

Building a Support System for Agriculture-Welfare Collaboration by Local Governments

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1. Background of research

In order to address the employment of people with disabilities in the agricultural sector, as well as understanding both the agricultural field and the welfare field, it is important to use support measures for these fields as necessary. However until now, even when initiatives are started, there was no chance to obtain knowledge and information of both fields, nor any chance to share issues in the community. The burden on consulters was large, as consultation services were distributed for each field, and such problems were one of the factors inhibiting agriculture-welfare collaboration.

Amidst such issues, movements have also begun to actively support agriculture-welfare collaboration centered on local governments. Therefore, this study focused on the characteristics of support by local governments for agriculture-welfare collaboration as well as the mechanisms to realize this support.

2. Characteristics of initiatives by local governments to promote agriculture-welfare collaboration

In this study, analysis was conducted using 8 typical cases of active support for agriculture-welfare collaboration. As a result, looking at support by content, these initiatives can be divided into 4 groups (Table). Group I includes initiatives that support matching of farm work contracts between farmers and employment support disability welfare service offices (hereinafter, "welfare offices"). Group II includes initiatives that carry out support so that disabled individuals can work for farms. Group III includes initiatives to support entry into agriculture by corporations in the welfare field, such as special subsidiary companies and social welfare corporations. Group IV includes initiatives that combine the three forms of support above and offer complex, phased support.

Table. Type of support for agriculture-welfare cooperation from local government

		Responsible organization	Year started	Main support content		
				Matching of farm work contracts (out-of-facility employment)	Employment support for people with disabilities working for farm	Agriculture entry support from the welfare field
I	Kagawa Prefecture	Kagawa Prefecture Support of Employment, Living, and Participation Center	FY2011	●		
	Tottori Prefecture	Tottori Prefecture (Agriculture-Welfare Collaboration Promotion Project Team)	FY2010	●		
	Shizuoka Prefecture-Hamamatsu City	Shizuoka Universal Farming Network	FY2005	●		
II	Nabari City	Nabari Disabled Agri Employment Promotion Council	FY2008		●	
	Hyogo Prefecture	Disabled Agricultural Training/Employment Support Network Council	FY2012		●	
III	Osaka Prefecture	Osaka Prefectural Corporation for Agricultural Land and Development and Greenery Environment Promotion (Ag Policy Team)	FY2005			●
IV	Shimane Prefecture	Shimane Agriculture Development Corporation	FY2012	●	●	●
	Nara Prefecture	Nara Prefecture (Agriculture and Forestry Department, Health and Welfare Department)	FY2010		●	●

Previously Group II was the main type of support, but following revision of the Agricultural Land Act and changes to the economic and employment situation, support content has also diversified. Therefore, this study describes the analysis results of a case in Kagawa where a mechanism was built for matching farm work contracts as in Group I, and a case in Osaka where agriculture entry support for corporations in the welfare field as in Group III.

3. Cases of support for agriculture-welfare collaboration by local governments

(1) Support for matching of farm work contracts: Kagawa Prefecture

In Kagawa Prefecture, home to thriving outdoor cultivation, a "joint orders window" was established for matching farmers suffering labor shortages and welfare offices that wish to perform farm work as out-of-facility work⁽¹⁾, and a mechanism was built for welfare offices to undertake farm work (Figure). The Kagawa Prefecture Support of Employment, Living, and Participation (SELP)

Source: Produced from interviews and documents from local governments.

Note: "●" indicates support, blank indicates no support.

Center operates the joint orders window, and there is a full-time coordinator in place. Kagawa Prefecture is also involved from the stage of creating mechanisms, and is still supporting initiatives now. When providing support, because the initiatives are cross-sectoral, agricultural departments and welfare departments collaborate within the prefectural government.

Mechanisms of the Kagawa Prefecture joint orders window are characterized by cooperation from JA (Japan Agricultural Co-operative), and the JA is primarily responsible for coordinating work requests from the farmer side. Because it is a joint orders window, it is also capable of supporting requests from large scale farmers by undertaking the work with multiple welfare offices.

By building such mechanisms, they realize work consignments focused on critical crops to the community such as garlic and onions, crops that require manpower. These matchings advance year by year, and the number of requests and working wages are both in an increasing trend. By building such mechanisms, the agricultural side secures a labor force during the farming season for major crops in the region, and achieves improved quality by a properly timed harvest, leading to maintenance and expansion of the management scale and higher income. It has also been indicated that for the welfare side, people with disabilities benefit from increased wages and a favorable impact on their minds and bodies.

(2) Supporting agricultural entrants from the welfare field: Osaka Prefecture

Osaka Prefecture, where many large companies are located, also ranks 3rd in Japan for the number of special subsidiary companies. As the statutory employment rate of people with disabilities is expected to rise, there has been growing interest among special subsidiary companies in the agriculture as an employment destination for people with disabilities. In response to this, the Osaka Prefectural Corporation for Agricultural Land and Development and Greenery Environment Promotion has come to actively support agricultural entrants such as special subsidiary companies and social welfare corporations by such activities as mediating idle agricultural land. While performing a study of farm management models that take advantage of proximity to major cities, it supports entry by special subsidiary companies and social welfare corporations.¹⁷ companies have begun agriculture so far.

Osaka Prefecture has also established a "Agriculture and Welfare Collaboration" Liaison Committee, with the goal of enhancing such support. From 2015, Osaka has centralized the agriculture entry consultation services, and it is actively supporting entry into agriculture with the public corporation.

4. Conclusion

As described above, support for agriculture-welfare collaboration is performed in a way that responds to the characteristics and issues of local agriculture. In addition, mechanisms have been made so that participants in local agriculture can build win-win relationships.

In order to perform such assistance, agricultural departments and welfare departments collaborate within local governments, working towards cross-department support. By doing so, it is possible to centrally aggregate information from agricultural and welfare-related fields, and make efficient use of this.

Additionally, there are also examples of commerce and industry departments participating, and cases in which wider support is expected in food processing and sales promotion. To link actors in the agricultural field and actors in the welfare field, the role of coordinators has become more important.

It can be said that these systems are a kind of platform which promotes collaboration between actors and solve local issues. Local governments can play a very important role in making the foundation for this.

Notes (1) "Out-of-facility employment" includes activities performed by users (people with disabilities) and staff of welfare offices who form units to undertake contracted work from corporations.

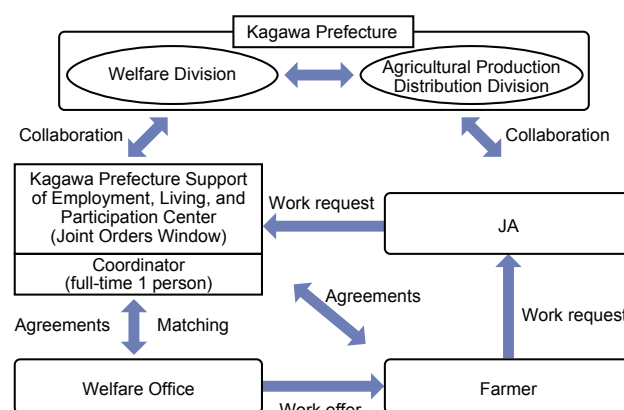


Figure. Promotion systems for agriculture-welfare collaboration in Kagawa Prefecture