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## **Farming and loving it**

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When I, along with other media practitioners, attended the “Multi-country Observation and Study Mission on Agricultural Productivity” at the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) office in Tokyo, Japan, I met an interesting Japanese lady named Otsu.

She came to the event wearing the traditional kimono complete with the wooden slippers and obi sash. At first glance, I thought she was just like any other urban lady who likes walking around the city in Japan’s national dress.

But I proved myself wrong when I found out that Otsu is a farmer, and loving every minute of it.

After post graduate studies in Munich, Otsu decided to join her husband in a farm located in Kyushu, an island south of Tokyo. Her husband’s family owns the 5-hectares field of rice paddies with 20 heads of cattle.

Living together in the farm, she and her husband grew organic rice and even “fished” for each other. They also raised three sons who would take to the farm life like ducks to water.

Pun intended, their rice farm is a duck-rice integrated organic farm. The ducks eat the snails that are harmful to the rice, and the rice benefit from the waste of

the ducks in water. They have no need for pesticides and also end up having duck eggs and duck meat after every harvest season.

In our short meeting, Otsu also made rough computation of financial benefits of living in a farm compared to a bustling city like Tokyo.

According to her, while city life can give one fat income, it also comes with a proportionate high cost of living. Plus, there is the stress that adds up to the busy life. Whereas in farm life, her family may make less in gross income, but they also have fewer expenses—lower water and electricity consumption, and no parking fees! On top of that, life in a farm is relaxed and peaceful.

So she would not have it any other way than her lifestyle now. She has time to raise her sons in the farm, hoping that they would learn about nature and food so that in the future, they would make them want to pursue the same career too.

As a mother, she is also concerned what food her children eat, especially in places which have suffered contamination of soil and natural resources, where farming will never be an option. Take the Chernobyl and Fukushima disasters. These are man-made disasters that have challenged the food supply and security of large areas.

Both she and her husband finished technical and Masters Degrees, and this education made them want to stay in the rural areas to make a difference. Not just in their lives but in inspiring others to do the same.

In fact, Otsu has organized the women in her community into a group that aims to influence other young women to pursue careers in farming.

On why she wants to share her passion in farming, Otsu said she believes not all the money in the world can buy food that is safe to eat. The best is to learn to grow it yourself and teach your neighbors to do the same.

I found myself nodding at every insight she shared. I never dreamt of growing my own food too, but I am doing it now. I even bake our own bread. And recently, I even learned how to make noodles. But the best is growing what nature gives us: fruits, vegetables and grains.