

Organic agriculture and *teikei* in Japan after nuclear plant explosion in March, 2011

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Key words: Japan, organic agriculture, *Teikei*, nuclear plant explosion

Author's Background

1. Japan Organic Agriculture Association

Summary

The contamination of radioactive matters to the field by the nuclear accident gave damage to the agriculture in eastern part, and especially, the organic farming because suffered serious damage because it puts the importance on the food safety and environment conservation. Beside the loss of income, there were various uncountable damages that can hardly be compensated. Under such severe situation, various supports among organic farmers, and between organic farmers and consumers were tried. The ideas to get out of the divergence between farmers (rural) and consumers (urban) need to be sought learning from the experiences of *teikei*.

Background

After huge earthquake in 11th March, 2011, severe nuclear power plant explosion occurred. This accident caused serious damage on the livelihood of people in Fukushima and surrounding areas. Radioactive matters fell on the ground and crops were contaminated. Farmers were restricted to sell contaminated crops, and even if not contaminated, fears and rumors restrained consumers of purchase.

Present paper examines the damage on organic farmers caused by the accident, and the struggles and cooperation to recover from the damage by analyzing the result of quantitative surveys to general consumers (internet survey to two thousand people), and quantitative survey (to 26 consumers *teikei* groups, 15 organic farmers groups and 58 organic farmers) and interviews to *teikei* (affiliation) farmers and *teikei* consumer groups.

1. Influence on organic farming and *teikei*

After the accident, almost *teikei* farmers groups and consumers groups held study meetings jointly to understand the situation, and the meetings were opened to general consumers, too. More than half the affected farmer groups measured the radioactive matters by own expenses. Some *teikei* consumer groups that purchase products from affected farmers decreased the members, but by contrast, members of *Teikei*

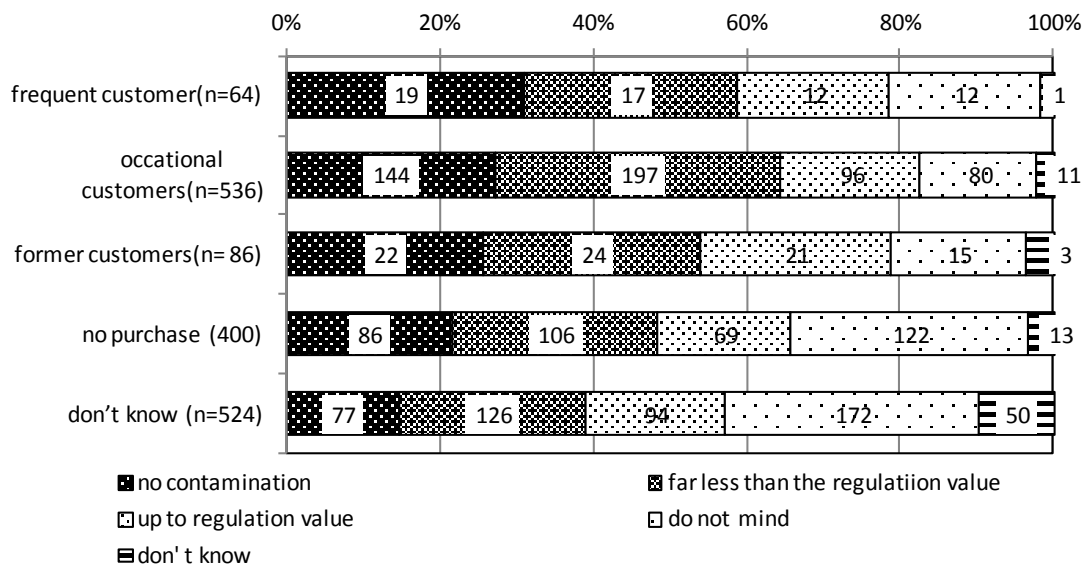
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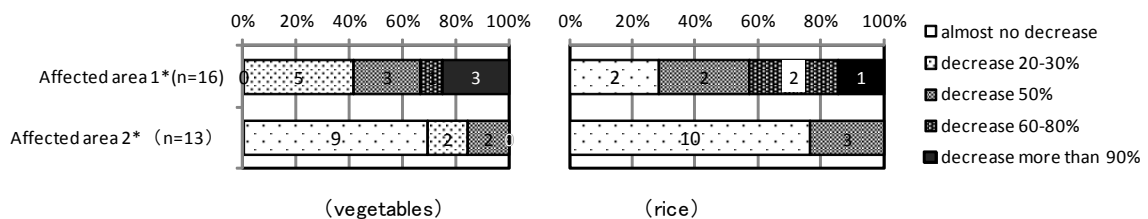
consumer groups increased in unaffected area, which showed the reliability of *Teikei*.

The economic damage to farmers was severe since the more heavily one depends on the organic products, the more sensitive was his/her reaction to products from affected area. Food safety was one of the most important reasons why consumers buy organic products, and it was no wonder that consumers did not like to buy "suspicious" food. It was interesting that those who try to make handmade food were not so sensitive as "wise consumers with keen eyes". It was ironical that the food industry and local people supported affected farmers by continuing buying their products. The serious divergence between farmers/rural and consumers/urban in the consuming society was the cause of the accident and also was the result of the accident.



(source: JOAA, 2012)

Figure 1. The extent of acceptable radioactive contamination by the frequency of organic products.



* "Affected area 1" covers the severely affected area (prefectures where the leafy vegetables were prohibited to be shipped), and the "Affected area 2!" covers less affected area (prefectures where other products were prohibited to ship and the prefectures the contamination into the drinking water were monitored)

(source: JOAA, 2012)

Figure 2. The decrease of organic farmers' income in 2011

Organic farmers provide various producer goods like manure, fallen leaves and straws by their own. Such production materials were also contaminated, and their use became impossible. Besides the economic loss by refraining from the use of self supplied materials, breakdown of resource circulation and the mental damage on their efforts and pride to conserve the environment was uncountable. The compensation scheme processed by Tokyo Electric Power was too complicated, and did not support such uncountable losses. Two years after the accident, the Dispute Reconciliation Committee for Nuclear Damage Compensation set in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology announced that special consideration is needed for the compensation for organic farmers since organic farmers and consumers put special importance on the safety. To realize truly safe society, one *teikei* consumer group sued nearby nuclear plant to stop the operation after the accident.

2. Supports by consumers and farmers

Various supports were offered from consumers and organic farmers. More than 60% of consumer groups supported the affected farmers, and those who did not do special supports answered that they thought that to continue the relationship with reliance is the support, or farmers declined special support. Sixty percent of *Teikei* farmers in non-affected area, and 40% of non-affected consumers groups also supported the affected farmers beyond direct *teikei* relationship.

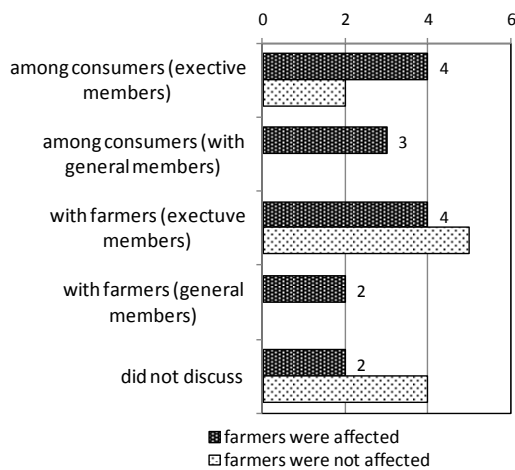


Fig 3-1 discussion by consumers groups

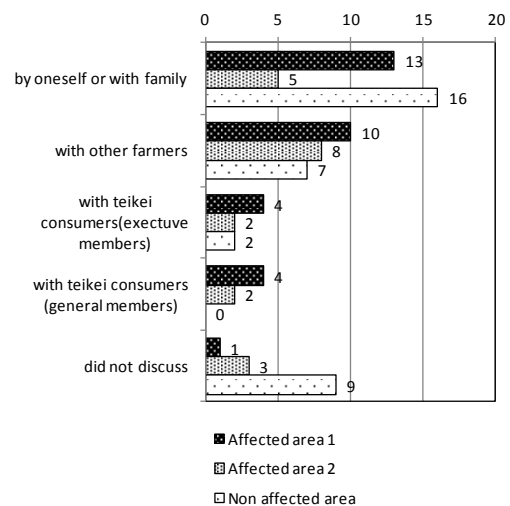


Fig3-2 discussion by organic farmers

(source: JOAA,2012)

Figure 3. Discussion about the measures to radioactive contamination

Machineries for deep plowing to embed the radioactive matters were sent to the affected area by

donations from many people, and consumers gathered to the fields to help the work to decrease the radioactive matters. With regards to the complicated compensation process of Tokyo Electric Power, consulting support has been done among organic farmers. Such feelings of mutual help and solidarity encourage the affected farmers, and also give deep learning to consumers.

Conclusion

The accidents are forgotten gradually, and the government is hastening to reopening nuclear plants as if the damage was trivial and "under control". The organic farming put importance on the food safety and environmental conservation, the material and mental damage was so serious. Even contaminated, farmers have to continue farming. Under such serious situation, various supports among organic farmers and between consumers were tried. Such feelings of mutual help and solidarity encourage the affected farmers, and also give deep learning to consumers. The ideas to get out of the divergence between farmers (rural) and consumers (urban), learning from the experiences of *teikei*, need to be sought seriously not to reopen the nuclear plant.