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# From Agribusiness to Food Democracy

## Comparative Study on Agricultural Policy and Organic Farming in France and in Japan

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### Abstract

Food and agriculture are main fields of human sciences. This paper elucidates changes in food and agriculture that have progressed in France and in Japan during the 20th century and presents some attempts to create a new agri-food system.

Agribusiness has developed as a branch of industry since the beginning of the 20th century. After the invention of agricultural machinery, it invented chemical fertilizer and pesticide, and genetically modified crops from the 1980s. Such technologies now strongly affect agriculture worldwide and in Japan. Contrary to this type of agriculture is a type promoted by the French government and the European Union commission, which established new agricultural policies in the 1990s. These policies reformulate the fundamental idea of agriculture: Agriculture is not a purely economic activity, but a multi-functional activity that must be regarded as the core factor of environmental protection, local community maintenance, and local economic revitalization.

From this perspective, the EU and France have provided financial support and a path to rapid growth of organic farming. The ratio of the organic farmland in 2016 was 21.9% in Austria, 18.2% in Sweden, and 14.5% in Italy. More interesting is the case of France, where the ratio of organic farming was only 1.9% in 2007, but where it has advanced rapidly to 3.6% in 2011, and 6.6% in 2016.

By contrast, the proportion of Japan remains extremely low: only 0.1% in 2007 and 0.2% in 2011. The reasons are multiple, but apparently include failure of government agricultural reform policy, indifference of Japan Agricultural Cooperatives which profit from agrichemical sales, and lax ethics of farmers opposed to drastic changes in agriculture.

However, governmental policy is not the unique factor for the promotion of organic farming. Some farmer and consumer activities have also made great contributions to the progress of organic farming. Furthermore, such activities are developing rapidly also in Japan. These activities have common features such as relationships based on producer-consumer trust, active involvement, disclosure of information related to production, and self-determination of producers and consumers in deciding what to produce and eat. These features are common with those of democracy. This is the reason we qualify these practices as “food democracy”. Based on concrete cases, this paper is aimed at showing the future of agriculture and food systems by examining the possibilities and limits of these practices.

## Keywords

Organic farming, Food democracy, Agricultural policy, Agribusiness, AMAP

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## Introduction: A Beginning of the End of Agribusiness?

On 10th August 2018, a San Francisco Court ordered agribusiness giant<sup>1</sup> Monsanto to pay \$289 million to a former school groundkeeper dying of cancer, who accused Monsanto saying that the company's Roundup weed killer contributed his disease. The jurors unanimously agreed that the company's chemical product provoked the cancer and that the company should have provided a label warning of the potential health hazard<sup>2</sup>.

Founded in 1901, Monsanto invented saccharin for Coca-Cola and realized rapid growth as Coca-Cola expanded its operations to become a giant food company. Specialized in chemical fertilizers and herbicides as well as explosive compounds, Monsanto like other agribusiness companies was closely linked to the American government that pursued national prosperity and military buildup during the first half of the 20th century. Just after the Second World War, agribusiness companies realized a further development by taking charge of the food aid to European countries and Japan that had suffered the war damage. And in 1974, Monsanto invented Roundup that is still the most widely sold herbicide in the world.

In the 1980's, Monsanto acquired some venture companies specialized in genetic modification and invented genetically modified seeds (GM seeds) such as soybean, corn, cotton, wheat that are resistant to Roundup and pests. As plants grown from these seeds drastically reduce painful weeding and insect eradication, Monsanto could produce enormous benefits by selling seeds and pesticides in pairs. This business model was followed by other agribusiness giants like Du Pont and Syngenta that speeded up their growth during these thirty years. But this business model aiming at accumulating huge profits by selling products that are not proved secure such as pesticide and herbicide, GM seeds, growth hormone given to domestic animals, has aroused relentless criticisms and concerns especially among European consumers and farmers.

One of the strongest criticisms against Monsanto was made by French government promoting the original agricultural policy that is heterogeneous to the agriculture developing in the American continents under the influence of agribusiness. Just two days after the verdict of Monsanto's trial, French Environment Minister of Environmental Transition Nicolas Hulot announced hostility against Monsanto in the interview with the daily paper *Liberation*: This verdict is "a good luck", and it is but "a beginning of the end of the cursed Monsanto's arrogance". What France is aiming for is "creating a different mode of food and agriculture not using these chemicals". Thus, he insisted on a ban of pesticide in the near future, saying, "Although banning this chemical product tomorrow is a fantasy, the prohibition in three years is realistic" (*Liberation* 08/13/2018).

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1. Here, agribusiness refers to a branch of industries covering a wide range of activities, starting from the supply of agricultural materials, such as seeds, chemicals and tractors, to the processing of agricultural products, including livestock. When we refer to all fields concerning food production and food consumption, we use the term "agri-food system".

2. This was the first verdict against Monsanto in the US. In France, Paul François, a farmer in Charente has made war against Monsanto for twelve years. The last case was decided in favor for him on the 11th April 2019 (11/04/2019 *Libération*).

Although Hulot's remarks have certain reservations in French government<sup>3</sup>, there is a possibility that this trial will become "a beginning of the end" of agribusiness's business model. The second verdict was returned on 17th March 2019 by a federal court jury in San Francisco that condemned Monsanto to pay \$80 Million to a Californian farmer and more than 11,000 people are said to be preparing a trial against Monsanto in the United States. The stock price of Bayer AG that completed Monsanto's acquisition in last June fell 16% in three days after the first verdict. As it had already plunged by 10% in last June, Bayer AG's stock price has fallen by nearly 30% because of the purchase of Monsanto (*Le Monde* 08/14/2018). If Monsanto were to survive alone, it would probably have become bankrupt, since even Bayer AG which has a profitable drug division is in difficulty like this. It cannot be denied the possibility that this trial be "a beginning of the end" of the business model of agribusiness.

Why is agribusiness so criticized? Can organic agriculture be an alternative to the conventional agriculture directed by agribusiness companies? What kind of policy has been taken to promote organic farming by French government and the European Union Commission and what kind of achievements have been realized? What kind of agricultural policy has been adopted by Japanese government and what is the actual situation of organic farming? What kind of efforts is being taken in the private sector to realize a different kind of agriculture and food system from those subject to agribusiness? By trying to answer to these questions, this paper aims at giving an overview of the features of Japanese agricultural policy and the status quo of organic farming. In doing so, we will refer to agricultural policies of France and the EU, since the Japanese agricultural policy was once influenced by the latter; nonetheless it could not attain the desired goal by carrying out a different policy.

This paper consists of six parts. First, it depicts a short history of agribusiness giants to make understand why they could develop so quickly. Second, it examines criticisms against the type of agriculture prescribed by these giants. Third, it retraces the historical changes of French and European Union's agricultural policy to understand how it established a type of agriculture as is seen today. Four, after examining Japan's agriculture policy, it makes it clear why organic agriculture remains so underdeveloped in Japan. Five, it situates organic farming as alternative mode of agriculture directed by agribusiness. Six, it describes some attempts realized by innovative farmers and awakening consumers to change actual agri-food scape. Finally, it tries to elucidate why these attempts and practices are to be qualified for "food democracy".

## 1. Birth and Development of Agribusiness

Let's start looking back on the history of development of agribusiness companies. To begin with, we should give a glance into what is agriculture. It is obvious that civilization began with agriculture and that agriculture remains a fundamental component of civilization. Despite its importance, agriculture is a fragile component of civilization, this is because it is dependent on natural factors such as weather, soil constituents, insect damage, and crop nature. Human beings who have wished to consolidate their existence by supplying a sufficient quantity of

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3. These reservations have been manifested by the fact of demission of Hulot just a week after this interview.

food have tried to control these conditions and to exclude them from agriculture. In this sense, human history is but the history of attempts to exclude contingent and vulnerable elements in agriculture. Agribusiness is an industry that developed rapidly in the twentieth century and its main aim was to introduce the industrial model into agriculture to transform agriculture into something that can be fully manipulated and controlled<sup>4</sup>.

The agribusiness is said to have developed on three stages (Goodman, Sorj & Wilkinson 1987: 6, Lyson 2004: 19-20). The first stage is the mechanization of agriculture since the 1910s. After Henry Ford succeeded in the mass production of automobiles, agricultural machinery such as tractors were produced in large quantities to realize sweeping changes in a sector that had been dependent on humans, livestock or hydraulic power. This mechanization enabled the rapid expansion of cultivable lands and increase in agricultural yield. In the United States, the total land area under cultivation increased by 133% (from 880 million acres in 1910 to 1171 million acres in 1960) and the average farm size increased by 228% (from 138 acres to 290 acres) during the same period (Lobao and Meyer 2001: 108). In contrast, the farmers who could not purchase machinery were obliged to give up their vocation. Thus, this first step in the development of agribusiness resulted in concentration of land and scaling up of agriculture throughout the US.

The second stage in the history of agribusiness was marked by the development of the chemical industry since the 1930s. The invention of the technique to fix nitrogen enabled the production of chemical fertilizers and brought about a drastic change in the mode of agriculture by increasing soil productivity<sup>5</sup>. The New Deal policy of 1933 popularized the use of agrochemicals to rebuild the American economy through the improvement of agricultural productivity (Friedmann 1993, McMichael 2000). When the Second World War ended, there was a massive distribution of American food as aid to European countries and Japan that were exhausted by the war. It was Cargill Co., Ltd., the largest agribusiness of the day, which undertook the task of transporting food aid supplies<sup>6</sup>. After the end of the post-war chaos, agribusiness companies struggled to create new technologies that are more profitable. They succeeded in improving chemical herbicides and insecticides and inventing high-yield hybrid seeds. Since the second generation of the seeds are ineffective, farmers were obliged to purchase them every year and to become dependent on the agribusiness companies. On the other hand, the three-component set of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds invented by agribusiness was exported to the developing countries as "Green Revolution".

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4. David Goodman and others say that there are two fundamental features in agribusiness's working. The first one is "appropriation" that consists in creating the same kind of effects by industrial means as those produced in nature; one example of it is a chemical fertilizer that fixes nitrogen as leguminous plants do in nature. Another one is "substitution" that means the production of food by industrial means such as production of fructose from maize instead of sugar as an agricultural product (Goodman, Sorj & Wilkinson 1987:3).

5. During 1945 - 1980, the use of chemical fertilizer in the US increased by 715% and total crop yield increased by 75% (Lyson 2004: 21). The circumstances are the same in other countries. In the UK, for example, 70 million pounds of agricultural chemicals used in 1948 increased by 800% to 540 million in 1982, and the yield of wheat per unit area also increased from 2 tons per hectare in 1939 to 6 tons in 1980. It is considered that half of this increase is due to the use of agrochemicals (Morgan and Murdoch 2000).

6. Friedman and others assert that it was at this moment that the US strategy that aims at extending its hegemony through the food aid and the food export was established for the first time to be continued up to now (Friedmann 1993, McMichael 2000)



This thus contributed much to the expansion of agricultural production and the fulfillment of the food supply in response to the rising population in these countries. However, it also brought about negative effects such as fatigue of farmlands and serious damage to the health of local farmers (Friedmann 1993, Otero 2012)<sup>7</sup>.

The third stage in history of agribusiness was realized by the introduction of biotechnology into seed modification from the 1980's and Monsanto that had gained huge profits with the sale of powerful herbicide Round-up was the leading innovator. After having bought out venture companies specialized in biotechnology, it succeeded in producing genetically modified seeds (GM seeds) that made the crops resistant to pesticides. Then, Monsanto sold the GM seeds and pesticide as a bundled product to earn huge profits. Seeing this business model going well, other agribusiness giants began fabricating GM seeds. As a result, this business model has got a rapid development, as is shown by the fact that 94% of soybeans, 93.4% of maize, and 96% of cotton grown in the US in 2017 use GM seeds. Further, GM crops are grown not only in the United States, but also in other major food-exporting countries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Canada, where over 90 % of the soybeans, maize and canola yields are from GM crops (ISAAA 2017: 9). Furthermore, the total land surface dedicated to the cultivation of GM crops in the so-called developing countries surpassed that in industrialized countries for the first time in 2012; the difference between the two has been increasing since then (ISAAA 2017: 3). Thus, agribusiness has enjoyed rapid growth for several decades and extended its influence all over the world. In Japan, many GM seeds, except those for rice, are permitted and a large quantity of chemical fertilizers and pesticides are used despite growing concern among, and criticism by, consumers<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Criticism of Agriculture that is Prescribed by Agribusiness

The agribusiness companies have enjoyed a rapid growth for a century. However, they are now confronted with some criticisms and concerns in many countries including Japan. Let's point out some problems about a type of agriculture prescribed by agribusiness, which have been pointed out by European consumers and farmers who are the most critical about that.

The first point of criticism targets the safety of genetically modified (GM) crops. The official view of the European Food Safety Administration (EFSA) which is responsible for the safety of food in Europe is that GM crops have not be proved dangerous, neither safe. From this perspective, it imposes a demanding test to each kind of GM seed that will be introduced in the EU. It requests to prove that GM seed and conventional seed are cultivated under the same condition and that the two show no difference in itself and on the environment (EFSA 2015). As one can easily imagine, this is a condition requiring huge amounts of money

7. According to Harriet Friedman, the Green Revolution is an attempt to integrate the agricultural system of developing countries that stayed outside the world economy into the globalized economy by pressing the farmers the purchase of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and the increase of exportable agricultural products (Friedman 1993: 38, see also articles of Multiwatch 2018).

8. According to an OECD report on its member nations, Japan is ranked third, after Chile and South Korea, in the quantity of pesticide used per hectare (OECD 2017).



and time, which means a *de facto* ban. As a result, agribusiness companies have almost abandoned to penetrate the European market, so that GM crops are not cultivated within the EU, except for Spain and some other countries. Regarding food containing GM crops, the EFSA ordains to note it to all foods whose weight ratio of each ingredient is over 0.9%. As European consumers are generally very critical of GM food, this means that only GM-free food is accepted.

The second point of criticism concerns the safety of herbicides and pesticides used in pairs with GM crops. As we saw earlier, GM crops have the merit of reducing painful labor of weeding and insect eradication since they have resistance against herbicides and pests, they. Nevertheless, there is always a possibility for the farmers to overuse these items to perfect their works. Several kinds of chemicals including glyphosate, which is the main component of Round-up, are certified in 2015 as “possibly carcinogenic” by IARC, an organization dependent on the WHO. Therefore, their overuse may provoke health damage and environmental deterioration. Moreover, there is a strong criticism against the fact that so-called “super weeds” acquiring a resistance against herbicides have already been born and the use of stronger herbicides is recommended by agribusiness companies to deal with them (Brown 2005). Pressed by these criticisms, the French government has announced the policy target to ban or at least drastically reduce the use of herbicides by 2021<sup>9</sup>. As for the neonicotinoid pesticide whose harmful effects such as decrease in bees have been proved, many European countries including France have inhibited its use in September 2018.

The third point of criticism against agribusiness-directed-agriculture is its high cost. Farmers cultivating GM crops are very often faced with the increase of expenses, for they must purchase seeds every year in addition to herbicide and other chemicals. According to a statistic, the proportion of farmer ‘s take-home income to the sale price was only 9% at the end of the 20th century, compared with 41% in the 1910’s (Magdoff, Foster and Buttel 2000: 10). This decrease may be caused by augmentation of transportation costs due to the enlarged distance between the producer and the consumer, and of processing costs due to the development of food processing techniques. However, the main reason for it is the increase in production expenses such as seeds and herbicide purchase. The agri-food industry is one of the most oligopolistic fields among all industries. Only four companies, Monsanto-Bayer, Dow-Du Pont, Syngenta-China National Chemical Corporation and BASF sell GM seeds in the world. If it is the case, the price should be the compliance of these companies, not of the food producer<sup>10</sup>. As a result of increased expenses and lowered selling prices, many of the US farmers have difficulties in their business, and it is said that the suicide rate of farmers has reached four times the average in all industries (Lewontin 2000).

9. *Liberation* 14/08/2018. The most persistent opposition to the use of herbicides and insecticides has been made by the “Confédération paysanne” that is a left faction of the French farmers’ cooperatives (Bové 2014). We will later come back on their claims.

10. In the US, the oligopoly has been progressed not only in the production of seeds and chemicals for agriculture, but also in their processing process. The ratio of four major companies in the processing of beef was 72% in 1990 to become 83.5% in 2005; as for the pork, it increased from 40% in 1990 to 64% in 2005, with regard chicken broilers, from 44% in 1990 to 50% in 2000. The oligopoly has been advanced also in vegetable food processing. 40% of wheat milling was monopolized in 1982 by the largest three companies to become 63% in 2005; in terms of handling soybeans, 54% was monopolized in 1977 and 71% in 1987 by four largest companies (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2007).

The fourth point of criticism regards the changes in the mode of agriculture. As it is the case that the exhaustive cost cutting is always required by the agribusiness companies that seek to maximize their profits, only the large-scale farms engaging in monoculture with GM crops will be able to endure it. When a farm uses the GM seeds, it is obliged to contract with an agribusiness company that prescribes all the process of food production from the selection of seeds and chemicals to the decision of food distributor to sell its products. There, the farmer only supplies land, labor and money to cover all cost burdens, and the rest is the work of the agribusiness company that instructs all steps of cultivation according to the manual. In this sense, a farmer is but a laborer whose activities are prescribed in advance as if he/she worked in a big automated factory<sup>11</sup>. As agribusiness's main aim consists in removing as much as possible contingent and vulnerable elements of nature from agriculture, it regards individuality and personal knowledge that each farmer has developed in his/her career as useless. Hegemonic in large food exporting countries, such as US, Brazil, Argentina, and Canada as well as in many developing countries where the criticism against agribusiness is limited or oppressed<sup>12</sup>, agribusiness extends its influence all over the world through its cheap agricultural products produced in these countries.

### 3. French and the EU's Agricultural Policies

The EU commission and the French government are now developing original agricultural policies to realize and maintain a type of agriculture that is completely different from that advocated by agribusiness companies. These policies merit to be analyzed, since they have possibilities of altering the global trends in agriculture promoted by agribusiness companies. So, let's see how France and the EU have elaborated their agricultural policies after the World War II (WWII).

Just like any other European countries, agriculture in France after the WWII departed from the food crisis. For this reason, the primary agricultural policy of the French government after the WWII targeted at increasing a food production and ensuring a stable food supply. Following the example of American agriculture whose efficiency was confirmed by the food aid after the WWII, the French government promoted mechanization and enlargement of agricultural management unit by means of production subsidies to the farmers. This agricultural policy called "structural adjustment"<sup>13</sup> was approved by the European Economic Community (EEC) born in 1957 to be legislated as "Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)". When

11. Many European farmers say that this kind of practice is no longer something that can be called agriculture (Bové et Dufur 2000, Lewontin 2000, Lang and Heasman 2004).

12. According to ISAAA report (International Service for Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications), it was in 2012 that the total area for the GM crops cultivated in developing countries exceeded that cultivated in developed countries, and the gap between the two continues growing (ISAAA 2017: 3).

13. This policy was discussed by many scholars during the 1960s. For example, a famous American historian Gordon Wright appreciated much it in saying that it transformed drastically conservative French agricultural system established since the French Revolution (Wright 1964). In contrast, an eminent French rural sociologist Henri Mendras showed some concerns about the brutality of transformation caused by it (Mendras 1967). His concerns came from his position as rural sociologist who highly appreciated the role played by the community in rural area. His perspective was succeeded, as we will see later, by one of his students Bertrand Hervieu who would reformulate French agricultural policy in the latter half of the 1990s.

the European Community (EC) was concretized in 1967, it was carried over as it had been by ECC. This policy achieved such a great success that the food exports of the EC exceeded the food imports in 1975 and that France surpassed the US to become the world's largest wheat exporter in 1985 (Servolin 1989: chapitre 6). On the other hand, it provoked a lot of criticisms among other industrial sectors and consumers, since the PAC budget accounted for 60% and over of the common budget of the EC.

The criticism about French agricultural policy came also from the farmers' side. As the agricultural subsidies were offered in proportion to the quantity of production, this subsidy system is more profitable for large agricultural producers than small farmers. The former controlled the French mainstream agricultural syndicates, FNSEA (Fédération National des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles), which kept a close relationship with the conservative parties that held power for 30 years (Delorme 1996) and whose administration was monopolized by large producers of wheat of the Paris Basin and large dairy farmers in Normandy (Fouilleux 2000; Pesche et Hrabanski 2010). Contrary to them were the small diversified farmers run by family; they were concentrated in Massif Central and the southwestern part of France and protested to the French government against its policy which, according to them, will distinguish them if it is left unchanged. Supported by some agronomists, such as Gilles Allaire and François Pernet of INRA (Institut National des Recherches Agricoles) and Pierre Muller of CNRS (Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques) (Deguara 2004; Martin 2005), they elaborated a new definition of agriculture<sup>14</sup>, and gave birth to an organization called Confédération paysanne (CP) in 1987, a left faction of French Agricultural syndicates (Martin 2000).

This new group criticized French agricultural policy and FNSEA as "productionist", since they targeted at maximizing the agricultural production with an extensive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The type of agriculture that this group advocated was completely different from that promoted by the French government and FNSEA: it should be a diversified agriculture that combines cereal cultivation and cattle raising; it should be friendly to the environment, minimizing the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticide; it should be run, not by large corporate management, but by family management; it is desirable to develop international relationship with the farmers in the developing countries (Daguera 2004; Martin 2005). These innovative ideas of agriculture were partly recognized by the socialist government born in 1981 with the victory of Francois Mitterrand (Servolin 1989: chap.8). But they remained marginal because of the hegemony of the FNSEA over the French society<sup>15</sup>.

In the early 1990s the EC commission and the French government came to feel acute difficulties to maintain their protracted agricultural policies. This was for some reasons. First, in the GAT Uruguay Round that began in 1986, the old-fashioned productionist model that encouraged agricultural production and export of agricultural products by providing subsidies was declared inappropriate in terms of trade fairness. Second, the increase of the budget for agricultural sector appeared insupportable to many politicians and citizens. Third, when the European Union was scheduled to be born with the participation of ex-socialist countries, the

14. This type of agriculture was called "Agriculture différente" by P. Muller and qualified as "Résistance paysanne" by F. Pernet (Martin 2005 :187).

15. These ideas of agriculture will be recognized officially by the French government and the EU Commission to become the basis of the reformed PAC in the 2000s. They will be even welcomed by the FNSEA that was the most fervent adversary of the CP in the 1980s (Daviron et Voituriez 2010).

anxieties of increase of agricultural budget and the objections by liberal countries like the UK and the Netherlands made the maintenance of the old system difficult (Delorme 1993; Josling, Tngerman and Mahe 1996).

To answer to these criticisms and anxieties, Ray MacSharry, then the EC Commissioner for Agriculture, proposed a “revolutionary” (Fouilleux 2004:242) reform plan of CAP in 1991. He proposed a significant reduction in the intervention price for cereals, oilseeds and protein crops (about 30% of reduction) and a partial limitation of land use (about 20%). As this proposal would raise a huge objection of the farmers whose income would decrease considerably, he proposed to procure farmers with direct payments tied to hectares of land cultivated. These proposition that were qualified as “decoupling” had the advantage of being less trade distorting; they had therefore possibilities that they would be welcomed by the GATT commission (Coleman and Tangermann 1999). In addition to these proposals, MacSharry proposed to introduce a mechanism of modulation of the direct payments in taking account of the “greening” of agriculture<sup>16</sup> and of the scale of management unit (Grant 1995; Fouilleux 2000).

These proposals provoked huge oppositions from some agricultural syndicates including FNSEA. However, they were finally accepted with the supports of the liberal countries and some other syndicates (Coleman and Tangermann 1999). In France, this reform plan (especially its greening and preferential treatment of small sale units) was not easily advanced because of the oppositions of the FNSEA and conservative party linked to it<sup>17</sup>. Finally, it was the socialist government of Lionel Jospin and rural sociologist Bertrand Hervieu who was then a policy adviser of the French Ministry of Agriculture, who played an important role to formulate a new law concerning her agricultural policy<sup>18</sup>. Inspired by the claims of the farmers affiliating with CP, Hervieu and others elaborated a new definition of agriculture for a new law that was established as “Law of Agriculture Guidelines (LOA) in 1999” (Lowea, Bullerb andl Ward 2002). This law presented in its first chapter basic ideas to redefine the agriculture: Agriculture is not to be considered as merely economic activity, but as multidimensional activity that spans economic, social and environmental aspects; Agriculture constitutes a core factor for realizing local revitalization and sustainable development; Agriculture thus defined can be performed mainly not by large-scale farming units but by small-scale farms managed by family. The basic idea of French/European agriculture, “multifunctionality of agriculture”, was clearly stated here<sup>19</sup>.

16. In 1985, the EC Commission published a “Green Paper” in which it pointed out some risks of environmental destruction by agriculture and encouraged the reformulation of agriculture toward environmental protectionism (CEC 1985). MacSharry’s proposal of modulation for the greening came from the ideas included in this paper.

17. As the direct payments to farmers made the mechanism of subsidy transparent, French farmers could understand that the greater part of the subsidy had been payed to large producers who monopolized the administration of the FNSEA. This weakened the influence of the FNSEA and made the influence of the CP spreading among small scale farmers in Massif Central and the southwestern part of France (Delorme 2004).

18. Lionel Jospin won the election of the National Assembly in 1997 to be nominated as French prime minister. During the election, the socialist party was supported by the “Verts”. Therefore, his government needed to execute a policy friendly to the environment (Delorme 2004).

19. This notion of “multi-functionality of agriculture” has been elaborated already. It first appeared in the “Rio Declaration on Environment and Development” in 1992, followed by the discussion in the “OECD minister-level meeting” in 1998, and the FAO session in 1999 (Pingaut 2004, Delorme 2004).

This movement in France was reflected directly in the revision of the EU's CAP, since Hervieu was one of the members of the EU's agricultural committee. In "Agenda 2000", a reform plan for the EU's CAP, a new policy was launched in place of the old one. It proposed to implement direct payments to the farmers according to their past agricultural performance in return for abolishing former production subsidies; it proposed also to reduce payment to farmers and to utilize this reduced sum for the rural sustainable development (the proportion between the two could be decided by each government). Thus, the Common European agricultural policy is reorganized as having two pillars: one is to pay directly compensation to farmers and another is to strive for rural sustainable development through agriculture (Gray 2000; Lowea, Bullerb andl Ward 2002). After this reformulation, the idea of "multifunctionality of agriculture" was regarded as basics of the "European Model of Agriculture" (Fouilleux 2004: 246); and some measures, such as Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation, were taken to concretize this notion into policy and the environmental part of the CAP budget increased year by year<sup>20</sup> (Potter and Burney 2002; Fouilleux 2004)..

Not only the new policy was approved by farmers, but also it was appreciated by other members of the society; consumers and environmental protection organizations who are not directly related to agriculture also welcomed it. In France where farmers exert strong political pressure, the majority of rural development fund is provided to the farmers who were engaging in sustainable agriculture like organic agriculture and agriculture realized in less favored area; this made possible a rapid growth of organic farming in France, as we will see later. In the UK where the pressure of the environmental organization is strong, this fund is assigned mainly for environmental protection, landscape conservation, and regional development to satisfy urban consumers and environmental protection organizations. Thus, by positioning agriculture at the center of environmental protection activities, the French and the EU's new agricultural policies succeeded in changing greatly the old viewpoint which regarded agriculture as a delayed activity to be reformed and in arousing wide interests in agriculture and food among the consumers who are living in the city.

## 4. Japanese Agricultural Policy and Failure of Its Reform

As well as the GATT Uruguay Round affected agricultural policies of the French government and the EC Commission, it made a heavy impact on agricultural policy of the Japanese government. And the very idea of multifunctionality of agriculture, which was the key concept for the reformulation of France's and the EC's agricultural policies, was discussed

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In the latter session, it was said: "Agriculture is intrinsically multifunctional in character. Furthermore, all agricultural activity and related land use leads directly to other non-agricultural functions ranging over social, environmental, economic and cultural goods and services, which can result in significant benefits or costs" (FAO 1999).

20. As the French new law and the EU's Agenda 2000 were the guidelines for the policy making, they took a few years to be implemented concretely. In France, it was after a series of conferences called "Grenelle Environnement", held in 2007 that brought together the government, local authorities, trade unions, business and voluntary sectors to draw up a plan of action to tackle the environmental issues and sustainable development, that these guidelines were transformed into concrete policies. This year marked a turning point of the organic farming in France that would develop quickly here after.



also among the Japanese scholars and administrative officers since 1981. So, we can find a kind of parallelism among these political entities so distanced. However, the discussion in the Uruguay Round did not bring about a profound transformation of Japan's agricultural policy, unlike European countries that undertook fundamental changes in their policies. To understand why it was less effective in Japan, we have to go back into history of Japan's agricultural policy after the WWII.

Just after the Japan's defeat in August 1945, its limited territory was overcrowded by the populations repatriated from its erstwhile overseas colonies. Moreover, because the youth from rural area had been recruited for military service and all the plants to make agrochemicals had been destroyed by air raids, the agriculture was beset in acute difficulty and the whole nation suffered from a food shortage. So, it was natural that one of the first tasks of the Japanese government under the Allied occupation was to promote the modernization of agriculture.

Here the modernization of agriculture had two meanings. The first was the democratization of rural society called "Agricultural Land Reform", which the Japanese government tackled in 1947 under the pressure of the occupation forces called General Headquarters (GHQ). Thinking that the prewar authoritarian social structure had supported Japan's past fascist regime, which had provoked the war against China and the US, GHQ urged the Japanese Government to undertake a drastic reform of land ownership. In fact, about half of the cultivated fields in prewar Japan were owned by large landowners and half the farmers were tenant farmers (Noma 1956). Then, the Japanese government compelled landlords having over 3 hectares (over 12 hectares in Hokkaido) to divide into small parcels of one hectare and to sell them to tenant farmers at a low price. As a result, the tenancy lands which comprised 45.9% of the total cultivable lands before this reform decreased to 9.9% (Kishi 1996: 63). Many of the autonomous small farmers that this reform created were integrated into the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (JA) that were established with the law enacted in the same year.

The second meaning of modernization of agriculture was the mechanization by introduction of small machines like cultivators and the intensive use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides, which were modeled on American agriculture. The first small mechanic cultivators were introduced around 1950 and, by 1960, they could be seen everywhere in Japan. The chemical industry developed rapidly so as to be able to export ammonium sulfate in 1950. The increase in the use of agrochemicals facilitated by the development of chemical industry and the growing enthusiasm of small independent farmers to produce rice enabled a rapid increase in agricultural production. However, it was this increase in the production of agrichemicals that provoked the pollution and disease in many parts of Japan; the environmental devastation in Minamata Sea was but one example<sup>21</sup>.

Encouraged by this productionist policy, the production of rice that is the staple food in Japan expanded rapidly nationwide. The average annual yield of 9.4 million tons of rice in 1946-50 became an annual production of 13.7 million tons 20 years later. At the same time, the working hours required to carry out rice cultivation per hectare decreased significantly: It was 1961 hours in 1952 and 644 hours in 1980 (Kishi 1996: 83-87). This reduction of working hours engendered supernumerary in rural areas. It was this that made possible for the rural

21. It was Chisso Company, one of the largest agribusiness companies in Japan, which provoked pollution and disease of the Minamata Sea.

population to move to the urban area to become employees or to carry on a side job by continuing to live in the rural area.

In the 1960s, Japanese society experienced a high economic growth. In 1963, the average household income of the rural population exceeded that of the urban population for the first time and the rural households maintained their lead for the next twenty years. This increase in the farm income was mainly because of the second job held by farmers; the ratio of agricultural income to the total income per farm was 53% in 1960 and 19% in 1985 (Kishi 1996: 325). As the farmers became rich and living in comfort, the JA which represented all the farmers developed into a powerful political and economic organization. As a powerful pressure group, it forced the government to guarantee the purchase of all the rice produced in the country at a high price. Satisfied with this high purchase price and large investment in the agricultural sector by the government, the farmers became zealous supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party (the so-called conservative party) that held power for forty years. Further, owing to its close relationship with the government, the JA monopolized the purchase of rice from farmers and could gain huge profits by selling exclusively chemical fertilizers and pesticides to the farmers. During the half a century, the JA developed into Japan's largest private organization with 4.7 million members, 216,000 staff members, and JPY 7.2 trillion yen (USD 65 billion d.) in sales in 2011 (Homma 2014:84)<sup>22</sup>.

This is the positive side of the transformation of agricultural system in postwar Japan. However, there is a negative side too. Most of the farmers, whose life stability were guaranteed by the government's protectionist policy, lost all enthusiasm in agriculture. They never tried to engage in the improvement of agriculture by introducing new techniques and enlarging of their individual parcels of cultivable land. Further, the massive profit gained by the JA from selling agrochemicals made this nationwide organization against the development of organic farming.

This conservative and enervate attitude of the farmers and the JA made the agricultural income so low that most of the farmers became part-time farmers and that the agriculture became an unattractive occupation for the younger generation. The farmers' sons and daughters did not want to continue their parent's occupation and decided to leave the countryside to become workers in urban areas. The result is the ceaseless outflow and aging of the rural population. In 2012, the average age of farmers was 66 years and many villages, especially villages in mountainous districts, are being abandoned day by day. Further, the food self-sufficiency rate, measured in calories, fell to 39% in the same year (Homma 2014: 91sq.).

This deplorable situation of Japanese agriculture filled the government with a sense of crisis. Further, the rapid development of Japanese industries during the 1970s raised exports and the export-import gap with the US enlarged, this got the US government to advance a claim for the import liberalization of agricultural products made in the country. Therefore, the Japanese government felt a strong need for reorganization of its agricultural policy in the early 1980s. In 1981, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (hereafter Ministry of Agriculture) published a paper in which the notion of "multifunctionality of agriculture" was pronounced for

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22. It is also one of the five largest banks (one of the twenty largest banks in the world) and, by far, the largest insurance company in Japan.



the first time<sup>23</sup>. However, this notion did not be developed, since the priority of the Japanese government was to promote agricultural development to enable a decrease in the cost of agricultural production in preparation for import liberalization.

When the GATT Uruguay Round began in 1986, the US requested Japan to lift the ban on the import of agricultural products including rice. This provoked a huge opposition campaigns by the JA and the farmers that said that the rice is something “essential of Japanese culture” and that if the rice is imported in Japan, it will damage the specificity of Japanese culture. Evidently, this statement is but a nationalistic one and there was no room that it was accepted at the Uruguay Round. Therefore, the Japanese government presented a notion of “food sovereignty” to enforce this statement, which means that each country has a right to maintain import limitations for food to protect domestic food production. However, this notion was rejected at the Round, supported only by a few food import countries, such as South Korea, Switzerland, and Norway (Saeki 1990: 178)<sup>24</sup>. Some scholars and administrative officials who were conscious of international trends, such as Soda Osamu<sup>25</sup> and Kada Ryohei of Kyoto University and Tsutaya Eiichi of the Ministry of agriculture, gave a caution to the Ministry of agriculture and advised to realize a radical reform of its policy toward agriculture friendly to the environment (Soda 1989; Kada 1990, 1996; Tsutaya 2000). Unfortunately, their voices were drowned out by the nationalistic voices led by the JA and politicians; the Ministry of agriculture could not implement any reform of its policy when the Uruguay Round closed.

Some years later, when the nationalistic voices died down, the Japanese government enacted a new agricultural law, called “Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas” (1999) to change drastically its agricultural policy. This new law consists of four basic ideas: ensuring stable supply of food, demonstrating multifaceted functions of agriculture, developing sustainable agriculture, and promoting rural society (Ministry of Agriculture 1999). Obviously, the enactment of this new law was realized under the influence of the discussion in OECD in 1998 on the notion of multifunctionality of agriculture (see note 19). In fact, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture requested the Japan Academy in 2000 to investigate into the notion of multifunctionality of agriculture. The official answer made by the Japan Academy contributed to clarify the meaning and validity of this notion (Japan Academy 2001). However, its answer could not change the orientation of agriculture, unlike in France and the EU where this notion

23. This paper called “Basic orientation of the agricultural policy for the 1980s” said : “As a contact zone between nature and human, agriculture has some multifaceted functions and roles, such as promoting human sensibility and creativity, transmitting original ethnic culture, and forming a cultural climate that is unique in each local space” (Society for New Agricultural Policy 1981 : 136).

24. Saeki Naomi, an economist of Tokyo University, criticized severely the Japanese government for its obsession with secrecy at the Uruguay Round: “As for the detail of discussions at the Uruguay Round, no information has been given to Japanese people: we know nothing about what kind of proposal was made by the Japanese government, what kind of discussions were made, and what kind of compromise was made at the Uruguay Round” (Saeki 1990: 3). This secrecy was a major point of difference with European countries where all the discussions made at the Uruguay Round were disclosed. It should be one of the most fundamental reasons for failure of reform of Japan’s agricultural policy that stayed retrogressive after the Round.

25. Soda Osamu, famous agriculturalist of Kyoto University wrote in 1990: “We must say that the argument brought forward by the Japanese government at the GATT Uruguay Round was on a law level. Our government should have talked about the notion of multi-functionality of agriculture and presented original and future-oriented views about the agriculture of the 21th century that will be performed by small scale farmers in the Afro-Asian countries” (Soda 1989: 183). We can imagine from these words that the idea of “multi-functionality of agriculture” was shared by many Japanese scholars at this time.

was established as a basic idea for the reformulation of their agricultural policies. It was very probably because this notion was shared only by some scholars and administrative officials and that most of the farmers did not want drastic changes in agriculture under the influence of the JA which recommended the old-fashioned mode of agriculture because it gained a huge profit out of a sale of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

A change came from different entity. In the early years of the 2000s, the Democratic Party of Japan tried to incorporate the EU's agricultural policy into its manifesto, thereby bringing a drastic change in Japan's agricultural policy. Till then, a large part of the budget of the Ministry of agriculture was earmarked for rice field improvement. Considering that this budget was a kind of disguised subsidy to the rural population and that it contributed to the consolidation of the influence that the JA had over farmers because it alone decided how the budget would be invested, the Democratic Party promised to reduce it and to provide direct payments to the farmers to win their support. When it won the general election in 2009, it implemented the policy of direct transferring to farmers the money saved by reducing the budget for rice field improvement. It also abolished the earlier policy of reducing the acreage of cultivated rice fields to avoid overproduction of rice which led to the deterioration of paddy field and rural environment. Although this policy was theoretically correct, it had a serious shortcoming. It accepted superficially the EU's policy to make direct payments to farmers, while ignoring the basic idea that the agriculture is a multifunctional activity.

Since agriculture is characterized by its multifunctionality and contributes greatly to the promotion of environmental protection, preservation of the landscape, and maintenance of the regional population and economy, it is reasonable to provide direct compensation to the farmers who provide these public goods through their daily activities. If the public has to perform all these functions, a huge cost burden will arise, so it is natural for farmers producing such public goods to get compensation from the government; however, this should be conditional. The compensation should not be the same for all farmers; it should be based on their actual contribution in promoting these goods. A farmer, for example, who engages in organic agriculture and contributes much for the environment protection should be given a higher compensation than a conventional farmer. For the same reason, a new farmer or a farmer who tries to accumulate abandoned lands to enlarge his/her cultivable field should be provided an additional compensation. Nevertheless, the politics implemented by the Democratic Party neglected these considerations and distributed equally to all farmers. Its politics was therefore criticized even by some farmers as "pork-barrel politics" and by consumers as "favoritism" toward farmers at the expense of consumers. Although it was one of the best agricultural policies implemented in postwar Japan, it was not able to produce expected results since it lacked an understanding of a basic idea of agriculture.

That is how the reform plan of agricultural policy ended in failure in Japan. The new and innovative law of agriculture of 1999 has remained ineffective and most of the budget of the Ministry of agriculture continued to be invested in rice field improvement. It is true that this investment ensured a spike in income of farmers, who also engaged in industrial works in rural areas: but it could not make Japan's agriculture innovative and productive.

## 5. Organic Farming as Alternative to a Conventional Agriculture

We have just examined agricultural policies in Japan and in France and the EU to make clear resemblances and differences between the two. Now, we try to understand what kind of effects these policies have produced on agriculture at each side.

For ten months since Avril 2018, I stayed in France to devote myself to making a comparative study on agricultural policy and organic farming in France and in Japan. During my stay, I was often surprised to see how deep and eager interest French people had in agriculture and environment. What surprised me the most was the existence of a research institute named “Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA)”, where more than 1550 qualified researchers are enrolled, conducting researches and public information activities in collaboration with universities all over the country<sup>26</sup>. Its activities cover a wide range of issues, from global issues, such as environmental problems, air pollution and global warming, to local/private issues, such as regional development, promotion of organic agriculture and relationship between food and health. When we see that all these diversified issues are studied in one institute taking the name of agriculture, we must recognize passion and involvement of the French government about agriculture.

Supported by such a huge institution and government’s untiring efforts, there is a rapid rise in environmental awareness and interest in organic agriculture among French people. According to the report of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture 2013), the proportion of organic farmland to the total cultivated land in 2007 was 9.0% in Italy, 5.1% in Germany, 4.2% in the UK, 1.9% in France, 0.1% in Japan. It is evident that the proportion in Japan is remarkably low and that in France is also low. In 2011, its proportion remained generally stable, since it was 8.6% in Italy, 6.1% in Germany, 4.0% in the UK, and 0.2% in Japan. Exceptional is the case of France whose proportion was only 1.9% in 2007, but doubled to be 3.6% in 2011, and doubled again in 2017 to be 6.7% (Agence Bio 2018: 9)<sup>27</sup>. Traditionally, France was not a nation whose environmental awareness was not as high as that in Austria and Sweden whose proportion of organic farmland to total cultivable land was about 20% in 2017 (figure 1). However, environmental consciousness has been developing and organic farming advancing rapidly in it these past years. Undoubtedly, this achievement

26. INRA was created in 1946, next year of the WWII. Because of the shortage of food of the country, its objective was to answer to the question: “How to feed France”. At that moment, the mission of INRA was to combine science and technology to improve agricultural and livestock farming techniques. When French production became sufficient to meet the needs of the population in the late 1960s, INRA created local centers to encourage local development. In the 1970s, INRA changed its perspective; its new objectives were of food quality and added value; it also engaged in autonomous and economical agriculture in response to questions related to local development and environment (INRA n.d.). The important position of INRA in French agricultural circles can be gathered from the fact that some of its researchers, such as Hervieu, Claude Servolin and Henri Nallet, became “conseiller” of the Ministry of agriculture of the socialist government; especially, Nallet was appointed Minister of agriculture from 1985 to 1986.

27. In France, organic farming is notably developing in southern and south-western departments where the “Confédération paysanne” is relatively dominant; Its ratio is the highest in Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (23.1 %), folloed by Occitanie (13.4 %), while it is the lowest in northern wheat cultivation areas, such as Hauts-de-France (1.5%) and Centre-Val-de-Loire (2.6%) (Agence Bio 2018: 16).

has been accomplished by consumers' increasing concerns about health and environment and government's persistent orientation to encourage farmers to engage in it.

Regarding the definition of organic agriculture, there are differences depending on country and region, but some conditions, such as not using GM seeds and cultivating without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, are generally recognized. In this sense, organic farming is completely contradictory to a type of agriculture directed by agribusiness (Goodman 1999, Goodman and Goodman 2009). To promote organic farming defined as alternative to the conventional agriculture, France and the EU have adopted some legal and substantial measures. France established for the first time in 1998 a five-year plan to promote organic agriculture and has updated uninterruptedly since then. And the EU's agricultural policy covering France was modified drastically in 2003 toward environmentally benign agriculture. It set so-called "cross-compliance" conditions to farmers; farmers should respect environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards to be able to procure direct payments (Olper 2008). Guided by this policy, all the European countries encouraged organic farming, which has been developing rapidly (Figure 1)<sup>28</sup>. The French government provides organic farmers with direct payment from 100 to 600 euro per hectare according to the cultivated species. This payment is not a small figure, since the average farmland run by family is 17 hectare in mountain areas and 30 in other parts of France. Moreover, the French government has set the policy target to raise the percentage of organic farmland to the total cultivable land to 15 % by 2022 (*Liberation* 28/06/2018).

Country	%
Austria	21.9
Estonia	18.9
Sweden	18.0
Italy	15.5
Latvia	14.3
Switzerland	13.5
Czech	11.5
Slovakia	9.9
Slovenia	9.0
Spain	8.7
Germany	7.5
France	5.5
(Japan)	(0.2)

**Figure 1: Proportion of organic farmland to total cultivable land in European countries in 2016**  
*FiBL & IFOAM : 44*

28. As this figure shows, organic agriculture is developing rapidly in East European countries, such as Latvia, Czech, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Farmers of these countries procure double advantage by engaging in organic farming, since they can export their organic products in a high price and get supplemental payments from the EU.

It is undeniable that the EU's agricultural policy has a nationalistic or "neomercantilist" character (Potter and Tilzey 2005), since its major objective consists in protecting the EU's agriculture by excluding from the European market cheap agricultural products manufactured in the Americas by large farms working with agribusiness companies<sup>29</sup>. However, these policies have an agreeable appearance, provided that a type of agriculture they prescribe is tagged with sophisticated words, such as "sustainable agriculture" and "food safety and security". Further, the very existence of a huge research institute like INRA reflects a firm belief of the French state which recognizes the necessity of theoretical reinforcement and national consensus to preserve its own agri-food system. There is no question that agriculture and food are the basics of each culture and that a heavy investment of human and material resources is necessary to protect originality of each agri-food system against the desolate world of globalization where "free trade" and "common standard" are the formula.

The fact that France is an industrialized country as well as an agricultural country certainly owes to such government's clear orientation and definite engagement in agriculture. In 2016, the number of French farm households is 450,000 units, and the total output of agriculture, forestry and fisheries including processed foods reaches 70.7 billion euros. Moreover, the export of French agricultural products exceeded the import by a large amount of 6.1 billion euros, thanks to its high valued export items like wine and cheese. It is the third largest among all export industries after chemical industry and automobile industry (*Le Monde* 04/02/2018). In Japan, on the contrary, the export value of agricultural products in 2017 is only 6.1 billion euro (807 billion yen) while the import value is 73 billion euro (9,373 billion yen), which means the deficit of 65.9 billion euro (8,566 billion yen) (Ministry of Agriculture 2017). If we contrast the agri-food situation of the two countries, we can realize how blessed the circumstances in which French people find themselves.

Compared to French agricultural policy and circumstances it yields, Japan's agricultural policy is completely poor and retrograde. Most of the agricultural budget has been invested into a rice field improvement and income compensation for the reduction of rice acreage. Evidently, these investments are not innovative so that they never succeeded in turning upward the productivity and cost performance of Japan's agriculture. It is true that, as mentioned above, the Ministry of agriculture enacted a new law in 1999 to realize a change in its policy and that it was the first law aiming at shifting from an old productionist's perspective to a more reasonable perspective pursuing sustainable agriculture. In accordance to this law, Japanese government started laying down a legislative foundation for the promotion of organic agriculture. It redefined in 1999 the Japan Agricultural Standard ("JAS Standard") to legislate the standards concerning organic agriculture and its products to compel the consumers' concerns about them. In the same year, it enacted a Law for the Promotion of the Sustainable Agriculture, and in 2006 a new Law for the Promotion of the Organic Agriculture.

Despite these repeated legislations, Japanese policy targeting the promotion of organic agriculture is far from attaining its objective. As it lacks executive ability based on the financial support (the budget for the promotion of organic farming is only 1% of the total budget of the

29. Eve Fouilleux affirms that the introduction of idea of multifunctionality of agriculture in the EU's discussion was destined to protect European agriculture: « La multifonctionnalité a également été introduite par l'Union européenne au niveau international pour se prémunir contre les attaques des pays les plus libéraux et sécuriser les aides directes de la PAC » (Fouilleux 2008 : 117).



Ministry of agriculture), it is but a “verbal policy” as said Sawanobori and Babicz who tried to present an general view of Japan’s organic farming (Sawanobori et Babicz 2006: 38). This inability and ineffectiveness come very probably from the resistance of the JA that was always against the decrease of its sale of chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as the lax ethics of farmers who were generally satisfied with a tiny income which they gained through their conventional agricultural practices, since they got more money through their second job.

The stagnation in organic farming, nevertheless, does not mean that the Japanese farmers were always against it. If we go back into the past of organic farming in Japan, we can find there a long and rich history. The first statement of the organic farming was made in 1935 by Okada Mokichi, the founder of a New religious movement called “Church of World Missionary”<sup>30</sup>. He advocated his followers to avoid taking all kinds of chemicals including chemical fertilizer, saying that the human body that is pure because it is given by Heaven may be endangered by them. As this movement was very influential in the 1940’s-195’s, many farmers are said to have engaged in organic farming at that time (Kurume 1983). To propagate organic farming, it founded in 1960 “International Nature Farming Reserch Center” that still is one of the most influential centers for the promotion of organic farming in Japan. In recent years, nevertheless, its influence declined because of the repeated schisms<sup>31</sup> and the number of organic farmers under its influence decreased.

In the 1960s when the environmental problems worsened nationwide, many Japanese consumers had a deep concern about food safety. This made a birth of many consumers cooperatives that dealt organic agricultural products like “Seikatsu Club” based in Tokyo and “Green Coop” based in Fukuoka city (Takezawa 1997). Although the food dealt by them is not always organic products, these cooperatives with their over 200,000 active members have a considerable influence on the consumers who pay close attention to food security. Simultaneously, in 1971, the concern about food security gave rise to a special organization for the promotion of organic farming named “Japan Organic Agricultural Association (JOAA)”. Made up of consumers’ initiative, this organization endorsed the direct relationship between consumers and farmers that it called “teikei”. Some recent articles published in scientific journals and Wikipedia lay emphasis on its role for the development of the organic farming in Japan (Amemiya 2011, Lagane 2011); contrary to what they say, its influence on the farmers stays marginal and insignificant, since it has only small number of members among them<sup>32</sup>.

30. Okada did not use the word “organic farming”, but “nature farming” to designate agriculture without chemicals. It is also the case for Fukuoka Masanobu who used the same word of “nature farming”. There is a possibility that Fukuoka was influenced by Okada’s thought in the 1950s to elaborate his own method; however, this point is to be clarified.

31. From this religious movement, many fractions were born to become independent, such as Shinji-Shūmeikai, Mahikari, Sūkyō-Mahikari. Nowadays, Church of World Missionary succeeds in getting many believers in Thailand and Brazil (not less than 200,000 believers in each country), many farmers are said to engage in organic farming in these countries (Takezawa 1997).

32. These works consider “teikei” as key word to explain the development of organic farming in Japan and of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the US and of AMAP in France. However, they seem to be erroneous for some reasons. First, recent studies reject the interpretation that the idea of “teikei” enabled a formation of CSA in France; they say that teikei’s origine of the CSA is but a “myth” (McFadden n.d.). Second, the JOAA never recommended a contract between farmers and consumers, which is the basics and the most prominent feature of the CSA; it only recomended the mutual cooperation between the two. Third, Japan’s first solid mutual cooperation between consumers and farmers was not the “teikei” recommended by JOAA, but that established between Kyoto (Rakuhoku) Cooperatives and Daisen Dairy Cooperatives in 1970. Forth, the word of “teikei” is not popular in Japan; if you say “teikei”

## 6. Status Quo of Organic Farming and Semi-organic Farming in Japan

The promotion of organic agriculture is not an exclusive matter to the government. It is rather a matter of farmers and consumers who can do much more for its promotion. So, let's look at some cases of organic farming performed in different localities to get its overview in Japan.

Muraoka district in Hyogo Prefecture is a small village with 30 families, which is located on the west slope of Mt. Torokawa, about 500 meters above sea level. The paddy fields extend below the settlement in the form of terraced fields (Figure 2). As it is impossible to expand farmlands, community members discussed together 16 years ago and decided to turn to organic or semi-organic rice cultivation to boost their income. However, they found that organic rice cultivation was very difficult to manage weeds and pests. Therefore, only six full-time farmers are carrying organic farming today. They have formed an independent association and sold directly their rice to consumers. Other members have engaged in semi-organic farming. And all the villagers use organic fertilizers made from cow's feces instead of chemical fertilizers.



**Figure 2: Terraced Paddy fields in Muraoka district**

Their paddy fields have some advantages for rice cultivation: as they are located on the mountain slope, the difference in temperature between daytime and nighttime is great; the fresh water flowing out of the mountain is always available; as the soil is clayey, it keeps well water and nutrients. These conditions are favorable to produce good quality rice. In fact, their rice won the first prize at the “9th National Rice Contest” held in Shizuoka Prefecture in 2012 and has been ranked high every year. Since then, the rice produced in this district is appreciated so much that it can be sold three times higher than ordinary rice. There is another merit in organic farming; farmers can achieve a significant cost reduction, since they need not to pay expensive pesticides and fertilizers. Kenji Tanaka, who cultivates 4 hectares of

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in Japan, nobody will understand you; it is much better to say “san-choku” which means “direct retailing from the producers” to designate this kind of practice.



paddy fields and is one of the most assiduous farmers in the district, affirmed me: “Agriculture enables us to live in comfort”.

Let’s take another example from the same prefecture. A city called Toyooka is known as Japan’s last habitat for Oriental White Storks. Oriental storks are big migratory birds and could be seen everywhere in Japan before the WWII. However, the overhunting during the war time and the intensive use of pesticides in the paddy fields after the war diminished their number. As a stork eats a day 500 grams of small living creatures, such as fish, frogs, insects and reptiles, they could no longer feed themselves because of the environmental deterioration. When the last wild stork became extinct in Japan in 1971, Hyogo Prefecture decided to introduce storks from Russia and to implement artificial breeding. After succeeding in it, the number of storks increased each year so that a plan for their release to the wild was established. However, harmful effects of pesticides, which made storks extinct, remained unsolved. Then, Hyogo Prefecture started the discussion with farmers to set about organic farming in this city. As the local JA was against it and most farmers were not eager to engage in it, Hyogo Prefecture created a special project team whose purpose was to encourage farmers to engage in organic farming and to establish a method of sustainable rice growing.

In 2003, three farmers started organic farming in a small rice field of 0.7 hectares. It was the first trial of organic rice cultivation in Toyooka City. However, the result was miserable: the field without herbicide was covered with weeds and farmers and project team members were obliged to remove weeds by hands for three weeks; and the harvest was much less than expected. Everyone thought that these farmers would never perform organic farming the next year. Surprisingly, they declared that they would try it again, even joined by other members. If it was the case, it was the task of the project team to find the best way to achieve success in the next growing. The project team plunged into meticulous investigations and visited farms in other prefectures with farmers to learn advanced techniques of organic rice growing. In these study tours, they obtained a series of new techniques that they applied to the next cultivation to find a method that is optimal to the natural conditions of paddy fields in Toyooka city (e.g., pouring water several times into paddy fields, and maintaining the depth of water at 15 cm in uneven fields).

By introducing these techniques, rice could be cultivated without herbicides and insecticides for the first time in 2005. They found that many insects and frogs grew in the paddy fields, but that beneficial living creatures, such as frogs and spiders, restrained the growth of pests. A new technology of reducing pests by increasing the number of beneficial creatures was thus established. A farmer who had engaged in organic agriculture since some years was pleased and said: “I know now that this is the farming method I’ve looked for since long.” In the same year, five storks were released in the presence of Prince Akishino for the first time after their extinction in Japan. Surprisingly, storks descended into organic paddy fields and fed on the critters in the area. That was the most delightful moment in their cooperative days in Toyooka City<sup>33</sup>.

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33. This ceremony of releasing storks to the wild got nationwide news coverage. It made organic rice cultivation recognized not only by the citizens of Toyooka City but also by the local JA and Toyooka city hall.

On the basis of this positive outcome, they appealed to other farmers, the JA, and the city hall to expand organic agriculture throughout Toyooka City. Then, another problem emerged: farmers protested this project, saying that storks step on and damage rice seedlings when they enter the rice field to eat food. To overrule this objection, the project team decided to observe and register the movement of storks in the rice fields from four o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening for three years. This allowed them to verify that among the 6921 steps taken by storks on rice fields in 2007, only 17 steps hit rice seedlings. They also confirmed that only three seedlings were killed. This finding was the undeniable proof that storks do not harm rice cultivation.

It was in this way that organic rice farming was established in Toyooka City. However, problems still exist: Organic farming requires sophisticated skills and increases the amount of works, much more than conventional farming. Further, its yield per unit area is approximately 20% less than that of conventional farming. Therefore, part-time farmers will never engage in organic farming. As for full-time farmers, they would have never adopted organic farming practices, if the price of organically cultivated rice had stayed the same as that of conventional rice. This problem seemed initially difficult to solve, because the JA which is the main distributor of rice was against this type of practice. Fortunately, in 2005, local supermarket accepted the purchase of all organic rice harvests at the farmer's preferred price. In 2006, the local JA changed its attitude toward organic farming after having seen the releasing ceremony of storks to the wild. It decided to purchase organic rice at the asking price and to promote its sale via special arrangements. The farmers' anxiety was resolved in this way, and many farmers in the city devoted themselves to sustainable agriculture<sup>34</sup>.

The selling prices of organic rice and semi-organic rice were 11,000 and 8200 yen, respectively, per 30 kg in 2014, while that of conventional agriculture was 5700 yen. Certainly, the rice yield per hectare is approximately 20% less without chemical fertilizer. However, organic farming is lucrative because organic rice and semi-organic rice sell respectively at 193% and 143% of conventional rice. Moreover, the farming cost is significantly reduced, given that farmers need not to pay chemical fertilizers or pesticides. According to the calculation of Shigeo Narita, the net benefits from organic and semi-organic rice farming are 795,900 and 591,800 yen per ha, whereas that from conventional farming is only 700 yen per ha. Farmers are now able not only to contribute to the promotion of the environment coexisting with the stork, but also to earn sufficient income to live at ease.

The results of all these observations satisfied farmers and organic agriculture developed rapidly in Toyooka City starting from the year of releasing of storks to the wild. In 2005, the total area of organic agriculture and semi-organic organic agriculture was 41.7 ha. In 2017, the total area of organic farming was 135 ha and that of semi-organic farming was 272 ha. The total area of sustainable rice cultivation was 407 ha, which is 12.8% of the total cultivated paddy fields in Toyooka City (for organic rice farming, it is 4.2% of total rice fields). This number was

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34. In 2008, the association of bean curd manufacturers in Hyogo Prefecture requested farmers to produce organic soybean. After the discussions, they decided to cultivate it on the condition that they can sell it at their preferred price. Since then, the area of organic soybean cultivation has increased and attained 50.7 ha in 2015. With the introduction of this organic soybean cultivation, sustainable agriculture in Toyooka City came closer to perfection in the sense that it can make the soil more productive and sustainable and the farming more profitable.

a satisfying one, since it is much better than the average ratio of organic farmland to Japan's total farmland, which is only 0.2%.

In addition to these surveys, I conducted some fieldworks among organic farmers in Kyoto Prefecture. These investigations combined with documentation confirmed me that organic farmers exist throughout Japan, but that they are generally isolated without any efficient network among them. This fact is easily imaginable, since nationwide organizations like the JA are against organic farming and the Japanese government has not yet established a clear policy to improve it. In some localities, many farmers are engaging collectively in organic farming or semi-organic farming. However, most of these localities are hilly areas, such as terraced rice fields in Muraoka district; very probably, the difficulty of expanding paddy fields probably has encouraged farmers to improve profitability per unit area by using advanced agricultural techniques. In other areas, except for Toyooka City which has the stork symbol, organic farmers are isolated and lacking any network.

From the producer's point of view, one of the major obstacles to developing organic farming is the fact that it requests sophisticated skills and heavy labors. Therefore, organic farming is impossible for part-time farmers who cannot spare much time for agriculture. In Japan, more than 70% of farmers are part-time farmers who gain more money with their second job. It is often said that the withdrawal of part-time farmers and the redistribution of their farmlands to professional farmers are prerequisite conditions for the development of Japan's agriculture (Okamoto 2010; Iida 2015). This is true as for the promotion of organic farming. However, it is not an easy task, since it is against the intention of the JA which has secured the organization and accumulated profit by holding many part-time farmers.

As for the situation of organic agriculture in Japan, we can say that the consumers' interest in its products is increasing. According to the report of the Ministry of agriculture, 44% of consumers interrogated say that they often buy organic products and 55% of them say that they have an intention to buy them under reasonable conditions; nevertheless, 70% of them say that they have difficulties in finding these products in their daily life (Ministry of Agriculture 2013). This high percentage of interest among consumers is replicated among the new farmers. The same report states that 28% of new farmers say that they "want to engage in organic agriculture" and other 65% say that they are "interested in organic agriculture". However, the lack of zeal of and effective measure by the Ministry of agriculture and the JA has kept the number of organic farmers limited. The consumers' and new farmers' increasing interest in organic agriculture is left hanging in the air.

This wretched situation obliges Japanese consumers to procure food whose safety is not approved. The retailers and supermarkets sell a large quantity of imported beef and pork which was injected with growth promoting hormones and fed with genetically modified soybeans and maize, which are prohibited in Europe. Even for the meat produced in Japan, most of the feed given to cattle and pigs is imported and genetically modified. Recently, the Japanese government finally decided to change its agricultural policy of rice acreage reduction and to encourage crop diversification in the paddy field to enable the production of organic feed. But this decision came too late, after a long-term farmer's dereliction in agriculture and ruination of paddy fields. The Japanese consumers who are careful what they eat are not given the right of self-determination of food, which is one of the fundamental rights as citizen.

## 7. Relating Food Producers and Food Consumers

We have just described some attempts made by farmers to realize a type of agriculture that is different from that advocated by agribusiness companies. Does it mean that farmers are the only agents who can change the ongoing agri-food system? Certainly not. We find some attempts made by consumers to alter it in collaboration with farmers. So, let's look at some of these practices<sup>35</sup>.

In almost every city and town in France, the market (*marché* in French) is held on the fixed days of the week in the plaza or on a median strip of the main road. It is mainly vegetable, fruit, meat, fish, cheese, egg and bread that are sold there. Generally speaking, French people prefer buying these foods in the market to procuring them in the supermarket. Among the street stalls of the market, we find some stalls run by farmers who produce the commodities by themselves. In particular, stalls for organic products are run by farmers who sell their products with the sign of *bio*<sup>36</sup>. These products are generally much more expensive than other products made by conventional agriculture. However, they are popular among consumers, since they are qualified as safe and healthy food. As it is necessary to respect some rules, such as not using chemical fertilizer and GM seeds, to receive certification of biological agriculture, organic farming implies the decrease of production per unit area and the increase of labor and time to produce. Therefore farmers would never engage in it, if they could not sell their products much higher than those made by the conventional agriculture.

The market, especially the market activated by farmers, which is developing rapidly during these days is called “farmers market” in the UK and the US. We could not find nationwide statistics in France, but in the US and the UK, its number is said to have increased drastically: It was only 100 in 1960 to become 2500 in 1996 (Hinrichs 2000), and 8540 in 2018 (USDA 2018). The situation is the same in the UK where it was firstly registered in 1997 and reached to 550 (Kneafsey et al. 2008 : 2). In Japan, this kind of market is generally called “*san-choku*” market<sup>37</sup>; it is developing so rapidly that it can be found in every city or town nowadays. According to a report of Ministry of agriculture, there are 16,816 *san-choku* centers in Japan in 2011. The products which are sold in these markets are not always organic products, but are generally cultivated by reducing the use of pesticides by 50% and over; and every product is attached with a tag to notify the producer's name and often his/her photo (Ministry of agriculture 2012).

This kind of market where farmers sell their products directly to consumers has some advantages for farmers: First, farmers can make more money than other retail selling since their products do not pass through brokers who take commission. Second, farmers can grasp

35. Our concern is not very far from that discussed in the name of “Alternative Food Networks (AFNs)” (Holloway et al. 2007, Godman and Goodman 2009).

36. I assisted the “24th Conventions Européennes” held in Bergerac on 10-11th July 2018. At that moment, I could discuss with no small number of farmers, who were all affiliated to the CP. Some of them told me that they grow vegetables without agrochemicals and sell them at a market by themselves. They told me also that they discuss each other to improve their agricultural methods and often help each other to satisfy the requirement of consumers.

37. The word *san-choku* means a direct retailing of the food from the producers. Besides this *san-choku* market, we find *san-choku* corner in almost all the supermarkets and “*Michi-no-eki*” (road station), where agricultural products are retailed directly from the producers to consumers.

the taste of consumers and modify their manner of production to improve their commodities. Third, they can develop pride and confidence in their *métier* by hearing directly the consumer's evaluation. Furthermore, the farmers setting up shop in the market often help each other to satisfy the requirement of consumers who generally prefer a wide assortment of articles.

We already saw that the mode of production of organic farming is completely different from that of the conventional agriculture directed by agribusiness companies. This is also true regarding their sales method. While agribusiness-led agriculture has only vertical relationship between company and farmer and lacks any horizontal relationship, the organic farmers, especially green-stuff farmers, often sell by themselves their products in the market and build a direct relationship with consumers<sup>38</sup>. In addition, they frequently develop a complementary relationship with other farmers to aid each other to diversify their articles or to elaborate their agricultural technics. On the other hand, the consumers can get fresh and good quality food by purchasing it directly from the producers. Further, they can exercise a right to self-determination about what they buy and what they eat, as well as the farmers can exercise a right of self-determination about what crops they cultivate and how they sell their products. Recently, this kind of practices have aroused a huge interest among scholars: some authors recognize in them the "civic" character (Lyson 2004, Obach and Tobbin 2014), while others qualify them as "embeddedness" (Winter 2003) or "democracy" (Hinrichs 2000) in contrast to the anonymous character of retail chain. There are also many scholars who attach importance to the proximity in time and space between producers and consumers, characterizing their "locality" (Dupuis and Goodman 2005, Petriani 2007, Delind and Bingen 2008, Delind 2011).

According to some statistics, the total sales value of organic agricultural products in France was € 8,373 million in 2012; its most preeminent distribution route is marked by supermarkets with € 3.600 million (43.6% of the total sale), followed by organic chain stores, such as BioCoop and Bio C'bon (34.3%), and direct sales, such as Marché and AMAP (12.0%) (Agence Bio 2018: 21-23). In Japan, we found no statistics on total distribution, but according to a questionnaire conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture on 1142 farmers in 2016 (multiple answers allowed), the highest ratio for the distribution of organic agricultural products was marked by the direct sales by delivery service (66.3%), followed by the agricultural cooperatives (59.8%), *san-choku* sales (35.9%), supermarket (20.7%), and wholesale market (17.4%). In the case of semi-organic products, it was the agricultural cooperatives that lead the way with 76.0%, followed by the direct sales (54.7%), *san-choku* sales (29.1%), the wholesale market (18.7%) and the supermarkets (16.5%) (Ministry of agriculture 2016: 2-3). If we compare these cases, the large share occupied by supermarket in France is rather astonishing. However, if we take into account of the sales scale of French large supermarkets, such as Carrefour and Casino, it is understandable that they extend their business to cover organic products. In contrast, the development of the door-to-door delivery service in Japan is undoubtedly the key factor for its eminent position in distribution of organic products.

As we have just seen, the market, especially the market specialized in organic products, is characterized by its capability of producing multiple relationships through food supplying

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38. In France, a considerable part of organic products are sold in supermarkets and specialist chain stores, as we will see in the next paragraph. But many of the organic farmers sell at least a part of their products directly to farmers (see note 36 of this paper).



and purchasing<sup>39</sup>. In this sense, the market is a place of tying people, not a place of zero-sum game as is often said by liberalistic economists. This consideration for the strengthening relationship among people has steered to the formation of a solid and persistent organization called “AMAP” (Association pour le Maintien de l’Agriculture Paysanne) in France and “CSA” (Community Supported Agriculture) in the US and the UK<sup>40</sup>. This type of organization has some common features: A producer and a certain number of consumers make a contract twice a year, in early spring and in early autumn before the harvest season, to prepay a predetermined amount for six months. Then, the producer delivers every week a box of vegetables and fruits of the value estimated by himself/herself. This organization has some merits from the producers’ side: it enables them to calculate earnings in advance and to secure income even in the year of bad harvest. It enables also to eliminate the risk of the overproduction. From the consumer’s side, it makes it possible to ascertain who produces where and how, so that they can get a sense of food safety and security. Moreover, since consumers are expected to visit producers upon occasions, they can procure the joy of being in contact with nature and looking at vegetables and fruits growing, which they will eat (Lamine 2008, Brown and Miller 2008).

If we go back into history of agribusiness, we can find there a hint to put a new interpretation of this kind of organization. As we have seen above, agriculture is a practice subjected to some extent to contingency and instability of nature; one of the objectives of agribusiness is to try to eliminate these vulnerable elements from agriculture by introducing industrial model into it. The main objective of AMAP in France and CSA in the US/UK is the same as that of agribusiness, but their method is completely different: The AMAP and the CSA try to reduce the risk of damages which might be caused these vulnerable elements in agriculture, not by introducing industrial model into it, but by constructing a solid tie between food producers and food consumers. Thus, the AMAP and the OSA are to be qualified as a practice to create an alternative agri-food system that is completely different from that bound to agribusiness.

We do not find in Japan the practice like AMAP, but we can find some attempts which try to build a solid relationship between food producers and consumers. One example of them is a practice called “Taberu-tsushin” that means directly “Communication to eat”. This practice was inaugurated in 2013 by a young man living in Iwate Prefecture; after having worked in the coastal areas devastated by the tsunami, he realized the needs to support the producers who had suffered much from the catastrophe. He then decided to form a team to run a new organization which he named “Communication to eat”. Every month he and his team choose one food and one producer to make a reportage rich in photos and illustrations which reproduces the food, surroundings in which the food is produced, and the work and way

39. We must pay attention to this point: organic agri-food do not always create multiple relationships among its stakeholders; in the US, for example, a considerable part of organic products are made in large factory-like farms, one of which can produce 80% of organic lettuce of the nation; and another farm raises more than 3000 cows in one large breeding establishment where every process is automatized from feeding to milking (Pollan 2006). In these cases, organic agriculture is not to be considered as alternative to agribusiness, but a part of agribusiness.

40. The CSA and the AMAP are said developing rapidly these years. The first mention of CSA appeared in 1985 and was estimated 50 in 1990 to become 1900 in 2008 (Brown and Miller 2008 :1296). As for the AMAP, it began in 2001 in the suburbs of Marseille and counted 20 in 2003, 120 in 2007 (Lamine 2008: 22). Its number did not stop increasing to reach 150 in grand Paris and 2000 or more in France in 2017 (AMAP n.d.).

of life of a producer. They send this reportage once a month to their members with a certain quantity of food for 2580 yen (about 20 euro). This attempt was soon appreciated by so many consumers who joined it that it was obliged to limit the number of its members to avoid a degradation of food because of the overproduction. It also attracted a huge interest among people who were seeking a change in the agri-food system in which they were placed. They affiliated themselves with this team and created a new organization in other part of Japan. Now, thirty-four organizations throughout the country and four in Taiwan have come to be born.

The newness of this organization consists in its attempts to establish a relationship between consumers living in urban area and food producers living in the rural area. In fact, as Hiroyuki Takahashi who is the founder says clearly, the objective of his organization is “stirring the city and the countryside” (Takahashi 2015)<sup>41</sup>. This is the merit of this organization with respect to the organization like AMAP, which creates relationship between farmers and consumers in their vicinity. On the other hand, in this organization, the relationship between food producers and consumers is generally limited, since there are few opportunities for direct contact between them. And worse is the fact that the distance between the production site and the consuming area increases, this is against the notion of “locality” or “proximity” that is much appreciated in alternative agri-food practices. How to solve these issues will be the task which this organization should face in the near future.

What is common to all examples mentioned above is following: They try to establish a solid relationship based on the mutual confidence between food producers and food consumers. They request food producers to disclose all information concerning the food production. They request farmers and consumers an active participation into these practices, so that the consumers will never be a passive persons who only purchase products displayed in the retailing shops, and that food produces will never be satisfied with being a simple producer but engaged actively in communication with consumers. Finally, they highly estimate the self-determination of each side, that is, the self-determination of producers who decide by themselves how and what kind food they produce and the self-determination of consumers who decide how and what kind of food they eat. All these features, that is, relationship based on confidence, disclosure of information, active participation, self-determination of different stakeholders, are common to the backbone of the democracy, especially grassroots democracy. This is why we qualify them as “food democracy”.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that there are some criticisms against these practices: They are but elitist practices engaged by middle-class high-educated citizens who are sensitive to food safety. They are also criticized as niche industry which merely fills the niches of mainstream large-scale agricultural farms and large-scale sales chains; therefore, they will disappear when the large agribusiness companies will seriously engage in the production and

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41. This objective has succeeded at least partly as is shown by one happening. The rice field of a farmer who had been represented in one volume of *Communication to Eat* was damaged by a heavy rain. All the rice was immersed by water and fell down. This made the use of the harvest machine impossible, while the rice should be harvested immediately. Then, the farmer sent a message for help to other members of the organization. Surprisingly, 150 members came to his farm to help him to harvest the rice with sickle, many of whom payed more than 200 euro to buy a ticket for the transportation (Takahashi 2015).



retailing of organic farming (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, Delind 2011). We have to observe how long these practices will grow in the future and how they overcome these criticisms over time.

## Conclusion: Agriculture and Food as Connections

This paper focused firstly on a type of agriculture advocated by agribusiness companies, which is expanding worldwide and on the criticisms of it. Secondly, it described the evolution of agricultural policies taken by French government and the EU's Commission, which aimed at promoting "European model of agriculture", which it to be considered as alternative to a type of agriculture directed by agri-business companies; it analyzed also why reform plans of Japan's agricultural policy could not succeed in transforming substantially Japanese mode of agriculture. Thirdly, it focused on some glass-rooted attempts realized by producers and consumers to alter the actual agri-food system.

In writing this paper, what attracted us the most is the fact that food can create all kinds of relationships; in other words, food can connect different agencies and different components of our world. Economically and socially speaking, food can connect producers who produce agricultural products and consumers who do not produce them but need them to maintain their existence. Environmental level, food can connect human beings and nature in the form of agriculture as an interaction between the two. We discussed fully on these topics in our paper; however, there are other features of food as nexus of connections. Affectionally and micro-socially speaking, food can produce a sense of communality among family members or co-eating members (in the case of hunters-gatherers) who eat it together. Diachronically speaking, food can connect persons of different generations, who share the same taste of cooking and eating which is culturally and historically constructed. Finally, existentially speaking, food can connect body and spirit, sensuality and intelligence, when it is cooked and eaten.

If we forget these fundamental features of food and agriculture, any projects regarding agri-food practices will never accomplished successfully. This is the reason why we are against a kind of agri-food practices led by agribusiness companies, which are seeking to reduce these fundamental features of food to simple monetary transactions. In recent years, Japanese government is eager to improve and diversify farmers' activities. It insists that farmers must elaborate their capability to earn much, not with their second job, but with their activities directly linked to agriculture, such as agritourism or better commodification of their products. This policy is not a mistake in its essence. However, it will never succeed in attaining its goal as long as it is conceptualized only from the market point of view: The producers who have no direct relationship with consumers will never be able to produce products that the latter is really thirsty for.

The more food industry develops, the less we prepare a meal by ourselves. The more individualization progresses, more frequently we eat alone. However, when we ask why we are obliged to act like this in our agri-food system, in other word, why we are deprived of a right of self-determination on agri-food practices, the questions regarding what to eat and how to eat will crop up as an existential as well as political matter.

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