
Construction of New Rurality in the Urban Fringe: A Case Study of Kodaira-city, Tokyo Metropolis

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Abstract

Urban agriculture has been managed under difficult circumstances over the last fifty years because of rapid urbanisation and the existence of large food-production areas outside the urban area. However, some urban residents, who are consumers of urban agriculture, currently recognise the importance of urban agriculture in relation to environmental problems and food miles and in the preservation of green and recreational spaces. This trend has seen such urban agriculturists living and working in environments close to their customers, managing farming through outlets such as farm shops and via direct contracts with supermarkets and forming a community with urban residents through recreational use of farmlands, such as by developing farming-experience gardens. In the urban fringe area of Tokyo, these productive activities also create new rurality which is different from what it used to be. Therefore, this paper aims to capture the new rurality and explore how it is created and consumed according to the diverse preferences of urban residents using the case study of Kodaira City, which is a typical urban-agricultural area in Tokyo. We analysed both quantitative data from a statistics survey and qualitative data from a questionnaire and conducted an interview survey of farmers and urban residents. The data were then integrated into the discussion. The results revealed that farming managements have diversified further because of farmers' management strategies as businessmen and that these farmers have been responsible for the change in consumers' outlook toward urban agriculture and its products. On other hand urban residents, both consciously and unconsciously, consume new rurality created in such productive process. In Kodaira City, strengthening relationships between farmers and urban residents through the exchange of new rurality make urban agriculture more sustainable.

Keywords: new rurality, urban fringe, urban agriculture, urban residents, Tokyo Metropolis

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