



Landscape of Osaki Kodo embraced with rice paddies, water channels and homestead woodlands called "Igune"

The Osaki region where traditional rice farming still prevails has been suffering cold temperature damage, flooding and drought for many years. For this reason, an ingenious water management mechanism was created by the organizations founded upon the "Keiyakuko" which is a long-established local reciprocity-based organization. The

knowledge and skills to survive disasters have also been handed down to the present.

In the Osaki region, there still remains a rich wetland ecosystem blessed with diversity of flora and fauna in rice paddies, water channels and "Igune" (homestead woodlands) scattered in the rice paddies like forests, creating a unique landscape.

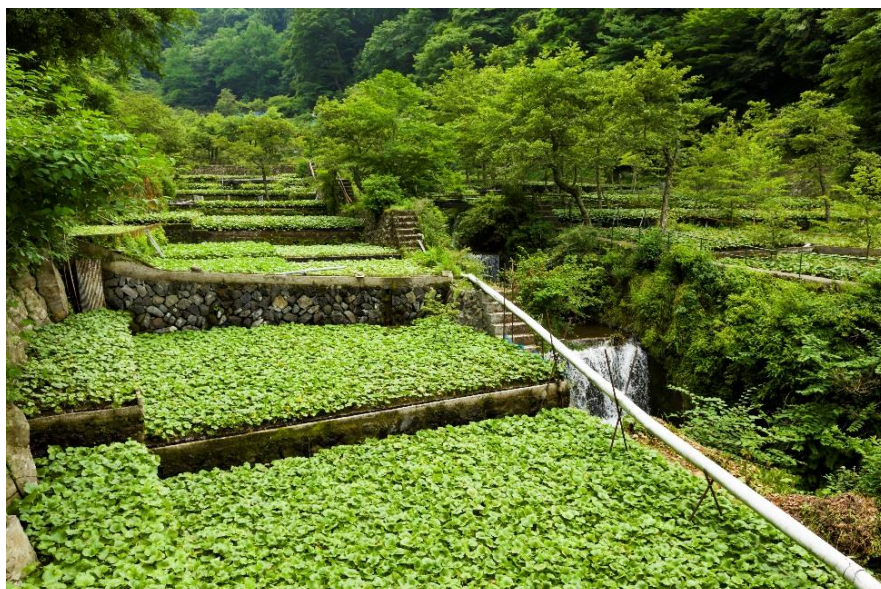
**Designated  
in 2017**

**Osaki region**  
in Miyagi Prefecture

## Osaki Kôdo's Traditional Water Management System for Sustainable Paddy Agriculture



Agrobiodiversity supported by rice paddies



A series of Wasabi terraces extending into mountainous areas

Wasabi is an endemic species of the Japanese islands that evolved uniquely. Worldwide wasabi cultivation began in this region approximately 400 years ago and a large number of varieties of wasabi and cultivation techniques that are suitable to the region have been developed.

The ridges along the slope of the mountain were cleared to make terraces for wasabi fields and fertilizers were used

as little as possible, using nutrients contained in abundance in the spring water instead. These efforts led to the development of techniques for high-quality wasabi production.

Together with the East Asian Alder (*Alnus hirsuta*) trees that are planted in and around the wasabi fields to protect them from the strong sun, the wasabi fields provide a unique landscape to the region and a habitat for endangered species.

**Designated  
in 2018**

**Shizuoka Wasabi Cultivating Region**  
in Shizuoka Prefecture

## Traditional Wasabi Cultivation in Shizuoka



The Japanese clawed salamander inhabiting around the Wasabi fields





**Designated  
in 2018**

**Nishi-Awa Area**  
In Tokushima prefecture

## **Nishi-Awa Steep Slope Land Agriculture System**

Performing "Tsuchiage", moving the soil washed down during heavy rain back to the field with traditional farming tools (Sadamitsu, Tsurugi-cho)

In places, the steepness of slopes is as much as 40 degrees and agriculture is carried out leaving the mountain slopes intact, without creating flat areas such as rice terraces. Kaya (grass used for thatching) gathered from grasslands are plowed into the fields to prevent the soil from eroding as much as possible. The use of a multiple cropping technique where various types of grains such as soba and vegetables unique to the region

are cultivated in small quantities also allowed the residents to adapt to the mountainous environment. Thanks to this agriculture system which has continued for over 400 years, the diversity of flora and fauna and rural mountain villages that represent the original and nostalgic landscape of Japan continue to be protected and handed down by the residents.



Sobagome Zosui (buckwheat porridge): A local dish originating from the site



"Spring in full bloom" A Spring scenery of peach and plum blossoms in full bloom

Kyoutou region farmers have adapted to the complex topography of the alluvial fan and its weather conditions to ensure that fruit farming provides a stable livelihood. Of particular note is the local grape cultivation method, in which thick, sparsely planted vines are trained over Koshu-style trellises (trellises suspended high above the ground) to counter the wet, humid conditions. In addition, the region has developed its own system of fruit farming, with a variety of fruit trees

and varieties suitable for the land being selected in order to adapt to the diverse farmlands and climate conditions. This Fruit Cultivation System contributes to biodiversity, and many species inhabit the orchards and their surroundings. This approach has created a unique mosaic pattern in the landscape, which together with the surrounding forests and mountains, creates a beautiful landscape that changes with the seasons.

**Designated  
in 2022**

**Kyoutou region**  
in Yamanashi Prefecture

## **Fruit Cultivation System in Kyoutou Region, Yamanashi**



Endemic grape variety "Koshu" in Japan



**Designated  
in 2022**

Lake Biwa region  
in Shiga Prefecture

## Biwa Lake to Land Integrated System

### Traditional Eri-fishing

The Biwa lake to land integrated system is centered on traditional inland water fisheries which have developed along with paddy agriculture that provides safe breeding grounds for spawning lake fish. For more than 1,000 years, the fishermen have been using and improving various types of passive fishing methods to catch migrating fish together with adapted social rules and local culture to ensure the

sustainability of the natural resources. In rice paddies in the coastal areas, the lake fish have themselves chosen rice paddies - created and maintained by humans - as their spawning and early breeding grounds. This has led to not only ecosystem conservation but also the conservation of natural fishery resources in Lake Biwa fisheries.



Sushi-kiri Matsuri (Sushi Cutting Festival), in which funazushi is used as a food offering to the gods

**Designated  
in 2023**

Mikata district  
In Hyogo Prefecture

## Integrated Farming System for Harmonizing People and Cattle in the Mikata District

### Grazing Tajima cattle on a pasture (Kami Town)

The main agriculture in the Mikata area is rice cultivation in terraced rice fields and the production of Tajima cattle calves. For more than 400 years, Tajima cattle have been treated like family members, fed with abundant wild grasses, and let to graze on the grasslands of the mountains. Even now, Tajima cattle are carefully raised one by one. Tajima cattle contribute to the preservation of the local ecosystem through rice cultivation using cattle manure and maintaining grasslands

with the grazing cattle. In 1898, the "cattle lineage record" was established for the first time in Japan. This became the precursor to the cattle registration system of Japanese black cattle. This area has continued to improve cattle with only lineages from this area. Therefore, a unique lineage that can only be found here is preserved. It plays an important role as a genetic resource for the Japanese black cattle.



Tajima cows are carefully raised and the unique local lineage is kept alive.



Designated  
in 2023

Musashino region  
In Saitama Prefecture

Fallen Leaves Compost Agroforestry  
System in Musashino Upland, in the  
peri-urban area of Tokyo

Landscape created by the system

In 1654, the Kawagoe Domain settled Musashino to combat food shortages amid Edo's population boom. Ingenious strategies tackled challenges—scarce water, volcanic soil, and erosion—with strategic tree planting. Grasslands transformed into forests, nurturing soil with fallen leaves composting and soil dispersal prevention. This land-use plan continues to this day,

with sustainable agriculture and fallen leaves composting remaining integral. These practices craft a unique agricultural landscape while nurturing goshawk habitats and rare plants like riverstream and golden orchids in upland forests.



Gathering Fallen Leaves Event



# GIAHS Q & A

## Q1

What is the difference from UNESCO World Heritage?

The UNESCO World Heritage System focuses on protection and preservation of the tangible cultural heritages and natural heritages of the world. FAO's GIAHS intends not only for the conservation of the site but also balancing between conservation and agricultural/social economic development of the site.

## Q2

What responsibilities are indicated by the designation?

The site designated as a GIAHS must be given a specific action plan for the conservation of the site. On the basis of this, traditional agriculture and farming methods, and rich biodiversity, etc., are needed to inherit to the future.

## Q3

What are the benefits from the designation?

If the value of the agricultural practice indigenous to the designated site is approved globally, people will pride themselves and gain self-confidence. It is also expected that the economy of the region would be stimulated through branding of the local agricultural products and through the attraction of tourists.