

MR. HIROSHI KANNO



Date of birth:
April 27, 1948

Currently living in:
Fukushima City,
Fukushima prefecture

Originally living in:
Iitate village, Fukushima
prefecture

Profession: former
vegetable farmer in Iitate

Married, two daughters
(40, 30), one son (36), five
grandchildren

Hiroshi Kanno lost his roots on March 11, 2011. “I was preparing everything for a new season when the earthquake hit. The shake was so massive, I had to sit down on the vegetable field. Everything stopped there.” He used to grow 35 different kinds of vegetables ranging from Chinese cabbage, to carrots and soya beans on his 2.5 hectares of land in Iitate village.

Due to the radiation levels in his hometown, his family needed to evacuate and leave everything behind.

He has lived with his wife and his mother in a flat in Fukushima City for almost three years now. “My life has changed by 180 degrees. I have my own house but cannot go back. I have land but cannot use it. I am a farmer but cannot be a farmer in Iitate any longer.”

He raises two questions: “How long can we be patient? How long can we stand this situation? It might be okay for a short time. But if you don’t know how long this is going to take, it will turn into a depression.” Mr. Kanno spells out the problem: “We are living in a house that is temporary. We cannot relax, let alone settle. We live like refugees. We live in a drifting way. We have lost our roots. It is a me without roots. But it’s not only me.”

He also worries about his former community. “We had a culture, festivals, which we cannot continue any more. All sort of means to maintain our community are lost because of the nuclear power plant disaster. How can we keep our community and unite it again, if there is no place to settle? The pre-disaster community of Iitate is shrinking. It is a huge loss we are experiencing.”

He finds it difficult to describe what he is now deprived of. "I have lost so many things, I cannot say it with one word. To lose one's core business, with which you earn a living, that is a big loss. To unite the community again is very important."

What he finds most important for people to know inside and outside of Japan is that we don't need any more nuclear power plants: "We should stop using nuclear power globally. Fukushima is the proof that we cannot control the severeness of a nuclear disaster." Mr. Kanno draws a fundamental conclusion: "This is more than a war. It does not distinguish. You don't know how you will be affected. It just goes on. This is a fundamental mistake. You don't know the cruelty, specifically the impact on health. Japan is exporting nuclear now. This is a question to humanity."

He concludes with a plea: "Please don't forget about Fukushima. The world must learn from Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and Fukushima."

Asked, if the world learns, he opens his hands, stretches them to the sides, leans back in his chair and simply says: "No. It is more fundamentally about protecting the earth or destroying humanity."

The vegetable farmer has wishes for the future though: "There are a lot, I cannot tell you at once. The first one is protecting the Earth. If there is no nature, there is no life. We need to protect the earth together."

But Mr. Kanno also despairs sometimes. "The situation is so complex and difficult. I feel very strongly about protecting the earth. If it is destroyed, there will be no food." And then he smiles again, pulls his business card out, and points to the very first line. "I live with soil" is what he added to it.

A short while ago, he also added some soil to his life again. Embedded in a range of rolling mountains, ten kilometres north-west of the centre of Fukushima City, is a small allotment he owns now. He grows and harvests vegetables. He still regards himself somehow lucky, since he has also become part of a farmers' cooperative again.

"All human beings are living things. We are all rooted in the soil. If we don't live with the soil, we will be destroyed."



Hiroshi Kanno's empty original house in Iitate village, Fukushima prefecture. He used to grow 35 different kinds of vegetables at his farm, 10km away.



Hiroshi Kanno checks radiation level near his new vegetable field in Fukushima city.