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QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES BEYOND
CERTIFICATION

**THE MEANING OF THE ORGANIC VILLAGE DECLARATION IN JAPAN: THE
ROLE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR
EXPANDING ORGANIC FARMLAND**

Kyoko Nakamaru (kyoko8nakamaru@gmail.com)

This study examines the significance and characteristics of the Organic Village Declaration as a form of institutional support for expanding organic farmland in Japan. Amid growing interest in environmentally sustainable agriculture, Japan has promoted organic farming, particularly through the conversion of paddy rice cultivation, which occupies a large share of the country's agricultural land. In recent years, an increasing number of municipalities have adopted the Organic Village Declaration to advance local organic agriculture initiatives. Based on in-person interviews with municipalities aiming to expand organic paddy rice production, this study analyzes how the declaration is positioned and utilized in practice. The findings that differences between municipalities with a long history of organic rice farming and those that began organic agriculture after adopting the declaration. In addition, the study identifies cases in which agricultural

cooperatives that previously handled only conventionally produced rice started to distribute organic rice through existing market channels. These results suggest that the Organic Village Declaration functions not only as a policy instrument but also as an institutional framework that supports local practices and facilitates the expansion of organic agriculture beyond formal certification.

Palavras-chave: organic agriculture; institutional support; local practices; value-based alternative food systems.