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# For the Agriculture with Security, Safety, Low Price and Stability

By IWAKUNI Tetsundo

In Japan, farmers have distrust of agricultural policies of the government and are faced with a serious shortage of successors. Foreign countries are dissatisfied with the Japanese attitude towards market liberalization. Consumers are concerned about various problems including the quality of foreign foods. Therefore serious debate for the revitalization of agriculture has been taking place in the Diet as well as local assemblies. Now it is time for everyone to frankly discuss the future direction of Japanese agriculture with a new idea, regardless of their positions.

First of all, the separation of ownership and management of farmlands should be promoted boldly. It is expected to contribute to bridging the gap between "the late elderly" who have farmlands but cannot cultivate them and "middle-aged and young farmers" who do not own farmlands despite their high motivations. For such a purpose, the Japanese government should purchase farmlands by issuing zero-coupon "farmland bond" or "paper money" and delegate management functions to prefectures and cities. Those public farmlands should be divided into two types, that is, "production farmlands" in flatlands and "farmlands for environmental conservation" in intermediate and mountainous areas. Farmers should be requested to improve their productivity so that they could win competition by themselves while compensation should be provided for farmers in intermediate and mountainous areas who are at a disadvantage in income. Such compensation can be financed by the rent income of farmlands. The selection of "production farmers" and "ecological farmers" needs to be made immediately. It would become possible to secure successors during that process.

In both France and Britain, lands are cultivated in every corner of the country and green farmlands have spread out. It is because they have succeeded in keeping triple set of church, post office, and elementary school. In Germany, there is a contest in which each village competes with each other to make their own village beautiful. Development for preserving a beautiful farm village as cultural heritage has produced a fascinating environment in a rural area, thereby attracting people in urban area who have emotional attachments to a natural environment.

I would like to request the Japanese agricultural policy to be changed so that farmers could retain successors and engage in agriculture without anxiety. One of the common desires of

farmers and consumers is the establishment of self-sufficient system from an international standpoint, not focusing on domestic self-sufficiency. It should include consumer-conscious policies and indirect self-sufficient system as an option. For the overseas agricultural production, Japan should promote cooperation with foreign countries by providing its agricultural skills and funds, if the narrowness of lands is really a problem for Japan. Recently I heard the story that New Zealand and Iwate Prefecture of Japan have started the joint production of the same food brand by seasonally switching the production between the southern hemisphere and the northern hemisphere.

Highly-motivated young Japanese farmers should cooperate with Southeast Asia and some regions of China and manage agricultural production there by the Japanese skills. Such a cooperative framework will generate a sense of security among people because they can eat foods produced by the Japanese. I believe that it is a mutually beneficial idea. Now is a starting point of the new history of Japanese agriculture. We should consider the re-establishment of agriculture which aims at “security,” “safety,” “low price,” and “stability.”

(This is the English translation of an article by Mr. IWAKUNI Tetsundo, Member of the House of Representatives (Democratic Party of Japan), which originally appeared on the BBS “Giron-Hyakushutsu” of GFJ on May 8, 2008)