

March, 2006

National Report for the International Conference  
on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

**Japan's Post-war Agricultural Land Reform and Subsequent Agricultural Land  
System**

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Forestry and Fisheries of Japan

1. Current assessment of agricultural land reform with a focus on owner farmers principle
  - 1) In 1946, the agricultural land reform was implemented by an order of the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces in Japan. The purposes of the reform was to break up structure of the land ownership by state power-landlords and democratize rural communities to boost agricultural productivity. With this drastic measure, the national government purchased all of the tenant farms of absentee land owners and the tenanted lands of resident landlords that exceeded one cho (1 cho = 99.2 ares) as well as their own lands exceeding three cho (a total of 1.74 million hectares), and sold them to 4.75 million individual tenant farmers.
  - 2) The reform was critical under the national policy of the days of “post-war reconstruction”, “the securing of food supplies” and “the stabilization of employment.” It is recognized as having made a significant contribution to the stabilization of the Japanese economy and society in subsequent years.
  - 3) At the same time, however, as described in chapter 2 ,it is an undeniable fact that the reform has played a key role in shaping the Japanese agricultural land structure as small-scale farm management and scattered patchwork farms.
2. Structural improvement envisioned by the old Agricultural Basic Law, subsequent changes in the approach, and the results

- 1) The Agricultural Land Law was enacted in 1952 with the objectives of sustaining the results of the previous agricultural land reform, securing the status of individual farmers to check the movement of the right of the individual farmland and the release of letting and hiring by the administration, and increasing agricultural production. The law emphasized that this form in which a farmer owns the land he cultivates and enjoys profits derived from the land without paying rent was most desirable.
  
- 2) The 1961 Agricultural Basic Law reoriented the country's agriculture policy toward the development of self-supporting farm management aiming to secure farmer's income comparable to other industries and to promote a cooperative system through expanding the scale of farming. The law set out to integrate land, of which owners left farming to take employment in other industries during the high economic growth era, into the land of full-time farmers mainly through transfer of ownership. In response, the government introduced several programs in 1962, including creation of trust of agricultural land by agricultural co-operatives and establishment of agricultural production corporations that cultivate farmland, and relaxation of the maximum size restriction on agricultural land acquisition.
  
- 3) The expansion of the farm base through ownership transfer, however, did not produce the expected results, because soaring land prices brought on by rapid economic growth as well as the increasing mechanization of farming gave rise to part-time farmers who chose to hold secondary employment rather than leaving the land. In response to such situation, the 1970 revision of the Agricultural Land Law dramatically shifted the direction of agricultural land system by setting out to promote land-leasing through the relaxation of the regulations that protected cultivation rights and consequently to increase the land mobilization, including leasehold land.
  
- 4) Furthermore, the government adopted the approach of promoting efficient use of agricultural land based on a community consensus in 1975, and introduced a promotional program for the utilization of agricultural land. Under this program, a transfer of rights could be effected without the authorization required by Article 3 of the Agricultural Land Law if farming communities reached an agreement on utilization rights to their respective agricultural land and their municipalities

proclaimed the agreements. The Agriculture Land Use Promotion Law enacted in 1980 also introduced a program for Agricultural Land Utilization and Improvement. Subsequently, these individual programs have been taken over by the agricultural land integration plan and the agricultural land utilization and improvement program placed in the Agricultural Management Framework Reinforcement Law.

- 5) The Agricultural Management Framework Reinforcement Law enacted in 1993 set out to accelerate the integration of agricultural land into the hands of certified farmers who aim for efficient and stable farm management. The law also called for the promotion of the integration of land into a special agricultural corporation established by an agreement of local farmers, in regions where the number of farmers had been dwindling.

In 2000, the government implemented additional measures to include a particular joint stock company that meet certain requirements in forms of agricultural production corporation.

- 6) As the result of these efforts to integrate agricultural land:
  - (a) As of January 1, 2005, there were about 8,000 agricultural production corporations that cultivate farm land, 120 of which were joint stock companies.
  - (b) Leaseholds accounted for 80% of the total area of agricultural land subject to rights transfer in 2003, a dramatic increase from just 3% in 1970.
  - (d) As of the end of August, 2004, there were 190,000 management units authorized as farmers/agricultural production corporations that aim for efficient and stable farm management under the Agricultural Management Framework Reinforcement Law.

These results demonstrate that a series of efforts for structural reform have had a certain degree of success.