

## Efforts for succession and development of usage of traditional regional resources in the Tadami Biosphere Reserve

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### Key Messages/Lessons learnt

- Tadami Biosphere Reserve (BR) is a mountainous area located in a heavy snowfall zone, which has managed to preserve a rich natural environment characterized by heavy snowfall and the traditional lifestyle and culture of the local residents, which form the cornerstone of the region. Yet one major issue is how to handle the succession and development of such a lifestyle and culture utilizing local resources in a sustainable manner in the current day and age with the threat of a declining and ageing population.
- Efforts are being made to utilize sustainable natural resources, pass on and expand traditional skills, promote production and branding of local products, and to aim for socio-economic development in the region.
- By branding local products, we have been able to send out information on lifestyles and the use of resources in harmony with Tadami's natural environment, as well as boost the revenues of the local producers of the products.

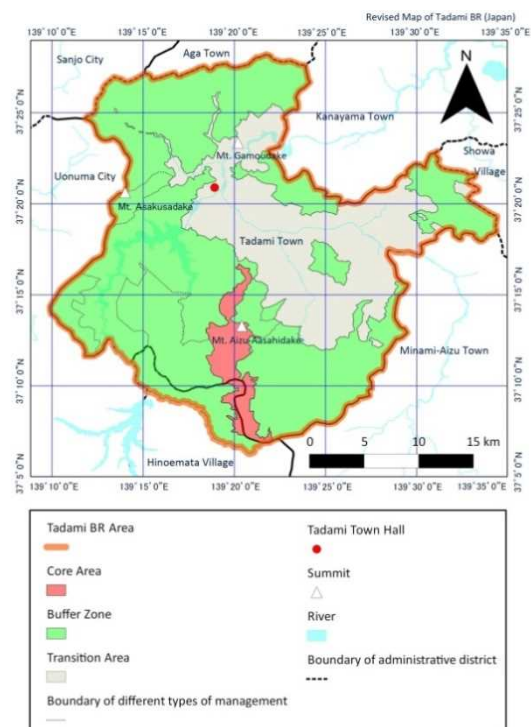
### Biosphere Reserve description



Photo 1: Landscape of Tadami BR in the winter

Figure 1: Tadami BR zonation map

Tadami BR (total area 78,032 ha) is a mountainous area surrounded by mountains of around 1,000 m in altitude, located in the southern Tohoku region and the eastern end of the Echigo Mountains of the main island of Honshu of the Japanese archipelago. This area



sees the flow of the main stem river, Tadami River, which originates from the Oze area and Ina River, its tributary, with farmlands and communities scattered on a fluvial terrace (Photo 1). The climate in this area belongs to the Sea of Japan

climate group, and the land sees heavy rain and snow. In particular, the dry seasonal wind which blows from the mainland in the winter season picks up moisture as it passes through the Sea of Japan, and encounters the Echigo Mountains, bringing a heavy snowfall rare in the world. This is the backdrop behind the unique natural environment and vegetation of this area, and the lifestyle and culture of the local residents.

In the core area, a snowy topography is formed through avalanches and other movements caused by frequent snowfall, while the landscape, dominated by collapsed land, grassland, brush land, and the vegetation of the beech forests arranged in a mosaic pattern, maintains the state of a natural forest. A buffer area surrounds the core area, and here there is a natural environment which is in almost the same natural state as the core area. A transition area is contiguous to the outside of the buffer area, where there is a variety of land such as forest wilderness, agricultural land, and a residential area (Figure 1). The local residents in the Tadami BR have traditionally used forest resources in a sustainable manner, such as through hunting and the collection of wild vegetables and mushrooms mainly in the transition area (Photo 2), weaving crafts weaving plants such as vine plants, and producing firewood for fuel, and this sustainable use of natural resources has continued to the present day.



Photo 2: Harvesting of Osmunds (*Osmunda japonica*) on avalanche slopes after the thaw

## BR challenges

Tadami BR was registered as a biosphere reserve through the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) in June 2014, and it can be said that this registration recognized that the existence of this traditional lifestyle and culture of the local residents based on a rich and valuable natural environment, biodiversity and natural resources characterized by heavy snowfall in the Tadami area is “an international model area of harmonious coexistence between people and nature”. Yet, on the other hand, Tadami area like other mountainous areas in Japan, is seeing a rapidly declining and aging population where the future existence of the local community is being compromised. In other words, at the same time, this means that the lifestyle and culture which hitherto used the natural environment and natural resources in a sustainable way are in danger of disappearing.

Against this backdrop, Tadami BR has been aiming (1) in accordance with the philosophy and objectives of the biosphere preservation area in the UNESCO MAB program, to develop a rich natural environment (snow, beech forests), regional biodiversity in the area, and moreover, to preserve and conserve resources, and to aim for socio-economic development in the region while continuing and developing local traditions, cultures and industries through sustainable utilization and seeking independence and revitalization of the region, and (2) by sharing information / personnel obtained through efforts in conjunction with the BRs in Japan and other countries via the BR networks, etc., has been aiming to contribute to both the

local and international communities as a “model area of harmonious coexistence between people and nature” (Tadami UNESCO Eco Park Promotion Council 2015).

### Initiatives/Actions on SDG 15

The unique lifestyle and culture and industries of the local residents rooted in a rich natural environment, biodiversity and natural resources characterized by heavy snowfall in the Tadami BR demonstrate a sustainable form of use of local resources by local residents. The task though faced by the local community is how to go about passing on and developing such resource usage in a community challenged by a declining and aging population.

Therefore, in order to pass on and develop traditional resource usage in a sustainable form in the local community and to support local industries through the use of such resources, Tadami Town, which is the main local government town of Tadami BR, has been working on certifying and branding products produced by local businesses and individuals using natural resources and traditional techniques as traditional products of “Capital of Mother Nature Tadami” (Figure 2).

Up until the present day, 20 items comprising traditional crafts (Photo 3) such as bamboo sieves and baskets using plants such as silvervine, crimson glory vine, chocolate vine (five-leaf Akebia), carex dolichostachya hayata and boehmeria tricuspis obtained from the forest; dried mountain vegetables such as bracken; honey from Japanese honey bees; traditional candies made with glutinous rice and wheat malt, mochi rice cakes which have been exposed to the outside air in the winter season and freeze-dried (frozen mochi), and white radish (frozen radish), and woodwork products made with lathes have been certified as traditional products (Photo 4). These products are sold at facilities in the BR region and can be purchased as souvenirs by visitors to Tadami BR.



Photo 3: Weaving class held by the local community



Figure 2: Labels for the traditional product brand “Capital of Mother Nature Tadami”





Photo 4: Products certified as traditional product brand “Capital of Mother Nature Tadami”

This project was positioned as “regional socio-economic development through sustainable use of regional resources”, which is one of the three goals outlined to achieve the BR’s philosophy and objectives given in the UNESCO MAB plan. With regard to the SDGs, this project can be viewed as an initiative to contribute to Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, and in addition, to contribute to achieving Target 8.9 (By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products) in Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and moreover, Target 12.2 (By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources) in Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and Target 12.8 (By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and

awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature).

## Practical Outcomes/Achievements

By producing products using local resources and traditional skills, and displaying and selling them at retail stores (SDFs: Goal 8 - Target 8.9), through the “Capital of Mother Nature” Traditional Product Brand Project, information can be given to visitors to Tadami BR about lifestyles in harmony with the nature of the Tadami area and information on ways to utilize the resources (SDGs: Goal 12 - Target 12.8). Moreover, this also contributes to revenues of the local producers of the products, and also leads to reviving traditional resource use methods that had been discontinued for some products (Photo 5).



Photo 5: Traditional charcoal making called “Kajigo-yaki” and deodorant made from it.

In order for products to be produced continuously, in other words, in order to continue to utilize traditional resources in a sustainable manner, it is necessary for producers to have continuous support from various stakeholders, or to ensure

the participation of newcomers who will become producers themselves. Finally, in carrying out this project, we hope that this will lead to the discovery of people, who will hopefully develop an interest in the nature of the Tadami area, and the traditional lifestyle and culture of the local residents to be found here, and while understanding the local issues, and preserving a natural environment and traditional lifestyle and culture, will work together with the local residents to maintain and develop the local community while making use of it. At the same time, we hope that this project will serve as one of the model projects of sustainable development for the many mountainous areas facing the collapse of the local community and the decline of industry.

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## References

1. Tadami UNESCO Park Management Plan.

Tadami UNESCO Eco Park Promotion Council (2015)

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