

Completion Report

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Subject of Research Project : Indonesian Migrant Workers at Agricultural Sector in Japan: Learned Lesson for Indonesia

Japan's agricultural sector is grappling with a severe labor shortage due to demographic challenges and an aging population. To address this issue, the country has increasingly relied on foreign labor, particularly from Indonesia, emphasizing the need for comprehensive reforms to enhance working conditions. The shift from family-operated to company-based agriculture raises health and safety concerns, particularly for foreign workers in programs like the Technical Intern Training Program. Despite government efforts to reform workstyles, mistreatment issues persist. The research explores the challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers in Japanese agriculture, examining their adaptation strategies and competitiveness in the 3K-labeled sector. Reports from the East Asia Forum highlight the significant labor shortage and the government's focus on smart agriculture, supporting young farmers, upsizing farms, and improving conditions for foreign agricultural workers. The latest EAF report emphasizes the government's recognition of the importance of foreign workers and the Work Style Reform Law, aiming to enhance diversity and working conditions, particularly in agriculture. The need for agricultural business model transformation is identified as crucial for sustaining the industry and addressing challenges like labor shortages, especially for Indonesian workers.

This research project successfully identified, observed, and analyzed the adaptation strategies adjusted by Indonesian SSWs using a qualitative research approach. Data were collected by distributing the g-form, with 17 respondents responding to the survey. The informants interviewed came from Chiba, Ibaraki, Gunma prefectures, some of whom worked in cattle breeding and agricultural land. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather more information regarding adaptation strategies while working in the Japanese agriculture industry as Special Skill Worker (SSW).

According to the survey and interviews, SSWs from Indonesia face the challenge of Japanese language proficiency skills, differences in work culture that are very different from the country of origin, and what is quite surprising is the problem of extreme weather (especially mountainous areas like Gunma) where it is very cold in winter and very hot in summer. They implemented various behavioral and process adaptation strategies, addressing differences in habits, work culture, language, environment, and religious matters. The good practice found in this study to overcome the above problems is to maintain family social ties within the company. Strong social bonds benefit both parties and make it easier for owners to retain workers, from apprentices to skilled workers. Still, the main problem of adapting and adjusting to a new environment is mastering the local culture and language, which remains a significant challenge for Indonesian SSWs.

This research project aims to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Indonesian SSWs in the Japanese agricultural sector, exploring their adaptation strategies and competitiveness in the labor market. By examining the experiences of foreign workers in the context of shifting agricultural business models, labor shortages, and governmental initiatives, the research not only sheds light on the intricacies of the current labor landscape in Japanese agriculture but also underscores the importance of inclusive reforms to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of the sector in the years ahead.

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Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

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