

An Analysis of the Current Situation of Rural-Resident Organizations in Yamaguchi Prefecture

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Summary

This article reports an analysis of new resident organizations in Yamaguchi Prefecture established through the cooperation of conventional rural communities. The impacts and future tasks of those organizations are reported mainly based on a field investigation. Since 2006, Yamaguchi local governments have supported residents in rural remote areas who voluntarily make a *Yume-Plan* (Long-term plan for the resident organization's action) and a *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* (New rural organization founded by plural rural communities and governed by residents) based on their voluntaries.

Three research sites in all have already set up a *Yume-Plan* and *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* program following the prefecture's guidelines. Each *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* carries out various activities, such as event programs for interaction with urban people and festivals for the recreation of residents every year. Some of the organizations provide health care or daily-life services for elderly residents. The organizations are also trying to utilize "dormant local resources" for activating the area.

Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku were divided into different types for the analysis. We found that there are some differences among the types in the management and decision-making process of the organizations. It is crucial to obtain the approval of all residents in the process of setting up a new rural organization to ensure its efficient management.

As *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* and conventional rural community has been clearly identified, their interrelationship also has been clarified. However, it is assumed that small and aging communities will increase, so *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* is expected to play a growing role in those communities. But it is difficult for *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* to directly take over all of the positions of a community. One way to address this problem is for *Tezukuri-Jichi-Ku* to develop *Social Innovations* to tackle various tasks as a new rural entrepreneur. To foster such entrepreneurs, it is important how appropriate supports are provided by the local government, agricultural cooperatives and other organizations.

Key words: Rejuvenation of Rural Area, Rural-Resident Organization