

Hog Lift and Corn from America

How grain trade built U.S.-Japan Ties

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Preface

Sixty-six years have already passed since the end of World War II. If we look back at how the history of Japan has progressed since then, we realize how much we have achieved. Starting all over from the ashes of defeat, Japan experienced spectacular economic growth in the 1960s. Then the oil crisis slowed the growth of Japan's economy, but the bubble economy surged in the 1980s, followed by the lost decade from the early 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s. Finally we have seen the endless dire days surrounding the new global circumstances after 2000. Japan has pulled through lots of ups and downs.

In 1979, Ezra Feivel Vogel wrote his book “Japan as Number One” in which he pointed out that Japan's high educational motivation and the habit of many Japanese people to read avidly were major factors for Japan's rapid economic growth, and these factors are now almost always used as a growth model for developing countries. Vogel's best-selling book drew lots of Japanese readers throughout the 1980s. His point was surely right.

However, we Japanese may have taken his point as a confirmation that the Japanese way of living, thinking and working – and everything else – were the best in the world, and we may have allowed ourselves to become complacent without noticing. We could live that way while Japan's vitality continued, but our country seems to have lost much of that vim today.

Moreover, with the rapidly emerging countries such as China and Brazil, the relative power of Japan has become less important in the international community. Japan was once one of the states that had achieved the highest living standards in the world, until the 1980s, and our country impressed many other countries with its high standards of business, law and order, health and education. What happened to Japan and the Japanese people?

And then in 2011, Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake, the scale of which was so devastating that it could take 1,000 years for us to see another like it. Now Japan has become more famous for the tsunami that

came after the earthquake, and for the nuclear power plant disasters.

This book discusses the history of Japan and its people from the viewpoint of food, especially livestock products and grains. I have been researching and teaching on this topic at my university. There is a population of 120 million in Japan, and there is a demand for food that can feed this population. It would be ideal if we could provide all our food for ourselves, but unfortunately Japan is in no position to do that. Therefore, Japan has been importing agricultural and livestock products from foreign countries, mainly from the U.S. This has allowed Japan to focus its nation-building efforts over several decades since the end of World War II.

In other words, Japan's continuous prosperity over the past half century and more has been supported by scientific technology, as well as automobiles and electric appliances developed by technology. And more importantly, there has been enough food to feed the population of Japan, and it is the population that constitutes the most important driver of success.

Food has been produced within the country as well as imported from abroad just like a pair of big wheels working together on a cart. It is not a question of whether this is good or bad, but the fact is that our day-to-day life functions only by using both these wheels to their full capacities. If rice is the representative of Japan's domestic production, then the representative of imported food is the livestock fed with imported grains. If livestock doesn't sound familiar to you, just think about beef, pork, poultry, eggs, cheese, milk and yogurt, which are the final products of livestock. It is only possible for Japan to produce such products in great volume domestically thanks to a constant supply of feed grains imported from abroad, mainly from the U.S. Therefore, it is equally important to produce food domestically as well as importing it.

Thus, it is necessary for Japan to excel at the business of international grain trading, achieving substantial trading results and building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence, as Japan has done in its relations with the large agricultural countries in order to secure a stable source of imported food both now and in the future.

This book is written in easy language and explains how the Japanese livestock industry has been supported by corn imported from the U.S. as well how the U.S. and Japan have developed their long and multifaceted relationship through the trading of livestock products and grains.

Japan and the U.S. have developed a very strong relationship in livestock and related industries. If we view this bilateral relationship from the mid- to long-term point of view, it certainly is worthy of being called a bond, even though the day-to-day trading is carried out based on business-like price negotiations. I am sure this book will provide you exactly what you need to know in order to understand the reality of Japan's food circumstances and to think about the future of Japan. It is my pleasure if this book can be your guide.

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