

Discussion of the experiences of WWOOFing in Organic Farm 88, Nagano, Japan

14 July 2014 - 8 August 2014 (Four weeks)

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1. Organic Farming

- **Working hours and days**

-> 6 hours a day (7:00AM-1:00PM or 6:00AM-12:00) / 5 days a week (MON-SAT).

- **Weather and climate**

The climate was cooler and dry. We didn't have any tropical night and could sleep well every night. It was much better than my home town (Tatsuno, Hyogo) at least in summer.

- **Sowing (Carrot and soba)**

-> Sowing push-cart was used. After sowing, we packed the seeds into the soil to stimulate their germination.

- **Compost (organic fertilizer for multiple vegetables)**

-> **Used mash room bed**; Fertilizer was supposed to be the most important element for farming. They are lucky to get the excellent compost without charge. Less costly and recycled network of materials and resources should be built before we start to farm.

-> **Livestock's manure**; it should not be used; some studies show that vegetable which contain excess nitrate nitrogen could be harmful to human body.

- **Cultivating (Soybean)**

-> **Plowing by cultivator**; cultivating at an early stage is effective in controlling weeds.

- **Growing Vegetables (Cucumber, Zucchini, Tomato, Eggplant, Potato, Herbs and etc)**

Necessity of.....

-> Doing careful observations of the weather (daylight and rainfalls).

-> Doing close observation of the condition of plants and the soil.

-> Collecting information (pests and the timing of planting) from other farmers in the town.

-> Building the good relationship with the neighbors.

- **No agrochemicals was used.**

-> No insecticide, pesticide, herbicide or chemical fertilizer was used for farming.

- **Weed control (protecting multiple vegetables)**

-> Kama (sickle) and Kusakariki (Mower machine) were used. Generally speaking, most of farmers want to save time and trouble for weed control though any kind of herbicide should not be allowed in organic farming.

-> **Mulching of dead weeds**; put around cucumber and eggplant. It's good for preserve moisture and controlling new weeds growing.

- **Harvesting (Potato, Tomato, Zucchini)**

-> It is important that we judge the vegetables' ripening from its colour, size and texture. We followed Ryo's directions.

- **Shipping (Sorting and Packing; multiple vegetables)**

-> This work should be done carefully because those products should be judged by their appearances.

-> **Delivery fees;** We need to compare the delivery fees of each companies carefully.

- **Discussion**

-> **Physical labor;** I was ready for the field working though the jobs in the farm was so tough indeed. I'm really glad to survive now. I could learn a lot of things here. It is so complicated to describe the detail of the works.

-> **Believing my five senses;** Frankly speaking, careful observation is the key to succeed in agriculture.

-> **Chemical analysis;** Chemical soil analysis should be required when I start to farm. I'd like to make the best use of my chemical knowledge for farming.

-> **Substitution (Reuse & Recycle);** I learned that we don't have to buy so many stuffs. For example, my father owns a large plot of the bamboo mountain, I can use the leaves for mulching, the soil for compost, ashes for fertilizer and stems and branch for mainstay.

-> **Less reflection;** Unfortunately I couldn't have enough time to reflect on the everyday working.

2. Organic Life

- **Foods and Cooking**

-> Ingredients were usually organic food stuffs which we harvested. Cooking was preferred to consider Macrobiotic, which is referred to the list of Yin&Yang (shade&light), should be balanced well.

-> Our meals were basically more vegetables and rice, less meat and fish.

-> Drinking milk was supposed to be not good for the body because of not being good for our digestion.

-> Miso, Soy source, dressing, jam were usually homemade things.

- **Energy and water saving**

-> **Saving water;** cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, bath water and toilet.

-> **Household waste water;** it flows into the river directly. We should have paid attention to our waste water.

-> **Making bath;** Firewoods were used to heat bath water.

-> **Taking bath;** Take the bath one after another quickly during the water is warm.

- **Taking care of environment**

-> **No chemical synthesized surfactant;** we avoided using any chemical synthesized surfactant for washing body, hair, dishes, clothes and bath tub.

-> **Organic soap;** Only organic soap was allowed to use in this house.

-> **Vinegar and baking soda;** it could be used for washing toilet.

Discussion

- Our life is connected to the internal nature (our body) and the external nature (environmental) directly and indirectly. In our modern society, we have been hiding the discomfort things such as human waste, waste water and bad smell as our society has been developing.

- I suppose that our parents generation don't prefer inconvenient life such as farming in local region and less electrified life style. On the other hand, some of my generation are going back to inconvenient and traditional life.

3. Environmental Education (Playing with kids)

- **Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy**; I attended a self study meeting by the host mother, Yoko. His theory was really interesting. I'd like to consider the theory when I plan a program of environmental education.

- **Playing with kids**

- > In the river (with the host family's kids)

- > Pizza party with a family from Osaka.

- > Playing with kids from UK.

- > Playing and BBQ party with a family from Nagoya.

- > Reading the picture book, "The Promise Between The Sea and The Sky" to some kids;

I thought they understood the story because they gave me lots of questions. I gave a book to each family (total four copies were given).

Discussion

- **Their organic life can be considered as an environmental education itself**; Those

experiences with kids were not planned as a program of environmental education though I saw that kids were learning a lot from other kids, their parents and visitors and through their daily life and the nature.

- **Introducing a part of organic life to environmental education**; It is difficult to spend enough time with kids. When I hold an event in future, I'd like to have a class which can give a good lesson of nature (or ecology) through organic farming to kids (objective ages is elementary school). For example, Vegetable organic garden without chemicals could be nice. I'd like to give some opportunities to think about "WHY are the synthesized chemicals such as insecticide and surfactants not good for our body or environment?" to kids.

- **Concerning Global Warming**; I'd like to give an opportunity to think about "WHY can firewoods be better than petroleum to stop global warming?"

- **Foods are living things as well**; If kids can only see the foods such as soy source, bread and fruit juice in the supermarket, they possibly think the foods are made of plastics. They should have opportunities to see and know the foods are made from vegetables, crops, fish and animals. Human can't survive without consuming living things.

4. Cooperating with WWOOFers

- **Living and working**

- > We carried out our duties of farming and housework five days a week.

- > We took turn in preparing lunch, dinner, bath and other housework.

- **Exchange information**

- > We usually talked in Japanese and English. It was a good exercise for improving my English.

- **Playing in the river**

- **Visiting a old Japanese inn near the Suwa Lake with Raphael's father.**

- **Hiking**

- > in a local mountain.

-> through the forest and marsh of Mt. Nyukasa.

- **Visiting winery & brewery**

-> A Winery and Sake brewery in Obuse.

- **Watching a drum festival at Matsumoto Castle**

- **Playing card game after dinner**

Masa (from Tokyo, JP); I learned a lot from him. He was always ready to help anyone and the host family trusted him. His miso soup was so bloody nice!

Josie (from US); She enthusiastically worked in the fields and the house. That was really respectable. She seemed to have her own philosophy of organic life. She hated to put plastic materials on and into the soil. Her fried camo camo was so bloody nice!

Raphael (from FR); He told me about his father's winery business and producing in Shablis and the current situation of France. I'd like to visit his family's winery in Shablis, France. His mojito and mint tea were so bloody amazing!

Josh (from NZ); He was definitely a creator of a cheerful atmosphere. Wilderland sounded interesting and I'd like to visit in the near future.

Yusuke & Rina (from Shizuoka, JP); They've done a round-the-world trip before. I enjoyed their travel stories!

Mitch (from US); He was working in China before. He came here after he did an WWOOFing in Hokkaido. He introduced his unique recipes for us. His pesto was so bloody nice!

Discussion

- Working and living with the people from other countries is definitely the real pleasure of WWOOFing!
- Communication with them is one of the greatest experiences for me.

5. WWOOFing in Foreign Countries

Discussion

- I'm thinking to visit and do WWOOFing in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and so on.
- One of the reasons why I started WWOOFing is that I'd like to work for farming in foreign countries.
- Every country and every farm has its own way to manage its organic farm.
- I'd like to invite GOOD WWOOFers to home; I'd like to meet and share information with other WWOOFers in foreign countries.
- "Permaculture" sounded interesting too. I need more information about that.

6. Farming & WWOOF Hosting in Home Town

Discussion

- My father owns some plots around our house. The total area is 70a at rough estimate. Most of the plots are being kept idle. I'd like to make better use of them. Farming could be a better way of use.
- I should prepare the plots for farming before I start to accept WWOOFers.
- Still I'm not sure to be able to make my living by farming though I'm thinking to cultivate more plots and plant some more vegetables and fruit trees.
- I'd like to start to accept WWOOFers after I finish to improve the plots and my house.

Summary

I think that I got more confident of working in farm compared with before. The reason why I challenge something new is mostly that I just want to see the matter with own eyes. I'm glad to work with the full-time farmer. Still I can't decide to change my job to a full-time farmer though I think that I have some options to do self-realization. I'd like to continue doing jobs which are related to organic farming and environmental education. I'd like to become an expert who can give proper advice to people about doing organic farming and eco-friendly activities.