

Fukushima Mulberry Shredder

Mulberry shredders were once an important tool for people who commercially raised silkworms. Although the Fukushima Mulberry Shredder is a simple machine, it changed the Japanese sericulture industry and Japan's economy as a whole.

Silkworms do nothing but eat mulberry leaves from the time they hatch until they begin spinning their cocoons. For a silkworm farmer, chopping enough mulberry leaves for their silkworms to eat is one of the most laborious, time-consuming aspects of their job. In 1900, an inventor named Fukushima Motoshichi (1866–1923) changed the entire feeding process with his invention of the Fukushima Mulberry Shredder.

The shredder is a conveyor belt with walls attached to a large knife, which chopped the mulberry leaves. The chopped leaves were then moved forward out of the machine. Because the position of the chopping blade could be easily adjusted, the leaves could be cut to various sizes. This meant that food could be prepared for silkworms at any stage of development. This simple automation revolutionized the sericulture industry, which became a key pillar of Japanese industrial development during the early twentieth century.