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SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

The Continuing Development of Field Crop Management

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The Tokachi and Abashiri areas form the main field crop region in Hokkaido and with the move toward large-scale management, land holdings are predicted to be greater than 40ha in the future. The area of cultivated land in field crops required to meet farm household expenses is increasing and a survey of farms shows an increased interest in enlarging the area of field crop cultivation. To make this possible the formation of a mechanization system suitable for the large-scale management is necessary. Research indicates that increases in low crop profitability cannot be overcome by increased field crop cultivation, even if it reaches 40-50ha. This can be attributed to work competition during spring and fall. The spring competition is between sugar beet transplanting and potato seeding and in the fall it is between the potato and bean harvests. Large-scale field crop management has been improved by the introduction of soybean and red bean harvesters, the automation of sugar beet transplanting, and the establishment of a field crop rotation system. The completion of this new field crop mechanization system will allow for an increase in the area under cultivation and lead to larger agricultural incomes. Although, it is not covered in this report, vegetable production is being added to the field crop management system.

Environmental Policies in Response to Dairy Farming Development

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The improvement of dairy farming in Japan can best be seen by looking at the increase in the average size of dairy herds and the improvement of milk yield per cow. These indexes are at the same level of EU countries and approaching those of the USA. This rapid development has resulted in debt accumulation in Hokkaido and raised the environmental issue of manure management. The proper processing of dairy farm manure would solve the water pollution problem and provide a source of organic fertilizer for upland farming. To turn this environmental negative into a positive requires the cooperation of dairy and upland farmers and financial incentives from the government.

To secure management stability and environmentally friendly dairy farming, a price policy for processed milk and a direct payment system to farmers are necessary. The basic premise of the price policy is that it will allow the level of milk prices to gradually reach that of advanced dairy farming countries without depleting resources, overloading the environment with cow waste, resorting to low wages, or the need for low land rents.

The original intent of the direct payment system was to supplement incomes due to declining milk prices. To improve the system the government must increase the amount of money allocated for payments and make the system more flexible. Direct payments should reward farmers who increase the planted area of forage per cow, because this will decrease the environmental load and reduce water pollution. Moreover, the system should reward upland farmers who prove that they use manure as fertilizer.