PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF *SATOYAMA-SATOUMI*;

THROUGH THE EVALUATION OF "*100 JAPANESE SATO*" BY ASAHI SHIMBUN NEWSPAPER

Yuuki Iwata

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1. BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE STUDY

Recent discussion of the importance of a more sustainable society has brought about recognition of the potential role of rural agricultural villages in Japan, which have become degraded in recent decades due to depopulation, aging or urbanization. They are now called *Satoyama Satoumi* and there is now scientific evidence of their value such as their capacity for supporting biodiversity, and their provision of natural resource security (*Satoyama Satoumi* SGA: United Nations University et al.). In this context, Asahi Shimbun Newspaper Company conducted the "*100 Japanese Sato*" Project in 2008, whose aim was to select the top 100 rural areas based on public nominations. This study focused on the nominations with a view to understanding public perception of *Satoyama Satoumi*, and to providing suggestions for future *Saotyama Satoumi* studies.

2. METHODOLOGY

After data filtering 3024 nominations were used in the study, and the coordinates of the nominated sites recorded. These points were then combined with land use and topographic datasets using a Geographic Information System (Arc GIS 9.2) and classified into Sato types using cluster analysis (SPSS 16.0 Japanese ver.). SPSS Text Analysis for Surveys 3.0 Japanese was used to extract the keywords that appeared frequently in the written appeals for each site. The key words were then investigated in terms of region, applicant type and Sato type and interpreted as representing perception of *Satoyama Satoumi*.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The nominated sites were divided into one of the following Sato types; Forest Type, Forest + Paddy Field + Other Agricultural Type, Paddy Field Type, Other Agricultural Type, Urban & Suburban Type and Coastal Type (Figure 1). More than 60 percent of the nominated sites were classified as Forest Type (forest cover of more than 90 percent), and these were distributed all over Japan except Hokkaido. The highest density of nominations for this type was located in the Koshinetsu Region, which indicated that the image of the idyllic Japanese rural landscape is well represented by the deep mountain areas of this region. Nominations for the Urban & Suburban Type were concentrated in the Kanto Region, and the majority of those nominations were by individuals living in the sites or by NPOs. This indicated that the image of *Satoyama* for urban citizens especially in the Kanto Region tended to be of urban or suburban natural areas where they could conduct nature activities. Most of the nominations for the Coastal Type were by Other Organizations including ocean related organizations, and only a few nominations were collected from the public. This indicates that the concept of "*Satoumi*" has not yet reached the public domain. The Text mining analysis revealed that only two percent of the keywords related to "Biodiversity" whereas most of the key words related to "Landscape", "Nature", "Activity" or "Beautiful". This shows that the concept of biodiversity is still difficult for the public to understand, and future studies of *Satoyama Saotumi* need to focus on ways to spread this concept as well as on how to incorporate the notion of landscape beauty into promotion of *Satoyama-Satoumi* management and to improve accessibility to such management activities.

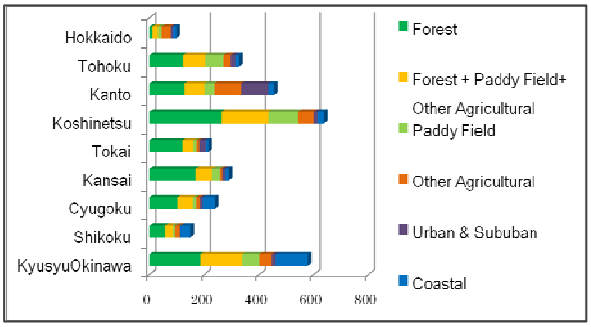

Figure 1 Number of each Sato Type by region