

A Comparative Study on Food Safety and Security between Japan and the Democratic Republic of Congo -Applications of Modern and Traditional Agriculture to Africa-

Abstract:

During the nineties, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was been engaged in a long transition towards multiparty democracy and a market economy. And the DRC had repeated civil conflicts, but it started a reconciliation and rebuilding process. With nearly 70 million population, the DRC is Africa's second largest country. Agriculture is the primary rural economic activity. However, the DRC has a food production deficit estimated at 30-40 percent.

The DRC's human development Index (HDI) value for 2012 was 0.304, positioning the country at 186 out of 187 countries and territories in the world. Seventy percent of the population lives below the poverty line and lacks access to adequate food.

Food security and safety is an issue of growing concern in Japan and in the DRC as well. However, the nature of the problem is completely different from each other. Nevertheless, we found out some similarity and innovative application of the traditional agriculture to the modern agriculture in both countries. Our motivation to conduct a comparative study is to understand the possible collaborations to increase the food security and safety by combining two different experiences. We have conducted several joint discussions and interview surveys in the DRC. The green revolution for Africa involves the production of cash crops which can be sold on the global market. This may leave countries unable to produce food for themselves, and dependent on chemical fertilizer and agricultural chemical. Fortunately, the agriculture in the DRC is mostly free from green revolution and is still in the traditional agriculture. In Japan, consumers organized a small group and started to look for safe and reliable foods. Some farmers had realized that the modernized farming practice, which highly depended on agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers, sacrificed the nature and health of farmers themselves instead of improvement in agricultural productivity. A research group led by Professor Motoki Kubo at the College of Life Sciences, Ritsumeikan University, announced on December 10, 2012, that they developed the world's first soil fertility index (SOFIX(R)) based on the assessment of soil biological characteristics. This study highlights some of the problems facing farmers in the DRC and suggests some possible approaches toward solutions.