

Explanatory Notes

Toward Comprehensive Food Policy: A Conceptual Transformation from a Production-oriented Scheme

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The condition surrounding the policy of agriculture and food production has changed drastically from the scheme aiming only for more production to the improvement of total human and environmental well-being, which covers issues on food production, consumption, and waste management, namely, a whole circulation of food-related materials. As an academic circle responsible for taking care of agriculture and food matters, we have to catch up with such global concerns, reconsider focal points in our research territories and influence the reform of government organizations from local to central. The symposium challenges the idea of structural change in the agricultural policy scheme and asks our academic colleagues to share the same direction of research interests.

According to UN statistics, our world is urbanizing, and people in cities became more numerous than people in rural areas around 2006. While social scientists in agriculture have made an effort to develop more efficient production and to improve the socio-economic life of farmers on and off the farmland and of people in rural areas, social scientists have gradually recognized that the viability of farming activities and the quality of farmers' lives intensely depend on the other parts of the food system. The situation requires us to adopt an opposite direction of research perspective, more than merely focusing on the whole picture of the food system.

The idea of the new Food Policy provides a new perspective in the opposite direction of the conventional food policy system, which sees the food policy from the supply side. The Food Policy, invented by T. Lang, is an integrated policy scheme that binds food-related policy fields currently dispersed in segmented policy sections by focusing on food as a central concern (Lang *et al.*, 2009). It covers health, the environment, and society, as shown in the subtitle of the above book. The environmental issues cannot be ignored when considering the future food system because one-fourth of global environmental impact is generated from the food system sector (Poore and Nemecek, 2018).

Another feature of the current/conventional food system is that technological innovations have played an essential role in predicting the future direction. The agricultural sector has evolved along with the innovation in production technologies, in which smart agriculture is the latest trend wave. However, technological progress beyond food production has expanded and obtained more power to control the whole food system because food from farm gate to table has become dominated mainly by large companies.

Meanwhile, Japan's government launched a new policy scheme called 'Sustainable Food Systems Strategy (MeaDRI)' in May 2021. The new policy foresees future technological progress as critical in solving emerging problems concerning food. While it is to be reviewed critically, another point that is ignored, an essential part of the policy process, is citizen participation. If food is focused on a policy, everyone could be concerned about it and motivated for their own sake.

In agricultural economics, we grapple with issues on agriculture and food requires an interdisciplinary system and network perspectives (Liang and Plalias, 2022). This symposium approaches from three angles: a political economy based on global debates on the food system, environmental concerns in agricultural policy, and the effect of technological innovations. With a comment summarizing them and posing additional information, we discuss a viable way toward the policy transformation.

References

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