THE IMPORTANCE OF RESTORING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

Local food systems in Japan have been seriously eroded by the increasing uniformity of the Japanese diet, which has resulted first from the Westernization and diversification of eating habits that began with the receipt of food aid from the United States after World War II and continued through the years of economic growth. This led to the rise in popularity of eating out and home meal replacement. Market liberalization and globalization have accelerated this trend.

Local food means essentially what in Japan is called “the taste of Mother’s cooking”—home-prepared meals made with ingredients supplied by local farmers. The loss of local food systems has not merely entailed the disappearance of the distinctive cuisines of individual families and regions; it has also led to the replacement of local farming focusing on self-sufficiency by single-crop agriculture and dependent on an extensive distribution network. This has destroyed the local cycle of production and consumption within each community while undermining food self-sufficiency; it has also caused the loss of the food culture that, alongside the rural scenery, is the farming community’s greatest attraction and most valuable tradition.

Keywords: local food systems, Japanese diet, food festivals, eating habits, food security

INTRODUCTION

With growing consumer and public interest in boosting food self-sufficiency and in the idea of local production for local consumption, recent years have witnessed renewed awareness of the role of local food systems and the increasing trend toward reviving and invigorating them. For example, food festivals that bring together family cuisine from different households in a particular region are becoming common, and farmers’ restaurants that serve local food are on the increase. Moreover, virtually all agricultural cooperatives put considerable effort in selling farm products through direct-marketing outlets, and many of these carry local foods such as boxed lunches, pre-prepared dishes, and cakes and sweets made by, among others, the women’s arm of the co-op.

If local food systems are to be fully revived, each country must set out a clear policy for protecting its agricultural sector against the WTO regime and ensuring food security. As part of that effort, it will be necessary to foster understanding of local food systems among consumers and urban residents by further strengthening contacts between cities and agricultural communities, and to promote the spread and quality of farmers’ restaurants and other eating establishments that serve local food. Also crucial will be passing on the taste of traditional foods to the next generation by educating local children’s taste buds from an early age, both at the family dining tables and in the school canteens.

The truth of changes in the Japanese diet

To this day, the Japanese Diet has been changing a lot, and Fig. 1 shows this. Calorie supply, which had increased by around 1990, has decreased after this year. Rice consumption was at the peak in 1962 and went down, and the decreasing rate is also high. On the other hand, calorie supply of animal products, fruits, oils and fats and so on has increased, but nowadays, vegetables, fruits, fishes decreased in this order, and that of animal products and oils and fats went flat rate.

Fig. 2 shows the “Change of Calorie Supply” seen by the change of component ratio. This chart shows ratio of rice, which is approximately 50% in 1960, became less than 25%, and on the other hand,
Fig. 1. Changes in consumption per capita by item and calorie supply

Fig. 2. Changes in component ratio of calorie supply per capita

ratio of animal products and that of oils and fats continue to rise more highly than that of rice which continues to decrease.

If we see the changes in the Japanese diet by PFC Balance, the diet around 1980 was composed of main foods like rice, and side dishes like seafood, animal products, vegetables, and so on. Mcgovern Committee in the U.S thought highly of the Japanese Diet as a superior one that has excellent nutrient balance. Nevertheless, since the consumption of rice, vegetables and so on has decreased, animal products, oils and fats have also increased, therefore an intake of fats is currently in excess.

On top of those changes in the diet, the eating out ratio has increased dramatically as economic
growth has done, and after 1990, this ratio has increased a little even though it has some cyclic ups and downs. The eating out ratio has been at the peak in 1990s, and after that, it gradually decreased. On the other hand, ratio of delicatessen, or the so-called “Intermediate Food,” has increased. In this way, Japanese people spend less time to eat out and more time to eat at home, but the food they eat at home has been bought outside more often.

The causes of changes in the Japanese diet

The Japanese diet has gradually changed since the Meiji Restoration, but actually, this hardly changed among the populace but only among the wealthy people. However, despite the food shortage after WWII, flour and skim milk, which the U.S occupation forces provided the Japanese people, enabled them to start a school lunch program whose main food was composed of bread and milk, to protect their children from starvation and to strengthen their bodies. At the same time, the school lunch greatly changed the children’s tastes and liking. Also, when bread and milk were introduced in the school lunch, there were food incentive policies like the flour-food incentive, which encouraged people to eat bread. There is also the animal product policy which encouraged them to eat meats, eggs, milk and dairy products, and oils and fats incentive, called “a pan movement”, which encouraged them to eat fried foods. To spread this policy, “kitchen cars” ran around all over Japan. As TV watching became a habit, a food program greatly influenced their diet. These days, a gourmet dining is all the rage, mainly because of mass communication, especially TV. In other words, the Westernization of eating habits caused by support from the U.S was caused by a worship of the West, formed by an inferiority complex against the Western world, partly because of the defeat of the Japanese during WWII. Also, growing income caused by rapid economic growth has accelerated this Westernization, and mass communication, especially TV, also have had great influence on this. Increase of eating out ratio has been caused not only by growing income but also by increase of a double-income, mainly because of women’s social advancement.

Problems in changes of eating habits

Changes in the eating habit caused at least four various influences: standardization of the diet; unfavorable changes in attitudes toward their eating habit; worse health caused by loss of nutrient balance, and decrease of food self-sufficiency ratio.

Standardization and diversification of the diet

The spread of school lunches and increase of eating-outs, has decreased the time to eat at home. This has standardized the diet which was once variable at home and in the countryside. Before, the diet reflected the tastes of the countryside. However, this diet gradually changed to what was standardized like the standard all over Japan, and was added to what is like “stateless food”. Indeed, menus in restaurants have become diversified, but all of the diets have been separated from food at home and in the countryside. These food has been mass-produced in food plants, and in this sense, standardization of the diet has made further progress. In addition to these situations, farmhouses, food providers, food produced by high-variety low-volume production, provided for themselves, and sold products in neighborhood were taken for granted. However, as low-variety high-volume production and single-crop has made progress, distribution has also become diversified. Furthermore, as globalization has made progress, more farm products have been imported.

Unfavorable changes in attitudes toward eating habits

The recent features of attitudes and actions to the diet are listed below. These lists say that indeed, diversification of the diet has made progress despite of its standardization, but actually, the eating habit has been corrupted and traditional eating culture is steadily declining. In this way, the eating habit was almost destroyed. These situations are based on changes in social economy like the trends toward the double-income and the nuclear family, less time to sit in a happy circle, and so on. As these changes have made progress, the attitudes toward the diet at home including home prepared meals have changed.

Cooking all meals at home decreased. On the other hand, the following activities increased in number: cooking only rice, cooking just one meal, buying cooked meals, or “microwaving” frozen foods.

As it is called “Buffet-style table” or “eating separately”, “Eating individually” or “Eat Alone” have increased. A mealtime with the whole family decreased.

Because of the trend toward reasonable prices
and gourmet eating at the same time, purse strings are usually tightened, but there is more style to make lavish use of luxurious dishes sometimes.

It is not only because Japanese people don’t have enough time to cook, but also because they want to have more time doing their hobbies and study their lessons, even though they have enough time to cook. This shows that cooking becomes low-priority.

In spite of this, Japanese people tend to choose healthy or safe foods, and given their actual consumption acts, don’t always choose these kinds of meals.

Worse health caused by loss of nutrient balance

Changes in the diet and “corruption” of the eating habit have been the causes of the nation’s unhealthy state. Actually, changes in disease in our country shows that the number of people with cancer, heart disease, and cerebral thrombosis has increased after WWII. For the first time in 1957, the term “adult disease” became used. In addition to this disease, the number of people with diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and allergies has also increased, therefore in 1996, these diseases altogether became what is now known as called “Life-Style Disease”. It is indicated that one of the causes of “Life-Style Disease” is change in the eating habit like the trend toward consumption of high protein, high fat, and high sugar meals. Indeed, the average life span in our country (79 years old for male 86 years old for female) is still high standard in the world, but our health has apparently been worse. For example, the number of males who are fat and females who have low weight has increased and the national health expenditure in 2007 became 3.41 billion yen, (and this was increased no less than 45% from 15 years ago).

Decrease of food self-sufficiency ratio

As I mentioned before, changes in the diet causes increase in the number of imported foods and decrease of food self-sufficiency ratio. Consumption of rice has decreased. Consumption of animal products, oils and fats, flours, and sugars has also increased. Basically, rice can be self-sufficient in Japan, animal products and what is needed in stock raising, feed grains, oils and fats, flours, and sugars highly depend on imported foods, because these products produced in Japan have less competitive power. Consumption ratio of self-sufficient rice has decreased, and consumption of animal products, oils and fats, and the others which can not be self-sufficient has increased. These means that food and agriculture, which had been connected strongly together, has been gradually separated. Rice production surplus, which caused approximately 40% production adjustment of rice fields, exists. On the other hand, “Loss of Food” caused by leftovers and expired is estimated as much as 5-9 million. Moreover, decrease of self-sufficiency ratio also causes loss of circulation in an area, the loss of scenery, and the eating culture.

The structure of changes in the diet

Problems caused by the changes in the diet are standardization of food, unfavorable change in the attitudes toward the diet, worse health caused by loss of nutrient balance, and decrease of food self-sufficiency ratio. Next, I would like to consider the relationship between these problems. Changes in the diet began from the food support by the U.S after WWII, and this enabled Westernization represented by bread and milk to start. Because what was provided was flours and skim milk, this naturally led to the Westernization of the diet, and caused the separation between food and agriculture. It is well known that because the U.S would like to release surplus food products, the U.S chose this strategy as a form of support. As recovery after WWII and rapid economic growth started, consumption of animal products and oils and fats has increased, and Westernization of the diet has made progress. At the same time, trends toward eating out made Westernization of the diet more rampant and standardized. As this standardization and diversification of the diet has gone further, commercialization of the diet also caused the trend toward eating out, which caused the loss of taste of foods at home. This loss led to other losses of the eating habit and culture in the countryside. These situations connected with each other caused changes in action and attitude toward the diet and worse health from loss of nutrient balance. Those also caused low self-sufficiency ratio that came from dependence on more than half of food from foreign countries, especially the U.S, and it was commercialization, liberalization, and globalization that has accelerated these trends.

A basic necessary condition to review the eating habits

Immediate causes of changes in the diet are standardization, commercialization, and eating
out. It is expected to change the eating out habit, to recover the eating culture, to improve health, and to activate local agriculture, by reviewing and changing those causes. To achieve that, at first, it is important to work on shrinking the distance between diet and agriculture, which are already separated. First of all, we have to cook and eat food we can get nearby. In short, it is necessary to improve self-sufficiency ratio at home and in the countryside, and for that purpose, we also need to promote the movement to increase the self-sufficiency ratio of respective farmhouses and to promote production and local consumption. It is fresh, safe and reliable to use food nearby, and basically, since we can eat in season, it is also healthy. Moreover, there are traditional ways to cook, therefore it means taking over the traditional diet. Secondly, as far as standardization of diets is concerned, there is inferiority complex about Japanese diet and agriculture. It is important to review the eating habit, to re-recognize the importance of food at home, and to promote health-highlighted food while getting rid of that complex. For that purpose, a dietary education has important roles, which let people understand the way the diet ought to be and learn about food through hands-on learning like farmwork and learning how to cook. A dietary education is needed to help change people's lives. Particularly in childhood when the sense of taste is formed, children are able to recognize traditional taste. It is important to conduct a dietary education starting from early childhood. Thirdly, though review of the diet cannot be separated from improvement in self-sufficiency ratio and usage of the local foodstuff, it is unavoidable that price of the local foodstuff goes up, as commercialization, liberalization, and globalization have made progress. It is also important to understand that local foodstuffs have different features from imported food, match traditional diets, and contain scenery because local foodstuffs have a multifunctional effect on local agriculture. Furthermore, it is essential to earn the trust of consumers who support local foodstuffs, even if these foodstuffs are more expensive.

I would like to introduce concrete action of recovery of the eating habit. To begin with, I will introduce the national policy, the state of movement all over Japan and actions of agricultural cooperatives.

National policy

*The Food, Agriculture and Rural Area Basic Act*

In 1999, to adjust big changes in Japanese agriculture, the Food, Agriculture and Rural Area Basic Act was established and enforced, instead of the Agricultural Basic Act which was established in 1961. The feature of that law is to define the accurate meaning of food consumption and habit. That article 16-2 says “National government must make a guideline about healthy food, spread knowledge of food consumption, offer accurate information and conduct any other measure necessary, to contribute to the improvement of food consumption and effective utilization of agricultural resources.” This purpose would be promoted systematically by “The Food, Agriculture and Rural Area Basic Plan.”

**Dietary education**

April 2005, Dietary Education Basic Law was enforced, and this law’s aim is “to educate those who learn the knowledge about the diet and the ability to select the proper diet, and can act a healthy dietary life”. Dietary Education Basic Law shows the basic ideal concerns of dietary education like the following sentences:

- The improvement of national health in body and mind, and the formation of a fertile mind;
- Understanding the thankful mind to diet;
- The expansion of promotion on dietary education;
- The definition of the role of guardians, concern in the education and anything in children’s dietary education;
- The experience of the diet and practice of promotion of the dietary education;
- The consideration of traditional eating culture and environmentally friendly production and contribution to activation of farming, mountain and fishing villages;
- The role of dietary education in reservation of the safety of food. In promoting this dietary education, relevant ministries and agencies cooperate, and it is assumed that it will develop synthetically, and the following measures are discussed at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries;
- Promotion of ”Japanese-style dietary patterns” centering rice;
- Information dissemination to the people about food self-sufficiency ratio;
- Promotion of the experience activities about agriculture-and-forestry fishing;
- Promotion of local supply and local
consumption;
- Promotion of control of food waste, reuse, etc.;
- Promotion of various information dissemination about food.

A dietary guideline, a diet balance guide

In order to aim for the improvement of national health, and the quality of life, and reservation of a stable supply of food, the old "dietary guideline for the production of health" was improved, and it has been decided to use the "dietary guideline" in 2000. The following 10 articles are raised as indicators:
- Let’s enjoy a meal;
- The balance of the meal based on the staple food, a main dish and a vegetable;
- Cereals, such as boiled rice;
- Combine vegetables and fruit, milk and dairy products, legumes, a fish, etc.;
- Salt and fat are to be consumed moderately;
- The amount of meals should be proportional to your optimal weight and balanced daily activities;
- Harness the product of gastronomic culture or the area and, occasionally it is also a new dish;
- Make cooking and preservation skillful;
- Let's improve our eating habits.

The measure of spread and enlightenment of "dietary patterns in Japan" centering on rice is promoted through a "dietary guideline" and a "diet balance guide."

Food action Nippon

In 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries started "the national movement promotion enterprise towards the improvement of a food self-sufficiency ratio". It also established the "FOOD ACTION NIPPON head office" as an organization. It aims to even agricultural output to circulation and processing, and consumers to become a national body. It tackled production and consumption, rise of domestic agricultural products from a farming forestry fishing village to a city, towards the improvement of a food sufficiency. A farm worker group, a maker, a distributor, the food service industry, household appliance industry, a local government, and so on make a "promotion partner" organization and the organization related to food. Five actions for the improvement in a food self-sufficiency ratio set up here are as follows:
- Let's eat a thing with now "in season;"
- Let's harness the foods which can be taken locally in a daily meal;
- Focus on boiled rice, let's keep the good meal of the balance fully using vegetables in mind;
- Let's reduce a leftover food;
- Let's get to know, try and aid various measures which are aimed at improving the self-sufficiency ratio.

Local supply and local consumption and sixth industry

"Local supply and local consumption" says the measure which is going to consume agricultural products produced regionally, and it aims at improving food self-sufficiency ratio by "the sixth industrialization" (collaboration of primary, secondary and tertiary industries) of agriculture through measuring the sale and processing of an outlet. Local supply and local consumption are clearly positioned in food, agriculture, and a farm village plan as one of "the strengthening of connection between food and agriculture", and in 2010, will enact the "sixth industrializing method." It was decided that a country supported and promoted this. In the "sixth industrial method", the following items are raised as basic philosophy.
- Strengthening of connection with a producer and consumers;
- Activation of the area by advancement of agriculture-and-forestry fishing of the area, and associated business;
- Realization of consumers' rich eating habits
- The promotion of food education;
- The promotion of the symbiosis of a farming mountain fishing village;
- Contribution to improvement of a food self-sufficiency;
- Contribution to reduction of environmental load;
- Promotion of social consciousness in the area.

In addition, the basic policy was hammered out about local supply and local consumption in March, 2011, and the following three targets were specified.
- The annual sales total of an outlet will make the rate of 100 million yen not less than 50% by the 2020 fiscal year (16% in the 2006 fiscal year);
- The rate which uses professional agricultural products in a school lunch will be made into not less than 30% by the 2015 fiscal year;
- The number of annual total lodgers of the
institution for green tourism, such as a farmhouse tourist home, will be made into 10.5 million people by the 2020 fiscal year.

Concrete measure (an example and a measure situation)

The present condition of an outlet

An agricultural-products outlet (the place or institution established in order to meet consumers directly) serves as those with 16,816 places in the whole country, and the annual sales amount is about 880 billion yen. While an outlet with less than 10 million yen of total annual sales is considered small-scale has more than half, an agricultural cooperative association earning over 100 million yen, is also considered average.

Green farm

Ina, in the south-intermediate and mountainous area in Nagano Prefecture, was made to start an outlet in 1994 with an eye for a private sector carrying out "offering direct agricultural products being cheap and fresh and safe to consumers". Being able to extend the counter which was about 200m² at the beginning even to 1330m², the sender who was at the time of the start-up amounts to 1600 persons now. There are many small-scale and part-time farm households among senders, and many people who retired from being salaried workers returned to farming. There are about 500,000 people, who make the annual number of customers with more than 3000 visitors per day. Although considered small-scale, there are many farmhouses which produce a wide variety of limited amounts of products taking advantage of the local characteristic in this area.

Although sales in a green farm supports agriculture in the intermediate and mountainous areas, a very big contribution is achieved.

Secondly, another activity concerns not only with sales of agricultural products but also with the cultural life of the area. There are vegetables, flowering plants, and livestock products. Also, there are furniture, etc. which came out when grandmas' handmade processed goods and a house were pulled down. Moreover, a bookstore is located in one corner of the second floor where, many local bookstores are arranged, and the children-oriented books are also substantial. It has played a large role in advancing local culture, and contributes to children's education in the area.

Thirdly, it is a place where encounters between consumers and a producer take place, where dialogues lead to more networking in the area.

Fourthly, while publishing monthly paper "direct-delivery-from-the-farm newspaper" extracted to the information in Nagano, involving in Shinshu University, a local University, Nagano Prefecture, etc. and holding an every year "Nagano direct delivery from the farm and direct-sales summit", the direct delivery from the farm by "cooperation of Agriculture and Public, and study" is promoted, and it has become a tool for information dissemination and a core of inter-regional association.

The food cultural festival of the Miyazaki town, Miyagi

Miyazaki town is located in the intermediate and mountainous area approximately one hour and a half in the north in Sendai, which is the prefectural capital. The number of households is 1500 and there is a population of 6500.

Although the center of agricultural products is focused on rice, various agricultural products are made from the ground between the intermediate and mountainous areas. The commerce-and-industry meeting of the Miyazaki town started specialty development work, the committee on commercialization of local resources started, and examination has been performed in 1998. Rice cakes were initially cooked by the female members of the committee, which later on, was also handled by the male members, especially with the introduction of vacuum packing. After that, the home cooking of no less than 800 people gathering in such a place, and 10,000 or more persons attending the gymnasium made it into the hall. The Miyazaki townsman was surprised. Although the food cultural festival was held seven times in four-years, while 2500 kinds of recipes are gathered and are put into the collection of recipes, it has been accumulated as research data. Based on this, a "specialty city" is prepared into an outlet, and the newly made rice cake was used for take out during a weekend in the town center. While inviting the people who came from outside to taste a sample of the dish, local people felt that a traditional dish which is familiar to them should be part of a research study. Although Miyazaki town merged with two neighboring towns after that, and became known as Kami town, the food cultural festival stopped for a while and, in connection with this, the cultural food festival is resumed as a part of a synthetic event, and the agricultural cooperative association of women
joined the executive committee. The cultural food festival spread in various places, and has played the precious road to the excavation of home cooking, and rediscovery of its local culture. The cultural of food festival has played the role with a major lead, or advice of Mr. Tomio Yuki who is a folk-customs investigator.

**Green paper lantern**

A green paper lantern is a movement that an NPO Green Techno Bank started in the spring of 2005. It is a movement whose members hang up a green paper lantern using agricultural food products over the store. With a recorded self-sufficiency ratio of more than 50% in the calorie base of the store, is one star to a paper lantern. The number of stellar increases by unit (10%), and it becomes five stars at more than 90%. Although the first green paper lantern is presently hung up (and is the 6th year in Otaru, Hokkaido), the green paper lantern is hung up in over 3000 stores all over the whole country.

**Ginza honey bee project**

While the Ginza honeybee project is a name of an NPO, it is also a project which performs apiculture in Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo. In March 2006, local supply and local consumption is managed by taking the structure which is what started apiculture and sweets, on the roof of the paper pulp hall in Ginza using extracted honey. By tradition, honey cannot be bought if it does not come from Ginza."Although honey has been assembled at the beginning from the flowering trees and shrubs in the Imperial Palace, Hibiya Park, and so on, around Ginza, the planted tree on the roof of the building may be changed to flowers, vegetables, and also rice from which honey can be collected. After that, The "roof plantation" located in connection with this on the roof of the building in Ginza is expanded.

Work is done not only by a plantation administrator but by a Mama, a female master of the bar, who is a member of the Ginza honeybee project and a member of a Ginza social drinkers association. There are employees, and also disabled persons who join the group. In parallel to the measure of such local supply and local consumption, the study meeting about food, agriculture, and environment also continues. The opening of the gathering, basically tackles the direct-sales, agricultural products, or processed goods and local culinary specialties. Furthermore, such activity is used as a base, "a Nouentai", where in an agriculture support party is organized in the Ginza, and agricultural support in rural areas and exchange are also performed. Such measure in Ginza is spreading to the cities of Hokkaido, Morioka, Sendai, Yokohama, and Oita, not to mention the areas of inner Tokyo.

**Agricultural cooperative association system**

**Everybody's good food project**

In 2008, the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (following "JA ZENCHU") started the "everybody's good food project" with an eye for measuring the expanding demand of safe and delicious domestic farming and animal products. A producer, an agricultural cooperative association (following "JA"), and consumers were involved in the project.

It is the proposal of "good eating habits" to measure, and 1) start good eating habits based on boiled rice with a whole family; 2) "Good food" is from breakfast; 3) Make "handmade meals", and when these three things are mentioned, it is also proposed: 1) Device a recipe unique to a place of production; 2) Prepare a meal with your children; 3) Learn traditional food from a grandmother.

**JA farmer's market charter**

JA ZENCHU defines the five meaning of "JA farmer's market" which is a direct delivery from the farm institution by JA; 1) improvement in the farm income by various farmers' participation, and regional agriculture promotion; 2) The income-and-outgo improvement of JA as an important agricultural-products sales channel of JA; 3) The placement of base of local activation; 4) Offer of "motivation and the definite aim in life" to producer; 5) By cooperation with the processing and tourism sectors industrialization is possible. And JA ZENCHU has enacted JA farmer's market charter in 2003 in order to promote local supply and local consumption powerfully with the national JA local supply and local consumption conference. The seven following measures are raised as a management indicators:

- Aim at the abundant products offered which catch consumer needs;
- Raise a professional production ratio aiming at establishment of an anniversary fixture and anniversary shipment organization;
- Perform production, shipment, and a price setup by a sender's self-responsibility;
- Put quality control into practice and offer fresh, and safe agricultural products;
- Offer the information about regional agriculture and agricultural products positively;
- Prioritize safety of food and sending relief to consumers;
- Discourage promotion of imported agricultural products.

Concrete measure

The present condition of JA farmer's market

If the present condition of the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives Group as of April 1, 2010 is seen, the measure of JA forms 527 or 72% of its totality. Although the number of institutions is 2066, it is 1496 that 570 and JA are managing in what the partner is managing. Although sales amount to 251.6 billion yen and the growth of the number of installation has become slow as of latest trend, the tendency of expansion of a store is remarkable.

JA Aglitown and Cheerful countryside

JA Aglitown and Cheerful countryside is a compound base institution centering on the outlet which is suited and installed by JA Aichi Chita, the annual turnovers in the 2009 fiscal year of an outlet are 2,400 million yen and the greatest outlet in Japan, and 634 persons are shipping them to the outlet. Although JA Aglitown and Cheerful countryside are in the suburbs in Nagoya and were established in 2000, they are prepared as a compound base institution which consists not only of the outlet of professional agricultural products, but a processing sales institution, a farm village restaurant, a hot spring, and an agricultural training institute as well. Not only do people consider themselves shoppers from the neighborhood but they also play the role of tourists who do sightseeing. Based on figures, the annual number of visitors exceeds two million people. The processing sales institution sell handmade daily dishes, pickles, rice bread, ice cream, and so on. These products utilize local agricultural products, and it unites with an outlet, and the production rise of professional agricultural products, improvement of agricultural income, reservation of a successor and a new-entrants-to-agriculture person, creation of employment, etc. greatly contribute to regional vitalization and regional agricultural promotion.

JA Ohita Oyama town and a wooden flower garden

Oyama town's admission merger is carried out in Hita in 2005, and this is located in between the mountainous area of western Oita prefecture. NPC (New Plum and Chestnut) movement started in 1961. This movement grows plums and chestnuts with high profitability taking advantage of the geographical characteristics of an area which is unsuitable for land rice cultivation. The group also processes the products into pickled plum and so on, and engages in value-adding activities. The catchphrase they use is "Let's go to Hawaii by planting a pickled plum". It contributed to the improvement of farmhouse, and the Oyama town turned into a place where residents' passport possession rate is the highest in the whole country. This movement is well-known as the starting point of the one-village, one-specialty economic movement. Then, the restaurant "wooden flower garden" of the smorgasbord using the organic crops from locals is opened in 2000. From 70 to 80 kinds of dishes using the seasonal vegetables and wild grass which were able taken at the time are located in line, and the table with 130 seats are always full during lunchtime. It is the housewives living in the neighborhood who are taking charge of cooking and who also know how to eat the most delicious foods of the season. With public relations out of the area, they contribute to promoting and activating regional agriculture which also includes traditional as well as organic agriculture.

JA Hanamaki and mother's house Daasuko

JA Hanamaki is in the paddy field single-crop area of the Iwate prefecture central part. In JA Hanamaki, although the females are into the kitchen garden movement, which aims at multi-item sale in small quantities, the outlet "Mother’s House Daasuko" was established in 1997. On the basis of independent activity of females, management of the consumer participation type which leads to the exchange of goods with consumers has been developed. The sales in 2009 amounted to 840 million yen, and there are 330 members (250 of whom are women). They are about 65 years old of average age. Although it was a paddy field single-crop area, that act has had some of the following effects; 1) with females taking care of the activities they realized that there should be
anniversary cultivation and shipment of vegetables.  
2) Acquired self-responsibility and management. 3) 
There is added value given to agricultural products 
by utilizing the work and the traditional dish which 
the women of farmhouse have cultivated for many 
years. Furthermore, female social participation has 
been greatly encouraged.

**JA Nikaho Self-provided Action**

Nikaho town is located near the Sea of Japan side 
of southern Akita prefecture, where a factory stands 
with high economic growth, and subsidiary business 
advanced. As subsidiary business progressed, the 
agricultural products from farmhouse purchases 
increased in number. JA, which started in 1970, 
tried to support the consumption of agricultural 
products which eventually led to bringing about 
"true affluence." "200 thousand yen self-support 
movement" was developed in 1974, and "400 
thousand yen self-support movement" was 
developed in 1975, so did "500 thousand yen 
self-support movement" in 1978. It has spread 
production and not only self-support of agricultural 
products but handmade agricultural production 
processed goods including bean paste or tofu. With 
such progress, it also launched an organic farming 
study group in JA and worked not only for self- 
support but for quality improvement. Such self- 
support movement captured the spotlight from the 
whole country, and JA, which tackles self-support 
movement, also developed well.

**CONCLUSION**

As the above examples have shown, the national 
government and Japan's Agriculture Cooperative 
group has demonstrated remarkable power into 
local supply and local consumption and re- 
examination of food. However, the level of the 
whole spot has improved greatly. The present 
condition is difficult to spread around, though a 
superior example exists as a point. I would like to 
point out some fundamental problems in the present 
condition. First, the sense of values and action to 
food of people and consumers are diversified, a 
sense of crisis to the problem regarding eating 
habits, and the intention of giving priority to 
budget prices is getting strong. Second, sales 
increase of local supply and agricultural products 
is also becoming an important issue. However, 
since priority is given to higher sales, and sales 
competition of outlets is intensifying, there is a 
gap between commercialization and preservation 
of local food culture. Third, although national 
government makes the biggest task of improving 
food self-sufficiency ratio and direct attention to 
protecting its own national agriculture against the 
WTO organization and securing the security of 
food, the compatibility of the policy which balances 
getting more profits versus promoting traditional 
food culture is getting blurred. This also holds 
weight to the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives 
Group. In order to solve such problems, there is 
a need to change viewpoints and management 
methods radically. Moreover, there should be 
dietary education and guidelines which needs to be 
consistently evaluated and promoted.

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