

Encouraging newcomers on farms by Agricultural Cooperatives in JAPAN



July 10, 2024

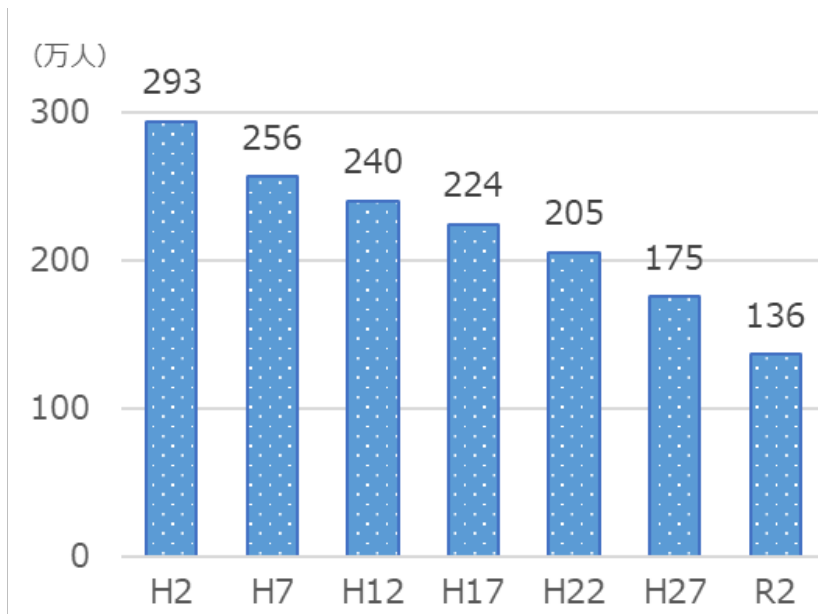
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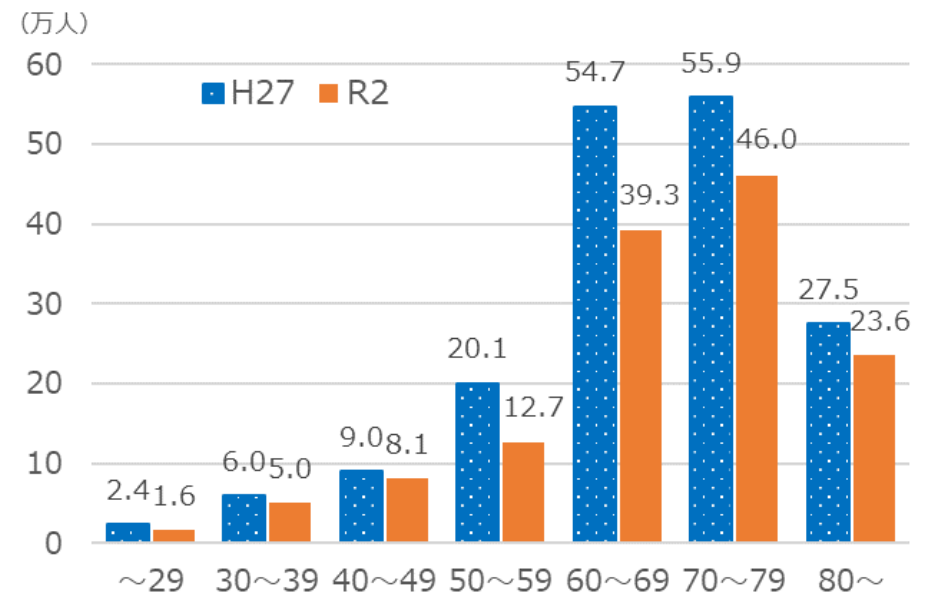
1. Decreasing number of farmers

- Number of full-time farmers is decreasing drastically in Japan.
- We need younger generation to involve in agriculture as we face aging of farmers.

■ Number of farmers (unit; 10 thousand)



■ Number of farmers by age (BLUE: 2015 ⇒ ORANGE:2020)

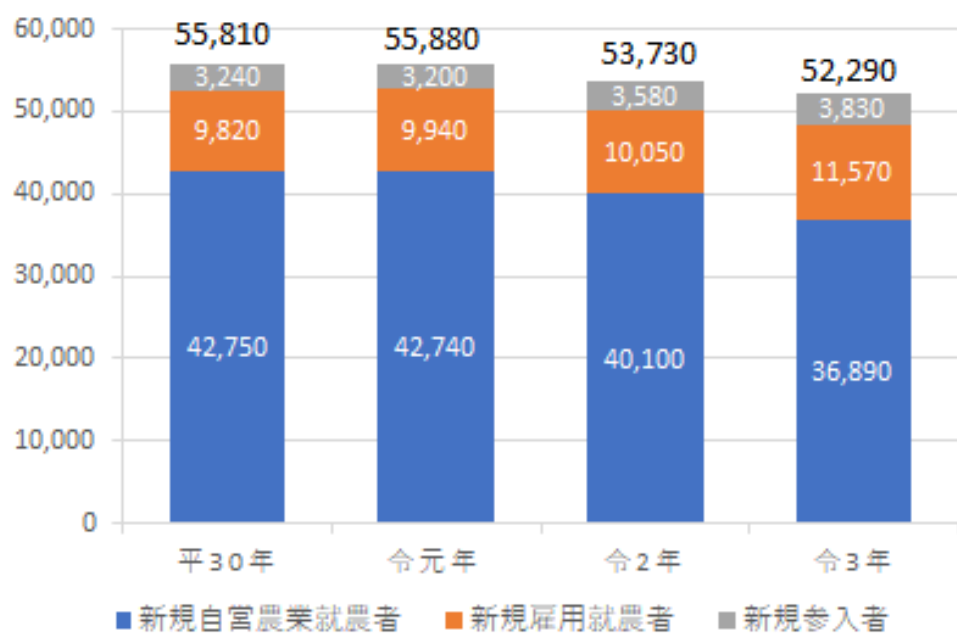


2. Number of new farmers has been few but stable.

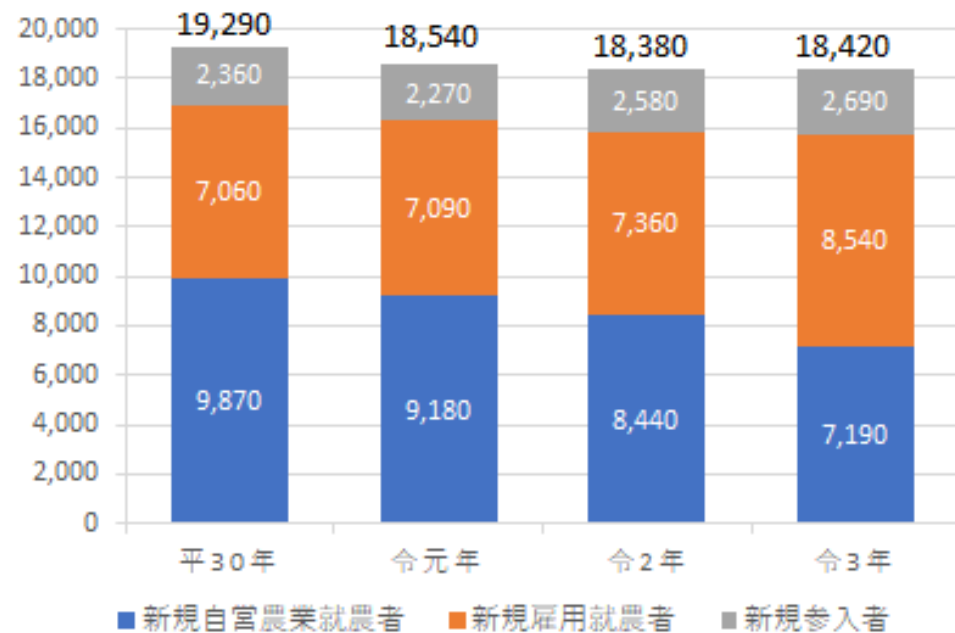
- Total number of new farmers was 52,290 in 2021.
- Majority of new farmers are successors of their parents' farms, while share of newcomers with non-farm background is increasing.

Trend of the number of new farmers (BLUE; Successors, ORANGE; Farm Employees, GRAY; Newcomers)

新規就農者数の推移（全年代合計）



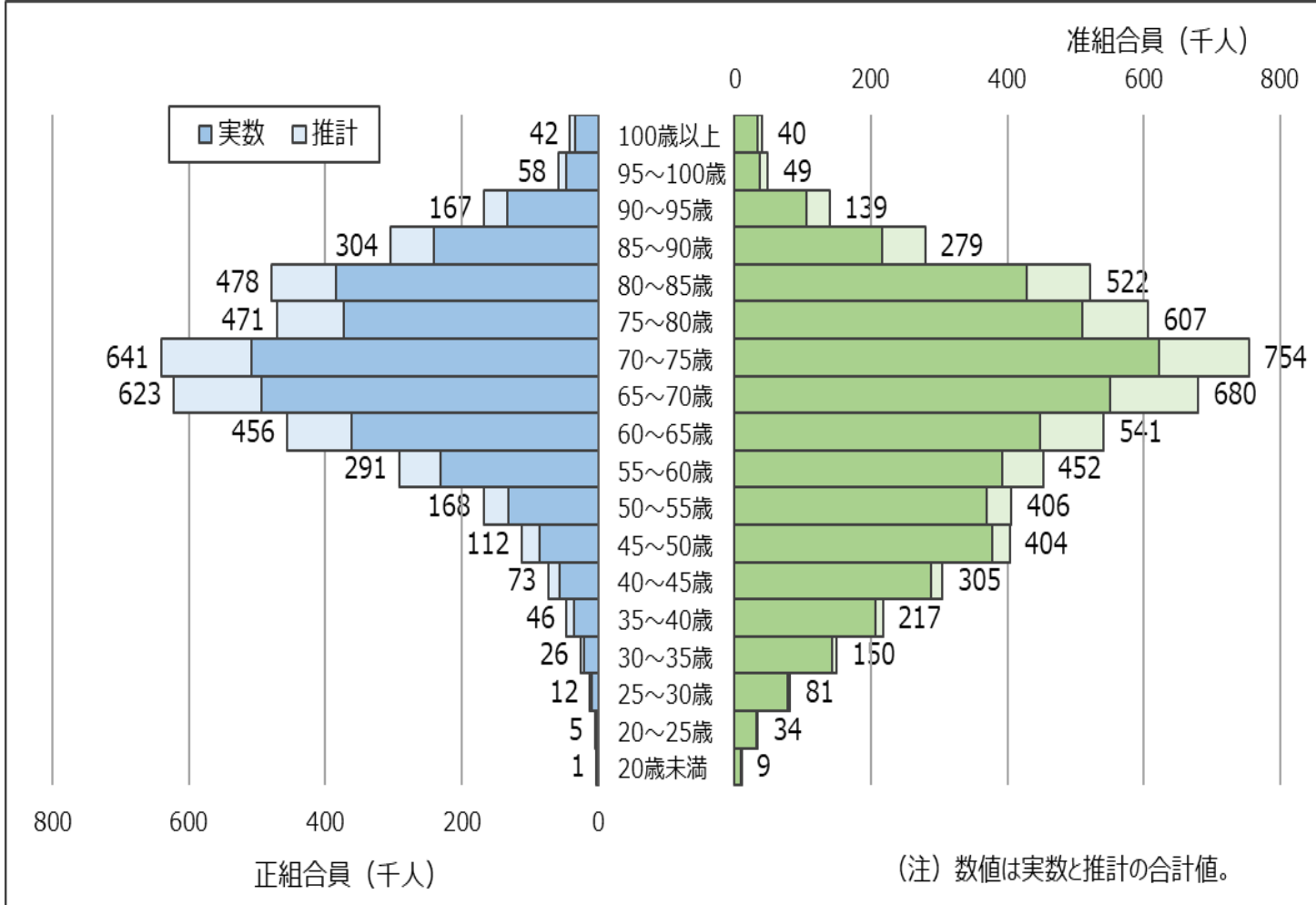
新規就農者数の推移（49歳以下）



3. Aging and decreasing number of members for agricultural cooperatives

- Agricultural cooperatives have developed especially with efforts of farm members, who are now of 70s and older.
- To promote participation of younger generation is crucial for agricultural cooperatives in Japan.

■ Number of members by age (LEFT; Farm members, RIGHT; Associate members)



4. JA Zenchu initiative to encourage newcomers on farms

- JA Zenchu sets a whole package to encourage newcomers on farms with the following **4 steps**.
 - 1. Role sharing** among local government, stakeholders, and a primary cooperative.
 - 2. Recruitment** of possible new farmers.
 - 3. Training** (with supports by the primary coop to trainees on salary, housing, sharing information to start farming, etc.)
 - 4. Start farming.**
- JA Zenchu provides a “handbook” to share the process to encourage newcomers.

5. Actual status of activities to encourage newcomers by agricultural cooperatives

- **67% of primary agricultural cooperatives have a “department in charge/contact person” to consult on recruiting newcomers.**
- **Many primary cooperatives share roles with their local governments** on each of the steps for recruitment, training, and providing service to start farming.
- **Supporting newcomers to “continue” farming is another challenge.** Many primary cooperatives establish supporting system for newcomers to stay on farms with stable productions and management.
- **Most of primary cooperatives has “youth producers’ association”,** that conducts various activities to strengthen cooperation among young farmers, as well as to promote agriculture and vitalize local communities.

Features of the New Farming Support Program (example)

- **Training in all process of farm management for specific crops/livestock** throughout the year.
- **Fully equipped with manuals** for better understanding of work.
- **Training (classroom) in business management** is provided based on the farm management track record.
- **Training on how to operate and maintain agricultural machinery**, using machineries owned by primary cooperatives.
- **Provide subsidies (salaries) to trainees** for their living expenses during training.
- **Provide accommodations** during the training period.

ONSITE of a training



Operating farm machines



Making mulch for vegetables



Raising eggplants



Sorting fresh corns



Onsite inspection of a new field



Examination of GAP

Features of the New Farming Support Program (example 2)

Following **supports** are provided by agricultural cooperatives **for newcomers when start farming**;

- **Introduce/share farmland** to newcomers at a time to start farming.
- **Provide sales channels** for newcomers (via primary cooperative, farmers' market, with the "JA brand")
- **Provide consultation service** from relevant agencies.
- Holding meetings in regular basis to **exchange information on production technique/management** among former trainees.

Training course provided by a prefectural agricultural federation



Training course for strawberry farming (14 months onsite training)

- Operated by JA Zen-noh
- Has three greenhouses and two seedling greenhouses, with three trainers and staffs
- Provides the cultivation method on elevated plantation beds



Outcome of the strawberry training course for the past 15 years

- All the graduates (53 trainees) of the training course started new career as strawberry farmers.
- Now they produce 29 % of total strawberry production in the region, playing an important role for sustainable agriculture and local community.
- Other initiatives to encourage newcomers for other crops are expanding, learning the outcome of this strawberry training course as the best practice.



Thank you