

# “Resilient Japanese Local Food Systems Thrive during COVID-19: Ten Groups, Ten Outcomes (十人十色 jyu-nin-to-iro)”

Date: Wednesday, November 25

Time: 7pm-8pm (Tokyo time)

Presentation will be followed by Q and A

On Zoom. Open to all; Language English



Please register [HERE](#)

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=p-YOaaVN3E-jFrtZnYKlopSDtnsMuJVAtzRnSitkskJUQJNERoJEVEINNTBXRE5WWEhDVEJSRotRMS4u>

This paper examines responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from farmers in Japan. Because COVID-19 was most prevalent in Japanese urban centers and especially the Tokyo metropolitan area, farmers in rural communities in Kansai expressed less concern over infection compared to Kanto-area farmers who were more concerned with risk of infection. While some farmers expressed concern over economic losses from the closure of restaurants and schools, many interviewees had pre-established diverse market channels and thus could pivot their distribution streams during the pandemic. Farmers diverted produce typically for restaurants towards direct sales such as *chokubaijyos* (direct sales markets) or engaged in online platforms. Because of a lack of single stream distribution infrastructure set up for organic farmers as compared to conventional farmers, many of the interviewees already have robust distribution networks and tend to hold strong community ties with consumers and buyers in their region. We argue that the activities of these farmers demonstrate the resilience of local-scale food systems in Japan, because these networks help maintain food security and community relationships during times of crisis.

**Chika Kondo** is a PhD doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Agriculture at Kyoto University. Her research interests lie in the field of critical food studies and rural sociology, where she is currently examining the socio-political shifts in producer-consumer relationships centered on alternative agriculture since the height of Japan’s organic *teikei* movement. Her other research interests center on how new and beginning farmers create viable livelihoods and how solidarity and mutual aid are developed and maintained to keep strong connections between producers and consumers.

**Jack Lichten** is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Frontier Science at Tokyo University, specializing in the fields of environmental sociology & ethics. His research focuses on how agricultural community groups prioritize productive and ecological strategies in urbanizing fringe areas of the Tokyo metropolitan area.

Chika and Jack will be discussing their recently published paper: “[Resilient Japanese Local Food Systems Thrive during COVID-19: Ten Groups, Ten Outcomes \(十人十色 jyu-nin-to-iro\)](#)” from our collection in the [Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

Notes on the full series: This discussion is the first in a series we will hold over the autumn on the causes, effects and current status of vulnerable populations in Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will be moderated by David Slater and will give listeners a chance to meet the authors and others associated with the articles (advocates, activists, supporters, and participants). The authors will provide insight into the articles, as well as background to the conditions of data collection in the age of Corona, an update on the situation and a look forward—asking if we are any better prepared for next time.

An introduction to the whole collection here: [Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19: A lull in the storm](#) by David H. Slater

Abstract for the full collection of papers: This is a collection of original articles on diverse vulnerable populations in Japan in the wake of the new coronavirus pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are felt differently, with some among us at much greater risk of infection due to preexisting health and welfare conditions. For others, perhaps more than the risk of infection, it is the precautions taken to mitigate the risk for the whole population, such as lockdowns and business closures, that have pulled away the already fragile safety net of state and civil society organization (CSO) support, leading to increased marginalization and social exclusion. The goal of this set of papers is to document the conditions of those that have been most directly affected by the virus and to provide background on the conditions that made them vulnerable in the first place, notably chronic conditions that are brought into more obvious relief in light of emergency measures. Each of the authors had a pre-established relationship with those affected populations and employed various ethnographic approaches, some face to face, others digitally via Zoom interviews and SNS exchanges. In this moment of what appears to be relative calm, we hope that our collection, quickly compiled in an attempt to capture the ever-changing situation, will give some insight into how those most vulnerable are faring in this time of crisis and provide information that will allow us to prepare better before the next wave comes our way.

