

## 7. Educational dairy farms and their activities

In recent years, there is a strong movement in Japan to reconsider the diverse functions held by agriculture, and growing numbers of farmers are opening their farms and fields to the public.

Out of all, activities on the educational dairy farms are increasingly popular where various resources on the farms/fields can be put in use for educational purposes. Such farms can also provide suitable condition for "comprehensive learning" and "developing children's mind and zest for living programme" which were introduced to schools in 2002. They are receiving high praises especially among teachers.

Given such trend of the time, in July 1998 under the proposal by the JDC, "Educational dairy farms promotional committee" was established with the cooperation of educators and dairy farmers for the purpose of expansion of educational dairy farms in Japan.

After the establishment, the committee has conducted researches on the works of the European countries, which were leading the world with their educational farms activities. They have also collected and studied the examples of experiences on the farms in Japan. In January 2001, the "Educational Dairy Farm Certification System" was introduced to certify the farms with appropriate levels of safety, hygiene and ability to provide good educational opportunity.

At the beginning in 2000, there were only 116 certified farms, but over the years the number has grown, and in 2011 there expanded to 309 certified farms in the country. In 2008, the committee has also introduced certification system for facilitators, who carry out educational farm activities. There were 556 certified facilitators in 2011.

Approximately 30 years behind the leading European countries, Japan has finally seen the first educational farms. However, this "Educational Dairy Farms Certification System" was the first of its kind in Japan in advance of any other agriculture, and it is attracting a lot of attention and high expectation.

Moreover, educational dairy farms being widely accepted by the public can increase the opportunities to promote the dairy farming as a job and the greatness of the dairy products generated from there.

If people can enrich their mind through visiting farms, dairy farming's contribution to the society can be recognised, and farmers can take even more pride in their work with more incentives to carry out daily tasks.

In the educational circles, there are continuous process of the trials and errors to find ideal education. We think that this certification system can possibly promote one style of education, which is essentially necessary for the children of the present day.

In the future, managements of dairy farms will be increasingly individualised and diversified, and the diverse functions of agriculture will get socially recognised, it is our belief that more and more farms will aim to become educational dairy farms.

