



# Identifying the Japanese Foreign Technical Intern and Training Program (TITP) in the Agriculture Sector and Its Outstanding Training Models: A Case Study of Indonesia

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Received 21 May 2023 Accepted 20 March 2024 (\*Corresponding Author)

**Abstract** The Japanese government established the Foreign Technical Intern and Training Program (TITP) for developing countries, enabling trainees from these countries to improve technology, skills, and practical knowledge in an actual work environment and apply their skills when they return home. However, due to issues including improper wage payments and overwork, this approach has received harsh criticism from human rights organizations inside and outside Japan. Previous research has primarily focused on the negative aspects of this program, with little emphasis placed on its positive impacts. TITP is considered critical for Indonesia because it provides high-paying jobs for "unskilled" youth, accounting for more than half of the unemployed population. This research aimed to summarize the current general condition of the TITP, classify the different programs under TITP, and compare the socio-economic conditions of the alumni after finishing TITP and returning to Indonesia. Based on the findings, we can assert that the TITP in the agriculture sector has attracted TITP alumni to pursue a career in agriculture, thereby contributing to an increase in young farmers, desperately needed to ensure the future of Indonesia's agriculture. The majority of alumni became farmer entrepreneurs. The average income of TITP alumni working in the agriculture sector was found to be more than three times that of the average Indonesian farmer's monthly income. The main programs realized under the TITP and reviewed in the current study included the Industrial Training Program (ITP) and the Technical Intern Program (TIP). These programs were compared with the NT Farm (NTF) in Fukui, which is recognized for its exceptional training methodology, including entrepreneurship development training. All NTF alumni now own land, and their average income is slightly higher compared to that of the ITP and TIP alumni.

**Keywords** TITP, agriculture entrepreneurship, young farmers

## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI) survey on the national farmers in 2017 concluded that Indonesia is on the verge of an agriculture crisis in the long term. This is due to the decrease in agriculture households and the aging of farmers, which is not accompanied by the regeneration of the farmers. Regeneration is a key to sustainability. However, many youths (aged 18-35) assume that

agricultural enterprises are less profitable, old-fashioned, dirty, muddy, and provide low income. Hence these assumptions, only 21.95% of the youth engage in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors. Access to meaningful employment is also challenging, particularly for the 1.7 million youth entering the workforce annually. Youth account for over 50% of Indonesia's unemployed population.

Indonesia lacks qualified young farmers. Training is a principal means of developing human resources to achieve this goal. Japan provides technical training for developing countries under the Foreign Technical Intern and Training Program (TITP) in many sectors, including agriculture. In 2021, Indonesia sent hundreds of its youth to this program since 1984 and is still actively engaged to this day (Gusnelly and Riskianingrum, 2019). The main goal of TITP is to enhance the technology, skills, and knowledge pragmatically and practically in an actual work environment so trainees from developing countries can apply their skills when they return to their home countries. However, this approach encounters severe criticism from human rights organizations inside and outside Japan due to several issues it has caused.

Past studies (Chiavacci 2012, Ratnayake et. al. 2020, Tong 2019) mainly focus on the negative side of this program, while good qualities are hardly recognized. TITP is considered highly important for Indonesia as it provides high-paying jobs for the "unskilled" youth, accounting for over 50% of the unemployed population. In recent years, the Indonesian government strongly supported the TITP, claiming it attracts youth to engage in agriculture, and many of its alumni return to Indonesia and become agriculture entrepreneurs. However, scientific literature proving these statements could not be found. This study is needed to clarify the condition of the TITP alumni, especially in the agriculture sector.

## OBJECTIVE

This study uses examples of Indonesian trainees and trainee alumni who have conducted training and internships over the past 26 years to illustrate the common condition of Indonesian trainees in the agriculture industry under TITP. It also examines cases of outstanding training models, including the alumni's current livelihood after conducting TITP in the agriculture sector in Japan.

## METHODOLOGY

Primary data was gathered through direct observation of training, in-depth interviews, and online questionnaires conducted from November 2021- August 2022. This study interviewed two farmers employing Indonesian trainees under two separate programs: under the *kenshuseido* or Industrial Training Program (ITP) and under *ginou jisshuseido* or Technical Intern Program (TIP). NTF is a farm that oversees Indonesian trainees under TIP. Both ITP and TIP are part of TITP.

Eleven trainees conducting internships under TIP and all trainees (four people) from NTF were also interviewed to grasp the general condition of training in the agriculture sector. Alumni of the programs were also interviewed to understand their perspective toward TITP and their current source of income and livelihood. Of the interviewed alumni, 36 are graduates of ITP, 12 are alumni of the NTF, and 15 are TIP alumni other than NTF alumni. In total, 80 respondents are analyzed for this research.

Secondary sources, such as scientific journals or publications, articles, and reports, were also used in this study. The data was analyzed through comparative analysis since it is descriptive and qualitative in nature. Comparative analysis is essential, especially in clarifying different training methods, to help understand how the different methods affect the trainees' livelihood. In the future, this study aims to aid in developing an adequate training method that will result in a better livelihood for its alumni.

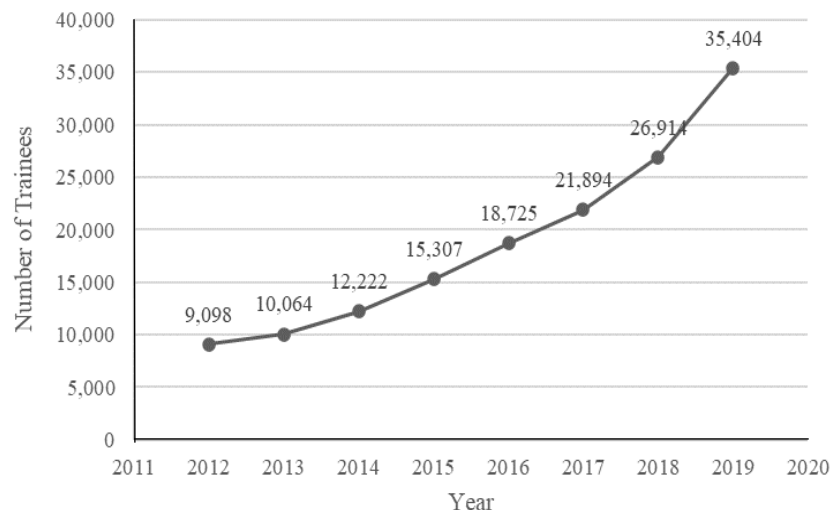
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### General Condition of TITP for Indonesian Trainees in the Agriculture Sector

In 1984 the Indonesian and Japanese governments approved an agriculture internship program for Indonesian youth called the Industrial Training Program (ITP). In the agriculture sector, the Ministry of Agriculture selects young farmers or children of farmers to work and receive training at a Japanese farm for around one year. Problems arose, primarily due to the restriction of giving a wage to trainees under the *kenshuu* visa. Only allowance, far below the standard wage, is permitted in addition to all accommodation, including lodging and food, that the farmer provides. In response to the issues, the Japanese government 1993 introduced a new program called the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), where unskilled labor from developing countries will train and work for 3 to 5 years in 14 sectors, including agriculture while receiving an hourly wage. Currently, TIP is more commonly known as TITP.

The program aims to transfer technical knowledge and skills from Japan to developing countries. Nevertheless, previous studies state that the program has not successfully improved intern trainees' skills in technical expertise and matters. The trainees learned more about Japanese work ethics (*5S; Seiri, Seton, Seiso, Seiketsu, Shitsuke*) and habits, creating networking opportunities, and earning money, which helped them open their own business back home (Ratnayake et al., 2016). Recently, in 2019, the Special Skilled Worker Program (SSW – *Tokutei Ginou*) was launched to help solve the problems faced under TITP.

In terms of the number of TITP trainees in Japan, the total number has consistently increased. Indonesian trainees are in fourth place for the total number of trainees. Every year the number of Indonesian trainees in Japan has increased and is predicted to multiply. Figure 1 shows the number of Indonesian trainees from 2012 to 2019.



**Fig. 1 Number of Indonesian trainees in Japan**

Source: Japan Ministry of Justice Statistics on Foreign Residents

While these figures indicate the demand, the TITP has gained attention and multiple criticisms. Domestic and foreign organizations called for the program's abolition due to the alleged exacerbated cases of human rights and labor violations. Nearly every year since 2010, the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 5 calls out to Japan to improve its foreign labor schemes as it operates under the auspices of TITP. Meanwhile, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern about many reports of sexual abuse, labor-related deaths, and conditions that could amount to forced labor in the TITP (OHCHR, 2014). Sending countries acknowledge the mistreatment. However, each country has its stance (JICA, 2019). Unlike most countries, the Indonesian government considers this program as a means of developing human resources, particularly in the agricultural sector (JICA, 2021). In 2021, more than 3,427 Indonesian trainees worked in the agriculture sector, putting them in second place after the construction sector.

The Indonesian government supports this program and claims it is a good source of social remittance and prospers new agriculture leaders and entrepreneurs, even though entrepreneurship is

not part of the training they receive. From an interview with the Head of the Agricultural Education Center, Agricultural Human Resources Extension, and Development Agency (BPPSDMP) of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture, it is understood that since the end of 2021, the government has been planning to start a new program to send selected Indonesian youth to the TITP or SSW program in the agriculture sector by providing agriculture entrepreneurship training prior departure and after graduating from the program to help them get a head start in building their agriculture enterprise in Indonesia. To aid in the development of such programs, this research would like to highlight two cases of adequate training methods of TITP in the agriculture sector and the livelihood of their alumni. One is the ITP training conducted in cooperation with the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture, and the second case will be training conducted at the NTF.

### Differences between ITP, TIP, and NTF Training Methods

Table 1 shows the main differences between each program compiled from interviews and secondary data. It reveals that the most significant differences are divided into three aspects; 1) the trainees selected for the program, 2) the pre-departure training and education received during the program, and 3) the trainee's wage and accommodation while in Japan. In ITP and NTF, youth with an agriculture background become one of the main requirements. Including this precondition ensures the trainees have preexisting knowledge and interest in agriculture and have a significant chance of performing better than those with no agriculture background. Work in agriculture is demanding and requires a great deal of energy. Respondents mentioned that many trainees could not keep up with work on a farm and tended to quit before the contract ended. This requirement will help prevent that sort of case from happening. As for NTF, all trainees finished their contract; some even extended it for another year or two.

**Table 1 Main differences between the ITP, TIP, and the NTF**

Program element	Kenshu (ITP)	Ginou Jisshu (TIP)	Farm in Fukui (NTF)
Pre-departure training	P4S or Organization under the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture (MA)	Registered Training Organization (LPK), pays a minimal 10 million IDR	No requirements apart from attending a Japanese language school in Indonesia
Trainee candidates	Young farmers or families of farmers	Anyone who is under is training under the LPK	Alumni of Tanjung Sari Agriculture Vocational High School (SMK)
Selection of the trainee	Selected by the farmer group under MA	Selected by the farmer via LPK through online interview	Selected by the principle of Tanjung Sari SMK
Length of training	Up to 1 year	2 - 5 years	3 years
Training/education in Program	Before and in the middle of the program	None	Yes, weekly
Financial literacy education	Yes (starting with 2021)	None	Yes
Income	Allowance (around ¥40,000/month)	Wage (hourly, more than ¥100,000/month)	Wage (hourly, more than ¥100,000/month)
Accommodations (lodging and food)	Provided, by the farmer	Not provided (paid by the trainee)	Not provided (paid by the trainee)
Overtime work	Not allowed, not paid	Paid	Paid

The second aspect is from the training and education received by the trainees. The pre-departure training for trainee candidates of ITP is conducted in an Agriculture and Rural Training Center (or

P4S in Indonesian). P4S is a community institution owned and managed by farmers directly to increase the development of agricultural human resources through training, extension, and education with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. There are 1,562 P4S centers in Indonesia, one in almost every district. Since the trainees are spread throughout Indonesia, they will intern in the nearest P4S for at least three months. The trainees of NTF are all alumni of Tanjung Sari Agriculture Vocational High School (SMK), located in West Java. This vocational school is one of Indonesia's best agriculture vocational schools. Two hard-working exceptional alumni are selected by the school's principal every year. Regarding the cost to become a trainee in Japan, standard TITP programs applied through a registered training sending organization (or LPK in Indonesian) charge the trainees at least 10,000,000 IDR or around 670 USD. Some even charge more than 2,000 USD. Under the ITP and NTF, this kind of fee is unnecessary. As for ITP trainees, pre-departure training in P4S is less than 150 USD, while under NTF the trainees only need to pay for private Japanese lessons before their departure to Japan.

Unlike the common ITP, both TIP and NTF provide agriculture training during the program. In ITP, trainees receive intensive Japanese language and culture, plus an introduction to agriculture in Japan, for around two weeks before being spread all around Japan to work on a farm. The appointment of the farm where they will intern is also decided based on their agriculture experience and interests. In the summer, they will participate in hands-on agriculture training given by farmers in various fields. This is conducted for around three weeks.

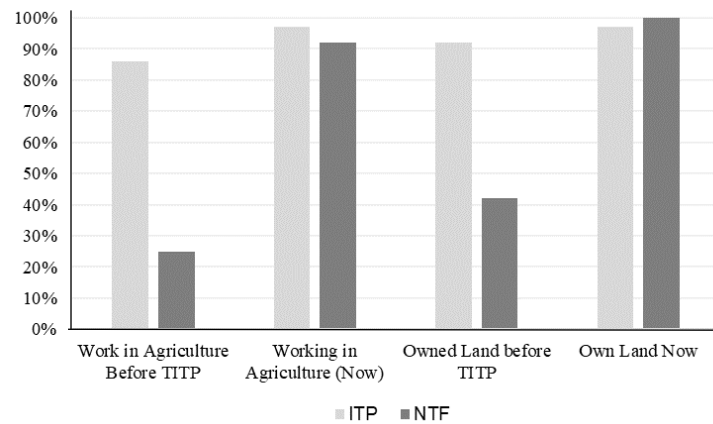
In NTF, trainees and the farm owner will have weekly classes to discuss agriculture and entrepreneurship. At the beginning of the program, each trainee is asked to make a business plan on what they would like to do with the money they saved from working in NTF. Each week they will give an update on their business plan. The CEO of NTF also provides financial literacy education and advises on investments made for their business plan. Trainees interviewed say they have already started to invest their money in their business, like buying land, cattle, and machinery, just after one year of working. For alumni, NTF also provides loans to help expand their business. The main goal of NTF in employing Indonesian trainees is to help them become wise agripreneurs.

The final main difference is the wage (allowance) and accommodation provided. During the internship, ITP trainees are given an allowance of 40,000 JPY or around 312 USD per month. However, all accommodation expenses are paid by the farmer. As for trainees in NTF, they receive a monthly wage of more than 100,000 JPY (around 780 USD) after taxes and insurance charges. NTF trainees are also paid an hourly wage for any overtime work done. However, lodging and food expenses are borne by the trainees. This wage is almost more than ten times the average income of Indonesian farmers of around 1,400,000 IDR or around 92 USD per month.

### **Current Condition and Livelihood of Industrial Training Program Alumni and NTF Alumni**

This study hypothesized that alumni of NTF will become more prosperous farmers (in terms of higher income and assets owned) compared to alumni of the other programs due to the agriculture and entrepreneurship education they received. This study accepts it with the following discussions as support. NTF currently has 13 alumni. When respondents were categorized into three groups; ITP (n=36), TIP (n=15), and NTF (n=12), only 52% of alumni of NTF had farmer parents, and only 25% of the alumni worked in the agriculture sector before coming to Japan. While 92% of ITP alumni had farmer parents, 86% of the respondents were farmers or worked in the agriculture sector before TITP.

After finishing the program, currently, 97% of the ITP alumni are farmers, own agriculture entrepreneurship, or work in the agriculture sector, or an 11% increase from before conducting TITP. As many as 92% of NTF alumni currently earn an income from the agriculture sector, a significant increase from 25%. Land is considered an essential asset, especially in agriculture-related sectors. As for land owned or cultivated, 92% of ITP trainees owned the land before coming to Japan. Unlike ITP alumni, only 42% of NTF trainees owned land before training in Japan. Nevertheless, interviews reveal that all NTF alumni (100%) currently own land and do farming as their primary or secondary source of income. Figure 2 shows the details.



**Fig. 2 Condition of ITP and NTF alumni (%)**

Another contributing factor that needs to be considered is that 92% of the NTF alumni returned to Sumedang or Bandung, West Java. Land prices have become higher in this area due to the construction of highways nearby, and many agricultural lands have been converted to other uses. Hence, the fact that NTF alumni have land and are still cultivated in this area is a notable factor to be considered, as they have contributed to sustaining the number of farmers in the area. Regarding the average income of alumni, NTF alumni earn an average of 4,791,667 IDR (around 320 USD) compared to ITP alumni with 4,693,548 IDR (approximately 310 USD) and TIP alumni with 4,750,000 IDR (around 316 USD). Even though the nominal is almost equal, with regards to the land owned, NTF alumni have a higher value in assets due to the higher price of land in the area.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this study's findings, it is concluded that TITP in the agriculture sector has successfully attracted its alumni to proceed with a career in the agriculture sector, contributing to more young farmers, which is critical for the future of Indonesia's agriculture. The hypothesis set that alumni of NTF will become more prosperous farmers compared to alumni of the other programs due to the agriculture and entrepreneurship education they received can be accepted because all NTF alumni became farmers as their primary or secondary source of livelihood. All NTF respondents own their land, 92% in Bandung and Sumedang, West Java, where land prices are high. Regarding income, the majority of ITP, TIP, and NTF alumni earn three times the average income of farmers in Indonesia. Future studies should elaborate on the factors impacting the TITP alumni's livelihood and develop a recommendation for training for agriculture trainees to generate more high-quality young farmers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation is extended to JST SPRING, Grant Number JPMJSP2122, for supporting this study and all respondents involved in this research.

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