

Japanese Approaches to Green Economy for a Sustainable Society



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1. Approaches to Green Economy for a Sustainable Society

(1) Green Economy – the economy that supports sustainable society

In order to build a sustainable society, we need to achieve a secure balance among the three value standards of “economy,” “people and society,” and “environment.”

The first value standard of “economy” is primarily measured in monetary terms. Spectacular development of global economy in the latter half of the 20th century has greatly improved the living standard of many in the industrialized countries and some in the upper segment of developing countries from material and convenience points of view. However, this system has fostered an excessive and lavish consumption pattern in the U.S., Japan and other industrialized countries, casting substantially negative impact on the world’s sustainability and the true affluence of people and society.

The second value standard of “people and society” is defined as all elements associated with our social life minus the “economy”. This domain, therefore, includes such elements as health, security, equity, welfare and culture. In an industrial society such as Japan, we place emphasis on money and goods, and often find ourselves out of touch from our families, communities, or with our inner selves, elements that comprise an important part of this value standard.

The third value standard of “environment” is defined here as the total system of natural environment -- the basis of all life forms -- that surrounds the man-made social system. Needless to say, this is under a grave threat as resources are being depleted, deteriorated or permanently damaged. The environment may not serve as the value standard that directly dictates our current generation, but we need to reaffirm its importance for the future generations and the ecosystem.

Viewed from the perspective of time scale, these three value standards do not occur parallel to each other. “Economic affluence” and aspects of the

“people/society” standard are elements that provide “well-being” for us, the current generation. By contrast, the environment is associated not only with the “well-being” of the current generation but also serves as an indicator for the sustenance of the foundation for human survival into the future. In time scale, the “economy” may be defined as a short-term standard, “people and society” as a medium-term standard and the “environment” as a long-term standard.

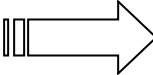
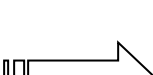



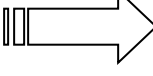
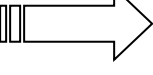


The Green Economy that we are seeking to build is an economy that is in harmony with the environment, an economy that supports a sustainable economy filled with the vibrant energy of people and society. It must be an economy whereby the measures adopted for the environment encourage the economy and society in which we live to flourish, and conversely, measures adopted as economic policy help preserve and recreate the environment and lead to the well-being of people and society.

(2) The difference between the Green Economy and our present economy

Today, Japan’s economy is forging ahead on its market-first track, with the wholehearted embracing of market principles in an attempt to respond to the globalization of international economy. In spite of the superficial and fragmented economic “prosperity” on the surface, many people live with a sense of anxiety, of being trapped with no way out of the deadlock. Will Japan continue to move further on this present path, or choose a different path by shifting to a Green Economy to build a sustainable society in future? The time has come for us to make a choice. The Green Economy we propose is a sound market economy. If it were to materialize, Japan’s society should come to display different features from what it is now, as shown in Table 1.

A Green Economy is an attempt to revert the market economy back to its sound, fundamental state in this age. It is based not solely on economic rationality: rather, the Green Economy encompasses environmental protection, preservation of culture, humanity, and other elements of external diseconomy that had been excluded in the conventional calculation of economic impact.

Table 1: Comparison between Present Economy and Green Economy

Present Economy		Green Economy (Sound Economy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little attention on life 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for life in all forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental destruction 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of ecosystem 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of ecosystem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of culture 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation and creation of culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Money is everything” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on humanity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money as purpose of life 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money as a means in social life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ever-increasing desire 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restraint of desire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greed and comfort 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiting oneself and others, middle-ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of all people and both sexes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans treated as “parts” or numbers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for individual uniqueness and differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition, efficiency and dependence 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for voluntary will, independence and commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of solution through violent means 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace, non-violence and anti-war
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms industry 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in scale and globalization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within one's means, small- and medium-scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralization and monopolization 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization of functions and power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor social welfare 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved social welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working as compulsory duty 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with joy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of purpose in life 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life with a purpose

(3) Four approaches to examine the Green Economy

We have held discussions on the elements that constitute the Green Economy, features and conditions that enable the Green Economy, problems with the present economic system and other topics from the perspective of citizens and members of NPO (consumers).

In the initial stage, we tried to extract the elements that will constitute the ideal Green Economy. But due to the huge scope of areas associated with the Green Economy, we realized the difficulty in exploring and identifying the whole picture, and decided instead to examine the Green Economy from three perspectives of “food,” “work” and “purchase.” These are closely associated with our everyday life and activities among all the potentially important domains of the Green Economy. We then added the fourth, institutional perspective, which deals with the “proper regulation and economic instrument” in our effort to summarize the elements that make up the Green Economy.

We know that not all people agree with our approach based on the four perspectives, as they comprise only a portion of the components of the Green Economy. In addition to the above four areas, which in our opinion carry great importance, we believe we will be able to attain a clearer picture of the Green Economy to come through many other areas such as “energy” and “learning” in the future.

2. Ten-Point Proposals that Build the Framework of Green Economy

From “Food and Agriculture”

Proposal 1: Let us substantially raise self-sufficiency of food to secure the basis for living in Japan.

Proposal 2: Let us promote the consumption of locally produced food and establish eating habit which is more compatible with local climate and natural conditions.

Proposal 3: Let us reevaluate the significance of agriculture and try to build a system whereby younger people can easily go into and find job security in agriculture.

From “Work”

Proposal 4: Let us work in a way that seeks not only personal income but also the welfare of our family members, neighbors, community and next generations.

Proposal 5: Let us recognize diverse modes of work and introduce a just and human evaluation system of work including fair social recognition.

Proposal 6: Let us work in a way whereby both men and women are able to raise children -- the leaders of future generations -- free from undue anxiety or pressure.

From “Purchase”

Proposal 7: Let us try to be wise consumers knowing that our purchase is inevitably affecting the global environment and living in the local community.

Proposal 8: Let us appreciate and respect the traditional culture and local identity and promote the local economy.

From the “Proper Regulation and Economic Instrument”

Proposal 9: Let us introduce proper regulatory measures based on the Precautionary Principle, and regulations against CO2 emissions from both stationary and mobile sources at the earliest possible date.

Proposal 10: Let us rely more on economic instrument such as taxation, emissions trading and other areas as appropriate in the “global environmental age.”

(1) Proposals on “food” – Perspective from “Food and Agriculture”

Proposal 1: Let us substantially raise self-sufficiency of food to secure the basis for living in Japan.

The self-sufficiency rate of food shows the proportion of national food consumption provided by domestic sources. Normally, the rate is shown by the ratio of calories supplied by domestically-produced foods to the total daily calories supplied per person (about 2600kcal). Food self-sufficiency is a comprehensive index that shows the current situation of food and agriculture in Japan, or any given country, as it is determined by domestic farm production and national food consumption. The self-sufficiency of food in Japan is very low, at 40% at present. This is the lowest figure among

industrialized countries when compared with 125% in the US, 132% in France, 96% in Germany and 74% in Britain (2000 figures). The ratio in Britain fell to less than 40% after World War Two but recovered successfully later, thanks to the government's post-war agricultural policy.

If food imports to Japan were to be cut off by global poor harvest caused by climate changes, international conflicts or other contingencies, the Japanese people would lose their basis for living. Also, another source of anxiety is that China, which now exports huge amount of food to Japan, could be forced to stop its food exports to Japan when its own food self-sufficiency runs low. In the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries initially set out the target of raising the nation's food self-sufficiency to 45% by fiscal 2010. But because the rate remained at 40% for seven years in a row from 1998, the Ministry extended the target year by five years to 2015.

We propose raising Japan's food self-sufficiency rate to 60-70%, which is equivalent to our food-self sufficiency between 1965 and 1970. This is the time just before cases of air pollution and contamination of rivers and lakes began to surface around the nation, a byproduct of the rapid economic growth that started in the latter half of 1950s. As we will note later, economic growth has not only polluted the environment but caused major changes in our eating habits. The air pollution and water contamination levels in the decade from 1960 to 1970 are deemed appropriate target values for pollution control. In the same way, we believe it would be reasonable to set the target for food self-sufficiency to coincide with the level in this era.

The Green Economy is an economy that supports a sustainable society. In economic activities relating to food and agriculture, we believe three requirements must be met to satisfy the needs of "people and society" and "environment."

First is the protection of the environment or ecosystem. Second is the preservation and creation of local cultures. And third is the practice of healthy eating habits to promote physical and mental well-being and a rich sense of humanity. The food self-sufficiency rate is a comprehensive index

that is interrelated with all of the three requirements of the Green Economy. This is one reason why we have included the improvement of food self-sufficiency as one of our goals in our efforts to realize the Green Economy.

Proposal 2: Let us promote the consumption of locally produced food and establish eating habit which is more compatible with local climate and natural conditions.

We have examined dietary patterns in today's Japan from the three requirements of Green Economy.

First, from the perspective of environmental protection, we surveyed the "food mileage," an indicator of sustainability calculated by multiplying the amount of food imports by the distance traveled (ton · km). Japan imports about 58 million tons of food a year, and its food mileage comes to about 900 billion tons · km (2001). This stands far above the statistics in other countries -- three times the figure in South Korea and the US, five times the figure in Britain and Germany, and nine times the figure in France. Trial calculations have shown that such massive-scale global food transportation produces twice as much as CO₂ emission as food transportation inside the country. Therefore, promoting local food production and consumption plays an extremely important role in environmental preservation.

Second, we examined the problems associated with the second point of protection and creation of distinctive local cultures, by studying the low self-sufficiency rate of two crops -- wheat and soy beans. Traditionally, the Japanese people have cultivated crops suited to the local climate, soil, and natural conditions, and cooked and processed them for consumption. The product is what we call Japanese food that represents our dietary culture. It has been pointed out that eating locally grown produce is good for your health too, because you are taking in the food that are more adapted to your local natural environment. Also, a shift in Japanese consumers' preference towards Western-style foods has further pushed down the nation's food self-sufficiency because such foods are made from the species of wheat and soy beans that are difficult to grow in Japan. We should also take note that,

immediately after World War Two, the US government mandated bread and other Western foods at school lunches in Japan as a way of using up their surplus farm products, and this is one factor that has contributed to the popularity of Western foods in Japan. Therefore, we need to grow more wheat and soy domestically, and revert to a diet that is more in line with our climate and soil to raise the nation's food self-sufficiency.

Let us look at dietary patterns in Japan from the third viewpoint of maintenance of humanity. With the globalization of economy, competition becomes severe, and people are working longer hours and often do not have the time or energy to prepare a family dinner or healthy diet for their children. Many grown-ups are also too busy to pay much attention to their own diet or would settle for any food that fills up their stomach. Much food is left over and thrown away. We are losing the sense of appreciation for the animals and plants that have sacrificed their life for our food, or the desire not to waste what is valuable, a traditional virtue summed up by the Japanese term, "mottainai." Japan has turned into a nation of gourmet consumption as a consequence of its economic growth. Somewhere along the line, we seemed to have acquired a distorted idea about food, the most basic and important element for all human beings. The nation may now be better off financially but it is spiritually deprived than ever before. There must be a direction of economic activities that enable each one of us to enjoy more fulfilling, physically and mentally healthy dietary lifestyle.

If each one of us consumes and prepares food more consciously, pay attention to which foods are more adapted to the local climate and soil, and promote local production and consumption, then we believe it is possible to turn around the nation's food consumption patterns together with efforts of farmers and food producers.

Proposal 3: Let us reevaluate the significance of agriculture and try to build a system whereby younger people can easily go into and find job security in agriculture.

In Japan, agriculture has in the past not been open to anyone who wants to

take up farming. Unless they grow up in a farming family, young people graduating from school did not have the option of getting a job in agriculture in the same way as in a company or governmental institution. This stems largely from the government policy that barred non-farmers from owning farming land, the most fundamental element of agriculture. As a result, due to the aging of farmers and dwindling number of young people to succeed farms, the population in agriculture continued to decline. The number of people engaged in agriculture totaled 3.62 million in 2004, which is only 30% of the number in the peak year 1960. Abandoned farmland reached 210,000 hectares in 2000. The government's agricultural policy that excluded non-farming families from entering agriculture has led to dwindling interest in farming among non-farmers, polarizing the nation into farm producers and consumers. This is another reason behind the declining food self-sufficiency of Japan. To develop a solid vision for Japan's agriculture, we must first of all secure people who will assume farming challenges in the future. To make this possible, we need to build a system whereby younger people can enter and find job security in agriculture.

In recent years, an increasing number of people are turning to agriculture and forestry. Some are quitting their office work while others are taking up part-time farming work after retirement or moving to local cities from the city in pursuit of more meaningful life.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, some 80,200 people took up a job in agriculture in 2003. Among them, fresh graduates numbered 2,200. As for people who left their previous jobs in another industry to start farming, those aged under 39 numbered 9,700, those aged between 40 and 64, 46,500, and those aged over 65, 9,900. Middle-aged to senior citizens formed the largest group and the number of fresh graduates remained small. While it is certainly necessary to increase the aggregate number of people taking up farming, we believe it is crucial for the development of agriculture to encourage fresh graduates to join the farming industry.

Following the consolidation of agricultural land and introduction of large-scale farm management, the number of agricultural corporations run

by modern, business-style management has topped 10,000, and is growing yearly. The revision of the Agricultural Land Law enforced in September 2005 authorized business corporations to engage in agriculture throughout Japan, scrapping the past regulations that confined them to designated areas called Structural Reform Special Districts. The revision is expected to lead to full-scale entry of business in agriculture based on the lease of agricultural land. Also, institutional frameworks for personnel training including teaching farming skills to newcomers are being introduced, paving the way for job hoppers from non-farming households and fresh graduates to land a job in farming.

We believe creating a system in which young people are able to find job security in agriculture would comprise a step in the direction of Green Economy.

(2) Proposals from work

Proposal 4: Let us work in a way that seeks not only personal income but also the welfare of our family members, neighbors, community and next generations.

Our twentieth century civilization, symbolized by mass production and mass consumption, has implanted in us the notion that having more wealth (money) would enable us to acquire more things and that is what affluence is all about. As a result, the stereotyped value that “money is everything” has come to prevail even among children, leading not only to environmental degradation but threatening the sustainability of people and society. More recently, the act of work is being perceived as nothing more than a means to earn money rather than a process to fulfill more sophisticated human needs of achieving worthwhile goals or playing one’s role in and giving back to the community. Many people believe that attaining high income the easy way is the best, and that people who managed to achieve this are the winners in life. In other words, for many people, the purpose of work is shifting from supporting the family and raising future generations, or enriching oneself and society, to earning more and more money. Although we have seen some

recent moves to counter this tide, the globalization of market economy has forced businesses to put more emphasis on short-term profits for their own survival, inevitably affecting the employed workers.

The act of work carries a larger meaning beyond earning the income to support oneself. Work can serve as a means to develop one's ability and skills to help fulfill his or her goals. Also, work can cultivate closer ties with other people or with the community and satisfy our needs to stay connected with others. Moreover, such ties among people can play a major role in supporting our society and motivating social reforms, for instance, through environmental preservation, handing down of local culture and revitalization of regional economy.

As we have seen, work is an effective means to secure the true affluence for people and society beyond one's immediate or financial needs. If more people realized this and if we have in place a system that enables us to work more significantly, that can encourage people to live their life more fully. The economy will be more vibrant, providing an incentive to shift to a people-oriented Green Economy where "people" make "capital" and "resources" work.

We need to take every opportunity to spread the deep significance of work and create models of work that lead to true affluence in many different forms. It is important that we offer opportunities to pass this on to people, particularly to young people, through on-the-site work experience, dialogue with workers and other means.

Proposal 5: Let us recognize diverse modes of work and introduce a just and human evaluation system of work including fair social recognition.

In today's Japan, the social framework and evaluation system for work are not programmed to accommodate or appreciate diversity. Many people therefore have no alternative but to choose work options that eventually put priority on income.

Still, there are countries even in the market economy world that recognize diverse working arrangements in their clear orientation toward building a well-balanced society. For example, the Netherlands has promoted work-sharing on the basic guideline of assigning 1.5 persons worth of work to a married couple. As a result, the nation successfully overcame high unemployment and budget deficit in the 1980s to rank among the leaders in Europe in international competitiveness. The Dutch people have realized flexible work programs that do not distinguish full-time work from part-time work, enabling many to choose a style of work that suits their way of life, restore ties with their families and divert more energy into citizens' activities, for instance. The Dutch government created a system that encourages each citizen to reexamine the significance of work and accommodates various working styles as they move toward a well-balanced society. We must note here that the challenge succeeded in part due to their national qualities: the Dutch people historically have flexible value systems to accept people of difference race and resolve differences through discussion; social characteristics that enable free choice of profession to match ability or aptitude; and high social status of NGOs being treated on a par with business corporations or governmental institutions. Still, we can learn a lot from this example of working styles as we in Japan examine and implement the way of work in the Green Economy.

To make such flexible working styles possible, each of us will need to reevaluate our idea on the significance and value of work. The government can help by incorporating a system for diversified, flexible working arrangements by reviewing its labor policies and guidelines that are currently measured by quantitative numerical targets and incorporating qualitative targets and guidelines. Businesses will need to move beyond its evaluation system based on productivity, economic efficiency and performance to introduce an evaluation system that appreciates the individual worker's unique skills and characteristics, community work, volunteer activities and other aspects that lead to sound and well-balanced life. It is essential for companies to develop and spread a model based on the new evaluation system and show that it can be an economically viable option.

Proposal 6: Let us work in a way whereby both men and women are able to raise children -- the leaders of future generations – free from undue anxiety or pressure.

In a sustainable society and the Green Economy that supports it, people of both sexes earn equal respect just as they enjoy equal rights and duties as members or wage-earners of the family and society.

Looking back, however, the era of rapid economic development in Japan resulted in population migration from farming villages to urban areas and the emergence of nuclear family households. In many families, men worked as breadwinners while women stayed at home to take on family responsibilities. The division of labor according to sex was widely accepted as an efficient arrangement that supported the nation's economic growth. As Japan's economy entered the era of stable growth, however, an increasing number of married women joined the workforce in pursuit of more material affluence. After the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law in 1986, employers began to expect female workers to put work before family responsibilities, just as they have long required of male workers. This has put excessive burden on women -- they now had to juggle work and family because most men continued to focus solely on work. In addition, working conditions for employment, wages and promotion for women, in many cases, are still inferior to those for men. If women wanted to achieve the same evaluation and compensation as men, they often had to work harder than their male counterparts, forcing them to carry an even heavier burden.

Also, the globalization of economy has forced businesses to put top priority on customer service and profit acquisition in order to survive, compelling male and female employees to work longer hours. Workers are putting in long hours and constantly pressed for time, as they are required to maximize efficiency and achieve results in the shortest time possible.

Such long hours of work has demanded huge sacrifices not only from

individuals but also from the family, particularly the people of future generations.

For instance, childbirth and child care play a crucial role in maintaining family ties, raising children for the future generations and securing the sustainability of human society. At present, however, only women in most cases are forced to choose between work and childcare. If they decide to continue working, they often would have no choice but to give up having children, or if they decide to have a child, they have to hire someone to look after their child for a greater portion of the day. From a social perspective, the shrinking population could threaten the sustainability of Japan as a nation.

Also, due to the long hours of work and the sense of being pressed for time, parents often neglect opportunities for the family to get together for meals. Mentally, this can lead to insufficient communication between parents and children, and other problems. Culturally, it can mean the loss of opportunities to educate the children about the importance of eating right or traditional dietary culture. When parents have little interest in what and how they eat, it is the children who suffer as nutritionally insufficient diet can hamper healthy growth.

To resolve these issues, each individual needs to reexamine the value of the family and significance of work. At the same time, we need to transform the generally accepted notions and social systems of work that had been originally designed with only male participation in mind. Something must be done to change the prevailing practice of overtime without pay and long-hours of work so that workers are able to fulfill both work and family responsibilities without having to give up what is truly important, like time with their family. Also, the government's financial assistance to families with children should be expanded further based on the idea that it is the whole society that bears the responsibility for caring for members of the future generations. The government has introduced after-hours childcare programs and childcare benefits as measures to stop the decline of the birth rate. But if we are to truly turn the tide around to secure the nation's sustainability, the only fundamental solution would be to build a system in

which men and women are able to keep on working and raise children without undue pressure or fear.

Proposals from purchase

Proposal 7: Let us try to be wise consumers knowing that our purchase is inevitably affecting the global environment and living in the local community.

Global corporations secure vast amount of resources, energy, raw materials and workforce to meet the needs of mass-consumption lifestyle in industrialized countries. Because of the gigantic scale of the product market, they are able to make huge profits if they can procure these elements efficiently and at low cost. There is a whole list of instances where profit-oriented exploitation and industrial production in developing countries by global companies have damaged the environment and livelihood of the local population. To cite just a few examples, virgin forests and tropical forests are deforested or damaged irreversibly to obtain building materials or pulp, or to clear the land for cattle ranches to produce beef that ends up as hamburgers. Also, mangrove forests are being destroyed for excessive development of prawn farms.

At present, many people purchase products without being aware of what is going on in overseas production centers. Even if they did not know about it, consumers are actually contributing, through the act of purchase, to the destruction of environment and livelihood in the place of production, obtaining low-price products at the cost of huge sacrifices in the producing region. We can stop this by “learning.” Let us call on businesses to disclose more detailed information beyond the place of production to include, for instance, the steps taken for protecting the environment and society in the producing region. Changes in consumers’ awareness and action will be the key factor to motivate a shift in the attitude of global conglomerates.

This also means that we as consumers have the duty to learn about how and where the product was produced and evaluate it accordingly. It would be a

good idea to always be aware when shopping where the product was manufactured, whether the production places undue demands on the local environment, society, economy and living, whether illegally exploited labor is used in the production process and whether the production takes global environment into consideration. In many cases, it may be difficult for individual consumers to check out all these items all the time, in which case they have the option of supporting NGOs and NPOs that specialize in these areas. Specifically, they can become a fee-paying member and read their journals, participate in their activities, or make financial contributions.

Proposal 8: Let us appreciate and respect the traditional culture and local identity and promote the local economy.

In this era of highly sophisticated information and communications, traffic and transport and multilateral finances, the globalization of economy is progressing rapidly. The market is getting bigger in an endless pursuit of profits, as larger entities swallow up smaller concerns to grow even stronger. These powerful, profit-oriented economic activities have devastated the natural and social environment and regional economy in various places, while at the same time accumulating negative assets for our future generations. If we fail to stop this tide, we cannot hope to sustain the regional community, or human society, for that matter.

To sustain local and global environment as well as people's living in sound shape, we need to nurture independent, local economy, respected for its culture, even if on a small scale, that would resist being swallowed up by the powerful, global economy. To make this possible, it is essential that we identify the unique characteristics of each region, renew our awareness of the traditional culture and performing arts rooted and handed down in the community, and make them more accessible in various ways to people in the present day. We are saying this because traditional cultures set an example: they show us how people in the community have lived with nature over the history. They are crystallized forms of wisdom that indicates ways to lead sustainable life and economy in that particular region.

Today, many municipalities are devising innovative efforts to promote their town or village. We believe people are seeking to build autonomous local economies, even if on a small-scale, by focusing on the region's unique characteristics without having to take part in a competition based on homogenized values. Today, Japan depends heavily on overseas imports for a great portion of its food, energy and timber resources while its agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries continue to decline. The nation's farms, forests and fishing grounds are degenerating because we are underutilizing the resources that enable us to be more self-sufficient. From social, environmental or disaster-prevention point of view, this is regrettable.

To raise the domestic food and energy self-sufficiency, create jobs and revitalize the local economy, we will need to develop local industry by exploring tourism resources and promoting small hydroelectric, wind power, biomass and other sources of renewable energy that occur naturally in the locality, in addition to reviving agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Renewal of our awareness of diverse local values for their sustainable utilization in the region forms the foundation for the revitalizing regional economy and promoting local production and consumption. Only when this approach gets under way, We believe we will have prepared the ground for the local economy to coexist side by side with the powerful, global economy.

To turn this into reality, the central and municipal governments should offer assistance in tax breaks and other forms of institutional support because the efforts of the local community have their limitations. The measures to promote local economy may include tariffs on farm and forestry products and securing the price of renewable energy sold to utility companies.