

Engaging with Academia and Research Institutions (ARIs) to support Family Farmers and Food System Transformation During and Post COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia



With technical assistance from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Establishment of the Association of Western Japan Agroecology:

Based on reflection of the history of the '*Teikei*',
Direct Partnership between Producers and Consumers, in Japan

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Today's Topics

1. Foreword movement

Mission and Action Plan of the Association of Western Japan
Agroecology (AWJA)

2. Historical consideration

To look back the history of Japanese organic farming, and
To examine what we can learn from the experiences of '*Teikei*'

Introduction

Backgrounds of Today's Speech

Agroecology: Wide diffusion in the world, yet less known in Japan

The AWJA is the first active Agroecology group, established in May 2021.

However, long experiences of '*Teikei*' initiative, close contact between organic farmers and consumers → Currently, '*Teikei*' is stagnant and likely to disappear

Purposes:

1. To summarize history of '*Teikei*' to know the lessons from the experiences
Crucial reasons for decline in dynamism of organic agriculture
2. To consider if Agroecology can realize the philosophy of '*Teikei*'
3. To announce the founding of the AWJA for networking with organizations with the same mission (especially in Asia)

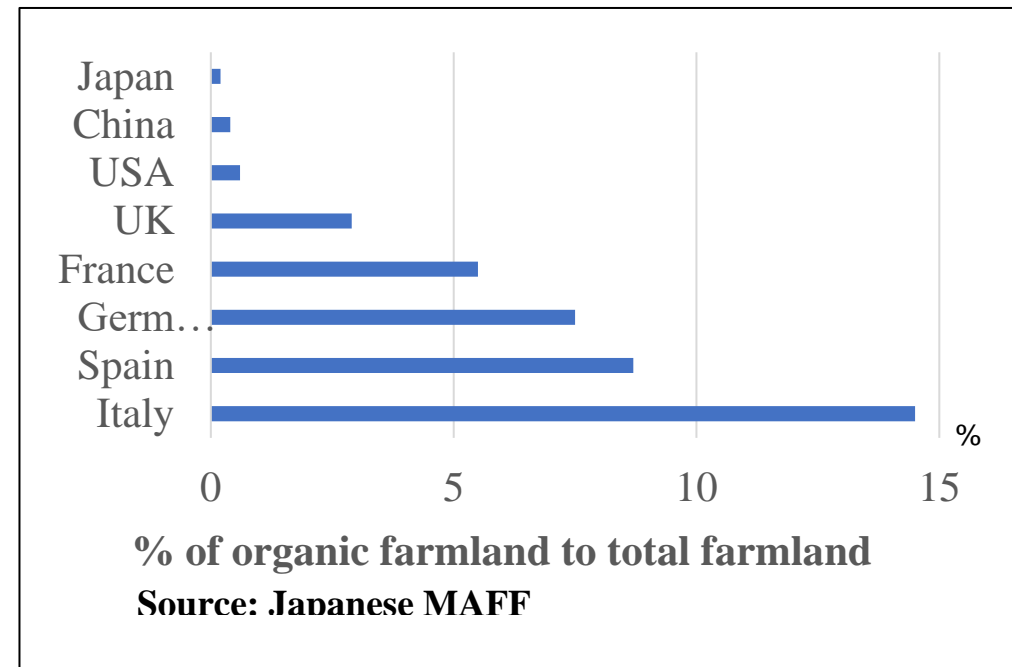
Establishment of the AWJA

☆Backgrounds

- Necessity of transforming industrial agri-food system
Climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and socio-cultural diversity loss, COVID-19 pandemic
- Agroecology can be a powerful solution
- Slump of organic produce market in Japan
- Organic farmland is less than 0.3 % of total one.



Agroecology can break through such difficulty!



Mission of the AWJA

Agroecology: a framework that integrates agricultural practice, sciences, and social movement (Rosset and Altieri, 2017)

Goal: to release food and the rights to the food from the yoke of industrial agri-food systems and to realize the society cherish life. (van der Ploueg, 2009 [2008])

- Practice : from industrial agriculture to an intrinsic one, which follows the ecosystem
- Sciences: variety of natural sciences and social ones to redesign sustainable agriculture, considering diversities of each region
- Movement: to transform agri-food systems at the grass root level by local innovation, focusing on social justice and sustainability

Technological Aspect of Agroecology

Essential understanding: to draw out the power of creatures in the interdependent relationship between plants and animals, that is ecosystems

To collect examples

Mixed and inter-cropping instead of monoculture

Coupling with animal husbandry

Reduction of the dependence on external resources

→ Material and Economic circulations within farm and community

→ Multiple use of regional resources

Steps to the AWJA

1974: Start of typical '*Teikei*' relationship in the Western Japan

'Hyo-Yu-Ken' (Hyogo Prefectural Organic Farmers Group)

I-turner migrants + Converts from conventional agriculture

'Motomeru-Kai' (Consumers group seeking for safe foods not contaminated ones)

2014: Division of 'Hyo-Yu-Ken' Opinion difference on certification/labeling system

2020 Decision to dissolve consumers group Decrease in members and aging

May 2021: Birth of to the AWJA

Former 'Hyo-Yu-Ken' and members of consumers group, consumers' cooperative, logistics provider, Researchers etc.

Tentative actions

1) to summarize the half-century of '*Teikei*', and the half-century of organic farming, natural farming, and alternative farming practices

→ Application the lessons to agroecology

2) to analyze current agri-food systems by SAFA (Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems)

3) To collect and list knowledge and skills related to agroecology, and to use them as a database or inventory. To combine individual knowledge and technologies to create a framework for Japanese style agroecology

4) To create and support local agri-food

Most products should be seasonal with less energy use

Review of the Process of Organic Agriculture

1. Beginning: Founding of the Japan Organic Agriculture Association, in 1971

Consisted of farmers, consumers, synergists, doctors, researchers

Basic philosophy: Intention to switch modernized agriculture into an intrinsic one

‘To "return" and "search" for the ideal farming method by radically reflecting on the conventional farming method’. (Ichiraku, 2009)

To depend on nature force

2. Ten Principles of *‘Teikei’*

(i) mutual assistance, (ii) intended production, (iii) accepting all the produce,
(iv) mutual concession in the price decision, (v) deepening friendly relationships,
(vi) self-distribution, (vii) democratic management, (viii) learning among each group,
(ix) maintaining the appropriate group’s scale, (x) steady development

Review of the Process of Organic Agriculture

3. 'Boom' for 'organic' produce Growth of 'organic' market

Perversion of organic farming and rampant false labeling
→

4. Institutionalization

1992: Voluntary guideline of certification and labeling

2000: Japan Agricultural Standard for Organic Products (Organic JAS)

2006: Organic Agriculture Promotion Act (OAPA)

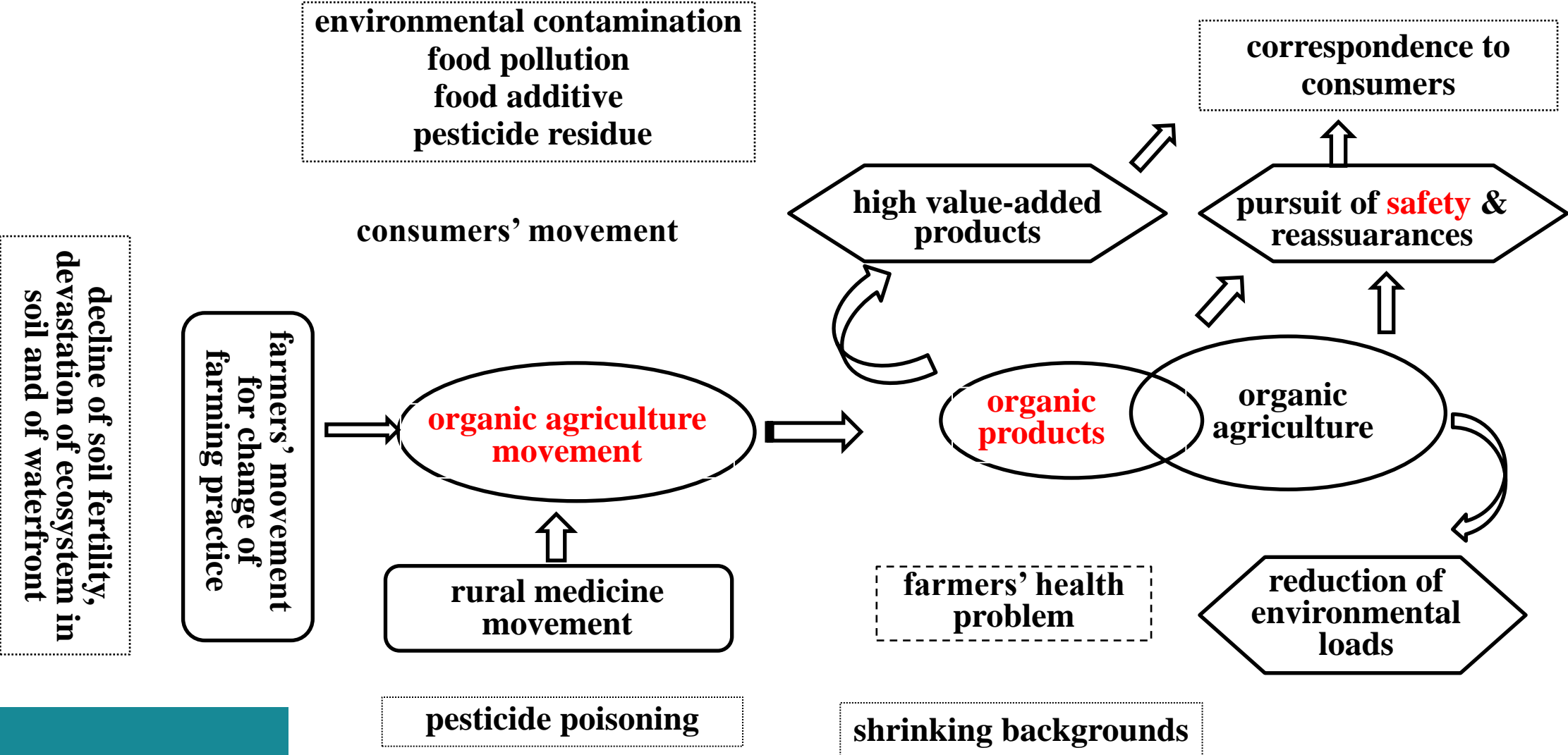
5. Diversification of marketing circuits

'Teikei' → special logistics providers, natural food shops, department stores

→ online-sales, direct sales, farmers markets, super-market chains

→ Food to commodities with high value-added, Anywhere and Anytime

Process of organic agriculture movements in Japan



Review of the Process of Organic Agriculture

Momentum at the initial stage:

Joint force of three aspects of consumers movements, farmers' will to shift farming methods, and the rural medicine movement

Currently,

Momentum: just 'safeties' on the context of consumption with high added value
just decrease in environmental loads on the context of policy

**Simplification of viewpoints to either economy or environment
Loss of social movements and intrinsic purpose**

Reason why decline of 'Teikei'

Peak of '*Teikei*' in the 1990s

'Teikei' lost its influential power in the 21st century

Why?

Internal factors: Aging of both organic farmers and consumers

Few entries of new members

Gaps between Ten Principles and actual situation, based on 'Housewife Model'

External factors: Variable 'organic markets' including imported organic produce

Superficial understanding about organic agriculture

Conclusion

Institutionalization: Result of organic agricultural movement

Yet, contradictory aspects

- Acceleration of the simple understanding about organic agriculture
 - Just farming method that does not use pesticides or chemical fertilizers
- Significance of intrinsic organic agriculture has been lost

Less concern for the functioning of ecosystems and the conservation of biodiversity

Polarization of organic farmers

Business-oriented organic **farmers**: Monoculture depending external inputs
Intrinsic organic family farmers with small and medium size

What are the meanings of organic agriculture?

Conclusion

☆ Revitalization of '*Teikei*' and further promotion of intrinsic organic agriculture

Involvement of the younger generation is essential

Young people entering the movement decreased as the social aspect of the organic agriculture movement becomes smaller.

Currently, the younger generation is more interested in environmental issues, such as the climate crisis and bio-diversity loss, and social issues such as inequality and human rights.

As agroecology encompasses such issues, the AWJA will approach from this perspective.

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