

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ Social Science Study Group



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Local Responses to the Revision of the Seed Law: The Seed Registration System, GMOs and Rice

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In January of 2018, the Japanese legislature abolished its 1952 Seed Law, which provided the legal basis for local agricultural committees that provide assistance to rice farmers including help with seeds, seed planting and nearly all aspects of rice farming. The abolishment of the law is related to a number of other key shifts currently at play in Japanese politics, including the reform of JA Zenchu (Japan Agriculture, the National Central Union of Cooperatives) and power shifts within the bureaucracy alongside international trade commitments. Consumer groups, especially those concerned with genetically modified organisms (GMOs), advocates for sustainable farming practices and those that insist on local control over food, argue that these changes may open rice farming to corporate control, including foreign ownership.

This research begins by examining the landscape of international legal frameworks related to GMOs and the domestic context that influenced changes occurring in agricultural policy including the repeal of the Seed Law. Initial findings suggest that Japan's quasi-governmental institution, JA Zenchu is poised to take on a role similar to corporations in other countries. Japan is likely to see rice farming continue via oversight of JA through mechanization including self-driven tractors and GIS assisted planting and harvesting.

Nicole L. Freiner is Associate Professor of Political Science at Bryant University, where she teaches courses on Asian and Japanese Politics and Society, Comparative and Environmental Politics and Policy. She is the author of numerous journal articles and two books on Japanese politics: *"The Social and Gender Politics of Confucian Nationalism: Women and the Japanese State"* (2012), and *"Rice and Agricultural Policies in Japan: The Loss of a Traditional Lifestyle"* (2019), both published by Palgrave MacMillan. Most recently, she was awarded a grant by the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in order to conduct research on Japan's Seed Law and Biotechnology Policy.

About:

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for scholars conducting research on contemporary Japan.

Meetings are held once a month and are open to speakers from all disciplines of the social sciences. The event is open to all. Registration is not necessary but appreciated, online at www.dijtokyo.org.

Venue:

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