

Aso Grassland Conservation Center

Grassland and Agriculture

Agriculture has been a way of life on the Aso grasslands for a long time. The wild grass that has been cut in the fall and used as bedding for the cattle becomes good quality compost and is in turn used to sustain agriculture. Paddies for rice, fields for cereal crops and vegetables, cultured flowers, and meadows of thatch grasses and combustible-fuel grasses all thrive in the region's relatively cool climate and the favorable environment provided by the broad plains and grasslands.

Due to the abundant grass and water resources, livestock farming, in particular, is a substantial part of the region's agricultural output. By exploiting the natural wealth of the land, farmers have established a symbiotic relationship whereby their livestock is not only used as a source of income but also helps to preserve the state of the grasslands through grazing.

As in the rest of Japan, farming in rural areas is in decline. Aging populations and young workers' desire to pursue careers in other industries, and to move to larger cities, has meant that Aso's farmland can no longer be properly maintained by the local people. Today, the annual controlled burnings of the grassland rely on the hiring of around 2,500 volunteers from the surrounding cities.