

Improved food self-sufficiency to protect our children and attain “life security”

Japan lacks vital mineral and energy resources, which has helped create a national character that is industrious and strives for improvement. That is the reason I prefer not to use the term “human resources” but rather “human assets”. In terms of national security, we also need to return to considering the well-being of people living on this land.

Japanese food has become popular among countries worried about lifestyle-related problems. However, Japan’s own food self-sufficiency rate has remained at about 40 percent over the past 10 years. In terms of soybeans used to make tofu, which is a symbol of healthy foods, the rate is just 5 percent compared with over 100 percent in the US and France. Japan is ranked the lowest among all industrialized nations and has been unable to realize even a defensive position in self-sustenance.

Agriculture-related public works projects such as land improvement and soil conservation programs in which bid-rigging and corruption are rampant and are an enormous drain on the budget must be stopped. It is vital that policies are implemented that benefit both self-reliant producers and consumers who desire food safety, between which a mutually-beneficial relationship can be created.

The introduction of Japan’s first-ever ‘Production Origin Labeling Management System’ and blanket BSE testing of cows, sheep and goats was realized out of my own sense of crisis about the need to support self-reliant agricultural producers who are conscious about both health and the environment.

In a society seeing a rapid increase in suicides and bullying, there are just 200 child counselors nationwide. In addition, there are only 7 medical departments that provide clinical training in this field. There is no future for a society that fails to take care of its own people. A measurable effect can be gained by allocating just a portion of taxes to this area.

During my tenure, a Child Support Department was established at the Board of Education. To better support bullying victims and their parents, a father of a boy who had committed suicide after being bullied was hired as an outside employee to act as an adviser.

We also abolished the age limit for teacher recruitment examinations and aggressively employed people from a variety of backgrounds in school classrooms. A hotline exclusively for children was established, the first of its kind in Japan. We also set up a 24-hour hotline to provide assistance to child abuse and domestic violence victims. These are measures that must be adopted across the country.

Now, more than ever, Japan needs new leadership with the resolve to govern and protect the people and assure “life security”.

While firmly adhering to Clause 1 and 2 of Article 9 of the Constitution, Clause 3 should clearly stipulate the formation of an “International Relief Team”, in contrast to the pre-WWII concept of “Rich Country, Strong Army”, to provide emergency and medical assistance, and rebuild homes in areas affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, and by civil wars and famine. Japan, which is an island nation situated in the Pacific Ocean between the Americas and Asia, must win international trust and recognition through contributions based on soft power.