**The Aizu Book of Agriculture**

Aizu is known for its high-quality rice and produce, and farmers draw on centuries of specialized knowledge about techniques suited to local conditions. Regional agriculture developed rapidly in the early part of the Edo period (1603–1867), and much of the credit for this lies with Saze Yojiemon (1630–1711), a local farmer and village leader. He produced several books about farming techniques based on careful observation and his own experience building a sound base for agricultural practices throughout Aizu.

Yojiemon was born in the village of Makunouchi, now part of Aizu-Wakamatsu. He published the first and most famous of his books, *Aizu nosho* (Aizu Agricultural Manual), in 1684. He described his experiences and the outcome of his experiments, along with practices of other farmers in the district. The book soon attracted the attention of local leaders, who were eager to borrow it and apply the knowledge in their own villages.

*Spreading knowledge*

The book was written in Chinese characters, which made it difficult for many farmers of the time to read. Yojiemon therefore came up with a clever way to introduce the contents of his book to them. He produced *Aizu uta nosho* (Aizu Agricultural Song Manual), which presented the book’s content in the form of *waka*, a traditional type of short poem or song. Because farmers could easily memorize the *waka*, Yojiemon’s work could reach a much broader audience. He continued to write about and advise on agricultural practices in Aizu, and he was officially commended in 1689 for his services and achievements.

Visitors can learn more about *Aizu nosho* and regional agricultural history in the Fukushima Museum, located near Tsuruga Castle.