



Keio Business School

Agriculture, Food, and Resilience in Japan

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1. Introduction

Japanese agriculture has two profiles, one is that Japan has been historically based on agriculture in particular rice crops. It had been the base of Japanese economy as the main industry, and had formed the base of culture and environment of Japan. It is symbolized by the landscape of rice paddy and sometime Japan is called the country of “Fresh Rice Plant (Mizuho)”. The other is that Japan no longer relies on agriculture as the main industry in terms of the size of production, GDP, employment. Still how to develop agriculture is the important agenda for Japan. A serious problem of Japanese agriculture is its low productivity in terms of labor and total factor input. In response, policy makers have attempted to raise productivity by increasing the number of business oriented farmers or corporations equipped with larger scale land and IT. At the same time, policy makers pursue the free trade represented by the TPP (The Trans-Pacific Partnership)^[1] in which tariff rates should be reduced significantly to increase import on one hand, while promoting export of Japanese agricultural products on the other hand. Agriculture and foods play the key roles in disaster prevention. The 2011 East Japan Earthquake had afflicted the agricultural production and fisheries in East Japan. At the same time, health and wellbeing of people critically depends on agriculture and foods. Japanese agriculture should be transformed in a way to increase its productivity and employment to be competitive in global market, while it should conserve environment and support health and wellbeing of people.

2. Mr. Shimada and 3.11 East Japan Earthquake

Mr. Masayuki Shimada, in his mid-thirties, has been a leader of entrepreneur in Japan. Graduating from Hokkaido University of Education with a teacher license, he has established his education business in Hokkaido. Then he moved into Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture where he has established various business. In particular, he was focusing on agriculture and food business as shown

^[1] MAFF, Japan's International Economic Policy on Agriculture, http://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/inter_relate/inter_econo/, 2016.

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