

Study of requirements to expand the production of ecological rice in the eyes of producers

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1. BACKGROUND AND SUBJECT

Now, in the growth of concern about global environmental problems, ecological agriculture is getting attention. In the agricultural policy, ecological agriculture has been set as an aim for entire agriculture. They need policy support for the effort and producer's compliance with environmental standards. At the same time, ecological agriculture indicates a possible way to respond to changing situations such as globalization of agricultural market and lower price of agricultural products. Consumers also have interest in ecological agriculture.

To expand the production of ecological agriculture, we must figure out the problems for expanding and continuing ecological agriculture and the requirements to boost the effort. In this thesis we deal with ecological rice because it is ahead in branding by ecologically minded farmers.

2. ECOLOGICAL RICE DEALT WITH IN THIS THESIS

We define ecological rice as follows. Ecological rice is produced with efforts to conserve ecosystem around paddy fields –for example chemical-free production, reducing-chemical production, biotope in the paddy etc.- and then consumers know the efforts when they buy it.

We interview producers and consider 4 ecological species of ecological rice in Takashima city Shiga prefecture. “Kankyo Kodawari products” (rice), “Sakana no Yurikago Suiden rice”, “Takashima Ikimono Tambo rice”, “JAS standard organic rice” and specially-cultivated rice (chemical-free rice).

3. RESULT

We describe the result of consideration below.

Producers of ecological rice decide effort level, area, rice cultivar, sales channel etc. to maximize their profits under constraint of labor and land condition. It is also important that producers sympathize with the ideal of the ecological rice. Price premium and subsidy may perform a certain function to expand the production of ecological rice because the effort reduces yield and requires more labor input. Limited demand, weeding laboriousness and some rice cultivar unevaluated as ecological rice are the barrier. Farmers who don't grow rice mainly or who have side job hardly value ecological agriculture. So they are not positive for the efforts. Land accumulation by practical farmer who has environmental consciousness may serve an important role to break off the barrier and to expand the production of ecological rice.