

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage of Aso from the perspective of landscape and its supporting systems

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Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) is a partnership initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations which began in 2002 with the aim to identify, support and safeguard remarkable land use systems and landscapes that are rich in globally significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development. There are 19 countries and 45 areas around the world, and among them 9 areas in Japan that are listed as GIAHS at present. The Aso area located in Northern Kyusyu features the world's largest caldera, which is 25 km wide from north to south and 18 km from east to west and grassland landscapes. The vast grasslands of the Aso area have been managed throughout history by local agricultural activities such as controlled burning, mowing and pasturage since the Heian period. The historical land use in Aso has been a balanced combination of rice fields at the caldera floor, forestry and fungiculture at the foot of the caldera, and grazing pasture at the top of caldera, which is carried out in harmony with the environment. The management of the Aso grasslands for sustainable agriculture have been recognized and certified as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) in 2013. In terms of landscape, the values of Aso as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System are the dynamic grassland landscapes of the large caldera, the historical paddies and rice terraces, which vary in size from small to large as a result of the local human activities. There are beautiful rural landscapes on various scales. However, the productivity oriented rural development and the division of land has been having a negative impact on the landscape value of the GIAHS. There are cases of rice paddies and buildings that contribute to the landscape value being lost. From such cases, it is evident that the landscape structures that should be protected since they are GIHS are not recognized widely enough. This study investigated the landscape value and landscape structure as GIAHS and its value supports landscape policy. As a result, it became clear that the landscape structure of Minamiaso village consist of the traditional combination of grasslands and paddy fields retains significant wildlife habitat and picturesque agricultural landscapes. It has become clear that development activities do not influence to landscape in large-scale, however development activities as land readjustment project influenced to landscape in small and medium-scale. "Landscape planning" "Landscape agricultural development plan" can support the landscape structure in small and medium -scale. It is important to plan the land use for the landscape value of GIAHS.

キーワード：世界農業遺産、景観、景観計画

Keywords: Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), Landscape, Landscape Planning