

# **Teikei Networks for Forests, Homelands and the Sea - All Connected Through Humus**

## **River Basin Region Self Sufficiency and Teikei will Drive Organic Agriculture**

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Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA)  
Committee for Organic Agriculture Promotion

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Editor's note: Japanese people always put their family names before their given names. We have followed this custom throughout this book.

# Self sufficient Teikei networks with humus as the link between forests, homelands and the sea in river basin regions

Uozumi Michio

## Humus and organic agriculture

It is now almost 40 years since I started organic agriculture in 1970 searching for solutions that would overcome the damages done by pesticides and chemical fertilizers of modern agriculture by implementing practical organic agriculture as the true agriculture for everyone and everywhere through learning traditional farming methods of our forefathers.

The year 1970 was one year before the Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA) was inaugurated. I met Mr. Ichiraku Teruo, the founder of JOAA soon after the initiation of JOAA and my idea will be better understood by including some of the historical aspects of JOAA.

Ichiraku Teruo was inquiring into organic agriculture and collected related overseas' literature and found "An Agriculture Testament" by Sir Albert Howard, the father of organic agriculture, and "Pay Dirt" by J. I. Rodale with the Japanese title "Ogon-no-Tsuchi" (Golden Soil).

Ichiraku Teruo re-translated "Pay Dirt" and it was published with the title "Organic Agriculture – The Natural Cycle and Revival of Life" in 1974 by the Cooperative Management Institute which he was the president of back then, and also co-translated with Toshinao Yokoi the other publication by Howard called "Soil and Health" and published as "Organic Agriculture of A. Howard" (published by JOAA) in 1987.

The essence asserted by Howard, which is well reputed among organic farmers and researchers, can be stated simply as follows:

"Humus and minerals are essential to the health of crops and plants which leads to the health of domestic animals and to the health of human beings." His 30 years of joint research with his wife Gabriel Howard was compiled into the two books mentioned above. Upon finishing research work in India as a public servant, he returned to England and started the organic agriculture movement through his journal Soil and Health.

Howard stated that "pests and disease that harm plants are the results and indications of farmers' wrong practices of growing crops and caring for animals" and his view was quite unique and unprecedented at the time. He saw stable farming in Asia using night soil and composted manure which was quite a contrast with the

exploitative chemical farming practices in Europe. It was an eye-opening experience for him. He found that plants absorb nutrients in humus and soil through the workings of organisms of the rhizosphere called mycorrhizal fungi (mold fungi). We now know plants do absorb directly such big molecules as amino acids and sugars thanks to the research by Kobayashi Michiharu et al.

Roots of plants form the rhizosphere with surrounding organisms. Plants exude nutrients for organisms which in turn provide plant nutrients by working on organic matter and minerals in the soil. Humus is food as well as housing for soil organisms. Soil rich with humus will be rich with organisms and soil fauna by which plants can grow healthy with their own vital force.

Temporary damages done by pests stimulate plants to get over them and complete their life cycle. Excessive input of manure will promote massive increase of organisms temporarily but will gradually subside with rise and fall of different organisms and give the soil lasting fertilizer effects. The root system is much wider and deeper in organic agriculture than in conventional chemical farming. These factors are probably contributing to the better taste and sweetness of organic produce.

## Forests and humus

Howard stated that the principle of organic agriculture is seen in the forest that nurtures miscellaneous life forms with plants, leaves, decaying trees and twigs that micro organisms feed on, insects and soil animals, and proposed to study how to implement organic agriculture that realizes this principle of nature's process of life cycle in farmland. This is what we have been studying, practicing, proving and promoting in Japan for about 40 years in the JOAA movement.

This has resulted in practice slowly but steadily from Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south by JOAA members. It can be said that our efforts have laid the foundation for future development of organic agriculture in Japan. Since the Organic Agriculture Promotion Law was enacted in 2006 and various promotional activities at the prefectural level, it is important to show that organic agriculture is based on the health of crops and domestic animals nurtured by humus built up in the forest in

order to establish lasting stable organic agriculture with correct understanding of its basic philosophy. It is not desirable for lasting stable organic agriculture to stand on integrated pest management (IPM), a collection of symptomatic treatment techniques acquired through departmentalized fractional knowledge of modern agricultural science. We propose organic agriculture that is based on principles of everlasting natural life cycles.

This stable lasting organic agriculture depends on humus supply from upstream forests which is demanding immediate attention for proper care, for Satoyama, the homeland forests with rural villages, is in a fairly vulnerable state throughout Japan and many have been destroyed already.

Howard pointed out in his "An Agriculture Testament" in 1940 that in Japan people make efforts to preserve upstream forests to protect soil erosion from the occasional torrential rains that rush down the steep rivers. He noted that such efforts are important because the humus thus preserved will serve living organisms in the forest, crops and animals in the field and in the water. I believe this is correct. The pillar of developing lasting stable agriculture should center on this humus function.

### **Composting and small farm with animals**

My first hand experience with humus is fallen broad leaves used in a nursery compost bed and the resulting bed soil. The nursery compost bedding was seen everywhere on traditional farms but is now rare, being mostly replaced by electrically heated bedding.

There are multiple reasons for this, namely the forests are mostly covered by needle leaf trees, and farmers buy seedlings instead of growing plants themselves. Also, leaf mould itself is sold at stores. Consequently, farmers have gone from making bed soil by themselves to using electrical bed heaters to spur growth.

The robust growth of seedlings determine the growth of the plant's entire life span as they say "seedling is half

the growth." Thus, to grasp the nursing of seedlings is of grave importance for the organic farmer. Compost nursery bedding using broad leaves is controlled to last 2-3 weeks at 25-30C by adjusting the C/N ratio and the water content. There is no need to worry about wilt or fertility exhaustion. It is therefore a basic need for organic agriculture to maintain broadleaf forests.

For stable compost production, it is recommended to keep animals that can work everyday to produce compost with their bedding and manure.

Any domestic animals of one's liking can be a good choice such as cattle, pigs, chicken, sheep, goats, rabbit, etc. Cooperation between local animal husbandry and field management can be a solution but this can get disrupted by either side for different reasons. Moreover, animal husbandry is growing towards larger industrial operation often using feed from imported genetically modified grain. It is best to keep animals within the farm to meet the needs of organic agriculture. The size and method of animal care determines the kind of feed and bedding, and their combination will determine the quality of compost and stability and quality of future organic agriculture. The time required for decomposing different composting materials such as leaves, rice hull, saw dust, tree bark, rice straw etc. will also affect the quality and stability of crop production. A planting plan with consideration of animal feed, bedding and security of their quality and quantity is also important for the stable operation of organic farms.

My past experience proved that broad leaves are the best composting material that can provide quality crops. I never encountered a single situation where pesticides or chemical fertilizers were required in my 40 years of farming practice. Planting multiple crops will avoid replant failure and allows various insects and microorganisms to habituate leading to stable production year after year. Nematodes and root knot diseases do exist but have never given devastating damage. Natural balancing among various forms of life



in the organic field may be the reason for this.

Pine tree bark as composting material was used for about two years but failed to give good results and I believe leaves, rice hull, rice straw and weeds are a better choice, for the decomposing time is completed earlier than in the case of needle tree bark.

Thus organic compost material, green manure, rice and wheat straw etc. will turn into humus to become nutrients for crops. They form a co-operative relationship between crops and microorganisms contributing to the healthy robust growth of crops.

### **Organic link between forests, homelands and the sea via humus**

#### **Iron, an essential link for the life process**

Humus is essential for agriculture as mentioned above. It is also found in recent studies to be vital for healthy forests and for the sea to be rich with life. The water flows out of a mountain forest carrying humus that contain fulvic acid-Fe, enriching phytoplankton and algae at the river mouth to form rich fishing grounds, according to results by Dr. Matsunaga Katsuhiko. Humus rich soil also has buffering capacity against acidification and alkalization that prevent soil from become acidified by acid rain.

It also was scientifically proven that ions of such minerals as iron, manganese and aluminum need to be balanced for human health, according to results by Dr. Nishida Yuzo. We need to learn from both natural processes and scientific findings and reflect them in our farming practices.

#### **Fulvic acid-Fe and ocean life**

Dr. Matsunaga states that the fulvic acid-Fe from broad leaf forests, rivers that have reeds growing, ponds and organic paddy enhance growth of phytoplankton at the river mouths, nurturing shellfish and fish while also protecting against desertification of the beaches. This process is vividly illustrated in the book "Forest is the Lover of the Sea" written by oyster farmer Hatakeyama Shigeatsu. He restored his oyster culture by planting broad leaf trees in the upstream mountain region. The forests along the coastlines are called "fish forests" from old days and fishermen knew this link well from their experience. Water containing humus enhances the growth of phytoplankton and zooplankton that feed living organisms in the water and create forests rich with life, contributing to crop fields, rivers, lakes, marches and the sea.

### **Humus and iron**

Chlorophyll in plants and hemoglobin in animals have important functions related to photosynthesis and breathing. Both have iron as a key player. Iron comes originally from soil. Oxidation-reduction or chelating is the way plants absorb iron from soil. Iron chelated protein has biological defense mechanisms with its anti-infectious property ("Iron: The 13.7 Billion Year History of the Universe" Tokyo University Research Museum, 2009). Fulvic acid-Fe is a chelate substance formed by humus and iron ("When the Forests Die, the Sea also Dies - Ecological Connection of Land and Sea" by Dr. Matsunaga, Kodansha Publishing, 1993).

#### **Acid rain destroys human brain**

Acid rain melts aluminum in the soil which seeps into and contaminates ground water, drinking water and water in general. Aluminum ions prevent neurotransmission of iron ions resulting in Alzheimer's disease, according to Dr. Nishida. According to his theory, the lack of Fe ion inhibits the composition of serotonin and dopamine ("My 44 Years with Electrons" by Dr. Nishida, 2009).

### **Depletion of humus and the dilapidation of forests, homelands and the sea**

We have seen the important role forests play. It is over 70 years since Howard derived organic agriculture from his observations of nature in the 1930s and 1940s, and we are in a different world today with an increase of destruction and pollution of the natural environment as well as global warming caused by massive discharge of CO<sub>2</sub>. Forests are ailing due to acid rain, probably from pollutants by emitted HNO<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Standing dead trees and the acidity of the soil is feared to spread further, meaning that we are in an age when we must take account of pollution of organic substances that form humus with chemicals and heavy metals. This is very serious for organic agriculture.

Woods and forests are converted to monoculture of pine trees and Japanese cypress rather than broad leaf trees in Japan. Needle leaf trees spread pollen causing allergy to many people. The thinning of the forests is left undone for it does not make money. Their absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> has dropped, and their thin succulent growth at steep mountain slopes poses danger of debris flow from the trees.

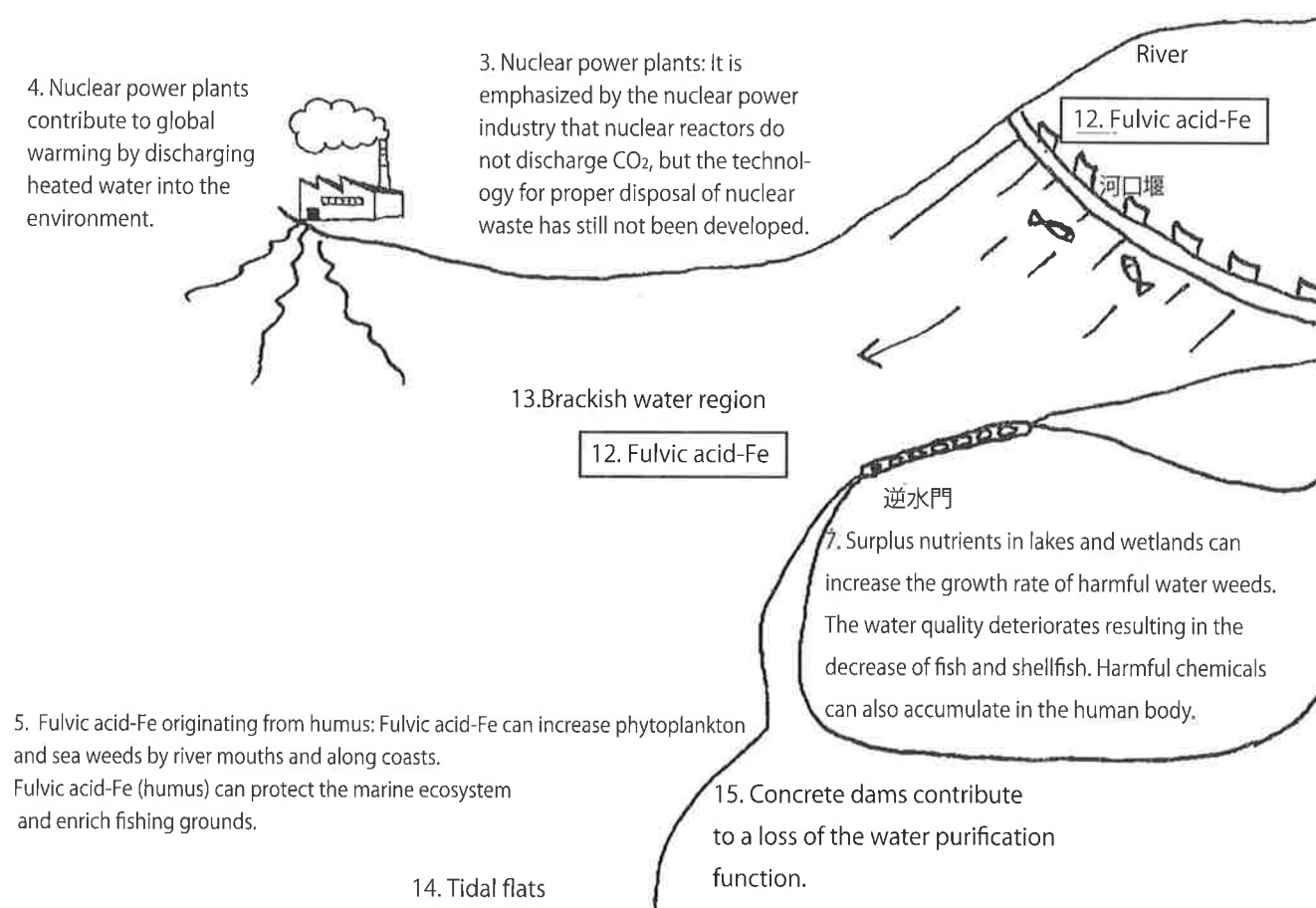
Needle leaf trees make less humus by one digit than broadleaf trees: "Not only soil fertility drops, but there

## Organic agriculture, forestry and fish

(Humus is the most important organic matter in soil)

Let us create a movement to promote deep connections and affiliations with str

1. Japanese people have had many historical experiences such as Ashio mining pollution, Minamata disease (methyl mercury) and serious health damage since the Meiji era.
2. We should study and understand that the most important thing for the people is to preserve the natural environment of the forest, farm fields, rivers and the sea.
6. Chemical fertilizer ingredients (N, P, K) are easily carried away by rainwater because the soil cannot preserve them. The chemical fertilizers are also flowing into the lakes and the sea, and are also accumulating in the ground. It is necessary to convert to organic agriculture.



10. Reclamation of tidal flats leads to a number of environmental problems. The brackish water region will lose its ability to function as a filter, and natural habitats and feeding grounds for waterfowl and other wild birds are lost.
- Prof. Katsuhiko Matsunaga of Yokkaichi University has shown how seaweed and algae - the forest of the ocean - can contribute to sustainable fishery and act as a large CO2 sink. Coastal regions and beaches are also important sources of biofuel.
8. People living in the Lake Kasumigaura area are using the water for drinking. Agriculture, forestry and fishery must promptly be converted to organic practices and methods to protect the health of all living beings.
19. Enjoy composting! Mix your kitchen waste (vegetables and organic matter) with straw in a way to restore CO2 levels in the atmosphere. Wakuwaku composting using straw is good for everyone!
- Elementary schools and junior high schools give children experience composting. This is an educational experience to teach children about farming, forestry and fishery and to gain a better understanding with a little bit of effort.

11. Organic farming should be expanded to avoid eutrophication and to enrich rivers and the coastal regions, and to keep N, P and K out of the groundwater. From now on, let us cooperate with consumers to convert to organic agriculture, with mountain region forestry and fisheries.

## shery Project based on humus

nic material for livings things)

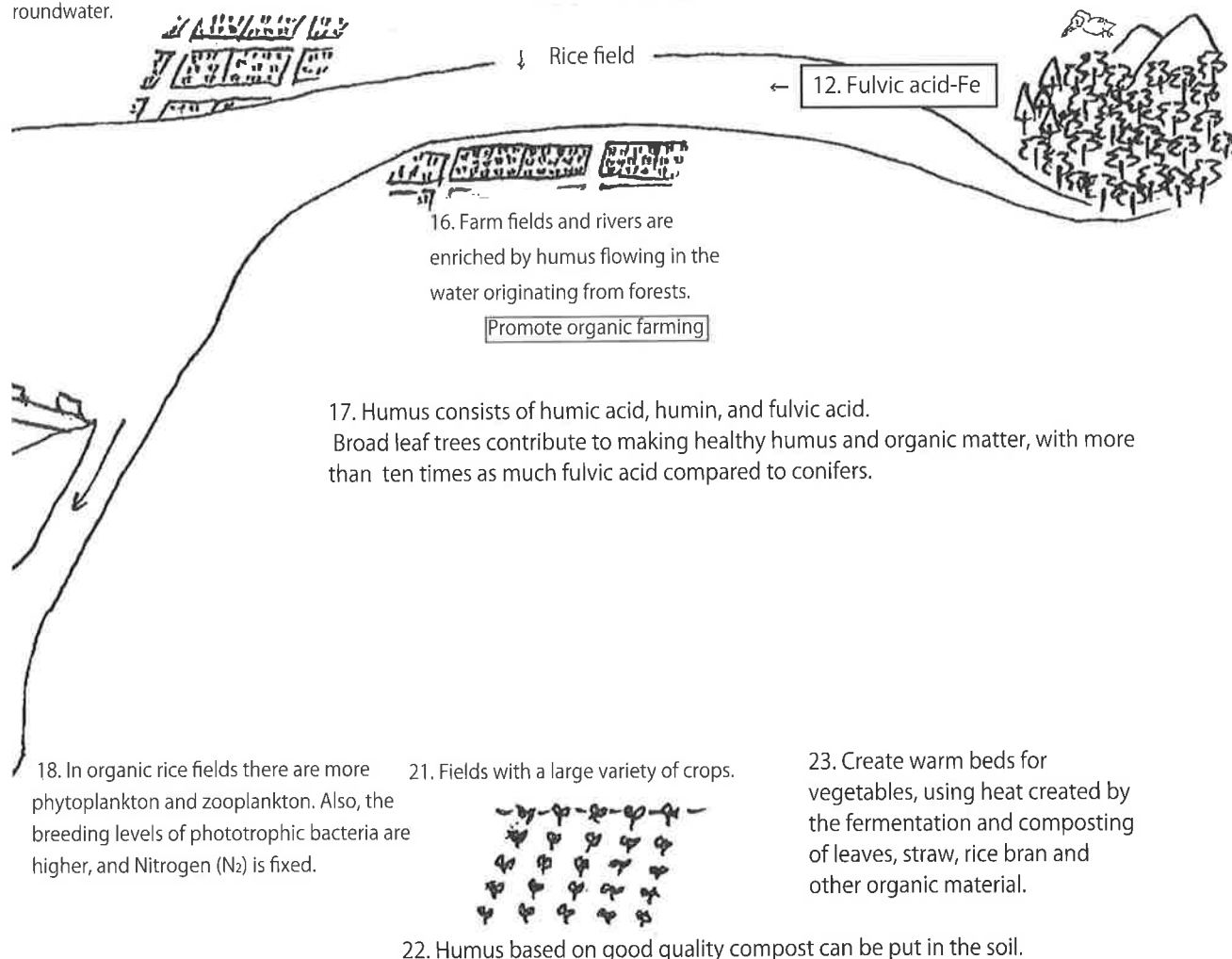
rong links between organic farmers, fishermen, forest workers, and consumers.

It's time to change !

Toki-birds are coming !!

irried away from conventional rice fields,  
l ingredients are delivered to rivers, ponds,  
roundwater.

9. Rice fields near mountain regions can be naturally enriched by humus  
from the streams and rivers. The taste of the rice grown in fields with plenty  
of humus tastes very good!



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ink to the daily food they

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will also be less buffering against acid rain leading to soil acidification and eventually to withering of the needle leaf forests.” Dr. Matsunaga continues to say that this is already true in some mountain areas facing towards the sea.

We must take into our hearts that our production and living activities are withering and destroying mountain trees and flowing less humus rich water into rivers and ponds, withering and desertifying the sea.

In order to secure a constant supply of quality compost, we must utilize the gifts from our forests such as fallen leaves, used mushroom logs and bark of broadleaf trees so that woods can be recovered and organic agriculture thrive.

It is time to propose once again to foster small family farms that keep domestic animals and revive humus rich broadleaf trees and utilize them for compost and animal bedding.

### **Teikei networks of self sufficient forests, homelands and the sea in river basin regions**

#### **Industrialization of Japan and its modernization of agriculture**

- Social reform by organic agriculture and Teikei -

Looking back at modernization of Japan, it would reveal that it was a history of poisoning the air, rivers, lakes and sea. Waste liquids and materials from industrial activities have been dumped into our river systems and polluted our natural environment.

The first known case was in the Meiji Era at the Ashio copper mine that poisoned farmers along Watarase River. After WW2 the Kamioka mine contaminated Jintsu River with cadmium resulting in the Itai-Itai Disease among the people, especially women along the river. In Minamata, Co. discharged untreated organic mercury into Minamata River causing the Minamata Disease, and identically along Aganogawa River, Showa Denko Co. caused a second wave of the Minamata Disease. Smoke from factories in Yokkaichi City and Kawasaki City caused asthma among a large number of people living and working nearby. Environmental pollution was at its peak in 1970 when Japan's economy was growing rapidly.

Corporations put their profit over human lives and the activities of people living with the rich blessings of the mountains, rivers, homelands and the sea along the river basin regions, disregarding pollution as something that gets resolved or diluted by water. This way of thinking caused severe damage to people and

the natural environment.

The damage was escalated by the government's modernization policy that placed highly profitable industries above less profitable agriculture, forestry and fishery. The nation allowed these sectors to be sacrificed for the sake of modernization. The very same idea still persists today. The patent war of biotechnology over genetically modified organisms (GMO) is rooted on the same idea.

It was unfortunate that this idea of profit over life prevailed in agriculture in modernization. The intrusive instruction of modernization by JA in the context of modernization made farmers become dependent on pesticides and chemical fertilizers and created an attitude that traditional ways are not efficient and less productive. It is very unfortunate that organic agriculture that inherits the traditional way is also looked down upon in the same way, and regarded as not efficient and outdated.

Chisso Co. and Showa Denko Co., the culprits of Minamata Disease, represent companies that built the foundation for the chemical industries of Japan. They played the role as engines for modernization of agriculture after WW2 with such materials as chemical fertilizers, vinyl chlorides and vinyl acetate used for greenhouses. In the production process of vinyl chlorides from acetaldehyde, inorganic mercury (mercuric sulfate) was used as a catalyst and was discharged without proper treatment into the sea of Minamata, then turned into organic mercury (mainly methylmercury chloride) that caused Minamata Disease through biological accumulation process. This was made clear in 1956.

The curve of the number of Minamata Disease patients closely follows that of the production curve of Chisso. Symbolically, we all helped Minamata Disease spread by producing and eating tomatoes and cucumbers in winter and by enjoying cheap convenient food at all times.

In this sense, our responsibility for pollution and destruction of the natural environment and endangering species is not at all light. That is the reason why society as a whole must recover from the conditions we created ourselves. Let us not give up and say that it is impossible but say that we must start with small steps by learning together and supporting each other.

#### **“Our Self Sustaining Farm” as the base of self sufficiency and Teikei**

JOAA was inaugurated in 1971 in the hope of social



reform through organic agriculture, and not just to change the methods of agriculture. Those who shared the same thoughts as Mr. Ichiraku got together and started from the daily basic activities of growing, delivering and eating organic food.

The history of organic agriculture in Japan can be called the history of 40 years of Teikei, a movement of social reform by creating a visible relationship between producers and consumers growing and eating to support each other and learning together.

“Teikei” has become known as an international term among organic farmers, which is a welcoming move that we can share similar idea and methods. However, in recent years, Teikei in Japan seems to be going through a period of fatigue and stagnation and many seem to remain more or less as just a reasonable direct deal of goods. I would like to propose “Our Self Sustaining Farm” as a refreshing and invigorating movement of Teikei to deepen its ideas and activities based on 40 years of experience.

#### **“Our Self Sustaining Farm” movement**

The wonderful thing about organic agriculture, I think, is that it allows all creatures - crops, weeds, pests, useful insects and other insects and animals - to live happily together. And we humans beings, growers and consumers supporting each other, are also part of it. The organic world is a world where we can share the joy of co-existence, co-habitation and cooperation and feel the beauty of life, the joy of being in the world. On this foundation of the Teikei spirit, I wish to add this new concept, “Our Self Sustaining Farm” and unroll a movement that is evolutionally deepening the Teikei relationship eliminating any dividing walls between “I, the grower who produce” and “I, the consumer who eat.”

“Our Self Sustaining Farm” is a foothold for consumers to secure food for self sufficiency by meeting farmers through what we in Japanese call “en” which means a relationship based on destiny and connection. It is to own a farm. Not just a small backyard garden but a real field of crops. An amateur consumer can be a farmer by working under the instruction of a farmer in the field.

To grow crops in “my” field means to support the other Teikei consumers of the farmer which will build a spirit of brotherhood, mutual support and cooperation. To grow by ourselves will mean a chance to learn to be humble in nature and the joy, hardship and importance

of self sufficiency.

It is difficult to change the sense of value that grasp a cheaper item when the sense is based on high or low of the price. You will never notice how much environmental destruction or repression of people is hidden behind the cheap price, nor its contribution to the hollowing-out of Japanese agriculture.

It is really a shame to see our people indulging in opulence in the face of those starving in the world when our own self sufficiency is less than 40%. When the idea of self supporting farms is understood through this campaign, it will make it easier for people to understand forests and the sea for self sufficiency. Life size living will not exploit others, therefore it will also lead to making Japan a truly peaceful country.

It is the humus that has taught us the water basin region network of self sufficiency and the spirit of cooperation of our forefathers. Many entrusted this dream to rainbow colored ideas of co-operatives in Japan since the Meiji Era. It is understandable that Mr. Ichiraku, who started out in the union movement, linked the Teikei movement in organic agriculture with the idea of the union movement. We are following his line of thoughts and we must further develop the ideas. We have been groping to see what his idea was and how to advance it, and came to see that it is necessary to extend our Teikei circle broader to the forests, homelands and the sea, the whole area connected in the water basin region organically by humus. Regions in different parts of Japan will hopefully have new contacts and organic connections as the fruit of this new movement.

#### **Uozumi Michio**

Born in 1950. Vice president of JOAA. Vice president of Organic Agriculture Promotion Association. Committee member of National Organic Agriculture Promotion at MAFF. President of Organic Agriculture Promotion Forum of Ibaraki.

After finishing his Agriculture College studies, he joined the construction of the Tamago-no-kai (Egg association) farm in 1973, becoming an independent farmer in 1980 in Ishioka, Ibaraki. His farm keeps 600 chicken, manages 320 a cropland and 15 a paddy.

Co-authored “Organic Agriculture Handbook,” “Modernization of Agriculture and GMO Viewed from Organic Agriculture,” and “Agricultural Testament Explained” etc.

# Self sufficiency from seeds

Hayashi Shigenori

## **Landrace seeds suited for organic agriculture**

In Japan, many organic farmers grow many varieties of crops and supply consumers directly through the Teikei system. Also, quite a large number of Japan's organic farmers save their own seeds of different varieties. The advantage of saving seeds is being independent of seed companies to be able to breed varieties of one's own liking and also save the expenditure otherwise needed for purchasing seeds. The seeds sold by seed companies are mostly treated by pesticides. Saving seeds thus means the farmer can avoid chemically treated seeds and stay consciously on the safe side.

Most farmers buy seeds every year from seed companies that produce popular hybrid varieties, known as F1. Hybrid varieties are bred by crossing varieties with different traits using Mendel's Law that dominant traits are expressed in the first generation (F1), but the second generation (F2) on will have mixed traits expressed. Thus, they cannot be used in commercial production where uniformity is expected.

It can be said that hybrid seeds were created so that high profit is secured for the seed companies. They are expensive for the farmer. Seeds are fundamental for farming and to be dependent on a commercial company for one's seeds is not a favorable condition as an independent farmer, for he/she lacks a strong basis for the production. Landrace seeds or heirloom seeds, on the other hand, have fixed traits and anyone can save seeds safely.

JOAA held its first seed exchange among seed saving organic farmers in the Kanto region in 1982. Most of the old farms customarily kept landrace varieties that have been saved for generations - long before the advent of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Consequently, they are perfect for organic farming. The seed exchange is to make them available for organic agriculture.

Mr. Ooinoue Yasushi, who bred the giant grape known as Kyoho in the 1940s has left the maxim, "No technique surpasses breeding" which means that the yield of a crop is determined by breed rather than by farming techniques. The difference of breed is expressed in the color, shape and taste of the crop which makes one aware of the grave importance of the seed variety, the breed. This makes the use and

maintenance of seeds saved with fixed traits that are suitable for organic farming a matter of extreme importance.

## **Promoting organic farming through seed exchange**

JOAA's Seed Group sent a questionnaire to organic farmers to find out what heirloom varieties they had, including the seeds saved for generations, and compiled and published the results as "100 Varieties Suited for Organic Agriculture" in 2000. In conventional farming, certain hybrid varieties tend to be used for commercial production nationwide, for example the Taibyo-soubutori or disease resistant daikon, or the Momotaro tomato. In organic agriculture, however, a great amount of different varieties are used including landrace varieties.

Conventional farming methods ignore differences of soil and climate in different parts of Japan by using pesticides and chemical fertilizers to produce efficiently. It is the Bento-ya (lunch box peddler), the food service industry, or the food material supplier and others that have power to set prices in the market place and their choice of variety is what determines which variety a farmer will grow. For example, carrots can be anything but must have good outstanding color when cooked and the shape and size must fit the box for ease of transporting throughout the country. Tastes tend to be preferred when any variety is sweet while hot and sour are disliked. All these factors combined will determine what variety would be selected.

Self sufficiency is what is valued in organic agriculture. It is important to find and foster the varieties kept for generations in different regions in order to be self sufficient by saving such seeds rather than being swayed by economical efficiency that made many varieties disappear as they were abandoned and scrapped.

## **Breeding varieties suited for organic farming**

It is basically the responsibility of public services such as the local and national government to breed seeds suited for organic farming. In Chiba where I live, then-governor Numata proclaimed a no pesticide golf course policy and stipulated that no new golf course would be approved unless it was managed without pesticides.

## Social reform from the kitchen

### From Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai (The Grow & Eat Safe Food Society) and the Organic Agriculture Teikei Action of Miyoshi Village Producers' Group

Wakashima Reiko

#### Why do I stick to organic farming action?

Food from organic farms are not commodities

Food is life for all living things. We can't buy and sell life as a commodity; we should never regard organic farm produce as mere objects of market economic principles.

One tomato is sold for 100 yen in a supermarket. We are made to think that we can exchange the tomato and 100 yen in equivalence. We consider whether spending 100 yen for a tomato is suitable, and make a judgment to buy or not to buy. At that time we don't realize that we are unable to produce even one seed from the tomato, and that the tomato doesn't become a tomato if there is no seed (the source of life), clean air, water, moderate sunshine, and farmers who take care of it.

Life is born only from living things. However, we think we are able to control life and make a price for the living thing. I think that this is wrong. There is nothing that can be exchanged for life. It is said that there are six billion microorganisms per one gram of the healthy soil that raises healthy farm produce. Organic food is collaboration with the life of an innumerable amount of living things in the soil, an innumerable amount of living things on the ground, and with organic farmers.

There is no distinction in the importance of the life. Each life is equally honorable. It is not suitable to set the price of 100 yen or 200 yen on life. Life should not be dealt with using market economic principles. Therefore, organic farm produce should be treated as Teikei based on mutual trust - not as a business.

#### Be fair

I stick to Teikei because it intends to be fair regarding the relationship between the producer and the consumer. In Teikei, the producer sets the price for the production, and the producer and the consumer cooperate with the farm produce including delivery. It is an equal and ideal way to not be exploited.

The Teikei consumers have not asked the farm producers in a selfish way for safe food. We have the belief that by correcting our way of eating and continuing to eat according to Teikei, our actions support the agricultural producers, especially the

family producer. Consequently, we also preserve our children's lives and health. We continue doing Teikei based on mutual trust that entrusts the life of each other.

Health is not a personal thing but a social issue

I think there are a lot of people who are not recognizing that health is not just a personal thing, but an issue for society. Obesity has become an object of public concern. It is said that there are a lot of people suffering from obesity among the lowest income groups. I think obesity has its origin in the food we eat. Because it is said that the people living in poverty don't have knowledge of nourishment or own cooking utensils, they buy processed food, which has a lower nutritive value along with the cheap price.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that if the processed food was not sold, they would cook. It has been assumed that easy convenience is what the consumer needs. I think such easy convenience is satisfying the needs of the corporations and the supermarkets that provide and deliver the food. The consumer doesn't request easy convenience at the expense of health and life, but will find it difficult to avoid processed food unless taking conscious action. Therefore, it is important for the consumer and the producer to join forces together directly.

"Food with vitality" is the source of life! This is how the producer and the consumer hope that we can live healthily, culturally and humanly as human beings. If we endure a little, we obtain it by Teikei.

What should we eat? The theory of Ishizuka Sagen

Nobody desires to not live a healthy, long life. Dr. Ishizuka Sagen (1850-1909) thought that human health was controlled and focused only on food. The dietary study of the present age is an analytical nourishment study. Instead, Ishizuka's theory is based on the study of overall nourishment which is rooted in the climate.

What should a human being eat? Ishizuka paid attention to the difference among the movement of the jawbone, the number and the shape of teeth and length and the structure of our intestines, as well as the digestive enzymes.

Looking at the human jawbone, it moves to the upper and lower front, back, left and right, and the number of teeth we have is eight frontal teeth, then four canine teeth, and 20 molars. Ishizuka then assumed that the human race was a cereal diet animal. He suggested that the ratio of vegetables to meat and poultry to grain should be 8:4:20 or simply expressed as 2:1:5. This was assumed to be the balance of the meal that followed along with the laws of nature. Moreover, Ishizuka said, "Receive the vitality and the nutrients of the entire living thing by wholly eating the food. We should not think that the body and soil are separated. We should eat the foods produced locally in the area and foods which the body request according to the season."

In Japan, we say "Itadakimasu" before the meal. The meaning is "Let's eat!" while also having the deeper sense of "I receive your life." Foods are life. I think there are good manners connected with receiving the life, including tasting the time of the growth of the crops by chewing well.

Organic farm produce are living organisms that the producer made to bear fruit following the laws of nature. Teikei is the way to obtain food with life.

What is Ichiraku's philosophy?

In my opinion, Ichiraku's thoughts deal with pursuing human happiness. He said, "Live long and live comfortably and happily" and "give the nature to the children, and give the work to the elderly people."

It is not easy for the resident who lives in the city where the functions of the community have collapsed to sympathize with the village lifestyle. It is because the life of every day is different. This is the reason why Teikei is so effective. It is important that the consumer can see the producer face to face. Mutually imagining each other living, and sympathizing is important. Teikei is said to be, "Relationships where the face is seen" and actually, small conversations when farmer and consumer meet are important.

The accumulation of small conversations raises the sense of responsibility, and before long, it will lead to trust. It is not only a vegetable and rice but the farmer's very existence that is delivered to the city. To begin with, there are not a relationship of confrontation between such a producer and the consumer. It is a relation of coexistence. It is a relation of mutual prosperity and mutual poverty which is based on coexistence principles. We are able to actually feel this directly in Teikei.

## Organic farming schools

Italy created a Slow Food University in 2004. I want to found an organic farming school in Japan. I propose the Folkehoejskole as a model, which is an educational institution in Denmark. In 1844, it was founded by N. F. S. Grundtvig, who was a Danish poet, religionist and philosopher. The education method is that the teacher and the student live together and talk about the experience of the life mutually and learn and enlighten each other.

The idea of organic farming can be extended to various fields like geography, biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as domestic science, ethics, politics, economics, sociology, national history and world history. If we can try to study these subjects from the overall perspective of organic farming, how interesting and happy wouldn't we be? We also study co-operative society theory while doing organic farming. I want to found such an organic farming school. This is my dream.

## Organic agriculture & Teikei action

### – producers and consumers joining hands

The Teikei alliance between Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai (The Grow & Eat Safe Food Society) and Miyoshi Village Producers Group

It has been 36 years since Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai and the Miyoshi Village Producers Group started walking together on the same road. Our action is called Teikei and became one of the models of "10 Guidelines for Teikei between Farm Producers and Consumers" published by Japan Organic Agriculture Association in 1978.

Now, Teikei between Miyoshi and the Tsukutte Taberu Kai is slowly but firmly being brought over to the next generation.

Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai (Grow & Eat Safe Food Society)

Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai in Nishi Tokyo City, Tokyo started when housewives in the Tokyo Metropolitan area, who worried about their food, stormed their way into Miyoshi Village in 1973 and requested farmers to grow rice, fruits and vegetables without using any chemical fertilizers and agrochemicals. The number of members at the very beginning was 111, and reached 1,372 at one time in 1985, but gradually decreased. On average, it has been somewhere from 830 to 880 over the last 10 years, with 850 members at the moment (2010).

Tsukutte Taberu Kai and Miyoshi Village Producers Group are in Teikei together and have set up three principles for the purpose of realizing a healthy food life and proper farming as it should be, in order to protect the health and lives of children, grandchildren and generations to come. Those principles are:

- 1) The society will accept all that is produced
- 2) The society will respect farm producers' deciding the sale price
- 3) The society will support the farm producers to produce and deliver the products and takes responsibility as well

Tsukutte Taberu Kai has set up an agricultural fund mainly to provide loans, no interest indefinitely to the producers according to the principle "Consumers should share the loss which occurred in the process of consolidating agricultural methods according to the order of nature."

The number of the total posts, which are the hubs of delivery, was 118 as of January, 2010. Among them, the posts that hold more than 10 members are 14. The total number of members that belong to such posts are 616. The average number for each post is 5.2. Also, there are 234 (27%) home delivery members. The running cost of the society is 500 yen per month, and there are no full-time workers as it is managed by the members themselves.

The name Anzen-na Tabemno-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai (Grow & Eat Safe Food Society) was chosen to declare the will to produce healthy food together with producers.

#### Miyoshi Village Producers Group

Miyoshi Village Producers Group is a producers group located in Minami Boso City, Chiba at the southern tip of the Boso peninsula, just east of Tokyo. The average temperature of Miyoshi Village is 17C so they have a warm climate. By the community integration in March 2006, the name Miyoshi Village had disappeared, but as a producers group, they keep Miyoshi village in their name.

Miyoshi Village Producers Group started with 18 families in 1973. They have become 27 families at the moment, without using what is considered to destroy the ecosystem, such as pesticides, agrochemicals, chemical fertilizers, vinyl greenhouses, and so on. They are producing more than 100 kinds of farm products every year, following Mr. Tsuyuki Yukio, who said, "There are laws of nature in the Universe." The mission of Miyoshi Village Producers Group is to

practice self-contained farming and to be creative with farming methods respecting nature and harnessing the power of nature at a maximum.

The average cultivated acreage for each farmer is 120 a including rice fields, regular fields and fruits, as well as 180 chickens in average to run agriculture with livestock as a major sideline with mixed husbandry on their family farms. Their cultivated acreage is average scale in Japan. However, the average annual income excluding all the costs is about 4.2million yen (2008), and this is about 3 times more than other farmers of the same scale.

#### What is Teikei?

##### Pioneers of Teikei

Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai held a celebration party for the 35th anniversary last year. 230 members and 45 producers attended. It was a big party. Watching some videos and TV programs of the early stage, we consumers and producers both had thousands of thoughts about the long way to come. However, we are not satisfied with only 35 years. We did not gather there to look back on the past, but to bridge Teikei to the future. Ms. Kitao Akiko, who served as the chairperson to organize the celebration made a closing speech showing the banner up high which read "Moving Forward Further Out to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" and received unanimous applause. Teikei between Tsukutte Taberu Kai and Miyoshi has been gradually but firmly taken over by the next generation and the torch of life has passed too.

In May, 2005, Tsukutte Taberu Kai published a booklet titled "Miyoshi Vegetables, Connecting City and Village" as a memento. In the very beginning, "for the publication of this booklet," Mr. Wada Hiroyuki, Mr. Sugita Syoji and Mr. Watanabe Katsuo, from Miyoshi Village producers group wrote a message together. I quote some here.

"Can we really produce crops with no agrochemicals and no chemical fertilizers, and make a living? I remember the time when we started 30 years ago. Many people involved in agriculture technology, who heard about our action, pointed out 'it is reckless to found such a producers group, as the possibility is closest to zero'."

The producers in Miyoshi decided to start growing without agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers under such circumstances. And 30 years later, it read "Seeking for the agriculture, as it should be, meeting many people, supporting each other and living as if our

lives depends on it, it should be true that our effort, as producers or consumers, has exerted influence around. Recalling the past 30 years, feeling we might have done something good for the society, we are feeling the happy moment of life and said to ourselves, 'we are so glad to have kept doing this!'"

Every time when I read this part, I feel a lump in my throat, glad to have kept doing this. When I understand that the producers feel the same, I am simply so delighted and feel a lump in my throat with pleasure. This is Teikei. The results of Teikei. I would like to say it out loud.

In the world of self-centered, top priority on economy, it's been criticized that Teikei is enclosed romanticism and regarded as an aberration, as special people are doing special action. However, we are not special people at all. Ordinary producers and ordinary housewives held hands together, beyond the opposite interests relationship and when we noticed that we needed the other party, the new relationship has risen to care and support each other. When you come right down to our specialty, the producers in Miyoshi are the people who practiced and confirmed their agriculture method following "There is the law of nature in the Universe" as Mr. Tsuyuki Yukio said. And the members of Tsukutte Taberu Kai have tried to become people who deserve to receive such farm products from Miyoshi, and decided to remain consumers, even if being called "drones."

#### Down-to-earth people

Producers work in the fields in the nature despite rain, wind, hot and cold. If farmers wish, to cultivate under the sunshine, and read when it rains, it should be possible, but it's not possible for producers in Miyoshi, because they have to deliver 3 times a week (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday). There is no full-time office worker in Miyoshi. From allocation to rotation of drivers, they do all the work by themselves. Of course, they are working in the fields, too. They harvest products considering the delivering date, box them to bring in to the shed to allocate for shipping together and load them up in trucks. They don't have a choice in rain or wind. They never take a day-off even if back hurts or toothaches unless they are really screaming. While doing the role what each individuals need to do in the group, they keep chickens, make compost, sow more than 50 kinds of vegetable seeds, weed, transplant, harvest and sow seeds again, when they got damaged by typhoons. 3 - 4 times a month they deliver

to the posts (where to unload) for more than 10 hours for 300 km round trip as a driver or an assistant. This is how our vegetables are delivered to us.

I always think: If I hadn't encountered Tsukutte Taberu Kai and Miyoshi, how had my life been like. I don't want to even think about it, but I must have had floated in the virtual space and had not been down to the earth with any anchorages. I must have been confused in the whirlpool of information and chosen a wrong path.

I used to think that agriculture is to change nature. Agriculture is to deprive nutrient elements from the soil, I assumed. If that is so, I thought, it is necessary to use fertilizers to reproduce, as well as chemical fertilizers and agrochemicals in order to lessen farmers burden. "The Limits to Growth" of Club of Rome and "Global Environmental Report" written by Ishi Hiroyuki made me feel there is nothing I can do and despaired. I thought it couldn't be helped for city dwellers to eat poisons quietly.

The relationship between Tsukutte Taberu Kai and Miyoshi looked like a miracle to me. Growing with no agrochemicals and no chemical fertilizers was unbelievable, as well as the Teikei system to support it by consumers' action. I simply thought with this system, farmers can make a living, there is no harm, I can do and I can allow my self to live. That was my motivation to join in Tsukutte Taberu Kai.

Miyoshi became my anchorage. The certainty of people who live up on the soil sincerely following the laws of nature, keeps me on the earth. Human beings could have been born from the soil. I am living thanks to the people in Miyoshi, the people down to earth. I am hugely grateful.

Every Tuesday, a vegetable cart from Miyoshi arrives in front of my house. I run out from my house. The producers get out from the truck. The people are down to earth. It is a really happy moment every week. I wonder why it makes me so happy. I am so glad that they arrived safely and we could meet again. I treasure every encounter, for it will never recur.

Vegetable boxes are carried into my yard and getting piled. Because 21 people, a rather big number of people, belong to my post, the loads are many. 50 or even 60 boxes of peaches come. Their harvesting plenty makes me happy, and small amount, even it is not in the small harvest season, makes me worry about lack of sunlight. When in typhoon season, I am worried sick about them. Mr. W looks like he has a back problem. Mr. Y's front tooth has been missing, he may be too busy to go to see

a dentist. When we carry the boxes together, the body conditions of the producers tell me many things.

Human beings can't live alone. Teikei is said that it is a "relationship with faces," but it doesn't mean that we only know their faces by photos. It means how much we can think about the background of the producers and their farm products. This thought grows into trust. In order to trust, we need to feel the existence of producers using all five senses.

#### Principles of Teikei

The first principle of "The Ten Principles of Teikei between Producers and Consumers"

"The essence of Teikei between producers and consumers is not trading, but in the friendly relationship between people. That is both parties should be equal and help each other on the basis of mutual understanding. This relation should be established through re-examining of livelihood both as producers and consumers."

To be honest, I couldn't understand the first principle at all. If I pick up only the subject and the predicator from these sentences, it becomes "The essence of Teikei is relationship." What does it mean? It sounded abstract to me and it was too difficult to understand. But I found myself come to take no notice.

However, I read it afresh, and I understood. When I look up the word "Teikei" in a dictionary, it says "to help each other" and the essence means "the heart" and "the relationship" is "bond." That is to say, if I rephrase, "The essence of Teikei is relationship," then it is "The heart of mutual support, Teikei, is the bond." This is the principle of Teikei.

There are some organic farmers who think what they are doing is not Teikei as it doesn't meet the ten principles of Teikei, Teikei is heavy, Teikei is old and so forth. There seems to be a tendency to take Teikei negatively, but Teikei originally means to help each other and mutual support, and the first principle says its heart is "bond." This is the only necessary and sufficient condition of Teikei. For your information, from the second through the tenth are methodologies.

Mr. Wada Hiroyuki, one of the producers in Miyoshi wrote in the memorial booklet I mentioned before, "..... I am wondering, by having something certain, it changes people around us, and people start to gather around." Teikei has a power to gather people. I think this is the very achievement of Teikei. Actually I have received bonds with many people through Teikei. The producers in Miyoshi, members of Tsukutte Taberu

Kai, people from Japan Organic Agriculture Association. Those bonds mean almost like my own life to me. I am feeling the happiness being like-minded, looking at the same direction, going towards the same goal, beyond generations and places, all over in Japan and all around the globe.

Nevertheless, I wonder if Mr. Ichiraku Teruo had focused on these feelings to come. Or is this the only one truth that we have finally achieved where we should be. What Mr. Ichiraku predicted through deduction and what we concluded from the 35 years of induction are the same.

#### What is Teikei?

I have been thinking about what Teikei is for 20 years since I joined in the group. I concentrated on letting many people know about the approach that had given me a reason to live.

The thesis titled "The Emergent Culture of the Japanese Organic Farming Movement and its Implications for Political Economy" (1995) written by an American cultural anthropologist, Darrell Moen, who visited Japan in 1991 to make a research on the organic agriculture movement, has given me an American's rational way of thinking about Teikei theory. I could finally understand methodically about Teikei through his thesis. That is itemizing principle, consciousness, philosophy, purpose, method and possibilities in my own way to explain consciously how I understood and I tried to expand the membership. In fact members belong to my post has doubled, and we have 21 people now. This is the biggest post in Tsukutte Taberu Kai. However it seemed the more breaking down, the further away from the groundwork of Teikei, and I was faced with a dilemma.

#### No meaning unless practiced

Consciousness should be with action. There is no meaning on principles, philosophy and consciousness of Teikei, unless it is practiced. I show you my daily life. Every Tuesday, as it's the delivering day from Miyoshi, I make no other appointments basically. Since I am working full-time, I rush back home from my workplace right after finishing working. Arriving home, piling up the empty boxes for vegetables to return in front of my entrance, placing 20 shopping baskets and bags in my front yard and being ready for Miyoshi to come with kitchen knives, box cutters and plastic bags with me. Ms. Nishikado, Ms. Kai and I are in charge of dividing the load. Soon the delivering truck arrives, down-to-

earth people come out. After finishing unloading, we talk about vegetables and so on, Miyoshi goes to the next post. Sometimes we can't talk much, because of the traffic circumstances, but it is no problem. I just want to meet them. I feel relieved when I meet the producers. May it be because I can confirm my own pace to live?

On December 15, 2009, 20 items, 60 boxes and bags arrived. We divide them into 20 people starting from something with dirt. Basically it is to divide everything evenly among the members, we cut konjac (a popular Japanese foodstuff typically mottled grey and firmer in consistency than most gelatins) and takuan (a popular traditional Japanese pickle made from daikon radish) then put them into small bags. We finish dividing finally in about 2 hours. The baskets are full of vegetables. I carry 11 of them into the shed, and at 8pm, I load 9 baskets to deliver to houses.

The Maruyama family lives in a condominium building. I carry the basket to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor after their unlocking the entrance doors of the building through interphone. When the elevator doors open, I hear a voice of 4-year-old boy, Maa-kun saying "Wakashima-san!" To him, it seems vegetables are Wakashima-san's. He tells me about what he did, "I ate Wakashima-san's green peppers. Because Wakashima-san looked cool eating green peppers, I ate them too!" I give him some quiz asking the name of vegetables like "Do you know what this is?" And saying "See you!" to each other, exchanging high-touches to make sure we are like-minded.

The next house is a 3-year-old-girl Maria-chan's. When I ring the interphone, she comes down from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Wearing pajamas, she always has something in her hands. She says she wants to show me. Last week it was a carrier-bag in the shape of Pooh Bear when folded. Again it seems vegetables from Miyoshi are Wakashima-san's here.

Then a 3-year-old girl, Karin-chan's house. She has just got a younger brother. She rushes from the front door bare footed being frustrating to wear shoes. She is powerful carrying the vegetable bags into the house. Next is a house of Sugi-san. She takes care of 3 grandchildren. Her parents gave her the name, Sugi, meaning Japanese cedar, wishing her to grow straight.

She's full of humor and says "But look at my back. It's been bent like this." I visit 9 houses like these then go home. It takes about one and half hour in total. After arriving home, it's our dinner time. Thanking Miyoshi, eating brown rice, boiled broccoli and biting instantly pickled turnips, I feel my happiness as 'Oh, it tastes great. It's good to be alive!"

It's good to have kept doing

"When things are properly done, they naturally conclude right." I was taught the rules of nature that all living beings grow depending on the other lives, by the people in Miyoshi, who live on natural organic agriculture. And I also learned that thanks to many lives I am kept alive.

The 30 years of Teikei have not been a smooth path, however Tsukutte Taberu Kai and Miyoshi have overcome many difficulties together as sharing the same destiny. Because we believe this is the right path. If you ask me the reason why I believe this is the right way, because the natural organic agriculture in Miyoshi is the right farming method.

Our endeavor is just a small attempt by a small organization. However, like the attempt by 28 pioneers in Rochdale in the 1840s who were the origin of the co-operative associations and later became the world's largest NGO with 600,000,000 members in 100 countries all over the world, I am sure that "If it is necessary and right, even the smallest organization won't perish."

#### Wakashima Reiko

Based in Kokubunji City, Tokyo. A member of Japan Organic Agriculture Association. Joined Anzen-na Tabemono-o Tsukutte Taberu Kai in 1991, served as the chairman of the group in 2005.

Member of Japan Organic Agriculture Promotion Committee of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2007-2009. Has been certified as educator for "Food is to live and to heal" of Nihon Sogo Igaku-Kai (Japan Holistic Medicine Organization) since 2008.



# **The philosophy and the practice of Teikei— The co-operative spirit of learning and its contemporary development**

Oishi Mitsunobu

**What is so special about the Japanese organic agriculture movement?**

**--Learning about the philosophy of cooperation from the organic agriculture movement**

In the recent book titled "Sharing the Harvest – A Citizen's Guide to Community Supported Agriculture"<sup>1)</sup>, the Principles of Co-operative Associations that were originally formulated by the early co-op groups in the mid-1900s and most recently refined and adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1995 have been introduced to readers.

Most of us who are involved in the co-operative movement were nurtured by these Principles of Co-operative Associations as well as "What are Co-operative Associations"<sup>2)</sup> by Ichiraku Teruo.<sup>3)</sup>

I can not forget the surprise even now when I learned about the Teikei movement, the unique philosophy and practices of Japan's organic agriculture movement, for the first time. It was after witnessing the ideal and the reality, top to bottom, person to person, and good and bad, through being involved in the co-operative association movement in one region in Japan.

It was what we had been searching for, what we had been trying to regain as our own footing, in the daily and actual management of the association constantly wavering and struggling. How flexibly, how steadily and how variously people had already been practicing it all over in Japan! It was also known as the Ichiraku philosophy.

There, the tradition and the social foundation of the co-operative association philosophy were integrated and based.

Since then, I have decided to learn the philosophy and the practice of cooperation from the organic agriculture movement, while verifying our own co-operative association movement. I have carefully stepped closer to the organic agriculture movement, learned about it and being stimulated by it for 10 years. How slow I was!

Even being late, I believe Japan's co-ops and agricultural co-operatives must learn the core of the philosophy from the history of the organic agriculture movement.

Recently, an attempt has started to develop and expand the principles and practices of Teikei by summing them up historically and proactively and

corresponding to the changing times. I am proud of being a part of this new Teikei, the alliance and solidarity in local regions, as we are redefining how our own co-operatives should be at the same time.

**Communication between the organic agriculture movement in Japan and other parts of the world**

It just so happens that the regional Teikei movement by family-operated farmers in Japan is occurring together with, for example, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne = Association to protect family-operated farmers) in the United States and Europe. The global alliance and communication of various movements in the new generation can bring new energy to each other.

Due to the fact that the original social background is the market (commodity economy) in the US and Europe, the historical stream of research and the practices of organic farming opposing modern agriculture formed a certain organic market (the interior and international market) and then from this womb, local movements of alternative markets, such as CSA and AMAP were born in the 1980s.

On the other hand in Japan, the full-blown organic agriculture movement as a social movement started integrating its co-operative association philosophy and grass-roots movement combined with medical, food and farming being led by conscious consumers who stood up against the background of revealing harmful effects in the postwar rapid economic growth, culminating as early as 1971.<sup>4)</sup>

The Japanese organic agriculture movement has a very unique origin as it flatly rejected selling and buying products as commodities from the beginning and started as a social movement called Teikei, alliance, which includes a momentum for both producers and consumers to reform their way of living in a friendly relationship of inter-understanding and as a supportive co-operative.<sup>5)</sup>

Although the unique trail of this Japanese organic agriculture has suffered from the huge stream of global standardization, institutionalization within the country, commoditization, the preeminence of the market of organic farming "products" as well as globalization

since the 1980s, it is about to start an international crossover changing its history into a bright and new development.

“The center of crossover” is, as Ms. Robyn Van En says, “the philosophical aspects” of the movements.<sup>6)</sup> There is coexistence, supporting the co-operative/binding of person to person and community and how to create new (or another) social relationships within people and between human beings and nature.

I think it deals with the global citizen’s core of solidarity against iniquity, labour grab, the scrambling war for the world’s resources, un-sustainability, destruction of the community and nature by capital flows, and for the re-construction of people’s collectives, which was destroyed by the commodity economy and market principles. It is about how human beings and nature coexist and how they can stay sustainable, and the reconstruction of the ability to produce food in the local area, which is declining in the era of globalization.<sup>7)</sup>

I would like to think about the principles of Teikei of the Japanese organic agriculture movement in this changing era as a new fetal movement from the perspective of social movements that is giving birth to how a person to person relationship should be.

### **The social core of Teikei**

What surprised me the most when I first learned about the Japanese organic agriculture movement was that it had been brewing a support relationship that was co-operative and based on trust. The trust relationship for deciding their rules (models) includes the momentum for both farmers and consumers to change the relationship between those people who are supposed to have different interests on a superficial level.

What we as a consumer co-operative had been doing was to try to create a bridge between the group who wants to have safe food and individual farm producers and groups or Japan Agricultural Co-operatives. The best I could call it was: “Directly from producers knowing their faces and their names,” but it was a relationship between our Co-op and the production area, not yet between producers and consumers’ union members directly. We had arranged so that union members could sometimes observe the production areas or made contracts of vegetable sets or rice in order to keep a certain amount of orders constant, but it was only to that extent.

There are co-operative rules within the organizational

principles for consumers’ co-operative associations, but there is nothing to regulate how the social relationship with outside producers should be. There may be cooperation among consumers who has the same interest, but there are no association principles for cooperation or to support co-operative activities with producers.

Thus, there is little momentum for consumers’ union members to change their way of living and to develop support co-operatives with producers. We don’t have close relationships to maintain the trust and share the responsibilities with each other, but depend on the goodwill and sympathy that “this is what we are accustomed to eat produced by so-and-so” at most. As a consequence, it remains one of the interest co-operatives.

On the other hand, the practices of Teikei in organic agriculture are direct co-operative configurations overcoming their own interests. Teikei has practical rules to support the co-operative person to person relationship beyond the unique and different positions. It actually practices the co-operative philosophy at the core of its spirit.

In this social relationship, in order for consumers to have safe products, they need to trust producers. Consumers will need to turn away from the commodity economy rules in the market that allow them to buy whatever and whenever with their money, and entrust their dining tables to the producers. It sometimes requires patience in the case of unavoidable natural circumstances. The producer must do what he/she can to richly provide safe and healthy crops all through the year, having been entrusted with the consumer’s dinner table. They develop their trust relationship together with many difficulties. Their heart goes out to each other. They come to build the relationship thanking each other and being happy for each other. They both grow mutually as independent individuals in these ways. These individuals are not the ones separated by the commodity economy.

It is said that co-operative associations are “a binding of person to person.” This does not mean that they are interest groups. It is hard to truly understand the meaning of this without the experience.

Soon after the war, Japanese co-operative associations were formed as professional associations.<sup>8)</sup> Therefore, there has been a tendency to misunderstand the purpose of the co-operative associations as protecting the profit of the union members. Agricultural co-ops protect farmers’ profit, and consumer co-ops realize the

profit of consumers or correspond to consumers' needs and so forth. It may even seem as if there is conflict of interest between them. It is very hard to overcome this hurdle while they both try to earn more under the commodity economy which has both devastating power and enchantment.

There is, of course, a profit to realize in a union that individuals can't achieve. But the core of the philosophy of co-operative associations is to understand, support and cooperate despite the different interests of each person and group. And it was supposed to be a philosophy and practice which had an active purpose to realize a fair society. Ichiraku Teruo emphasized this core over and over again in his book titled "What are Co-operative Associations."

This aspect of co-operative associations was being tried and practiced as Teikei in the organic agriculture sector. What a shame if it is forgotten and lost!

The original co-operative associations must learn from this, bring it into their unions and create the momentum to change their attitude and their way of living.

Because co-operative associations are rather general-interest, they have to face the commodity economy in daily life. That is why we can challenge them to change their regulations and their activities, making people actually feel that at the core, for each food item there is a social relationship between consumer and producer, and explain how to escape from just selling and buying "products" through their experiences.

A wide range of consumers can feel that it is a relationship of trust - a binding union of person to person with producers beyond each interest group - and people can become independent through co-operatives that support each other. We need to bring this into the principles of union organization.

### **Is Teikei out of step with the times?**

Recently in Japan there is a trend to try to create organic food markets, and from that point of view, the unique social activities of Japan's organic agriculture movement is sometimes said to be old-fashioned and out of step with the times.

If the purpose is to easily earn acknowledgement of organic farming products, it is quicker to put them onto the commodity market which has such devastating power.

However, what comes next would be competition with other organic products in the Japanese market and against the international commodities that are being

imported. Seeking for the right appraised market value, it will be a high-value-added pursuit according to the never-ending competition principles.

What else can we expect from this? In such a market, how could we create new social human relations that are binding if our products are just commodities? Or is it a social contribution to spread and provide food with living power to as many people in the society as possible so that they stay healthy in a proposition that food should be like this? Or should we be using it as one of the distribution routes for surplus organic farming products? Do we want to provide a service to fulfill the healthy and fashionable way of living?

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this changing era, the biggest characteristic we have seen is capital globalization. Natural resources, land, labour power, food, information and even insurance: everything is commercialized racing around seeking for profit in the world. This is how the binding of collectives in human society and environment on the earth was destroyed by global capital. We are getting far away from the fair society. The gaps are widening within and between countries, and the destruction of the natural environment keeps on going until it reaches a point of no return.

Even if organic farming products and organic food industries grow and form markets, isn't it obvious that they will be eaten up greedily by the profit-making opportunities in agribusiness, until all the special added value is just a matter of competition, and nothing special is left?

Without the momentum to change people's mentality, their life style and livelihood, and even if more organic farming "products" as commodities appear and make money in the market, the society will not change.

Ichiraku Teruo noted, "Needless to say we must not become manneristic but practice a new way of doing things always corresponding to the changing situation. Be that as it may..... Only with an un-changing basic philosophy can we positively respond to the rapidly changing situation. Only with a determined purpose can we choose methods and manners reacting to any environment."

When someone says that Teikei is old-fashioned or out of step with the times, then the question goes to that person, "What are you seeking for?" If the purposes and the philosophy are different, it is a discussion based on different dimensions and a solution can't be worked out.

Most of such people had better reconfirm the basic

significance and meaning of the kind of problems Teikei has brought up. The social circumstances have grown into serious problems that Teikei already pointed out in the 1970's.

Also, they had better consider where to insert a wedge in the groundwork of the problems and how much it is possible to break down the disruptive trend of wanting more and more, the economical and uneconomical basis of the commodity market, by joining the market or creating an alternative movement.

Without considering the philosophical and practical social aspects that Teikei have, there is a tendency in Japan that the discussion will become prolonged both regarding the theories of the techniques or methods and how to fit into the market.<sup>9)</sup> Such system theory discussion can become confused or complicated. This is when it may end up being regarded as out of step with the times or old-fashioned.

Of course the economical relationship to live together supporting each other is possible. This is mutual cooperation. Producers deciding their own product prices is not disturbing the freedom of consumers' choice or inflicting the price by giving the first priority on the income of the producer without thinking about consumers. It does require mutual understanding and self-motivation. Thus, the first purpose of organic farming is not to make a lot of money.

My view is that the attitude of sustainable farming with natural materials circulating around without using much money is based on a philosophy or a way of thinking and living. It is not based on seeking for more profit by making the scale larger through quantitative expansion and boosting efficiency buying materials as commodities.

I would like to redefine the issue of people's livelihood that Teikei brought up and reconfirm its historical meaning as a social dynamics in our modern society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In that sense, I would really like to study and explore the process and experience how social/community movements such as CSA and AMAP have developed under the circumstances where markets have already been built up.

As far as I can see, the practice and philosophy of Teikei is clearer in meaning and currently good enough to be reconfigured and adopted on a wider scale, when the groundwork and structure of the time is converging. Also, people are being trapped by the commodity economy collapse and its ideology. The practice and philosophy of Teikei have not faded with the changing

times and will survive as a new philosophy and practice.

### **The social development of Teikei (The evolution of Teikei)**

"Teikei Networks for Forests, Homelands and the Sea – All Connected Through Humus" published by Japan Organic Agriculture Association appears to me to be the social expansion and development of Teikei.

We recognize that soil and humus, the principle of the forest, is the keystone, the most important factor in the nutrition and mineral cycle to manage circulation and metabolism of living organisms on this planet. This is not just a Teikei style alliance with consumers and a coexistence with nature in the limited agriculture area, but a movement to reconstruct the basis of the food activity of human beings in a cross-sectoral manner, as one of the members in nature. This foundation is fulfilled not only by distribution to the market, but through Teikei, the unity between people and nature.

This is the reconstruction of the community and people, which are torn apart by the commodity economy and the principles of the market economy. This is reforming the local self sufficiency of the fundamental food of human beings which have been weakened through globalization, and the center of the citizen power against the capital depriving process toward the natural resources of agriculture, forestry, and fishery.

In that sense, Teikei networks for organic agriculture, forestry, and fishery is significant as pointing out the social development of our modern era, showing that Teikei provides a reconstruction plan of the primary industry that is the basis of human activity. The organic agriculture movement has been given a historical role to lead local revitalization that is beyond its domain.

Co-ops have connections to the fundamental producers who produce farm, fishery and forestry products. They also have connections with the processing sector. Co-ops have the possibility to connect broadly among all steps of food production, the human basis, deepening the philosophy of Teikei. We would like to join in this movement proudly as one of the local co-operative associations.

Notes:

1) "Sharing the Harvest – A Citizen's Guide to Community Supported Agriculture" Elizabeth Henderson with Robyn Van En, 2007 (p44-45)

Japanese translation "CSA the possibility of local supporting agriculture" translated by Yamamoto

Kiyoko, expounded by Kubota Hiroko 2008 (p85)

Ms. Elizabeth Henderson has introduced the sixth principle among the co-operative association principles: "Co-operative among co-ops" and says it is a very valuable principle even for CSAs. She has described many concrete examples as many CSAs have been cooperating and "trying to build up the ways to live together."

On the other hand, most agriculture associations and consumer co-operatives repeated mergers and takeovers in order to make bigger business associations, having more and more same trade associative character seeking more profits. The national center of consumer co-operatives, Japan Consumers' Co-operative Union desires and expresses, "We want to wrestle with the companies in the same ring." They also requested the government to conclude Free Trade Agreements on imported agriculture products and the abolition of tariffs in order to provide cheap imported farm products from foreign countries for the sake of consumer profit in Japan. From "Proposals for Japanese Agriculture" by Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, 2005.

- 2) "What are Co-operative Associations" published by the Co-operative Research Institute, 1968.
- 3) Ichiraku Teruo (1906 -1994) served as an executive board member of The Norinchukin Bank (the central bank for Japan's agricultural, forestry, and fishery co-operative systems), a member of the board of directors of JA-ZENCHU (Japan Agricultural Co-operatives), and was the chairperson of the board of directors of the Co-operative Research Institute.
- 4) Japan Organic Agriculture Association was founded by Ichiraku Teruo in 1971.
- 5) The first principle of the Ten Principles of Teikei, 1978.
- 6) "The philosophical aspect of Teikei is fairly common in North American CSA." From "Sharing the Harvest" introduction by Robyn Van En (p15 in the version printed in Japan).
- 7) The vision and the social movement which have a philosophical point of view and an awareness of the problems of the modern world can be connected with self-conscious worldwide movements, which wrestle with the structure of our modern world and modern society. Some examples are the actions of E. F. Schumacher and Satish Kumar, the Slow Food Movement in Italy, and critics such as Vandana Shiva who opposes the deprivation of culture and life in the era of globalization.

Lohas (Lifestyles Of Health And Sustainability) is based on marketing, but here in Japan it is also accepted as "reconsidering our lifestyle."

- 8) In the process of economic democratization after WW2 in Japan, the old industrial associations were broken up and co-operative associations were formed among the people in the same trade. These include agriculture co-operative associations, fisheries co-operatives, forestry co-operatives, and consumers' co-operative societies. This is how common interest groups gathered with an emphasis on protecting the interest of co-operative members.

In the democratizing process of agriculture, agriculture co-operative associations were formed in order to work together for living as well as to become subsistence farmers' co-operatives in the postwar system to increase food production and overcome food shortages as a part of cultivating small farmers through farmland liberation and the dissolution of the feudal landlord system. As a result, the government took the role to control food, especially rice, and the modernization of agriculture pursuing yield improvement to the utmost limit by introducing and using much chemical fertilizers and pesticides. At the same time, postwar farm villages were in a process to function as the source of labour supply for heavy chemical industries to support the nation's rapid economic growth as well as to change the dependency on agriculture.

On the other hand, consumer co-operatives started after WW2, supported by laws to cultivate consumer groups (co-ops) for economical modernization in order to make an attempt to hold out against the exclusive production and circulation capital as well as to aid the dissolution of the powerful Zaiibatsu, Japan's prewar family-run conglomerates. However, with population inflow from farm villages to cities in the period of rapid economic growth, the formation of a mass consumer society had prepared the social groundwork to bring up consumer movements to protect their interest.

As for forestry, the precious forest resources in the postwar tree-planting programs expecting domestic timber demand were deserted because of the trend to switch to cheap imported timber. As resources of energy, it was superseded by coal and oil, and the Satoyama agricultural homeland regions where materials had been collected for fertilizer making used for farming and forest as a continuous space of human activities were deserted. Thus, in the end,

forestry co-operatives have lost their basis.

These are all postwar processes that have been deeply affected by the historical situation in Japan.

- 9) Organic agriculture techniques have been learnt from nature over time, and diverse integrated farming techniques have been developed through man's observation power and the relationship between human beings and nature. This includes the seeds which were kept growing in the local climate, the traditional and cultural wisdom, the technical manner to be able to think with our own head and body as the actual climate changes, the respect for diversity, the seeding and planting techniques which involve responsibility and co-trusting with consumers, and much more. However, recently in Japan with the large flow of institutionalization and marketization of organic farming products, there is a tendency to take out the techniques only and schematize them.

- 10) "Organic agriculture, forestry and fishery Project based on Humus" (graph, 2010) by Uozumi Michio (please refer to p.12-13)

#### Joso Consumer Co-operative

Founded in 1975. Aspiring for local-support and independence, resigned from Japan's Consumers' Co-operative Union which had been growing into a mammoth through mergers and takeover efforts by 1996. The principles of Joso are: "Producing things, people and communities." The number of union members is 6,000. Joso is active in the local area in the south part of Ibaraki and the north part of Chiba, Japan.

#### Oishi Mitsunobu

Born in 1957. Graduated from Tsukuba University. Entered Joso Consumer Co-operative in 1983, became a board member in 1988, has been a senior director since 1997. He is the head of Ibaraki Organic Agriculture Promotion Forum.