



JAPANESE AGRICULTURE AND FARMING VILLAGES

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This video presents the history, current situation, and challenges facing Japanese agriculture. It commences with the observation that despite Japan's modernization and industrialization in the mid-19th century, "the majority of farmers lived from hand to mouth and could not afford to invest to improve agricultural practices or their living conditions." It goes on to state that Japan's economic development was centered on the industry sector and the benefits did not filter down to rural areas.

The video then focuses on postwar agricultural land reform and the establishment of agricultural cooperatives that played a key role in the modernization of the agriculture sector. Agricultural extension services were instrumental in enhancing agricultural productivity and improving living standards in rural areas.

In the 1960s, Japan's agricultural production increased, keeping pace with the nation's high economic growth, and farming modernized rapidly. Better production technologies and infrastructure improved agricultural productivity. Japan became self-sufficient in rice by the mid-1960s. Around that same time, consumer demand began to shift away from rice to fruit, meat, and dairy products, resulting in rice surpluses. The government began to accelerate the diversification of agricultural activities into livestock breeding, fruit cultivation, and planting new crops like wheat and soybeans.

Meanwhile, living conditions in farming villages improved steadily. The nutritional status of farm households made remarkable progress. In the 1970s and 1980s, modern technologies became commonplace in farming villages and the living environment was as good as in urban areas.

The proportion of part-time farm households soared as employment opportunities for farmers increased. The majority of farm households now rely heavily on off-farm income. Full-time farmers are engaged in large-scale and specialized farming.

The video then provides an overview of Japanese agriculture by region. It concludes with a summary of the challenges facing Japanese agriculture today: agriculture's share of the nation's GDP has dropped to only about 1%; Japan's food self-sufficiency rate has declined to about 40%, the lowest among developed countries; structural problems, such as small farm size, an aging workforce, shortage of successors, and increasing proportion of part-time farmers, remain unsolved; in remote villages, out-migration and abandoned farmland are on the increase; and consumers are becoming more conscious of food safety.

The video was jointly planned by the APO and the Association for International Cooperation of Agriculture and Forestry, now known as the Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry, and produced by the Agriculture and Forestry National Broadcasting Corporation.

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