

# Background to “Traditional tea-grass integrated system in Shizuoka” being registered as a Globally Important Agriculture Heritage System Site, and efforts after registration.

Inagaki, H.<sup>1)</sup>, Suzuki, H.\*<sup>1)</sup>, Nakatani, S.<sup>1)</sup>, Usui, Y.<sup>1)</sup>, and Kusumoto, Y.<sup>2)</sup> Kusumoto<sup>2)</sup>

1: Shizuoka University, Japan

2: National Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences, Japan

E-mail: inagaki.hidehiro@shizuoka.ac.jp



In Shizuoka prefecture, a unique traditional system for green tea production conserves semi-natural grasslands called Chagusaba. Chagusaba in Shizuoka prefecture have helped in the maintenance of the traditional conditions suitable for the growth of semi-natural grasslands, and they provide an important habitat for natural plant species (Inagaki, 2009). Based on the results of our study, Chagusaba in Shizuoka were designated as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2013.

## Reason for applying for Globally Important Agriculture Heritage System status

When pests of abandoned farmland were studied, we discovered vegetation rich in plant biodiversity, without the occurrence of pests. This was not abandoned farmland; it was a meadow where the remains of rice paddies were used for Chagusaba. Later, our study showed that the Chagusaba were grasslands rich in plant biodiversity. When these research results were announced, both Japanese and foreign researchers began to visit the Chagusaba. As they saw how amazed foreign researchers were by the Chagusaba, the residents also gradually began to recognize the value of these grasslands.

The 10th Convention on Biodiversity (COP10) held in Nagoya in 2010 focused on “Chagusaba,” and in March, the following month, the Chagusaba was selected for the on-site investigation of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative in March. The people of the region prepared a spectacular welcome for the guests by decorating the meeting site with flowers from the Chagusaba and preparing traditional regional food. That was on March 12, 2011, the day after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The excursion was canceled in light of the disaster. The native residents who had faced the world with such pride about their land appeared more despondent than ever before. We saw this despondency as evidence that the land was a GIAHS. However, when applying for GIAHS status was first proposed, there had been many voices of dissent: “We don’t need that.” This was because the residents mistakenly believed that GIAHS registration would force even children to use very strenuous farming methods or that it would restrict structural improvements to the land. As a clear explanation of these facts circulated through the community, popular support for GIAHS registration had gradually begun to develop. Initially, the opponents also included people who were deeply concerned about the future of the region. During the FAO visit, it was these opponents who firmly exclaimed, “Chagusa farming was inherited from our ancestors and is the pride of the region. We will pass this onto future generations.”



## GIAHS Certification System

After GIAHS registration, the Certification System of Chagusaba Practitioners was established. This certification uses as an indicator the effort and level of contribution of each farmer to maintaining the Chagusaba by cultivating biodiversity with high-quality tea production activities. There are three levels of certification according to the ratio of Chagusaba acreage to the total managed tea field acreage. This certification is expressed in the number of leaf marks. The certification system of the Chagusaba in Shizuoka has two broad characteristics. The first is the system of recognizing “people” as opposed to “tea.” Tea distribution is complicated. Crude tea is not directly sold to consumers. Rather, tea from multiple regions is blended together using “combination” technology, and the taste is adjusted to make the final product. The purpose of certifying farmers is so that the farmers implementing the GIAHS, not the distributors and vendors who sell the product, receive the benefits of the GIAHS blend. The other characteristic of the certification system of the Chagusaba in Shizuoka is that certification is performed by scientific measurements using GIS. The certification of practitioners is evaluated by the acreage of Chagusaba to the acreage of the tea field. However, the Chagusaba lie scattered around the tea fields. Also, because the Chagusaba are on sloped land, the farmers themselves frequently do not know the accurate acreage of them. Therefore, the Chagusaba site is confirmed, and GIS measurements are made in order to accurately measure the acreage of the Chagusaba. Presently, approximately 580 families of farmers have been certified, and the certified acreage of the tea fields is approximately 1200 ha and that of the Chagusaba is approximately 450 ha. Among the sites of the GIAHS system, the certification system of practitioners of Chagusaba farming, which is based on the level of contribution to conserving biodiversity, has earned the reputation not only as the first example of such a system, but also as a very unique system.



## Evaluation of Chagusaba by indicator plants

There are many types of Chagusaba, and actually, diverse plant species have not necessarily been conserved in all Chagusaba. Therefore, in order to maintain the environment of the Chagusaba, biodiversity must be monitored. However, the concept of “biodiversity” and surveys of species diversity are not simple for farmers. Thus, out of the indicator plants strongly correlated with the diversity of plant species, the authors have selected three types of plants whose species are easily discernible for farmers and general residents. Presently, the study of these indicator plants is used as the condition for receiving an environmental conservation type agricultural direct payment subsidy, and it is mandatory for farmers.

## Use for sightseeing

The specific utilization of the brand “GIAHS” can be utilized in two general ways: for giving added value to agricultural products and for sightseeing. However, there are challenges in using GIAHS sites as sightseeing resources. Because real estate such as buildings and scenery are certified as global heritage sites, tourists can visit a site even if they do not adequately understand its global heritage value. In contrast, with globally important agricultural heritage systems, it is the agricultural systems that are evaluated. Thus, tourists cannot see the heritage, and it must be explained to them. To address this, we held a workshop for sightseeing associations so that before registering as a GIAHS, taxi drivers and tour bus guides could tell the stories behind the globally important agricultural heritage systems. The results of this workshop were realized by the “Chagusaba Taxi.” This taxi used a reservation system, but taxi drivers acted as guides of the Chagusaba, all the way from Kakegawa Station on the Shinkansen line to the Chagusaba. Also, farmer-planned Chagusaba tourism was also established, including actual Chagusa cutting and strolls through the Chagusaba. Chagusaba tourism actually does not directly benefit farmers much. However, amid declining tea consumption, Chagusa tourism can be expected to increase customers by creating enthusiasts of tea producing regions and green tea through exchanges between consumers and producers as a result of tourism.

