

FORWARD

Diversified industries such as agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries are being carried out in the Yaeyama islands and the other islands of the Ryukyu Islands that locate in the subtropical climate and where various ecosystems continue through small mountains, hills, flat lands, rivers, mangrove blackish water and coastal regions in the limited area of the small islands. Livelihood in these islands has long been continued on a harmonized balance between agriculture and marine resources rich in the subtropics.

However, along with the increase of populations and the reclamation of agricultural lands by clearing mountainous hills in recent years, agriculture has been facing to the acute constraints of high temperatures and drought in summer. Typhoon causes rainstorm and salinity problems on agricultural crops every year. Soil erosion and its contamination into the coral reef and coastal regions and ground water pollution by chemical fertilizers and livestock excreta have been observed in some locations recently. Countermeasures against these problems need to be taken urgently.

Similar problems have become obvious in a number of tropical and subtropical small *islands* scattered around the Pacific Rim, including other Southeast Asian countries. These islands have their own culture and natural environments diversified among each other. However, it is true that there are common problems in water, soil and climate to solve in order to develop safer and sustainable agriculture in these islands.

Based on the understanding above, Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) organized the “International Symposium in Ishigaki — to form a new network for agricultural research among tropical and subtropical islands” in March 2005 in cooperation with the Seikai National Fisheries Research Institute of the Fisheries Research Agency, the Okinawa Prefectural Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Research Institute for Subtropics. Researchers from Fiji, New Caledonia, the Philippines and Japan reported their own problems, research results and research plans and discussed the future direction of the research collaboration including the building a human network among them and who are concerned.

New collaborative research project regarding the problems in agriculture and environment of the islands in the tropics and subtropics is planned to start in the fiscal year 2006 by Okinawa Subtropical Station of JIRCAS. I hope the proceedings would be utilized by researchers and administrators concerned in order to share the problems and to solve the problems in the region.

Finally, I sincerely express my acknowledgement to all participants from at home, particularly Yaeyama Islands, and abroad to share the problems and to support the symposium and to all members of the Okinawa Subtropical Station of JIRCAS to cooperate and to work together for the success of the symposium.

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