

## THE POLITICS OF DESIGNING AGRARIAN AFFAIRS IN SOUTH KOREA

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### Abstract

This article outlines and analyzes the various factors that have shaped agriculture and rural life in South Korea. This paper first outlines the historical role of the government, farmers and the public in influencing and shaping agrarian life from 1961 to 1992. Second, it looks at the effects of deregulating the agricultural economy over the last two decades. Finally, based on this historical analysis, it considers the present and future course of agriculture/rural life in South Korea. In particular, this article argues that stabilizing and enhancing the agricultural industry and rural life depends on 1) the South Korean government crafting sensible, democratic agrarian policies that give farmers the flexibility and power to adapt to the continually changing global economy and 2) farmers developing an infrastructure of power through which to strengthen economic positions, influence policy making and shape cultural trends. In short, the survival of agriculture and rural life under an industrial/urban centered-global economy requires a process of retrofitting agrarian institutions, structures and cultures in ways that not only ensure social and economic diversity and stability, but also national security through food self-sufficiency.

### I. Introduction

Agriculture, rural life and the farmer have long been revered in modern Korea. Historically, agriculture was considered as a valuable source of wealth that drove economic development especially in the Chosŏn period (1392-1910). Peasants and farmers were considered the pillars of the nation as they cultivated crops and raised livestock that fed and nourished the country. Because of their central roles in society that have

endured since the early recorded history of Korea, agriculture, rural life and farmers acquired a mythical status and became crucial sources of national identity during the Japanese colonial period when Koreans partook in nationalist movements that sought to resist colonialism by identifying what was “Korean” and constructing a unified national body.<sup>1</sup> Agriculture and the farmer continue to be spoken of very highly by Koreans and used as symbols that embody the nation. According to a 2010 survey on Korean agriculture, urban residents declared that “agriculture will continue to be important in the future” and an important role of agriculture is “the preservation of natural environment and balanced development of national territory.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the farmer and agriculture’s prominent place in nationalist discourse, Korea’s agricultural industry and rural life has steadily deteriorated over the last four decades. Since 1961 when the government started a path of modern development centered on industrialization and urbanization, the percentage of Koreans working in agriculture and livestock has declined from 49.5% (1970) to 6.4% (2011) with only 17.6% of land devoted to farming (2008 est.). Agriculture’s share of the country’s GDP also shrank from 25.5% (1970) to 2.6% (2008). Whereas 90% of the population lived and worked in rural Korea before 1945, only 18.5% of Koreans live in the countryside today (2010 est.) with the majority of them being between the ages of 50 and 80. High debt is experienced in most farming households as their incomes have steadily declined. In 2005, each household averaged close to 27.2 million Korean *won* in debt. High debt with lower income in farming households has helped widen the income gap between the urban and rural.<sup>3</sup> Today, not only do farmers face a series of developments that threaten to erode their livelihoods and rural life, including the passage of Free Trade Agreements(FTA),

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but the country also faces a national security issue because the decline of the agricultural industry has resulted in the sharp reduction of Korea's food self-sufficiency rate.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand the decline of the agricultural industry and the farmers' livelihoods, this paper examines the factors, forces and developments that have shaped the direction of agriculture and rural life, or agrarian affairs, in South Korea since 1961. In particular, this paper looks at the role of government, farmers and the general public. Through a historical analysis, this paper seeks to shed light on the powers and influences behind agrarian development and offers policy suggestions for stabilizing and enhancing agriculture and rural life. This paper argues that new possibilities for the agricultural economy and rural living can be accomplished in two ways. First, the government should actively collaborate with farmers to retool its approaches to the agriculture and livestock industries. Second, farmers may better adapt to the changing environment by creating an infrastructure of power that features cooperatives and a new culture of food.

## II. The Role and Power of Government, Farmers and the Public in Shaping the Direction of the Agricultural Economy and Rural Life in South Korea from 1961—1992

In present day South Korea, agrarian affairs have largely been determined by the views and practices of the government, farmers and the general public. Among the three groups, the government has held significant control over the make-up and direction of the agricultural industry and rural society since the country's founding. Before 1948, however, rural inhabitants had already experienced heavy government intervention in their daily affairs through colonial government-led rural movements. These movements were different than rural projects before 1910 in that Japanese colonial-era movements (1910-1945) marked the first time in which the state devoted significant effort and resources toward controlling the countryside in order to create a comprehensive rural market system that would increase agricultural productivity and the output of crops. The colonial government started the Campaign to Increase Rice Production in 1920 and the Fourteen-Year Plan (1926) with the hope of turning peasants into productive, disciplined agricultural laborers. The 1920 Plan featured programs that encouraged "the use of chemical fertilizers and improved seeds, cultivation of new lands, and irrigation improvement, and required inspection of rice and beans to enhance quality and marketability."<sup>5</sup> In order to pacify peasants at a time of growing rural unrest, the Rural

Revitalization Campaign (1932-1940) introduced "spiritual programs" to mold the moral and ethical behavior of peasants—programs teaching virtues such as frugality and "loyalty to the emperor" and correcting "wrong" behavior.<sup>6</sup>

The colonial government's thrust to redesign Korea's agricultural economy and discipline peasants through top-down initiatives stemmed largely from Japan's need for a reliable supply of inexpensive agricultural goods. Because state-led industrialization in Japan was increasingly drawing rural inhabitants to cities, domestic production of agricultural goods started to decrease, which increased food prices and led to "rice riots" and protests over these high prices in Japanese cities. The colonial government reformed Korean agriculture and rural life as a way to help resolve instability in Japan. Agricultural and rural policies in colonial Korea, in short, were developed for the sake of industrialization. This trend of reforming agriculture and rural society based on the needs of manufacturing and heavy industry has been seen in many developing countries in the post-World War II era.<sup>7</sup>

The South Korean government also placed agriculture and rural Korea under the needs and interests of the urban sector and industrial capitalist development after 1961.<sup>8</sup> Park Chung-hee, the authoritarian leader, centered his economic policy chiefly on a program of "labour-intensive manufactured exports-led growth." Until the early 1970s, this program's success was based upon the "squeezing of the agricultural sector" through several initiatives, especially the direct procurement of rice and agricultural goods that lowered the wages and wealth of farmers by keeping agricultural prices low. Low prices on agricultural goods kept labor costs down by reducing "the reproduction costs and thus wage levels for the industrial labour force" and indirectly exerting a "downward market pressure on urban wage rates" by providing a steady supply of cheap laborers who were fleeing from poor economic conditions in rural Korea.<sup>9</sup>

The government's policies on and approach to rural Korea evolved through the New Village Movement (NVM, *Saemaul undong*) in 1971. This movement began because the U.S. government phasing out agricultural aid programs such as PL480 that supplied inexpensive food for urban residents and permitted the government to reroute vital resources to industry and manufacturing.<sup>10</sup> Equally important, increasing discontent by rural inhabitants over the growing income inequality between the urban and rural motivated the government to start this rural movement. Seeking to achieve food sufficiency and pacify the countryside, the NVM tried to "modernize" agriculture and rural



life through infrastructure projects that included the construction of roads, agricultural initiatives that distributed new types of fertilizer and strains of seeds, including the new high-yielding rice seed *t'ongil* (unification), and political indoctrination classes that taught villagers how to “improve” their lives. Like the colonial government’s reasons for emphasizing moral training in its own rural movements, the NVM featured classes on morality and the promotion of “work-ethic” because the government believed rural problems stemmed from “farmers’ lack of willingness, self-confidence, and determination, including their conservative resistance to change...and their laziness.”<sup>11</sup>

The NVM marked the beginning of the government’s determination to carry out rural reforms through a patronizing, intrusive, top-down manner. Government officials forced farmers to use certain seeds, especially the *t'ongil* rice seed that farmers disliked because of its poor taste and its weakness to pests, and ordered them to change various aspects of their lifestyles, such as removing thatched roofs and installing painted tiles for the sake of modernization.<sup>12</sup> It unitarily imposed its development program on and tightly monitored and controlled local communities because it believed that it was the only modern rational entity that could determine the “correct” content and direction of reforms. The government, in effect, believed it was the sole proprietors of “High Modernism.” Government officials therefore rarely consulted with farmers over the direction of the NVM because they believed farmers were traditional and “backwards.”

As a type of top-down agrarian development that embodied the government’s policy of organizing agriculture around the needs of industrialization and urbanization, the NVM also expanded the government’s influence in and control of the countryside. The establishment of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation in 1961 (NACF/*nonghyŏp*) first allowed the government to become a more influential power over the everyday lives of farmers.<sup>13</sup> The NACF supplied services “required of a modernizing agricultural sector: marketing, agro-input supply (fertilizer and machinery), agricultural credit, and other banking services.”<sup>14</sup> Unlike a traditional cooperative, however, the organization rarely represented the interests of farmers, who had no voice or voting power in determining NACF affairs. Local NACF cooperatives were linked to low-level government administrative units and farmers were forced to join the cooperative in order to obtain valuable resources, such as fertilizer and capital, from the government.<sup>15</sup> Alongside the NACF, the NVM with its numerous programs solidified the government’s ability to influence the daily affairs of farmers directly.

Beginning in 1961, a statist form of rule determined agricultural and rural affairs, which was in line with the government’s approach of planning and directing the overall economy in a top-down, unilateral fashion. Hence, starting in the late 1970s, it was unsurprising when farmers challenged statism at the same moment labor and democracy movements in cities began to demonstrate against the government’s process of political and economic development. As labor protests and the fight for democracy grew during the early and mid-1980s, farmers loudly criticized government economic reforms, such as the decline of price subsidies for grains and the failure of movements like the NVM to overcome rural/urban inequality, and the government’s standard approach of excluding farmers in crafting rural policies.<sup>16</sup> A study on the discourse of farmers’ protests around 1987 when the democracy movement was in full force explained that democracy, farm land, import liberalization, democratization of cooperatives and price of farm products were key issues pushed by farmers.<sup>17</sup> This study showed that farmers recognized that creating an inclusive process of agrarian development that would improve their livelihoods required them to participate in the democracy movement and fight for political reforms—not just economic reforms.

The changing historical conditions of the late 1970s and 1980s helped farmers to publicize their demands, gain support in their struggles and challenge the government’s approaches to agrarian development. The most distinctive feature of this new historical period that helped farmers was a culture of dissent. This culture was constructed through mass protests for democracy by members of the working class and university students who demonstrated against authoritarianism and new ideologies, such as Minjung Ideology, that framed the struggle for democracy as a historical mission to fight for the rights and security of “common people.” Pushing for a more inclusive, democratic form of modern development, this culture fostered an environment that not only gave farmers a powerful forum through which to speak out against the government and connect their issues with broader political, economic and social matters, but also drew the public’s attention to the serious problems in the countryside. Urban activists and residents, in particular, took up farmers’ causes as way to transform the entire political, economic and social culture of South Korea. In large part, urban activists and university students took strong interest in the plight of farmers as a response to Minjung Ideology’s emphasis on farmers as the symbols of the nation.<sup>18</sup> Minjung was considered an inclusive category that comprised all Koreans, but the ideology particularly



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valued farmers because they had long been considered the first cultivators of the land and thus the leading force to embody the national spirit. Minjung Ideology expected activists and students to cultivate the political consciousness of farmers in order to help farmers become “makers” of history and assume their leading place in the nation.

There is a long history of urban intellectuals, activists and students being active in agrarian affairs since the colonial period. Organizations such as the YMCA and the Presbyterian Church and newspaper companies such as the *Tonga ilbo* started rural movements that featured literacy campaigns and economic programs.<sup>19</sup> Leftist groups, for example, established organizations, such as Red Peasant Unions, in order to radicalize peasants and construct a socialist society. After 1953, religious figures, such as Hong Pyŏng-sŏn and Pae Min-su, started rural movements as ways to construct an agrarian-based nation-state anchored by a Danish-style cooperative system. The culture of dissent unleashed a huge wave of rural activism in which many religious organizations and university students, in particular, organized farmers against the government and promoted their struggles. The Catholic Farmer’s Union (CFU) and the Christian Farmer’s League (CFL) became two of the most active groups to assist farmers. They set up training schools to turn farmers into activists and helped them organize public protests against the undemocratic nature of the NACF, unfair land policies and the rice price system. The partnership between activists and farmers benefited both sides because farmers acquired additional means to achieve their demands and activists found another cause through which to criticize and organize against government authoritarianism.

The culture of dissent was a pivotal factor that enabled farmers to express their grievances, protest against unjust rural reforms and achieve some concessions from the government. Through the culture, farmers grabbed the attention of non-rural inhabitants, gained popular support for their causes and created alliances to

advance their interests. The culture afforded the structure that briefly ruptured the existing agricultural and reform process and empowered farmers to challenge the government’s system of rule. By the middle of the 1980s, farmers started their own organizations and movements independently from activists. By 1985, there were eight county-level organizations leading farmers’ movements. The number of county-level organizations grew to the point that a national organization, the National Farmers Association (NFA), was started in February 1987 to coordinate activities and lead the fight to resolve land problems, reform the NACF and train farmers to become leaders.<sup>20</sup> Farmers achieved some democratic reforms, including a revised cooperative law that authorized farmers to elect primary cooperative presidents who in turn would elect the national NACF President.<sup>21</sup>

### III. The State of Agriculture from 1993 to the Present

Since the Kim Young-sam administration’s (1993-1998) call for globalization (saegyehwa), economic development in South Korea has featured a process of deregulation and trade liberalization, which has created a very unstable environment for farmers. Neo-liberalism, which calls for the total liberalization of the economy and the reduction of the welfare state, has played a pivotal role in motivating the government to complete a series of multi and bilateral trade pacts, including the General Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture (URAA, 1994), and South Korea’s membership in organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>22</sup> Under President Roh Moo-hyun’s administration (2003-2008), the government has pursued bilateral trade treaties through FTAs.<sup>23</sup> For those countries involved, FTA agreements provide preferential trade conditions through such measures as the reduction or elimination of tariffs and additional barriers on goods. South Korea has concluded FTA agreements with Chile (2004), Singapore (2006), EFTA (European Free Trade Association, 2006), ASEAN (2007), India (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, 2010), the EU (2011), Peru (2011) and the United States (2012).

Critics have particularly focused on how multilateral trade agreements and FTAs have quickly stripped farmers of protective measures for the agricultural and livestock industries.<sup>24</sup> For example, starting after the implementation of the URAA, South Korea has been required to reduce tariffs on agricultural products, with the exception of rice, by 24% from 1995 to 2004.<sup>25</sup> Though all FTAs have spaced out the removal time of tariffs, each of the agreements have targeted the ultimate elimination of most tariffs



in the agricultural and livestock industries, especially in key fields of Korean specialization such as apples, pork and beef.<sup>26</sup> At the same time protective tariffs have been removed during the 1990s, the government's agricultural policy included the reduction of "domestic (price) support" through the government agricultural purchase program, which declined from 1.4 million tons (1995) to 0.7 million tons (2004). The government eventually discontinued the program, including programs to purchase rice, in 2005.<sup>27</sup>

As inexpensive agricultural and livestock imports have gained market shares in Korea and farmers have struggled to adjust to the new demands of the global economy, the agricultural economy has shown significant signs of weakening. The decline of the agricultural sector since 1994 is best summarized in the following excerpt from a 2010 study on trade policy and the agricultural economy in Korea:

...real agricultural output, measured as national farm gross revenue, increased by only 0.48% per annum from 1995-2009, compared to 5.2% per year from 1980-94. Furthermore, annual growth rates, on average, of real prices of farm products and real net farm business income per farm household are -1.9 and -3.9%, respectively, after URAA (1995-2009) relative to -0.13 and 6.7% from 1980-1994. Annual income per farm household, including its non-farm business income, declined from 95% to 66% of the average urban household between 1995 and 2009.<sup>28</sup>

The government has predicted that agricultural and livestock industries will incur further losses through the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS). Estimates of losses stand at 12 trillion won (\$10.7 billion) within fifteen years, with 90% of losses coming in the areas of livestock and fruit. Some farmers have taken advantage of government assistance programs and are trying to increase their income through the export of specialty crops,<sup>29</sup> but farming household production and income on a whole have greatly declined, rural debt has increased and the number of farms has sharply declined.<sup>30</sup>

The government's pursuit of FTAs is in line with its history of approaching agricultural policies. First, FTAs continue the government's practice of developing agricultural policies based on the needs of industrial capitalism. The government sees FTAs as the best way to eliminate foreign tariffs on goods from Korea's major manufacturers, "especially those producing automobiles, ships, semiconductors, telecommunication equipment, and steel."<sup>31</sup> With Korea dependent on exports to fuel its economy and fears

that China will dominate the export market, the government will do anything to eliminate foreign trade restrictions in order to increase foreign market shares for Korean industrial goods. The government, therefore, eliminates agricultural and livestock restrictions, especially with countries who specialize in agricultural and livestock exports, for the sake of industrial growth. Second, FTA negotiations have shown the government's established pattern of unilaterally designing and carrying out major agricultural policies.<sup>32</sup> Farmers and critics of the FTAs have complained that they were only able to participate in crafting FTAs after the government has already negotiated and completed major terms of the agreement.<sup>33</sup> According to a critic, "during the negotiations [KORUS], people were kept distant from the information and the deal was done in secrecy."<sup>34</sup>

Farmers cannot be blamed for standing idly by while the government carried out major policies to deregulate the agricultural economy. After the 1987 election, farmers established a number of progressive organizations<sup>35</sup> to protest these reforms, such as the National Federation of Farmers Organization (1990). Today, struggles against FTAs have been led by the Korean Peasant League (KPL, 1990) and the Korean Women's Peasant Association (KWPA, 1989). Both groups are grass root organizations that share the same objectives of resisting agricultural trade liberalization policies; protecting farmers' rights, food sovereignty, and the environment; and promoting democracy and the construction of a "people's economy." However, the KWPA seeks to unite women farmers and enhance the rights and status of all Korean women.<sup>36</sup>

Since 1990, the KPL and KWPA have organized large-scale public protests against FTAs and have called for the continuation of "domestic agricultural support and farm debt relief,"<sup>37</sup> which appear to be the most important concerns and demands of farmers today.<sup>38</sup> KPL and KWPA protests essentially embody and express the frustrations of farmers who believe that FTAs and debt are responsible for the deterioration of rural social and educational infrastructures, thus eroding their quality of life.<sup>39</sup> Currently, the KPL and KWPA have focused their protests against negotiations for a China FTA, a China-Korea-Japan FTA and the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), which is an expansive free trade pact with Asia-Pacific countries, including the United States and Australia. A majority of Korean farmers are against these potential FTAs because they believe these agreements would destroy the Korean agricultural industry as inexpensive agricultural goods and livestock pour into the country from its close neighbors. The Korean Rural Economic Institute estimates that agricultural production would drop as much as 2.36 trillion



won (\$2.1 billion) within ten years of removing tariffs on Chinese agricultural goods. Lee Dae-jong, the leader of the KPL, has therefore declared that farmers will conduct an “all-out battle” against the Chinese FTA.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the KPL and KWPA’s efforts that have established networks for farmers to exchange information and devise protest strategies collaboratively, farmers have been unsuccessful in preventing the passage of FTAs and influencing the process of deregulating the agricultural economy. In part, the organizations’ chief strategy for achieving reforms and promoting farmers’ interests through public protests helps explain this problem. One of the most widely publicized protests by farmers occurred at the WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun in September 2003 when Lee Kyung-hae publicly committed suicide in order to express his outrage over the WTO and multinational corporations creating an “undesirable globalization that is inhumane, environmentally degrading, farmer-killing, and undemocratic.”<sup>41</sup> Though protests like Lee’s suicide have gained media attention and loudly broadcasted farmers’ issues, they have had little effect on official policy making.<sup>42</sup>

Protests are essential for spreading ideas, educating people and gaining support, but attaining structural reforms in the economy and society also requires directly influencing the political processes that are behind policy making. For example, though the number of Japanese farmers is small and their contribution to Japan’s GDP is miniscule, the JA Group, a large-scale cooperative, has united the farmers to create a powerful bloc of influence that has successfully lobbied farmers’ interests and determined agricultural policies and legislation, especially the direction of FTAs.<sup>43</sup> Though the JA Group is mired in a number of controversies, its way of mobilizing resources and pressing farmers’ demands through its strong influence over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the agricultural ministry has resulted in institutional reforms that have protected farmers.

Korean farmers could claim that their protesting strategy has successfully pressured the government to maintain rice tariffs in all Korean FTAs. The government, however, recognizes that removing rice tariffs would cause a huge political crisis because it holds strong symbolic and historical value to Koreans.<sup>44</sup> Il Sa-kong, the former finance minister, commented that in the KORUS negotiation, “the inclusion of rice could have made it politically more difficult to negotiate the FTA. You must understand, for Koreans, rice is more than just a commodity. It has historical, cultural and emotional dimensions.” Regardless of farmers’ activities, then, the government is committed to preserving rice tariffs.<sup>45</sup>

Farmers have also encountered difficulties in protecting their interests because of the diminishing support from outside of agriculture and rural Korea since 1993. The loss of support from the general public started as the culture of dissent metamorphosed into a new culture of consumption centered on the *sinmin* (citizen). Unlike the Minjung-centered culture of dissent that emphasized the overthrow of military authoritarian regimes and the protection of farmers, this new culture focused on the protection and enhancement of the consumer rights of citizens at a time when neo-liberal policies were promoting consumption. According to John Feffer, the consumer’s needs were most important in this new culture and thus consumers believed that the “Korean farmer is expected to plant only what the consumer wants.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, the farmer should not expect help from the public, but instead should help urban consumers realize their desires and ideal lifestyles. In fact, a number of middle class Koreans began to “feel frustrated by the protective regulations concerning agriculture” and advocated trade liberalization because protective trade measures “put restraints on their ability to engage in consumerism.”<sup>47</sup> The 2008 protests over the resumption of beef imports from the U.S. was a moment when urban residents and the media expressed strong support for farmers through calls for the protection of farmers and food sovereignty.<sup>48</sup> This support, however, quickly disappeared after the protests, which showed that people’s reasons for demonstrating was less about their hope to improve the position of farmers and more about anti-American sentiments and fears over becoming sick from beef tainted with mad cow disease.

#### IV. Policy Suggestions

The Korean agricultural economy is in a state of transition in which conditions for farming and raising livestock are being drastically readjusted to conform to the standards of a global economy that stresses deregulation and trade liberalization. Korean farmers should accept this reality, especially the inevitability of the government concluding more FTAs in the future, and no longer fight for the restoration of already-cut tariffs, price controls and government purchasing programs. Farmers instead must adapt to this new reality by developing innovative ways to produce and market agriculture and livestock and enhance rural life while promoting their interests to the government—a process already underway in many rural communities. The government should be supportive of these efforts and drives to reconstruct the agricultural economy, especially for national security. South



Korea currently has one of the lowest food self-sufficiency rates among all OECD countries—26% or 4.6% if rice is not included. Food self-sufficiency, or “the extent to which the nation can supply its own food,”<sup>49</sup> is a major problem in Korea as result of the large disappearance of farms and the rising importation of grains, especially wheat and corn and soybeans, which are primarily used as feed for a growing livestock production.<sup>50</sup> During the 2007-2008 world food crisis, grain and food prices increased throughout the world and contributed to food price inflation in Korea, which is currently the second highest among OECD countries (8.1%, 2011).<sup>51</sup> Policymakers have grown gravely concerned about “the impact of rising grain prices on the overall economic performance of the economy and political stability.”<sup>52</sup>

The government has addressed food self-sufficiency issues by enhancing its capabilities for food security—“a state’s ability to provide enough food to feed its people.”<sup>53</sup> In particular, the government has helped Korean companies purchase farmland overseas in return for sending agricultural goods to Korea at low prices.<sup>54</sup> Government officials have also focused on securing a steady supply of inexpensive grains by setting a semi-government commodities brokerage and trading firm in Chicago.<sup>55</sup> Regardless of their potential effects, the catastrophe of the 2008 Daewoo led-farming program in Madagascar<sup>56</sup> and the continual domination of Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge and LDC in controlling agricultural trading and prices raises serious doubts about any positive developments coming from these recent initiatives.<sup>57</sup>

Though the government should still explore various external food security options that are fair and effective, it also should adopt a balanced approach to food security by devoting resources to the support of farmers’ initiatives to transform and reconstruct the agrarian economy and strengthen Korea’s food self-sufficiency level. Indeed, because internal factors and forces are far easier to manage and control than events and developments outside of the country, national and local programs to increase food self-sufficiency could prove to be very effective. The government has already promised and begun administering numerous long and short-term forms of aid to help farmers transition to an FTA-conditioned economy.<sup>58</sup> In order to ensure a path of development that increases food self-sufficiency and provides benefits and security to farming households, the government still needs to expand its ways of helping farmers boost productivity and gain new markets through reforms that are democratic and sustainable. First, in order to help farmers acquire the latest innovations in farming practices, materials and technology, the government should increase spending on agricultural R&D,

which is considerably low in comparison to other developed and developing countries, and relax laws that prevent certain forms of agricultural investments by domestic and foreign capital.<sup>59</sup> Second, government agencies should help farmers cultivate new overseas markets, which would enable the Korean agricultural industry to expand. Third, it should provide more resources to small and medium size farms instead of only increasing the number of large-scale farms and the amount of aid to farms owned by corporation because historical evidence has shown that a high-level of agricultural productivity has been achieved through smallholding farming in developing countries.<sup>60</sup> Fourth, it should carefully reconsider its land redevelopment projects, which have decreased over one million acres of rich farmland over the past thirty years.<sup>61</sup> Finally, the government should pour resources into sustaining the social-welfare system in rural Korea, which has seen mass closings of schools and hospitals that has contributed to the overall decline of rural life.<sup>62</sup>

Any new reforms should be carried out in close consultation with farmers. The Korean government should rethink its long-standing practice of unilaterally designing and pushing through agricultural and rural projects and programs. Studies on local economies have shown the success of farming and rural projects have depended on how well the government worked with local communities who have the expertise and knowledge to determine what is best for developing their immediate areas of living.<sup>63</sup> The NVM proved that a top-down movement does not ensure the improvement of the agricultural economy but instead could lead to deep resentment toward the government by rural inhabitants.

For their part in revitalizing rural Korea, farmers should utilize the resources given to them by the government and redesign their approaches to the agricultural economy in ways that would allow them to achieve new economic opportunities and gain more influence and support in society. In particular, these new approaches should take advantage of the growing market for organic food and high-end agriculture and livestock in China, Korea and Japan and create the necessary mechanisms that would sustain their plans of development, such as shaping political legislation and increasing public interest in agriculture and rural life by influencing cultural trends. Farmers, in short, should create an infrastructure of power that enhances their economic, political and cultural strength. Currently, among farmers throughout the world, cooperatives (*hyöpdong chohap*) represent one of the most democratic and effective institutions to create an infrastructure of power. Cooperatives serve to deal with the farmer’s most pressing problem of a scarcity of



organization and resources toward adequately dealing with the forces and institutions of capitalism, especially in the area of finance. What distinguishes a cooperative from a corporation is that it is a democratic institution owned and controlled by members that emphasizes community and healthy social relationships alongside economic goals.

Cooperatives in Korea first gained popularity during the colonial period when intellectuals and religious groups such as the Ch'ondogyo created large-scale cooperative systems that stressed the economic goals of improving the material situation of farmers in order to save and cultivate human life.<sup>64</sup> Cooperative movements expanded in the late 1980s and began to challenge the NACF, especially confronting its authoritarian nature. Cooperatives in South Korea have proven to be effective and powerful mechanisms that have strengthened the economic powers of farmers and given farmers more autonomy and control over their lives. By collaboratively marketing and selling agricultural goods and livestock directly to consumers, marketing cooperatives, in particular, have allowed Korean farmers to gain stable and fair incomes through the maximization of resources and lowered costs by sidestepping intermediaries between the producer and consumer.<sup>65</sup> Founded in 1986, Hansalim (Save All Living Things), for example, has flourished with over 280,000 consumer cooperative members, 2,000 farmers, 328 employees and over 131 stores with over \$162 million in sales (2010). Under Hansalim's cooperative system that is centered on organic farming, farmers streamline their costs by sharing the labor and responsibility to distribute their goods and sell them at cooperative stores that are located in urban centers, such as Seoul and Pusan.

Hansalim has been extremely beneficial for farmers and rural residents on several levels. Economically, the cooperative has created a production and distribution system for farmers that has expanded the market for their goods and their economic opportunities. Socially, the cooperative has strengthened ties between farmers and urban residents through visiting farm programs and educational projects, which has gotten urban consumers to become more aware of and interested in agrarian affairs. Politically, Hansalim has fostered relationships with NGOs throughout the world in order to promote the interests of rural residents and environmental policies to governments and policy makers. In effect, Hansalim has enabled farmers to compete with large-scale agricultural corporations and has provided members with the means to participate and shape processes that directly influence their livelihoods.<sup>66</sup>

In today's globalizing capitalist economy, important trade decisions and financial decisions and trends that play significant roles in determining agricultural and rural settings, such as commodity prices and the flow of capital, are being made by global institutions. Building more cooperative movements should be a powerful way for farmers to establish economic, political and social networks and give rural locales the power to assert their influences over national and global affairs. In fact, the conditions are ideal for starting cooperative movements because the government has recently enacted laws that make it easier to start a cooperative and there is a growing popularity for cooperatives.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to strengthening their institutional powers through cooperatives, farmers should collaborate toward cultivating strong ties with the general public, especially urban consumers. In order to regain the support the farmers' movement had experienced under the culture of dissent and foster again a broad alliance that is powerful enough to push their interests and goals today, farmers should specifically reach out to and influence people through a new culture of food centered on agriculture and rural life. Part of the infrastructure of power, this food culture should more than just highlight the current prospects and challenges facing farmers in that it should persuade the general public that it is in their best interest to care about what is happening to Korean agriculture and rural life. A new food culture in Korea could arouse public support for farmers by stressing how farming is not only about producing food of good quality, but also about protecting society by bringing awareness and solutions to political, economic and social issues that affect everyone. Organic food movements by farmers in the United States today have done a masterful job of drawing consumers to their causes by showing that addressing agricultural and rural problems helps to bring attention to and tackle significant problems in society, such as the political lobbying power of agribusiness in determining government food and nutritional standards, the relationship between income inequality and access to healthy food and the erosion of the natural environment and ecosystems through pesticides and chemicals. By spreading their message and familiarizing the public about agricultural life through mechanisms that connect farms to consumers, such as farmer's markets, the U.S. organic food movement has successfully linked agricultural and livestock issues to protecting democracy, tackling economic inequality and safeguarding the environment, thus raising public support for farmers.<sup>68</sup>

Several studies have recently shown that Koreans are concerned over the possibility of FTAs drastically diminishing the country's





sovereignty, and domestic instability and health disasters erupting because of economic globalization.<sup>69</sup> A culture of food can articulate how sustainable organic farming, which already has a favorable impression on society, could forcefully address these concerns because organic farmers are creating local agricultural systems with high quality control that strive for food self-sufficiency on the peninsula.<sup>70</sup> By linking agricultural and rural issues with important political, economic and social issues in contemporary Korea, the culture of food could draw broad attention and support from the public as people recognize that helping farmers and addressing agricultural and rural problems could serve as an alternative means to confront and resolve pressing problems in society. Far from needing to invent new language, farmers could simply deploy already existing concepts to articulate this linkage. Indeed, farmers could adopt the KPL and KWPA's concept of "food sovereignty," which "stresses the importance of redefining the relationship between producers and consumers such that the food economy can again be primarily a local economy and dependence of Korean consumers on the corporate food system and large scale industrial agriculture can be lessened or eliminated."<sup>71</sup>

The successful creation of an influential culture of food requires more than just language and discourse to make connections. It also requires farmers to familiarize urban dwellers with their livelihoods. Because people living in cities and their suburbs are far removed from the daily life of farmers and unfamiliar with rural living, there is a lack of awareness of what farmers are currently experiencing and thus few reasons for them to support farmers' causes. Farmers could create mechanisms through which to overcome this chasm of knowledge and experience by learning from Hansalim's educational and exchange programs, such as "Life Class," that invite urban dwellers to work on farms and celebrate holidays with farmers and KWPA's cooperative program "Our Sister's Garden," which directly connect rural food producers with urban consumers. Agritourism, which

"incorporate[s] both a working farm environment and a commercial component," is a growing industry in Korea and could also serve as a powerful mechanism to expose people to farming and rural life.<sup>72</sup> Organic farms engaged in tourism activities, for example, teach visitors about the history of agriculture in Korea and emphasize farming's role to "sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms" and "...restore ethical and spiritual values of life for all of us."<sup>73</sup> Fostering powerful mechanisms, like agritourism, to influence urban dwellers is crucial for the culture of food to create new networks through which to spread the farmer's message and draw assistance.<sup>74</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Currently, agriculture in South Korea is at a crossroads. Whether agriculture rises to new levels or continually declines depends on how well the government, farmers and the public collaborate to create an inclusive, transparent and democratic path of agrarian development. Each party has a stake in the present and future course of agrarian development because agrarian issues not only affect the everyday lives of farmers and rural inhabitants, but also the country's overall economic, political, social and cultural conditions. The government must make sensible and democratic macro-changes that enable farmers to easily adopt and sustain micro-decisions; farmers must continually adapt to changing environments by creating innovative designs and approaches toward enhancing rural life and the agricultural and livestock industries; and the public must support farmers' efforts and refrain from anything that romanticizes the rural, which is an unrealistic, conservative approach to agrarian development.<sup>75</sup> It is too early to know how the Park Geun-hye administration will approach agricultural and rural policies, but forceful calls for "economic democratization" during the presidential campaign<sup>76</sup> and growing concerns over a path of development centered only on industrialization and urbanization indicate that changes may be in store for rural Korea.<sup>77</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For more information about the connection between agrarianism and nationalism, see Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 135-150.
- <sup>2</sup> Korean Rural Economic institute, *Agriculture in Korea 2010*(Seoul: Korean Rural Economic Institute, 2010), 489.
- <sup>3</sup> This decline in farming income has contributed to the widening urban-rural income gap as the level of farm household income in relation to working urban household income dropped from 90% in the 1990s to 66% in 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> This percentage includes feed and excludes rice.
- <sup>5</sup> Gi-Wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, "Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign, 1932-1940," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 78

- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 88.
- <sup>7</sup> In countries such as Argentina and Turkey, governments enacted several measures to protect domestic industries that damaged agricultural sectors and the lives of farmers, including overvaluing the real exchange rate, pushing down the price of agricultural goods through direct procurement programs and placing high taxes on agricultural exports. Maurice Schiff and Alberto Vades, *The Plundering of Agriculture in Developing Countries* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1992), 5.
- <sup>8</sup> This is an argument well researched in the works of Larry Burmeister. See Larry L. Burmeister, "Agriculture cooperative development and change," in *Transformations in Twentieth Century Korea*, ed. Chang Yun-shik and Steven Hugh Lee (New York: Routledge, 2006), 64-85, Larry L. Burmeister, "South Korea's Rural Development Dilemma," *Asian Survey* 30-7 (July 1990): 711-723 and Larry L. Burmeister, "State, Industrialization and Agricultural Policy in Korea," *Development and Change* 21 (1990): 197-223.
- <sup>9</sup> Mick Moore, "Mobilization and Disillusion in Rural Korea," *Pacific Affairs* Winter (1984-1985): 583.
- <sup>10</sup> PL480 (U.S. Farm Surplus Importation Agreement) was a program to ship agricultural surpluses in the U.S. to countries throughout the world for political purposes.
- <sup>11</sup> Moore, "Mobilization and Disillusion in Rural Korea," 588.
- <sup>12</sup> High Modernism is "a supreme self-confidence about continued linear progress, the development of scientific and technical knowledge...the rational design of social order... and, not least, an increasing control over nature (including human nature) commensurate with scientific understanding of natural laws." James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 89-90.
- <sup>13</sup> The 1950 Grain Management Law and the Office of Rural Development (ORD, 1961), gave the government broad powers to control agricultural and rural affairs. In particular, the 1950 Grain Management Law, which "gave the government far-reaching budgetary authority to purchase, store, transport, allocate, and establish prices for agricultural commodities," gave the government strong powers to regulate agrarian affairs. See Burmeister, "Agriculture cooperative development and change," 66.
- <sup>14</sup> The NACF was established through the merging of several village cooperatives with the Korean Agricultural Bank.
- <sup>15</sup> According to Burmeister, "over 90 percent of all farm households have belonged to the cooperative since its establishment" while it served "to insure that a politically docile countryside could be harnessed to the industrialization drive." Burmeister, "Agriculture cooperative development and change," 68 and 71.
- <sup>16</sup> Nancy Abelmann, *Echoes of the Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 213.
- <sup>17</sup> Chul-Kyoo Kim, "Globalization and Changing Food Politics in South Korea," accessed December 1, 2012, [http://www.waseda-giari.jp/sysimg/rresults/456\\_report\\_2-2.pdf](http://www.waseda-giari.jp/sysimg/rresults/456_report_2-2.pdf), 78.
- <sup>18</sup> For an excellent study on the Minjung movement see, Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).
- <sup>19</sup> Trying to create a united front against Japanese imperialism and attempting to realize their ideal visions of the nation were few of the reasons for starting rural movements.
- <sup>20</sup> Abelmann, *Echoes of the Past*, 218.
- <sup>21</sup> Burmeister, "Agriculture cooperative development and change," 74.
- <sup>22</sup> Neo-liberal reforms of the economy and welfare state started with banking and financial reforms under President Chun Doo-hwan in the early 1980s and greatly accelerated through reforms prescribed by the IMF and undertaken by President Kim Dae-jung after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998.
- <sup>23</sup> FTAs have been pursued for several reasons, especially due to the stalled multilateral trade discussion in the Doha Development Round.
- <sup>24</sup> Though the Korean government argues that FTAs lifts the national economy by increasing exports and creating new jobs, the agreements are still controversial because critics argue that they give too much power to foreign corporations and strip the government's power to protect consumers' rights and privacy and curb speculative financial activities. See Martin Hart-Landsberg, "Capitalism, The Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and Resistance," *Critical Asian Studies* 43:3: 319-348.
- <sup>25</sup> Chun Kwon Yoo, Munisamy Gopinath and Hanho Kim, "Trade Policy Reform, Productivity Growth and Welfare in South Korean Agriculture," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy* (2012): 3.
- <sup>26</sup> For a list of tariffs to be eliminated, see Choi, Yong Kyu, "Free Trade Agreements of Korea in Agricultural Sector," November 25, 2011, <http://www.kikou.waseda.ac.jp/wojuss/achievement/publication/pdf/norinchukin/i4-2.pdf>, 397-421.
- <sup>27</sup> Yoo, Gopinath and Kim, "Trade Policy Reform, Productivity Growth and Welfare in South Korean Agriculture," 3.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Mari Fujisaki, "FTAs push S. Korean farmers into 'sink or swim' crises," *Asahi Shimbun*, July 11, 2012.
- <sup>30</sup> Employment in agriculture has steadily decreased with nearly 60,000 jobs being lost yearly since 1991. See Byongwon Bahk, "Policy Recommendations for the Korean Economy," *South Korea and the Global Economy in Transition: Selected Working Papers*, ed. Byongwon Bahk and Gi-wook Shin (Stanford: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2012), 101.
- <sup>31</sup> Hart-Landsberg, "Capitalism, The Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and Resistance," 327.
- <sup>32</sup> During Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung's administrations, it could be argued that they established agricultural and rural policies with little input from farmers. For example, in response to the new trade agreements that deregulated the agricultural economy, the Kim Young-sam administration set up the "Agricultural and Rural Development Committee" in February 1994 to design new agricultural and rural policies that would help farmers adjust to the new economic environment. Given the responsibilities to craft significant policies that will directly affect farmers, the committee was composed of only thirty civilian "experts" and no farmers. The Roh government had encouraged farmers working closely with officials to design agricultural programs under its policy of "participatory government," but it rarely included farmers during the negotiation process for international treaties like the FTA.
- <sup>33</sup> Induk Kim, "Voices From the Margin: A Culture-Centered Look at Public Relations," (PhD diss, Purdue University, August 2008), 189
- <sup>34</sup> "South Korea, conclusions from regional strategic meeting against FTAs," July 30, 2012, <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/actions-and-events-mainmenu-26/stop-free-trade-agreements-mainmenu-61/1283-south-korea-conclusions-from-regional-strategic-meeting-against-ftas>, 5.

- <sup>35</sup> The KPL, in particular, has “over two hundred village branches, 64 country headquarters, nine provincial headquarters and national headquarter in Seoul.” See Kim, “Voices From the Margin: A Culture-Centered Look at Public Relations,” 90.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 86 and 90.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>38</sup> Chul-Kyoo Kim, “Globalization and Changing Food Politics in South Korea,” 77-78.
- <sup>39</sup> See Heesun Chung and Gregory Veeck, “Pessimism and pragmatism: agricultural trade liberalization from the perspective of South Korean farmers,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 40-3 (Dec 1999):271-284 and Kim, “Voices From the Margin: A Culture-Centered Look at Public Relations,” 119.
- <sup>40</sup> Kim Hun-dae, “Agriculture at risk under FTA with China,” *Hankyoreh*, May 5, 2012.
- <sup>41</sup> John Feffer, “The Legacy of Lee Kyung Hae,” *Yale Global Online*, August, 29, 2005, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/legacy-lee-kyung-hae>.
- <sup>42</sup> Commenting on the impact of Lee’s suicide on the government and policy making, Na Gi-soo said, “...The South Korean government and other governments stated that they were sad about his death. But there was no big change in Korean agricultural policy. It’s a sad thing.” See Feffer, “The Legacy of Lee Kyung Hae.”
- <sup>43</sup> “JA at crossroads/TPP, agriculture can coexist/But reform of huge farming federation is unavoidable,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 18, 2011 and Aya Takada and Yuriy Humber, “Japan Wants Free Trade. Its Farmers Don’t,” *Businessweek*, August, 2 2012.
- <sup>44</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, The Proposed South Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) (RL 33435; July 18, 2007) by William H. Cooper and Mark E. Manyin, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33435.pdf>, CRS-2.
- <sup>45</sup> See “Korea-U.S. FTA/Il Sakong Interview,” *East-West Center*, accessed January 1, 2013, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/news-center/east-west-wire/korea-us-fta-il-sakong-interview>.
- <sup>46</sup> John Feffer, “Korean Food, Korean Identity: The Impact of Globalization on Korean Agriculture,” *Shorenstein APARC Seminar Series*, 2004, [http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20815/Globalization\\_and\\_Korean\\_Agriculture\\_John\\_Feffer.pdf](http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20815/Globalization_and_Korean_Agriculture_John_Feffer.pdf), 34.
- <sup>47</sup> Ha Joon Chang and Jang-Sup Shin, *Restructuring ‘Korea Inc.’* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 69-70.
- <sup>48</sup> For a description of the protests, see Choe Sang-hun, “Korean Leaders Considers Ways to Rework Government,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 2008.
- <sup>49</sup> Anders Riel Müller, “The Fight for Real Food in Korea,” Korea Policy Institute, April 4, 2012, <http://www.kpolicy.org/documents/interviews-opeds/120404andersmullerfightforrealfoodinkorea.html>
- <sup>50</sup> Su-kyeung Lee and Anders Riel Müller, “South Korean External Strategy Qualms: Analysis of Korean Overseas Agricultural Investments with the Global Food System,” (Paper presented at International Conference on Global Land Grabbing II, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, October 2012), 14.
- <sup>51</sup> For an excellent discussion on the 2007-08 Food Crisis, see Deborah Johnston, “Introduction to a Symposium on the 2007-8 World Food Crisis,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10-1 (January 2010): 69-71.
- <sup>52</sup> Lee and Müller, “South Korean External Strategy Qualms: Analysis of Korean Overseas Agricultural Investments with the Global Food System,” 14.
- <sup>53</sup> Malte E. Kollenberg, “Food insecurity alarm for quality food,” *Yonhap News Agency*, April 18, 2012.
- <sup>54</sup> Under the guidance of the Overseas Agricultural Development Service (OADS), 85 projects in 20 different countries were being carried out by the end of 2011. See Lee and Müller, “South Korean External Strategy Qualms: Analysis of Korean Overseas Agricultural Investments with the Global Food System,” 22.
- <sup>55</sup> Formed in April 2011, aT Grain Co. is a jointly owned company between the state-owned Korea Agro-Fisheries Food and Trade Corporation, Samsung C&T Corp., Hanjin Transportation Co. and STX Corp and specializes in purchasing, transporting and storing grains.
- <sup>56</sup> This project led to the overthrow of the Ravalonmanana administration by protests over highly questionable terms in a lease for 1.3 million hectares of farming land given to Daewoo Logistics by the Malagasy government.
- <sup>57</sup> Alongside these four companies, Mitsubishi and Marubeni, Japanese companies, are also major trading companies. According to Lee and Müller, “79% of total imports of the three major grains are controlled by foreign trading companies.” See Lee and Müller, “South Korean External Strategy Qualms: Analysis of Korean Overseas Agricultural Investments with the Global Food System,” 14.
- <sup>58</sup> Types of aid include direct payments for damage compensation from excessive imports, loans and consulting services to diversify production and increase productivity and funding rural infrastructure projects such as wiring up rural homes for internet connection and setting up websites through which farmers could easily acquire data and information and develop relationships with urban consumers.
- <sup>59</sup> Byongwon Bahk points out that “In the case of agriculture, even investment or management by domestic capital and companies is still strictly regulated, a legacy from years past when agriculture was virtually the only source of wealth...If Korea had, beginning in the early 1960s, attracted FDI, capital, technology, and managerial skills from advanced countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and France, Korean agriculture and its food processing industry would look very different—and much more successful—today.” See Bahk, “Policy Recommendations for the Korean Economy,” 114.
- <sup>60</sup> Derek Byerlee, “Are We Learning from History?” *The Global Farms Race*, ed. Michael Kugleman and Susan L. Levenstein (Washington: Island Press, 2013), 21-44.
- <sup>61</sup> “According to Anders Müller, through controversial projects such as the Four Rivers Restoration project that destroyed nearly a thousand acres of healthy farmland along riverbanks, agricultural land over the past 30 years has been “reduced by almost one million acres.” See Müller, “The Fight for Real Food in Korea.”
- <sup>62</sup> The erosion of the quality of life in rural Korea has led to a growing exodus of young men and women out of the countryside, which has caused a steep decline in the number of farming households with a successor (3.6%, 2005). See Korean Rural Economic Institute, *Agriculture in Korea 2010*, 75.
- <sup>63</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 3.



- <sup>64</sup> For more information on religious-based cooperative movements like the Ch'öndogyo cooperative movement, see Albert L. Park, "Building a Heaven on Earth: Religion, Activism and Protest in Japanese Occupied Korea," (unpublished manuscript), Microsoft Word File.
- <sup>65</sup> For a good description of one cooperative, see Michael Reinschmidt, "Rural Development: Lessons from the Liberalization of Korean Trade," *Korea Journal* 49-4 (2009): 91-134.
- <sup>66</sup> For more information on Korean cooperatives, Hansalim and its impact on Korean farmers and consumers, see Do Wan Ku, "The Emergence of Ecological Alternative Movements in Korea," *Korean Social Science Journal* 36, no. 2 (2009): 8-29, Hyejin Choi, "Institutionalization of Trust as Response to Globalization: The Case of Consumer Cooperatives in South Korea," *Transit Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (2009): 457-461 and Reinschmidt, "Rural Development: Lessons from the Liberalization of Korean Trade," 91-134.
- <sup>67</sup> Editorial, "'Sahoejök kyöngjae' silhöm, Hyöpdong chohap kkotpiryömyön," *Hankyoreh*, November 29, 2012 and Kim Hyönda, "Hyöpdong chohap sidae kaemak..." *Hankyoreh*, November, 29, 2012.
- <sup>68</sup> Michael Pollen, "Vote for the Dinner Party," *New York Times Magazine*, October 10, 2012, 62-64.
- <sup>69</sup> See "Koedam üi nara," *Chosön ilbo*, November 10, 2011 and Shi Young Lee, Taejoon Han and Sung Hee Jun, "Anxiety over Globalization in Korea," December 5, 2008, [http://www.keip.go.kr/skin.jsp?bid=news\\_06\\_view&grp=news&mode=view&num=183081](http://www.keip.go.kr/skin.jsp?bid=news_06_view&grp=news&mode=view&num=183081).
- <sup>70</sup> Bo Won Suh, Anita Eves, and Margaret Lumbers, "Consumers' Attitude and Understanding of Organic Food: The Case of South Korea," *Journal of Foodservice Business Research* 15-1 (2012): 49-63.
- <sup>71</sup> See Müller, "The Fight for Real Food in Korea."
- <sup>72</sup> Hyungsuk Choo and Tazim Jamal, "Tourism on Organic Farms in South Korea: a new form of eco-tourism?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 17-4 (July 2009): 431-454.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.
- <sup>74</sup> Korean farmers need to set realistic goals on how to achieve these new networks. Many Koreans have supported the ALBA system (Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas) as a viable way of creating a democratic and sustainable system for agriculture that will greatly benefit farmers. Yet, the problem with ALBA is that it is a regional government institution funded by Latin American countries, especially Venezuela. Though it has merits, ALBA would not work in Korea or East Asia because governments would not support this system. Korean farmers need to create a regional system that does not rely on the support of governments. Taking time to thinking about these autonomous regional agricultural systems controlled by farmers is important because it could lead to alternative ways of organizing and strengthening agriculture in Korea.
- <sup>75</sup> A trend founded in reaction to industrialization and urbanization, the romanticization of the rural emphasizes not only farming as a noble profession because agriculture is the source for living and wealth, but also the country as the ideal space for a healthy life because of its natural surroundings. Because of their connection to nature, both farming and the country have been typically characterized as "authentic," unlike industry and the city, which have been depicted as "artificial." Agrarianists today, who typically have been behind romanticizing the rural, have sought to preserve and protect the rural as a sanctuary from the harms and ill effects of industrial and urban living by rejecting any changes or forms of development in the country. Aiding rural residents cannot be accomplished through the idealization of the rural and the rejection of all changes for these options only unfairly dictate a way life and overly presume that preventing changes can be achieved easily under globalization. The romanticization of the rural is found prominently in today's "back to land" movement.
- <sup>76</sup> For a short summary on calls for economic democratization, see Choe Sang-hun, "South Korean Resist Hypermarkets' Intrusion on Small Businesses," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2012.
- <sup>77</sup> In Korea, there is a growing movement of people in cities moving to the countryside and taking up farming because of their discontent of urban living and industrialization. According to a Reuters report, "more than 10,503 families left Korean cities in 2011 to take up farming, more than double the number in 2010. For many, the constant need to compete for jobs, promotion and space in the city was just not worth it." See Iktae Park, "Koreans flee stress and the city for rural idylls," *Reuters*, May 9, 2012.

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