

Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan: The Role of Two Citizen Movements in the Rediscovery of Local Foodways

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Abstract

This paper looks at two citizen movements in Japan that address the country's low self-sufficiency rate of merely 40% and the issue of food safety. Recently, a series of food scandals that also involved imported food products has alarmed Japan, such as the incident of Chinese dumplings that were tainted with pesticides (*gyōza jiken*) at the beginning of 2008.

Food Action Nippon defines itself as a citizen movement (*kokumin undō*) that provides information about domestic food products and balanced eating habits. Slow Food Japan is an NGO and part of the worldwide Slow Food Movement that originated 1986 in Italy. Slow Food Japan seeks to preserve a cultural heritage such as vegetables, fruits and cattle that are in danger of vanishing and tied to a specific region and special cultivation techniques.

Taking these two citizen movements—a governmental initiative and a global movement—as examples, I argue that the quest for a return to supposedly safer domestic foods reflects a search for national and local identity expressed through the (re)discovery and promotion of local foods.

Assmann, Stephanie. 2010. Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan: The Role of Two Citizen Movements in the Rediscovery of Local Foodways. In *Globalization, Food and Social Identities in the Asia Pacific Region*, ed. James Farrer. Tokyo: Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture.

URL: <http://icc fla.sophia.ac.jp/global%20food%20papers/html/assmann.html>

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“Eat Japanese”—Food Security, Food Safety and Food-related Health Problems—Intertwined Issues in Contemporary Japan

The Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (hereafter: MAFF) released a short video clip in 2009.¹ The four minute animated video subtitled in English addresses alarming concerns with regards to Japan’s high dependency on food imports, the rise of lifestyle-related illnesses (*seikatsu shûkan-byô*) such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, and finally the loss of a distinct Japanese food culture consisting of fish, rice, soy, and vegetables. A solution to all these pressing problems is quickly presented: “Eat Japanese”—a return to Japanese food would make weight problems vanish, Japanese food culture would be revived, and Japan would regain a higher self-sufficiency rate. The video clip blames current health problems of Japanese citizens on the globalization of food practices, in particular on the rise in popularity of Western foods, especially meat consumption and fatty foods.

Food Action Nippon and the Slow Food Movement—A Self-proclaimed Government Movement and a Popular Movement

As the above video illustrates, three pertinent issues, the question of food security, the increase of lifestyle-related health problems among the Japanese population, as well as the issue of food safety currently pose serious challenges to the Japanese government. In this paper, I will provide a brief background of the above issues and introduce two movements that aim to counterbalance the globalization of food practices by requesting a return to domestic and local food products.

The first movement I will address is the governmental campaign, Food Action Nippon, which was established by MAFF in October 2008 with the goal of initiating a “citizen movement” (*kokumin undô*) among the Japanese population. The second movement is the “Slow Food Movement,” which originated in Italy in 1986 and has developed into a global movement operating worldwide. The Slow Food Movement has been active in Japan since 1998 and is represented throughout the entire country.

Before investigating how both movements address the current challenges of food security, food safety and lifestyle-related illnesses, I will first examine the use of the term “movement” and establish a theoretical framework that defines both movements. It is important to note that Food Action Nippon and the Slow Food Movement have ostensibly similar objectives in proclaiming a return to local food heritage and in providing information about local foodways to the Japanese population, but they differ with regards to their origins, structure, agents and purposes. According to

1. Source: <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/grv2422/>, accessed on 22 April 2009.

Sidney Tarrow's definition, a social movement is described as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow 1998, 4). In their reader on social movements, Goodwin and Jasper offer a similar definition: "A social movement is a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices" (Goodwin and Jasper 2003, 3).

Do these definitions apply to Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan? The Slow Food Movement emerged in the 1980s in Italy as a popular movement from left-wing activists in opposition to a scandal about methanol-tainted wine (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 48-49). A major turning point in the formation of the Slow Food Movement was the opposition to the opening of a McDonald's restaurant on the Piazza di Spagna in Rome (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 69). Despite opposition to the McDonald's fast food chain, the Slow Food Movement has defined itself not as a movement against Fast Food per se but rather as a broader movement against globalization and the homogenization of foods and tastes (Shimamura 2004, 17). The movement has matured from an activists group—which opposes a lifestyle that embraces the globalization of food in the forms of fast food, ready-made meals, and more recently, genetically modified food—into a transnational network that is active worldwide.²

Given the transformation of the Slow Food Movement, I argue in this essay that the definition of the term "movement" needs to be redefined as applied to both the Slow Food Movement and Food Action Nippon. More specifically, I argue that the Slow Food Movement can be more accurately defined as a transnational advocacy network according to Keck's and Sikkink's definition of "transnational advocacy networks" that "include[s] those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 2). Transnational advocacy networks "involve actors from nongovernmental, governmental and intergovernmental organizations, and are increasingly present in such issue areas as human rights, women's rights, and the environment" (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 1998, 188). According to Sidney Tarrow's elaborations on transnational contention, the role of transnational advocacy networks is for the establishment of domestic movements so that local activists can experience a sense of shared values and participation in wider transnational networks (Tarrow 1998, 192). This holds true for the Slow Food Movement in Japan, which maintains a close relationship to the mother organization in Italy in terms of its well organized grassroots movement in Japan.

2. Slow Food currently has over 100,000 members in 132 countries around the world. In 2005, Slow Food had 38,000 members in Italy, the country of its origin. The United States followed with almost 15,000 members, third was Germany with approximately 7,500 members, followed by Switzerland with 3,800 members (Petrini and Padovani 2005: 132). Slow Food Japan has approximately 2,000 members.

In contrast, Food Action Nippon has not been formed as a collective and sustained entity within the Japanese population in opposition to an authority. Rather, Food Action Nippon can be best described as a state campaign or a government campaign established by MAFF with the objective of initiating a “citizen movement” within the Japanese population. Due to these differences the two movements—a state campaign under the pretext of a self-proclaimed movement and a popular movement more accurately defined as a transnational advocacy network—have different perceptions of tackling current problems such as food security, safety, and food-related health concerns.

Food Education and Food Self-sufficiency: Two Objectives of the Japanese Government

The governmental campaign, Food Action Nippon, is not the only initiative launched by the Japanese government with the objective of changing the eating habits of the population. Overall, the Japanese government has decided to take a more active role in counterbalancing the globalization of food in educating its citizens about appropriate and healthy food choices. In its efforts to reshape the dietary habits of the Japanese population, the government is addressing two issues in particular. The first concerns the unbalanced diets of so many Japanese who skip breakfast,³ yet consume too many fatty foods and ready-made meals available at convenience stores, and have developed overweight and skinniness, which has become a problem for young Japanese women in particular.⁴ In order to address such food-related health problems, MAFF released the “Basic Law on Food Education” (*shokuiku kihon-hô*) in 2005, which aims to provide information about healthy food choices and the preparation of food to the Japanese public, including parents and educators. The law also stipulates that farmers, fishermen and food-related businesses take on greater responsibility in providing information about food and nutrition to the Japanese public. The following excerpt taken from the official English website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) documents the many challenges Japan

3. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) provides information about men and women who skip breakfast (*chôshoku kesshoku*) in a yearly survey on health and nutrition of the Japanese population. According to the results of this survey, skipping breakfast has especially become an issue for men and women in their 20s and particularly for men in their 30s. 24.9% of all women in the age group from 20-29 skip breakfast, whereas 28.6% of all men in their 20s and 30.2% of all men in the age group from 30-39 do not eat breakfast. (*Heisei 19nen Kokumin kenkô eiyô chôsa kekka no gaiyô* [Overview of the results of the survey on health and nutrition in the Japanese population for the year 2007], <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2008/12/dl/h1225-5k.pdf>, accessed on September 17, 2009).

4. There seems to be a tendency for more men to be overweight and for younger women to be underweight. According to data collected by the MHLW, 21.7 % of women in their 20s are considered to be underweight (Body Mass Index BMI < 18.5) whereas 33.7% of men in their 40s are considered to be overweight (Body Mass Index BMI \geq 25) (*Heisei 19nen Kokumin kenkô eiyô chôsa kekka no gaiyô*, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2008/04/dl/h0430-2g.pdf>, accessed on September 16, 2009)

is currently facing in terms of food security and food safety:

Behind the law, there're a variety of food and nutrition issues such as a lack of proper concern for food; an increase in irregular and nutritionally unbalanced meals; a rise in obesity and lifestyle-related diseases; an excessive desire for being slim especially among young females; outbreak of a series of incidents related to food safety; over-dependency on food from abroad; and, loss of traditional food culture in a globalization movement. Some might criticize that eating is such a personal thing that government shouldn't regulate by a law. However, Japanese situation over food has already reached to a crisis point, and that a law had to be enacted in order to address these issues. (MAFF 2009c)

The second issue is MAFF's attempt to raise Japan's food self-sufficiency rate by proclaiming a return to domestic food products which is one of the underlying reasons for initiating the campaign Food Action Nippon. MAFF seeks to provide an incentive for Japanese people to buy local food products and to develop a greater consciousness for a distinct Japanese food culture as part of Japanese national identity and to counterbalance the high dependency on food imports by returning to domestic food products. As the above quotation of the video "Eat Japanese" illustrates, a change in eating habits is clearly associated with a return to an indigenous food fare. The overtones of Food Action Nippon are quite nationalistic. The name Food Action *Nippon* as opposed to Food Action *Nihon* reflects a high consciousness of national identity. The ambitious aim of Food Action Nippon is to raise Japan's food self-sufficiency rate from the current 40% to 45% by the year 2015. This goal is to be achieved through three different approaches. First, Food Action Nippon, also known under the name "*Oishii Campaign*" [Tasty Campaign] has formed ties with approximately 150 promotion partners in the private industry and non-governmental organizations. Among these partners are department stores and convenience-store enterprises such as Lawson and Seven Eleven. Slow Food Japan is also one of Food Action Nippon's promotion partners. The aim of this co-operation with food companies and non-governmental organizations is to create regional networks with producers and to expand the distribution of their products. The motto of Food Action Nippon is 'the visible producer' (*kao ga mieru seisansha*), a producer whose products are visible, reliable and of high quality—in short, a producer that consumers can trust and relate to. Second, Food Action Nippon has been expanding its campaigns through printed media, on TV, and also through the Internet.⁵ Third, in addition to the presence of the organization in various media, Food Action Nippon organizes sales of regional agricultural products (*chihô kokusan*) with a current emphasis on the Kantô-Region. It is important to note that Food Action Nippon does not sell its own products

5. For example see <http://shokuryo.jp/index.html>

but seeks to strengthen ties between producers and consumers in order to expand distribution networks. These promotion and sales efforts currently remain limited to domestic food products, including regional agricultural products.

Despite the government's efforts to make domestic food products more attractive, the possibility of becoming independent of imported foods may prove to be wishful thinking. Japan currently has a low calorie-based food self-sufficiency rate of 40% and remains highly dependent upon the import of foreign food products. The United States and China are Japan's major food suppliers, followed by Australia. According to statistics compiled by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) based on data of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for the first half of the year 2006, Japan imported 22.9% of its food from the United States of America and 16.8% from China, followed by 8.1% from Australia (JETRO 2008). The dependency on food imports is reflected in Japan's low self-sufficiency rate, which showed a gradual decline from 78% in 1961 to 50% in 1987 and reached a record low of 37% in 1993 (MAFF 2009b). As of 2003, Japan had the lowest self-sufficiency rate among the major industrialized countries according to self-sufficiency rates data compiled by MAFF. For example, the U.S. had a self-sufficiency rate of 128% while Australia's self-sufficiency rate was at 237%. Data for the self-sufficiency rates of other industrialized countries were as follows: Canada 145%, France 122%, Germany 84%, Italy 62%, the Netherlands 58%, Spain 89%, Sweden 84%, Switzerland 49%, and Great Britain 70% (MAFF 2009b).

One reason for the decline of food self-sufficiency can be seen in the decline of farm households since the beginning of Japan's high economic growth. During this period, the number of farm households decreased from 5.4 million households in 1970 to 3.3 million households in 1998 (Rath 2007, 486). Correspondingly, the number of farmers declined from 37.7 million farmers in 1950 to 14.8 million farmers in 1998 (Mulgan 2000, 3). In short, farming has become a much less attractive vocation than in times past. Another reason for Japan's low food self-sufficiency rate is the diversification of food-consumption practices, in particular a gradual shift from rice consumption—Japan's major staple food—to an increased consumption of wheat and meat products. According to MAFF, the share of rice in the daily diet has decreased from 48.3% in 1960 to 30.1% in 1980. In the year 2004, the share of rice amounted to only 23.4% of the daily diet of a Japanese person. At the same time, the consumption of cooking oil and fat rose from 4.6% in 1960 to 14.2% in 2004 (MAFF 2009b; Suematsu 2008: 44-46). These shifts in nutrition can be traced back to the U.S. Food Aid Program that introduced milk and wheat products into the Japanese diet as a major component of school lunches (*kyūshoku*) for children. The shift from a rice-based diet to a diet centered on bread and milk marked a major shift in the eating habits of an entire generation (Cwierka 2006; Schmidtpott 1998). A second major shift in eating habits occurred at the beginning of the 1970s when fast food chains, such as

McDonald's, became increasingly popular in a very short period of time.

A Legal Framework and Enhanced Visibility of Food Production to Ensure Food Safety

A further issue of concern to the Japanese government is the matter of food safety. In recent years, Japan has been plagued by a number of food scandals. In the winter of 2008, Japan was shaken by a food poisoning scandal over frozen dumplings (*gyôza*) imported from a Chinese company (Ministry of Labor 2008; Yoshida 2008). This case is just one example in a long series of recent food scandals that involved a number of both foreign and Japanese food companies. In January 2007, the Japanese confectioner Fujiya had to halt its production after admitting the repeated use of expired ingredients and the mislabeling of “consume by” dates for its products. In the same year, an investigation of the prefectural government revealed that the confectioner Akafuku, based in Mie Prefecture, had falsified production dates of its popular bean-jam sweets (*Japan Times Online*, March 2, 2007 and October 21, 2007). Despite the fact that these food scandals only partially involved Japanese food companies, Japanese consumers tend to equate food safety (*shokuhin anzen*) with the consumption of domestic products (*kokusan*). The scandal involving Chinese dumplings confirmed the fears of many Japanese consumers that imported Chinese food products contained pesticides. A telephone survey conducted by Kyodo News on February 9 and 10, 2008 revealed that 76% of the respondents intended not to use Chinese products after this incident (*Japan Times Online*, February 11, 2008).

In this regard two reasons for the supposedly greater safety of domestic products are noteworthy. The first reason is the existence of food-related laws that assure food safety in Japan, such as the Basic Law of Food Safety (*shokuhin anzen kijun-hô*), which ensures investigations of food products. This comprehensive legal framework suggests trustworthiness. Second, as mentioned earlier, the Japanese government seeks to invoke trust in domestic food products by making food processing and the origin of food products more transparent and visible. A producer in your immediate vicinity who you personally know invokes trust. In order to establish trust, Food Action Nippon aims to convince Japanese citizens of the safety of domestic products by establishing personal ties between domestic food producers and food consumers. The use of the term “citizen movement” aims to establish a feeling of solidarity among the Japanese population, whereas a more direct order to change eating habits from the government might provoke rejection amongst the Japanese. Rather than enforce a change of eating habits in a direct way, the government set up Food Action Nippon in order to establish personal ties with Japanese consumers through promotion partners that serve as a link between the government and the population.

In a similar effort to make food production chains more transparent, MAFF has introduced a food traceability system which mandates beef traceability since 2003 and recommends the implementation of a traceability system for other food products as well (Hall 2008).

Slow Food—Advocating the Local on a Global Basis

I have shown that the Japanese government uses a variety of approaches towards changing the population's eating habits by conducting a food education campaign, a campaign to raise the food self-sufficiency, and through introducing a food traceability system. One example of a popular movement advocating a return to local food products is the non-governmental organization (NGO) Slow Food movement, which I defined earlier as a transnational advocacy network that maintains close ties to the Italian mother organization. Albeit the objective of providing information about local foodways is similar in the case of both movements, Food Action Nippon and Slow Food differ in terms of their perceptions of food self-sufficiency.

Whereas Food Action Nippon is especially concerned with enhancing the level of national food security and reducing the population's lifestyle-related health problems, Slow Food aims to enhance the quality of lifestyles by highlighting food as a way to experience conviviality and pleasure. Members of the Slow Food movement advocate an overall slower pace of life and to this end they aim to preserve regional cuisines that are in danger of vanishing. The preservation of local heritages illustrates the historical dimension as well as a consciousness of the need to protect a country's indigenous foods. In other words, Slow Food invites people to connect with their local food heritage and re-think their conventional eating habits and living patterns while emphasizing the pleasures of (sharing) food.

The symbol of Slow Food is a snail, which represents slowness and prudence. Slow Food originated in the small town called Bra in Piedmont, Italy in 1986 and is strongly centered on the principles of founder Carlo Petrini (Petrini 2001; Petrini and Padovani 2005). The organization is rapidly growing and has a multifaceted structure. There are currently more than 83,000 members in over 100 countries worldwide (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 131-132). As of 2005, Slow Food had 38,000 members in Italy. The United States followed with almost 15,000 members, and third was Germany with approximately 7,500 members, followed by Switzerland with 3,800 members (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 132). Members are organized in local "convivia" where they coordinate a variety of food-related activities, such as wine and food tastings, food fairs and public lectures in order to provide information about local foods (including cultivation techniques and special ways of preparation). Participants in the convivia also conduct "taste education" in high schools, for example, the planting of a school

garden. One of the main tasks of the *convivia* is to establish close ties between food producers, co-producers and distributors of foods. Members of the *convivia* also give advice to food producers on how to improve the marketing and distribution of their products with the aim of increasing the consciousness of consumers for regional products in their immediate vicinity. Slow Food has established the “Ark of Taste” project to protect endangered regional foods that are at risk of dying out. To be included on the list of endangered products, Slow Food requires that the product in question needs to have an excellent taste and a long history. Moreover, the product needs to be of environmental, economic, and historic relevance in the region of its cultivation. Also, the product should be cultivated on a small scale and must be at risk of dying out. Slow Food has additionally set up three criteria that prohibit products from being listed in the Ark of Taste: (1) the product cannot be genetically modified, (2) the product shall not have a commercial brand name or trade mark, (3) after being enlisted as endangered, the product must be clearly marked with the snail, the logo of Slow Food.⁶ Moreover, the organization conducts the Terra Madre event, which can be described as a global meeting of food producers, such as farmers and cooks. So far, two events have been held, the second one in October 2006 (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 163-174). In 2004, the organization has also entered the educational sector by establishing the University of Gastronomic Sciences where students can obtain a two year education in gastronomy, food culture and farming methods (Petrini and Padovani 2005, 147-162).

Slow Food Japan—The Local Expression of a Transnational Advocacy Network

Despite the transnational character of the Slow Food Movement, it is in fact “local” food products that Slow Food aims to safeguard. In Japan, Slow Food expresses its local organizational status through 44 *convivia* with locations ranging from Hokkaido, in the north of Japan, to Japan’s most southern province, Okinawa. Slow Food Japan maintains close ties with the mother organization, which in turn acts as an advisor on structure and administration. Slow Food Japan was launched in 1998 and currently has approximately 2,000 members.⁷ Slow Food Japan is actively enhancing local knowledge about food in several ways. First, Slow Food Japan seeks to protect regional cuisines and regional agricultural products. As mentioned, the organization’s “Ark of Taste” (*aji no hakobune*) is intended to safeguard various endangered regional foods. As of February 2008, there are currently 22 products in Japan that are listed in the Ark of Taste as products that are on the verge of

6. The Ark of Taste (*Aji no hakobune [aruka]*), Unpublished news release, Slow Food Japan, February 20, 2007.

7. These data are taken from the following website: <http://www.slowfoodjapan.net/new.html>, accessed on March 5, 2007.

vanishing. A few of these products are named below.

Haretsu corn, (*Hachiretsu tômorokoshi*), Hokkaido
 Long grilled goby, (*Nagatsura no yaki haze*), Miyagi Prefecture
 Amarume Green Onion, (*Amarume negi*), Miyagi Prefecture
 Dried persimmons, (*Dôjô hachiya kaki*), Gifu Prefecture
 Masakari pumpkin, (*Masakari kabocha*), Hokkaido⁸

Second, Slow Food Japan conducts a number of Slow Food festivals and food fairs in order to give local producers a chance to introduce their food products to a wider audience through sample tastings. Similar to the governmental initiative Food Action Nippon, Slow Food aims to provide education about food products such as soybeans, tofu and *miso* and the various ways of preparation through lectures, videos, sample tastings, games and simple cooking as part of these events. An additional similarity between Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan is that food fairs are conducted by both organizations on a regular basis. Food Action Nippon has conducted the food fair “Feel Good Japan” while Slow Food holds a fair every year in Yokohama under a different theme such as rice (2007) and *miso* (2008). Similar food fairs are also held on a regional basis such as the Slow Food Festival in the rural town Kesenuma in the northern part of Miyagi prefecture in February 2007 (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, February 15, 2007). These fairs are open to the public and attract visitors who are eager to try a number of different local foods.

Though the goals and objectives of the governmental campaign Food Action Nippon and the popular movement Slow Food are similar, they differ in terms of structure, purposes and perception of the globalization of food. Both organizations aim to provide information to the public about nutritional habits and seek to counterbalance the globalization of food practices that have, in their view, led to alarming concerns regarding food security, food safety and more recently health issues. Both organizations implore its members and member countries to return to domestic and regional food products and to reconsider unhealthy eating habits. Yet whereas Food Action Nippon as a state campaign is more concerned with the alarming consequences of low food self-sufficiency and the rise of food and lifestyle-related health problems among the Japanese population, Slow Food seeks to safeguard an indigenous food fare linked to local heritage.

8. Source: http://www.slowfoodjapan.net/ark/item_index.html. Accessed on September 16, 2009.

Raising the Self-sufficiency Rate through Association with National Identity

The significance of the activities of both Food Action Nippon and the Slow Food Movement lies in the fact that current problems concerning food security, food safety and lifestyle-related health problems are used to invoke a revived sense of national identity expressed through food. Further significance lies in the fact that the Japanese government has not only issued legislation, but seeks to intervene in the eating habits of Japanese citizens. Such campaigns as the *shokuiku* initiative and the Food Action Nippon initiative are of very recent nature and demonstrate the willingness of the Japanese government to take a more active role in shaping the personal habits of its people in order to avoid long-term health problems of the population and to ensure greater independence from foreign food imports. This active role of the Japanese government is becoming increasingly intertwined with the efforts of such non-governmental organizations as Slow Food, which fully supports Food Action Nippon.

I have argued in this essay that the term “movement,” as applied to Food Action Nippon and the Slow Food Movement, needs to be redefined. Food Action Nippon is a state campaign that seeks to initiate a movement through the cooperation with food-promotion partners in the effort to change the population’s eating habits, the Slow Food Movement can be more accurately defined as a transnational advocacy network that operates globally but paradoxically emphasizes a return to local food fare. Further research is needed to address the redefinition and the reinterpretation of these movements and their mutual efforts to act as a counterforce to globalization. In the future, it will be of importance to observe whether the Japanese government will maintain its active role in trying to influence the eating habits of the Japanese population, and if that is the case, whether there will be increased cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations in their attempts to ensure food safety and food security.

A “Buy Local” campaign is certainly not the key solution to raising Japan’s self-sufficiency rate. The current objective of raising Japan’s self-sufficiency rate by only 5% by 2015 makes it obvious that the Japanese government only expects minor changes to occur over a longer time period. A major upswing of the self-sufficiency rate would require other measures such as more efficient use of mass production systems. The “Buy Local” campaign seeks to increase the consciousness of Japanese consumers for domestic food products and regional agricultural products available in the immediate vicinity through associations with national identity. The disadvantage of such measures as “Eat Japanese” is the fact that the growth of diversification

within Japanese society could be reduced, and new protectionist measures could evolve.

Appendix

The following images show five of the altogether 22 products that are listed as endangered food products on the Ark of Taste of Slow Food Japan. Except for the persimmon fruits (*Dôjô hachiya kaki*), the following four images were taken from the website of Slow Food Japan, http://www.slowfoodjapan.net/ark/item_index.html, last accessed on September 22, 2009. The source of the image of the persimmon fruits (*Dôjô hachiya kaki*) is the following: <http://www.fruit-ishii.co.jp/fruit/hatihakaki/hatya.htm>, last accessed on September 22, 2009



Amarume Green Onion (*Amarume negi*)



Haretsu Corn (*Hachiretsu tômorokoshi*), Hokkaido



Masakari Pumpkin (*Masakari kabocha*), Hokkaido



Dried and Grilled Goby (*Nagatsura no yaki haze*), Miyagi Prefecture



Persimmon Fruits (*Dôjô hachiya kaki*), Gifu Prefecture,

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