

G7 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in Miyazaki
High school students' proposals
22 April 2023

Good morning, Agriculture Ministers of the Group of Seven and honorable guests. We are high school students in Miyazaki. Thank you very much for inviting us and giving us a chance to share our opinions on future agriculture and food.

In Miyazaki Prefecture, where we live, there is an area that has been certified as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems. Under the harsh conditions where about 92% of the area is forested and most of it is sloping land, people continue to live while balancing the conservation and utilization of forests by combining agriculture and forestry. This activity has protected rare animals and plants, nurtured beautiful landscapes such as terraced rice fields, and traditional culture such as kagura, god-entertainment. Since we were born and raised in such a place, we hope for a sustainable society where our lifestyle aligns with the earth.

Please allow our three groups to propose their ideas.

First, we propose a joint research project conducted by “different countries and different people working together” called “ZERO INNOVATION,” in order to achieve zero burdens on the environment, zero waste, and zero disparity. We need this because some problems, such as climate change, threaten food security in the world and inequality between developed and developing countries is deepening. It is more important than ever for developing and developed countries to work hand in hand and to promote more joint research projects on sustainable agriculture in harmony with the environment. As a result, participating countries will spread the techniques from the research throughout their own countries. In particular, the improvement of agricultural productivity should contribute to the decline of poverty in developing countries. Also, developed countries can learn a lot from the traditional farming methods that developing countries have preserved. We want to create a world where countries, people and the earth are united without disparity. To achieve this, more attempts by the G7 countries are required to promote innovation with developing countries.

Second, we propose a “Cool Agriculture Campaign” to highlight the appeal of agriculture so that consumers will learn more about the attractiveness of agriculture and become closer together with producers. This campaign will use media and other platforms that are popular among young people to communicate the appeal of agriculture. The reason we think this is needed is that, nowadays young people hesitate to become farmers because they are worried about hard labor and a lack of knowledge, skills, and funding. We had a chance to visit some

farms where we talked with the farmers directly. There, we saw cool managers who practiced farming with passion and pride earning a steady living. This completely changed the image of agriculture we had. Therefore, we will spread the appeal of agriculture to younger generations to get them and consumers to become familiar with agriculture. We will make use of SNS that we always use in our daily lives to communicate information about agriculture. We will also try to work on several activities which connect agriculture to platforms popular among young people, such as anime, games and music festivals. We want to make a society where people think agriculture is cool. We would like the G7 countries to develop the “Cool Agriculture Campaign” to highlight the appeal of agriculture on a large scale.

Lastly, we want to make a society where “food and culture continue to be linked together” and people generally appreciate their food. We propose agricultural education programs in which children can enjoy authentic agricultural experiences. We believe in this program because developed countries waste a lot of food, while there are developing countries that are suffering from starvation. Some of you must have had unforgettable and enjoyable farming experiences. If we set up a local common field, everyone from children to adults can enjoy working there. It will provide the opportunity to feel agriculture close to them and the field will be a good playground for children. In Miyazaki, 80 percent of schools have a Bento day. On that day, we make our own bento, traditional Japanese lunch boxes, and bring them to school and eat it together with our classmates. We have good opportunities to learn the importance of foodstuffs and local dietary culture through educational programs. We want to make a world where people are conscious enough to be grateful to the availability and affordability of food. To realize this, every country should work on more agricultural experiences and educational programs starting from childhood.

We decided to put our ideas into action immediately. Last month, we borrowed a local farm and held a “Food and Agriculture event” for parents and children. At the event, children and adults went barefoot, harvested carrots, made curry and rice, and ate it together. The place was filled with laughter and smiles. This event provided us with an opportunity to think that “living in a society where it is natural to be grateful for food and agriculture will bring happiness to everyone in the world.” Now is the time for everyone here, including us, to take action. Let’s make a world where “countries and people all work together,” “producers and consumers are closer together,” and “food and culture are linked together.”

The keyword of our proposals is “together.”

Thank you very much for taking your precious time to listen to our proposals.