

## 小論文（120分）

受験番号							
氏名							

### 【注意事項】

- 1 試験開始の合図があるまで、この問題冊子の中を見ないで下さい。
- 2 この問題冊子は4ページあります。また、問題は7問です。全問に解答して下さい。
- 3 解答用紙は、横書きで使用して下さい。
- 4 試験中に問題冊子の印刷不鮮明、ページの落丁・乱丁・汚れ等に気がついた場合は、手を挙げて監督者に知らせて下さい。
- 5 問題冊子、解答用紙（白・2枚）には、試験開始後、監督者の指示にしたがって、受験番号欄に受験番号を、氏名欄に氏名を、見やすい数字、文字で記入して下さい。
- 6 受験番号が正しく記入されていない場合は、採点できないことがあります。
- 7 問題冊子中の余白は適宜利用してかまいませんが、どのページも切り離さないで下さい。また、解答用紙は、解答欄以外の箇所を使用しないで下さい。
- 8 下書き用紙（黄緑・1枚）を解答用紙と間違えないように、注意して下さい。
- 9 試験終了後、問題冊子、解答用紙、下書き用紙は全て回収しますので、持ち帰らないで下さい。

次の英文を読んで設問に答えなさい。

### **Why has Japan been hit with rice shortages, soaring prices despite normal crops?**

Shortages of rice have recently been seen across Japan, and the price of the staple food is soaring. But close to 100% of Japan's rice is domestically produced and the yield of crops appears normal, so why is this happening?

The Mainichi Shimbun spoke with Kazuhito Yamashita, a former bureaucrat at Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and a research director at the Canon Institute for Global Studies, about the background to the rice commotion, shedding light on the reality of rice policies that have disregarded consumers. Questions and answers from the interview follow:

Question: Why is there a shortage of rice and why are prices high?

Answer: Some have said that it's due to lean crops as (1)a result of last year's scorching summer, or from (2)an increase in inbound tourism, but neither of these is the main reason.

The crop situation index for rice grown in 2023, indicating the amount of the rice harvest, was 101 — around the same as an average year. In contrast, the crop situation index for 1993, which led to the so-called “rice riots of the Heisei era,” was 74. Some suggest that a lean harvest of high-quality rice caused a shortage of the crop, but the harvest was not bad.

As for the suggestion that inbound visitors are consuming more, we cannot say this is a major factor. Even if around 3 million visitors were to stay in Japan each month for a week and eat rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner like many Japanese people, it would still only account for around 0.5% of total consumption. And in actual fact, not many visitors have rice for all three meals, so their consumption must be even lower.

Q: What is the main factor, then?

A: The reason there is a shortage of rice is because of the acreage reduction policy which decreases the amount of land devoted to cultivation. Under acreage reduction, rice production is cut to raise market prices, and the government provides subsidies to rice farmers who switch to other crops such as wheat or soybeans. Japan has continued (3)this policy for over 50 years.

Because consumption of bread, pasta and other alternative foods is increasing, if farmers produced the same amount of rice as before, there would be a surplus, causing the price of

rice to drop. To avoid such a situation, production has been cut year by year, and recently only about 60% of rice paddies are in use, with the others set aside under the acreage reduction policy. Production has thus been kept at under half of the peak of 14.45 million metric tons annually.

Because production has been managed so tightly, when there is even a slight increase in demand, such as from inbound tourists, it can quickly lead to a shortage, and prices surge as a result. This is the essence of what is happening now.

Q: Is Japanese rice competitive internationally?

A: People across the world say, "It's the best-tasting rice in the world, so why isn't more of it being exported?" Japanese agricultural officials often comment, "We can't compete with cheap rice produced in Thailand and elsewhere," but that's not the case. Just like you have luxury and standard cars, there are different kinds of rice. Luxury cars won't lose out to ordinary ones even if the price is higher.

The British Rolls-Royce is an ultra-luxury vehicle, and Japanese rice, too, should be marketed as the Rolls-Royce of rice, so there's no need to compete with cheaper rice. With the right pricing, any amount will sell. In actual fact, in California, Koshihikari rice produced in the state is now selling for a higher price than in Japanese supermarkets.

Q: It's said that the decline in rice consumption is serious, but if the amount produced increased and the price went down, people would eat more, wouldn't they?

A: Exactly. Rice acreage reduction is <sup>(4)</sup>an absolutely terrible policy. The government spends over 300 billion yen (about \$2.06 billion) in subsidies annually to decrease the amount of rice produced, thus going out of its way to raise the price and increasing the burden on consumers. In <sup>(5)</sup>the medical field, for example, the government spends money to reduce the financial burden on citizens, but the rice acreage reduction does the opposite — it is using taxpayer money to make consumers suffer.

Furthermore, due to the acreage reduction policy, the development of rice varieties that increase yield per unit area has been halted. By unit area, Californian rice now yields 1.6 times more than Japan's. Chinese rice too used to yield only half as much as Japan's but now yields more.

The acreage reduction policy does not benefit consumers or the agricultural industry. If the abolition of the acreage reduction policy causes rice prices to drop and creates difficulties for full-time farmers whose main income is from agriculture, direct payments from the government, like in Western countries, would be the solution.

Q: Japan's rice is the only grain of which almost all is produced domestically. From the point of food security, it's important to increase the amount produced, right?

A: Japan currently harvests just under 7 million tons annually, but if it were to do away with the rice acreage policy and introduce high-yield rice varieties, it would have the ability to produce 17 million tons a year. If it were to yield that much and export 10 million tons, it would have great security benefits. Exports serve as a kind of reserve for emergencies. All countries are aware of this and are advancing their food policies accordingly.

Q: Are the rice shortages and high prices that we're seeing likely to recur in the future?

A: As long as the policy to reduce rice acreage remains in place, similar situations will occur again. That's because the environment where even a small movement in consumption can lead to rice shortages and high prices remains unchanged.

Today, the world's largest rice exporter is India, with its exports reaching 10 million to 20 million tons annually. If Japan completely abolished rice acreage reduction and exported 10 million tons a year, it would become one of the world's largest rice suppliers and could also contribute to global food security. Despite such opportunities, officials have paid no attention, begging the question of how long Japan intends to continue to pour effort into maintaining high domestic rice prices.

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<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20240823/p2a/00m/0bu/024000c> より引用・一部改変

- 問 1. 下線部(1)および下線部(2)が米の価格上昇の主な理由ではないことを示す根拠について、それぞれ日本語で具体的に説明しなさい。
- 問 2. 下線部(3)の目的とその具体的な内容について、日本語75字以内で説明しなさい(句読点を含む)。
- 問 3. 下線部(4)について、なぜそのように表現されているのか、下線部(5)と比較しながら、日本語で具体的に説明しなさい。
- 問 4. 下線部(4)の政策を廃止した場合に関する、①および②の問いに答えなさい。
- ① さらにどのような策を講じると日本の米の収穫能力を伸ばすことができると主張されているか、日本語で答えなさい。
- ② ①で主張されている策を講じた場合、日本の米の収穫能力は現在の何倍になる可能性があるか、小数第三位を四捨五入した値で答えなさい。
- 問 5. 本文中で米の輸出量が最も多い国として挙げられている国はどこか、日本語で答えなさい。
- 問 6. 本文の主張を下記の①および②に示しています。英文の空欄( i )および( ii )に入る最も適切な英単語を、それぞれア～エの中から1つ選択しなさい。

① Japan should increase rice production and aim to become a major rice ( i ) nation in the world.

ア storing      イ exporting      ウ consuming      エ importing

② Japanese rice is often described as the most ( ii ) rice in the world, so it will sell as a luxurious item like the British Rolls-Royce.

ア delicious      イ attractive      ウ expensive      エ valuable

- 問 7. 問 1 で言及されている核心を突いているとはいえない説をまとめた上で、あなたの身の回りであたかも真実であるかのように捉えられていることがらの具体例を挙げなさい。あなたはそれがらに接した時にどのような態度でどのように行動しているかについて、日本語600字以内で述べなさい(句読点を含む)。