

Census analysis series No.7

An analysis of organic farming practices

Census analysis team of the project on the structure of the agricultural industry and rural regions

The number of agricultural management entities practicing organic farming nationwide is 69,000, with the cultivated area being 115,000 ha.

Along with the growing attention being given to sustainable agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has introduced the “MIDORI” strategy, a strategy for sustainable food systems. This strategy aims to increase the proportion of farmland employing organic farming to 25% (equivalent to 1 million ha) by 2050. In the 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry, a survey was conducted to examine the introduction status of organic farming at the agricultural management entity (hereinafter, “producer”) level.

The result of this census showed that about 69,000 producers had introduced organic farming practices. In terms of cultivated area, about 115,000 ha employed organic farming nationwide (Table 1). The crop most frequently grown organically was paddy rice. However, organically farmed paddy rice was grown by only 4.9% of producers (in terms of cultivated area, 4.7%). The percentage of organic farming for vegetables and fruits was higher.

Table 1. Number of organic produce and their organic cultivation

	Number of planting (cultivating) management entities			Planted area (ha)		
		Engaged in organic farming (management entities)	Ratio of organic management entities		Devoted to organic farming (ha)	Ratio devoted to organic farming
Total agriculture management entities	967,187	69,309	7.2%	2,562,434	115,269	4.5%
Paddy rice (edible)	713,792	35,244	4.9%	1,285,654	60,624	4.7%
Soybeans	49,731	2,862	5.8%	132,084	5,122	3.9%
Vegetables	282,543	24,647	8.7%	264,734	18,435	7.0%
Fruits	172,528	12,750	7.4%	126,819	9,630	7.6%
Other	...	6,598	...	753,143	21,458	2.8%

The larger the paddy rice producers are, the more likely they are to practice organic farming; however, the percentage of organically cultivated area is lower.

Focusing on paddy rice production, Fig.1 shows that the proportion of organic producers increased as the scale of rice-cultivated area increased. Fig.2 shows the percentage of organic rice-cultivated area out of total rice-cultivated area among organic producers. Small-scale organic rice producers introduced organic farming practices in almost 100% of their cultivated area, whereas larger producers introduced organic farming practices only in a portion of their total rice-cultivated area. However, the trend was different for other crops (vegetables, fruits, and soybeans). For details, please see the project’s research reports, which will be published in 2023 (in Japanese).

As discussed above, for the promotion of organic farming, it is necessary to not only increase the number of producers practicing organic farming but also to promote organic farming among large-scale producers.

As a side note, it has been pointed out that organic farming, as per the Census of Agriculture and Forestry, may include “self-described” organic farming or farming practices that have simply reduced the usage of chemical fertilizers or pesticides (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2022). Thus, when we use these numbers directly, these facts should be considered. Nonetheless, there is the large gap to bridge in order to achieve the planned target of increasing organic farming (1 million ha) by 2050. To achieve the target, further promotion of organic farming is required.

(Analysis by KUSUDO, Takeru)

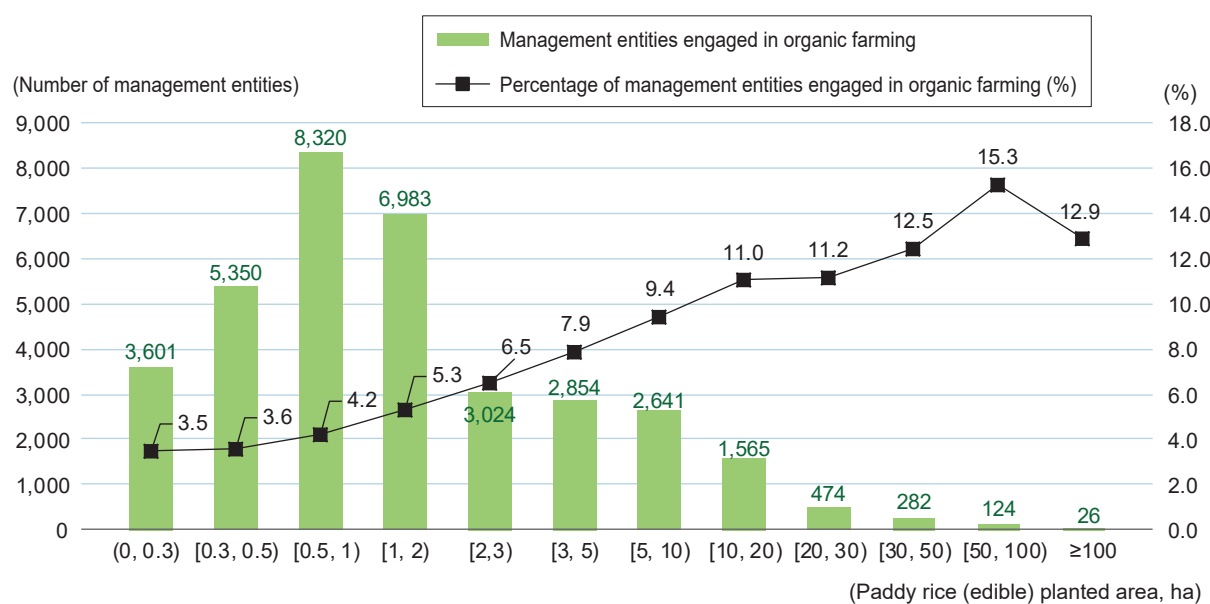


Figure 1. Number of producers practicing organic farming by size of cultivated area (paddy rice [edible])

Source: Prepared by the author from the 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry survey form data

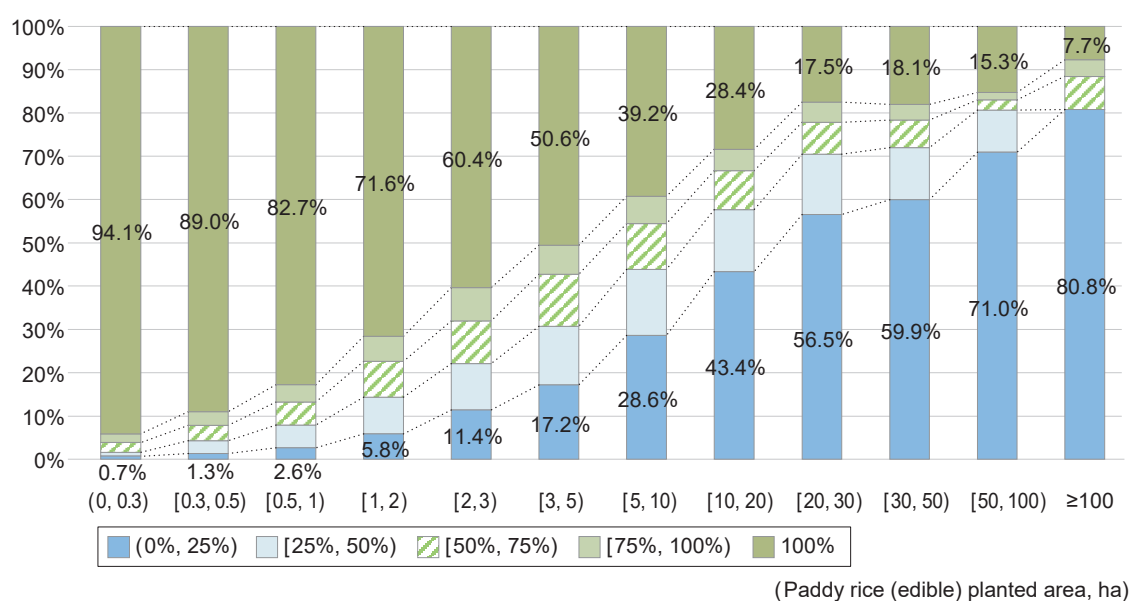


Figure 2. Percentage of organically cultivated area by size for producers practicing organic farming (paddy rice [edible])

Source: Prepared by the author from the 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry survey form data

[References]

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2022) "The Second Meeting of the Study Group for the 2025 Census of Agriculture and Forestry: Committee Members' Opinions and Responses," Handouts for the Third meeting of the Study Group for the 2025 Census of Agriculture and Forestry) (in Japanese) <https://www.maff.go.jp/j/study/census/2025/221108/attach/pdf/index-1.pdf>