

Sustainability of “Rice of Takashima Ikimono Tambo” with standing on market sympathy

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Takashima city in Shiga prefecture is located at west side of Lake Biwa which is the largest lake in Japan, and the location is geologically constricted part. Because the distance between lake shore and dividing ridge is very short, the climate of Pacific ocean and the Japan Sea are both crossing over at Takashima. Hence its local weather is very changeable, there is the words “don’t forget an umbrella, even if you forgot your lunch bag”. The geography of Takashima is like a miniature of Japan, and varieties of rice paddy sceneries can be seen as if there are collected from all over Japan. We explain “the rice branded with full of wildlife”, which is aimed to new standard model within the varieties of environment from the communities that has plenty of spring water to the heavy snow mountain area.



(Photo 1) School of intermediate egret (*Ardea intermedia*), which are foraging at harvest season.

In Takashima, there is no “special creature” such as crested ibis (*Nipponia nippon*) or oriental stork (*Ciconia boyciana*) which can be strong brand by itself. There is no thrilling “special scenery” such as several tens of thousands geese flying off at one time. We can only see varieties of “usual creature” and its rice paddy habitat that used to be seen at all over Japan in past. Under these conditions, it is possible to establish “special story” that can raise sympathy from consumer or market. Takashima “Ikimono Tambo project” (means rice paddy with full of wildlife) is enhanced by fostering this “story”.

Wooden fish-ladder or slope is made and tuned by farmers, and the cost is up to 20,000 – 30,000 JPY.



(photo 2) Identification training for black-spotted pond frog (*Rana (Pelophylax) nigromaculata*; left) and Nagoya daruma pond frog (*Rana (Pelophylax) porosus brevipoda*; right)

However, its function and effect could be greater than those of made by concrete that costs more than 2,000,000 JPY which could be tax. Farmers are strongly moved when they watched the first crucian carp (*Carassius*) swimming up at their first handmade fish-ladder, and the sensation can not be covered by public fund. “special story” is created by farmers with telling their sensational experiences. Moreover, distributor or consumer will be “necessary member for the story”.

Unique story is cultivated by spreading varieties of “symbiosis method” which is applied by each farmer’s rice paddy fauna. Not only fish-ladder, but also Kame-Kaeru slope (tortoise-frog slope) that is for rescue fallen tortoise, frog, and chick from canal and also rice paddy biotope can be one of symbiosis methods.



(photo 3) Setting small-scale fish-ladder (Chidori-Xtype tuned in TAKASHIMA), which is fit to the water level management of pesticide free organic farming method.



(photo 4) Kame-Kaeru slope (tortoise-frog slope) which has adjustable float with keeping slope degree as flow change

As fostering these symbiosis stories, we make importance of “high quality” such as quantitative taste point to maintain the price support among highly valued market. No matter how much high goal we establish, “rice with high price but bad taste” can not be kept on supported by market, and it is not sustainable for neither farmers life nor ecological conservation activities.

Takashima “Ikimono Tanbo project” has started since 2005 as the core agricultural policy in City of Takashima which is established by merger of municipalities. However, at the present moment, this project does not receive public fund from City



(photo 5) Japanese common catfish (*Silurus asotus*) which comes from Lake Biwa for spawning via fish ladder.

of Takashima. This may be very meaningful. Direct payment to farmers is unstable along with policy or administration, and it may enhance negotiation of wholesale price. As the result, the position of environmental conservation agriculture can be unstable within the market. Also, public funds can be stopped as soon as the budget-short and it is risky as the incentive for farmers because policy for biodiversity conservation may be weakened.

Enhancing support from the market, environmental conservation agriculture with standing on consumer’s sympathy and trust is our management strategy of “truly sustainable agriculture with enhancing biodiversity”. Supporting by public fund can be the most “wise tax use” only when it is used at the phase of system establishment for spreading these activities independently.



(photo 6) Eurasian harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*) is important mammal at rice paddy habitat. It is popular among kids program.

(photo 7) “joint sampling ” conducted by Takashima Ikimono Tanbo farmers. This sampling is regularly held to recognize and understand “endemism” at each farm, which consists of variety of ecosystem.

