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## 学 位 論 文 要 旨

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題目: 小規模産地における農協運営主体の農産物直売所のマーケティング戦略  
(A Marketing Strategy for Farmers' Markets Managed by Agricultural Cooperatives  
in Small- Scale Farming Areas)

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In a small-scale farming communities in Japan that cannot adapt large-scale production-distribution systems for the sale of fruits and vegetables, measures must be taken to ensure both the expansion of markets and farmers' income.

Consumer demand has been diversified by lifestyle changes following the country's high economic growth. Vegetables and fruits with reduced pesticide and those that are raised organically are in demand, but in smaller communities it may be difficult to deliver such locally grown vegetables and fruits in the wholesale market.

As a result, off-market distribution has increased, and the distribution methods of fruits and vegetables have begun to diversify. In particular, the number of farmers' markets has rapidly increased in many places throughout Japan, and these markets have been established as one of the new distribution channels for fruit and vegetable producers. The customer base for farmers' markets is large, but in recent years, a downturn in farmers' markets has occurred as competition among the markets has intensified. I therefore propose that the managers of farmers' markets must implement an effective marketing strategy that is different from what they have used in the past.

In recent years, the number of farmers' markets managed by an agricultural cooperative as the governing entity has increased. Compared to the markets that have other governing entities, farmer's markets managed by an agricultural cooperative are able to operate several stores in a large-scale system.

Therefore, in small localities that cannot against the global mass distribution system, the formation of new production centers using farmers' markets is a potentially successful strategy. However, information regarding the shipment of products from members of the agricultural cooperative to farmers' markets is insufficient, as is information about consumers shopping habits concerning farmers' markets.

In the present study, I analyzed both the factory behavior of producers who ship to farmers' markets and the buying behavior of customers.

As the primary analysis, I studied "Agricultural cooperatives" in Tottori Prefecture which manage several farmers' markets in small-scale farming area. Here, I first, summarize the features of the management philosophy of farmers' markets, and then, I describe the characteristics of farmers' markets that are managed by agricultural cooperatives. Regarding consumer behavior, I analyzed the characteristics of consumers' buying behavior at farmers' markets and identified the main customer base at these markets. Factors that influenced new customers of farmers' markets to become repeat customers were also identified.

I also identified characteristics of the shipping process for the main members of agricultural cooperatives, who ship to farmers' markets. In particular, I analyzed the

members' item selection behavior and store choice behavior. Based on all of the results of the study, I propose a marketing strategy to be used by farmers' markets that are managed by agricultural cooperatives in small-scale farming areas.

As a result of analysis, I found that at farmers' markets, a majority of the customers are over age 50. The customers also tend to visit the markets in morning. Concerning the farmers' markets goods, although the evaluation of the goods differed among customers, I found that in general the customers at farmers' markets evaluate the goods for quality, freshness, safety and low price. Customers' overall ratings of the goods are similar for the farmers' markets they have visited, but they often express the intention to again at the same farmers' market.

Regarding the shipment members, I found that small-scale producers who provide multiple items are the main shipment members at farmers' markets. There is also a trend among cooperative members showing, high productivity may ship goods to several farmers' markets. This is understandable since a portion of an extra-large quantity of goods shipped to a single farmers' market is at risk of remaining unsold, and the shipment to multiple farmers' markets will decrease that risk. This situation suggests that by the farmers' markets can provide a market environment for high-producers as a new distribution channel.

However, in the small-scale farming area that I studied, shipment member has increased rapidly since the expectation of farmers' markets is expected to continue, and because the shipping requirements to the farmers' markets are not a barrier. There is thus the possibility that conflicts between agricultural co-op members will intensify at farmers' markets. In particular, I observed that conflicts have occurred concerning the timing of the farmers' markets or a specific price range, or a particular item. To date the farmers' markets have expanded by increasing the numbers of stores and the scale of markets, and further studies are necessary to determine how the market expansion impacts existing customers.

It is apparent that these the farmers' markets need to target the elderly customer base and that they develop new aspects of their organization, such as the vertical integration of shipment members, to carry out new product development strategies and market penetration strategies.