

KYOTO 2016 AGROECOLOGY DECLARATION

May 31, 2016

Japan today faces a host of socioeconomic challenges and environmental crises. A stagnant birth rate, rural depopulation due to the migration of young people to large cities, decreasing employment opportunities for the younger generation, and increasing income disparity between the rich and the poor stand out as major social problems. Climate change and the destruction of the natural and cultural landscapes as a result of urbanization and large-scale construction projects threaten people's daily life. On top of these challenges, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident forced people to think seriously about the issues related to food safety and food self-sufficiency. These social and environmental problems are all interconnected. Action plans are needed to restore the resilient human-environmental interactions and foster long-term sustainability. A key to achieving these goals is to promote local food systems with low external input dependency through organic agriculture and other agroecological practices.

In Japan, attempts to promote organic agriculture became increasingly popular during and after the 1970s. Subsequently, these attempts received strong support from grass-roots consumer movements. Along with a growing awareness of food safety, these historical contexts provide the foundation for a new food movement.

In May 2016, the Small-Scale Economies Project of the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature in Kyoto hosted a series of events dedicated to agroecology. Over 90 people, including scholars from different universities, farmers, consumers, and members of non-governmental and non-profit organizations participated in these events. Together with project members, discussions were held on the challenges and opportunities to scale-up agroecological practices in Japan for the purpose of achieving a more sustainable, resilient and self-sufficient food system. Based on the discussions, 73 people endorsed the following declaration:

ACTION-ORIENTED PROPOSAL FOR AGROECOLOGY-BASED FOOD PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION SYSTEMS IN JAPAN

<Definition and Characteristics of Agroecology>

Agroecology is a trans-disciplinary approach rooted in both traditional and scientific knowledge that seeks to design and manage productive, biologically diverse, and resilient small-scale agricultural systems. These systems should be economically viable, socially just, culturally diverse and environmentally sound. Three key principles of agroecology are diversity, networking and sovereignty¹⁾.

<Recommendations>

1. Revitalize rural-urban linkages through locally-based and environmentally sustainable market systems that are independent from the control of large corporations.
2. Galvanize environmental, farmer, consumer and other social movements to develop a strategy to achieve agroecological goals.
3. Ask scientific community, both social and natural scientists, to support the agroecological movement with relevant participatory and trans-disciplinary research and educational programs that benefit both rural and urban societies at large, particularly women and young people.
4. Encourage local and national policy makers to support a new food system that democratizes the production, distribution and consumption of healthy food.
5. Link this agroecological movement internationally with similar movements in other countries and regions.

Note:

- 1) The concept of sovereignty here refers to the autonomy of food production, energy self-sufficiency and technological independence at the local and regional level.