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### **Japan: Diplomatic Initiatives to Strengthen Agriculture and Democracy**

Japan emerged from World War II as a nation that bore the scars of defeat. Sixty-six major cities had been heavily bombed and almost 9 million people were left homeless (Dower 45-48). “The streets of every major city quickly became peopled with demoralized ex-soldiers, war widows, orphans, the homeless and unemployed—most of them preoccupied with simply staving off hunger” (Dower 48). Governmental and agricultural reforms enacted during the U.S. occupation of Japan along with the trade relationship that grew between the U.S. and Japan in the years following World War II provide historical examples of successful diplomatic initiatives that helped resolve conflicts and improve relations between nations that had once been bitter enemies. As George McGovern states in *The Third Freedom: Ending Hunger in Our Time*, “Lifting our fellow humans out of hunger and enabling them to become constructive participants in the global economy is not only the morally right thing to do but will also add to our own prosperity and improve our hopes for peace and stability” (155). Japan rebounded from postwar devastation to become an affluent nation, ranking as one of the largest aid donors in the world during the 1980s. In 1991, Japan was the second largest foreign aid donor worldwide, behind the United States (Library of Congress Country Studies).

#### ***The American Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952***

General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander of Occupational Forces in Japan following Japan’s surrender in 1945. Under his leadership, the Allied Powers resolved to make Japan incapable of waging war, thus “demilitarization” was the first priority of occupation authorities (Columbia University). Japan’s armed forces and military industry were dismantled and displays of patriotism eliminated from schools and public life. The U.S. government also believed that establishing democracy in Japan would ensure a peaceful and more prosperous future. Under a new American-style constitution, the emperor’s subjects became citizens. Women were granted equal rights, including suffrage. Legislation was passed to break up monopolies and decentralize giant business corporations.

Land reforms initiated during the occupation had a significant impact on Japanese farmers. Before the war, two-thirds of the agricultural land was rented out to the families who farmed it. Farmers, who comprised more than half of Japan’s labor force at that time, paid wealthy landlords as much as half of what they produced. The average farm was little more than an acre, leaving many farm families to live in poverty. During the occupation, according to Dower, “An agrarian land reform was initiated that within a few years would virtually dispossess the rural landlord class, destroying a system in which exploitative tenancy had been wide-spread and creating in its place a huge constituency of small owner-farmers” (82). Postwar reforms redistributed land so that families could own the land they worked. Land ownership helped farm families become more independent economically, allowing them to participate more freely in the new democracy (Columbia University).

#### ***Humanitarian Response to Disaster***

While land reforms created more opportunities for farmers in Japan, it was the humanitarian response to a natural disaster in 1959 that initiated agricultural diplomacy and trade between the U.S. and Japan, both through the efforts of ordinary citizens and through official diplomatic channels.

Many Japanese cities and farms were still recovering from WW II destruction when two typhoons devastated Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan’s most important livestock-producing region, in 1959. (See

Figure 1). Master Sergeant Richard Thomas, an Iowa farmer, was working in public relations for the U.S. Air Force in Tokyo at the time. "[Thomas] had visited Yamanashi, dramatically rimmed by mountains (including Mt. Fuji), and with vegetable gardens and rice paddies tucked into every available space. And he had gotten to know several people there. Hearing that typhoons had damaged one of his favorite areas of Japan spurred him to action" (Swaim 92).

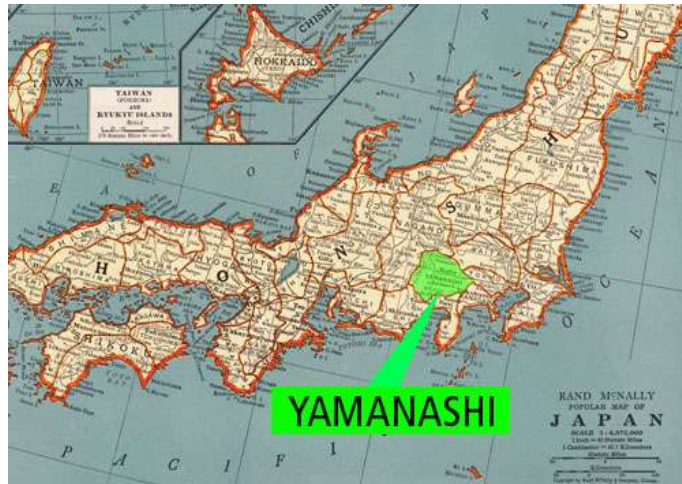


Figure 1: Rand McNally Map of Japan highlighting Yamanashi Prefecture.

Thomas suggested airlifting hogs from Iowa to Japan, asking farmers to donate breeding stock and the U.S. government to back his idea. Through citizen diplomacy, Thomas initiated restoration of livestock herds in Yamanashi Prefecture, engaged Iowa farmers in humanitarian efforts and opened Japanese markets to U.S. agricultural imports, which sparked a lasting friendship between Iowa and Yamanashi, and helped heal lingering wounds between the former World War II enemies. This unique collaborative effort between farmers, agribusiness leaders and government officials “established the groundwork that has led to over \$280 billion of food and agricultural product exports to the island nation since that time” (Wyant).

Thomas first proposed his idea to Don Motz, the U.S. agricultural attaché at the embassy in Tokyo, who helped work out the details. The Air Force flew Thomas to Iowa where the "hog lift" received enthusiastic support. Walter Goepfinger, president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), had been searching for ways to open global markets for Iowa grain. "Iowa farmers donated 36 hogs for the project. The Agriculture Department agreed to provide 60,000 bushels of corn for feed from government stocks, but only after department officials were convinced of 'the possibility of selling large amounts' of grain there," Walter Goepfinger recalled in a 1980 memorandum.

Goepfinger explained his strategy to the *Des Moines Register* as the hogs were prepared for shipment in January 1960. "We're sending pigs that weigh around 130 pounds, farrowed last spring or summer. We're doing that deliberately because we want the Japanese to see the pigs 'grow up' under our methods of feeding" (10 January 1960). In contrast to U.S. farmers, Japanese farmers traditionally fed their hogs a non-grain diet that included coconut scraps, sweet potatoes, and silkworm cocoons. Feeding grains to hogs rather than food scraps increases the quantity and quality of meat. Donating the hogs along with the grain to feed them in response to the typhoon devastation also provided "a way that we could develop a market for feed grains.... [Japan] could become an awfully big market for our surpluses," Goepfinger explained.

Thomas' efforts in citizen diplomacy extended to Washington, D.C., where the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the Japanese agricultural attaché, Hideo Tokoro, agreed to help. The U.S. Air Force supplied a plane for the hogs; grain was transported to Japan by ship. According to the U.S. Grains Council:

"Getting the hogs to Japan was no easy task. Roscoe Marsden, president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, rounded up 36 lean meat breeding hogs donated by Iowa farmers. The animals were shipped on an Air Force Cargo plane fitted with special crates. Accompanying the hogs were Marsden, his wife Kay, and NCGA director Albert Miller. Because there were no jet cargo planes at the time, the hogs and their escorts were forced to take a time-consuming, treacherous, island hopping flight across the Pacific. At each stop, Miller and Marsden would bathe the hogs so that the animals wouldn't overheat" (*Issue 1*).

"This is a warm hand of friendship extended across the sea," Tokoro said in accepting the hogs on behalf of Japan. "It is the spirit of the people-to-people program expressed in the most realistic as well as the most sublime of terms. Like these hogs you have presented, the seed of friendship you have planted will increase itself, producing generations of blue ribbon friends and good will of the purest strain." After a two-week quarantine in Tokyo, the 35 surviving hogs (one died en route) were transported to the Shumiyonshi Breeding Station in Kofu, the capital of Yamanashi. "The hogs lived out their lives in new facilities and populated the prefecture with their descendants. Official estimated that by the time the last of the original hogs died nine years later, their progeny totaled some 500,000 feed grain-guzzling animals" (U.S. Grain Council).

For the fledgling FAS, the hog lift was an early—and highly successful—experiment in building a coalition of government and private organizations to aid in the creation, expansion and maintenance of long-term export markets for U.S. agricultural products (Swanson). Today, Japan is the largest commercial market for feed grains, pork, wheat, potatoes, and rice, and is expected to become the top market for U.S. beef exports. As the United States' third largest export market, sales exceeded \$11 billion in 2009 (Wyant).

Expanded Japanese markets for eggs, poultry, meat, and milk have improved nutrition in Japan and increased economic returns for American farmers. "The people of Japan remember and appreciate what Iowa farmers, the state of Iowa, and the American government did to help them by sending the swine breeding animals to Japan and corn to feed them. Today, Japan is our largest export market for feed grains and pork," said Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey.

Trade statistics are not the only positive outcome of initiating a relationship through agriculture with Japan. "The numbers that quantify trade, in dollars or volume, don't tell the whole story," said Christie Vilsack, former first lady of Iowa who often travels with her husband, Tom, a former Iowa governor who currently serves as the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. "It's the relationship between individuals, built and nurtured over time, that make the trade relations between nations possible. Relationships heal wounds. Relationships build alliances," Mrs. Vilsack asserts. "Many times we do not really recognize the unforeseen consequences of an act of kindness," she observed. Richard Thomas set in motion a humanitarian effort that resulted in international trade—and friendship. "Many people have worked hard to continue that friendship," Mrs. Vilsack continued. "It's a valuable lesson: In order to have peace you have to have relationship with people, and you have to tend those relationships. Iowa and Yamanashi have continued to nurture the relationship—Iowa sends people to Yamanashi, and Yamanashi sends people to Iowa. That goes a long way to explain the relationship [the U.S. has] with Japan as a whole."

The exchange of visitors between Iowa and Yamanashi that began with the hog lift included Harold Hughes, who served as Iowa's governor from 1963-1969, and U.S. senator from 1969-1975. Hughes, also a WW II veteran, visited Japan in 1965. He wrote of the experience in his memoir, *The Man From Ida Grove*:

After we landed in Tokyo, I left ... for the two-hour train ride to Kofu. Arriving at the station, I found myself amid a sea of little children waving American and Japanese flags. Some five thousand people were there for a tumultuous welcome.

I toured the farms, including the hog barns, which are enhanced with fresh flowers in vases every day. 'For the benefit of the hogs,' said my Japanese guide. When he pointed to thousands of swine and said, 'From Iowa,' I remembered the Japanese friendship bell recently installed on our Statehouse grounds and thought how some twenty-odd years before we were deadly enemies. I glanced at my guide and estimated him to be my age. If I had been sent to the South Pacific, we could have killed each other (218-19).

### ***Restoring Food Security in Postwar Japan***

"Food insecurity is first and foremost a moral issue. We should all feel a humanitarian imperative to take on the challenge and ensure that children do not go to sleep hungry. But it goes beyond that. No matter where they live, children will only realize their full potential if they have regular access to food. Giving a child the opportunity for a brighter, more productive future affects not only the individual child, but the community where that child is raised, the country where he or she lives, and all of the world" (U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack).

Helping restore food security in postwar Japan was instrumental in turning a former enemy into a strong ally. Agriculture is an important tool in international diplomacy—one that may be underestimated. "Food is a powerful asset in terms of diplomacy because it is often associated with hunger and meeting basic human needs of all people in a society. The specter of massive starvation touches people in all countries and can lead to unexpected cooperation," explained Ambassador Kenneth Quinn. Citizen diplomacy offers another significant approach to creating and sustaining peace. "Overcoming the legacy of bitter post-war feelings has been a long and very difficult process in both countries," Quinn observed. "Citizen exchanges have, in my opinion, contributed significantly to this effort. I saw this during our visit to Yamanashi [in April 2010] when our group took part in a traditional celebration that commemorated a historic event from medieval times. We Iowans joined in the parade dressed like Samurai warriors. As we marched through town the crowds along the parade route cheered and waved at us and we waved back. The friendliness was as genuine as it was palpable," Quinn continued. One of our group remarked, 'It looks like the war is finally over.' I believe that the exchanges between Iowa and Yamanashi dating back to the hog lift have been part of that process of draining the poison of post-war bitterness from both countries."

According to Secretary Vilsack, the Japanese people are a very traditional people who remember kindnesses extended to them at times of difficulty. "The Hog Lift reflected the generosity of America not long after a bitter and deadly war, which included using atomic bombs to help end it," he explained. "As a result, the Hog Lift helped to establish a deep friendship that exists today. This friendship has strategic and economic importance. Japan is our strongest ally in the region and is in the top five of our trading partners."

Japan's economy suffered a tremendous blow due to the March 2011 tsunami and earthquake, which, according to Secretary Vilsack, will be met with "significant help from the agriculture sector in America."

Vilsack explained that the earthquake and tsunami disrupted the soil used by Japan to grow the limited food they produce in their own country. “The United States will provide technical assistance in analyzing what has happened to the soil and how it will impact the Japanese crop production. We are doing the same thing in Haiti following the earthquake they suffered. The United States also offered food assistance immediately after the tragedy as it most always does.” Secretary Vilsack further explained the role of agriculture in sustaining peaceful relations between nations:

[T]he effort in the 1960's helped to cement a very strong and lasting friendship between the America and Japan. Our generosity in extending a helping hand in Japan and in Europe following World War II helped to keep the peace globally for the last 66 years and counting. This generosity is a value that arises from our rural roots in this country where if a family had a fire that destroyed a barn, others had barn raising efforts or if a farmer was sick and couldn't harvest a crop, others would help out and do it for the farmer. This generosity is what in part supports and strengthens community in the rural countryside. In the 1960's the United States was far more rural than it is today, but the values that led to the Hog Lift still thankfully exist. That value is what led to the development of the USAID, the agency that helps others in nations that suffer a tragic event. While it is morally the right thing to do to help others in trouble, it is also the smart thing to do in a world with a global economy and confronting terrorists because you build alliances and friendships that help support your businesses and protect your citizens. From an economic standpoint agriculture has benefited from the expression of these values in the aid given. Today, Japan is one of our best trading partners and we sell hundreds of millions of dollars of agricultural products to Japan. This trading relationship is one of the main reasons we sell more ag products than we have to buy. This helps our farmers and also creates thousands of jobs—a long way of saying that the Golden Rule is golden in a number of different ways.

### ***Current Agricultural Concerns in Japan***

Japanese agriculture is facing significant declines. Gains made in improving nutrition through livestock breeding, production of other protein sources, and vital agricultural trade relationships have improved food security. However, Japan's ratio of food self-sufficiency has plummeted from 79% to 39% in the years between 1960 and 2008 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery, Japan [MAFF] website). In addition, the share of agricultural output in gross domestic product (GDP) dropped from 9% to less than 1% and the amount of land dedicated to agricultural production dropped from 6.09 million hectares to 4.63 million hectares (Yamashita).

Major trends of concern to Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (MAFF) include:

- The total value of imported agricultural products by Japan increased to a record high level of 5,530.4 billion yen in 2007 in the context of a diversification in dietary pattern in an appreciating yen and the liberalization of global trade.
- In addition, the top 5 countries and regions from which Japan imports agricultural products accounted for just over 70% of the total value (with the United States accounting for 31% of the total value of imported agricultural products, the EU accounting for 13%, China accounting for 13%, Australia accounting for 9%, and Canada accounting for 6%), resulting in a framework of reliance on certain countries.
- In preparing for emergencies that might impact food imports, Japan will need to reinforce its ability to supply food by securing agricultural land and water for agricultural purposes, endeavoring to foster and secure principal (as opposed to part-time) farmers, and improving the level of agricultural technologies under normal circumstances. (MAFF website).

Japan's population has increased from 70 million to 130 million in the years since World War II, while in the same timeframe the amount of land devoted to farming has decreased. Diminishing agricultural land resources threatens food security as well as food self-sufficiency. Part-time farmers who continue to operate small farms (the average is 1.2 hectares or 3 acres) have kept full-time farmers from expanding their operations in Japan, driving production costs up (Encyclopedia of the Nations).

According to Yoshikawa, "Japan's low rate of food self-sufficiency is principally due to the fact that farm size is so small that it is almost impossible to make a living by farming. The result has been a decline in the number of farmers, the aging of the farming population, and a drop in the amount of land under cultivation." While the population of the nation increases, the population of people who primarily engage in farming has sharply declined from 11.8 million in 1960 to only 1.9 million in 2009. In addition, 61% of farmers are age 65 or older. Government policy has made it difficult for ownership of small farms to be consolidated to increase the profitability of farming. Instead, many aging owners of small farms sell land to developers for higher gain than if they sold it to new farmers, or established farmers hoping to expand their operations (Yoshikawa).

Consequences of the earthquake in March 2011, including radiation from failed nuclear power stations, have jeopardized the safety of food produced in many areas. This creates an even greater imbalance between Japan's agricultural exports and imports.

### ***Conclusion***

Japan's government price support levels for agricultural producers are the highest among members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), driven in part by food security concerns and memories of food shortages during World War II and its aftermath (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada).

The Yamanashi Prefectural Livestock Experiment Station, the original destination of the 35 Iowa hogs received through the 1960 Hog Lift, provides one example of how Japanese livestock producers can work toward higher levels of food self-sufficiency. By the time the last of the original Iowa hogs died in 1969, officials estimated that their descendants totaled more than 500,000 animals. Today, Japanese herds still carry genetic markers of their Iowa ancestors (U.S. Grains Council). Japanese breeders have worked to develop and market their own original pork brand, Fujizakura Pork ("Sweet Corn and Sushi" Video. Iowa Sister States). Continued expansion of domestic hog and other livestock production will help balance the quantity of food Japan is now required to import.

In a speech during the Sister State Reaffirmation Ceremony at the 2011 Iowa State Fair, Yamanashi Governor Shomei Yokouchi described agricultural diversification efforts including expanding grape production and development and expansion of the Japanese wine industry. Producing diversified products for domestic consumption and for export will expand markets, decrease need for government price supports to protect farmers, and hopefully encourage more career (rather than part-time) farmers. All of these efforts will improve Japan's level of food self-sufficiency.

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