We visited the Okitama region in February 2015, still covered in deep snow, to hear from Mr. Tsutomu Watanabe, who is the Co-representative Director of the organization. We also visited Shirataka Nora Society, an organization which shares the same mission in the same region, and heard from them over a meal deliciously prepared by hand.

The region was formerly called Yonezawa Domain in the feudal age. In the legacy of the domain's "spirit of self-sufficiency" and "development of local industry," a ground-breaking attempt has just begun to share and connect these long-standing locally-focused regional revitalization programs in the larger region.

Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone

Surrounded by mountains in all directions in the upper reaches of the Mogami River, the Okitama Basin is blessed with rich water and farmland, with thriving rice-farming and fruit-growing industry. Beautiful pastoral scenery, which may well be called Japan's original unspoiled landscape, can be found throughout the four seasons. In fact, Iide, a town within this region, has won the highest prize for the First Annual Most Beautiful Villages in Japan Scenery Contest (hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries) for its scattered-settlement farm village scenery.



At the office of the organization

Three cities and five towns are included in the self-sufficiency zone, including Yonezawa City, Nagai City, Nanyo City, Takahata Town, Kawanishi Town, Oguni Town, Shirataka Town, and Iide Town. With 2,498 square kilometers of land, which is

a little less than five times the land mass of the 23-ward area of Tokyo, the zone is slightly over one-fourth of the entire Yamagata Prefecture. The aforementioned Yonezawa Domain covers the same territory, and the tradition of the autonomous and self-reliant spirit has remained in the region since the times of the feudal lord Yozan Uesugi. The current population is 220,000.

Carrying On the “Circulation Model” Concept

Various regional revitalization programs have been tried in the Okitama Region, including Nagai City’s Rainbow Plan which took food waste collected from the separated garbage and turned it into compost. Mr. Yoshihide Kanno, who came up with this plan, initially saw chickens he was raising eat soil and muddy water, and wondered if the animals need the microorganisms in local soil. This led him to the circulation model that he called the Rainbow Plan, which turns food waste into compost, compost into rich soil, rich soil into safe and secure crops, crops into meals, and the meals back into food waste. Today, all 5000 households in the central city district of Nagai participate in the program, and the program is a source of pride for the city as many from within and outside Japan come for an observation visit.

The image of the circulation model, which was central to the Rainbow Plan, was carried on in the conceptual framework of the Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone. In response to the expanding liberalization of importing agricultural produce as a result of globalization, Mr. Kanno emphasized the need “to create the connections that originally existed among agriculture, food, and the environment, and among people.” Ultimately, his suggestion to “form self-sufficiency zones like a mosaic across the nation” served as an impetus for the creation of the Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone.

Other municipalities in the Okitama Basin are also notable, including Takahata Town, which is known nationwide as “the origin of organic farming,” and Iide Town, which has been aiming to become the “Town with an Energy Circulation Model” and working on locally producing and locally consuming renewable energy. Mr. Kanji Hoshi is a farmer poet, a leader in Takahata’s organic farming movement for many years, and a proposer of the self-sufficiency zone concept, and he explains this way: “Behind the concept of the self-sufficiency zone is this Chinese Buddhist teaching called ‘*shin-do-fu-ji*’ (body-earth-not-two). It means that human beings and the soil cannot be separated.”

Towards a Regional Circulatory Society

The Organization has set the following four activities as pillars of a “regional circulatory society”: 1) promoting regional self-sufficiency and intra-regional distribution; 2) building safe and secure agriculture and food production in coexistence with nature; 3) putting theory into practice in educational settings; and 4) becoming a global model for reducing medical expenses. They have established eight subsections to promote these activities, solicited volunteers for each project, and conducted field studies and research activities while moving forward the discussions on these issues. For example, the Renewable Energy Subsection has begun considering the possibilities of small hydroelectric power and hot spring energy, and the Intra-Regional Distribution (Local Production Local Consumption) Subsection has been coordinating with Yamagata University and others for discussions on rice bran oil and snow storehouses (which is a mechanism for drawing out sweetness from vegetables and fruits by storing them in the snow).

The Organization has around 250 members including group (non-individual) members. Corporations, municipal governments, universities, unions, and NPOs that are working on local-production-local-consumption, organic farming, and other circulatory regional development measures from all around the Okitama Region have come together; individuals

who support the idea of the self-sufficiency zone have also joined. This grand effort toward a self-sufficiency zone is unprecedented in Japan, and has been moving forward thanks to coordination across industries. Mr. Watanabe says that when it comes to regional activities, the expectation is to show results rather than to debate the logic behind them. According to him, members with a sense of pride and mission have been enjoying their involvement in subsectional activities now as they plan to officially start next fiscal year. When resident discussions develop into various projects, and when they organically connect with each other, there is hope that this movement will spread and regions will become sustainable, as more and more regions ought to be.

Shirataka Nora Society

Shirataka Town is located in the middle of the mountains at the foot of the Okitama Basin, surrounded by the Shirataka Hills to its east and the Asahi Mountain Range to its west. Along the Mogami River, which runs through just about the center of the town, lies rich and vast farmlands. Rice is the main crop grown in the town, but sericulture and dairy farming also take place, in addition to growing leaf tobacco and apples.

For Diverse Members to Sustain Their Lives on Organic Farming

Shirataka Nora Society is an agricultural processing group founded by eleven people of various ages and backgrounds in Shirataka Town. Different circumstances brought each of them to organic farming, but they founded the group together as they each desired an entity from which they could support their livelihoods on farming. Using pesticide-free and reduced-pesticide crops as ingredients, and without any additives or chemical seasoning, they produce and sell pickles and rice cakes, which are both local specialty foods, as well as their original side dishes, confectionery, and other processed food items. We visited Meguriya, a restaurant from which Shirataka Nora Society processes and sells their products.

From Its Inception to Today

Mr. Fumio Ouchi was the representative of Shirataka Nora Society when it was founded. He had found out about Shirataka Town at the National Chamber of Agriculture's Consultation Center for New Entry into Agriculture, fell in love with the dignified presence of the Asahi Mountain Range that overlooks the town, and decided to move and settle there. According to Mr. Ouchi, Shirataka Nora Society was founded in 2006 by reorganizing the Nora Society, which had originally been started by Ms. Mitsuko Hikita as a women's group. The reorganization required a huge transition in the Society's activities, from mainly growing and selling organic vegetables to processing the produce for sale. This model of growers being engaged in processing and sales was created as a means to sustain their livelihoods on agriculture. The model can be considered a forerunner to the so-called sixth-order industrialization² approach, which has been actively promoted as a revitalization strategy for rural



Meguriya, Shirataka Nora ciety's

² Sixth-order industry denotes an integrated approach that combines the primary industry (agriculture, forestry, and fisheries), secondary industry (processing and manufacturing), and tertiary industry (distribution and sales), drawing from this equation: $1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$.

farming and fishing towns today.

Starting from 32 items in the beginning, Shirataka Nora Society now makes more than 60 processed food items, the purchase-order membership has reached around 300 members, and annual sales has reached around 20 million yen. They have begun partnering with the Consumers' Co-operative Union in 2007, adopted planned production, and continue to conduct almost all the processing by themselves.

Unique yet Traditional Organizational Management

In November 2011, the Society incorporated as an enterprise cooperative as a result of the Society's policy to maintain equality among the members. The Society aimed to avoid placing a heavy burden on an individual serving as a representative, and to respect each member's opinions. Membership consists of a good balance of locals and transplants, men and women, and people of various ages, and they set up a system where the representative changes every two years. They have a unique way of running the organization where tasks are divided equally to each individual, not defined by household unit, while a sense of the traditional farming community could also be seen in how they discuss matters thoroughly and work cooperatively.

Processing Agricultural Products as an "Extension of the Home Kitchen"

Members say that Shirataka Nora Society's processing work is an "extension of the home kitchen" where female members share their everyday complaints with each other as they work with their hands. "It's minimum wage but I'm happy," Ms. Mie Kato, a member who has supported Shirataka Town's organic farming for a long time, says of this work format, and her words propel us to think deeply about economic wealth and degree of happiness in rural life. This "extension of the home kitchen" work is all by hand, does not seek efficiency, and avoids mechanization. Thanks to the hard work put in to producing and selling multiple items including local traditional preserved foods, they are contributing to transmission of the local culture through passing down the everyday dishes for farming families.

However, these processed agricultural items made from pesticide-free and reduced-pesticide ingredients do not sell well at the local farmers' market, and the overwhelming majority of the patrons are city dwellers who appreciate the value of safe and secure agricultural products. It is a difficult to make "local production, local consumption" a reality and to expand agricultural processing in the region as a means to transmit local culture. These issues have much to do with how Japanese people consider agriculture and with how agriculture ought to be in Japan, and pose a big challenge for the future of Shirataka Nora Society.

Recently, Shirataka Nora Society is making a steady effort to raise awareness, deepen understanding, and foster cooperation within the regional community through various activities, including cooking classes using produce they made and lectures on safe and secure food. They hope to be more engaged with the town government to explore possibilities to provide their produce for the school lunch program and for hospital meals. However, when it comes to having more members, the condition to become a member is a 300,000-yen investment, and the Society is not thinking about actively expanding membership for now. Maintaining the current organizational structure, their goals seem to be to take themselves beyond agricultural processing and to explore various activities rooted in the community.

Expanding Regional Activities

The region suffered damages from a landslide caused by heavy rain last summer, and there was a renewed awareness of the need to manage the degraded forest for the sake of disaster prevention. Shirataka Nora Society member Mr. Shoichi Sugawara is involved in another group called Shirataka Forest Improvement Society where they follow the rural tradition of utilizing the bounty of the mountain as a precious resource. Their activities contribute to the reevaluation of the forests, as they work to determine the boundaries of, thin trees in, and manage planted forests that have been abandoned. Additionally, they hold membership in the Shirataka Regional Revitalization Network, and have been contributing to the needs of the regional community, such as playing an active role in giving recommendations on the rebuilding of the town hall building. They are also a full member of the aforementioned Organization for the Promotion of Okitama Self-Sufficiency Zone, and are expected to take their work beyond the town into the larger region in areas such as renewable energy use in the future.



Snowy landscape at Okitama region in Yamagata

3. Attending the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Organic World Congress: Active Organic Agriculture Movements in Asia

Seiji Sugeno, President Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network (FOAN)

Moved by Bhutan's "100% Organic" Declaration

From October 13 to 15, 2014, I attended the IFOAM Organic World Congress held at a conference center in Turkey's ancient capital Istanbul. The theme for this congress was "Building Organic Bridges," and within it one could sense the power of Turkey in promoting their organic produce to the world like dry fruits and dairy products. 900 people from about 80 nations around the world participated, and the active and lively presence of Asian nations such as China, South Korea, India, Cambodia, and Bhutan were highly visible. IFOAM Asia's Secretary General is a Korean woman, and she reached out to Japan to join the regional body. India, Brazil, China, and Russia lobbied extravagantly to be the host for the next World Congress to be held in three years, and China was especially notable in making an active appeal. India was chosen as the next host after all, and was publicizing the next congress as one where producers will take center stage. In fact, only few farmers attended this World Congress as opposed to the many environmental groups, distribution groups, and academic scholars present.



The Minister of Agriculture and Forests and Mr. Sugeno

Bhutan caught my attention the most among the Asian nations. The highlight was when the Bhutanese Minister of Agriculture and Forests announced in his speech that "Bhutan aims to go 100% organic by 2020." It is wonderful that the Minister of Agriculture and Forests attended this World Congress and made this declaration. In contrast, it was unfortunate that the only person in attendance from Japanese government agencies was a staff person from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in charge of promoting organic agriculture in Southeast Asia.

In November 2013, when I visited the Araku Region, which is a mountainous area in southeast India, I noticed family farming and community farming alive and well in the region's rice production, dairy farming, and coffee bean cultivation. I found it important that we form alliances in Asia based on the power of these organic agriculture initiatives that are small-scale, family-owned, and collectively-operated.

"The Appeal from Fukushima" and the Sustainable Society

The largest objective in attending the Organic World Congress was to speak to the world about the conditions caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the nuclear accident, and to make an appeal based on the lessons learned from the disaster. Another



In front of the Fukushima exhibition booth at IFOAM

main objective was to relay the voices of organic farmers from all around Japan who have stated that “nuclear power plants and organic agriculture cannot coexist” and that we must “switch to renewable energy” at the “Revival! 3 Years Since the Fukushima Nuclear Accident – Fukushima Live-and-Plough Organic Agriculture Meeting” held in Fukushima in August 2014.

In the morning of the second day of the Congress, I delivered the message through “The Appeal from Fukushima” (see page 18 for full text). I asked Ms. Kaori Kuroda of CSO Network to serve as interpreter for me, and thanks to her I could solemnly and firmly

convey our message to the world. I emphasized that while radioactive contamination occurred in all types of soil, it was the fertile soil that is richer in organic materials that was more likely to have radioactive cesium absorbed and fixed in it. I wanted to tell the audience that the soil is powerful, and consequently this power of soil and hence the power of organic agriculture can be the light of hope for revitalization of the region. Furthermore, I appealed to the audience that Fukushima illuminates the role and sustainable value of environmentally-friendly agriculture even more as a result of the radioactive contamination that it has suffered. I also spoke about how all of the support received from citizens made it clear that urban-rural coexistence was crucial. I felt a sense of accomplishment after the speech as several people showered me with compliments and asked to shake my hand.

On the third day of the Congress, a special Fukushima booth was set up near the IFOAM International Head Office space, and we distributed posters, Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network flyers, and “The Appeal from Fukushima” text. Many people stopped by to take a look at our materials. A person from Romania asked us if we could teach them the technology to turn vegetable oil into running tractors.

We also got to meet Ms. Pinar Demircan, an anti-nuclear activist from Turkey, and heard from her that “at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, radioactive contamination had spread to the northeastern part of Turkey, but the government conducted no field investigation whatsoever on it.” We also heard that there is a plan to move forward the construction of two nuclear power reactors in Turkey using Japanese technology. “Just from observing Fukushima at a distance from Turkey, I felt that it will be impossible to take up agriculture in contaminated Fukushima again, but I am glad I could hear directly from you on this matter,” she said, and these words of hers left a strong impression on me.



Mr. Ishi, Mr. Okawara and Mr. Sugeno

IFOAM's General Assembly took place on the fourth day of the Congress. Three of us who came to Turkey together – Mr. Kai Okawara, a board member of the Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network; Professor Hideki Ishii, a Special Appointed Associate Professor at Fukushima University; and myself – made an appeal together at the General Assembly. Mr. Okawara took up agriculture after the 2011 disaster by starting to grow vegetables and apples, and he has since started up a citizens' radioactivity measuring station at his own home; he is considered a promising young agriculturalist who is proactive in promoting Fukushima produce. Professor Ishii started his position at Fukushima University also after the 2011 disaster, and, in cooperation with the Agricultural Cooperative and farmers, he has gone all around the prefecture to conduct field investigation including soil measurement; he has also been publicizing test results of Fukushima produce. There was a large round of applause after the three of us presented. At this General Assembly, the motion by IFOAM Japan to "advocate anti-nuclear pro-renewable energy through action" was passed.



Making Pomegranate juice by traditional way 1

It has become clear to me through attending this IFOAM Organic World Congress that when it comes to the various challenges the world faces – such as poverty, hunger, climate change, environmental and soil degradation, and protection of biodiversity – going "organic" is



Making Pomegranate juice by traditional way 2

one of the biggest keys and "sustainability" a key word. There is great need for the grassroots movement in support of organic farming to further develop. There is also great demand on the governments around the world to understand the complex situations in which the world is placed and to make sound decisions, with Bhutan's 100% organic declaration being one such example. As a country that is responsible for the nuclear accident, the Japanese government must make the decision for a change in its direction, with a shift away from nuclear power generation and a shift toward renewable energy, in the same way that Article 9 of the Constitution was borne as a

country responsible for marching into war and for all the sacrifices as a result.

In attending the IFOAM Organic World Congress, we owe our thanks to Mr. Katsushige Murayama, President of IFOAM Japan. We are grateful for his coordination with the IFOAM International Head Office so that "The Appeal from Fukushima" could be scheduled in the program. We are also grateful for Mr. Yu Watanabe of the IFOAM Japan Office for arranging

our accommodation and travel, and for his assistance with setting up for the speech at the Congress site. We extend our appreciation to both here once again.

Visiting the University of the Aegean and the Organic Farms

We spent the two days after the General Assembly visiting the University of the Aegean and the organic farms thanks to Professor Masanori Nonaka of Niigata University making connections for us.

At the Izmir Airport in the Aegean Region, Professor Oguz Can Turgay and Mr. Kazuki Suzuki awaited us. Professor Can had once studied at Niigata University in Japan, while Mr. Suzuki was from Niigata University and was studying at Ankara University at the time. Both of them deserve our deep appreciation for having made various arrangements for us, from the rental car to our visit to the University of the Aegean.

At the University of the Aegean, we met with the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, and we were able to let him know the conditions of Fukushima in his office. We were warmly welcomed, and following the suggestion made by Professor Ishii of Fukushima University, the plans for partnership between Fukushima University and the University of the Aegean had moved forward. After our meeting, thanks to the Dean's identification of our appeal as an important matter for Fukushima, the three of us from Fukushima were provided with an opportunity to present "The Appeal from Fukushima" to thirty pedology students. The message was also posted on the University of the Aegean's website, and we are grateful for that as well.

In the afternoon, we made an observation visit to a large-scale organic farm, which is collectively operated by thirteen families. This specific farm belonging to the Tombul Family contains livestock, grains, and pomegranate, as well as a processing facility. Its vast size of around 500 hectares, including multiple sites, reminded me of a theme park. I was amazed by the cyclical system which incorporates livestock, grain production, and processing. There was a machine in the biomass plant that could convert waste from the dairy cows into liquid fertilizer and barnyard manure, and amidst this modernized system, a traditional technique handed down from generation to generation was employed, where pomegranate was being stomped on in order to make the most of its special nutritional component. Also, cutting-edge technique utilizing information technology was used to ensure safety and sanitation. There was a well-balanced coexistence of good traditional practices worth preserving and innovative procedures.



At Ege University with a professor in Agriculture

In the collectively-operated farm system, full health and welfare benefits are offered on top of the wages paid to each family. There was also a museum on their premise, and they had an easy-to-understand exhibit on the history of olive production which has taken place in Turkey since the olden days. I was moved by seeing how the cyclical system of sustainable agriculture had been thoroughly incorporated here despite the farm's large scale.

The final evening was spent socializing around a Turkish meal, which allowed me to understand the friendliness of our Turkish hosts.

4. A Forum for Community Power Seminar “Bhutan, the Nation of Happiness, and Its Community Power” and the Community Assessment Tool

Masako Hasegawa, Program Office, CSO network Japan

Takahumi Ashima, Inturn, CSO network Japan



Professor. Katsuhiro Masaki, the Hirao School of Management, Konan University

On March 14, 2015, the Forum for Community Power invited Professor Katsuhiko Masaki of the Hirao School of Management at Konan University to give a lecture on Bhutan’s community power. Since 2006, Mr. Masaki has been conducting research on Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness (GNH) which takes into account the conditions in rural Bhutan. Due to the fact that Bhutan has set GNH as their national policy, there is a tendency for all Bhutanese people to be seen by outsiders as living “happily,” but the reality is that various social problems exist in Bhutan just like in other nations. According to the latest survey conducted by the Bhutanese government during the fiscal

year 2010, around 40% of the nation’s population could be considered “happy,” and the level of “happiness” among rural residents was lower (37%) than that of their urban counterparts (50%). We asked Mr. Masaki to speak on the status quo and the challenges faced by the rural regions of Bhutan, incorporating both the perspective of people’s everyday lives and the activities and programs of the national government.

Gross National Happiness (GNH)

GNH is a counter-concept to Gross National Product (GNP), and it aims for development with “happiness” as its ultimate objective. GNH is made of four pillars – sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and good governance – and nine domains have been established based on these four pillars. These domains have been further broken down into 33 indicators, and a national survey using these indicators is done in order to attain a quantitative measurement of GNH. A person is considered “happy” if s/he exceeds the sufficiency threshold in six of the nine domains. Policy evaluations are conducted using a screening tool based on GNH, and policies are assessed in each region based on this screening tool as well. In 2008, when there was discussion as to whether or not Bhutan should join WTO, this screening tool was used to decide against joining.

Conditions in the Rural Communities of Bhutan: From the Perspective of

the People and the Nation

Bhutan is considered a model student when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Between 2007 and 2012, poverty rate has been successfully reduced to half from 23% to 12%, and other goals are being reached in terms of income and life expectancy as well. However, the Bhutanese government recognizes its challenges in areas such as education and employment, and rural areas with lack of transportation are confronted with especially serious issues. Specifically, these communities lack development funds, they also do not have educational and employment opportunities for their residents, and the population of young people are declining as a result of migration to the cities. Every year, Mr. Masaki has visited Shingkar, which is a small remote village off the major road consisting of 34 households, and he has gotten to know the residents well. Using this village as an example, he spoke about the conditions in rural communities from the perspective of the everyday lives of the people and the activities and programs of the national government.

In the rural communities of Bhutan, everyday life of the people has operated on reciprocity. These communities are characterized by strong connections among the people and the sense of unity felt within the village. Traditionally, problems that arose in the community had been solved within the community. However, as the population of young people have declined in recent years, reciprocal community life has become more and more difficult to sustain.

On the other hand, in recent years, community life has also become a site for the national government programs, and new challenges have arisen as a result. Bhutanese government has been promoting public works throughout the nation including in rural areas through provision of subsidies, and Shingkar and surrounding regions were no exception. Government-led organic agriculture project had been implemented, but the region lacks adequate access to the markets, and no results have been yield thus far. Living conditions in the village has been improved, but, at the same time, this became an impetus for the idea to sink in among the villagers that community life belongs to the realm of national government's activities. This has led to more and more instances where the villagers rely on government funding.

Community Challenges

When it comes to solving various problems within a community, Mr. Masaki stresses the importance of residents working amongst themselves to sustain and develop their community's livelihood rather than being dependent on government subsidies and other national policies. He said that one direction to take would be to form associations between the village's cooperative union and external groups. Specifically, this would mean that external supporters who care about the well-being of the village would provide collective assistance to activities that help improve living conditions in the village. He noted that in order to make the village more livable, there have been programs implemented already, and a few other plans have also emerged. Further development is to be hoped for on this matter.

This was an example of one small village among the 700,000 Bhutanese people, but many issues commonly seen in Japanese communities were also found here. Among these issues that exist across borders was the balance between the realm of community life and the activities of the nation or government. It is vital that each community create their own "happiness" with their own hands, but, at the same time, coordination with the government is also necessary. Therefore, when providing assistance to communities, it becomes crucial that the supporters

pay attention to both of these forces.

5. Towards a Creation of the Community Power Assessment Tool



Masako Hasegawa, Program Office, CSO network Japan

Thus far, the Forum for Community Power has visited “Vibrant Communities” that have produced results in community revitalization, and heard from community leaders who have strived to revitalize their communities. Many of these Vibrant Communities had made the most of the climate and traditions unique to their region as the “community treasure” in building their community. It is our hope that we extract the essence of community revitalization from these successful examples and create a model so that we may be able to present some hints to those who are confronting the obstacles and struggling to revitalize their own communities. Through systematic review of the common variables among successful community revitalization cases, and through creating a series of assessment tools, we are trying to provide a resource that may be used at various phases of community revitalization. When there are difficulties, or when developing the next steps, we hope that our tools can be of use in bringing attention to the variables needed in community revitalization.

Through Our Visits with the “Vibrant Communities”

In creating the Community Assessment Tool, let us do a case analysis of the “Vibrant Communities” that the Forum for Community Power has visited, observed, and have interacted. Since 2013, the Forum for Community Power has accumulated case studies on community revitalization measures through visiting the following twelve communities, including ten communities in six prefectures in Japan and two communities overseas. The Vibrant Community Observation Study Summary provides a summary of the parties undertaking revitalization, the contents of revitalization measures, and results. Firstly, this shows that operation is largely split between the private sector and the municipal governments, and in the case of the former, most have been farmers. Even when projects have been undertaken by farmers, many cases involve coordination with municipal governments, and the same is true with municipal-led projects where many involve coordination with the private sector.

Secondly, there were many cases of environmental conservation agriculture linking with the cities as a common content of a community revitalization measure. Producer-consumer partnerships and green tourism are a few of the ways in which the community interacts with the cities, and these illustrate how urban residents see value in sustainable and environmental conversation agriculture and are supporting rural areas through economic means but bypassing the market economy. Lastly, what the chart shows as achievements and results of community revitalization are stabilization of agricultural operations through expanding the sales channels for the produce, and the increase in those visiting and settling in the community. We can conclude, then, that a virtuous cycle of promoting the environmental conservation agricultural efforts that utilize the “community treasures” to city dwellers who value them, the community receiving more visitors and settlers as a result, and this leading to more venues for selling the produce can be considered a model case for community revitalization.

Considering the Different Roles of the “Happiness Indicator”

When measuring the results of community revitalization, “Happiness Indicators,” which have been created in many places recently, can serve as a reference. Happiness indicator measures how an environment to live happily has been developed, and the aforementioned GNH concept by Bhutan is one such indicator that is well known. Since the 2000s, state governments in the United States and Australia have created their own indicators, and have adopted policies based on the results of resident surveys using such indicators. Since 2010, municipal governments in Japan have begun creating their own indicators as well. Among such municipalities is Arakawa Ward in Tokyo Prefecture, whose current mayor who believes that “the ward government is a system to make its citizens happy.” Under his leadership, the Research Institute for Local government by Arakawa City (RILAC), which the Forum for Community Power visited in August 2014, created the Gross Arakawa Happiness (GAH) Indicator, and continue to conduct research that can affect policy. GAH consists of the following six areas: 1) health and welfare, 2) parenting and education, 3) industry, 4) environment, 5) culture, and 6) safety and security. An umbrella indicator titled “Degree of Sense of Happiness” ties all six together.

At CSO Network, we analyzed eight happiness indicators from the world and six from Japan, and found the following six as common areas appearing in many indicators: 1) income and employment (economy), 2) health and welfare, 3) parenting and education, 4) environment, 5) culture, and 6) regional community. This framework overlaps almost exactly with GAH. Generally speaking, income, employment, and other economic aspects tend to gather attention as a result of community revitalization. However, it can be concluded that when an environment is created where happiness can be felt in a more multi-faceted way – such as in health and welfare, parenting and education, or culture – people settle or flow into such communities, and sustainable community becomes a possibility. On the other hand, those who want to continue to live in a rural community may prioritize different sets of variable in a region, such as the environment or the regional community ties, than their urban counterparts, and the creation of a regional-specific unique happiness indicator can help in the community revitalization process. We take these different roles of happiness indicators into account, and in the future, we would like to ask for feedback from those engaging in community revitalization who have actually used the Community Assessment Tool as we continue to mold our assessment tools.

An Appeal from Fukushima

The Value of Organic Farming and Hope for a Sustainable Society

IFOAM Organic World Congress 2014

Seiju Sugeno, President of Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network

<Inability of nuclear power plants to coexist with people>

I am an organic farmer in Fukushima. I am here today to make a claim to you and all the other farmers that nuclear power plants cannot coexist with people or farming. This is not only my hope, but also Fukushima's hope: to create a future that is free of nuclear power plants.

Three years and seven months have passed since the earthquake, the tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident, which occurred in March 2011. Since the nuclear disaster, the large amount of radiation that escaped in the air has been contaminating mountains, forests, farms, and oceans, not only in Fukushima, but also in nearby parts of eastern Japan. Needless to say, it has been greatly affecting our daily lives, as well as the communities that we live in. The damage brought by the disaster was especially severe to us organic farmers, as our main focus has always been to farm and crop in the most eco-friendly manner possible; one that does not disturb or disrupt the ecosystem.

Since the disaster, we have suffered a lot. Many of us lost our houses and farms to the tsunami. A hundred and thirty thousand people are still unable to go back to their homes. Little children are now living under the constant fear of radiation. And sadly, we have also lost some farmers to suicide. But even in devastation, we kept on farming and remained hopeful.

<Collaborative investigations between farmers and university researchers>

We have conducted numerous tests on our soils, water, and products for radiation, while also checking our bodies with a whole-body counter. As you know, radiation is invisible and has no smell. In order to make the damage of radiation visible to everyone's eyes, we are conducting factual investigations in collaboration with researchers from Fukushima University. Unfortunately, the contamination of mountains and forests is very serious. We found that the radioactive cesium was being absorbed into fallen leaves, and eventually taken into trees as they decomposed into the ground. Mushrooms and edible wild plants from Fukushima are currently banned from shipping. Decontamination of the mountains and forests is one of the biggest tasks that we are facing now.

On the other hand, the amount of radiation in our rice and vegetables had drastically dropped to almost none within two years of the disaster. Mr. Kiichi Nakajima, an honorary professor at Ibaraki University, called this the "Miracle of Fukushima." After conducting collaborative research with Mr. Masanori Nonaka, a professor of soil science at Niigata University, we found that cultivated soil absorbs radioactive cesium underground, and it stabilizes it there. When radiation is stable in the ground, it does not contaminate farming products. Furthermore, the research revealed that when a land is fertile with a large amount of microbial activities (meaning it is cultivated organically), it tends to stabilize radiation easier.

I was very impressed by the power of soil. I believe that organic farming is the way to recover lands from contamination.

<Value of organic farming and power of farming communities>

Japan is one of the countries in the temperate monsoon zone, where the history of rice farming goes back three-thousand and five hundred years. For many of those years, we have been cultivating our lands to create fertile soils.

It hurts every time I see abandoned farms in the evacuation zone that are no longer used due to radiation. One of my farmer friends started farming inside of the evacuation zone, only sixteen kilo meters away from Fukushima Daiichi, to test out how organic rice grows there. The land surrounding his rice field was completely covered with weeds, as nobody took care of it. Eventually insects like dragonflies came back to the land, but surprisingly they only stayed around his rice field. I was truly touched to see this.

As organic farmers, our duty is not only producing rice and vegetables, but also preserving the beautiful landscapes that surround us, and maintaining the rich ecosystem within them. At the same time, it is also our responsibility to grow a community where people of all ages work together to provide their own food and energy. A major shift in energy is taking place in Fukushima right now. People are more focused on renewable energy, including solar power, hydropower, biomass, and extract oil from rapeseeds and soybeans. I myself have recently switched my tractor to run with vegetable oil.

Japan is a country with the longest average life span. This is probably thanks to our diet, which consists of various seasonal ingredients including rice, vegetables, fish, wheat, and soybeans. "Washoku," traditional Japanese cuisine has recently been added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage. I believe that farmers are also a part of this "Intangible Cultural Heritage," with their long years of dedication to this country.

<A shift from a materialistic society to a humanistic society>

When the disaster occurred in Fukushima, we received much support from different communities, NPOs, NGOs, and some major companies. New relationships are now being built between Fukushima and urban communities. A lot of college students, city residents, and corporate employees are coming to Fukushima to experience farming. We are also receiving a new generation of young organic farmers who have decided to move to Fukushima. I also hope that supporting companies will be able to help us with our local businesses in the future, and support our development of renewal energy.

When the economy grew, many people shifted to living in a materialistic society, where everything is mass-produced, mass consumed, and mass-disposed. I think it's time for us to change that. I believe that communities grow stronger in small towns and villages, especially when farming together. We need to live in a humanistic society where all lives are equally valued.

We have a dream in Fukushima. It is to create a sustainable society where children run freely in the fields. A society where everyone, including students, city people, the elderly, people with disabilities, and even dragonflies and frogs, all coexists with one another.

Let's create a society that is strongly tied to its communities, and is free of nuclear power plants.

Thank you.

The list of “Vibrant Communities” visited for the research

<i>Prefecture, City</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project</i>
Yamagata, Takahata-cho	Takahata Coexist Institution	Organic farming movement
Miyagi, Osaki-shi, Naruko-chiku	Naruko-Rice Project NPO, East Naruko Dream Council NPO	Nruko rice project, Satonowa project
Iwate, Kuzumaki-cho	Kuzumaki Town, Iwate prefecture, Kurumaki Forestry Inc., Iwate Children Environmental Study Group NPO, Shiwa Town, Iwate prefecture	Town Revitalization, Circulatory society movement, Woody Biomass Project, Study Project for Forest and Wind
Fukushima, Kitakata-shi	Organic Agriculture Study Group	Farmer’s school (BanNo-juku)
Fukushima, Kitakata-shi	Kitakata Town Planning NPO	Community activities by clean energy
Fukushima, Kitakata-shi	Satoyama Conservation Group	Environmental protection movement
India, Andhra Pradesh, Arak	Nandy Foundation, India	Community development by organic faming
Shimane, Onan-cho	Onan Town	Childcare system and reception for migration
Shimane, voshika-cho	Kakinoki Organic Agriculture Group	Reception for migration
Turkey, Izmir	Families Joint Management Organic Agriculture Inc.	Organic farming by joint management
Yamagata, Okitama-area	Okitama Self-sufficiency Promotion Organization	Self-sustaining area plan
Yamagata, Shirataka-cho	Shirataka Nora Inc. union	Selling processed organic products
Fukushima, Nihonmatsu-shi	Towa Furusato Planning Council NPO	Community development by Organic farming

CSO Network Japan aims to contribute to achieving a just and sustainable society in which individuals can earn a dignified living and the disempowered can participate meaningfully in decision-making, by way of linking up different actors beyond boundaries and sectors. In collaboration with Japanese and overseas CSOs and with a focus on multi-sector partnerships, CSO Network Japan works on action-oriented research, information dissemination, and holding events and seminars. The current priorities of its activities are (1) promotion of “social responsibility” and “sustainability”, (2) research on new trends of international development, (3) information dissemination about MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and post-2015, and (4) efforts to support sustainable local community building.

Visiting sustainable areas

—Wishing to make an index of well-being community-building—

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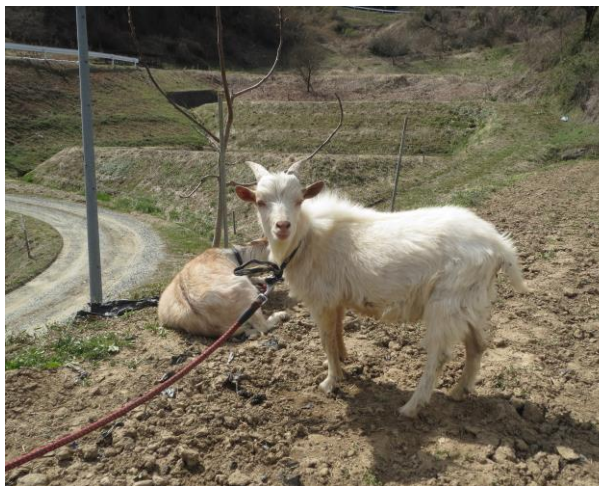
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