



Reconstruction of Tohoku and Development from Within

**- Examples of New Connections between
Rural Areas and Urban Cities in
Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, Yamagata and
Andhra Pradesh**

Contents

Preface	4
Katsuji Imata	
Towards a Glorious Future of Farming – Together with City Dwellers	6
Kanji Hoshi	
Development from within and Regional Strength.....	18
Tadaaki Oe	
A Bright Future for Tohoku’s Food and Farming Culture Beyond the Disaster— Agriculture’s Value and Region’s Strength —	25
Seiji Sugeno	
The Move to Build a New Rural Community, Illustrated by the Naruko Rice Project.....	34
Tadayuki Miyachi	
Regional Leaders to Pave the Way To the Future	41
Akihiro Asami	
Will Food Regain a “Firm Relationship” between Urban and Rural Areas?	46
Tetsuya Ebisudani	
Organic Festa Organic farming as a Starting Point to Widen the Circle of Producers and Consumers	50
Yoshimitsu Taniguchi	
Companies’ Reconstruction Support — Towards a New Relationship Between Urban and Rural Areas — .	54
Kaori Kuroda	



Small Farmers Around the World Advocate Food Sovereignty and the Restoration of Agriculture.....	59
Koyu Furusawa	
Diary of a Visit to Araku, South-east India.....	64
Kumpei Hayashi	



Preface

Katsuji Imata

Board Chair

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This booklet is a sequel to the last year's edition, which started our attempt to showcase the “destination of collective thought” that had arisen from the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accompanying nuclear plant accident in 2011. Last year, the booklet focused on laying out commonalities between the Fukushima accident and the Minamata disease, which afflicted Minamata in Kumamoto prefecture and alongside the Agano river in Niigata prefecture about 50 years ago . This time, our efforts led us to examine what thread can be spun by focusing on agriculture in the Tohoku region and linking past, present and future.

When this thread meets the future, it yields such keywords as sustainability, post-growth, circular economy and endogenous local development/recovery. However, instead of the rather stereotypical mantras that these keywords tend to generate these days, the readers will find that each author has his or her feet firmly on the ground, which makes their arguments more convincing.

This booklet is based on rich discussions held at the Forum of Community Power, for which CSO Network Japan plays the secretariat role. The Forum takes stock of efforts across the nation in which local communities take on a leading role in designing the future of their own community, paying a particular attention to the locally-led recovery efforts for the Great East Japan Earthquake and the nuclear plant disaster – thereby questioning the current dominant economic discourse of centralization, growth and development. Sustainable economy based on local industries, dialogue between rural farmers and urban residents that attempts to go beyond the dichotomy of producers versus consumers, new forms of collaboration with the corporate sector and multi-stakeholder approaches to formulate local governance – all of these are within our horizon for research and discussion. Many members of the Forum contribute their worldviews to this booklet.

In FY2013, the Forum members visited and had discussions with those who are actively working on community-led local development, covering Takahata, Yamaguchi





prefecture and Naruko, Osaki city in Miyagi prefecture in July; Kuzumaki and Shiwa in Iwate prefecture in August; and Atsushio-Kano and Yamato of Kitakata city in Fukushima in September. In November, the group went to Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh in India – in a customized tour organized by the Naandi Foundation – and learned of an effort to develop biodynamic farming for the indigenous population. In February 2014, the Forum held a symposium titled, “The 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake and Endogenous Development – Creating a New Connection between Rural Areas and Urban Cities.”

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Towards a Glorious Future of Farming – Together with City Dwellers

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While Japanese agriculture has been threatened by natural disasters and the global economy, there are also individuals co-existing with nature who find hope in and fight to preserve an agricultural world view, in in which people support one another while maintaining a feeling of connection to life. What values for this new era can we discover in rich communities, such as those within rural areas and the growing connections between rural and urban districts? Let us take a look at a farmer's perspective.

Frequent climate changes and natural disasters

The previous conventional wisdom about climate can no longer be accepted as the norm these days, and this shift has been felt keenly in the fields. The impact of global warming is worsening, and the climate on the archipelago has shifted from a temperate zone to a sub-tropical zone. Furthermore, the changes in the ecosystem have been remarkable for both flora and fauna; for example, the wild boars that lived with the Abukuma mountain range as their northern border have crossed the Ou Mountains and are multiplying in Yamagata Prefecture. The mountain villages are suffering terrible conditions in which pine trees and Japanese oak trees are dying and the natural richness is being lost. The cause of this is believed to be acid rain and atmospheric pollution that have been blown toward Japan from the continent.



Paddy field in Takahata town

Moreover, the land that can accommodate cultivation of products has changed; the rice brand *Koshihikari*, originating from the Hokuiku region, is now harvested in areas of Tohoku, and cherry trees, formerly a specialty of Yamagata Prefecture, can now be grown even in Hokkaido. The major problem of farming in Tohoku to date was how to overcome cold-weather damage, but going forward, how to handle global warming will likely become an important issue. Nevertheless, the changes in the seasonal weather will not be easy to deal with, since the harshness of nature has been





even more extreme than predicted, including phenomena such as heavy snowfall and extreme cold in winter; low temperatures and heavy rainfall during the rainy season in spring; and heat waves and droughts in the summer; as well as violent typhoons, localized high rainfall, heavy floods, and substantial snow in the Kanto and Koshinetsu regions. These changes in the weather are causing profound damage to production areas, leading to great suffering and hardship in the lives of local residents. For example, last year, the specialty grapes (Delaware) of Takahata bore fruit and were ripening on schedule, and the harvest was expected to go according to plan; but in July, due to a long rainfall and insufficient sunlight, the fruit perished right before the harvest. As a result, in one sweep, the crop was reduced by more than half. Even the rain-shelter tents could not impede the excess soil moisture. The situation exceeded all technological abilities.

Upheaval of oncoming social changes

On the national social economy front, as well, events that show the demise of a post-war democracy have been occurring one after another, such as, joining the TPPA (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) abolishing the policy of reducing rice cultivation, and major changes by an agricultural administration that sings the praises of a strong agricultural industry, as well as the forced adoption of the Secret Information Protection Act, the reformation of the Board of Education System, the export plan for reopening nuclear power plants, and the approval of the right to collective self-defense.

Moreover, in the rural areas that form the base of society, depopulation and aging are progressing rapidly, and abandoned, uncultivated fields and rice paddies are on the rise. In addition, streets in all regions are losing their vitality, and they have become so-called “shutter streets” where many shops have closed. Customers are being taken away by national supermarket chains and convenience stores, and it is inevitable that privately-owned shops will gradually go out of business.

Under these circumstances, if the TPPA takes us by storm, it will threaten the existence of not only the agricultural industry, but also the rural societies themselves.

How does life go on after 3.11?

More than 3 years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, which brought unprecedented calamity and tragedy to the affected areas and their residents. People are resolutely recovering from that shocking impact, and the cleanup of the massive amount of debris is said to have progressed to 90%, but the progress of the recovery plan is not yet even halfway complete. In particular, the mass relocation and





community restoration efforts are facing complicated and difficult problems, and work is expected to proceed on a step-by-step basis until the revitalization of industries and stabilization of the residents' lives can be achieved. In addition, psychological care for depression cannot be ignored, given that many people have been living in temporary housing for a long time. We must hope that regional restoration will not focus only on concrete aspects, but will also rest on a foundation of human recovery.

Nuclear accident as a disaster of modern society

Even more problematic are the risks related to the major accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant and its follow-up handling. The hydrogen explosion may have been triggered by the earthquake and tsunami, but it is clear from the nature of the explosion that this was a man-made disaster; we must regard it as a "disaster of modern society," as described by the philosopher Takeshi Umehara. This signifies the failure and collapse of technological civilization, which had been the driving force behind economic growth while propagating the myth that nuclear energy could be used for peace.

The radiation dispersed by this terrible accident was not limited to the coastal areas of the power plant's premises, but was also carried by the wind inland towards the Kanto region as well as northward to the coastline of Tohoku's Pacific Ocean. The range of contamination was extremely wide. The beautiful Fukushima Prefecture – an irreplaceable homeland – was violently snatched away, and there are no words to express the rage and sadness of the more than 160,000 people who had to evacuate. We can only bow our heads in shame at the weakness of our sympathetic imagination.

Hiroaki Koide (of the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute) stated that the radioactive fallout, including components such as Cesium 137, which has spread due to the major accident at the Fukushima Power Plant, is 400-500 times higher than the readings for the atomic bomb of Hiroshima. This legacy of immeasurable loss is a consequence of the national policy of dependence on nuclear power supported by an industrial, academic, and government-backed promotion framework. It goes without saying that TEPCO is liable as a concerned party, but the responsibility also belongs to successive generations of the national government's administration. Nuclear power, which completely stole the natural conditions of the archipelago, the livelihood of the people doing business there, and the structure of the local industry, as well as the local residents' proud culture and traditions, not to mention their education and welfare, can only be described as an enormous modern monster. Above all else, radioactive





contamination is lethal for the farming, forestry, and fishing industries that produce life in cooperation with nature. For the farmers who have toiled in the fertile earth over many years, removing a layer of soil from their land for the sake of decontamination is like peeling off a layer of their own skin. After that, the farmland will probably not be able to recover without a thick layer of added topsoil.

Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of people living today to protect our children's future, so it is absolutely essential that we thoroughly decontaminate public areas, such as living spaces and schools. To reinforce this, we need strong, quick support both nationally and from local government. Furthermore, TEPCO should obviously be expected to provide just compensation for the efforts taken independently by the local residents.

Agriculture's reserve strength beats radiation

Despite all this, some individuals were not content to remain idle spectators of the slow and reluctant measures after the accident, but instead took action themselves and conducted an independent survey in order to break out of the deadlock of unprecedented suffering. For example, a group of people led by Seiji Sugeno of the Organic Village Towa Furusato Planning Council in Nihonmatsu City took matters into their own hands. They received advice from the Fukushima Agricultural Technology Centre, and they accepted their challenge, starting by cutting the grass and plowing the fields. By deep plowing two to three times, they reduced the Cesium dosage in the soil by half. Furthermore, students and researchers, including Professor Nonaka of Niigata University and Professor Nakajima of Ibaraki University, worked together to conduct a radioactivity survey of all the farmland and created a detailed map. Next, they diligently confirmed the migration ratio of radioactivity from the soil to the cultivated and harvested crops. As a result, they proved that the cesium dose of crops raised in mature soil with high humus was dramatically low. In sum, soil with high ion absorption ability had a high resistance to the radioactivity.

Planning towns with natural energy

I visited Kuzumaki in Iwate Prefecture in early December 2013. It was a typical mountain village, deep in the heart of the Kitakami Mountains, with a population of just over 7,000 people. 86% of the land was forested. Holstein milk cows were introduced during the Meiji Era, and today, the village raises a herd of 11,000 cattle and is known as Tohoku's top dairy farm. The town is also involved in producing wine, with a focus on crimson glory vines, and so it bills itself as "the town of milk and wine."





In recent years, however, Kuzumaki has drawn attention for the striking records and results it has produced by achieving natural energy at a rate of 160% self-sufficiency, making the town a national pioneer. Since 1999, 15 large-sized wind turbines have already been installed, and they have been meeting the energy demands of the 2,200 households in the village; furthermore, the public facilities, including the elementary and junior high schools, the community center, and the home for the elderly, have been sustaining themselves through solar power. In addition, the generation of electricity from cattle manure biomass, a by-product of the local dairy farm, shows us the path to self-sufficient energy in communities where houses are scattered across a large area. I only wonder why they are not using the abundant mountain streams to generate small hydropower.

After being guided through deep white birch woods, we came upon scenery reminiscent of a Swiss Alpine village. This is the Kuzumaki Kogen Dairy Farm, which 500,000 people visit every year. At the center are the large cattle barn and the milk processing building, and surrounding these, buildings with functions corresponding to various needs have been set up, including a place to experience the farm and communicate with the farmers, as well as overnight accommodations and restaurants. In a corner of the large field, a cattle manure biomass plant and a wood pellet heat generation supply system are also in operation.

Among all this activity, my attention focused on the zero-energy environmental house. By combining an underground heat pump, a solar power generator, a small wind turbine, and a water heater, it creates a fully self-sufficient system in a limited space. Of course, the housing building materials contained locally produced timber and high-functional glued laminated timber. I felt a strong sense of affinity with these efforts toward a sustainable environment with local production and local consumption based on the guiding principle of “utilizing the gifts of heaven, earth, and humanity.” During the development of Kuzumaki, the residents were ahead of the curve in taking a firm stance against nuclear power, and their efforts have met with success. This model is one ray of light bringing hope to agricultural mountain villages afflicted by depopulation.

Thoughts about the joys of farming

I have worked in farming for 60 years, and it has been 40 years since my comrades and I made our first fumbling efforts toward organic farming. While confronting nature and believing in the strength of the land, I have gradually come to feel the joy of farming. More than anything, the joy of creation is the core of this business. When I face my creation and tend it carefully, I may look like a parent raising a





beloved child, or sometimes I may have the eyes of an agricultural artist. I pour both skill and labor into creating the best environment to for my works. I take pride in the thought that the fruit of my labor is not a product, but truly a work of art. Then there is also the joy of harvesting one's work after raising it so carefully. This can be called a farmer's greatest pleasure. Once the harvest is in hand, there is also the joy of sharing it with others. Of course, this includes family and friends, but there is joy in sharing your life with the all people with whom you have bonded through long-term cooperation. Living in nature and working in this business of cultivation and creation makes your senses sharper. By thoroughly tending the roots of your own soul, you can elevate farming to a cultural activity. The true "happiness of the fields" can be experienced directly through the five senses, and I think this is the ultimate form of self-achievement.

Towards social actualization

Unfortunately, the frugal desire to harmonize with the local environment and lead a self-sufficient, simple life according to one's means is taking a beating from the forces of globalism, symbolized by the nuclear accident and the TPPA. Under current conditions, even small communal societies that have been built up over many years can no longer be self-sufficient through community members' efforts alone. We need action to hold back the current of the times; that is, to shift social attitudes away from self-fulfillment and towards collective fulfillment. I believe that our course of action should be to escape from the tide of globalism, which everyone seems to view as inevitable, and to establish a foothold for localism based on regional sovereignty. Excellent models for this can be found in many regions, but the one example that immediately comes to mind is the tight-knit organic farming community center around the Shimosato Farm owned by Yoshinori Kaneko of Ogawamachi, Saitama Prefecture. (Kaneko's practices and successes are already well known through his own statements and writings, so my report may be superfluous, but I would like to provide an individual farmer's log of my short visit.) I visited Kaneko's home in late January for the first time in more than 10 years. In addition to talking with the 8 trainees living with Kaneko, I spent an enjoyable time with Kaneko's neighbors until the wee hours of the morning. Kaneko and his wife have welcomed more than 100 trainees, including foreigners, into their home, and I felt they were remarkable farming instructors.

Early each morning, while I watched the family members and trainees working hard together on their respectively assigned duties, I was allowed to walk the farm at will and savor my time in the mountains. A variety of crops were grown on the large farm under a layer of white frost, and in the greenhouse, the first buds of the strawberries





were starting to show. Six Japanese black and red cattle were being raised, while in the corner of the yard, chicken and ducks were allowed to run free. Although large farming machines were used for cultivation, the fuel was made of refined waste oil from food products. Fertilizer came from a hotbed that collected ripened compost, as well as home-produced materials such as fermented human waste, cattle manure, and chicken droppings. Everything was operating smoothly under a wonderful cycle.

In daily life, as well, the residents heated the floor with the heat from the wood boiler, and they used biomass gas to boil water and cook. I was surprised to find that they were eating old rice. This was because they need to feed about 10 trainees throughout the year, and therefore need to keep approximately two years' worth of rice in storage. When you think about it, this is what all farmers did the past to prepare for a poor crop.

The high variety, low quantity production system of Shimosato Farm and the rich, relaxed lifestyle reminded me strongly of an organic farm I visited in the south of France 10 years ago. It was truly a cutting-edge model of a farm.

Furthermore, Kaneko works hard every day to spread his practices and successes throughout all of Ogawamachi. While tackling the issues he faces as a town councilor, Kaneko also pours his efforts into to medium-term and long-term promotion measures. In particular, he collaborates with local industries as he seeks out demand for organic products, and his achievement of converting all households in the Shimosato community to organic farming has captured the attention of the entire country. Kaneko kindly drove me around in his car, which ran on regenerated fuel made of waste oil from food products, and he showed me a few retail spots where his self-produced vegetables and processed products were sold. I was amazed at this lifestyle when I saw a tofu shop that served more than 1,000 customers a day at its cash register, and a veritable city of small trucks appearing in the parking lot of a sake brewery, among other surprises. Kaneko told me that a regular brick and mortar shop will be built in front of Seiun Brewery before the end of the year. Attracted by the beautiful country scenery surrounded by woodlands, as well as the delicious food, the throngs of customers coming from Tokyo and its surrounding areas never cease.

A promenade is being built along the banks of the Tsukigawa River, which runs through Ogawamachi, and when it is complete, it will extend for more than 20 km. Kaneko said with a smile that, once this infrastructure for tourism is in place, he hopes his town will eventually be called the “little Kyoto” of Musashino.

Based on this wonderful example of regional planning, Kaneko has brought rural voices to bear on national policy, and he attends all kinds of meetings in many regions,





actively offering his advice and guidance. Thanks to these efforts, the offshoots of Kaneko-ism have gained a strong foothold both domestically and overseas, and these people are working hard to make an organic farming Shangri-la for all local farming villages.



Tombstone of Teruo Ichiraku,
a pioneer of organic farming

In pursuit of living communities

In our town of Takahatamachi, although our methods are slightly different from Ogawamachi's, we too have been developing an organic farming community over the past 40 years. We received training from Teruo Ichiraku, launched an organic research group in 1973 made up of 38 farmers in their twenties, and have been fighting for an alternate path to overcome modernization ever since. The grueling course of our trials and errors has been reported in recordings and videos, and so I will not repeat them here. I am, however, proud that we were able to restore the local society, defined by its strong territorial and blood ties, as a living community by infusing it with the ethics of life. This was achieved not only through the successful efforts of our friends and local residents, but also advanced through the support and cooperation of consumers in nearby cities, the government, agricultural cooperatives, research organizations such as those belonging to universities, and also the media. Nowadays, of the 2,000 farming households in our town, 1,000 households are succeeding with their sustainable



Takahata library, farming village
library built by community members

farming business, and among these, 400 households are conducting organic farming. In 2008, the local administration enacted the "ordinance concerning town planning for Takahata food and agriculture," in order to support safe food production and raise local self-sufficiency. One of the strong pillars of the

ordinance was the specification of voluntary restraint with respect to genetically-engineered crops. Communication between cities and farming villages and the training of leaders are also essential points in our organic town planning. In order to actualize the ideas embodied in the ordinance, however, a highly effective promotion plan is necessary. Above all else, we need an independent and capable self-governing body.





In pursuit of new forms of *teikei*

We have proven that through collaborative relationships or *teikei* (a Japanese type of community-supported agriculture), which forms the backbone of the organic farming movement, economic independence is possible even with an Asian style of family farming. Furthermore, with its power to inspire local community, organic farming can also restore a sense of community among the urban dwellers with whom it collaborates. In urban society, where isolation of residents is swiftly progressing, we can awaken human dignity by connecting these people to real food and agriculture.

Unfortunately, the collaboration between producers (farmers) and consumers, built up over many years, has come to a standstill in the face of radioactive contamination from the nuclear accident, and in some cases, it is in danger of falling apart. The publication of detailed analysis results and ND (non-detection) data is not enough to prevent the rampant rejection of products from Eastern Japan, and it is impossible to sweep away the damage caused by harmful rumors. Although more than 3 years have passed, many producers have not been able to recover their demand. They had overcome market principles to create a fair trade relationship based on human trust, and its easy collapse was a completely unforeseeable shock.

However, the future of organic farming cannot be built without breaking through these barriers and restoring the original collaborative relationship. Both producers and consumers must visit the region together to deepen their understanding while examining the facts. One possible reference point is the considerable success of CSA (USA) and AMAP (France). What are the differences between our sluggish *teikei* and the activities in Europe and the United States, which may originally have been inspired by Japan's model? It seems that the key to this issue lies in city dwellers maintaining a constant interest in the local circumstances of the producers who provide food and other items and being willing to provide full support in the event that they run into trouble. Rather than simply trying to get safe products for themselves, consumers can actively be involved in local development, and join farmers in working toward local revival and the creation of new models.

Such actions have been demonstrated independently by the activities of volunteers who supported the affected areas in Eastern Japan and in Fukushima. Close to home, the Waseda Environmental Round Table aims to overcome the hardship of damage caused by harmful rumors, and in order to build a new relationship between both sides, it is launching the "Takahata coexistence project." They began by compiling the principles and basic ideas, and after two years of discussions, a framework for project planning and organizational management has started to take shape. The





distribution system, centered on a type of organic rice called “blue demon club,” has already commenced operations, but there are no signs of rapid diffusion yet. Of course, due care is being given to pre-existing collaborative relationships as they explore possibilities that could be similar to a Japan edition of the CSA.

The coexistence project, however, is a larger plan, and we are currently visualizing a living community which will be tied together by a sense of values. We hope to transcend the distance and barriers between cities and farming villages, enjoy the “happiness of the fields” together, and be involved in the everlasting business of farming. Our vision also incorporates a crisis management plan in anticipation of an emergency situation. For example, if a major earthquake occurred in an urban region, we would promptly secure evacuation areas and provide food. We also plan to stockpile food and build self-sufficient farms for this purpose.

New sprouts among the younger generation

I feel that recently, the young generation has grown more interested in agriculture. In Takahata, as well, as many as 10 young leaders in their twenties have emerged in the past 1 to 2 years. They are all children of organic farmers. Moreover, among the youth currently attending school, another 10 or so people would like to work in farming after they graduate. In order to make their wishes into reality and help them to become the driving force behind our town’s planning, it is essential to create rewarding work for them to do. At the same time, I would like to prepare an environment with endless opportunities for communication, in which they can experience the true richness of culture.

The trend of coexisting with nature and seeking a simple, modest livelihood can be seen in national statistics, and 30-40% of the people wanting to work in farming indicated that they wished to be natural farmers or organic farmers. We find an encouraging ray of hope in these new sprouts of the younger generation. I believe we need to properly convey our past experiences to them.

What these young people have in common, I think, is an awareness of farming’s affinity with life and its public role in society. They have started from a value system that differs from the doctrine of economic supremacy, which has swept over us recently, and they have reached a new horizon while questioning what happiness truly is for human beings. These people choose to coexist with nature and live whole-heartedly, operating on a different level from the profit-based farming that our nation has been calling for. Furthermore, they will not stop at their own personal happiness, but will cooperate with others, and will support each other in order to work towards improving the whole region.





For example, with the same perspective that leads some people to support developing countries, these young people are migrating to mountain villages and distant islands, which are becoming isolated in this country, and it warms my heart to see their efforts to resuscitate rural regions. The young volunteers who supported the recovery of towns and villages that were struggling in the wake of the major disasters and nuclear accident relished the value of simply contributing to society.

Nonetheless, in order to plant their roots in the villages and to establish an independent livelihood, it will be essential for them to earn an income, meager though it may be, to cover their daily livelihoods. Adults must also play a role in building a general framework of necessary environmental conditions, but the young people's success essentially depends on their own work, brought forth by their knowledge, ability, and skills. It is also important to produce high-quality products, to increase the added value through homegrown processing, and to build ties and negotiate with people who share one's values. Moreover, if the people the region can become a brand of their own, even on a small scale, the road ahead will be glorious.



Scenery of Takahata town

People returning to the land again

For some time, I have had the impression that the 21st century is a time for people to return to the land again. People have started to realize the emptiness of virtual reality, and want to get back in touch with their raw senses. They want to feel the earth and nature for themselves, and are beginning to act on this desire. The act of leaving behind a convenient, comfortable consumer lifestyle and pursuing a more relaxed, tranquil way of life clearly stems from the values of a mature society. Modern people who have been totally immersed in the convenience of an IT society, however, cannot easily convert to a self-sufficient, fully independent lifestyle. The “life education,” acquired through experience with farm cultivation, must begin in childhood and continue with perseverance. At the heart of life education are lessons about food and agriculture.

Here in Yamagata Prefecture's Oitama district, there are many surviving “Somokuto” (vegetation towers) that date back as far as the era of Lord Uesugi Yozan. People built their lives on life taken from plants and trees, so they carved the stones and offered their prayers in order to honor and express gratitude toward nature for keeping them alive. One of the true origins of the concept of coexistence with nature can be





found in these Somokuto.

Since then, over 250 years have passed. Material civilization, which once seemed limitless in its progress and development, has reached an impasse, and we stand on the verge of a major transformation towards a “life civilization” that will prioritize life and the environment above all else. When that time comes, people all over the world will throw themselves into overcoming the difficulties we face, and as this text has indicated, the practice of cultivating this new land will be deeply meaningful. Using these principles as a guideline, I would like to pursue a way of life that will tie all life together.



Author's recent photo



Development from within and Regional Strength

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These days, as if nothing was learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, many voices are calling for a second period of high economic growth. When it comes to life satisfaction and happiness, however, it is clear that pursuing economic growth will not lead to a hopeful future. What, then, is the true alternative? Hints to the answer of this question can be found in rural areas where development is happening from within.

Basic concepts and stimulation of livelihood

On April 6, 2011, less than one month after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the major accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, a certain economic group announced a plan called "The Second Emergency Appeal": working towards recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake."

In addition to asserting "the need to restart operations at suspended nuclear reactors" quickly, the group proposed the "basic concepts for reconstruction," in which it is argued that "reconstruction' after the disasters is not about 'restoring' conditions to the way they were before, but rather about building a truly new Japan; and under this vision, building a new Tohoku is essential." Moreover, the following statements were made regarding industrial stimulation: "Undertake any means, including deregulation, special zone systems, tax reductions for investment, and policies to lure various companies to rural districts, and utilize the abilities of our citizens as much as possible;" and "aim to rebuild the primary industries as 'strong industries' while utilizing the strengths of Tohoku by promoting bold restructuring, including increasing farmland on a large scale; using mass relocation to make the most of abandoned, uncultivated fields and rice paddies in other regions; promoting corporatization of the industry; and creating focal points around fishing harbors."

Masaji Shinagawa, who passed away last year, spent his whole life maintaining his ideals of pacifism and constitutionalism while working as executive secretary for the





organization that made this appeal wondering how he would react to these words, I am left with a sense of sadness.

For the past three years, the entire economic community has been hoping for “another high economic growth period,” and neo-liberal methods have been used to promote “recovery strategies” under a national initiative model (1). These strategies have the same origin as “Abenomics,” and Miyagi Prefecture has become their vanguard at the local government level. We must, however, assert that there are clear differences between this plan and our vision of reconstruction. The basic concepts and industrial stimulation methods mentioned above must be rewritten as follows:

“‘Reconstruction’ after the disasters is not about ‘restoring’ the pre-disaster society, which prioritized economic growth, but rather about building a Japanese society based on a circulatory regional model; and under this vision, it is essential to build a Tohoku region from within that values primary industries.

Accordingly, we will “undertake means, such as strengthening regulations according to the needs of the situation, establishing systems for special zones on a limited basis, investing capital to circulate within the region and encouraging business start-ups; and we will utilize the abilities of our citizens as much as possible.”

With regard to primary industries, we will aim to rebuild sustainable livelihoods while utilizing the strengths of Tohoku’s natural climate by implementing a fundamental revision of modern agriculture and exploitative fishing with methods such as moving towards de-monocrop and non-chemical farming; recycling abandoned, uncultivated fields and rice paddies; placing emphasis on family farming; promoting organic farming; and recovering affected fishing harbors.”

Seven Important Viewpoints

First, we need to escape from the system of sacrifice. In a growth-driven society, there are two distinct groups: one that imposes sacrifices without taking responsibility and one that is forced to make sacrifices (in other words, is sacrificed). Society is set up for the benefit of urban areas, large corporations, and secondary and tertiary industries, while rural areas, primary industries, nature, and the environment are all forcibly sacrificed. Taking a wider view of this concept, developing countries in Asia and Africa are also sacrificed. Furthermore, as many have pointed out, nuclear power is a quintessential sacrificial system.

Second, we need to build a regional circulatory society based on primary and regional industries. Models for this have been created in each region. For example, in the Towa district in Nihonmatsu City, there is the development of special products,





including mulberry leaf powder, for the purpose of resuscitating the mulberry fields, the strengthening of direct marketing and organic farming, the establishment of an independent regional certification system, the creation of organic compost, the acceptance of approximately 30 new working farmers. the operation of Fukushima Towa's roadside station, farm inns, and a new forms of alcohol tourism (2).

I would like to position small to mid-size factories, businesses, financial institutions, and local media stations as important leaders in these efforts. In particular, money will circulate within the region if organizations such as credit unions, credit associations, and labor credit associations offer low interest rates and unsecured financing for companies, groups, and individuals that work toward social justice through causes such as social service, the environment, food and farming, allowing them to fulfill more roles and bring forth a reasonable profit.

A third issue is the conversion from economic growth-driven principles to de-growth, and a fourth issue is the synchronicity between endogenous strength and exogenous strength. The following section discusses these points in greater detail.

A fifth issue is the promotion of diverse renewable energy, as well as local production and consumption of energy. In Tohoku, after the 3.11 Earthquake, Aizu Power, Aizu Natural Energy Organization, Binary Generator of Tsuchiyu Onsen (Fukushima City), Iwaki Otento SUN Enterprise, and others have all made progress (3). Taking into account all of this, as well as the lifestyle issues, it is essential to review the use of electricity, including heating and hot-water supplies, and to liberate farming from dependency on fossil fuels.

A sixth issue is changing our society's views of nature. After the Second World War, Japanese people came to think of nature as something they could overcome. The Great East Japan Earthquake, however, destroyed this attitude. The Japanese originally feared nature and expressed gratitude toward nature in their lives. This viewpoint appears to have become diluted in Japan, even within primary industries. The seventh issue is the inheritance of affection for our hometowns. The "hometown" considered here is not limited to where people have been born and raised. It also includes new farmers, people who return to farming upon their retirement, and people who move back to their hometowns; in other words, "hometown" actually refers to the place that someone cannot live without. Importance should be placed on things other than the economic base, such as human relationships and connections to nature, scenery, and the landscape.

Towards de-growth from economic growth-driven principles





Serge Latouche, who popularized the idea of de-growth in Japan, said the following:

“The heart of the problem is that growth theory is perceived as the essence of economism. The priority should not be making economic growth and development more environmentally friendly, or any other way of trying to replace bad growth and bad development with good growth and good development, but rather to escape from economy-driven principles altogether (4).

De-growth has two facets. The first point is that the economy should not be the sole criterion for judging anything. People who have become used to the high level of economic growth we have had since the 1960s might find this strange, but historically speaking, societies with prominent economies have been more unusual. As stated by Karl Polanyi, the economy was originally buried deep within society. The second point is that as the scale of the economy gradually shrinks, people will be able to lead happy lives through a fulfilling lifestyle with roots in rural regions.

In fact, according to the survey of public opinion by the Cabinet Office, 1984 was the year when Japanese people had the highest level of life satisfaction with an average score of 3.60 on a scale of 0-5. Since then, the level of life satisfaction has consistently declined, and in 2005, the level was 3.07. During this period, the GDP per capita continued to increase from JPY 2.885 million in 1984 to JPY 4.244 million in 2005, showing a 55% increase. In sum, despite financial gains, Japanese people are not satisfied with their lives. Continued economic growth has not led to happiness.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, remains a victim of the economic growth fever, contradicting what citizens of this country know all too well. In his policy speech of February 2013, Prime Minister Abe declared that “Japan will aim to be the best country in the world for business activities” in order to “become a global growth center.” This policy is fully in line with the “Basic Concepts of Reconstruction” of the economic group introduced in the top paragraph of this paper. But what Japan should truly aim for today is to “become the country with the happiest people in the world.”

Moreover, the “happiness” discussed here is not subjective for individuals. It refers to the fact that many people will be able to live better lives by creating a society that is just and protects the environment. It is common knowledge that Bhutan’s national policy is based on “Gross National Happiness (GNH).” The purpose behind GNH is “a paradigm with the goal the developing social happiness by breaking away from the current consumer culture and manifesting the latent potential of humanity.” (5)

For this purpose, changing our values is essential. Simply put, we need to switch from a monetary order to a life order. After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake





Disaster and the Great East Japan Earthquake, the life order temporarily took precedence over the monetary order, and human connections were deepened, but this “utopia built by disaster” did not last long. We must once again recognize the fact that there is nothing more important than life itself.

Synchronicity between endogenous strength and exogenous strength

Development and reconstruction from within is not an entirely closed world. The mobilization of regional strength and the progress made in the development of attractive rural communities was achieved by a lively exchange between rural and urban areas; in addition, there was support from external organizations and passionate action on the part of outsiders who (in the I-turn phenomenon) had chosen to live in rural districts. Cross-generational interactions and ties were clearly deepened. From these perspectives, success of endogenous development and reconstruction can be summarized in the following three points.

First, there is the presence of locally born people who support certain groups in society that once had trouble displaying their independence and wisdom within the community, such as young people, women, and outsiders who have moved to rural districts. This role is often fulfilled by people who have returned (by the U-turn phenomenon) to their hometowns after traveling to urban areas for education or work, and they have experienced both the excitement of urban living and its negative aspects. These people are either engaged in primary industries, work at municipal offices, or work for agricultural cooperatives, and they understand the values of both urban and rural areas; this awareness qualifies them to play a mediating role among different actors in the region.

The second point is finding a wide range of leaders. The leader of the NPO “Kamiechigo Yamazato Fan Club” (in Joetsu City, Niigata Prefecture), which has established its roots through its support of rural activities and environmental education, said: “We use the expression ‘village people’ to describe ourselves. Long-time residents are the first type of village people, while people who commute from neighboring areas are the second type, and people who commute from urban areas are the third type. We have adopted these definitions independently, but there is only one necessary requirement. It is whether or not a person has a feeling of belonging to this community, including its natural environment.”

These three types of village people respect one another, and when they conduct their activities with mutual empathy, the rural districts come to life. The “village people” will not be the only ones who come to understand the appeal of “rural districts.”





Employment and resources circulate throughout the region via green tourism, farm inns, farming restaurants, and the like.

The third point is a sense of shared values that transcend generations. Many of the new farmers from non-farming backgrounds are not interested in the large-scale, institutionalized, industrialized, and chemicalized type of commercial farming, but are instead attracted to organic farming that utilizes the resources of rural districts. There are also more than a few people who can see the value in small-scale, self-sufficient part time farming and forestry. These people respect the warm hearts of the elderly people who have lived a long time in the rural districts, as well as the skills they use in their professions and lives. For these reasons, regional self-sufficiency, small farms, and mountain work, have a positive image among them.

When the elderly look at these respectful young people, they reclaim their pride in their own livelihood and way of life. In the words of the leader of the Kamiechigo Yamazato Fan Club, “Inter-generational relationships, such as those between grandparents and grandchildren, are a good thing.” In fact, there is now a growing movement in various regions for grandchildren to inherit the family farming business. These young people will be the next generation’s leaders for development and reconstruction from within.

Attracting companies, developing resorts, relying on nuclear power.....

The exogenous development of rural districts has completely failed. As Professor Tokumi Odagiri accurately pointed out, for the rural communities, the 20 years since the bubble burst have been “20 years aiming toward the future,” including the creation of an environment in which rural districts could find



Mulberry fields and rice terraces at Towa district.
Handing over hopes and sweat of predecessors who cultivated the steep land and planted mulberry.
(Provided by Organic Village (Yuki no Sato) Towa Furusato Planning Council)

ways to bring about their own revival (7). Over the next 20 years, I believe each region will demonstrate that “rural districts can only develop from within.”





<Notes>

- (1) Other economic organizations have the same idea.
- (2) Tadaaki Oe (2013) *Hisaichihatsu naihatsutekifukkoeno chosen 2 Fukushimaogyo no saisei o mezashite* (Challenges for development within inside led by affected areas 2, aiming to revive Fukushima farming), Sekai, Dec. 2013, Iwanami Shoten.
- (3) Tadaaki Oe (2013) *Hisaichihatsu naihatsutekifukkoeno chosen 1 Fukushimadakarakoso shizen enerugi* (Challenges for development within inside led by affected areas 1, Natural Energy in Fukushima), Sekai, Nov. 2013, Iwanami Shoten.
- (4) Serge Latouche, Yoshihiro Nakano (Translate) (2013) *Datsu Seicho wa sekai o kaerareruka?- Zouyo, Kofuku, Jiritsu no aratana shakai e* (Pour sortir de la societe de consommation , For escaping from consumer society), Sakuhin sha.
- (5) Dasho Kinley Dorji (2013) *GNH (Kokumin sokoufukuryo) ni kankisareta kaihatsu no paradaimu* [New Development Paradigm aroused by GNH (Gross National Happiness)], 30th Anniversary Symposium of the Niwano Peace Prize.
- (6) <http://watashinomori.jp>
- (7) Tokumi Odagiri (2013) *Keizaiseichorosen to nohsangyoson---Naihatsuteki chiikizukuri no koujunkan o mezashite* (Economic Growth Path and rural villages---Aiming for virtuous circle of endogenous community development, Choson shuho (Municipality weekly report), Zenkokuchosonkai (National municipal assembly)





A Bright Future for Tohoku's Food and Farming Culture Beyond the Disaster

— Agriculture's Value and Region's Strength —

Seiji Sugeno

President

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Japan's farming culture supports people's livelihood and has a role in developing regional richness and strength. By knowing, sharing, and inheriting its value, we should be able to rediscover a bright and hopeful future. Let us search for and investigate new possibilities and using the wisdom and way of life inherited by Tohoku's farmers, who have overcome many disasters and have co-existed with nature for many years.

Lessons from my grandmother – *mochi*, and the culture of transition

Fifteen years ago, I opened a processing plant for rice cakes (*mochi*) by remodeling a building I owned that had previously been used for raising silkworms. My family was a farming family, and we raised silkworms and bred Japanese cattle for many generations, but from the 1980s, these industries significantly declined due to a sharp increase in imported farming products, including beef and raw silk thread. In the town of Towa, Nihonmatsu City, where I currently live, there were as many as 800 households of silkworm farmers in the most active period (1970s), and the production value of our cocoons was greater than JPY1.2 billion. In other words, this industry was the center of our regional economy. Today, however, there are only three silkworm raising households remaining, and the abandoned, uncultivated land, comprising mulberry fields and grassland, covers an area of more than 400 hectares.

When I took over the management of my family's business, I strove to make a direct connection between the production of the vegetables and special seasonal products and consumer groups, such as those in Chiba. One of my most highly rated products was a "vegetable box," which was a package of seasonal vegetables delivered every week. In spring, the vegetable box contained bracken fern, fatsia sprouts, and bamboo shoots; while in summer, it contained cucumbers, tomatoes, and kidney beans; in fall – daikon radish, Chinese cabbage, and taro; and in winter – Japanese pickled vegetables, dried persimmons, and sticky rice cakes. The homemade sticky rice cakes





at the end of the year were especially popular. “*Kogane mochi*” (millet dough cake) has a small harvest, but it has a strong, sweet taste, so it is perfect for sticky rice cakes.

My grandmother, who passed away seven years ago at the age of 92, used to say, “In the past, people would take a break from work, and they would eat sticky rice cakes and red bean rice almost every month at yearly events, starting with the new year, seasonal festivals, *Sanaburi* (festival after rice planting), and midsummer events. Young people today don’t seem to know when the seasons change.” She also reflected, “*Mochi* (sticky rice cakes) represents a culture of transition. *Mochi* and red bean rice were always eaten when the seasons changed and at major stages in a person’s life.” When I was in elementary school, my grandmother would always be roasting *mamemochi* (black bean sticky rice cakes) on a charcoal fire while waiting for me to come home from school on the snowy roads. Back then, my family also handmade our tofu and soy sauce. Looking back, I remember eating red bean rice when a child was born, and at the child’s first birthday, the child would be made to carry a large heavy rice cake on his back (a tradition for lifelong blessings, including a long life). In addition, we always ate sticky rice at important stages of a person’s life, such as when starting school, and at graduation, coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. Another strength of *mochi* is the ability to add mountain specialties, such as *yomogi* (mudwort), large green soy beans, black soy beans, and millet. Based on my grandmother’s lessons, I built a *mochi* processing plant. I decided to remain in operation throughout the year, and so I’ve been able to deliver happiness even to people outside the region in the form of pre-made *bento* (lunch boxes) containing tasty rice with red beans and seasonal products.

— Traditional Agricultural Events and Food in Abukuma, Fukushima Prefecture —

Jan. 1	<i>Kibimochi</i> (millet sticky rice cake) (wishing for saving money and a household’s prosperity)
Jan. 2	<i>Udon</i> (wishing for a long and healthy life)
Jan. 3	<i>Mikka tororo</i> (Jan 3 rd yam soup) (hoping not to catch a cold)
Jan. 7	<i>Nanakusagayu</i> (Jan 7 th porridge) Without wasting the <i>mochi</i> offered to the household shrine, drink <i>nanakusagayu</i> for digestion
Jan. 11	<i>Noh no hajime</i> (start of farming festival) New Year’s pine decorations are placed in rice fields and fields for farming, with offerings of a large amount of rice, <i>mochi</i> , and sake made using a hoe from the beginning of work.





Jan. 14	<i>Toshitori</i> (aging well) <i>Dango sashi</i> (sweet dumpling on a stick)
Jan. 15	<i>Shogatsu okuri</i> (end of New Year's holiday)
Jan. 20	<i>Ebisuko</i> (festival in honor of the god Ebisu) (Jan 20 and Oct 20 on old calendar) In January, held in the early morning before going to work. In October, held in the evening after returning from work. A food tray arrangement including Japanese pickled vegetables on rice, a type of soup, main dish, fish, and a serving of sake is presented to the household shrine (for protection and blessings).
Feb. 3	<i>Setsubun</i> (traditional end of winter) Sardine heads are grilled and combined with holly leaves and bean husks; this decoration is placed in a household doorway.
Feb. 11	(<i>Hatsuuma</i>) <i>Oshirako</i> (Fall, Oct 10) As the god of silkworm cultivation, women of the community gather together and have a meal offering <i>dango</i> and sake to the gods.
Feb.17	<i>Yamanokamiko</i> (Fall, Nov 17) The men of the community gather early in the morning to make <i>mochi</i> and soup; they pray for blessings on their work in the mountain and an abundant harvest. In spring, it represents the god of the fields coming down the mountain; while in fall, it represents the god of the mountain being among the fields.
Mar. 3	Spring <i>sekku</i> (seasonal festival) <i>Hishimochi</i> (red, white, and green lozenge-shaped rice cakes) containing white <i>mochi</i> and <i>yomogi mochi</i> .
Mar..21	Spring <i>higan</i> (equinoctial week) Wishing for intelligence and to avoid meeting calamities, <i>botamochi</i> (azuki bean rice cakes) and <i>dango</i> are offered to the gods.
May. 5	<i>Tango no sekku</i> (<i>kashiwamochi</i>) (boys' day) (rice cakes wrapped in oak leaves) <i>Shobu</i> (sweet calamus) and <i>yomogi</i> are added to the bathwater. It is said that it helps to win at challenges and to avoid headaches. <i>Sanaburi</i> At the end of planting the rice fields and washing the farming tools, sake and <i>mochi</i> are offered to the gods. Red bean rice and boiled down vegetables are made for others.





Jul. 17	<i>Doyomochi</i> (it is said to contribute to a healthy body) Cold soup of <i>juunen</i> (wild sesame) (to cool the body by placing cucumbers and perilla leaves in the soup)
Sep. 8	Harvest moon of mid-fall (<i>Imomeigetsu</i>) Previously held on Aug 15, <i>dango</i> and <i>imo</i> (potatoes) are offered to the gods.
Oct. 6	<i>Juusanya</i> (night of the 13 th day of the 9 th lunar moon) (<i>kurimeigetsu</i>) Previously held on Sep 13, <i>dango</i> and <i>kuri</i> (chestnuts), and beans are offered to the gods.
Oct. 10	<i>Mushikuyo</i> (exterminating harmful insects) (<i>mochi</i> offered to the household shrine) Memorial service for the dead insects, praying for smooth farm work for the entire year.
Dec. 8	" <i>Oyak kai tofu ni kokkei mochi</i> " (humorous rice cake in a troublesome tofu) (a small <i>mochi</i> is hidden inside a large block of tofu) A bride returns to her parents' home carrying tofu. The parents place a <i>mochi</i> inside it and make her carry it.

Japanese food lifestyle (*washoku*) has diverse agricultural value

"*Washoku*" (Japanese food) was registered as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. *Washoku* represents not only traditional food and the skill of the chefs, but also: (i) various fresh food products and their inherent taste; (ii) an excellent, healthy food lifestyle with a nutritional balance; (iii) the beauty of nature and the expression of the changing seasons; and (iv) an intimate relationship with annual events such as New Year's. These factors have brought worldwide recognition to the food lifestyle developed in response to Japan's seasonal climate.

I learned about seasonal food and the relationship between farming events and food from my grandmother, and I have used the historical records of old Towa as a reference to summarize the Traditional Agricultural Events and Food in Abukuma, Fukushima Prefecture (shown in the table). *Washoku* is related to agricultural events, and it is an accumulation of the wisdom and skill acquired during the lives of our ancestors. In the spring, we harvest the new seeds of wild plants (fatsia sprouts, fiddlehead fern, and bracken fern). This means receiving new life, and this new life has the touch of bitterness unique to spring. In my house, I ate bracken fern and bamboo shoots with salt at New Year's. Cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggplants were eaten in the hot summer to help our bodies cool down. It was said that when cold *juunen* (wild





sesame) soup was consumed with barley rice, it would go down well. In fall, a potato soup containing *daikon* radish, Chinese cabbage, and taro was thought to help against the cold by warming the body. The many preserved foods and fermented foods, such as Japanese pickled vegetables, dried persimmons, frozen *daikon* radish, *natto* (fermented soybeans), and *mochi*, have been handed down over the generations as a skill to survive through Tohoku's cold winters.

At the heart of this Japanese-style food lifestyle are rice, soybeans, and wheat. Despite this, , soybeans, which are the ingredients for *miso*, *natto*, and soy sauce, as well as wheat, are almost all imported. It is depressing that our food lifestyle is now “*washoku* relying on foreign ingredients.” Our farmers must bring back these soybeans, wheat, and assorted grains to our farming villages; and furthermore, we must bring back the original *washoku*.

A farmer's soul - learning from the Great Tenmei Famine

Stone monuments showing the evidence of the dismal circumstances during the Great Tenmei Famine 230 years ago rest within the borders of the Okitsushima Shrine of the Kohatayama Mountain in Towa, Nihonmatsu City. “There was continuous rain from the summer of *Dosan* (*Tenmei*), and mountain villages not only lost their harvest of the five cereals of *Ounikuni*, but the seeds as well. Although attempts were made to consume *mochi* made from straw powder, as well as leaves and roots from any weeds, the number of people who died from starvation remains unknown (...)” (Towa's history I) is engraved in the tombstones of the Great Tenmei Famine under the heading, “*Imin*.” Rain fell for months from mid-May, when the mid-summer days were cold; in June, there were floods, and any grains which showed their ears by the middle of August were swept away by a violent northern wind until the end of August; in short, none of the cultivated crops were able to produce fruit. In total, 1,000 people died of starvation in the former villages of Towa, Iwashiro, and Yamakiya. Even after this,, the region continued to meet with disaster from drought and heavy rain, and with the resulting wretched conditions, the region asked the administration of Nihonmatsu Domain if it could be exempt from annual taxes. At the time, farmers started many uprisings, in numbers of over 15,000. Based on these lessons, the policies for agricultural recovery in the Meiji Era, Taisho Era, and after the war, all fostered specialized crops (such as silkworm raising and tobacco leaves) and promoted dairy farming and sheep raising, as well as the planting of barley, wheat, soy beans, potatoes, millet, and the like, in order to cultivate new land and to try to increase the production of food provisions. Many agricultural research groups were formed among the farmers; and in combination with





the government's dispersing technology, recovery of the farming villages progressed due to the improved quality of rice, cereal production, and animal breeding. I believe this is truly an example of how Japan's rice cultivation culture of more than 3,500 years ago has continued unceasingly through the efforts ingrained in our ancestors' blood. Furthermore, we have also inherited a diverse food culture including soy beans and wheat.



Stone monuments showing the evidence of the dismal circumstances during Great Tenmei Famine

However, as times change, so do the circumstances. In February of this year, a major snowfall brought on by low atmospheric pressure on the south coast caused significant damage to plastic hothouses used for agriculture. This shone a light on the problems with the economic framework of competition between production regions and the distribution structure, which had pressured farmers to cultivate both fruits and vegetables in hothouses in order to produce more quickly than other regions for the sake of price competition. I think it rang a warning bell for us farmers in the Kanto and the southern part of the Tohoku regions. Once again, we must rebuild our food culture, taking into account our own self-sufficiency and cultivation appropriate for our climate.



Cultivating rice at elementary school

Value of agriculture raising a diverse community

Before the nuclear accident, children's excited voices echoed in elementary schools shouting, "My feet get so slippery!" and "The leaves are ticklish!" Towa's public Shimoota Elementary School was founded in 1994, and it stayed open for 17 years before merging with Towa Elementary School. It brought the entire region together, with





the parents and teachers working around the children, who were cultivating rice and growing vegetables in the school's fields. From the time my eldest daughter, Mizuho, was in grade 1, she started learning how to grow things; first in life environment studies, and later in grade 5, during the integrated study time, when she worked with the "Parents and Children Healthy Growth Committee" (a committee dedicated to the healthy growth of rice and vegetables as well as children) for the PTA. She was involved in every step, from the seed viability test, in which good seeds are selected based on whether they sink in salt water, to sowing the seeds, to planting rice, to cutting the grass, to thrashing the grain, and finally making the *mochi*. My dream was to become a teacher, and I fulfilled my dreams by becoming a teacher of the fields, playing in the mud with the children. Through the rice cultivation at this school, I realized again the educational power inherent in farming, as well as the educational power inherent in the region.

One point of note is the importance of experiencing the entire process, from sowing the seeds up to tasting the finished product. Parents exclaimed that, through this process, children who usually did not eat *mochi* ate as many as 4 or 5 rice cakes. Others declared, "My children now eat everything on their plate." I would like everyone to directly experience the way that daily work can accumulate to produce a bountiful harvest.

A second important point is that the children use their five senses to interact with the fields, the soil of the land, the water, and playing in the mud; as a result, the children directly experience the discovery of a small life when they find a frog, a dragonfly, or a sunflower, for example. Children's faces light up in the fields, and they even end up playing in the mud.

A third benefit to this process is the close relationship between the school and the region. During the rice planting and grass cutting stages, elderly men and women work energetically in the fields. These older people have the opportunity to hold a wider range of conversations with their grandchildren when they ask, "How do I use this tool?" "What happens to the threshed grain?"

In this way, I was taught the importance of discovering the source of life through rice cultivation and growing crops while the sound of wind, the smell of grass, and the feel of the muddy fields reverberated throughout nature.

Jiyunomori Gakuen, a school in Hanno City, Saitama Prefecture, has made progress in directly connecting its school lunches with the production regions for rice and vegetables. The high school students visited for one week during summer holidays to experience the farming process. They were having fun harvesting tomatoes with their manicured nails while wearing shorts and listening to their walkmans. Some of the girls





wore *zori* (traditional Japanese sandals) thinking that “the old ladies’ *zori* are cool!” After returning home, a high school student wrote back, “Up to now, I just bought tomatoes at the supermarket without thinking, but now, I have started to think about where my vegetables are grown and who grows them.”

The farming experience for high school students continued for 15 years, but it was discontinued after the nuclear accident.

Previously, people from facilities for local disabled persons had begun to take part



Rice grass cutting experience
(Civil society groups and students)

in the farming through activities such as picking up fallen leaves, weeding, and rice planting. Everyone worked hard together, working up a sweat. In farming and in the farming village, everyone from children to the elderly to high school students and disabled persons work together, empathizing with each other to create a strong community. This also exemplifies compassion for nature. For these reasons, agrochemicals are not used. For a large-scale paddy field, large machinery would have to be brought in, and chemical fertilizers and agrochemicals would be introduced to for the sake of productivity, resulting in the exclusion of children and the elderly.

New regional strength by collaborations with citizens, university researchers, and companies

It has been some time since the phrase “marginal settlement” was created to describe small villages with an aging population, but I believe that overcrowded cities, in which people live by mass consumption and mass disposal, are the real “marginal settlements.” I think that rural communities, where life is reproductive and sustainable, should be thought of as “communities of hope.”

We should work together with new farmers and city dwellers to create a rural community structure that supports family farming, small-scale business farming, organic farming, and regional business farming. I would especially like to reinstate in the rural areas the various production structures for Japanese-style food, such as miso, *natto*, and tofu. University researchers have been working together with Fukushima farmers to conduct a survey about the actual state of radioactive contamination, offering hope for the restoration of organic soil, and I too would like to collaborate with researchers to revive regional resources and to exploit the technology owned by companies.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, new relationships





arose combining the abilities of city dwellers, university researchers, companies and farmers, and citizens. I would like to work toward the revival of regional food made of rich regional resources, the revival of energy, the revival of employment opportunities, and the establishment of a framework for rural communication, utilizing the strengths of this foregoing.

Tohoku's farmers have overcome many disasters, including the Great Tenmei Famine, and we too face and overcome the nuclear accident and the radiation. Above all else, I hope to see the rebirth of rural villages echoing with the excited voices of children, as well as our lives as human beings, and to plant the seeds of hope for the sake of our homeland.



Many people come to rice paddies

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The Move to Build a New Rural Community, Illustrated by the Naruko Rice Project

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Agriculture has long protected the natural environment and supported the social and cultural activities of local people. In order to carry agriculture into the future, people are now seeking to build new relationships around it. What new agricultural value is created and brought to light through linking the urban with the rural, and the consumer with the producer? In this article, I consider the potential of such relationships in the context of the Naruko initiative.

1. The need for agriculture in rural regional development

Regional development centered on agriculture is attracting attention in today's rural villages. The first reason is the recognition that food produced by agriculture is indispensable to human life and that agriculture can be positioned as an environmentally sustainable industry that utilizes the natural environment. In order to make a living while also protecting the environment, we must further the debate on the actual state and direction of agriculture.

The second reason is a growing sense of crisis that regional autonomy and independence have weakened as the local economies of post-war Japan have shifted to focus mainly on secondary and tertiary industries. The rural industrialization that progressed in the 1970s, the resort developments promoted in the latter half of the 1980s, and the dependence of local economies on public works investment may have brought about a certain amount of temporary regional growth, but these changes have not resulted in real development (Makidaira, 2013). This social structure is draining the people, land, community, and pride out of rural areas (Odagiri, 2009). In Japan, primary industries and agriculture in particular are often family-managed and can therefore be characterized as regionally-rooted industries. Agriculture and forestry also demonstrate the public functions fulfilled by the rural community. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the direction of primary industry, and especially agriculture, through an





analysis of the situation from the perspective of local economic issues and national land conservation.

The third reason is that while Japanese agriculture is shrinking, small-scale agriculture is still being carried on today by the elderly. Farm outlets are increasing around the country, and a significant amount of the agricultural products on sale is produced by these small farms. Also, in recent years more than a few young and middle-aged people have shown an interest in agriculture and country life. These facts show that there has been a clear change in the climate that existed up until the 1980s. We should work to increase the number of people who appreciate agriculture and rural life, including the kinds of human resources identified by Oe (2008). He cites the following:

- (1) People who cherish the environment and occupations of their locality;
 - (2) People who engage in respectable craftsmanship with a broad ethical perspective and moderate business sense;
 - (3) People who can create productive interpersonal and intergenerational relationships.
- Our challenge is to find a way for rural life to flourish in the 21st century through an expanded network of people like these.

2. The Naruko Rice Project initiative

The Naruko Rice Project began in 2006 in the Naruko-Onikobe basin located in northwest Miyagi prefecture. The features of this initiative include:

- (1) Guaranteeing a price of 18,000 yen per bale of rice to the producers for a period of 5 years;
- (2) Setting a consumer price of 24,000 yen per bale;
- (3) Using the 6,000 yen difference between the producer price and consumer price for rice storage fees, administrative expenses, and the support of young farmers;
- (4) The cultivation of a low-amylose variety of rice suited to the cold mountainous terrain of the Naruko / Onikobe region (Tohoku No. 181. The name was later changed to *Yukimusubi*).

The situation that led directly to the foundation of the initiative was the announcement that, starting in 2007, Cross-Item Management Stabilization Measures would be introduced to the 2005 Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas. The Measures stipulate that certified farmers with farms of over 4ha (10ha in Hokkaido) and community farming organizations of 20ha or more are to be made the central focus of policy. Although exceptions for farm sizes are made with respect to semi-mountainous areas and combined farms, it was feared that semi-mountainous areas such as the





Naruko/Onikobe region would be excluded from the policy coverage. While the planted area of wetland rice in this region had decreased from 643ha in 1995 to 517ha in 2000, and then to 443ha in 2005, the area of abandoned arable land had increased from 21ha in 1995 to 45ha in 2000, and then to 94ha in 2005. An initiative to support agriculture in the region was explored amidst concern over the adverse effect the desolation of the paddy fields would have on tourism, another of the region's important industries.

Mr. Tomio Yuuki personally promoted this initiative in close cooperation with the Naruko region. He advocated the necessity of support for people who grow food. Mr. Yuuki asserts that food is the greatest and most fundamental form of social capital; that food has an absolute value for which there is no substitute; and that it is important to highlight the inherent link between food, farming, villages, and families, all of which fundamentally support life and living. He furthermore takes issue with the fact that farmers are unable to set the retail price of the food they produce, which differentiates agricultural produce from industrial goods. The cost of agricultural produce is both decided and subjected to changes beyond the control of the producer, which makes it difficult to formulate mid-term farming plans. Mr. Yuuki also noted that the scale of investment increases with the scale of the farm, increasing the inherent risk of agriculture, since nature remains the dominant determinant of crop yields. Placing large-scale farms at the center of policy does not guarantee that such farms can become stable leaders of Japanese agriculture. On the contrary, Mr. Yuuki contends that it is necessary to emphasize that Japanese agriculture is currently supported primarily by elderly self-sufficient farmers (Naruko Tourism Study Group Compilation, 2008; Yuuki, 2009). Mr. Yuuki's statements can serve as important testimony by which to consider the state of agriculture in semi-mountainous and other regions, in which it would not be sustainable in the long run to count on any single type of farmer.

Mr. Yuuki presided over the inauguration of Naruko Rice Project Council, a group composed of people from a variety of occupations, and the direction of the project was discussed. The shared concerns of the council were the crisis threatening food production and regional life and the need to bolster the local community through the protection of farming and food. This initiative, which was started by three farms with a total of 30a in 2006, expanded to 35 farms and 10ha in 2008 and again to 38 farms and 15ha in 2010 (Fig. 1). In memory of the people who struggled against the cold for long years to create a new way of life by developing the barren lands, the staff and customers of the inns of Naruko's hot springs started to support Naruko rice production in order to protect small-scale farming. During this period, local women experimented





with as many as 100 varieties of rice ball, and local confectionaries and bakeries used flour made from excess rice to develop pastries and other products. Lacquerers also used local wood to manufacture tableware on which to present the dishes. The initiative garnered further attention by inspiring the NHK Sendai drama “Tears for Rice,” broadcast in 2008, and by being featured in the posters and guidebook for a large-scale tourism campaign, the Sendai/Miyagi Destination Campaign (Abe, 2009). Furthermore, Kobayashi Ltd., a producer and distributor of boxed lunches and side dishes in Sendai, started to manufacture boxed lunches using local *Yukimusubi* rice. Mr. Yuuki reflects that they never reduced the sales price of *Yukimusubi* in negotiations with Kobayashi Ltd. This conveys the people’s determination to build a regionally supported agriculture in light of the conditions in which agriculture has been situated both locally and throughout Japan. Mr. Yuuki says that the number of university students and other visitors who come to experience farming has increased in recent years. In these ways, many agents from both inside and outside the region have developed initiatives to support the production of food as social capital while strengthening the connection between producers and consumers.

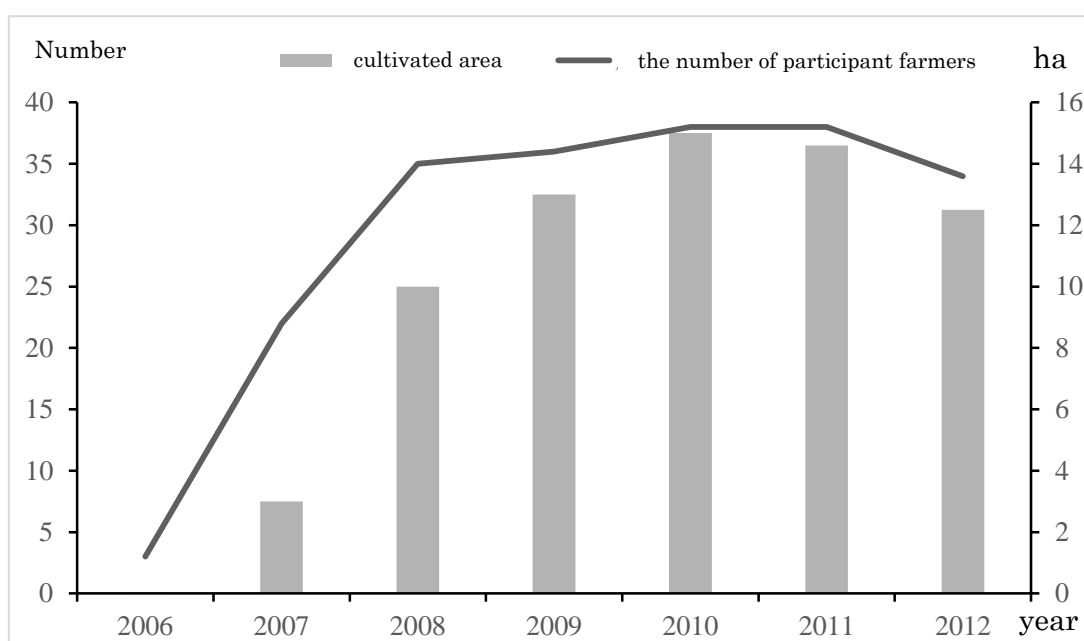


Fig. 1 Number of participant farms and cultivated area of the Naruko Rice Project

Source: Data provided by the NPO Naruko Rice Project

Nevertheless, the initiative has been at a crossroads since 2011 (Fig. 1). The number of participating farms is gradually decreasing, and the area of cultivated land





also shows a marked decline. These trends were caused by two factors: reduction of disengagement from agriculture due to the aging of the farmers, and the negative impact on consumer confidence in agricultural produce from this region caused by Great East Japan Earthquake and resulting nuclear disaster that occurred in March 2011 (from Naruko Rice News Vol. 14). Abandoned arable land was very conspicuous in the Onikobe district when the author visited on a site inspection (Photo 2). According to the 2010 agriculture and forestry census, the abandoned arable land in Onikobe district (previously Onikobe village) was 73ha, having spread even further from 59ha in 2005. In 2013, in order to continue the project of maintaining regional agriculture, the farmers have begun to adopt a new production system incorporating mechanical harvesting and drying operations (from Naruko Rice News Vol. 15). Now the direction of “regionally supported agriculture” is undoubtedly being called into question.



Photo1. Abandoned arable land extending through the Onikobe district (Taken by the author in July 2013)



Photo 2. Paddy fields in Onikobe district (Taken by the author in July 2013)

3. In place of a summary - The Naruko Rice Project's new vision of regional community

The Naruko Rice Project can be classified as part of Japan's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement. Initiatives to connect producers and consumers have been carried out in the past in Japan. However, the Naruko region is a tourist destination due to its agriculture and hot springs, and the Naruko Rice Project was a move to preserve this industry by using the creation of new relationships between producers and consumers to maintain food production, which includes the maintenance of agriculture and food-producing space through preservation of the agricultural landscape. A diverse group of leaders was involved in this initiative. It is deeply





meaningful that these leaders were able to share their respective viewpoints and create a cooperative initiative to support both production and the region itself. Today, many people speak about challenges facing the competitive power of the region. Such competitive power need not be solely determined by the attraction or creation of industries with international price competitiveness. In the construction of a new regional community, we can see the creation of regional appeal in progress. This is the very thing that will increase the value of the region (monetary value, cultural value, environmental value, and human value: Odagiri, 2013), and it may be a big step toward the regeneration of rural villages.

This article was written based on interviews conducted at a Community Power Forum site visit held in July 2013. The author would like to note and thank Mr. Tomio Yuuki, Mr. Yuki Abe, and Mr. Koju Itagaki for the invaluable assistance they provided during the visit.

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o katamukeru (A start from the study for a local neighborhood, hearing from the people living in this area), Nobunkyo.





Regional Leaders to Pave the Way to the Future

Akihiro Asami
Higurashi Farm

Rural districts have always utilized natural resources to protect a bountiful lifestyle, but many of them are now facing the difficult facts that farmers are an aging population and there is a lack of leaders among them. What can we do now to raise regional leaders who will pave the way towards a sustainable future? I look for this path based on my experiences of the activities in Aizu, Fukushima, where hillside channels have been protected since the Edo Era.

“Lack of leaders” as a pressing reality

The problem of a declining and aging population in the rural districts continues to deepen. Up to now, they have somehow maintained their peace and equilibrium on the surface through the aggregation of farmland and the development of farming communities. Nevertheless, as the current leaders of the farming industry have increasingly lost the ability to work their fields, we have run up against the limits of our power to protect these regions, and there has been a conspicuous increase in abandoned, uncultivated fields and rice paddies. In addition, maintenance of the agricultural infrastructure comprising farm roads and waterways is also becoming more dire.

For many regions, agriculture and forestry represent key industries, and they are the foundation supporting these regions. At the same time, considering the multi-functional aspects of agriculture and forestry, including flood control, environmental safety, the continuation of food culture and traditional culture, and the maintenance of the functions of a tight-knit community, the current state of affairs must not be easily accepted merely because of changes in social and industrial structures.

However, the social status of rural districts, and indeed ruralness itself, remains as low as ever. This is clear when looking at the government’s refusal to change course on denuclearization, despite knowing the dismal state of affairs in Fukushima. Nevertheless, Japan’s overall population started to decrease in 2007, and the economy, as well as growth and expansion, have shifted towards full maturation. Maintaining the multi-functional aspects of agriculture and forestry is the most important issue for such a newly regressing society. In light of this fact, when it comes to “Placing priority on rural





districts,” no one objects to the idea of securing people who can do the actual work locally, that is, young leaders for agriculture and forestry. On the other hand, for the regions in which the population composition of the communities has substantially fallen apart due to the aging population, as can already be seen in marginal communities, it is impossible to find leaders within the local younger generation; in other words, they can no longer depend only on natural succession and self-help efforts, and this is a bitter topic for the local people.



Rice terraces of Motoki-Uwazeki

Dredging waterways, accepting external volunteers

Under these circumstances, I would like to present my proposal. I moved from Chiba Prefecture to the mountain community of Aizu, Fukushima, 18 years ago in order to farm; that is, I was a part of the I-turn phenomenon (seeking work in a rural district). Back then, what left the strongest impression on me was the existence of unsupported hillside channels which had been inherited from generation to generation for an unbroken 260 years since the Edo Era. This waterway system is called the “Motokiuwazeki,” and it is over 6 km long. It was once maintained and operated by 50 farming households, but the number of farms has continuously declined due to the shortage of leaders, and in 2000, there were only 30 farms. Today, this waterway system is managed by a mere 11 farming households. Waterways are a lifeline for paddy fields, and if they cannot be maintained, communities will no longer be able to grow rice. A community unable to cultivate rice will substantially lose its ability to function as a collective.





Therefore, since 2000, I have been proposing to accept volunteers to assist with the work of spring dredging, which requires the most help. The work of clearing away the soil, sand, and fallen leaves that collect in winter is the hardest labor, and it cannot be denied that many people quit rice cultivation for this reason. However, the experiment of accepting outsiders to work together with the community has raised various debates within the region. Step by step, I first obtained the local people's approval to accept 7 people on a trial basis, and currently, there are as many as 50 people coming every year. Now the relationship is not a one-way arrangement in which these volunteers are accepted into the village as mere helpers or guests, but rather has become a collaborative endeavor of city dwellers and farmers working together toward the same goal of protecting the region, as well as protecting the farming industry between the mountains. The volunteers experience a respectful lifestyle rooted in tradition and nature and feel fulfillment through their participation, and this arrangement gives a chance for the local residents to reconfirm their own pride as well. In short, we have been building an affiliation of mutual interdependence.

Furthermore, we obtain support from the volunteers by directly selling the rice originating from the waterway system to them for their consumption, as well as by making Japanese sake from the rice for them to drink, so the results have led to an economic benefit, too. In this way, the spotlight is not on the fields or the traditional events, but rather on the waterway system, and there seem to be a few efforts working towards further affiliations throughout the country.

“Connecting role” creates opportunities

I believe my role throughout these efforts is better described as a “connecting role,” than a “leading role.” The actual final objective is to find successors among the local farmers; namely, to bring out leaders, but we have unfortunately only managed to act as a break on the decline of farming families and have not yet been able to produce new leaders. Accordingly, I fully understand that the issue has not yet been resolved.

Nevertheless, I think that in order to raise regional leaders, we should first create these kinds of connecting roles. Of course, what we ultimately need are leaders, but supporters and collaborators, such as our volunteers, are also necessary to achieve our goal. To this end, the connecting role is essential. Even if the leaders in charge of local work increase by one or two people, there are still limitations to what they can do on a wider scale, namely, that of the region. As can be understood from the foregoing example, regardless how many motivated farmers exist, single households cannot maintain the waterway system alone. Since the abilities of the region are decreasing





these days, we need to foster connecting roles and leaders, and to build multi-layer structures for them to collaborate with.

Moreover, due care must be given to the methods for nurturing connecting roles. In order to actively demonstrate the joys of the region to outsiders, both the coordinating ability of those in connecting roles and the cooperation of local residents are essential. However, connection activities have not been sufficiently assessed for reasons including the population already having aged to the point that its remaining energy is limited, as well as existing organizations becoming less flexible and failing to function; consequently, the region's understanding and cooperation are often difficult to come by. Under these circumstances, even if they try to fight alone, the people in connecting roles merely float along. Furthermore, one problem causing the inability to meet expectations is the accumulation of fatigue on both sides, which will eventually endanger the very continuation of these efforts. Old methods of regional revitalization, such as events and special products, are not enough. What the regions need is not events, but rather the voluntary rallying of local residents. If the accumulation of that know-how relies only on individuals' abilities, it will not be able to create universality.

Toward the raising of leaders

In addition to actual farming, current experiments toward achieving this type of connecting role have cropped up here and there in Aizu. For example, young people have established a company to design traditional Aizu cotton in modern styles with plans for retail. Furthermore, there are young people directly connecting the producers of Aizu lacquerware to urban consumers, and working to vitalize the lacquerware industry. These are both examples of connecting roles, trying to bring forth new leaders and collaborators.

The key to paving the way toward the future depends on how local resources can be utilized, how they can be sent outside, and how they can be connected to the region. A first step is to raise people in connecting roles. This does not rely on an individual's abilities, but rather, on developing supporting organizations with strong ties to the region. Furthermore, people will share the same thoughts despite being separated by distance; in short, they will act as collaborators embracing urban residents far and wide. This rallying of collaborators should eventually lead to the birth of leaders who can pave the way to the future.





Author's recent photo





Will Food Regain a “Firm Relationship” between Urban and Rural Areas?

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As a result of a commodity driven economy, society has become progressively segmented, and moreover, the value of “food,” which should strengthen the connection to life and deepen relationships, has nearly been forgotten. The accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant presented us with an opportunity to rebuild the ties between urban and rural areas, as well as to recall the feeling of working together with this world. We would like to reach for a firm sense of hope for the future by confronting our relationship with “food.”

Gap highlighted by nuclear power accident

The major accident at TEPCO’s Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant and the radioactive contamination related thereto cruelly tore apart human relationships, that is, the relationship between cities (consumers) and rural areas (producers) via the food chain. If the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami had only been a natural disaster, we would now see many urban supporters happily joining in the recovery hand in hand with the affected people in the rural areas. This cooperation would have happened regardless of the uncertainty of the recovery plan and the differences in timelines and enthusiasm. It would likely have led to new ties between the urban and rural areas. The nuclear power plant, however, truly tore apart the core of our humanity.

But if we were to look just a little closer at that structural issue we would notice that even if the accident hadn’t occurred, the relationship between the rural and urban areas has in fact been an unbalanced one. All the energy generated from exploiting the land and the ocean is sent to the urban areas, and nothing but an intoxicating amount of money is left in the rural areas. Once an accident happens, antagonism and estrangement arise between urban and rural areas despite the fact that both are victims, and ultimately, the urban areas can abandon (throw away) the rural areas –I believe this is the relationship that has been created.

The situation reminded me that the relationship between producer and consumer





tied together by the concept of “safe food,” such as organic products, is really nothing more than the “safety” of each single product. If safety is threatened, the consumer side can throw away the actual products, but by doing so, it also abandons the people and the regions that held those consumers’ lives dear. Instead of closing the gap between those who “live here” (ie rural farmers) and those who “choose this lifestyle” (ie urban dwellers), we have knowingly widened that gap under the commodity driven economy.

Reality and hope

Without even thinking about it, we know that “eating” is the original act of risking one’s life. “Food,” however, has become an unexpectedly easy business over the past half century or so, changing with industrialization and globalization. People have left it to others to take care of them and have become completely reliant on labels; when an accident or incident occurs, people now become panicked.

We should have taken action to protect the true nature of our “food,” but what kind of world have we built today? We have even suffered the humiliation of being ridiculed by nuclear power. All we can do at this stage is look back at the origin of the problem. We must start all over again in order to return to the attitude of “safety is not something we produce, but something we create and guarantee together.”

On one hand, we have learned that there is hope hidden within the sad truth. The fact is that not all the consumers ran away (or abandoned the farmers). If we look at the experience of the organization I work for, the 2011 advance orders of rice (called, “reserved rice”), cultivated by the producers of the Inada Rice Cultivation Research Group of Sukagawa City, Fukushima Prefecture, fell by almost half. Yet despite the advance orders for rice produced in Fukushima Prefecture being decreased “by half,” there were still 2,500 consumers who “reserved” the rice before the harvest.



Rice terraces scenery of Tosa town, Kochi prefecture

While bowing our heads in acknowledgment of the sudden decrease in orders, having discussions with the producers with the acknowledgment that, “we have no choice but to restart from here,” we had the idea to “survey the people who did place an order, asking them what they trusted in.” The response was not only the safety, nor the taste or price, but something beyond all that. We had been entrusted with that





“something.” Among the answers from the people who reserved our rice was one voice saying, “Even if the rice is not edible, if the same people produce it, I will buy it.” I was deeply moved by this response. I believed that the underlying meaning to these words was not only appreciation for the farmers who provided for that person’s daily meals up to then, but also the strong feeling that “we must not now lose the world which we have created together. If I do not support the producers, we will be defeated.” I had not realized that we had actually created this kind of relationship, however small. We must identify the core of this idea of “a connection beyond product safety,” and we must respond to it.

Building a world together

What we learned from trial and error after the nuclear power accident was that there could likely be no future without building a world which shares a transformed understanding of “eating,” which is not limited to the “safety” of what we eat. In a way,



Harvest festival in Sukagawa City,
Fukushima Prefecture in November 2011.

this is realizing the obvious. Beyond safety lies the “essence of food.” It is not only a label bearing an organic JAS mark, nor is it only conveying the hard work of the producers; rather, it is the building of a relationship that is firmly aware of the responsibility towards future life, and the truth

is that consumers desire this as well. Although the number of these relationships is low right now, I hope to continue making connections, and want to restart my work of conveying “the richness of genuine things.” This may be the work that will recreate a foundation for a new society.

I have a message from Toshihiko Ito, who leads the Inada Rice Cultivation Research Group introduced above.

“We, the producers, would like to fulfill our responsibility of producing for the benefit of our consumers, who fulfill their responsibility of eating.” These farmers are dedicating themselves to learning –without taking a break during the off-season for farming, they continue to work for decontamination (they compiled their own





decontamination manual); and moreover, they have an unshaken resolve to disclose the measurement results of radioactive matter. These efforts will contribute to the development of a clean environment in the entire region. This is exemplified by the 2,500 supporters who reserved our rice in 2011, notwithstanding the 50% decrease.

Another example I would like to present is the farm inns that have opened one after the other in the Towa region of Nihonmatsu City. In addition to dealing with products, there are some farming families who have opened their homes in order to recreate bonds with others. This is a rather surprising phenomenon. In this manner, we can openly discuss the entire world of cultivating “food,” and continue to build it together. We would like to accept this call from producers who seek this type of relationship.

Towards the future

Tour groups comprised of a few people at a time are ideal for farm inns. If the weather is good, even staying only one night can allow them to take in what the poet Chieko called a “true sky.” The people who have seen this understand how much it means. The experience becomes a treasure house of energy for the future that will never wither away again. I would like to think of ways for people to feel the beauty of the foundation supporting our “food,” bringing forth both fond memories, and hope for the future.

3/11 showed us that we all have to change. And yet, the disparities in this world are widening, and people are filled with uncertainty. The population of Japan is decreasing, and in fact, both urban and rural districts are suffering from the same disease. Under these circumstances, I would like us to use food to, in the words of the philosopher Takashi Uchiyama, “build a firm relationship” anew.



25th anniversary of cultivating rice experienced by families among consumers





Organic Festa Organic farming as a Starting Point to Widen the Circle of Producers and Consumers

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Consumers interested in organic farming do not only exist in urban areas. The local Organic Festa has uncovered a latent need for organically farmed products in rural areas, which has also helped bring organic farmers closer together. This event has the potential to develop bonds that transcend a simple relationship between producers and consumers.

Visualized interest in organic farming

“Organic Festa” is a large-scale event in which local organic farmers gather for exchange and direct sales between producers and consumers. “Festa” comes from the Italian word for “festival,” so “Organic Festa” means “organic farming festival.”

It appears that the Organic Festa (“Festa”) was first held in Japan in April 2004 as the “Organic Festa in Tokyo.” The inspiration spread to Kagoshima, and the “Organic Festa in Kagoshima” was started in 2008. The Festa in Kagoshima gathered 20,000 people out of the blue in its first year, and it was a major topic of discussion among people involved in organic farming. Conventional wisdom held that the consumers interested in organic farming lived in major cities, such as Tokyo and Osaka, and that there were almost no such consumers in rural regions. Therefore, when 20,000 customers attended the Festa in Kagoshima, the southernmost tip of Japan, it was very big news, causing people to wonder whether “times have changed.”

In Akita Prefecture, where I live, the success of Kagoshima left a strong impression, and the first Festa was organized in Akita City in 2010. Kikuo Soma, an organic farmer in Ogata Village, and others, called for the opening of the Festa in order to “create a venue for farmers and consumers to meet by their own efforts.” Consumers’ groups approved of the idea, and an organizing committee was formed. Approximately 30 organic farmers gathered from all regions of the prefecture. Many of them were meeting for the first time, and the Festa created an opportunity to establish a network of organic farmers in the prefecture.





Creating sales channels “Akita-style”

The preparations were very much trial and error, since there was no experience behind the project. The biggest problem was the “Organic JAS Certification System.” In Japan, in order for farming products to be labeled “organic products,” it is necessary to obtain a qualification called “Organic JAS Certification.” The process to obtain the qualification, however, requires the completion of tiresome procedures, including making a contract with the certification organization; detailed recording of what fertilizer and materials a farmer used for each field; being inspected by an inspector from the certification organization; and finally being able to place the certification mark on the products after passing an investigation by the certification organization. Furthermore, the farmers have to bear the costs for these certification procedures.

For a farmer with a relatively large-scale farm and only a few harvested products, obtaining the certification might be good business, but for farmers who harvest a few dozen vegetables per year on a small field, the certification procedures are too great a burden. As a result, most of the organic farmers (especially vegetable farmers) who gathered for the Akita Festa had not obtained the certification.



Accordingly, the unique method referred to as “Akita style” was developed during discussions on creating a framework to sell organically farmed agricultural products without obtaining the certification. The Akita style was formed based on 4 procedures (steps): (1) examination of documents; (2) inspection of local land; (3) creation and display of a harvest card; and (4) selling by farmers themselves and conversation with consumers. The Festa has been held in Akita over the past 4 years, and there has been not even one incident of trouble in relation to the “Akita style.” This proves that it is possible to sell agricultural products at the Festa without any problems even without obtaining the Organic JAS Certification.

Let us return to the topic of the Festa in the first year. Another concern was how many people would actually come. Accordingly, we did promotion not only through the mass media, but also by other routes, such as Facebook and Twitter. Did these efforts lead to any results? When the Festa took place, as many as 3,000 customers came, which was far beyond our expectations. Once we opened in the morning, customers kept coming until the venue was completely filled, and the flow of customers continued until after lunch. I had the strong impression that “even in Akita, there are so many





consumers looking for safe food products.” The participating organic farmers clearly felt this as well. Suddenly, everyone’s motivation rose, lending a strong momentum to later developments.

Festa lights flames throughout Japan

The Festa in Akita has continued over the past 4 years, making improvements every year. The organic farmers’ network has steadily expanded, and today, the Akita Organic Farming Promotion Association sponsors the Festa. (The Festa’s homepage is <http://ofakita.org/>.) The number of attendees has stayed constant every year, hovering at around 4,000 people, and its development shows no signs of the frequently mentioned tendency for events to fall into a rut.

On another note, the news that “the Akita Festa drew 3,000 people” seems to have had an impact on the Tohoku region. In 2012, the manual “From Akita! Let’s start holding Organic Festa” (edited by the Organizing Committee of the Organic Festa in Akita), based on Akita’s experience, was published (available for a free download from the following URL, <http://www.zenyukyo.or.jp/info/209.html>), and was transmitted throughout Japan. Afterwards, it appears that Festa events were held in Yamagata Prefecture, Iwate Prefecture, and Fukushima Prefecture. The number of customers who came to any of the venues ranged from a few thousand to as many as 10,000. Festa events have been held not only in Tohoku, but also in Hokkaido, Yamanashi, Mie, Kumamoto, and elsewhere. This type of Festa event has spread across Japan, and it has taught us the important fact that “there are many consumers everywhere who are looking for safe food products.”

How should we capitalize on the success of the Festa? The question from an economic perspective would be “how can we sell organic farming products to local consumers?” – This is the issue of “local production for local consumption” in relation to organic farming. From a community building perspective, however, we can ask a different question, which would be, “Can the Festa event be used as a starting point to widen the circle of local producers and consumers with an interest in food products?”



Possibilities shown by Organic Festa

It is true that the Festa event differs from concepts such as “straight from the farm” and “direct sales venues.” First of all, during the Festa,





the local organic farmers meet at the same location, line up their tables, and sell their products together. Usually, there are more than a few lone wolf organic farmers who do not care about the fate of the region as long as they can secure their own customers. In addition, there are cases where some people form groups amongst themselves and do not communicate with other groups. Opening the Festa, however, removed these invisible walls between farmers, enabling the creation of networks. After holding the Festa for 4 years, as Akita has done, farmers can often be seen to exchange opinions among themselves at the venue, and in many cases they continue their relationships even when the event is over.



If should also be noted that, from the consumer's viewpoint, the appeal of the Festa lies in "the safe and delicious farming products" and "communication with the farmers." We have come to understand these points clearly by surveying attendees of the Festa in Akita. If the farmers and the agricultural products are appealing, the customers will likely continue to come.

Furthermore, the results of the 2013 survey showed that "first-time Festa attendees" comprised 70% of the total attendance, while "repeat attendees" comprised 30%. The actual number of customers was 4,000 people, which means that there were 1,000 repeaters, based on a simple calculation.

These numerous repeat consumers could perhaps become not merely "buyers," but also "supporters" and "fans" of the farming industry. Based on the foregoing, I wonder whether we can create a new regional community of farming and food. Today, the Organic Festa has shown us the possibility of this type of local society.





Companies' Reconstruction Support -Towards a New Relationship Between Urban and Rural Areas-

Kaori Kuroda
Executive Director
CSO Network Japan

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, many companies were involved in support activities. Now that three years have passed since the disaster, we have moved beyond the need for primary support, and are now looking into activities for building a lasting relationship. This chapter examines the new exchanges connecting urban and rural regions, which are being cultivated through companies' reconstruction support activities, and the possibilities that these exchanges offer.

Great East Japan Earthquake and Companies' Reconstruction Support

After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, companies' support activities commanded attention. Despite suffering damage themselves, the local companies, branch offices and plants, and other entities all contributed, as part of the region, to support activities right after the earthquake occurred. The Northern Iwate Transportation Inc. transported victims and medical staff starting on the same day as the earthquake, and it also created a bus network connecting the evacuation centers to public baths, supermarkets, and the like. Toho Bank, Ltd. of Fukushima City allowed people to withdraw cash without requiring bankbooks or personal seals, as long as they could confirm their identities.

According to the "Survey about Support for Victims and Areas Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake" published by Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) in March 2012, about one year after the earthquake happened, the amount of support provided by companies was approximately JPY 122.4 billion, and the number of company employees who participated in support activities as volunteers was approximately 182,000 people. This survey originally focused on members of the "1% Club," which is comprised of member companies of Keidanren, so the actual figures of corporate support would be even greater. In addition, material support activities were also actively performed, including the provision of relief supplies.

We also saw a variety of support activities in the form of providing finance,





including direct contributions to regional administrations, victims, affected companies, and NPOs; establishing an endowment; sale of products that include a donation; and fund-raising by employees. One characteristic of all this support which especially stands out is the fact that, knowing recovery would take a long time, there were more than a few companies that promised long-term, continuous support.

Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd. is one such company. Through cooperation with the Japan NPO Center, with contributions taken from the profits of Alinamin, a famous Takeda Pharmaceutical nutritional supplement product, Takeda launched “Takeda’s Program to restore life and livelihood” to support the activities of NPOs and the like, mainly focusing on Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures. The implementation period was expected to be 5 years. Fukushima Prefecture Organic Agricultural Network (*Yuuki Net*) received a grant from Takeda Pharmaceutical, and in March 2013, it opened the store “Fukushima Orugando Shimokitazawa” in Shimokitazawa, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo.

Bridge between Tokyo and Fukushima

Yuuki Net is an NPO centered around farmers in Fukushima Prefecture who had been working towards organic farming with a regional resource circulation model. It was established in 2009 and incorporated after the disaster. After the nuclear accident, Fukushima’s farmers suffered significant damage due to the radioactive contamination, but they have continued to take measures on behalf of their farm land and farming products, as well as to cultivate the land and plant their seeds. In order to overcome the damage of harmful rumors, as products from Fukushima Prefecture were being removed from store shelves, *Yuuki Net* considered it important to build face-to-face relationships by conducting person-to-person sales activities. Accordingly, Fukushima’s farmers have been selling their vegetables, rice, and processed products, which have passed radiation measurements, in locations including various regional markets, revival exhibitions for Tohoku products, organic farming events, and in front of the Arakawa Ward Office. Fukushima Orugando Shimokitazawa was the first permanent shop with a strong affiliation for these farmers.

After the disasters, Ms. Naomi Abe, who lives in Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, became the manager of this store, after helping Fukushima’s farmers with their sales activities in Tokyo and Kanagawa Prefecture. She manages many volunteers, and I myself am serving as a managing member. Rice and vegetables produced by approximately 50 farmers in Fukushima are sold in the store, and the popular Fukushima set lunches and desserts are also available to purchase. There is also an





undertaking for people to sign up for Tours to Experience Fukushima, which has made this store a bridge between Fukushima and Tokyo. It sees good business among people who were born in Fukushima but currently live in Tokyo, people who have fond memories of Fukushima, people who come to eat delicious food, people who live in the neighborhood, and others. The store has also become a place to relax for people who had to leave Fukushima due to the nuclear accident. Furthermore, thanks to the Fukushima Orugando Shimokitazawa, a women's group of Fukushima's organic farmers has also been established, and this group visits Tokyo and offers seminars and cooking classes about Fukushima's local cuisine.

Towards co-existence between rural and urban areas

As grants and support activities expire sooner or later, the number of companies wishing to somehow continue their relationships with Fukushima is increasing. At companies whose employees are continuing to purchase Fukushima's vegetable packages, a personal connection has arisen between the farmers and these employees. In addition, more than a few companies are continuing to hold markets within their own premises. With Fukushima Orugando Shimokitazawa at the center, new relationships between farmers and their urban customers are increasing.

As the next step, *Yuuki Net* is currently considering making arrangements for the employees of the companies to visit Fukushima, and to join in the experience of farming. For the past two years, I myself have cultivated a field and grown vegetables at the citizens' farm. I have perceived the true meaning of cultivation and felt gratitude for the simple act of eating. I would like everyone working in companies to be able to understand the value of farming, even if only a little bit, through cultivating some fields and planting some seeds.

Our model is the structure of the NPO called *Egao Tsunagete* (joined by smiling faces) located in Hokuto City, Yamanashi Prefecture. This NPO is not only involved in farming, but also conducts diverse activities including environmental and natural energy activities, as well as activities through collaborations between the groups of agriculture, commerce, and industry. This includes collaborative action with companies. Employees of companies based in Tokyo visit the region for the revival of the fields and rice paddies and periodic thinning of the forests which have been abandoned and are no longer cultivated or used; these employees also try their hand at farming. As a result, there is continuous exchange between Tokyo and the region. Recently, employees working in Marunouchi grew rice for sake while receiving instruction from the farmers,





and I heard that these employees worked together with a well-established sake brewery in Hokuto City to make a *junmaishu* (a sake without adding alcohol or sugar), called “*Marunouchi*.”

I am not thinking in terms of a one-time visit, but rather hope that the employees would visit Fukushima many times in a year. There are burgeoning ideas, including the creation of courses, such as a trial course covering the process from seed planting to harvest, a course covering the process from harvesting soy beans to making *miso*, and a course covering the process from planting rice for sake to making *junmaishu*. More than anything, I want people to experience a sustainable livelihood and its techniques through the smell of the fields and the sound of the wind, as well as exchange with local people.

I believe that the number of people, myself included, who wish to question their way of life as well as the economy and our society, will definitely increase using reconstruction support as a springboard. These people will also review their daily lifestyles, including how they consume and how they use energy. My impression is that, in addition to employees taking action with company initiatives, they will also become involved as individual citizens, and the traffic between rural and urban areas will increase even more from now on. We will move forward by utilizing the technical and other know-how that companies have, while city dwellers will learn the strength of the rural areas, and our mutual relationship will pave the way for our future society.

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Women's group of
Fukushima Organic Agricultura Network



Fukushima Organ-Do



Small Farmers Around the World Advocate Food Sovereignty and the Restoration of Agriculture

Koyu Furusawa

Board Chair

Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society (JACSES)

The value of food and agriculture is becoming increasingly acknowledged at international conferences dealing with global issues. This problem should be viewed not only from the macro perspective of food crisis resolution, but also in terms of the sanctity of food and agriculture, or “food sovereignty.” It should be recognized as a profound issue that questions the very state of human civilization and life. Now is the time for the world to lend an ear to the voices of small farmers.

The UN has made 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. The small farmers of the world are being pushed to the brink of extinction under the pressure of economic globalization and free trade. Local small farmers and family farms support the majority of humanity’s food production on the planet. The UN poses the question: Who will cultivate food in future? I would like to consider the background of this question.

The state of food and agriculture recognized as the global theme

In my view, the creation of a world in which food is produced and agriculture is maintained in harmony with nature will secure humanity’s long-term coexistence with other creatures on Earth. Looking at the global environment as a whole, agricultural land (including pasture) composes the largest proportion of the area settled by humans, and this land plays an extremely important role as the point of contact between the natural and artificial environment. Here lies an important key to humanity’s convivial interaction with the global environment. Today, in a new context, we are rediscovering the importance of agriculture in integrating nature, villages, and culture with respect for regional diversity and community. This is in stark contrast to the New World style of large-scale, mono-cultural, trade-oriented agriculture symbolized by the USA.

Recent movements to rediscover and reappraise agriculture-based lifestyles are also related to this contemporary perception. Given the crucial role primary industries are likely to play from now on, we must define the cultivation of farming communities and agricultural, forestry, and fishing industries that are in tune with ecological





environments throughout the world as an objective of international policy. This may serve as a kind of buffer against the destabilization of the global environment and the decline of local culture. In the 21st century, the primary industries of agriculture, forestry, and fishing should certainly play a part in this, as well as in guaranteeing the security of the Earth's living systems through the sanctity of food and agriculture and food sovereignty.

Voices of civil society and the agrarian movement in response to the World Food Summit

In considering the future of food and agriculture, I would like present a starting point: the importance of the sanctity of food and agriculture. To this end, I will recap the events at a World Food Summit I attended in the past and revisit the issues raised.

The UN World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996 was a highly interesting event, as we stand at a crossroads in determining how to view global food and agriculture in the 21st century. The Rome Declaration adopted at this summit stipulated goals of achieving food security for all and cutting the number of undernourished people in half by no later than 2015. Taken at face value, the Declaration stresses peace, response to poverty issues, the importance of social, political, and economic stability, the establishment of and participation in gender equality, and the roles of fishermen, farmers, foresters and indigenous peoples. To an extent, the Declaration also incorporates in its foundational principles the outcomes of the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development, and the World Conference on Women, all held since the 1992 Earth Summit.

However – and this is a limitation of UN conferences, which are founded on the national interests of various countries – the Declaration did not touch on disparities such as issues of affluence in developed countries (over-consumption), hunger problems in developing countries caused by the replacement of home-use crops with commercial crops (promotion of exports and dependence on trade), or market control by agribusiness. On the contrary, the document showed a strong tendency to reinforce the status quo, stressing the achievement of food security through trade and the system of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and, although not explicitly stated, expressing hope for production increases through biotechnology and other such methods.





3,000 people gathered for the NGO meeting at Colosseum in Rome
(World Food Summit 1996, Rome)

Gathering of NGOs with 3,000 people at The Colosseum in Rome
(World Food Summit 1996, Rome)

of “Food sovereignty and security to eliminate the globalization of hunger.” I would like to focus on the point about “profit for few,” meaning “agribusiness,” and also on the issue of “food sovereignty.” Let’s take a look at “profit for few” first and return to “food sovereignty” later.

The meager land and resources of developing countries are often used to produce cash crops for export. For example, in the 1990’s, Brazil became the third largest exporter of food and agricultural produce in the world, but almost half of its people were malnourished. (From 2001, Brazil became the top net exporter of agricultural produce in the world, and the malnourished population dropped to approximately 10%.) The reality is that the promotion of trade does not result in food security. Even in the USA, the world’s largest exporter of agricultural produce (also in the 1990’s), over 10% of the population was unable to secure sufficient food and was receiving food stamps. (In 2013, 16% of the population was receiving food stamps.) The claim that increased food production or expansion of trade eliminates hunger is patently untrue, which can be seen from the actual state of the world.

In the preamble to its statement, the NGO forum noted that “The globalization of the world economy, along with the lack of accountability of transnational corporations, and spreading patterns of overconsumption have increased world poverty. Today’s global economy is characterized by unemployment, low wages, destruction of rural economies, and bankruptcy of family farmers.” Today, this disparity is a global phenomenon that also affects Japan.*

Restoration of the sanctity of food and agriculture (food sovereignty)

Here I would like to focus in particular on the expression “food sovereignty.” It is usually translated directly into Japanese, but I feel that the term “food sanctity,” or respect for the uniqueness of food, conveys the meaning better. South American groups





and indigenous peoples have long used this expression in criticizing of the dominance of Western materialist culture and in calling for the reinstatement of cultural independence. The expression was proposed and incorporated into the final draft of the NGO forum statement.

Via Campesina (The Farmers' Way), an international organization of small farmers, used the Food Summit to launch its food sovereignty campaign. Today, this organization of small and family farms continues to raise important questions and has created an international network in which 150 small farmer organizations (representing about 200 million farmers as of 2013) from 70 developing and other nations across the world work to establish and strengthen genuine food sovereignty.**

Their demands are grounded on the recognition that the foundation of food and agricultural activity is the interchange and exchange between life and nature. This sublime exchange is deeply ingrained in the ethnic culture and history of a given region, and includes mental and spiritual connotations. The organization understands that disrespect for food and agriculture, as well as the destruction of nature, the environment, and regional culture, is advancing because this “sanctity of food and agriculture” (culture) has been destroyed. As a result, the roots of human food security are being demolished. The term “food sovereignty” incorporates the struggle to restore these roots, fundamentally interrogating the values of civilization.

My impression is that the people of Asia, Latin America, and Africa are more aware of this point. When I give even the slightest thought to traditional Japanese culture and consider the food customs relating to events such as New Year's Day, *obon*, and various festivals, such as the traditional village foods, the bounties of each of the four seasons, and the wisdom of cooking techniques, I can certainly feel the significance of food and agriculture. Furthermore, the traditional culture of the Ainu is a clear example of the fact that the role of food as an intermediary between nature and God (or the spiritual world) is extremely profound in the cultures of indigenous people throughout the world. Considering circumstances such as the destruction of culture by colonial policy in the past and the collapse of regional culture and identity due to the recent wave of modernization, development policies, and commercialization, this emotional attachment toward food and agriculture and the restoration and reconstruction of ideological and cultural value can certainly be viewed as posing fundamental questions concerning the state of civilization in the 21st century. The following is included at the start of the proposals on food rights at the end of the NGO Declaration.

“International law must guarantee the right to food, ensuring that food sovereignty





takes precedence over macro-economic policies and trade liberalization. Food cannot be considered as a commodity, because of its social and cultural dimension.”

In other words, the NGO forum is asserting that when it comes to food and agriculture, building a structure to maintain and promote lasting regional societies and sustainable agricultural communities and villages is the answer, rather than the promotion of trade. They argue that agriculture and farm villages have the power to support regional economy and community; that the local customs and culture symbolized by food culture make up the base of social infrastructure; and that fair preservation and development can bring balance to regional communities. They propose that these be the basic policies with which to rebuild food and agriculture around the world.

Now is the time for us to revisit the meaning of the UN’s International Year of Family Farming, take a good look at the significance of the food and agriculture that support our lives, and reaffirm the importance of food sovereignty.



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Diary of a Visit to Araku, South-east India

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Under the development of modern capitalism, what can we do to revitalize marginalized regions and human lifestyles, and to establish sustainable, circulatory societies? Together with some farmers from Fukushima, I visited a mountain region in India and its indigenous people, who are trying their hand at agroforestry. Through the lessons we shared with each other, we considered the outlook for the future.

1. Introduction – Bound for Araku

In mid-November last year (2013), together with Board Chair Katsuji Imata and Executive Director Kaori Kuroda (CSO network Japan), Professor Koyu Furusawa (Kokugakuin University), and President Seiji Sugeno, a member of the Fukushima Organic Agriculture Network, which has established its main office in Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture, I visited India for one week and had the opportunity to communicate with a few organizations of the region. In the first half of the trip, we stayed in the Andhra Pradesh Province of southeast India. We met with the coffee bean producers' associations, comprising indigenous tribes of the mountain region, and the local branch office of the Naandi Foundation, an NPO offering technical support to the coffee bean producers' associations. This paper is a report of our visit.

The visit started in Araku, which is a few hundred kilometers north of the Visakhapatnam region in the north of Andhra Pradesh Province along the coastline. We left the coast and took a mountain road to the real mountain range; we drove on a paved road through the red clay that is unique to regions with a tropical savanna climate. The air we breathed was a mix of the dust of the earth, the exhaust fumes from our vehicle, and the humidity. Along the route, we could see the city, filled with energy as well as the hustle and bustle of urban living. Once we were deep in the mountains, the noise receded to the quiet of an agricultural region. After being jolted around in the vehicle for some time, we arrived in Araku, which is almost the most northern point of AP Province, close to the border of Odisha. We were approximately 1,000m above sea level, and the temperature was cooler than the Tokai coast of Japan.





Allow me to describe briefly the background to our visit. Throughout almost all of southeast India, including AP Province, indigenous people live mainly in the mountain regions; these tribes have maintained their traditions and make a living off their own industry sufficient for their way of life. Recently, however, these indigenous populations have become marginalized in many regions. “Marginalized” in this context means to become limited, fragile, and endangered. On one hand, the usable resources per person have relatively decreased due to the increase in the population, while on the other hand, the portion of their way of life that has become dependent on cash has increased. Under these circumstances, the livelihood of the indigenous people has destabilized, and together with the overuse of resources and their degradation, the situation threatens to start a vicious circle.

Moreover, only so many food products can be harvested from the limited agricultural land. Accordingly, the indigenous people will come to rely on the surrounding forests, but this will inevitably lead to cultivation of the forest land and to deforestation; furthermore, if the situation descends into surplus use, that exceeds recovery capacity of the vegetation, the forest resources as well as the water resources will dry up, which will lead to an increase in wasteland, and the way of life dependent on nature’s bounty will gradually fall into deprivation. This trend has been further expedited by drought and severe rainfall due to recent climate change. For the indigenous people of the mountain regions living in these marginal conditions, what measures can they take in order to achieve the twin goals— of improving their way of life and establishing recovery of the forests and vegetation (that is, neither allowing degradation of the forests to temporarily protect their way of life, nor on the other hand, allowing the further loss of their way of life to protect the forests)? Can they change their path from that of a vicious circle to one of a positive nature? These answers are the topic of this essay.

The Araku Model, which is the subject of the efforts by the Naandi Foundation, whom we met during this visit, approaches this serious problem from both sides, namely by considering the aspects of agriculture and ecology as well as the aspects of society and the economy.

2. Araku Model

At the beginning of 2000, the Araku Model was started by the Naandi Foundation, and it was comprised of various elements. It was a program involving approximately 25,000 households and 100,000 people, living in about 300 communities. It promotes agroforestry (tree planting), cultivating a varied combination of trees and shrubs with a special focus on coffee, utilizing wasted land that covers an area of 6,000 hectares. The project is summarized as follows.

Coffee was introduced into India by the government during the period from the





1960s to the 1970s, and thereafter. Coffee trees are shade-tolerant trees and “shade-growing trees” (shade trees) are required to make shade necessary to grow coffee trees in a location with strong sun. For this reason, if the indigenous tribes intended to earn cash income by producing coffee beans, they would need to maintain a certain amount of forestry as a first step. By this model, conserving the forests represents an incentive for the indigenous tribes to earn money. A similar situation applies to black pepper vines. Black pepper is a creeping vine plant, and it requires a tall tree as a supporting column for the black pepper vine to wind around as it grows.

The method of the Naandi Foundation takes this thinking one step further by forming agroforestry out of wasted land, which cannot be used for farmland. The trees and shrubs that can easily be converted to cash, mainly coffee trees and black pepper vines, were planted with a certain density, and in addition, a variety of useful flora was also planted. Fruit trees, including mango, papaya, guava, and citrus fruit trees, were planted, contributing to improving the health of the vegetation and ecosystem as well as making a livelihood. Furthermore, by combining other useful trees and shrubs with diverse applications, such as herbs, pine and teak, a strategic forest could be grown.

Since the time for fruition was not rushed, and the trees were grown so that they could be used in the short-term, mixing and matching were conducted over time. For example, a papaya tree can bear fruit 8 months after planting, but a teak tree requires 20 years to reach its full growth. The planting density also varied depending on the planted species. For example, coffee trees take up about 2 sq.m., while teak trees should be given 6 sq.m, and bamboo plants, as many as 9 sq.m. By mixing and matching in a regulated patchwork manner, agroforestry can thrive. In Araku overall, a plan for tree planting based on 2.4 million trees and shrubs was drawn up for the 6,000 hectares; accordingly, there are on average 400 trees and shrubs in one hectare. In sum, one unit (equal to 0.02471 acre) has a density of 4 trees.



Mr. Seiji Sugeno in front of Satoyama of Araku

This method was necessary for the progressive increase of the indigenous people's income and the parallel progress made in improving the indigenous people's lifestyle as well as recovering the environment and vegetation. Furthermore, the long-term reclamation of green land and the promotion of tree planting over a broad scope will contribute to stabilizing the increasing carbon fixation amount for many years to come; therefore, these efforts will lead to a secondary income through conducting transactions regarding carbon credits with developing countries and companies as the





counter-parties.

3. Activities of producers' associations and village units

Increasing the net earnings from the coffee cultivation was also important. In this regard, the MACS producers' association (Mutual Aid Co-operative) plays a major role. Officially, the acronym SAMFT comes before MACS, so, in its entirety, it is SAMFT-MACS. SAMFT stands for "Small and Marginal Tribal Farmers." This MACS promulgates coffee cultivation technology and collects beans for the market. The 500 villages in the valley each have their own terminal association, and while they each conduct their own decentralized activities, they exercise group power with their logistics for the improvement of the indigenous people's way of life for all of Araku. It is a large-scale producers' association comprising more than 11,000 association members.

The production started to be systemized in 2003. Originally, coffee was brought in from the outside, and traditionally, it was not consumed. Therefore, there was hardly any accumulated technology for its cultivation. In addition, before its production was systemized, there were instances when the producers sold their products cheaply to merchants in the production area who could have paid well. The coffee bean producers of indigenous people, who each have only a small-scale operation, can now all benefit from large-scale organization because they can strengthen the technical and logistical sides of their business. This method also has a trust function, which can respond to cash demands in the case of a member's emergency.

The Naandi Foundation is collaborating with the MACS of the village units and making progress with coffee cultivation and its agroforestry project. Moreover, each village is making compost and conducting beekeeping following the guidance of the Naandi Foundation; both these actions hold an important position within the project.

As part of the agroforestry described above, compost is required when planting and growing seedlings and young trees on bare land, and compost can be made by fermenting cattle manure. The Naandi Foundation also provides technical advice in this regard. In a tropical climate, the sun is strong, and vegetation grows quickly, but organic materials such as fallen leaves also decompose quickly, so the soil has a high quantity of inorganic components, is red in color, and lacks fertility. It would thus be inappropriate to use the land with a high intensity in a limited space. By adding a small amount of micro-organisms introduced from the outside to the cattle manure, which is the most useful resource that can be acquired from inside the region, it is possible to create compost, a useful material to make the land fertile. This is accomplished by mixing 6 types of bacterial sources with the cattle manure and remixing it every 15 days. At first, it will be a wet, sticky mass, but after two and half to three months, the mass will become light and loose compost. By mixing this compost with the land, it will become





nutrients for the land, and the bacteria richly contained in the compost will have the additional effect of preventing crop damage from disease or harmful insects. As a result,



Young plant of coffee

it will be able to protect the short seedlings.

The Naandi Foundation is also active in the promulgation of beekeeping in this region. Looked at from another perspective, beekeeping contributes to flower generation, and thus, it promotes the development of the forests. Honeybees gather the nectar of a wide range of flowers from flower beds and forest trees throughout the entire valley and bring the nectar back to the beehive. As for the flowers, they are pollinated and make fruit as a result. If the product is oilseed, the seeds are extracted, and the remainder is converted to compost material. One could say that honeybees make 70% of food products. Creating an environment where honeybees can actively conduct their activities contributes to the stable provision of the residents' food products. Furthermore, the honey produced by the honeybees becomes nourishment, as well as a source of income for the valley. The Naandi Foundation makes its rounds of the valley, stopping in each community, and it explains the benefits of honeybees, focusing on the women of the village. By having women in charge of the beekeeping, the women can become financially independent, and as a result, they will have the right to voice their opinions, such that they will be the driving force behind their region's continuous development.



Village meeting

The Naandi Foundation is not only involved in agricultural support, but also in working toward the spontaneous development of each community in Araku. It seems that the self-governing function of each community is improving while progress is made on the cooperation of agroforestry, compost-making, beekeeping and creating flower beds, among other actions. The authors of this essay as a group conducted much exchange at community meetings. At these meetings, the participants discussed various topics concerning their ways of life, the environment, education, and other issues.

4. In conclusion — Asia and Fukushima

On the last day of our stay in Araku, we had a meeting to exchange opinions with the experts of the Naandi Foundation. Based on what we had observed up to that point,





we made queries and raised points from the Japanese members visiting India using the materials we had prepared in advance.

Sugeno described the richness of our way of life surrounded by beautiful undeveloped woodland in Fukushima before the nuclear accident and its loss due to the significant degree of damage caused by the accident; he continued by explaining the ongoing challenge Fukushima is taking on with the collaboration of supporters and consumers, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances. Furusawa introduced the partnership relationship, namely, the collaboration, which has been built by organic farming producers together with Japanese consumers. Lastly, I also reported the efforts made by shared brainstorming with the Seikyo Group, which is Japan's largest consumer group, regarding providing safe products, working together with farming production regions, maintaining environmental safety, and working on undeveloped land and oceanic regions; I explained that this model continues to exist, even after the disasters.

I believed that this model would also definitely provide a reference for rural districts in Asia. Nevertheless, for farming and farming villages, I think the relationship between Japan and Asia is not a simple matter of communicating to Asian countries the experience that Japan went through first.

While walking through Araku, Sugeno found countless times that the scenery was similar to the mountain villages of Japan..... even the nooks and crannies, the terraced fields for rice cultivation, the flower beds along the hillsides, the posture of the young farmers chasing their cows....., he was reminded of fond memories and felt strong emotions during our visit. I think it is likely that Sugeno felt a kinship with the people of Araku during our visit. The people of Araku have escaped from a marginal situation, which was one step away from starting the vicious circle of poverty and degradation of resources; and moreover, they are on the right track for developing a rich region that protects the environment. Each village community had established an association and was planting trees and raising honeybees. I had the impression that Sugeno likely felt close to the people of Araku due to his own circumstances in Towa, Nihonmatsu City after the nuclear power accident and disasters, when he struggled to sow seeds together with the young people, to make the paddy fields, and to rebuild his town. I as well, as a native of Fukushima, did not feel that the indigenous people of the mountain regions in marginal circumstances in southeast India were any different from me.

I mentioned in the introduction to this paper that the indigenous people of southeast India were in the kind of situation that could be most easily destroyed by the direct impact of climate change. In addition, the problems of national projects, such as developing mines and building power generation facilities, which threaten residents' rights like a parachute falling, have been repeatedly reported. How will we in Japan





become involved, and what will we learn from the circumstances we will face directly ourselves, as well as the foregoing? I feel that the mountain regions of Fukushima and Asia unexpectedly share a few common issues.



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.

Reconstruction of Tohoku and Development from Within

- Examples of New Connections between Rural Areas and Urban Cities in Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, Yamagata and Andhra Pradesh

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