

## NSLA Methods to Spread Organic School Meals

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### INTRODUCTION

It all started on March 11, 2011. On that day, the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident happened, spreading the radiation over the wide area in this country. At that time, I felt that I was the one responsible for this terrible event because I did not care about the society and did not do anything to help it.

I asked myself if there was anything I could do, even if there was only one person to take a step forward for the future of my children. I searched for something that would clean up the polluted environment, something that would benefit the physical and mental health of the children, and something in which I could be involved as a mother.

My answer to this question was "organic." Organic is good not only for humans, but also for everything on the earth. This was exactly my way of life I was seeking for. "Organic" has become my basic philosophy in acting for the future of children. For the next eight years, I worked hard alone to promote organic school meals in Ama City in Aichi prefecture.

I built Natural School Lunch Action (NSLA) in Aichi prefecture in 2019 because I met Ms. Zen Honeycutt in that year.

Since then, the NSLA's efforts have led to the implementation of organic school meals in four cities in 2021, the third year of its establishment, and in seven cities in 2022. We have now expanded to 40 branch initiatives all around the country.

Key words: Organic agriculture movements, Organic school meals initiatives, NLSA methods, Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)

## HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF NSLA

In December 2019, I had an opportunity to meet Ms. Zen Honeycutt who has been a leader and a pioneer in the organic movements in the U.S. since 2012 and also the Founding Executive Director of Moms Across America [1]. After listening to her talk, as a fellow mother of three children I felt that what I had done in Ama City was very little compared to her contribution to the society. Inspired by her, I think that I might be able to do something like her in Japan. Soon after that day, I called mothers who might be interested in organic school meals initiatives, and seven of them got together. I told them about how and what I have done in Ama City and said to them; "This is how I want others to promote organic school meals in Japan." They were so impressed by my talk, then an action group of mothers was organized shortly to promote organic school meals. This is the beginning of NSLA. (See Fig.1)

Since then, I have held a number of seminars for those who would like to make school meals organic. As a result, some existing organizations joined us, and more people started their own organizations as NSLA branches in Aichi Prefecture. However, around the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from going out and collecting people; therefore, we decided to hold webinars to introduce the NSLA methods created by me.

In fact, webinars worked well to spread the methods of the NSLA across the country. The number of NSLA branches has rapidly grown, and organic school meals have been implemented at many schools in several cities through our efforts as shown in Fig.2. Organic school meals share has grown sharply by the enthusiastic efforts of NSLA.

The progress of organic school meals share is faster and higher than that of the organic lands share. This means the demand exceeds supply. It is obvious that the school meals are good outlets for the organic agriculture sector.

## NSLA METHODS

To realize organic school meals, it is necessary for us to build the trust and the cooperation between NSLA members and relevant stakeholders in the school meals program. It is not an easy task, but NSLA Methods have been making it possible. In Japan today, many organizations are appealing to local governments for organic school meal's introduction, but each of them is not doing as NSLA has been doing, and in only a few cases they are successful. Our success was dependent not on forceful and aggressive attempts and communications, but on gentle and friendly manners.

### (1) Transmission of Miki's ideas to other potential NSLA members

The most important key element of NSLA methods is Spiritual Mindset. When I started the activities, I took the same aggressive approach as many activists had done, but the results were not successful. I reflected on myself and analyzed my behaviors sincerely to make my way of doing more successful. Through this process, I realized that what is needed for success is not to persuade or confront others, but let the stakeholders walk together heading for the organic school meals achievement.

This is the same as parenting, and when I applied the Adlerian psychology that once helped me raise my children to this activity, it dramatically became more successful than before [2]. So I built the "Miki's Ideas" based on this way, while also referring to "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" and other books [3]. This Miki's Ideas is shared with potential NSLA members via webinar, and those who agree with me will become NSLA members. (See Fig.3).

## (2) Actions based on the Miki's ideas

Based upon the Miki's ideas, we NSLA members have promoted our activities according to the established procedures as shown in Fig.4.

First, before contacting school meals officials we build NSLA branches and launch social network sites.

These preparations are to show them that we are ordinary mothers, not radical groups, and to make them comfortable during the meetings with us.

Then, in order to make clear the effective approaches, we must carefully research school meals in our local governments and to understand the current situations. This is because in Japan, each local government has the authority to manage school meals, and the way they are operated in different ways. In doing so, the key persons as shown in Fig.5 involved in the operation of school meals in each local government are identified.

At the meetings, we will provide information on relevant national projects to promote organic school meals and respective subsidies from the government. We do not ask them to do something for us, but to ask how we can work together with the school meals stakeholders for the healthy future of our children and then offer our supports.

Of course, there are times when things don't go smoothly, but in those cases, we review Miki's ideas, update them, and then approach stakeholders repeatedly. It might take some time, but, at the end of the day, we can establish the trust and cooperation between the local NSLA and the School meals stakeholders. Similarly, we could build relationships of trust with farmers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. In addition, through a series of various community service activities, such as serving for the town community revitalization committee, NSLA has succeeded in building good

relationships with the local government people and city council members including mayors and gradually deepened their understanding of organic school meals.

Finally, after building good relationships of trust with key persons involved in school meals, we connect them to each other horizontally.

NSLA has made bridges among school meals officials, local government people, farmers, and suppliers, and has been successful in achieving organic school meals.

## FUTURE WORKS

In Japan, "Measures for achievement of Decarbonization and Resilience with Innovation (MeaDRI)", the Green Purchasing Law, and the Fourth Basic Plan for the Promotion of Food Education have paved the way for encouraging organic school meals in villages/towns/ cities [4][5][6]. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has allocated a budget to support organic school meals initiatives in the FY2023 budget [7]. Additionally, a joint public-private organic school meals forum was held in 2022 where about 50 mayors participated [8]. This apparently shows that interest in organic school meals is gradually penetrating in this country.

We are working for a variety of more effective outreach plans than ever before to move this trend forward as shown in Table I.

## CONCLUSIONS

(1) NSLA methods created by me have grown into a practical one, gaining various experiences so the movements have become more streamlined year by year.

(2) By the methods, we were able to successfully implement organic school

meals by the mother's power which has been said to be difficult to achieve them by social movements.

(3) To catch up the situation where organic school meals demands exceed organic food supplies the IFOAM Recognized PGS Initiatives set up among local organic farmers' groups would be desirable. NSLA runs the IFOAM Recognized PGS Initiatives in Aichi prefecture in order to gain trust between organic farmers and school meals stakeholders through the annual organic farm peer reviews by relevant stakeholders.

(4) Since NSLA methods are based on capturing the human heart, it is commonly applicable to other social movements, even in different languages and countries.

The organic movements such as conversion from conventional to organic increase the organic food supply to meet the organic school meal's demands, will definitely accelerate organic farm and organic school meal's developments around the world.

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(in Japanese)



## FIGURES



Fig.1: Timeline of NSLA

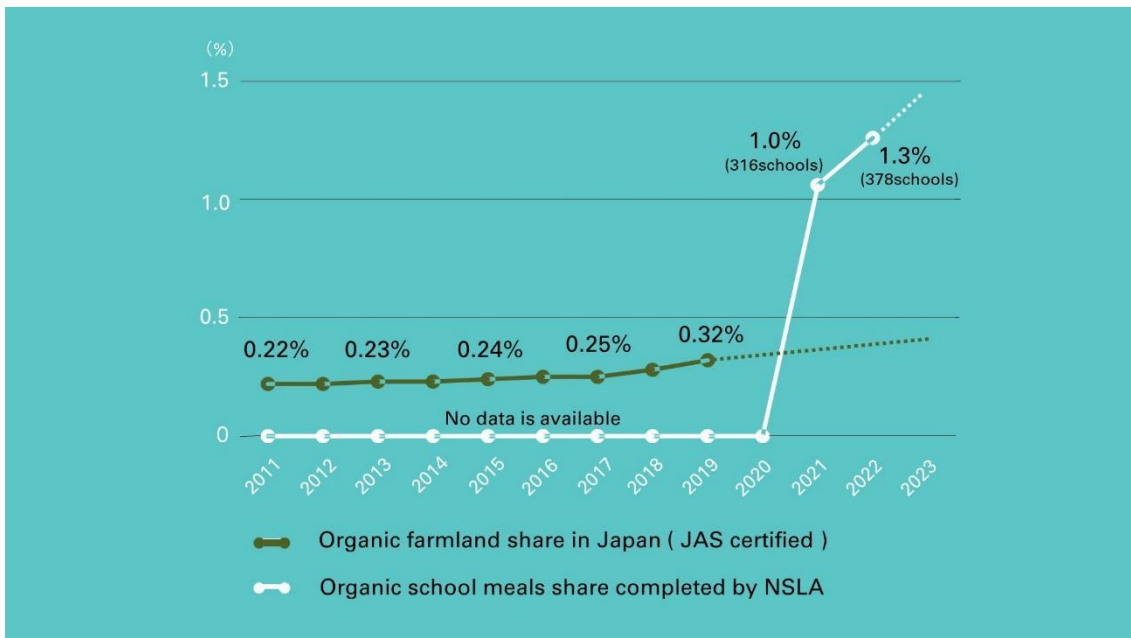


Fig.2: Annual developments of Organic Farmlands share (to total arable land areas) & Organic School Meals shares (to total elementary/junior high school numbers)

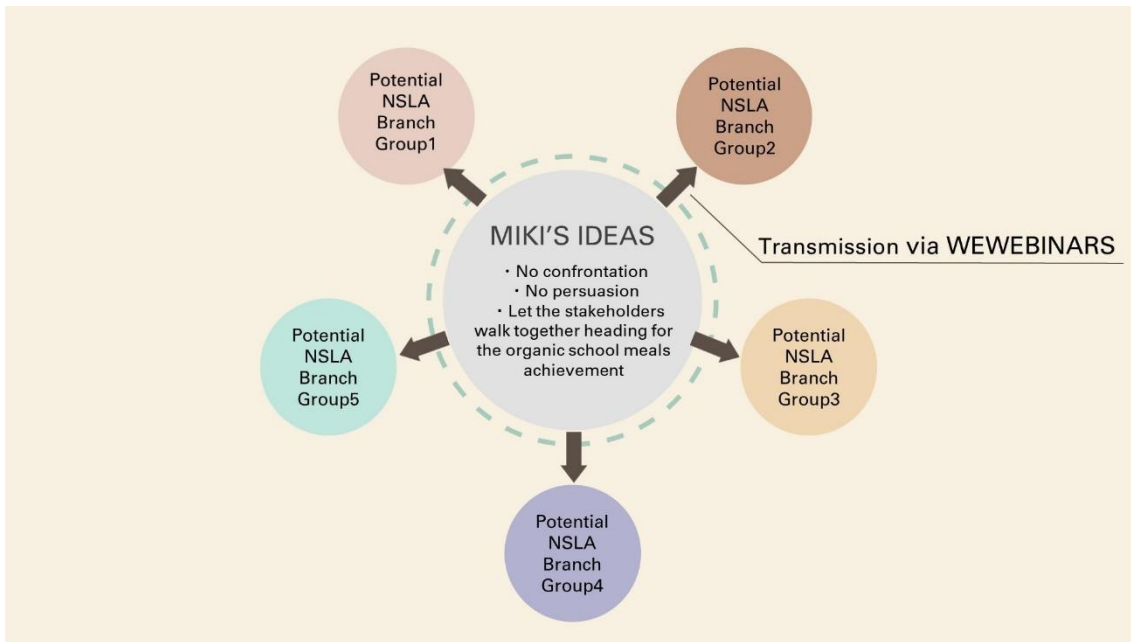


Fig.3: Transmission Miki's Ideas

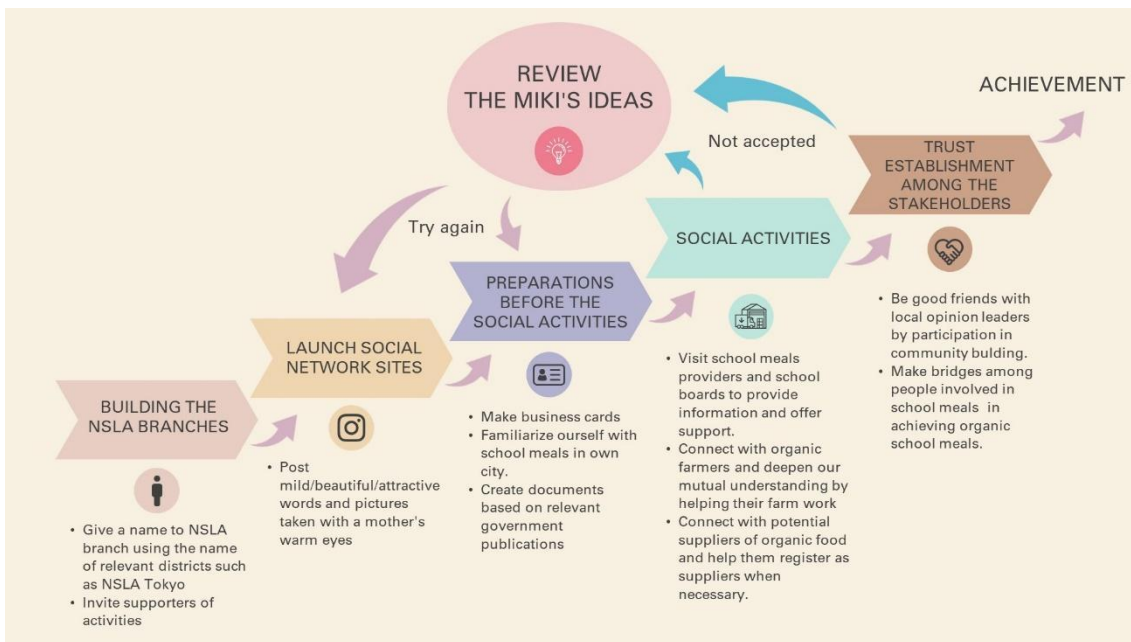


Fig.4: NSLA Actions based on the Miki's ideas

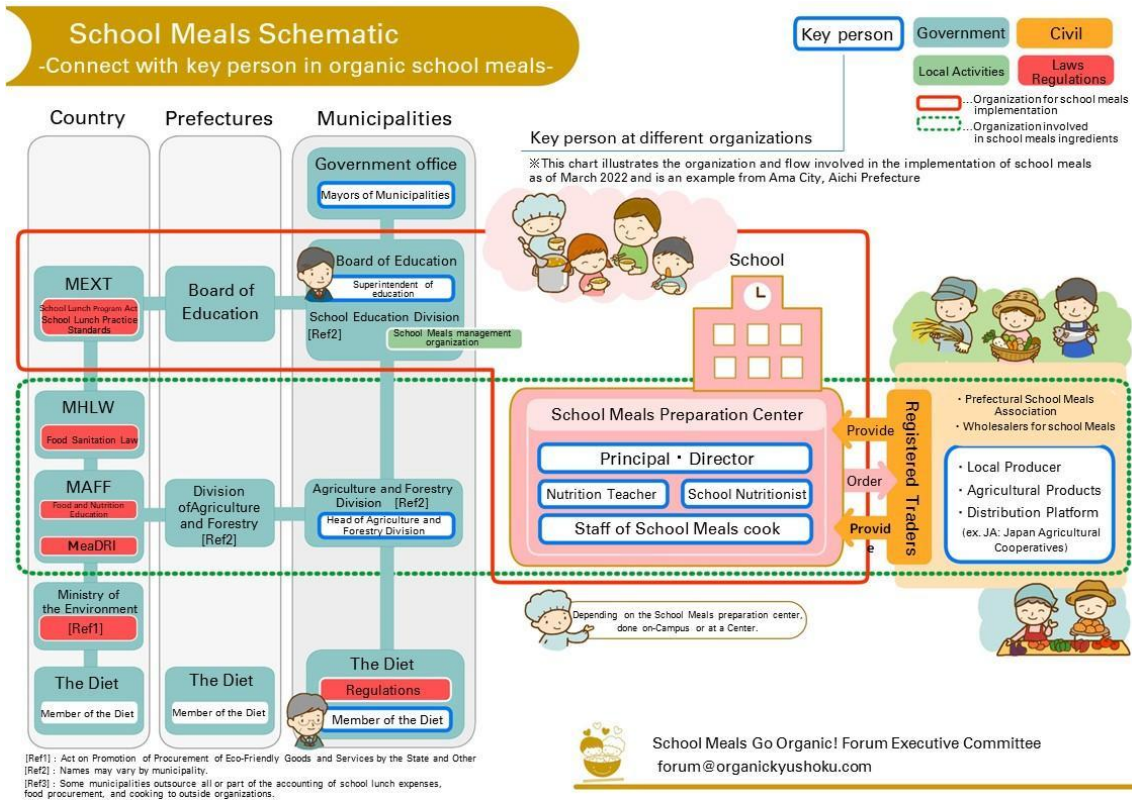


Fig.5: Respective school meals stakeholders in Japan



Photo1: Helping harvest at an organic farm  
in Ama City



Photo2: Washing organic carrots  
for school meals by NSLA and  
organic farmers



Photo3: School meals with  
organic carrots and radishes  
in Chiryu City



Photo4: Meeting with the Mayor of Ama City and the Aichi Prefecture Council Member



Photo5: Discussion meeting with Hokkaido branch of MAFF

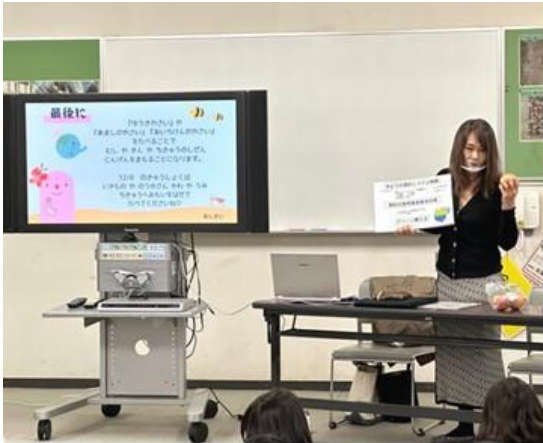


Photo6: Give on-site classes at an elementary school in Ama City



Photo7: NSLA Board Members



Photo8: Organic Rice Harvest Festival at PGS Initiatives

Table I Future works

Present issues	NSLA's challenges
<p>Insufficient supply of organic produce Organic farmlands share in Japan share is 0.3% (JAS certified) and organic school meal share is 1.3% respectively in 2022</p>	<p>NSLA is preparing to launch the IFOAM Recognized PGS Initiatives in Aichi Prefecture to grow PGS certified produce to be supplied to school meals</p>
<p>Awareness of the significance of organic food among children, parents and school meals stakeholders are low.</p>	<p>NSLA creates the packages of educational programs for organic foods and the SDGs are to be taught at schools.</p>
<p>Strict School lunch requirements especially in terms of price</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Purchase directly from local organic farmers to reduce intermediate costs</li> <li>•Use Organic foods instead of expensive processed foods</li> <li>•Use legumes that can meet the required amount of protein, instead of expensive and environmentally hazardous meat</li> </ul>