

The Significance and Characteristics of Introducing Regular Employment into Peri-Urban Farms: A Case Study in the Cities of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area

YOSHIDA Shingo

Summary

Revision of the Productive Green Land Act and the new act for leasing urban farmland enabled extant farmers to develop existing businesses and new entrants to begin farming within metropolitan areas. These changes are anticipated to cause employment management challenges for farms. Since structural diversification is one of the characteristics of urban agriculture, employees are expected to have an important role in diversified enterprises. This study endeavors to demonstrate the significance and characteristics of introducing regular employment into peri-urban farms using survey data from 317 farms located in the cities of the Tokyo metropolitan area. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was held at two fruit farms in Ichikawa City in Chiba Prefecture. The questionnaire survey demonstrated that the number of regular employees resulted in differences in farms' developmental stages. In particular, farms with only one employee can be distinguished from farms with more than two employees from the perspective of farm management capabilities and social networking. According to the interviews, even if the farms are of a similar size, the difference in farm objectives and thinking in terms of family management affect the presumed role of regular employees and future human resource management plans. These findings have significant implications for policies supporting farm development in urban agriculture; that is, farms that feature qualified management skills and entrepreneurial attributes should be incentivized and encouraged to promote regular employment.

Key words: peri-urban farm, regular employment, farm management, structural diversification