

Agricultural Issues.



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Japn 311 Social Issues in Japan

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Agricultural Issues in Salinas Valley and Japan.

Agriculture has been done since the existence of humans in this planet. At the beginning, farming was a matter of survival; however, over the years it has become a very important activity around the world, and its mayor task is to feed the hunger of the world. This is the mission of all farmers; nevertheless, this is not an easy task, and farmers around world face several agricultural issues that they must overcome in order to keep feeding the world, and more importantly to feed their very own families. In this essay, I will focus on the issues that the Salinas Valley farmers and the Japanese farmers have to overcome in order to keep their farming industries moving forward.

First of all, I would like to start by describing the issues that the Salinas Valley growers are facing today. After doing some research and talking to local growers in the Watsonville area, I came to the conclusion to focus on two mayor issues that they are facing. One of them is immigration, and the second one is the water quality and water quantity.

Lets focus on the immigration issues first, in order to do this we have to know a little about the immigrants in general; where they come from? Who they are? And some of their needs.

Most of the immigrants working in the fields are originally from Mexico, especially from central Mexico and the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. The vast majority are young, with an average of 24 years of age who come from abroad with the mind set of giving their families a better opportunity in many ways, but most of them want better education for their children, and better life opportunities in general for the whole family.

Talking with a few local growers, I had the chance to ask them face to face what was the main issue facing agriculture today and all of them came up with very similar answers. They all mentioned the lack of field workers and they all said that it was due to immigration. By not having enough workers to harvest the crops is a big issue in California today. Roberto Rodriguez, one of the local growers said that it is very difficult to find temporary workers these days, because most of the immigrants are searching for a more constant job, not only seasonal, so workers are in big need today. Another issue related to immigration Rodriguez said is the fact that the government does not allow them to hire undocumented personnel. This is a big problem because most of the field workers are undocumented but growers can't hire them because they get legal issues, so the harvesting becomes a hard task to do with the limited personnel that local farmers have, often resulting in great loss of the local agricultural products that stop from making it to our tables for the lack of labor. Another big issue that farmers in the Salinas Valley face is the water quality. Another local farmer Rosario Rodriguez said during his interview that water quality is deteriorating due to the lack of reservoirs to collect water during rainy seasons, and also the fact that most of the Valley is dependent of the wells that every ranch

has and that lately a lot of those wells are being contaminated with salt, specially in the regions that are close to the ocean.

Another issue with the underground water in the Salinas area is the fact that the underground water is being contaminated with the usage of fertilizers. This is a big issue clearly. Farmers have to meet a lot of regulations in order to be able to sell their products, in order to do this the quality of the product has to be at its highest, and by having contaminated waters some of this products won't meet the regulations set by the state and this will result in loosing all their crops.

This are a few of the issues that we can say are the most important ones that farmers have to deal with as of today. Some of the possible solutions for these problems as far as the local growers that I interviewed are very similar. Three out of three farmers that I talked to told me that the biggest issue was the lack of workers. A possible solution for this could be that the government might be able to work to come up with a immigration solution, to be able to have more force of labor by having all the undocumented immigrants to be able to solve their legal status so they can be able to work legally in USA; however, one local farmer said that this might not be the solution for this issue to be solved. The farmer said that once all the undocumented immigrants have a legal residency or a permit to work in USA they would rather look for a permanent job, and not having a seasonal job as farming in the valley is, so the lack of labor force in the farming industry will be hard to end.

On the other hand, Japan has issues of its own, some of them can be similar to the issues that the Salinas Valley growers are having, and some of them could

be completely different. Lets take for instance the example of land usage. In Salinas Valley this is not an issue; however, in Japan this is a mayor issue. As we might all know, Japan has a huge population and it's considered a small country with a population of about 90 million people. Taking into consideration that the country size is approximately the size of the state of Montana according to a survey done in 1995.

Agricultural land resources are very limited in Japan. The land that can be used for farming has been reclaimed, as we have no idea. Farmers have to deal with hillsides in order to be able to farm, as well as cultivating on the riverbeds. According to the article "Agricultural Problems of Japan" written by Takeshi Kimura only 60 million or about 17 percent of the total land area, is usable for agricultural purposes (pg141). The main produce that Japan grows is rice, especially during summer. The fact that Japan has very limited land for farming has driven farmers to the extent of having to grow in the same land as the seasonal products come and go. For example during the summer time the cultivation of rice is one of the most important, but right after the rice has been harvested within a week or two the land is ready for the next seasonal produce such as wheat or barley, and some farmer might use the land by planting vegetables during the winter to allow to have more than one crop.

Another big issue that can be found in Japan is to its very own heart. The people, most of the farmers as of today are getting old and the decedents are not

taking the tradition of continuing the job of their parents. This is a big issue, the fact that the farmers are aging with no hopes of their children taking over their jobs. Most of the farmers decedents are moving to the big cities in order to find a job with benefits, such benefits cannot be offered in a family farm, so after graduating most of the new students find a job in the city and stay there. However, in the last years the government has done intensive work to promote agriculture in the new generations by having people from the city going to farms and letting them experience hands on work in the farm, and they get the experience of being a farmer, and hopefully this will be a good solution to solve the fact that most of the Japanese farmer are getting old and nobody is taking those types of jobs.

In general agricultural issues are very similar around the world, I think that the water quality and quantity that Salinas Valley is facing could very well be a universal issue. Water quantity is definitely an issue that concerns the whole world, not only farmers but as a global issue that every community at one point faces. Out of the issues that I picked for this essay the water quality and quantity is the only one that can be considered as universal. On the other hand, every country faces very unique issues when it comes to agriculture.

After discussing with my team members for a almost two hours, I came back home with very unique feedback based on the experience that every team member had about agriculture and we talked about the specific issues that I mentioned in the essay. For example, a member from Japan agreed with me when

I talked about the fact that farmers are aging and farming jobs could be lost if they are not taken by new farmers. She also mentioned some of the actions that the government is taking in order to persuade more people into farming, and she said that more people are going back to the rural areas to explore the life of farmers, so she hopes that aging of farmers might not be an issue in next few years. Most of my team members mentioned some of the videos that we have seen in class so we are all hoping that this wont be a mayor issue in the future.

Another member talked about the possibility for the new graduates that are going back to agriculture and the possibility of the new farmers to own their own farm instead of working for somebody else. They also mentioned that in Japan more farmers are getting the benefits as if they were working in big companies, so that is another way to promote agriculture.

When it came to water, all of my group members agreed that this was a universal issue, and that the government and the world's population should be aware of this issue to enhance the conservation of water.

When it came to immigration my team mates were not sure how it would be tided with agricultural problems, due to the fact that they thought there were enough people to work, but after telling them the situation with the immigrations laws and how farmers cant hire undocumented immigrants it all clicked to them. They were surprised when I told them the fact that I talked to local farmers and they told me

how much of their produce they have to waste because they don't have enough people to work for them. For the immigration issue they all agreed that this was universal due to the fact that every country experiences some type of immigration around the world.

Talking to my group members was a good experience, I got to hear great topics and I had the opportunity to give them feed back based on my knowledge, but I also got great feed back form them as well.

Agricultural issues Bibliography

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