



DIJ Forum

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 18.30 – 20.00 (JST)

From the Rice Grain to the Shop – Exploring Sustainable Food Practices in Japan

Patricia Hein, Western University, Ontario

Eri Ōtsu, O2 Farm, Minamiaso, Kumamoto

This DIJ Forum combines approaches to sustainable food practices of two different worlds within Japan. The urban landscape of Japanese cities—embodied in Shibuya's bustling streets and iconic food vending machines—adopts an accelerated pace, catering to the fast schedules of modern Japanese life. Sustainability scholar Patricia Hein discusses Japanese approaches to food rhythms and uncovers how temporality influences sustainability practices through interviews with chefs, founders, vendors, and consumers. Farmer and local activist Eri Ōtsu shifts the focus to sustainable food production in rural Kumamoto. She illustrates the challenges and achievements of running an organic farm in rural Japan and demonstrates the possibilities of a sustainable lifestyle in Japan's depopulating areas. Both speakers show how food is deeply tied to time, place, and seasonality in two different regions within the country.

Patricia Helena HEIN is an Assistant Professor of Sustainability at the Ivey Business School, Western University, Ontario, in Canada. Her research focuses on the interplay of organizations and society. Specifically, she explores how organizations may perpetuate pressing societal issues – such as inequality or climate change – but also how they can bring about societal change. In her current research she explores sustainable food practices in Germany and Japan.

Eri ŌTSU is a farmer and social activist in Minamiaso in Kumamoto. She graduated from Keiō University (Faculty of Environment and Information Studies) and Technical University of Munich. Together with her husband, she is cultivating rice that they directly sell to households throughout Japan. Her local activities focus on raising awareness for sustainable agriculture and a rural lifestyle. She received the “Model Farmer Award” of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2017 and the Sustainability Award of the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2022.

The event will be held in English, admission is free. Both speakers will hold a presentation, which will be followed by a Q&A session and a small reception. To participate onsite please register via email to forum@dijtokyo.org. For online participation please register via our event website <https://dij.tokyo/sfp>. This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien – German Institute for Japanese Studies

Jochi Kioizaka Bld. 2F, 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094

Tel: 03 3222 5198, Fax: 03 3222 5420