

## **Community Development in Oyama-machi District of Hita City (Former Oyama Town)**

### **Introduction**

Situated in western Oita Prefecture and bordering on Fukuoka and Kumamoto prefectures, Oyama-machi is a small hilly leaf-shaped district measuring 6 km east to west by 10 km north to south. Forty-five years ago, the then poverty-stricken village (Oyama Village) kick-started its long transformation by launching the so-called NPC movement. In 1989, the village administration came to an end after 80 years of existence, replaced by a town administration (Oyama Town).

On March 22, 2005, Oyama Town became a district of Hita City as a result of a wide area municipal merger. (Although Oyama-machi is more like a super-district as it contains all the sub-municipal districts of former Oyama Town, which are now sub-municipal districts of Hita City, it is referred to as a “district” here for the sake of simplicity.) Former Oyama Town was 45.72 km<sup>2</sup> in size and had 1002 households, including 535 farm households, with a population of 3640 (as of October 1, 2004). With the combined area of actual cultivated land (paddy fields, upland fields and land under permanent crops) only amounting to 240 ha (about 45 a per household), the district’s farming operation is very small scale.

In the mid-1950s, village development efforts aimed at turning poverty into affluence began under the guidance of then Village Mayor Harumi Yahata.

### **1. Historical Background of Community Development**

November 1955 Mr. Harumi Yahata was persuaded to run for mayor following the death of the then village mayor from illness.  
The population of the village stood at 6485 at the time.

#### **[Reference Information]**

Harumi Yahata (1912 – October 1, 1993)

Born to a forest landowner/brewer family.

1945 Discharged from military service after Japan’s defeat in World War II.

1954 Becomes the President of the Oyama Village Agricultural Cooperative.

November 1955 Becomes the Mayor of Oyama Village. <For 16 years thereafter, Mr. Yahata played the dual role of village mayor (later town mayor) and president of the agricultural cooperative.>

1971 Resigns as the Mayor of Oyama Town.

Oyama Village/Town benefited enormously from the presence of an outstanding leader like Mr. Yahata, although he used to say, "I'm a seeder, not a leader."

With hope and encouragement, he left the following words for the next generation: "I plowed dry land, fertilized it and seeded it. Now I want you to grow the seed to fruition."

Harumi Yahata was a person who tirelessly sowed seed in Oyama in the hope that, no matter how modest, it would sprout eventually.

The trace of his struggle to free the village from poverty and bring wealth to it as the top leader of village development can still be seen. In this process, he proposed a new farming strategy based on low-volume production and multi-product selling called "mukade farming", where "mukade" means a centipede, a creature with a small body and numerous legs.

"When we were kids, we used to run after a rainbow, but were of course never able to reach it, no matter how fast we ran. Likewise, our "utopia" is far away, and we have to keep running for it. After all, we are all rainbow chasers."

Having received valuable practical lessons from this "Yahata School", a number of young people are now passionately working on community development together. The district has produced many community development leaders in this manner.

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|-------------|--|
| May 1, 1957 | Oyama Village launches a cable broadcasting service (OYHK) as Oita Prefecture's first. <Second in the whole nation><br>Mayor Yahata talked to villages for five minutes every day on a program titled "Let's Build Oyama into a Village Like This" to explore development models for Oyama Village.  |
| 1961        | The NPC movement (First NPC Movement) is launched. <Pursuit of higher income><br>NPC stands for "New Plum and Chestnut".<br>With plum and chestnut as main crops, the NPC movement was geared towards bringing about higher farm income.<br>Under the movement, seedlings were subsidized by the Village Government and 31 plum and chestnut instructors were trained. |
| 1965        | Second NPC Movement <Human resource development><br>NPC stands for "Neo Personality Combination".  |
| 1967        | "Let's plant plum and chestnut and go to Hawaii."<br><This slogan became well-known throughout the country.><br>The annual Hawaii tour continues to this day. Travel is financed with a loan from the agricultural cooperative, which is to be repaid over five years.   |

- <The Oyama district boasts the highest rate of passport ownership in the country (70%).>
- 1969 Third NPC Movement < Development of a comfortable environment>  
NPC stands for “New Paradise Community”.
- February 1969 The town system of government is introduced. (end of a village administration after an 80-year history).
- December 1969 Three young Oyama Town residents depart for Israel for a three-month study tour of kibbutzim. <Start of kibbutz training>

[Reference Information]

Kibbutz means “communal settlement” in Hebrew.

<A world-famous collective community that has developed in Israel>

A kibbutz is a collective community created under Zionist-socialist ideals. It is operated through cooperation and mutual help, rather than competition, and people do not receive any individual remuneration for their individual labor. In a kibbutz, production, consumption and daily lives are collectivized, and residents are guaranteed free access to the necessities of life. Originally, kibbutzim were primarily developed for agriculture, but are used for other industries, such as manufacturing and tourism, today. They even exhibit the characteristics of a local government. In Israel, there are about 270 kibbutzim, centering on the border area, and the number of kibbutz residents varies from 100 to 1000. <Kibbutzim are a result of Israeli efforts to build an environment that is as resistant to military invasion as possible based on its national security strategy.>

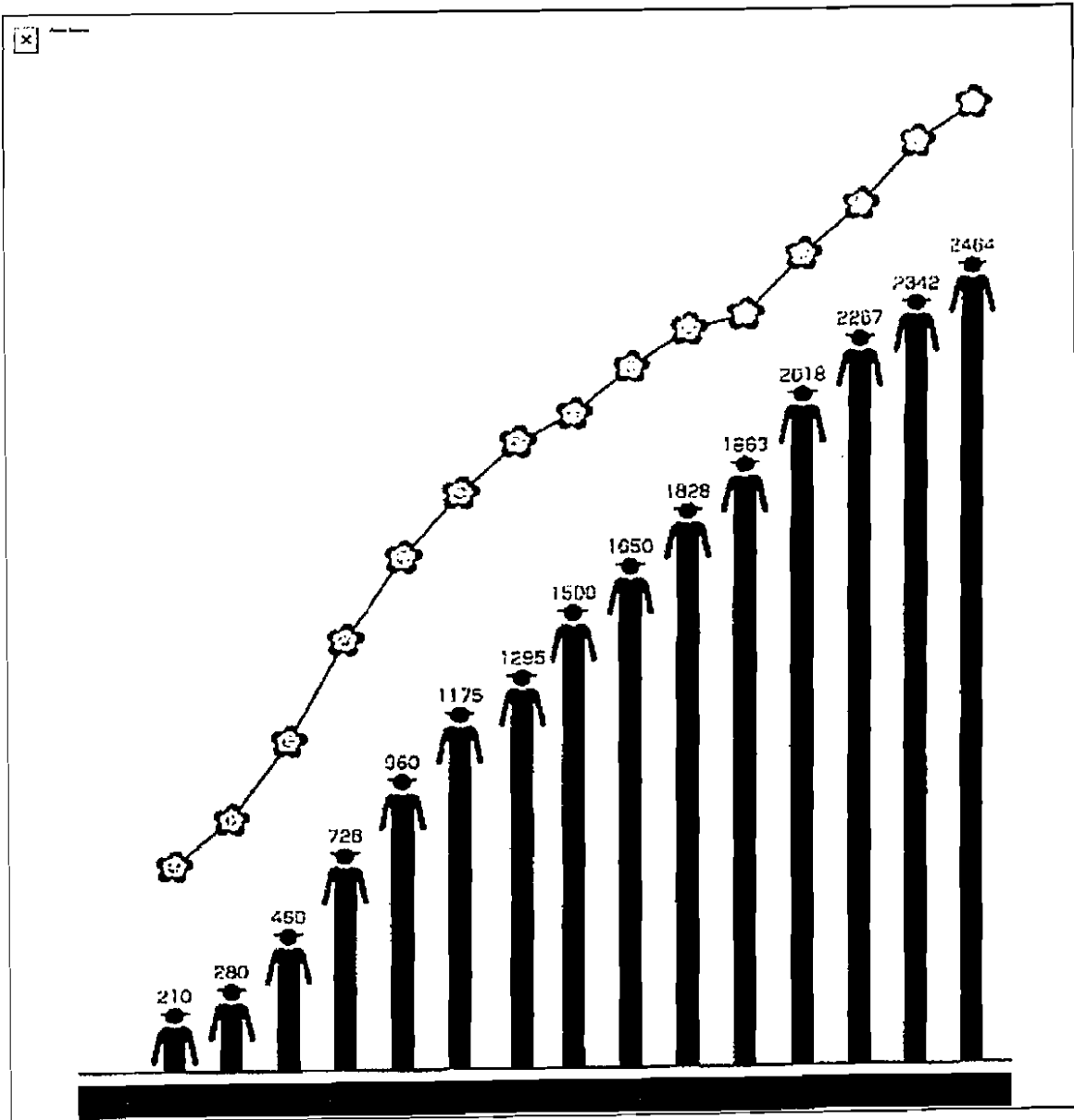
Processing everything we produce by ourselves. Former Oyama Town adopted a new development system based on the incorporation of a processing plant into a rural village, which was modeled after an Israeli kibbutz.

- February 11, 1970 On the first anniversary of the introduction of a town administration, Oyama Town signs a sister town agreement with Megiddo Town in Israel.  
<Beginning of the internationalization of Oyama Town>
- 1971 Receives a model community designation from the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 1974 Launch of the Let’s Learn about the World Association.  
The association was formed mainly by young people who had participated in kibbutz training in Israel, which began in 1969.
- 1975 The Oyama Town Agricultural Cooperative begins importing honey from China.

- November 1979 Governor Hiramatsu of Oita Prefecture proposes the One Village One Product Movement.
- 1981 The First Plum Festival is held.
- 1987 The Oyama cable television service (OYT) begins.  
Oyama Town took on the challenge of computerizing public administration.
- 1988 The Oyama Town Agricultural Cooperative sets up a joint venture company for honey with Wuxian, Suzhou, Jiangsu.
- July 1990 The Oyama Town Agricultural Cooperative opens a direct-sales store called "Konohana Garten".
- 1991 The National Umeboshi (Pickled Plums) Speech Contest is held.  
This contest, which is held once every four years these days, is sometimes called the Umeboshi Olympics.
- 1995 The National Umeboshi Convention in Oyama is held.  
Since this convention, a producer (female) in Oyama Town has been successively winning the Excellence Award.
- November 1, 2005 The Oyama Town Agricultural Cooperative (President Kinji Yahata) receives the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications Award under the Outstanding Depopulated Area Independence and Revitalization Case Commendations in recognition of its efforts relating to Konohana Garten, a bazaar run by farmers belonging to the cooperative.

## **2. Characteristic Features of Konohana Garten**

- 1) The farm product bazaar store, called "Nosanhin Bazaru-kan", puts the faces of producers on products
  - 2) Local production local consumption
  - 3) Processing and sale of locally produced farm products
  - 4) Incorporation of a restaurant called "Organic Farm", where farm dishes for treating guests are served
  - 5) 1.9 million customers
  - 6) Information transmission
  - 7) Pursuit of interaction with cities
  - 8) Improvement of farm income (sales ¥1.5 billion)
  - 9) Contribution to the invigoration of the community
- < See the diagram on the following page >



Address: 274-1, Oyama-machi Senjo, Hita City

Tel. 0973-52-3530

Hours of operation: 9:00-18:00 (Open daily excluding the year end-New Year period)

Main facilities: A direct-sales farm product store that boasts a diverse 680 farm products supplied annually by farm households, a processed food and craft store that sells about 300 products, including jams and pickles based on plum, a local specialty, and a restaurant (The restaurant closes at 21.00.)

- Hita store (Hita City) 0973-26-0602
- Akeno store (Oita City) 097-553-1111
- Wasada Town store (Oita City) 097-586-1111
- Tsunumien store (Bappu City) 0977-27-1313
- Nishijin store (Fukuoka City) 092-832-5140
- Nomaioike store (Fukuoka City) 092-561-1166

Homepage:  
<http://www.oyama-nk.com/konohana/>

### 3. Gross Agricultural Production and Agricultural Income Produced in Former Oyama Town

Item	Year	1980	1990	2000	Unit	Remarks
						Ratio of 2000 value to 1980 value
Gross agricultural production	Oita Prefecture	148.8	179.6	152.0	1 billion yen	1.02
	Oyama Town	508	902	1,000	1 million yen	1.97
Agricultural income produced per farm household	Oita Prefecture	698	839	1,040	1000 yen	1.49
	Oyama Town	343	571	785	1000 yen	2.29
Agricultural income produced per 10a of cultivated land	Oita Prefecture	82	85	94	1000 yen	1.15
	Oyama Town	61	109	147	1000 yen	2.41

Although gross agricultural production struggled to grow in 2000 in Oita Prefecture as a whole in terms of a ratio to the 1980 value, Oyama Town enjoyed a healthy growth of 1.97.

Oyama Town registered equally impressive growth rates in agricultural income produced per farm household (2.29 vs. 1.49 for Oita Prefecture as a whole) and agricultural income produced per 10a of cultivated land (2.41 vs. 1.15 for Oita Prefecture as a whole).

Decades ago, a poor rural village relying mainly on forestry due to its very small combined area of actual cultivated land launched the NPC movement in pursuit of higher income. Since then, it has turned out numerous products, worked on a vertically-integrated primary and secondary industry operation (local processing of farm products) aimed at increasing added value, and pursued "mukade" farming (low-volume production and multi-product selling) and high profit farming.

Community development in former Oyama Town is inconceivable without the presence of its top leader (Harumi Yahata). Former Governor Hiramatsu, who proposed the One Village One Product Movement in 1979, once praised Oyama Town as the "Pioneer of Village Development" and stressed the importance of "human development as the key to a successful one village one product movement" by quoting community development efforts in Oyama Town.

Today, community development geared towards building an affluent and comfortable village continues to make progress in the Oyama-machi district (former Oyama Town) under the slogan chosen by the new generation of rainbow chasers (leaders): "Looking to the Future".