

Support Program for Improving Graduate School Education
The Center for Comparative Japanese Studies
Education for Women As Leaders Program
THE 4th PUBLIC LECTURE in 2008

Speaker	OHTAHARA, Takaaki (Emeritus Professor, Hokkaido University; Director, The Regional Agricultural Institute in Hokkaido)
Topic	Japanese Food now – What happens on the front of production and consumption?
Time	March 6 th (Friday), 2009 16:00~18:00
Place	Inter-Faculty Building2, 1 st Floor, Rm102
Moderator	YORIZUMI, Mitsuko (Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University)

On March 6th (Friday), 2009, we held a lecture titled “Thinking of Today’s Japanese Food – What Is Happening in the Scenes of Production” by Mr. OHTAHARA, Takaaki, Emeritus Professor at Hokkaido University and Director of the Regional Agricultural Institute in Hokkaido, in the Room102 of Inter-Faculty Building2.

Professor OHTAHARA specializes in agricultural economics, has researched on cooperatives, such as farmer's co-operatives and co-ops, and has published many books and articles including *The Idea of Agriculture in Hokkaido*, *Agriculture and Agricultural Communities in Hokkaido under the Agricultural Basic Law*, *Introduction to Agricultural Economics*. In addition to his theoretical researches, he has been working on the frontline of agricultural politics in Hokkaido for long. In his lecture, he gave us an inspiring story based on his wide experience – he illustrated clearly the present situations and problems in Japanese agriculture with many examples.

The lecture pointed out that the recent events – the cases of BSE (mad cow disease), of stained rice, and of tainted Chinese dumplings – necessarily happened within the framework of globalism or market economy fundamentalism, leading to our awareness that it is vitally important to obtain Food “Safety and Security.” The emphasis on “Safety and Security” has something to do with a shift in the image of consumers; the image of consumers is now changing from the weak that are protected and should always defer to authorities’ ideas to an economic entity with some rights whose personal judgments are more respected. Now, producers and distributors owe accountability to consumers so that they feel more secure.

On the foundation of this movement in society, Professor ODAWARA explained how they had been trying to guarantee the safety and security of food in Hokkaido, one of the major agricultural prefectures, in the context of the “Ordinance of Food Safety and Security in Hokkaido.” Regarding the ordinance, he cited the following four points:

- (1) a turn to the agricultural policy with the viewpoint of consumers (Hokkaido Declaration of Slow Food)
- (2) the handling of genetically-modified products
- (3) the idea of local production for local consumption/ the promotion of environmentally adaptive agriculture
- (4) the fostering of dietary education

Regarding genetic modification, we were presented pro-and con ideas from a neutral standpoint. Based on these two opposing opinions, the Food Safety and Security Committee of Hokkaido drew a conclusion (that they prohibit actual commercial cultivation of them, while admitting its researches); I found the conclusion, their preventive measures against cross-fertilization and the examples of cultivation experiment to be very convincing. What I found particularly interesting was an idea that no matter how far genetically-modified crops were planted from other producers’ crops with almost 0 % crossing rate, the crossing rate never goes down exactly to 0% and ultimately we must count on the relations of trust between producers and consumers. This type of ambiguity always comes along with applied ethics I am concerned about. It was very useful to know how they found a solution in an actual scene in practice. The green-tourism in Naganuma town, Hokkaido, he cited as an example of the fostering of dietary education – in which they invite high school students on their excursion from large cities to lead agricultural life

together with them — was, I found, an interesting case of projects to boost the development of the area.

Besides these issues, we could learn more from the lecture — the present situations of minimum access, post harvest, green agriculture and organic agriculture.

After the lecture, there were many questions from the floor and lively discussions. At the end of the session, Professor FURUSE, Natsuko explained that this lecture was held as part of the general project on “food” that is aimed to integrate the humanities and sciences. It was a very fruitful lecture for the project on “food” and gave us an occasion to reflect on Japanese “food” from multifaceted viewpoints.

(Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University, YORIZUMI, Mitsuko)