

Testimony Before Joint Hearing
on Family Farms

By

Shiro Tokuno ✓

State Department of Water Resources Employee

Personal Viewpoints

October 28, 1977

My testimony will cover two separate areas dealing with irrigated agriculture. The first portion covers areas that need to be studied in greater depth; the second portion is a brief summary of land distribution experienced in Japan.

There is a need to improve our planning effort. We must increase our socioeconomic efficiency and use of available resources, especially in the agricultural sector. The following briefly describes some of the problem areas that should be studied.

A. Agricultural finance and pricing for irrigated and dry land farms.

1. Equity investment, net farm income, payment capacity or ability to pay for water.
2. Financial status of farmers by size, type of operation, location, etc.,
3. Change in size of operations and turnover by size of operation.
4. Impact of pricing policy, cost and quantity used.

B. Tenancy studies

1. Rate of tenancy change over time.
2. Impact of price cost squeeze in tenancy.
3. Economics of scale and tenancy.

C. Social considerations

1. Agricultural labor and sociological implications versus size and type of farms.
2. Impact of pesticide use.
3. Energy crisis and lifestyle.

D. Government Policies

1. Subsidy.
2. Water conservation effort.
3. Need for coordination at all levels of government -- reduce cost.

The second portion deals with my experience with the land distribution program in post-war Japan.

I served with the occupation forces in Japan from October 1945 through June of 1951. During this period a total agrarian reform program was initiated and for all practical purposes, was completed. The initial action undertaken by the Supreme Commander Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur was based upon the Potsdam Declaration whereby he issued an edict to the Imperial Japanese Government on 9 December 45, which required, among other things, that the Imperial Japanese Government undertake economic reform programs to enhance the position of the peasant farmer who was in so-called bondage to the landlord. Included within this program were several segments of agriculture, including the so-called land reform program. Other programs included the Agricultural Cooperative Program whereby the agricultural associations were dissolved and agricultural coops were established in their place. The Agricultural Extension Program as well as the Land Improvement or Land Consolidation Program were also a part of this agrarian reform program.

The occupation forces under General MacArthur immediately began to take action. The role of the occupation was primarily one of giving advice and guidance to the Japanese Government. Legislation was enacted whereby the land was purchased by the Government from landlords and sold to the tenant farmers.

The implementation of the program was executed without serious difficulty as the machinery for carrying out the program was in existence. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry the central government agency, handled this program very ably. Instructions went from the Ministry at the national level to the state or prefectural level to the cities and towns, each with their own land commissions.

One of the great achievements under General MacArthur was this program. In excess of six million acres of land were purchased from landlords both absentee and resident. All absentee landlords lands were purchased and resident owners land in excess of three acres, as a rule, were bought by the Government.

The program involved about five million farmers in Japan directly or indirectly. Of course there were numerous problems as the price paid for the land was fixed as of 9 December 45 and under a highly inflationary post-war period it was no wonder the landlords complained.

Tokuno

This particular program was broader than expected as the land use was affected as no change in land use was possible. Farmland could not be converted even to livestock auction yards let alone pulp factories. I visited Japan in 1972, again in 1976. I was definitely interested in the programs initiated in the occupation and accordingly I made special effort to discuss the success of these programs. Much to my amazement, much of the land has remained intact in the hands of those who bought the land and the program has certainly been a success as far as the occupation, and as far as U. S. policy is concerned a wonderful achievement. It has accomplished its objective as the once peasant farmer who tilled his soil with a horse or oxen giving one-half of his crop in rent, now owns the land and tills the soil with a tractor and enjoys the comforts of modern Japan.