

The Effects of Employing People with Disabilities on Agricultural Entities using a Grounded Theory Approach

Rina Miyoshi*, Kenichiro Onitsuka*

Laboratory of Sustainable Rural Development, Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University



BACKGROUND

- **Two Issues in Japan:** Declining/aging agricultural workforce & employment barriers for disabled persons.
- **"Noufuku Renkei" (Ag-Welfare Collaboration):** Aims to revitalize ag businesses & promote social empowerment of disabled (MAFF, 2019).
- **Research Gap:** Employment by agricultural entities is uncommon in practice and research (Foundation, 2023; Saiki and Kono, 2014).

OBJECTIVE

To qualitatively analyze and theorize the causes, processes, and effects of continuously employing disabled persons in Japanese agricultural entities.

METHODOLOGY

- **Participants:** Managers of 7 entities employing disabled.
- **Collection:** Semi-structured interviews.
- **Analysis:** Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

RESULTS: CAUSES, PROCESS and EFFECTS

1. Causes

- Driven by **labor shortages** and/or strong **external encouragement**.

2. Processes

- **Initial Troubles:** Employer's lack of knowledge led to communication difficulties.
- **For Continuity:** Intensive manager guidance, and/or "supporters".
- **Mutual Adaptation:** Once adapted, employees were recognized as individual "workers."

3. EFFECTS: ORGANIZATIONAL EVOLUTION

3-1. Internal Transformation

- Workplace accommodations incidentally improved workability for **all staff**.
- Employee growth fostered manager pride.
- Supporting disabled persons enhanced atmosphere and productivity.

3-2. External Development

- **Network Expansion:** All entities except (D) established "new external networks" after hiring.

Table 1: Subcategories made from interview transcription

() is Agricultural Entity A-G		
Relationship between Employees with Disabilities, and the entities and Work	Success of employees with disabilities Growth of the company(A)	Performance almost indistinguishable from employees without disabilities(D)
Struggles of the Entity and Employees with Disabilities	Employer's lack of knowledge(A, B, C)	Intensive guidance(A-G)
Background and Process to Hiring People with Disabilities	Shortage(A, B, D, E, F, G)	Encourage(A, B, G)
Presence of External Network Formation	Networking triggered by hiring people with disabilities(A-C, E-G)	Not conscious of agriculture-welfare collaboration(D)
Support	Support for farming entities that hire people with disabilities(A, B, D)	Employee with experience guiding a child with a disability?
Communication	Conversation to get to know each other(E)	Problem-free communication with disabled Checking on the condition in the car(F)
Factors for Workplace Improvement (including employees with disabilities) - Mainly Physical Aspects	Effects of work process improvements triggered by an employee with a disability(D)	Work quality is not dependent on the person(G)