

Revitalisation of Mountainous Communities Utilising Regional Resources (Yuzu Citrus)

Umaji Village, Kochi Prefecture



Overview of Umaji Village

Umaji Village is situated in the eastern part of Kochi Prefecture and composed of the Umaji District of the Yasuda river system and the Yanase District of the Nahari river system. The village has a border with Tokushima Prefecture, and is surrounded and isolated by 1,000-metre-high mountains. Forests account for about 96 percent of the village area (165.52 km²), and national forests account for about 75 percent of the forests. It is a small mountain village with a population of 893 and 429 households (as of 31 December, 2018), having neither national roads, railways, traffic lights, high schools, nor convenience stores.



(Umaji district)



(Yanase district)

Background

Umaji Village once boasted a forestry industry that made use of its rich forest resources, and mainly undertook the national government's national forest projects with two national forestry offices within the village, which made the village unique. Moreover, a forest railway was built to log timber from the mountains to the coast, the total length of which was about 85 kilometres. Later, while forestry began to decline through the slump in timber prices and the downsizing of national forest projects, Umaji Agricultural Cooperative (hereinafter referred to as "JA Umaji") started to make efforts for the full-scale cultivation of yuzu, which had been used as seasoning in the village.

At that time, as forestry was still active and most villagers were busily engaged in the industry, it was difficult to manage the yuzu business. Therefore, the surface of the fruits was rough and visually unappealing, which made it impossible to sell the fruits themselves, thus prompting the extraction and sale of the juice.



(Yanase Forest Railway to log timber)

Overview of the Project

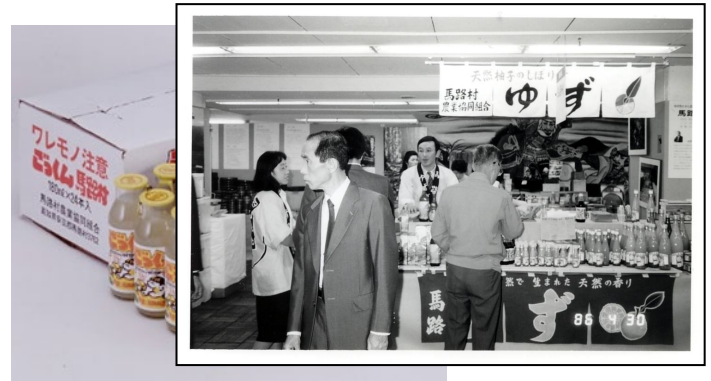
JA Umaji has worked on the development and sales of processed yuzu products for an extended period of time, and released *tsukudani* (ingredients boiled in soy sauce) as the first processed product in 1979, *Yuzu No Mura* citrus soy sauce in 1986, and *Gokkun Umajimura*, juice made from honey, water and yuzu juice in 1988. In 2006, Yuzu No Mori was established to consolidate scattered factory facilities, which enabled the establishment of a system to consistently control the production, order receipt, delivery, and sales.

Since JA Umaji provides the most job opportunities in the village, and greater yuzu sales increase income for yuzu farmers, the local government also offers maximum support. It makes efforts to publicise Umaji Village through yuzu and to improve the strength of the local brand by providing a grant for the improvement of facilities and the development of new products while working on various events cooperatively.

Since Umaji's yuzu farmers are aging, these initiatives provide assistance for production machinery and develop roads to farmland in order to reduce the effort for production.



(Yuzu No Mura)



(Gokkun Umajimura)

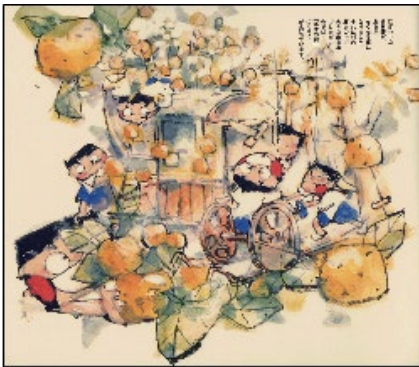
Strengths and Innovations

JA Umaji features the consistent management of the whole process from production to delivery. In production and processing, grown yuzu citrus are processed in the village plant for receiving orders and making deliveries. Direct sales are conducted at department store events and other venues to focus on connections with general consumers. Accepting mail-orders in addition enables customer information to be managed, improving analysis of sales trends etc. Further, as a mechanism for promoting the village, they place emphasis on making the Umaji region known to general consumers by adding the village's name to products, using the scenery, children, senior citizens, and cultivation scenes of the village for commercials, posters, and brochures, and unifying illustrations that emphasise Umaji's rustic aesthetic.

As a preference in yuzu, the farmers throughout the village cultivate the fruit without using chemically synthesised fertilisers or pesticides and no shop in the village sells them. They aim to make the yuzu drink *Gokkun Umajimura* something they can let the village children drink without any concerns.



(Poster of JA Umaji)



(Calendar of JA Umaji)



Results of the Project

Despite the fact that 192 of the farmers that cultivate yuzu are aging, the motivation of producers has increased since JA Umaji buys all the yuzu citruses they produce. Moreover, as JA Umaji provides the most job opportunities in the village, many young

people from Umaji or who moved to the village have gainful employment.

Brand recognition was boosted after *Yuzu No Mura* was commended in 1988 and *Gokkun Umajimura* in 1990 at events at Tokyo department stores that received media attention. Subsequently, sales increased yearly, and sales for 2017 stood at 2.87 billion yen.

A number of visitors and tourists visit the village to see the efforts of JA Umaji, which has led to an increase in revenues for accommodation facilities in the village.

Future Expansion

JA Umaji developed a distribution base in Kochi City to reduce the transport costs and opened the JA Umaji Antenna Shop *Umaji* as an annex to the facility in March 2016.



Antenna Shop Umaji

Although they have sold about 60 kinds of diverse products making use of yuzu so far, as it is essential to expand the range of application and products, JA Umaji is investigating the functionality of juice, seed oil, and extract as well as the effectiveness of juice residue, oil residue, flowers, and leaves in collaboration with a university in order to develop new application and products such as cosmetics and health supplements.



(Products of JA Umaji)



(Cosmetics)

Reference URL

<https://www.yuzu.or.jp/>

(Umaji Agricultural Cooperatives)

<http://www.umajimura.jp/>

(Umajimura Furusato Centre)

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