

Urban Agriculture World Summit in Nerima

Disseminating the appeal and potential
of urban agriculture to the world

Event period:

2019 November 29 Fri ▶ December 1 Sun

Participating 5 overseas cities



New York London Jakarta Seoul Toronto



Book 2: Farm profiles

Book 1: Urban Agriculture Policy
and Municipal Support

Book 3: Events and Engagement

From November 29 to December 1, 2019 the City of Nerima in Japan hosted representatives from five cities around the world to exchange ideas and demonstrate the benefits of growing food in the city.





Teruaki Suzuki—18th generation farmer

Mr. Suzuki calls himself a U-turn farmer. After years of working off the farm, he returned to the land his ancestors started cultivating 380 years ago. His farm is a collection of plots totalling 5,560 square metres just a 3-minute walk from Houya metro station.

“All I know is cabbage.” When the price of cabbage dropped, Mr. Suzuki had to learn how to grow a more diverse set of vegetables to attract local residents for direct sales, including tomatoes, broccoli, and green soybeans. He also sells to 3 restaurants nearby.

The farm stand (actually a vending machine made for vegetables) improved his relationship with his neighbours. People asked questions about how to eat, prepare and preserve vegetables. “Hearing thank you is a reward.”

Mr. Suzuki also keeps a shrine to Inari, where people pray and leave offerings for agricultural success. For 20 years, children from a local school have helped him seed, care for and harvest daikon radishes. Some farmers use a CSA model to build customer commitment and support, Mr. Suzuki figures that working with community achieves the same result.





Yoshimatsu Kato

Mr. Kato is a 12th generation farmer who farms one hectare of land and rents 0.6 hectares for an experience farm. "There were no houses here when I started!" Once houses and apartments started appearing 30 years ago, Mr. Kato had to be mindful about using chemicals because people were living right beside the farm.

In collaboration with a non-profit organization, Mr. Kato trains people with depression or schizophrenia to work on the farm.



Banner:
Direct
Sales
Here



Persimmons





Kato Farm

Mr. Kato's son Yoshitaka runs hydroponics production of three varieties of tomatoes in a greenhouse. 95% of the tomatoes are sold through vending machines, about 300 bags per day. The vending machines cost 2 million yen each (about \$24,000 CAD) to buy. In summer, they have to stock machines more than once per day because the machines have ventilation but no air conditioning. Greenhouse production runs from October to the end of June. They use cocoa coir from the Philippines as a growing medium, replacing it every two years. Once a month they bring in bees for pollination.



Disaster preparedness: Midori to Nou no Taikenjuku (Green Experience Farm)

Experience farms are privately owned and managed farms where gardeners pay a fee to a farmer to rent plots of land and learn about crop production. The farmer directs crop planning and offers instruction in exchange for a stable income and work force.

This particular farm, managed by Yoshimatsu Kato, also acts as a disaster prevention hub for the community. Once per year, the farm holds an emergency drill with information tables and a typical meal that would be prepared in the case of an earthquake or other natural disaster. Volunteers use produce from the garden cooked over gas stoves to make daikon soup, tomato rice, soya meat, roasted yams and persimmons.



Urban farms are recognized as local gathering places. Sixty cities in Japan have disaster use agreements with farms. Using farms for temporary accommodations is controversial as it takes time for soil to be rehabilitated afterwards for growing food. With the increasing frequency of recurring events, it is less likely that farms can be restored to full production.

Mr. Kato recognized that the proximity of urban areas makes it possible to use farms for other purposes (recreation, disaster preparedness, employment training). He also made it clear that farmers alone can't add these extra functions without help from non-profits and the city.