Local Food Movement in Japan: Rethinking Alternativeness

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Outline

1. An Overview of Japanese Agriculture
   - Declining and deteriorating sector
   - Political economic climate surrounding the sector
     - Failure (?) of structural policy
     - Neo-liberal turn of agricultural policy (deregulation and budget cut)
     - Liberalization of agricultural trade under the WTO regime

2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives
   - Alternative “quality”
     - Organic, Fairtrade, Ethical Sourcing/Marketing...
   - Alternative “place”
     - Local agri-food networks (Teikei/Sanchoku, Chisan-Chisho, Soybean Trust, Traditional food, Local brand marketing, etc.)

3. Conclusion: What Alternativeness?

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1. Japanese agriculture

- Japanese agriculture rapidly declining and deteriorating
  - Scarcity of arable land in a long term decreasing trend
    - 4.61m ha in 2009, 14% decrease since 1985, 24% decrease since 1961
  - Small farm sizes
    - 1.4ha excluding Hokkaido (20.5ha) in 2009
    - 1.9ha including Hokkaido in 2005 → 2.2ha in 2010
  - Low wages and falling agricultural incomes
    - Avg. ag wage for male = 62% of national avg. industry wage in 2005
    - Earnings from ag = 23% of total farm household income in 2008
  - Part-time and aging farmers in a sharp increase trend
    - Commercial farm households with full-time farmers under 65 = 20%
    - Commercial farmers aged 65 or over = 61% in 2005
  - Lack of agricultural successors
    - Commercial farmers with successors fully/mainly in ag = 6.8% in 2005
  - Increase of abandoned cultivated land areas – 400,000ha in 2010

S. Hisano, Political Economy of Agriculture, Kyoto University, 2010
1. Japanese agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Downward Trend of Japanese Agricultural Sector</th>
<th>(10000ha, 10000, %)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arable land</td>
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<td></td>
<td>600</td>
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<td>-7.2</td>
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<td>Abandoned land</td>
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<td>Nr. of farm households</td>
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<td>Nr. of farmers</td>
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<td>65 or over</td>
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Note: Data of arable land and number of core farmers are available for 2009. Numbers of farmers and core farmers are only for commercial farm households since 1985.
1. Japanese agriculture

- Political economic climate surrounding the agricultural sector
  - Trade liberalisation pressures from the U.S. and WTO
  - Deregulation pressures from the mainstream business sector
  - Diminishing role of the government sector

- Milestones
  - 1982-87: Nakasone cabinet → neo-liberal turn
  - 1985: Plaza Accord → rapid revaluation of JPY
  - 1988-91: Trade liberalisation of beef, orange, processed cheese, etc.
  - 1999: New Basic Law on Agriculture → selective measures
  - 2001-06: Koizumi cabinet → neo-liberal drive
  - 2007: Direct payment system → mainly targeted at core farmers
  - 2009: End of LDP rule → Where DPJ rule is heading for?
  - 2010-: Extensive Direct Payment System to support farm households
  - 2011??: Join in TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) ...???
1. Japanese agriculture

- Growing concerns about agri-food and rural resource issues
  - **Food security**
    - Fall of food self-sufficiency ratio = 40% on a calorie basis / grains = 26% on a weight basis in 2009 (cf. 73% / 62% in 1965)
    - But, 2007/08 World Food Crisis was not enough for Japanese consumers to realise the importance of food security...
  - **Food safety**
    - Consumers concerns about safety of imported food (1980s~)
    - Especially in recent years, due to those imported from U.S. and China
    - Vis-à-vis high quality (not necessarily safe) food produced domestically
  - **Rural local economy, resources, and community**
    - Rural-urban divide ↔ impoverishment (not necessarily in terms of economic income) of rural communities
    - Loss of multifunctionality of agriculture (including rural landscape and culture as well as water resource nurturing)

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2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (1) Quality

- Organic farming (有機農業)
  - Largely originated in the sansho-teikei (producer-consumer collaboration) movements, beginning in 1960s and 70s
  - Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA) founded in 1971
    - At its peak in 1983 in terms of JOAA membership
  - Third-party distributors arose in 1980s, contributing to the development of organic market
    - But at the expense of direct link between and mutual commitment of producers and consumers
  - Introduction of JAS organic standard in 2001, enabling the food services and retail sector to tap into the growing organic market
    - Not necessarily sourcing organic products domestically
    - Certified area (2009)= 8,595 ha or 0.19% of total cultivated area
    - Certified output (2008)= Domestic 55,925t or 0.18% of total domestic output (33,755t in 2001) / Imported 2,001,584t (94,186t in 2001)

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2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (1) Quality

- **Fairtrade**
  - Started with *teikei-style movement* (eg. Negros Campaign since 1986, Alter Trade Japan since 1987)

- **Ethical marketing (ethical sourcing)**
  - Social and environmental standards and certification scheme
    - ISO, GlobalGAP, SA8000, etc.
    - Responsible Soybeans, Responsible Sugarcane, Sustainable Tea, etc.
      - (⇒ Hisano 2008; Sekine, Boutonnet & Hisano 2008)
  - Not very popular in Japan
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (1) Quality

- Concerns over alternative “quality”
  - Conventionalisation of organic farming (Jordan 2010)
    - Increasing incentives for producers to be organic
    - Increasing opportunities for consumers to purchase organic products
    - But, likely to be exploited by mainstream actors...
  - Mainstreaming of fairtrade and ethical marketing (Hisano 2010)
    - Increasing opportunities for producers to be supported by consumers while going socially and environmentally sustainable
    - Increasing opportunities for consumers to purchase ethical products
    - But, likely to be exploited by mainstream actors...
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- Sansho-teikei (産消提携)
  - Evolved hand-in-hand with organic farming since 1960s/1970s
  - Active and direct involvement and mutual commitment of both consumers and producers within a certain vicinity
  - Gradually replaced by the third-party distributors and mainstream retailers who provide consumers with organic products

- Sanchoku movement (産直運動)
  - Started in 1960s/1970s, initially led by consumers co-ops and agricultural co-ops (JAs) in collaboration
  - Ex. Kyoto Consumers Co-op + Daisen Dairy Co-op, JAs in Tango region (Northern Kyoto), Kyoto Fisheries Co-op, etc.
  - Farmers’ associations (unions → Japan Family Farmers Movement or 農民連, founded in 1989) have launched Sanchoku Centres since 1980s + New Japan Women’s Association (新日本婦人の会)
  - Also addressing social justice and political issues...
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- **Chisan-chisho movement** (地産地消)
  - Locally produced (地場生産), locally consumed (地場消費)
  - Emerged in 1990s to address the “failure of the modern food system” by promoting the localisation of food consumption
    - Partially influenced by an old saying “身土不二”
    - But, largely aimed to revitalise local agriculture quickly taken up by local/national governments and JAs (rather than NGO/NPOs)
    - National Chisan-chisho Promotion Council/Forum since 2006

- Various types
  - Farmers’ market / direct sales outlet (直売所、道の駅、里の駅)
  - Promotion of local food in school lunches and food education
  - Green Lantern (緑提灯) voluntary scheme
  - Teikei (CSA) style movement
  - Not (or less) addressing safety/environmental issues, social justice issues, and political issues, with some exceptions
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry Partnerships (農商工連携)
  - METI, MAFF, etc.
  - Local-level partnerships...expected to make a ripple effect of investment and economic activities within the local
  - Various stakeholders
    - Local government, JA, community banks, SME, producers (agriculture, fishery, forestry), universities, research centres, etc.

- Sixth-order Industrialisation (6次産業化)
  - MAFF
  - Farmers are encouraged to add/change values
  - From just producing to processing, marketing, and linking their resources with various services
  - With support from other stakeholders

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2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- **Soybean Trust Movement (大豆畑トラスト運動)**
  - Launched in 1998 by Japan Consumers Federation (日本消費者連盟) and its division of No! GMO Campaign
  - Started with 15 farmers’ groups in 9 prefectures and about 1,000 teikei consumers → rapidly increased to the peak of 57 farmers’ groups in 2000 and 6,000 teikei consumers in 1999

- **Backgrounds of the movement**
  - Soybeans as a key ingredient of Japanese diet, but self-sufficient ratio dropped to 2-3% (6% in 2008, and if limited to food consumption 21%)
  - Concerns about the safety of imported GMO soybeans
  - Concerns about the loss of diversity of soybeans and soy-foods
  - To make use of increasing set-aside paddy fields and abandoned fields

- **Some consequences**
  - Mainstreaming of the use of domestically grown soybeans (国産大豆) for Natto, Tofu, and other soy-food products, while imported organic or non-GMO soybeans are also popular ➙ also promoted by MAFF

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2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- Traditional Food movement (日本の伝統食を考える会)
  - Established in 1981, with 22 members in Osaka
  - Initially aimed at rediscovery and reevaluation of Japanese traditional diet
  - Launched the “Traditional Diet Train Campaign” in 1992, to travel to a particular region of Japan every year to promote Japanese diet
  - As a countermeasure against the “American Train Campaign” (1989-1990) sponsored by U.S. interests aimed at promoting food exports to Japan
  - Symposia on various topics such as WTO, food safety, school lunch, food and poverty, etc.
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- Local brand marketing
  - Old practices of trademarks, brands, seals of approval and certifications become central to supply chains of all kinds including local food networks...
  - Local traditional vegetables
    - ex. Kyoto traditional vegetables or Kyo-yasai and Nara traditional vegetables or Yamato-yasai ( Ikejima & Hisano 2008; Imaizumi & Hisano 2010)
  - Geographical Indication
    - ex. Kobe Beef and Matsusaka Beef ( Sekine 2010)
  - Endogenous development can be enhanced by linking products to places (locality), but at the same time could be re-embedded in the conventional agri-food networks (as seen in the case of organic and fairtrade “quality” products)
2. Emerging Alternative Initiatives (2) Place/Locality

- Concerns over alternative place (locality)
  - Initiated by social movements → gradually or quickly taken up by local/national governments and mainstream actors especially WHEN the locality is translated into an added value of products through labelling/brand marketing strategy
  - Sometimes controversial role of JAs and local elite actors = less oriented to social justice and policy issues
  - At the same time, without the involvement of local/national governments, JAs, and some businesses, alternative initiatives would be left marginal
Some critiques

- **DuPuis & Goodman (2005)** challenge the ‘normative’ conceptualisation of localism, calling instead for a ‘reflexive localism’ that recognise potentially differential incorporation of social class into local food networks.

- **Maye & Kirwan (2010)** “(A)gri-food scholars are now becoming more sensitive to the dangers of falling into the ‘local food trap’, wherein ‘local’ is uncritically accepted as being ‘good’.”

- **Hirata & Nishiyama (2008)** “Chisan-chisho’s popularity has shown that there is a shared sense by government, JAC, and NGOs that there is something wrong with the current food system. This evaluation of the current food system is a starting point, but analysis needs to go further into policy issues. Social, economic, and environmental disadvantages and shortcomings of the food system need to be considered in a holistic manner.”
Discussions and Conclusion

- The role expected of academic researchers?
  - Maye & Kirwan (2010) “on the one hand, there are academics and activists who advocate a ‘pragmatic’ agenda, working both with and within the existing food system; whereas, on the other hand, there are those who advocate a more ‘purist’ agenda, seen through a structuralist critique of neoliberalism.”
  - What is my position? What is your position? Whatever position we would take, what is important is…