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Case on Kabukuri-numa and surrounding rice paddies : Beyond CBD COP10

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Over the past century, Japan's wetlands have been greatly impoverished, and 61% completely lost. Miyagi Prefecture, where Kabukuri-numa wetland locates, in particular lost 92%, most converted to rice paddies. Better productivity and efficiency have further fueled construction of paddies so as to eliminate their remaining wetland values by keeping them dry in winter, particularly on Japan's drier Pacific coast. This has seriously impacted many wetland-dependent species, driving some close to extinction. This takes a 100-year perspective in discussing enhancement of rice paddies' wetland values as a way of restoring wetland environments and sustainable local communities, by presenting the case of the Ramsar site, "Kabukuri-numa and the surrounding rice paddies," where co-existence of rice agriculture with over-wintering geese is being sought through restoration of some paddies back to wetland, and winter-flooding others still under cultivation.

A proposal to dredge Kabukuri-numa wetland became an opportunity for stakeholders to initiate a movement towards wetland protection and co-existence of wildlife with agriculture. Landholders agreed to re-convert of 50 hectares of paddy fields back to wetland in 1998. The number of geese using Kabukuri-numa as a roosting site increased, illustrating that the restoration augmented the site's wildlife carrying capacity. Farmers and others cooperated to implement a winter-flooding regime for nearby cultivated paddies. The project was examined from various standpoints, including as an application of the Ramsar Convention, and achievements and issues identified.

Normally, once a wetland is destroyed, restoration requires huge commitments of time and money, but restoration through managing rice paddies under cultivation as "agricultural wetlands" can be a realistic and effective method for restoring natural wetland environments in Asia.

This activity was the start of movement for Ramsar "Rice Paddy Resolution" X.31, 2008, which in on the way to be involved in CBD COP10 decision in 2010.