Preface

Promoting Rural Revitalization through the Conservation of Agricultural Heritage Systems

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The 2nd Conference of the East Asia Research Association for Agricultural Heritage Systems (ERAHS), on the theme of “Rural Revitalization in Marginal Areas: Biodiversity and Traditional Agriculture”, was successfully held in Sado City, Japan from June 22nd to 26th, 2015, which involved more than 120 participants including researchers, government officials, entrepreneurs and journalists from China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. This conference was organized by ERAHS and Sado City and co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations University (UNU), Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS-IGSNRR), Korea Rural Heritage Association (KRHA), Japanese GIAHS Network (J-GIAHS) and Niigata Prefecture. It was also supported by Japan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

After the opening ceremony, Dr. Mbuli Charles Boliko (Director of Liaison Office in Japan, FAO), Mr. Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Senior Vice-Rector of UNU), Mr. Kentaro Morita (Assistant Director of Rural Environment Division, Rural Development Bureau, MAFF, Japan), Mr. Qingwen Min (Professor of CAS-IGSNRR, China), Mr. Won-Keun Yoon (Professor of Hyupsung University, Korea) and Mr. Koji Nakamura (Professor of Kanazawa University, Japan) gave keynote addresses and presentations, respectively, on further planning for the GIAHS initiative, traditional agriculture and sustainable development, GIAHS promotion activities in Japan, conservation of agricultural heritage systems in China, development of agriculture and fisheries heritage systems in Korea and human capacity building through involvement with GIAHS.

Through development and progress in the past ten years, GIAHS have become an influential international project. As Dr. Mbuli Charles Boliko mentioned, the GIAHS project has played a highly positive role in improving the status of women, increasing economic productivity and promoting rural revitalization in marginal areas. Since GIAHS was endorsed as a corporate programme in 2015, FAO will mainly focus on the GIAHS standardized management, capacity building for heritage stakeholders and the establishment of the platform for sharing GIAHS conservation experiences in the future.

During the conference, 42 experts and government officials have given oral and poster presentations, introducing progress and perspectives of GIAHS in China, Japan and Korea. Research on multiple values evaluation, community supported agriculture, agricultural heritage tourism, traditional ecological knowledge, conservation and management mechanisms, typical success stories and general introduction of GIAHS sites and some candidate sites in the three countries have been reported in the conference. An exhibition of GIAHS conservation and agricultural products was also held.

This conference provided a platform for research and experience exchange on agricultural heritage systems conservation and showed clear trends and features as follows:

1) Multi-disciplinary research. Speeches, presentations, posters and papers in the conference indicate that agricultural heritage conservation has attracted increasing attention from many different areas of study. Researchers who have focused on agricultural heritages are from multi-disciplines including history, ecology, economy, policy, tourism, customs, ethnology and anthropology.

2) Multi-sectors involvement. Many postgraduates choose agricultural heritages as their topic of study in universities and institutes, and there are many opportunities for them to learn the topic, like exchange programmes, forums and workshops. An example is the Noto’s Satoyama Satoumi training course which is held in both Kanazawa University (Japan) and Philippines University to help the young generation. With the help of the ERAHS platform, China, Japan and Korea have initiated research cooperation on agricultural heritage conservation by sharing their advanced technologies and successful