

An Appeal from Fukushima

The Value of Organic Farming and Hope for a Sustainable Society

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<Inability of nuclear power plants to coexist with people>

I am an organic farmer in Fukushima. I am here today to make a claim to you and all the other farmers that nuclear power plants cannot coexist with people or farming. This is not only my hope, but also Fukushima's hope: to create a future that is free of nuclear power plants.

Three years and seven months have passed since the earthquake, the tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident, which occurred in March 2011. Since the nuclear disaster, the large amount of radiation that escaped in the air has been contaminating mountains, forests, farms, and oceans, not only in Fukushima, but also in nearby parts of eastern Japan. Needless to say, it has been greatly affecting our daily lives, as well as the communities that we live in. The damage brought by the disaster was especially severe to us organic farmers, as our main focus has always been to farm and crop in the most eco-friendly manner possible; one that does not disturb or disrupt the ecosystem.

Since the disaster, we have suffered a lot. Many of us lost our houses and farms to the tsunami. A hundred and thirty thousand people are still unable to go back to their homes. Little children are now living under the constant fear of radiation. And sadly, we have also lost some farmers to suicide. But even in devastation, we kept on farming and remained hopeful.

<Collaborative investigations between farmers and university researchers>

We have conducted numerous tests on our soils, water, and products for radiation, while also checking our bodies with a whole-body counter. As you know, radiation is invisible and has no smell. In order to make the damage of radiation visible to everyone's eyes, we are conducting factual investigations in collaboration with

researchers from Fukushima University. Unfortunately, the contamination of mountains and forests is very serious. We found that the radioactive cesium was being absorbed into fallen leaves, and eventually taken into trees as they decomposed into the ground. Mushrooms and edible wild plants from Fukushima are currently banned from shipping. Decontamination of the mountains and forests is one of the biggest tasks that we are facing now.

On the other hand, the amount of radiation in our rice and vegetables had drastically dropped to almost none within two years of the disaster. Mr. Kiichi Nakajima, an honorary professor at Ibaraki University, called this the “Miracle of Fukushima.” After conducting collaborative research with Mr. Masanori Nonaka, a professor of soil science at Niigata University, we found that cultivated soil absorbs radioactive cesium underground, and it stabilizes it there. When radiation is stable in the ground, it does not contaminate farming products. Furthermore, the research revealed that when a land is fertile with a large amount of microbial activities (meaning it is cultivated organically), it tends to stabilize radiation easier.

I was very impressed by the power of soil. I believe that organic farming is the way to recover lands from contamination.

<Value of organic farming and power of farming communities>

Japan is one of the countries in the temperate monsoon zone, where the history of rice farming goes back three-thousand and five hundred years. For many of those years, we have been cultivating our lands to create fertile soils.

It hurts every time I see abandoned farms in the evacuation zone that are no longer used due to radiation. One of my farmer friends started farming inside of the evacuation zone, only sixteen kilo meters away from Fukushima Daiichi, to test out how organic rice grows there. The land surrounding his rice field was completely covered with weeds, as nobody took care of it. Eventually insects like dragonflies came back to the land, but surprisingly they only stayed around his rice field. I was truly touched to see this.

As organic farmers, our duty is not only producing rice and vegetables, but also preserving the beautiful landscapes that surround us, and maintaining the rich

ecosystem within them. At the same time, it is also our responsibility to grow a community where people of all ages work together to provide their own food and energy. A major shift in energy is taking place in Fukushima right now. People are more focused on renewable energy, including solar power, hydropower, biomass, and extract oil from rapeseeds and soybeans. I myself have recently switched my tractor to run with vegetable oil.

Japan is a country with the longest average life span. This is probably thanks to our diet, which consists of various seasonal ingredients including rice, vegetables, fish, wheat, and soybeans. "Washoku," traditional Japanese cuisine has recently been added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage. I believe that farmers are also a part of this "Intangible Cultural Heritage," with their long years of dedication to this country.

<A shift from a materialistic society to a humanistic society>

When the disaster occurred in Fukushima, we received much support from different communities, NPOs, NGOs, and some major companies. New relationships are now being built between Fukushima and urban communities. A lot of college students, city residents, and corporate employees are coming to Fukushima to experience farming. We are also receiving a new generation of young organic farmers who have decided to move to Fukushima. I also hope that supporting companies will be able to help us with our local businesses in the future, and support our development of renewal energy.

When the economy grew, many people shifted to living in a materialistic society, where everything is mass-produced, mass consumed, and mass-disposed. I think it's time for us to change that. I believe that communities grow stronger in small towns and villages, especially when farming together. We need to live in a humanistic society where all lives are equally valued.

We have a dream in Fukushima. It is to create a sustainable society where children run freely in the fields. A society where everyone, including students, city people, the elderly, people with disabilities, and even dragonflies and frogs, all coexists with one another.

Let's create a society that is strongly tied to its communities, and is free of nuclear power plants.

Thank you.