

# エコシステム

Ecosystem  
Conservation  
Society-Japan

11

NOV 136

November  
2014

## 使われない農地 40万ヘクタール

自然に戻す国、無駄にする国

- | 全国で「使われなくなった農地」が増えている
- | 使われなくなった農地はどうしたらよいのか
- | 使われなくなった農地は自然に戻しておく
- | 耕作放棄地を自然に戻すためには
- | 海外において、農地を自然に戻した例
- | 美しい自然を取り戻すために

2010年現在の日本で使われず放置されている農地は約40万ha。今後も増えていくことが予想されます。そうした農地はお金を使い無理に農地に戻すのではなく、自然に戻しておくことが賢明です。将来の人々の遺伝子資源として、また、土壌を増やすために。

As of 2010, there were about 400,000 ha of unused and abandoned farmland in Japan. It is estimated that this trend of more idle farmlands will continue in foreseeable future. We believe it is wiser to return those unproductive lands to nature to increase genetic diversity and to improve soil conditions for future generations than to restore them to farmlands.

# There are 400,000 Hectares of Unused Farmland in Japan

A country that returns unused farmland to nature and a country that wastes it

In recent years, Japan's abandoned farmland is increasing. As of 2010, about 400,000 ha of farmland, almost twice the size of the entire City of Tokyo, have been abandoned. It has been said that some of the causes are industrial development, freer economic trade and population decline (especially in rural and mountainous areas).

In the past, many experts say that agriculture has numerous functions, in addition to food production, that protect our national lands. But in reality, agriculture uses nature. For example, modern agriculture that was adopted throughout Japan after World War II has caused tremendous soil erosion and loss of biodiversity to the extent that many species that once were abundant in rural areas have now become endangered. Also, multi-functional benefits are not limited solely to agriculture. For example, when farmland is converted to grassland, wetland or forest, multi-functional benefits for human society usually become much more enhanced.

Today's Japan does not need as much farmland as it once did to produce food because of its continuous population decline. In a new era such as this, we should stop applying the same old policy of "Never allow an abandoned farm and if one happens, restore it" to every farmland in Japan. Instead, we should adopt a new policy that allows many farms to return to original, local, natural areas.

In the United States and in the European Union, policies to return farmlands to nature have been promoted because of economic reasons and negative impacts agriculture has been causing to the environment.

For example, in Romania, there are about 100,000 ha of reclaimed farmland throughout the delta area of the Danube River (a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site). There the Romanian government has been promoting wetland restoration

projects by removing levees that surround farmlands. The levees had been constructed because of various economic development and agricultural pressures, but they have negatively impacted the wetlands and natural environment.

As the results of these nature restoration projects, local fishermen are now enjoying much better harvests, and various species of aquatic vegetation have returned to the wetlands cleansing polluted water there.

Japan needs to restore her beautiful nature and leave rich biodiversity to future generations in order to enhance a sustainable society.

For that purpose, we propose establishment of the following systems regarding abandoned farmland:

1. A system by which government can acquire abandoned farmlands located in national parks and nature reserves or in hazardous areas where natural disasters can easily occur, and by which those lands can be restored to natural environments. This would be done by encouraging partnership among government agencies and private organizations including environmental groups.

2. Because the owners of many abandoned farms are not known, a system is needed by which those lands can be managed by groups such as environmental or other non-governmental organization for the public good. Those land stewards would manage the lands to promote biodiversity.

These two proposals are difficult to achieve under Japan's current vertically divided bureaucratic system. We shall need strong political leadership to overcome territorial walls among agencies and to show a vision and a plan that encompasses the next 50 or even 100 years.



As of 2010, there were approximately 400,000 ha of abandoned farmlands throughout Japan.



Though agriculture is said to have multiple functions and benefits, natural ecosystems such as forests and wetlands have more functions and benefits.



In Romania, nature restoration projects have been promoted in which some of reclaimed lands for agriculture have been returned to natural wetlands. BY 2007, about 15,000 ha of reclaimed land have been restored to wetlands.



Instead of policy of "All cultivated lands must be restored to farmlands", it is desirable to have a new solution of "Return abandoned farmlands to nature".