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Sustainable food? Teikei, Co-operatives and food citizenship in Japan and the UK.

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Abstract

This paper explores in particular how *Teikei* groups, as forms of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), operate in Japan, focussing on one particular group. The paper links the *Teikei* approach to debates around social capital and consumer-citizenship, arguing that pre-existing consumer/citizen institutions may usefully be engaged in developing food citizenship and CSA operations. The discussion is linked to CSA and various other alternative food networks (AFNs) that have grown up in various forms in Japan, the US, the UK and elsewhere in Europe over the past thirty years or so. CSA in similar fashion to *Teikei* involves bringing producers and consumers closer together in terms of reconnecting the agricultural producer and consumer to aid food traceability and quality (including organic). CSA also exhibits elements of new assemblies of agricultural governance based on enhanced consumer-citizenship where consumers, to varying degrees, have a say in what and how produce is grown and how the land is managed.

Keywords: citizenship, consumers, food, co-operatives, social capital, networks, Japan, institutions.

Introduction: AFNs and the search for safe food.

A great deal of interest in food research has been expressed globally in recent years. In the UK commentators have noted how increased attention is being directed towards agri-food research in the context of post-productivism and a more segmented commodity market in agriculture (Watts, et al, 2005; Winter, 2003). And a significant portion of this interest has come in the wake of a series of food scares and other epidemiological events with a linked and resultant diminution of public confidence in farmers and food products. These events have deepened widespread feelings of mistrust and consumer anxiety over food safety (cf. Kneafsey et al, 2004) and partner longstanding accusations of environmental damage caused by modern agriculture, not only in the UK and Europe, but elsewhere, notably Japan. Such concerns have also seen increased criticism of farmers, government, supermarkets and the

food industry. Despite such concerns many consumers are frustrated by the lack of a radical or effective response by government.

In Japan concern about food safety has also been a feature of food production debates, beginning with concerns over pesticide use in the 1960s up to more recent concerns over BSE/CJD and Avian influenza or 'Bird flu' (Asahi Shimbun, 2004). Reactions to these highly mediated issues prompted sometimes slow responses from government but high profile and challenging responses from consumers. For example such consumer anxiety led directly to the growth of the organic sector and the emergence of a wave of consumer innovation in the 1960s (Honjo, 2004; Masugata & Kubota, 1992; Oyama, 2005). Despite the foregoing, organic farming, with or without 'alternative' food networking, still accounts for a very small proportion of production worldwide and Teikei¹ and CSA networks make up only a very small proportion of that again. This paper looks at co-operative arrangements for food through Teikei / CSA in Japan and the UK drawing on aspects of citizenship theory and the social capital literature to propose that AFNs use pre-existing sources of social and institutional capital to broker expanded operation.

Teikei is one such type of response, as outlined below, where consumers identified a need to transform both farming practices and the *relations* between farmers and consumers. These consumers in Japan initiated a formula for shortened food supply chains (SFSCs)² in combining a qualitative shift in the knowledge of both production *process* and *producer* (cf. Renting et al, 2003: p401). As such Teikei represents an early effort to transform the food supply chain and develop an alternative food network³ (AFN), as explained later.

As a result of the recent chequered history of food in the UK and various policy reactions on the part of the UK government, the emerging research agenda has involved the investigation and promotion of alternative food networks in the UK and associated explorations of so-called SFSCs (e.g. Renting et al, 2003). In the UK the search for a new agriculture has featured several key ideas, notably the idea of *reconnection* between consumers and

¹ *Teikei* is the Japanese term for a direct food distribution system, based around small co-operatives producing and buying organic produce, it is defined neatly by Hashimoto (2000) and in more detail by the Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA, 2004), also Masugata & Kubota (1992).

² Shortened in either sense of: i. localised and using less food miles, or ii. more direct exchange using fewer intermediaries. Ideally an AFN would exhibit both characteristics.

³ A range of different initiatives have been grouped within this label, including; subscription and shareholder CSA, vegetable box schemes, farmers markets, direct selling, farm shops and community gardens (see; SUSTAIN, 2002; Soil Association, 2001; Whatmore et al, 2003).

producers (Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002; Rural Strategy 2004) and the notion of *localising* food networks – both of which were central ideas of the Teikei pioneers in Japan. Given these key ideas the UK agenda has an inherently spatial and environmental agenda as well as an economic dimension. Although emphasis on these aspects may differ according to the paradigm being promoted (see; Marsden & Sonnino, forthcoming).

The consideration of AFNs may be characterised as a complex issue which also combines numerous cultural and social features:

AFNs by their nature employ different social constructions and equations with ecology, locality, region, quality convention, and consumer cultures. As such, a major theoretical and empirical task is to explore how these evolve and contribute, in different ways, to rural development (Renting *et al* 2003: p394).

The evolution or contribution of different AFNs are likely to be diverse. This also a policy niche that sits perhaps uneasily with past practice and ongoing regulatory frames, i.e. current agricultural skills profiles in the UK and the wider context of European / CAP agriculture and expansion of AFNs is likely to be fragmented. Indeed policy prescriptions or suggestions about reorienting the production side of the food chain are likely to be only part of an interlocking, probably imperfect, solution to food quality and rural development. Despite such concerns Marsden & Sonnino (forthcoming, 2005) argue that institutional spaces of opportunity for AFNs are opening up in the light of CAP reforms. Other authors have focussed so far on *particular* elements of the issue; for example on specific projects or science-based analyses relating to pollution, chemicals, impacts on habitat, animal welfare and so on (e.g. Goodman 1999, 2000).

Renting *et al* (2003) argue that new institutional practices and interventions will be needed to support and encourage alternative practices for agricultural sustainability and rural development and that research into how these practices perform across time and space is needed in order to assess their longevity, applicability and viability. Marsden also calls for research to respond to the emerging sustainable agri-food sector to see if ‘it can reactivate rural space as a live agent in the shaping of the ‘competitive spaces’ between ‘conventional’ and ‘alternative’ food sectors’ (Marsden & Sonnino, forthcoming:p3). Watts *et al* (2005) assert that AFNs can be classified ‘as *weaker* or *stronger* on the basis of their engagement

with, and potential for subordination by, conventional FSCs operating in a globalizing neoliberal polity' (2005: p34, my emphasis).

Consequently then it seems a key task is to devise appropriate policy responses for viable AFNs and identify where novel practices can be supported and extended. This should also include assessments of novel and *longstanding* examples of innovation in food networks. As part of my response, another less debated aspect is alluded to by Ostrom (2000), which relates to the need to design flexible and appropriate institutional frames:

[There is a] delicate problem of designing institutions that enhance citizenship rather than crowding it out. The penchant for neat, orderly hierarchical systems needs to be replaced with a recognition that complex, polycentric systems are needed to cope effectively with complex problems of modern life and to give all citizens a more effective role in the governance of democratic societies (Ostrom 2000:p3).

In problematising institutional design in this way Ostrom highlights how formats and contexts assist in maintaining, performing and developing relations between and among participants in the food chain on the production and consumption sides – indeed blurring the division between this traditional binary and picking up on the call for networks to be understood better in this policy area (cf. Whatmore & Thorne, 1997).

So, the light of the emerging AFN research agenda this paper aims to make a particular contribution to the debate about both reconnecting consumers and producers and the concern to improve food quality and safety, by introducing a commentary on co-operatives and the 'place' of social capital as part of the parallel debate about consumer-citizenship / food citizenship and 'horizontal' AFNs (cf. Murdoch 2000). Teikei examples, as research objects, appear interesting as they tend to score as economically viable (long-lived), horizontally networked and boast social and environmental benefits. Therefore, drawing on research conducted in Japan this paper examines the prospects and evidence for the extension of civic or community supported agriculture in the UK and elsewhere through the exploration of the Japanese experience with Teikei assessing how features of long-lived and successful groups may be transferred to European practice and picking up on Ostrom's call, reflecting on gaps and opportunities in our current approach to AFNs. This is influenced by the idea of promoting multifunctionality *qua* sustainability through the reestablishment of new forms of community governance which critically engage with the consumer-citizenship hybrid

identified by authors such as Urry (2000), also; Parker (1999); MacGregor (2002) and rehearsed below.

The consumer-citizen, social capital, community governance and food citizenship

Increasingly boundaries are blurred and overlap; hybridisation of the rural and of wider practices is gaining recognition (Murdoch, 2000; Woods, 2005) and influencing policymakers. Part of the fragmentary identity that post-modern, post-national and global citizenship offers is a hybrid role where a range of activities and memberships are collected, discarded and reworked as part of a public/private, interest based/political or group/individual citizenship (Isin & Wood, 1999; Urry, 2000; Stevenson, 2001). The mantle of *consumer* has featured traditional emphases on the private, the market and the customer, while *citizenship* has featured a parallel connexion to; service, the public and the state. The practice and possibilities of consumer-citizenship conjoin these aspects and may be caricatured as a ‘third way’ solution via a return to community (MacGregor, 2002; and see, Renting *et al* (2003) for different forms of community in this context). This type of hybridisation however allows for the promotion of new institutional arrangements and structures. In political terms a greater sense of co-responsibility between humans and non-human ‘nature’ may also emerge (Bonnett, 2003), particularly around such new network institutions. Urry (2000: p172) notes that citizenship is ‘intricately intertwined with knowing about, avoiding or minimising the impacts of...hazards upon the rights of humans, animals and the rest of ‘nature’ – a citizenship that brings together concern about self, environment and other (actants).

Following this claim there is an implicit and correlative assumption about the responsibilities towards and between people in relation to the environment and understanding how human action variously contributes to risk, anxiety, pollution, disease and other environmental damage. Consumers increasingly recognise limitations with neo-liberal conceptions of the ‘market’ if they do little to act upon them. However new structures emerge at the margins and should be encouraged - if only to provide more powerful opportunities to critique and perform (Albrow, 1996) market institutions and governments and enhance democratic debate and assessments of alterity. This shift still understandably requires the use of a market discourse in the context of producing and consuming food. However the possibilities of the envelope of consumer-citizenship allows for enhanced accountability, engagement and co-responsibility over the performance and quality of exchanges in more segmented markets.

Post-productivist, post-modern countrysides similarly open up possibilities for the reassessment of roles, responsibilities and relations in and for rural spaces, actors and a range of consumers, particularly (or peculiarly) those surrounding emergent⁴ food networks or AFNs. These ‘spaces’, albeit variably, offer opportunities for enhanced consumer-citizenship where the consumer role in monitoring the food chain may be reinvigorated: examples or facets of this role include closer relations with producers, enhanced information and critique of foods, ingredients and producers. Beyond this even Teikei, CSA and other novel forms of AFN potentially offer consumers a degree of benefit beyond high-quality, sustainable or organic food: they also encourage a qualitative shift in enhanced exchange relations that involves dialogue and the (re)building of trust relations (Kneafsey et al, 2004; Oyama, 2005).

Following this potential shift I enrol parallel debates about co-responsibility and consumer-citizenship with the (much abused) notion of social capital which has been explored at length in numerous contexts and policy arenas. Little research has specifically dealt with this in terms of food and agriculture, while in wider rural geography this topic has only recently begun to be discussed in any length (cf. Falk and Kilpatrick, 2001). Despite the lack of research with social capital formation at its centre, it is the case that numerous threads of research cite social networks, community building and related notions that involve social capital, notably in the public participation literature. Indeed Bowles & Gintis argue below that the label of social capital should be dropped altogether in favour of the term *community governance*, which allows for the design of appropriate institutions, (and which echoes Ostrom’s call quoted above):

the attributes said to make up social capital describe relationships among people...‘community’ better captures the aspects of good governance that explain social capital’s popularity, as it focuses attention on what groups *do*...communities are part of good governance because they address certain problems that cannot be handled either by individuals acting alone or by markets and governments... (Bowles & Gintis, 2002: p419-420).

Thus social capital formation appears important here at least because the maintenance and operation of at least most of the AFNs examined by the literature (e.g. Kneafsey et al, 2004;

⁴ The term emergent is used here to flag up the need for more research into complexity and complex adaptive systems with regard to food and wider rural relations where particular structures and trajectories form and are shaped over time (see; Byrne, 1998 for example).

Ilbery et al, 2004; Renting *et al*, 2003; Marsden et al, 2000) encourage and *require* components of social capital⁵ (see Lin, 2001; Fine, 1999) in order to survive – although little has been published about this using practical examples.

There is a strong interest in such matters in the US, for example DeLind (2002) and Lyson & Guptill (2004) use the term '*civic agriculture*' in bringing together ideas of relocalisation and citizenship; where people and place are reintegrated through food networks, notably with economic viability as a necessary prerequisite. Hassanein (2003) has developed the term 'food democracy' concerning 'citizens having the power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally, and globally' this concept is a wide-reaching one whereas, for Delind, part of the underlying aim of civic agriculture is to nurture local understandings of land and food through 'inhabitation'. That is to say the development of ways of doing and connecting that rely on trusted habits and behaviours. This view then is closer to ideas of understanding and communication than perhaps notions that emphasis proximity or actual participation in production, a point rejoined later.

In institutional economics social capital and related ideas have emerged as important research areas. Authors such as Prouteau & Wolff (2004) note how understanding *relational goods* has been rather neglected despite there being widespread and continued interest in public participation, associational life and now in social capital itself. Understanding and enhancing the relational nature of some AFNs and how their materials and circulations may play an important part in promoting more durable networks where 'production and consumption of relational goods may be a significant motive for devoting time to associational involvement' (Prouteau & Wolff, 2004: p439). The argument here is that understanding the effects of the interactions, rather than simply identifying those interactions, is crucial. In this part of the literature it has been argued that (pre-existing) associations are where the production and consumption of relational goods are most likely to occur. That is likely to be where social capital and community governance hold the potential for the connections that may sustain the AFN developed from pre-existing sociations. Indeed the JOAA on its inception in Japan tacitly understood this, believing that a '*human*

⁵ Usually Social Capital definitions refer to trust and reciprocity as key components that structure *relations* as well as involvement and engagement in community activities and issues. The World Bank defines social capital as 'the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society - it is the glue that holds them together' (World Bank, 2005).

relationship should be built between producers and their consumers' (JOAA, 2004:p2), thus their attention was not only towards the organic standard of the food but to the quality of the relations between the consumer and producer. They had realised that when seeking improved traceability or trustworthiness a communication channel and method of oversight must be opened up between consumers and producers – to trust the producer was to trust the food.

Within the wider concern about social capital and co-responsibility is the consumer-citizen conflation that has gained some popularity over the past decade (Urry, 1995, 2000; Parker, 1999; MacGregor, 2002). Indeed a small but significant discussion in the literature on consumer-citizenship has centred around the idea of co-responsibility: if social capital relates to trust and reciprocity then the idea of co-responsibility as shared interest and obligation lies close-by as a new formulation on reciprocity. For example, MacGregor (2002) notes that corporations have been more directly revealed to be responsible for their own actions, particularly when governments have failed to regulate effectively; in some sense they have drawn more intense scrutiny, and as a corollary, (unfulfilled) social responsibility upon themselves. This has led to a further politicisation of consumption and corporate behaviour and has fuelled the development of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda (McGregor, 2002; European Commission, 2002). This phenomenon has also been happening to the food industry and agriculture in the UK, yet only recently⁶.

It should be recognised that the idea of consumer-citizenship implies an acceptance of a form of neo-liberal market capitalism, yet this is somewhat dependent on how it is practiced, what institutional arrangements are evolved and how other political and economic levers are worked with regard to food and land use. One can reflect on this conflation or compression of roles and despair at the emasculation of citizenship as traditionally envisaged and the seeming abandonment of radical democratic projects, or one can seek to utilise and link-up consumer channels with existing opportunities: to make use of consumerism and the market to extend community governance. Authors such as Shotter (1993) on the upbeat, remind us that the market can provide 'providential space' where new forms emerge and cannot be easily repressed. The question then is how to harness market /consumer power as part of the ideal of citizenship as 'ongoing contribution to the solution of community and public

⁶ It is surprising how such a politicisation of food took so long to develop in the UK, for example, as compared to Japan.

problems and the creation of the world around us' as outlined by Boyte and Skelton (1998). In short to embrace a consumer-citizen role as part of the governance of food and land (rather than the only or main source of regulation).

If a widened conceptualisation of citizenship is accepted then a broadened governance structure based on those affected as consumer-citizens is further legitimised. This approach would manifest itself as a collaborative partnership approach based on lessons learnt from ideas of community governance developed in other contexts, notably in local government and urban studies (and from the practice and mistakes of industrial and state-led agriculture). In the UK there have been significant public policy shift towards a new community governance that involves (a rhetoric of) enhanced participation in policy making and debate (Doak & Parker, 2005). One avenue that merits attention then is to develop the idea of community governance with regard to food (Murdoch & Abram, 1998) and in UK policy terms to link this into the notion of the 'new localism' as espoused by the Blair government (Corry & Stoker, 2002; ODP, 2004). In this way seeking to explore and extend the legitimate role of 'community' into a wider range of 'services' than those currently provided by local government and envisaged under consultative processes such as Community Strategies (Raco et al, forthcoming).

The discussion of consumer-citizenship also leads directly then to the idea of food citizenship (cf. Hassanein, 2003) which may be explained as the actions, rights and responsibilities, of consumer-citizens with regard to the food that they eat. Some commentators have asserted that healthy food should be as of right (Dowler & Caragher, 2003) and place food as a central concern for governance. CSA and Teikei both illustrate a form of consumer-citizenship where the consumer as citizen adopts both a self-preserving attitude and a congruent community-regarding attitude in terms of the decisions over food production and land management, mirroring the pragmatism that Hassanein supports. How this may be practically extended in the UK rural and agri-food context is discussed at the conclusion of this paper.

In extending these points to a degree it is also the case that required culture shift implies convincing farmers and landowners that ceding control of their agricultural practices and dealing directly and negotiatively with consumers is feasible. For example, if AFNs and civic agriculture are to expand as a practice then considering the governance of agriculture

and land more widely, is important. Not least because of the implications for traditional conceptions of privateness and private property⁷. Rethinking the governance of agriculture is sure to lead to some conflict and concerns about organisational efficiency and / or arguments based around the advantages and disadvantages of private property rights. These arguments are indeed never far from the surface when dealing with any rural change in the UK let alone thinking about restructuring relations between stakeholders in agriculture. Bearing in mind the radical and crosscutting nature of AFNs, consideration about the constraints and arguments which present themselves as obstacles to AFN development will need to be addressed in a more thoroughgoing way than is possible here.

Towards sustainable food?

Dimensions of sustainable food have been usefully indicated by SUSTAIN the food and farming lobby group based in the UK. They set out nine criteria for sustainable food, as follows; Proximity, Health, Fair trade, Non-exploitative, Environment friendly, Accessible, Good animal welfare, Socially inclusive, Educative (see SUSTAIN, 2002). For any food / network to score highly across all of these criteria is a tall order and one which entails a number of cost implications which cannot usefully be discussed here. However the criteria do act as a useful checklist against which to benchmark different case studies and co-operative types. Here I indicate these and illustrate an idealised co-operative type in figure 3, below. The next steps of the research will be to use a modified list of these criteria against which to examine case studies in more depth.

In the UK there have been significant shifts in demand and the economics of agriculture allied with a series of food and other crises that have highlighted structural problems with the way that agriculture has been governed and land, crops and livestock has been managed. Shifts in global trade have also exerted a price squeeze in industrial agriculture. One of the drivers for various AFNs is that producers are diversifying their production methods and

⁷ As a boost to supporters of CSA operation recent research has challenged the presumption that private property is necessarily superior to common property. Ostrom (2000; 2003) has argued that common property arrangements are more than interesting historical relics and that the best way for some land in certain conditions to be managed by communities themselves. There also exist examples of longstanding common resource and more novel or fringe experimentation with communal resource management and its governance that merit further investigation in connection with AFN institutional arrangements, particularly in terms of some CSA formats. In support Aoki (2001: p51) argues that 'under certain conditions the presence of community relationships maybe complementary to, rather than a substitute for, market enhancement. To determine the conditions underlying such community roles, we need to understand the nature of institutions that can govern trade and other domains'.

crops as a response to this squeeze, as well as responding to the lack of prestige and self-worth in producing food that is perceived as low-quality or which may be in some way unsafe: otherwise characterised as ‘risky food’. Despite this, models such as CSA have yet to grow significantly with only 24 examples being cited by the UK Soil Association by 2005 (Soil Association, 2005a). This might be construed as rather disappointing following the three year Cultivating Communities project (Soil Association, 2005b) which was aimed directly at promoting and assisting the establishment of CSA in the UK. It seems timely then to look at Japanese experience with Teikei / CSA and reflect on how CSA may be encouraged in the future.

A description of Teikei and the Japanese context is provided below, highlighting how this set of practices have emerged and seeking to understand a little more about why Teikei has inspired and acted as a precursor to many AFNs and what lessons may be learned from the operation of Teikei groups for others. The remainder of the paper then sets out an overview of a particular Teikei group before returning to the UK situation and suggesting ways forward for CSA and related practices.

Japan, Co-operatives and Teikei

Teikei as idea and practice is credited with inspiring numerous novel food networks across the globe, including the development of CSA projects in the US and the UK (Honjo, 2004; Lapping, 2004). Given that many of the Teikei groups in Japan are purported to have survived for decades (Masugata & Kubota, 1992; Honjo, 2005) an assessment of these AFNs appears worthwhile. However some wider context about Japanese agriculture and efforts to inform consumers about food production, by way of explaining the emergence of Teikei, is useful here before embarking on a fuller description below.

Co-operatives in Japan

In Japan there has been a strong heritage since WWII of different forms of co-operatives in agriculture on both the producer and consumer sides. Producer co-ops have played a very important role in Japanese agriculture with almost all farmers in Japan joining their regional (producer) co-ops the *Nohkyo* or ‘JA’. The national representative body boast 1,010 co-operatives and vaguely claim that ‘...most of the 3 million farm households in Japan belong to one [a JA]’ (JA Zen-noh, 2004). A strength of the producer co-ops lies in the small farm size (average farm size is around 1.5Ha) prevailing in Japan. This was largely due to US

inspired land reform in 1946 when larger landholdings were redistributed to the tenant farmers (see Kawagoe, 1999). As a result of this fragmentation farmers were incentivised, if not virtually compelled, to seek partners and to co-operate to ensure economies of scale and bargaining power (Oyama, 2005). This in turn led to the growth of the JAs with strong central government support.

Consumer co-operatives have also been strong since the 1950s with around 570 consumer co-operatives with 22 million members in Japan by 2004 (JCCU 2004; Ada, 1997). However these figures conceal a drop since an all time high of over 650 co-ops during the early 1990s (JCCU, 2004) and despite the number of consumers registering as members has shown a steady gross rise the overall figure produced by the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) should be regarded suspiciously as many of these 'members' shop infrequently or not all at Co-op stores – a point not denied by JCCU administrators in interview (Suhara, 2005). Rather, the consumer co-ops are suffering in an increasingly competitive market and their social and environmental credentials are seemingly being whittled away as they struggle to compete with other supermarkets. The changing roles of Japanese women and a shift away from place based group culture have impacted on consumer co-ops and Teikei groups alike. This is evidenced by a drop in *Han* group operation, which are loose groupings of typically 5-10 families⁸, who jointly order and receive products. In this way the Japanese Teikei system relies on enhanced consumer *co-operation* exemplified by the *Han* system. The idea being lower delivery costs that enable lower prices. As a by-product it is assumed that a strengthening of community cohesion is provided through this co-operation (Suhara, 2005).

Some key facts about Japanese agriculture:

- Almost 80% of farm holdings are 1.5Ha or smaller;
- In addition to the rice staple 2 or 3 wheat or vegetable are grown as secondary crops;
- The farmed area is decreasing due to urban development and govt 'shrinkage' policy;
- Rice fields act as flood mitigators and as reservoirs for underground water;
- The food self-sufficiency rate is in decline;
- A growth of part-time farmers;
- Increasing succession difficulties with fewer young persons willing to engage in farming;
- Soil fertility is being lost because of the lack of humus;

⁸ The modern *Han* approach appears to have derived from the *Goningumi* 'group of five' system that evolved sometime in the Edo (1603-1868) period for a variety of functional reasons (see; Amenomori, 1993: p15).

- Soil damage due large-scale, successive monocultures;
- Plant diseases and pests occur frequently due to the loss of ecological balance;
- Contamination of water, air and products by agricultural chemicals;
- Persistent animal welfare issues.

The apparent continuing strength of the producer co-ops overall masks tensions in Japanese agriculture which has been increasingly opened up to market forces and liberalised trade relations since the late 1990s (Nakashima, 2004; Oyama, 2005). This has meant that prices are being driven downwards and economies of scale are being sought by central government. Also relevant here is the emergence of private supermarkets and the near soviet style of the JAs which has led to frustration for farmers wishing to diversify or convert to organic farming (Honjo, 2004, 2005). Also affecting Teikei is the rise of various *Sanchoku* schemes, as detailed in the box above.

Organic farming in Japan

There are a number of similarities with UK and European farming and some obvious differences, notably in terms of farm size and crop types. Japan has developed a relatively large market for organic produce since the 1970s, claiming to have over 1 million regular organic customers, representing a market worth approx \$3bn in 2000 (Masuda, 2000). It is also the case that much of this produce is imported (Japan is a net importer of foodstuffs with a self-sufficiency percentage of somewhere between 40%-45% (based on calorific value) and down dramatically from a 79% rate in 1960 (JIN, 2000; JMIAC, 2004).

By 2003 only 5,000ha of Japanese land was used for organic production (Hashimoto 2000, cited by Parrott & Marsden, 2002: p48) and according to the 2000 agricultural census in Japan around 10,000 of 3.2 million (approx. 1/3 of 1%) producers in Japan were farming organically and even fewer - only around 3,000 - of these were officially recognised (Nagamatsu & Matsuki, 2003) with the formal accreditation scheme (JAS Organic) only launched in late 1999 (Oyama, 2005). By 2004 there were 4,539 Japanese organic producers accredited. Thus it is reasonably clear that the sector is growing in Japan although there are far more overseas organic importers to Japan - 11, 757 of these registered by 2004.

The promotion of food traceability and the mainstreaming of efforts to connect producers and consumers through *Sanchoku* is somewhat similar to UK and European initiatives (see Food Standards Agency, 2004; Ada, 1997) and practices being adopted by food retailers

aimed at restoring consumer confidence. Sanchoku is still evolving as a practice and varies greatly across co-operatives and other retailers in terms of the specifications and credentials that they boast (Suhara, 2005; cf. Nagamatsu & Matsuki, 2003). This indicates the immaturity of this element of food regulation in Japan. Sanchoku features a more direct transaction between producers and vendors and also may include agreed restrictions on chemical use or other conditions. These, in a very few cases, may include organic methods (see Ada, 1997). Sanchoku can be seen as a reaction and surrogate for Teikei which the supermarkets and the consumer co-operatives have devised.

Despite this fluid context three basic principles underlie sanchoku, i.e. traceability, standardisation and communication (CCIJ, 2004), yet such general principles are open to abuse and numerous producers and supermarkets have sought to create their own 'Sanchoku' marques. The JCCU is currently trying to rationalise the criteria and standards for Sanchoku so that (their) consumers/members can understand what Sanchoku actually means and that producers will adhere to these parameters. The provisional list of criteria or conditions for use of the Sanchoku 'label' being developed in 2005 was (translated version):

1. to promote the participation of associate members;
2. to clarify the sources, producers, distribution route and method of production;
3. to maintain a clear inspection and checking system;
4. to build up partnership with producers based on independence and equality;
5. to promote the projects which consider the environment and sustainability.

These points are themselves quite generalised and do not usurp Teikei but they do provide cause for the JOAA to worry about the future of Teikei groups.

In similar fashion to the UK and under the rallying phrase *Chisan-Chisyo* (Grow locally, eat locally) farmers markets have also been growing rapidly with the number of Co-op farmers markets in Japan estimated at 2,500 by 2004 (SCCU 2004), this is compared to the 240 or so known to have been established in the UK by 2000 (Friends of the Earth, 2000) - by November 2003 however, only 103 markets had been certified as satisfying national criteria for farmers markets developed by the National Farmers Markets Association (FARMA)⁹.

⁹ These were: 1. Locally produced - only produce from the defined area shall be eligible for sale at a farmers market. Producers from the area defined as local must be given preference. 2. Principal producer - the principal producer or a representative directly involved in the production process must attend the stall. 3. Primary, own

More generally Japanese farming has suffered from similar food scares and concerns over the polluting effects of chemicals as have been witnessed in the UK. Thus Japan is experiencing similar tensions and problems as found in Europe and elsewhere but has a relatively strong legacy of co-operativisation and active consumer-citizenship, as well as an extensive group-based culture which has given rise to an abundance of widely differing associations, clubs and societies. Conversely the Japanese political system has maintained an elitist reputation and rather authoritarian stance towards public policy. Despite this DIY culture has blossomed since the 1960s (see Tsuru, 1999) and helps explain the antecedence of the early Teikei / organic pioneers.

The JOAA (Japanese Organic Agriculture Association) has acted since the early 1970s as the central promoter for organic agriculture in Japan with Teikei serving as the central method or system design principle for organic agriculture in Japan (JOAA, 1993; 2004). However the operation of Teikei groups and the role and influence of the JOAA have suffered as organic produce has become more available in specialist shops and in some supermarkets, and the rise of Sanchoku has also dented the uniqueness of Teikei in providing some guarantee about various health and quality questions (see Oyama 2005, forthcoming). Wider socio-economic change has also affected Teikei in similar fashion to consumer co-op experience in the past ten years.

But what is Teikei exactly?

Although mentioned in passing by several UK and US authors little has been written or researched in any depth on Teikei in English. Joan Thirsk in her *Alternative Agriculture* mentions Teikei without even using the name; ‘...the initiative was first launched by women in Japan, forming a purchasing network in association with one farm’ (1997: p265). Yet even this oblique reference is somewhat misleading as one of the key features of Teikei relations is that they almost always comprise groups of farmers and groups of consumers, as will be explained below.

produce - all produce sold must be grown, reared, caught by the stallholder within the defined local area. 4. Secondary, own produce - all produce must be brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stall holder using at least one ingredient of origin from within the defined local area. 5. Policy and information - information should be available to customers at each market about the rules of the market and the production methods of the producers (NAFM, 2005).

Teikei is a system of direct agriculture that was developed in the early 1970s in Japan and to a lesser extent in Germany and Switzerland at a similar time (Masugata & Kubota 1992; Kneen, 1995; JOAA, 2004; Lapping 2004). The approach is centred on an alternative distribution system based around organic agriculture in Japan. The Japanese Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA), the umbrella organisation for *Teikei* groups in Japan was founded in 1971 as an independent body. Membership of the Association is open to all and by 2000 there were approximately 3,000 members, of which 20-25% were producers. Part of the Japanese version of the JOAA title is the word *Yuki*, which expresses the idea that there are laws and principles behind the dynamism of natural phenomena and that ideally an ‘organic human relationship’ should be built between producers and their consumers. Thus, the JOAA as originators of the system sought to include the social dimension alongside environmental and health objectives and promoted enhanced *relations* between consumers and producers as a way of building necessary trust and accountability.

Teikei is an idea to create an alternative distribution system, independent from the conventional market. Though the forms of Teikei vary, it is basically a direct distribution system. To carry it out, the producer(s) and the consumer(s) have talks and contact to deepen their mutual understanding: both of them provide labour and capital to support their own delivery system. The key principle that JOAA espouses is the establishment of a relationship between producers and the consumers.

Teikei developed due to consumer anxiety over food additives and the use of industrial pesticides in Japan with some informed consumers seeking out sources of organic produce. Notably women in the big conurbations (Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto were prominent) looked for direct sourcing under conditions negotiated by themselves with producers – in part because organic produce was not available through retailers. From the producer side some farmers were receptive to organic conversion, particularly those who suspected that pesticides and other chemicals were responsible for ill health within the farming community (see Honjo, 2004; Masugata 2005). Indeed the Takahata¹⁰ group described below was born in this way, with a group of consumers approaching farmers and negotiating their conversion to organic methods in the early 1970s.

¹⁰ The Takahata Teikei group discussed here is the *Takahata Shiki-dayori no Kai* (TSK) at least one other Teikei collective is known to operate in the Takahata area of Japan.

The key features of Teikei are described by the JOAA who set out ‘Ten Principles of Teikei’ by the late 1970s, as follows (left column):

JOAA principles	SUSTAIN criteria
1. To build a friendly and creative relationship, not as mere trading partners.	Socially inclusive,
2. To produce according to pre-arranged plans on an agreement between the producer(s) and the consumer(s).	Non-exploitative
3. To accept all the produce delivered from the producer(s).	-
4. To set prices in the spirit of mutual benefits.	Fair trade
5. To deepen the mutual communication for the mutual respect and trust.	Socially inclusive
6. To manage self-distribution, either by the producer(s) or by the consumer(s).	Accessible
7. To be democratic in the group activities.	-
8. To take much interest in studying issues related to organic agriculture.	Educative
9. To keep the members of each group in an appropriate number.	-
10. To progress toward the final goal of organic agriculture and an ecologically sound lifestyle. (Source: adapted from JOAA, 2004)	Environment friendly, (plus?: Health, Good animal welfare, Proximity)

(Source: after SUSTAIN, 2002; JOAA, 2004)

When compared to SUSTAIN’s (2002) nine desiderata (as listed above) for sustainable food, there is significant overlap and a core of the criteria provide a useful framework against which to assess Teikei and other AFN examples in terms of food sustainability. Summarily though Teikei is centred on two key factors: i. Organic produce, ii. direct contact between producers and consumers.

Different Teikei groups have evolved in numerous ways in terms of numbers of consumers and numbers of producers. The range of size of the consumers involved vary widely from less than 10 families to more than 5,000 per group in some cases. Teikei networks also vary in terms of distances between the producer group and the consumer group and there is variance in terms of the products exchanged and the delivery arrangements for those products (for example fruit and vegetables are regularly delivered while organic rice is typically delivered only once a year). Most of the organisation and management of the larger

Teikei networks tends to be undertaken by a core group of consumer volunteers who liaise and negotiate with the farmers (Oyama, 2005).

During the 1970s and 1980s the Teikei movement expanded, although exact numbers are hard to come by, partly because clear definition and official certification for these groups has not been present until more recently. JOAA officers interviewed assume that the 1980s and early 1990s saw the peak of Teikei activities and the downturn over the past decade is attributed to several interrelated factors including; availability of organic produce through other outlets and changing work patterns of women in Japanese society (see below). The number of Teikei groups was thought to be 832 in 1990 (JOAA 1993; Masugata & Kubota 1992) but no further empirical evidence has been collected although the JOAA claim that numbers in of groups and consumers within Teikei networks have been dropping since the mid-1990s (Kubota, 2005; Honjo, 2005).

The JOAA recently summarised a series of problems faced by the Teikei movement (adapted from JOAA, 2004):

- Aging profile of Teikei leaders;
- Fewer volunteers to share group tasks, partly due to increasing opportunities for women to get jobs and take part in other social activities;
- Consumers have begun to source organic products elsewhere (i.e. supermarkets);
- Leading growers have also become older and many complain of succession problems,

Thus the rather downbeat story more recently in Japan is that Teikei activity has been suffering as other perhaps less ‘sustainable’ but commercially mainstream sources of ‘quality’ food ahs become available.

Case study: the Takahata group

The Takahata Shiki-dayori no Kai (TSK) Teikei group is one of the most well-established and well-known Teikei groups in Japan. One of the reasons for selecting this group for study is that they are long-lived and appear to remain viable in terms of numbers of consumers and producers. Therefore the group invited further study to investigate its success. The network emerged in the early 1970s when a group of Tokyo based women approached one farmer in Takahata, Tohoku prefecture. The farmer was persuaded to convert to organic production and convinced a group of other farmers to follow suit as the consumers promised to ‘guarantee the crop’ by taking all of the produce. Since its inception in 1973 the TSK group

expanded although the farmers are based distantly from the majority of the consumers who live in Tokyo – a distance of approximately 500km.

By 2005 the TSK group consisted of nine farmers/farm households, cultivating approximately 25 hectares of land serving approximately 130 TSK consumers¹¹. The farmer currently leading the TSK producer co-op reported that in order to remain viable the Takahata farmers estimate receive a premium of c25% compared to conventional sales of non-organic produce. The main crops for the Teikei consumers are rice and fruit with the rice delivered monthly and the fruit delivered on a monthly basis in season through the Han system, which is orchestrated by the core group. Other crops are possible but are rarely demanded by consumers, although one farmer offers organic pork.

The consumers meet once per year with the farmers and this is a social occasion preceded by a short more formal meeting where a report is presented by the farmers and Q&A session is conducted with the consumers. The annual meeting was attended by the author and lasted little more than an hour, followed by a dinner which included TSK organic food and drink and where the consumers and farmers mingled freely. Around 80 of the consumers were present and all of the farmers, bar one who was ill on the day of the event, attended. The consumers at the meeting were predominantly female and the age range in the TSK case was varied, from young mothers and nursery teachers through to retired and elderly people.

The farmers also welcome consumer help on occasion with jobs such as rice planting and they also host a Baobabu school visit once per year which serves an educative function rather than yielding practical help with production tasks. In addition to the annual meeting a core group appears to liaise intermittently with the farmers on behalf of the group. It was somewhat surprising that the producers and consumers meet so infrequently - yet the accrued trust over thirty years of operation does appear to support the assertion made by Shapiro (1983) that trust can be preserved through the maintenance of *reputation* and therefore the frequency of direct contact may not be essential where trust has been established. This point was reinforced as some of the questions asked by consumers did indicate a degree of ignorance of the practices adopted by the TSK farmers. For example one consumer requested

¹¹ The Takahata farmers produce surplus crops and have begun supplying another Teikei group which is also based around a nursery school (Satake, 2005). A proportion of the TSK consumers also source other foods not supplied by TSK from other Teikei groups.

that the farmers dried the rice ‘naturally’ instead of mechanically - the reply was short and decisive it was stated to be ‘too expensive’ to do this.

Here the trust relations thesis may be divided into direct trust based on i. repute and ii. mediated or delegated trust through the core group member. Both are more feasible in this case, particularly as there is a strong linkage or ‘host’ role played by the Baobabu nursery school and the parents (particularly the Mothers) as active TSK consumers. Thus the Takahata group appears to have coalesced around a pre-existing institution or social / institutional capital node (the school). This arrangement also means that direct contact *between the consumers* occurs and they are more likely to share and communicate feedback about the TSK farmers and the food itself. It is conjectured that the Baobabu school gate acts as a recruitment milieu for the Teikei group and conversations with school parents at the annual meeting event appeared to confirm this. Further investigation of the role of the school network is needed, particularly as this holds significance for CSA operations and linkages in the UK and elsewhere¹².

Takahata group features:

1. Distant producer/consumers – approx. 500km;
2. Infrequent contact – possibly due to longevity of the group and the trust relations that have built up;
3. Type of produce exchanged: fruit, rice – delivery cost;
4. Han system present– grouping of approx five consumer households;
5. Longevity - operated satisfactorily for 32 years;
6. Built around a social capital node – i.e. the Baobabu nursery school

On both sides we see co-operatisation both among the consumers and among the farmers as well as the direct relations between the two groups. The consumer side was bolstered by the school connection serving as a base or core for membership and channel for new consumers as new parents are informed about the Teikei link. More in-depth work is required to better understand the reasons for such durability of TSK, particularly when produce is now more widely available elsewhere and at comparable, if not lower, prices. Initial hypothesis centre on the presence of a wealthy elite network and long-time consumers feeling that they owe a

¹² A notable example of this in the UK is the Tablehurst & Plaw Hatch CSA in Sussex, which revolves around the operation of a Rudolph Steiner school (see; Soil Association, 2001).

responsibility to farmers, as well as the prestige status of Teikei food and participation. Reasons for newer joiners also need to be explored beyond the nursery school connection.

Why has Teikei worked in Japan?

The case study selected quite clearly cannot be truly representative and further research is needed, however there are some interesting points emerging through these initial investigations. There are at least six identifiable general reasons for the success of Teikei in the 1970s and 1980s, drawn from interview, secondary sources and the case study itself:

- Fragmented land ownership - small farm structure (average farm size is 1.5Ha) pushing people towards co-operation;
- Pre-existing co-operatisation due to fragmented land ownership as above and the social milieu which led to the control of Japanese agriculture by the *Nohkyo* / JA producer co-ops;
- Thirdly, the attitude of consumers towards food and the information sensitivity of Japanese consumers towards environmental and health issues is important (Honjo 2004);
- Crop types involved – rice features strongly, as well as vegetables and fruit. Some Consumers are members of more than one Teikei group in order to source different products;
- Social organisation and the Han or *Goningumi* system where groups of consumers share deliveries and order jointly – reinforcing group lock-in to the Teikei group;
- Role of mediating institutions in providing a milieu for interaction and engagement for consumers – i.e. schools.

Despite the continuing success of some Teikei networks, during the past decade Teikei groups more generally have reported problems and according to the JOAA the numbers have begun to decline (Masugata, 2005; Honjo 2005). This decline has both been in the numbers of co-operative groups and the numbers of farmers and consumers within groups. This may be explained by a number of factors including; the availability elsewhere of organic produce, the growth of related labelling schemes and Sanchoku initiatives and a shift towards individualised delivery, away from the Han system. These points were confirmed in interviews with JCCU officials who do command rather better statistical information about their member's purchasing behaviour than the JOAA. Overall these trends paint a rather gloomy picture for advocates of AFNs and those emphasising the benefits of collective purchasing and horizontal networks. With the future of Teikei uncertain the JOAA have recognised that they need to work hard to:

deepen the communication and firm up the solidarity between our Teikei groups; make contact with other civil, environmental conservation, and consumers' movement groups in a more positive manner; exchange knowledge with co-ops and agricultural cooperatives; impress the government, central or municipal, with the significance of the Teikei movement between producers and consumers...demand... policies which will help and promote the sound development of organic agriculture...make known the sustainability of the method and management of organic agriculture at the grassroots level (JOAA, 2004).

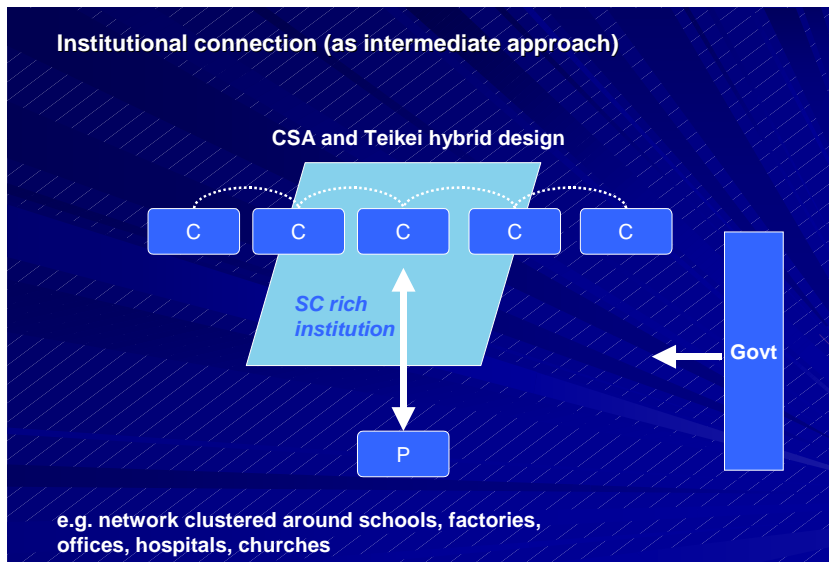
However, despite such currents when assessing the Takahata example it was clear that it performed well across some criteria for sustainable food (but not necessarily others, notably the localness criteria). The notion of reputation effects and the role of a network node around which the Teikei operation can coalesce appears interesting and worthy of further investigation. The flexibility of the TSK group may also be important given that and at least some of the Takahata group members were involved with another organic (Teikei) network to source other weekly or monthly products and the TSK farmers were also able to sell surplus produce to another Teikei group.

Conclusion: what can we learn from Teikei?

There are numerous lessons to be drawn from Teikei, and the recent history of co-operatives in Japan and using this information selectively I want to address the issue of how to suggest future development of CSA operation in the UK and elsewhere. In order to situate this aim the paper has outlined Teikei and linked this to discussions of citizenship and community governance debates following from Hassanein (2003:p79) who contends that; 'the best hope for finding workable solutions to conflicts about the character and direction of the agro-food system is through the active participation of the citizenry' and similarly, from Ostrom (2000:p13) who argues that many 'policies adopted in many modern democracies crowd out citizenship' and according to her 'they do this by crowding out norms of reciprocity and trust and by crowding out the knowledge local circumstances and experimentation needed to design effective institutions'. This issue of enhanced democracy is important but also, given that only 24 CSAs were identified by the Soil Association by 2005 (Soil Association, 2005a), it appears that further efforts to generate workable and durable institutional arrangements are necessary. Therefore seeking to design new formats and, significantly, to learn from successful examples is crucial at this stage of CSA development.

There has been a growing interest in institutional capital in planning and policy in the UK (cf. Healey, 1999; Khakee, 2002) and it appears that contexts or networks with pre-existing social capital relations or ‘institutional capital’ appear to provide useful platforms for instigating and perpetuating CSA / Teikei models. Following this line, in Figure 1 below, an illustrative hybrid CSA/Teikei arrangement, that makes use of a mediating institution and which bears a degree of institutional or social capital is illustrated¹³. The idea being that new groups can more easily be set up through these institutions and it may be useful for CSA farmers to approach such institutions. Note how in the figure a single producer is shown as this is the most common arrangement in European CSAs.

Figure 1 – CSA/Teikei hybrid model for the UK/ European context.



As Hassanein states: ‘the thoughtful; practice of pragmatic politics and the development of a strong food democracy will be keys to transformation of agro-food systems in the long run’ (2003: p78). Yet, as an aspirational set of dimensions they are worthy. Further, more detailed, research is required across a wider selection of cases to add finesse to this as considerable differences exist between Teikei groups and CSA operations and the relevance of these findings may therefore vary. The idea that AFNs can or do fulfil all the criteria set out by SUSTAIN (2002) is an unlikely one with a number of pragmatic decisions shaping the dimensions of different groups and care should be taken, noting Ostrom, to encourage

¹³ This observation is derived not only from successful CSA / Teikei groups in Japan and the UK but also on research looking at how to reinforce rural service provision through the encouragement of multiple-service outlets (Parker, 2003; Moseley et al, 2005), typically one service provider acts as a ‘host’ for other services and in many cases there is mutual benefit from this ‘tandemisation’.

bespoke designs. Detailed investigations of other cases in Japan and elsewhere are necessary to really understand how and why different criteria are more or less important, or more or less achievable in given contexts.

In looking at co-operatives and interviewing Teikei participants and others in Japan it appears that connection amongst consumers and between producers is important in seeking to facilitate a stronger more robust agriculture and sustainable food network in the UK. There are, however, strong factors militating against AFNs, not least the lack of skills and experience - requiring nothing less than a culture shift for farmers. In the UK, according to the Soil Association, there are three main barriers summarised as; *skills, time* and *risk* (Pilley, 2005) in that producers tend to be risk averse, lack skills in organic farming or in growing a range of crops and in terms of dealing with consumers directly. They are also wary of the time costs involved in developing and managing a shift towards AFN / CSA operation. On the consumer side information, interaction opportunities, price and, again as Ostrom (2000) argues, a lack of structures that encourage intrinsic motivation feature as barriers in this area of policy. This means that the way that agriculture is administered and decisions taken limits the scope for food citizenship – and this needs to be addressed in rural policy. In my view there are at least four aspects that could be pursued:

1. Encouraging food citizenship proactively designing and promoting the role and practices of consumer-citizenship as a response to domination of by private institutions and the media where the consumer as citizen adopts both a self-preserving attitude and a congruent community-regarding attitude in terms of the decisions over food production and related concerns about environmental impact.

2. More research on the relations and histories of AFN participants and whether they have intertwined over time and through other setting, frames or contexts, or whether they are newly formed by dint of the AFN is required. One hypothesis is that examples of both situations have featured and yet pre-existing network ties and accrued social capital encourages and may be a fruitful route to bolster CSAs and other AFNs in the medium term, and as part of a pragmatic response to corporate agriculture and neo-liberal economic policy.

3. The brokerage of new (market) relations through ‘intermediate associations’ and mediating institutions appears logical and promising. Similarly work on matching institutions and pre-existing groups or potential groups/consumers to farmers is useful. This is a model that emphasises community and social relations and Teikei experience and some of the UK CSAs appear to confirm this. For example schools provide excellent platforms and are features of several examples in both the UK and Japan of Teikei and CSA groups. The Schools act as existing network nodes for parents and children and given the throughput of these families the possibility of a growing number of informed consumer (citizens) is realistic.

4. Work to understand whether other institutions such as churches (through parishioner networks) and workplaces (through co-workers) could serve similar functions is required.

Despite the mixed fortunes of Teikei it does appear that useful lessons can still be learned from Japan by; CSA operators, interested consumers and policymakers. This paper has sought to identify how the market share of AFNs may be increased in the medium term by encouraging enhanced consumer-citizenship and identifying opportunities where social capital exists and may be receptive to traceable, direct and possibly healthier food. Policymakers in Europe and in the UK specifically face the issue of how to regulate the market and rebalance the relations and effects of state involvement and corporatism in the agricultural sector, as well as curb the excesses of liberalised trade based on ‘free’ market principles – one tool must surely be to broker relations between consumers, institutions and producers to develop CSA as one important thread in developing healthier, sustainable and ‘reconnected’ food in the UK.

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