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**Field Trip Report**  
**“Fukushima visit December 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>”**

No doubt nuclear issues are nowadays the most critical subjects for the general public concern, more since Fukushima disaster. Disasters of such nature are of different orders: such as civilian concern or others.

Fukushima nuclear power plant accident on March 2011 took place after a natural disaster, quake and tsunami, which made it unique in term of destructive power and in terms of extension in main land Japan. Fukushima represents an important resource because of its huge forest cover (942,516ha) and an important economic zone as well because of its agricultural production in terms of rice, soybeans and other products. The nuclear accident in this area has led to the death of a huge number of people and severe damages of an important motor of development in the area (agricultural domains).

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**Problems related to Fukushima accident in the context of the trip:**

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Throughout the visit conducted on December 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2013, on different sites of the region, several problems could be identified from the seminars, contact with the farmers and even by any individual alone.

However all problems are linked with the radioactive materials. First, through the talks held in Towa city, we could have an extensive understanding of the “agro-economic” problems induced by the radioactive materials resulting from the accident. In fact, actual agricultural products in this area are not believed to be harmful to health regarding the radiation levels measured on the site. However, when it comes to nuclear matters, the stigmatizations on the products are probably the most common problem with the consumers (not local in this case). Another critical issue is that the monitoring and the mitigation of contaminated areas seem to be conducted only by local people (more involved in monitoring), apart from the help from some supporting organizations or institution such as TUAT. FOLENS student could themselves measure the radioactivity at some points (very close to each other) and the main remark done was: there are important variations from a point to another, even very close to each other. Thus, an intensive monitoring and a constant update of the radioactive material map have to be done by the authorities. The radioactivity map scale and mesh size (big) is not suitable.

Elsewhere, we do believe that the most sensitive issue (from owner’s view) remains the “abandoned” cattle in the restricted area; some other web sources also discuss about the thousands of pets that turned wild. In Nihonmatsu/Towa district most of the problems related to economic aspects, in relation with the agriculture, in Fukushima area were identified: stigmatization of the products, measurements of the radioactivity done by themselves only or by some universities, lack of attention from the media, etc. Moreover, part of the socioeconomic problems were mainly discussed and explained in Minamisouma area. It is certain that agricultural issues are important concerns, likely everywhere in Fukushima. However, human loss and material damages are the apparent marks of Fukushima nuclear disaster. Important numbers of people are still living in temporally housing (Kashima district: 30,000 people). In another, some people have definitely left their homeland and there is likely no efforts done by the authorities in order to envisage a future possible return. Abandoned fields are everywhere to be found (in all visited areas). There is little support from the authorities and attempts of the

local actors trying to go public, in order to let people know about their hopelessness and lack of support, are not well seen by the authorities. In resume, it is difficult to trust official information release related to the feeling and the situation of local residents.

## **Hopes**

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Despite the critical situation discussed above, we do believe that there is a little hope. First, it is amazing to see how local people are aware of nuclear materials and how much every individual (especially farmers) struggle for their future and that of Fukushima area. Help from NGO's and universities is an encouraging factor for the revival of Fukushima (agriculture, economy, environment and return of people); however, little more public activities have to be conducted in order to gain help and support from all horizons so that the government and local residents can come to agreements that help Fukushima revive again.

Research works conducted by TUAT researchers shows no correlation between radioactive elements (Cs137, Cs134) on cultivated lands and the harvested products; in another hand, no health issues related to the consumption of the agricultural product in the visited areas has been mentioned. Elsewhere, we could learn that there is no problem with the water used for the irrigation of lands. These are good signals showing that with a little more effort, Fukushima farmers' products may acquire again their original values in the markets and that residents who left may gain enough confidence to be back home.

## **Lessons learnt from these issues**

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To me, one of the most striking statements I learnt of is that "most of the Fukushima power plants are part of Tokyo electric power supply sources". Therefore, considering the importance of Tokyo and its dependence to nuclear energy, in particular, and comparing its population to that of Fukushima and the risk involved, we may suggest to Fukushima local actors to build up connection with Tokyo people and farmers in general. The use of nuclear energy has to be rethought. Japan is known to be one of the leading countries for land management, environmental risk prevention, and landscape and structure resistance design. However, with the scale and the impacts of the nuclear accident on the environment and the agriculture in Fukushima area, it appears that there is more to be done on land management for agriculture with regards to the installation of power generation facilities, especially those involving radionuclide emissions.

## **What to do?**

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Seeing the efforts done by Mr. Yoshizawa, mostly in trying to prevent the cattle in the restricted area to be "killed", we can understand that there is an antagonist effort trying to lower the voices of local residents. Therefore, I would rather suggest an opinion which is to perform more press work about this issue. I would do a regular update of the map radioactivity on cultivated areas as well as on the restricted area. I would investigate eventual long term health risk in being exposed at such low radioactivity in the visited areas. I would preserve the abandoned cattle in the restricted area for research purpose because of the advantage of their long term exposition on such site.

## **Reference:**

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Folens handout (final seminar December 2013)  
[http://ajv.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/life\\_and\\_death/AJ201205150057](http://ajv.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/life_and_death/AJ201205150057)  
<http://cannabispenguin.tumblr.com/post/5127814758/free-pets-from-restricted-area-of-fukushima>  
<http://www.smashinglists.com/worst-nuclear-accidents-disasters-in-history/>