

Challenges of Danish agriculture3

Farmland under water

By Masaru Yamada, the Japan Agricultural News

Since the 1960s, Denmark has expanded its agricultural production by increasing grasslands and fields through river improvement. Mr. S ren Christensen, a farmer living at the mouth of the Skjern River, which flows into the country's west coast, has now agreed to submerge 50 hectares, or half of his farmland and pasture, under water.

'It will be a big challenge, but a necessary step to protect local biodiversity and contribute to the global environment' The country's government decided last October to return 100,000 hectares of farmland to low marshland. The reasons for this were, among others, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Although there has been some protest among farmers whose farmland is being "taken away", many people's voices have had to be heeded.

Mr. Holger Hedelund Poulsen, a dairy farmer in Skanderborg, western Denmark, is opening his private farm to hikers from sunrise to sunset. 170 Jersey dairy cows, the farm has become a famous tourist attraction because of its 'mountain', which is the highest in the country at 170 metres above sea level. The farm is said to be a famous tourist attraction.

I visited the farm to listen to Mr Poulsen, who says he is self-sufficient in 70% of his feed, and was intrigued by the reason for his openness.

'In order to continue dairy farming when people say cow burps are bad for the earth and smell bad, we need to let the public know what the farm looks like. If we can get people to come over there, there's no reason to keep the gates closed," Mr. Paulson responded mischievously.

During his two-week stay in Denmark, I visited more than ten farms. While their high efficiency and affluent lifestyles are among the most advanced in Europe, everywhere I went I noticed that they were stepping up to new challenges. In particular, amidst growing public criticism that livestock farming is one of the main culprits

in global warming, farmers were also trying to change by drawing on their wisdom.

New challenges could also be seen in areas other than the global environment.

An hour's drive south of Copenhagen. We visited the Tvedemose farm, which produces 2000 tonnes of

mushrooms a year. In a corner of the huge selection area we found a familiar mushroom. It was an enoki mushroom. One of the managers, Mr. Lars Egelund, went to Japan for three months to learn the technique and started growing them a few years ago. He now produces nearly 60 tonnes, accounting for 80% of the domestic market share. It is organically grown and sold in shops for around 500 yen per 100 grammes. 'It is selling well, not only to Asian consumers, but also to a wide range of consumers. Mr Egelund hopes that, together with the 20 tonnes of shiitake mushrooms he produces, it will become a mainstay product. He keeps his antenna up high and is quick to change course if necessary. Flexible thinking and action support Danish agriculture.