

日本における畜産農家の負債問題

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Debt Problems of Livestock Farms in Japan

—Implications for Japanese Agricultural Policy—

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ABSTRACT. In this article an analysis of the recent financial problems in Japanese livestock industries is presented. Although Japan's agriculture is well known as being highly protected, her livestock industry, which enjoyed the most rapid growth among agricultural sectors has been facing severe financial difficulties. The author analyses the situation, the reason behind it and its implication to Japanese agricultural policy.

So as to know the situation of debt problems among livestock farms, the amounts of subrogation payments by Agricultural Credit Fund Associations were used. They have dramatically increased since the middle 1970's, and the livestock sector accounted for the majority of total cases and amounts subrogated.

As factors contributed to a farm having debt problems, the author pointed out the fragile financial character and low technical level including management skill of farmers, combined with the depressed price situation of livestock products. The decline of prices was brought by stagnation in demand for livestock products, increasing imports (Loopholes in import systems have also contributed to this.) and political decisions of reducing support prices for livestock products due to domestic and international pressures for further deregulation.

The recent financial problems which have occurred in the livestock sector have meant that creating large-scale and efficient farms through the selective policy of the Agricultural Basic Law has not generally succeeded. This means that Japan's agricultural policy has failed to reduce the disparity in productivity of agriculture relative to that of non-agricultural industries as whole.

Key words: Debt problems, Management of livestock farming, Agricultural protection policy, Structural adjustment

1. Introduction

Although agricultural protection policies have been adopted by the most advanced economies since the Great Depression, they have been recently criticised as a major cause of the present disorder in not only world food trade but also in the world economy. Japan's agriculture in particular is well known as being highly protected, as is agriculture in the EEC countries. Under strong foreign and domestic pressure for further liberalisation, Japan has finally decided to open her beef and citrus markets in the near future. This will force Japanese agriculture to undergo further adjustment. This paper, however, will not explore the future prospect of the livestock industry but analyse the recent situation under such move toward further liberalisation.

The paper focuses on three issues: debt problems in Japanese livestock industry in spite of high levels of agricultural protection; an analysis of the reasons behind this financial crisis; and thirdly, the implications of this situation for Japan's agricultural policy.

2. The State of Financial Problems in the Livestock Sector

Japan's agriculture seems to have solved the problem of relatively low income in the agricultural sector. This was the major objective of the government's farm incomes policy launched in the early 1960's. The average income of agricultural households exceeded that of non-agricultural households during the mid 1960's. Moreover, in terms of income per capita, the former became larger than the latter in the middle of

the 1970's, but income parity was achieved not from agricultural income but mainly from non-agricultural income. In 1985, non-agricultural income accounted for about 2/3 of total farm household income, while 35 years ago it was only 1/4. The average income of full time farms is still lower than that of non-farm households, although full time farmers run larger properties than do part time farmers.

Since the end of the 1970's there has been a crisis in the livestock sector [1]. It originated in the emergence of a financial crisis among dairy farmers in Hokkaido. Table 1 shows how much debt livestock specialists owed from 1966 to 1987. In these two decades the debts of livestock specialist farmers increased more than 10 times, while that of rice farmers increased 7 times. This figure is the largest in the broiler sector at 20.4, followed by that of the dairy specialists in Hokkaido at 19.5. But large debts do not automatically imply financial difficulty. If a farm is profitable enough, even large debts will not lead to financial difficulties. However, Table 1 does show debt income ratios which indicate problems in repaying debts. In the rice farming sector the ratios have been stable at around 20 to 30%. On the other hand, the ratios of the livestock sectors have been increasing rapidly since the middle of the 1970's,

and, except in the dairy sector outside Hokkaido, these ratios exceeded 100% in 1987. The income examined in the table includes non-agricultural income, so if only agricultural income were considered these ratios would go up substantially.

Table 2 indicates the financial situation of dairy farms in Hokkaido in the comprehensible way. Only 29 dairy farms out of 92 sample farms (32%) had no financial problems in the sense that they could afford repayment on debts from agricultural incomes after deducting living costs. These farms were classified as rank A. The other 68% of farms surveyed had problems. Rank B farms defined as farms which find it difficult to repay their debts, accounted for 37% of the sample. Farms with agricultural incomes not large enough for the repayment of debts after spending for their living costs were classified as rank C farms, and amounted to 23% of the sample. The remaining 8 farms (9%) had deficits in terms of agricultural income. Obviously these farms could not cover their living costs and debt repayments with their agricultural incomes. Also it can be pointed out that the number of farms at risk was greater in 1980 than in 1979.

The picture is even clearer in terms of per cow figures. Firstly, debt per cow gradually increases as the rank decreases from A to D. The average

Table 1 Debts by type of farming (1966-87)

	1966	72	78	87	87/66
	DEBTS (¥'000)				
Rice	233	672	1,319	1,604	6.9
Dairy					
Hokkaido Region	1,469	3,903	15,351	27,539	19.5
Other Regions	444	1,431	4,799	7,199	16.2
Cattle Fattening	—	—	6,672	10,510	—
Pig Raising	648	1,420	6,929	12,683	18.6
Layers			2,759	7,192	19.1
Broilers	377	1,191	3,730	7,684	20.4
	DEBT INCOME RATIO (Debt/Total Income×100) (%)				
Rice	23	31	26	21	
Dairy					
Hokkaido Region	148	147	231	338	
Other Regions	46	64	66	80	
Cattle Fattening	—	—	88	163	
Pig Raising	69	55	88	167	
Layers			49	129	
Broilers	37	45	90	127	

Note: a. Covering those farm households of which the rate to cash receipt of one product is more than 80% of total agricultural cash receipts.

b. Income includes agricultural & non-agr. income, presents, pension, subsidies and others.

Source: MAFF, *Noka no Keitaijetsu ni mita Noka Keiei*

Table 2 Financial situation of dairy farms in Hokkaido (1980)

Rank	(¥'000)				
	A	B	C	D	(Total)
No. of farms 1979	37	38	12	5	52
Surveyed 1980	29	34	21	8	92
Gross Agr. Income ①	19,785	18,212	17,483	12,457	18,040
Agr. Expenditure ②	13,271	13,600	14,970	13,460	13,796
Agr. Income ①—② ③	6,513	4,612	2,510	-1,003	4,244
Living Cost ④	3,200	3,285	3,418	3,016	3,626
③—④ ⑤	3,313	1,327	-908	-4,019	978
Repayment on Debt ⑥	1,535	2,995	2,617	4,216	2,555
⑤—⑥	1,777	-1,668	-3,525	-8,235	-1,577
Debts	29,227	33,613	38,292	42,899	34,165
Interest	1,429	1,726	2,291	2,428	1,822
Av. Herd size	33.9	30.8	27.4	25.6	30.5
Per Cow					
Gross Agr. Income	585	591	638	487	591
Agr. Expenditure	393	442	546	526	452
Agr. Income	193	150	92	-39	139
Debt	865	1,091	1,398	1,676	1,118
Interest	42	56	84	95	60

Source: Dept. of Agriculture, Hokkaido.

amount of debt per cow of rank D farms is about twice that of rank A farms, and in rank D farms this amount is equivalent to more than three times the gross agricultural income. Secondly, in rank D farms interest payments raise agricultural expenditure substantially because of the large debt. Only this can account for the difference of about 40% in agricultural expenditure. Thirdly, in rank B and C farms gross agricultural incomes are greater than those in rank A farms. But agricultural expenditure is higher. Therefore, agricultural income is smaller in rank B and C farms than in rank A farms. From the above points it can be concluded that rank B and C farms feed larger volumes of compound feed to their cattle in order to derive more milk yield per cow although this was not always successful. Finally, the average gross agricultural income in rank D farms was extremely low, this is presumed to be due to quite low milk yields per milking cow.

To sum up briefly, farms with large debts and inefficient management fell into the category of 'at risk' farms. In Hokkaido about 3,000 dairy farms out of the total of 18,000 were classified as 'at risk' farm in the early 1980's, which meant they were practically bankrupt. Reconstruction schemes that included special loans with low interest rates, suspension of repayments and consultation services provided for management were

carried out in cooperation with the central government, the prefectural government and agricultural cooperatives. There are no statistical figures available on how many farms have gone bankrupt so far. Hence the only way to know the situation is to see the amount of subrogation payments (*daii benzai gaku*) by Agricultural Credit Fund Associations. They are a kind of insurance organisation specially geared for agricultural finance. Financial institutions like the agricultural cooperatives, banks and credit unions make contracts of liability guarantee arrangements with each prefectural Agricultural Credit Fund Association, and if these institutions suffer losses through bad debts, the associations pay off the debts to the institutions on behalf of the debtors, that is, the farmers. Hence the amount of subrogation indicates the seriousness of the debt problem. Figure 1 shows the increasing amount of liability guarantee arrangements accepted by Agricultural Credit Fund Associations. As with debt income ratios, the amount of subrogation payments has dramatically increased since the middle 1970's. Although the amount of liability guarantee arrangements accepted also increased rapidly, the ratio of subrogation payments to the amount of liability guarantee arrangements skyrocketed from 0.3% in 1968 to 1.8% in 1985. Subrogation payments covered not only the livestock sector but also all other agri-

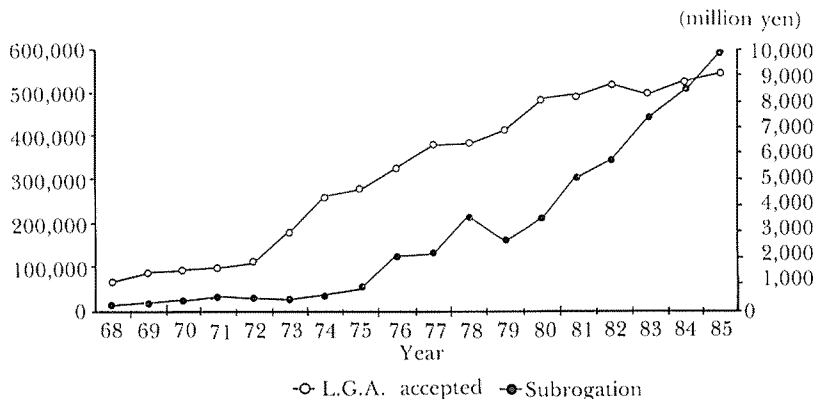


Fig. 1 Amounts of subrogation payments.

Note: a. L. G. A. means liability guarantee arrangement accepted by Agr. Credit Fund Assus, while subrogation is amount of subrogation payments by Agr. Credit Fund Assus.

b. The data refers to fiscal year.

Source: National Council of Agr. Credit Fund Assus. and Agr. Credit Insurance Assus. *Nogyo Shinyo Hoken Gyomu Yorau*

cultural sectors. The livestock sector, however, accounted for approximately 40% of total cases subrogated (2,756 cases) and 60% in terms of the total 1,981 amount. The cases subrogated do not always indicate the number of bankruptcies, but it can at least be assumed that there has been an increasing number of livestock farms 'at risk' since the middle 1970's.

3. The Reasons for the Financial Problems in the Livestock Sector

What caused the debt problem in the livestock sector? We will examine survey data derived from the agricultural cooperatives' computerised farm management system for this purpose. The survey sample consisted of 10 family specialist pig farms in the Kanto Region. There were 48 pig farms in the town surveyed, but the sample farms were relatively large in terms of management scale and they accounted for about 2/3 of the total number of hogs marketed per year in the town. Survey data was available from 1978 to 1981. The average number of sows per farm among those farms surveyed was 72, with a range of 32 to 140. The amount of debt also varied from 880,000 to 70,000,000 yen per farm, with an average of about 23,000,000 yen per farm or 320,000 yen per sow. The sum of the worst three farms' (Nos. 4, 5 and 6) debts accounted for more than 70% of the total. The financial situation of these three

farms was quite poor, for example the ratio of net-worth to total assets, which should be at least 30% for good management, was only 1.7%, 16.6% and -22.2% respectively, while the ratio of the best farm (No. 11) with almost nil debt was 96.6% (Table 3). These great differences in debt among farms can be attributed to other aspects of the financial situation. For example, farm No. 4's agricultural income was only 8,260,000 yen, while No. 11's was 14,510,000 yen, although the former raised 72 more sows. Interest payments and feed costs represented the major difference in production costs. The difference in expenditure in terms of carcass weight between farm No. 4 and farm No. 11 was about 170 yen per kilogram. The difference in interest payments and feed costs can explain more than 80% of the difference in expenditure. The larger interest payment was obviously caused by the large debt, while the larger feed cost appears to relate to the lower technical level. The differences in annual market hogs per sow and feed conversion ratios result in the difference of 90 kg of feed per hog which is equivalent to about 100 yen per carcass weight kilogram in terms of prices at that time.

As in the above case, high production costs are often caused by large debts and low technical levels. At the same time, however, high production costs during periods of depressed prices are a major factor that contributes to a farm having

Table 3 Summary of surveyed pig farms (1981)

Farm No.	No. 5	No. 5	No. 11
No. of Sows	184	55	64
Return & Costs (yen/kg carcass weight)			
Gross Income	795	786	758
Expenditure	765	739	594
Feed Cost	473	449	388
Interest	40	41	0
Income	73	72	197
Technical levels			
No. of Fattening Hogs			
Marketed/Sows/Year	13.5	16.0	19.2
Mortality Rate	2.21	11.31	2.71
Feed Conversion Ratio	2.96	2.81	2.39
Debts & Assets			
Debts (¥'000)	50,120	23,620	880
Debts/Sow (¥'000)	363	477	14
Liquid Assets/Liquid liability (%)	93.6	71.6	1,581.9
Net Worth/Total Asset (%)	16.6	-22.6	96.6

Table 4 Financial and technical trends of No. 6 farm

	1979	1980	1981	1879-81
				(¥'000)
Debt increased A	14,820	-630	-2,680	11,520
Asset increased B	5,800	-1,890	1,220	5,210
A-B	8,940	1,260	-3,900	6,300
Income	-9,220	790	3,820	-4,610
Return & Costs (yen/kg carcass weight)				
Gross Income	598	604	721	
Expenditure	791	677	739	
Income	-162	19	72	
Technical levels				
No. of Sows	46	53	55	
No. of Fattening Hogs				
Marketed/Sow/Year	6.5	12.9	16.0	
Feed Conversion Rate	3.81	2.69	2.81	

a large debt. The relationship between high production costs and large debts is a vicious circle. Table 4 shows the reason why farm No. 5 had a large debt. This farm's debt rose by 6,300,000 yen over the 3 years beginning in 1979. The main reason for this increase was a huge negative income amounting to nearly 9,000,000 yen in 1979. At the end of the 1978 net worth to total asset ratio was about 17%, but in 1979 this ratio dropped to a negative value. It is obvious that extremely high production costs and depressed prices at 373 yen (liveweight, farmers' received price) per kilogram dropped from 427 yen in the previous year caused the negative

income of 1979. Technical levels in that year were also very low. For example, the number of annual market hogs per sow was only 6.5, and the feed conversion rate was 3.81. This farm increased the number of sows to almost double over the fiscal year of 1978-79 (4/78-3/79), but the operator's technical expertise did not seem to match the large management scale. Moreover, hog prices dropped by nearly 15% during 1979. Hence farm No. 5 suffered a cost-price squeeze, and a huge negative income was the result.

There are many factors that contribute to a farm having debt problems. Most of the problems arise on livestock specialist farms that be-

came heavily indebted while expanding their farm operations in the 1970's when the products prices were rising. It has been estimated that two-thirds of all livestock farms in which less than 30% of investment is the farmers' own capital are at risk. Because of this financial vulnerability, farms easily fall into the financial difficulties when they faced with depressed prices. Moreover, the downturn in inflation rates since the late 1970's has increased their debts in real terms. Since then any expansion in farm operations has been impossible because of overproduction and production adjustment in livestock products. Farmers' efforts have therefore come to be focused on productivity improvement and cost reduction. For example, increases in milk yields per dairy cow are particularly salient in recent years, rising from 5,900 kg to 6,400 kg in the 6 years after 1975. Pig farming has also achieved marked technical progress. The target for the number of hogs marketed annually per sow in the 1960's was 15 head. In the 1980's it is over 18. Farms producing as many as 20 hogs per sow are not uncommon. With such continuous technical progress, farms like No. 5 which could not keep up with this trend fell into financial difficulty. As a result, the fragile financial character and low technical level including management skill of such farms, combined with the depressed price situation, lead to

their falling into the category of 'at risk' farms.

Next, we will examine what brought about the decline in livestock product prices. This was the one of the major contributing factors to livestock farmers' financial problems. Livestock farming in Japan has been subject to prolonged recession since 1975. With the downturn in the country's economic growth resulting from the 'oil crises' of the 1970's, overproduction of livestock products prevailed (with the exception of beef)* because of stagnation in demand growth for livestock products. Overproduction inevitably brought price declines in livestock products as shown in Figure 2. After dramatic increases following spiraling inflation caused by the first oil shock of 1973, prices of livestock products began to fall or lie stagnant. For instance, hog prices received by farmers had an upward trend peaking in 1975. But in 1976 prices fell below the long term trend, and fell by 28% between 1975 to 1985. The prices for broilers also fell by 21% between 1976 and 1985, while milk prices fell by 7% between 1978 and 1985.

These price declines naturally reduced the incomes of livestock farmers. As can be seen from Figure 3, upward trends in the 'family labourers' allowance per day' (see the note of Figure 3) turned downward in the late 1970's. In the dairy sector the allowances had been far below those in the rice cropping sector because of the price

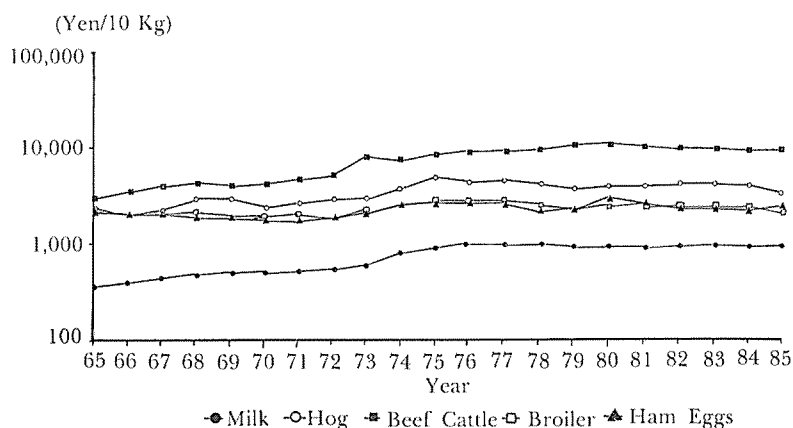


Fig. 2 Trends in prices received by farmers for livestock products (1965-85).

Note: a. semi-logarithm.

b. liveweights for hog, beef cattle and broiler.

Source: MAFF, *Noson Bukka Chingin Chosa*

* "The reason why there is no overproduction of beef is that calves are not overproduced. The breeding of calves requires roughage. So calf breeding farmers with no large tracts of land for roughage can not undertake large-scale propagation as seen in pig and chicken production." (Arai, H. 1983: Progress and problem of Japanese livestock farming. *Farming Japan*, 17(4), 38.

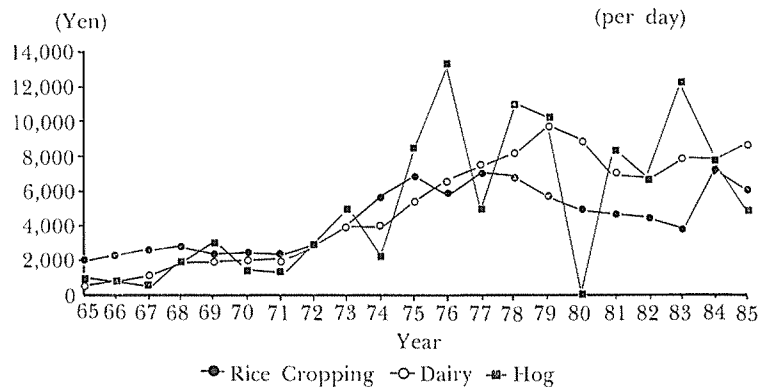


Fig. 3 Trends in family labourers' allowances (1965-85).

Note: a. family labourers' allowance/day = (gross income - (expenditure - family labourers cost)) / family members' labouring hours × 8

b. expenditure includes estimated own capital interest and own land rent.

Source: MAFF, *Chikusanbutsu Seisanhi Chosa Hokoku*
Nosanbutsu Seisanhi Chosa Hokoku

support policy applying in the latter. After the deficit payment system was introduced for manufacturing milk in 1966, these allowances were stabilised and increased to nearly the same levels as those in the rice cropping sector. After the allowances in the rice farming sector deteriorated with the introduction of the production allocation scheme because of the overproduction problem, family labourers' allowances for dairy farms maintained an upward trend. But allowances in the dairy sector began to decline in the late 1970's as they had done in the rice cropping sector. Because dairy farmers introduced a voluntary production allocation scheme to maintain price levels [2], they were restricted in the expansion of their operations, and ultimately this meant a blind alley for farmers' trying to seek income increases.

Meanwhile, as there has been no strict price support scheme in the pig farming sector as there has been in the dairy sector,* family labourers' allowances have fluctuated greatly, as a result of price fluctuations. Moreover, since the late 1970's the extent of the fluctuation has become much greater than before. It can be said that this instability has led some pig farms into bankruptcy.

At present, in every livestock sector except beef, production allocation schemes have been adopted to brake the price declines although

these attempts have not always been successful. Until the late 1970's, livestock farms could expand their farm operations without facing depressed prices, because the demand for livestock products had increased and many small scale livestock farms, whose share of livestock numbers was still large, had abandoned their operations as a side business. But from the late 1970's onwards, demand for livestock products stagnated and farms that had abandoned livestock farming accounted for only a small share of the total number of livestock. Therefore if farms expanded their operations in order to maintain their incomes in a depressed price situation, price declines would be accelerated.

Finally, another major contributing factor to the price declines was increasing imports of livestock products. In spite of the import restriction policy for livestock products, imports of livestock products have been gradually increasing. For example, at present imports of beef already account for about 30% of total beef consumption, 20% of pork consumption and 10% of broiler consumption. The main reasons for these trends are the government's decision to expand import quotas and the yen appreciation, but at the same time loopholes in import systems have also contributed to these trends. Diaphragm beef, which is categorised as an AA (automatically approved)

* Pigmeat is purchased and resold on the domestic market by Livestock Industry Promotion Corporation so that the wholesale price may be stabilised with a range of upper and lower limits.

item and is served as 'yakniku' (BBQ beef) at restaurants in Japan, has been imported at a rate of more than 50,000 tonnes per annum, while the beef quota is about 150,000 tonnes per year [3]. In the dairy sector huge amounts of so-called camouflaged dairy products that is, prepared products with cocoa and sugar added have been imported as an AA item [4]. If these products are counted as imported products, the share of imports would rise to 25%. These examples show that the existing import restriction systems are not effective enough in protecting domestic producers.

4. Recent Financial Problems and their Implications for Agricultural Policy

The main objective of agricultural policy during the rapid economic growth period starting in 1955 was to overcome the income disparity between the agricultural sector and non-agricultural sectors [5]. At that time the growth of non-agricultural sectors outpaced that of the agricultural sector, and the disparity in productivity and income between the two sectors widened. The Agricultural Basic Law was enacted in 1961 to meet this problem. In this law, the fundamental measures to meet the income parity objective were as follows.

1. Creating many large-scale and highly efficient viable farms that could earn higher incomes enabling farm households to make a living comparable to those engaged in other industries.
2. Training farmers and encouraging their family members to seek employment in other industries.
3. Selectively expanding agricultural production to match the great changes occurring in the pattern of food consumption.

In practice, as mentioned before farm household incomes equalled or even bettered non-farm household incomes. This, however, was achieved not by creating large-scale and highly efficient farms but by increasing off-farm incomes. The share of farms whose agricultural incomes are equal or better than those of non-farm households has decreased within the last quarter of a century. In addition, it should be noted that most farms categorised as 'Agriculturally Self-supporting Income Farms' have been not rice farms but live-

stock and fruit-growing farms. In this sense, the selective expansion policy which was one of the objectives of the Agricultural Basic Law was successful.

As for the reasons why large-scale and highly efficient farms in the rice farming sector were not created, the following three points can be made. Firstly, as tenancy of arable lands was tightly restricted to prevent a resurrection of the prewar type of landownership system, it was quite difficult for farmers to enlarge the scale of their operations by renting. Secondly, although producer rice prices decided by the government had been raised substantially since the late 1950's, the prices of wheat and barley were fixed at low levels which meant that even farmers of average productivity could derive only negative incomes from cultivation. As a result, farmers could not find any profitable winter crops and were forced to engage in off-farm work as part-time and seasonal workers. The reason behind this price policy for wheat and barley related to America's food strategy, [6]* At that time the USA had a severe grain surplus problem and disposed of the surplus by exporting it to developing countries including Japan in the form of the food aid. Moreover, Japan imported huge amounts of rural products from America not only through food aid but also by the MSA agreement.

Under this agreement Japan could purchase food with Japanese currency, which was quite a good condition for Japan since she was suffering from a chronic shortage of foreign currency. As a result, self-sufficiency of wheat and barley fell dramatically during the rapid economic growth period. Thirdly, generally speaking, the non-agricultural employment farmers found was inferior to those of urban counterparts in terms of wages and other conditions. They often had to undergo 'dekasegi' (working apart from the family) in metropolitan areas during the winter season. Therefore rice cropping was necessary to maintain their total incomes, and so most farmers did not stop farming. In addition, there were no governmental schemes specifically geared to accelerate the exodus from farming. As a result, many part-time farmers remained in rural areas. Conversely, Japan's rapid economic growth was supported by these cheap labourers. Within 25 years Japan's agricultural labour force (defined as persons mainly engaged in family farming)

* Japan's rearmament was carried out by using this money.

almost halved, but the number of farm households decreased by only 28%.

Under such circumstances, farmers who wanted to seek higher agricultural incomes started to raise livestock or transferred to fruit-growing. The government also supported them through the creation of financial institutions of support or by providing subsidies. Then production switched from crops to livestock products which required less land and enjoyed natural protection from foreign competition. Also there was little pressure from America against the livestock farming sector because the US, as the world's main exporter of feed grains and soybeans, had little incentive to discourage growth in the protection of feed-based livestock industries [7]. The result has been that the livestock industry and fruit-growing have developed rapidly in short periods. For example, herds in the dairy sector increased from only 2 to 26 cows per farm between 1950 and 1985, and in the layer sector the number of hens increased by a factor of 250. In the rice farming sector, however, the average arable land for cropping was stagnant. Of course these rapid increases were partly achieved by a decline in the number of livestock farm households, since the major proportion of farm households that abandoned livestock farming were involved in small-scale management. But a small number of large-scale farms have a very large proportion of Japan's total livestock. For instance, 46% of the total number of dairy cattle belong to a farm strata of over 30 head, 52% of the pig population belong to a strata of over 300 head and 63% of layers belong to a strata of over 10,000 fowl.

As described above, the recent financial problems which have occurred in the livestock sector have meant that creating large-scale and efficient farms through the selective expansion policy has not generally succeeded. This means that Japan's agricultural policies have failed to reduce the disparity in productivity between agriculture and non-agricultural industries as whole. The productivity of agriculture relative to that of non-agricultural industries has even deteriorated during the last three decades and is now less than 30% of non-agricultural productivity. There is increasing criticism of the high prices of agricultural products and Japan's agricultural protection policies, but it can be said that the high prices of food and the high protection rates simply reflect this great disparity in productivity.

The Japanese yen tends to be valued in terms of the productivities of export industries which are the highest among all Japanese industries. In other words, the current exchange rate of the yen to the US dollar is overvalued for agriculture. For example, it is suggested that agricultural protection rates in terms of US dollars have risen in the recent past [8]. But as we analysed before, in terms of yen almost all domestic prices of rural products have decreased. Hence from the Japanese farmers' point of view, protection levels have declined regardless of the extremely high protection rates. The current widening difference between domestic and international prices of rural products caused by the rapid yen appreciation simply reflects the increasing disparity in productivity between agriculture and manufacturing in Japan. Hence the vital question is how to improve the relative productivity of agriculture.

As mentioned above, Japan's agricultural policies after World War II can be described as a history of liberalisation. As a result Japan became the largest net importer of rural products in the world. Liberalisation has been carried out mainly because of pressures from the US together with internal pressures from Japanese big business. Japanese public opinion on agricultural import has fluctuated widely from time to time. For example, during the 'food crises' of the early 1970's when the US temporarily embargoed soybean exports, the Japanese public showed strong support for greater agricultural self-sufficiency in the name of food security [9] and agricultural protection was strengthened at that time. But public attitudes towards the liberalisation issue have completely changed as a consequence of US pressures for further liberalisation because of rapidly expanding trade deficits with Japan. Almost all agricultural support and stabilisation prices have been reduced, and the strengthening of protection levels, such as closing of loopholes in agricultural imports systems, is no longer permitted. Under such circumstances further liberalisation of rural product imports will be carried out, although even total liberalisation will not alleviate present trade friction between the US and Japan. But this decision will surely hurt not only agriculture but also regional economies since agriculture is still a major industry in local areas. Therefore the problem of the great disparity between agricultural and manufacturing productivities is also a problem of

the regional economies. Agricultural problems cannot be solved by the agricultural industry on its own but only through the reduction of the existing disparity of productivities among industries.

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日本における畜産農家の負債問題—その農業政策との関連性：小林信一

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本稿の課題は、畜産農家の負債問題について、1. その状況の把握、2. 問題激化の背景と原因の究明、3. 農業政策との関連における問題の意味の考察を行なうことにある。

負債農家の実態について、本稿では都道府県農業信用保険協会の代位弁済発生件数・額を用いて明らかにした。その結果、昭和50年代に入って発生件数、額がともに急増しており、また畜産部門が大きな比重を占めていることがわかった。負債固定化の要因については、経営内と経営外的要因に分けて考えられ、前者には急激な規模拡大による負債の増加や、大規模経営に適合しない経営者の飼養管理技術水準による経営赤字などがあげられる。また経営間の経営技術水準の格差拡大が事例調査によって確認された。経営外的要因としては、畜産物価格の停滞、下落があげられる。これは畜産物の需要低迷による生産過剰、いわゆる偽装畜産物を含めた輸入の増大や、国内外からの農業過保護批判による価格支持水準の引き下げという政治的要因も大きい。

大型畜産農家の負債問題は、農業基本法の選択的拡大による自立経営創出政策の破綻であり、大きく見れば農業の非農業部門に対する比較生産性の劣化を背景としている。畜産物の内外価格差の拡大問題も、内外の畜産部門間の問題というよりも、国内における農業と非農業部門間の問題として捉える必要がある。