



## Strengthen the Partnership Between Alternative Agriculture and Alternative Medicine

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Both agriculture and medicine, which concern themselves with healthy life, have their “alternative” versions. Just as people working in healthcare are unfamiliar with the term alternative agriculture, those involved in agriculture find the term alternative medicine to be novel.

Are agriculture and medicine similar because they arose from the same roots, and even now walk similar paths? Looking back on ancient times, we see that in medicine there arose the “concept of sanitation” requiring people’s cooperation, while in agriculture there arose “ceremonies” to pray for bountiful harvests and to avoid natural disasters, which made cooperation essential.

Looking back on history, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, advances were realized in laboratory medicine, and attention was focused on the causes and prevention of epidemics. Biochemistry merged with molecular biology and became a powerful weapon in understanding life processes. In agriculture the manufacture of chemical fertilizers and pesticides began, and agricultural production grew by leaps and bounds. Molecular biology became a major field of endeavor, and genetically modified food plants were created.

In recent years modern medicine, which is based primarily on Western medicine, has seen the emergence of alternative medicine, which substitutes for and complements modern medicine, while intensive agricultural production, which uses mainly chemical fertilizers and pesticides, is similarly substituted for and complemented by alternative agriculture. These alternatives have characteristics of the life sciences. For example, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, medical science has concluded the work of decoding the base sequences of the human genome, while agriculture has done likewise with the rice plant genome.

These days some people say we should consider medicine to be “social capital” that humanity holds in common, like education and the environment. This way of thinking is similar to the “one-third spring water” idea which conceived valuable spring water as common capital for agricultural production, and upon which the water was shared impartially. I would like to add that late Prof. Japanese Hirofumi Uzawa defines “common social capital” in this way: “[Common social capital] means social measures which enable all the people living in a country or in a certain region to lead fulfilling economic lives, to develop superb cultures, and to sustainably and stably maintain a people-friendly society”.

Is a partnership between alternative agriculture and alternative medicine possible? Agriculture and medicine, which have a shared historical background as discussed above, face the challenges set forth by 21<sup>st</sup> century preventive medicine which include the assessment, management, and communication of risk, the prevention of illness, and improved quality of health. How can alternative medicine and alternative agriculture partner in response to these challenges in the field of medicine? Tackling this contemporary problem is of the greatest importance in responding to the needs of society.

A number of the achievements of 20<sup>th</sup>-century technological knowledge suggest that science and education under an agriculture medicine partnership will be indispensable to our 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Representative of such areas are prevention of illness, health improvement, food safety, conservation agriculture, and healing agriculture. Despite the saying that medicine and food serve the same purposes, there has not been much emphasis on education and science under an agriculture medicine partnership. In particular, the issue of the coronavirus COVID-19 and new variants, which is

now pandemic and threatening people around the world, should be noted.

Until now there have been few opportunities to study and discuss how alternative agriculture and alternative medicine are related to these areas. I hope that we have a scientific substrate to solve these problems.

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