



Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System Traditional WASABI Cultivation in Shizuoka

Essential ingredient in Japanese cuisine

Wasabi is an endemic Japanese species which first gained popularity in the early 19th century when it began to be used to make sushi. Since then, the spice has become essential to Japanese cuisine and has contributed to the development of Japanese food culture.

In recent years, wasabi has also been used in meat dishes, and the world has now taken notice of this ingredient.



Excellent landscape

Evergreen wasabi fields blend into mountainous forests, creating beautiful landscapes throughout Japan's four seasons. These panoramas are considered a future resource for the tourism industry.



Best wasabi producer in Japan

The wasabi cultivation in Shizuoka Prefecture has led to unique developments in several local areas, while also spreading to other regions that have abundant spring water, such as the Abe River basin and the Izu Peninsula. Today, Shizuoka's wasabi cultivation ranks first in Japan in terms of production volume, cultivated area, and production value. Production value, in particular, contributes 70% to the national average with its excellent reputation for high quality.

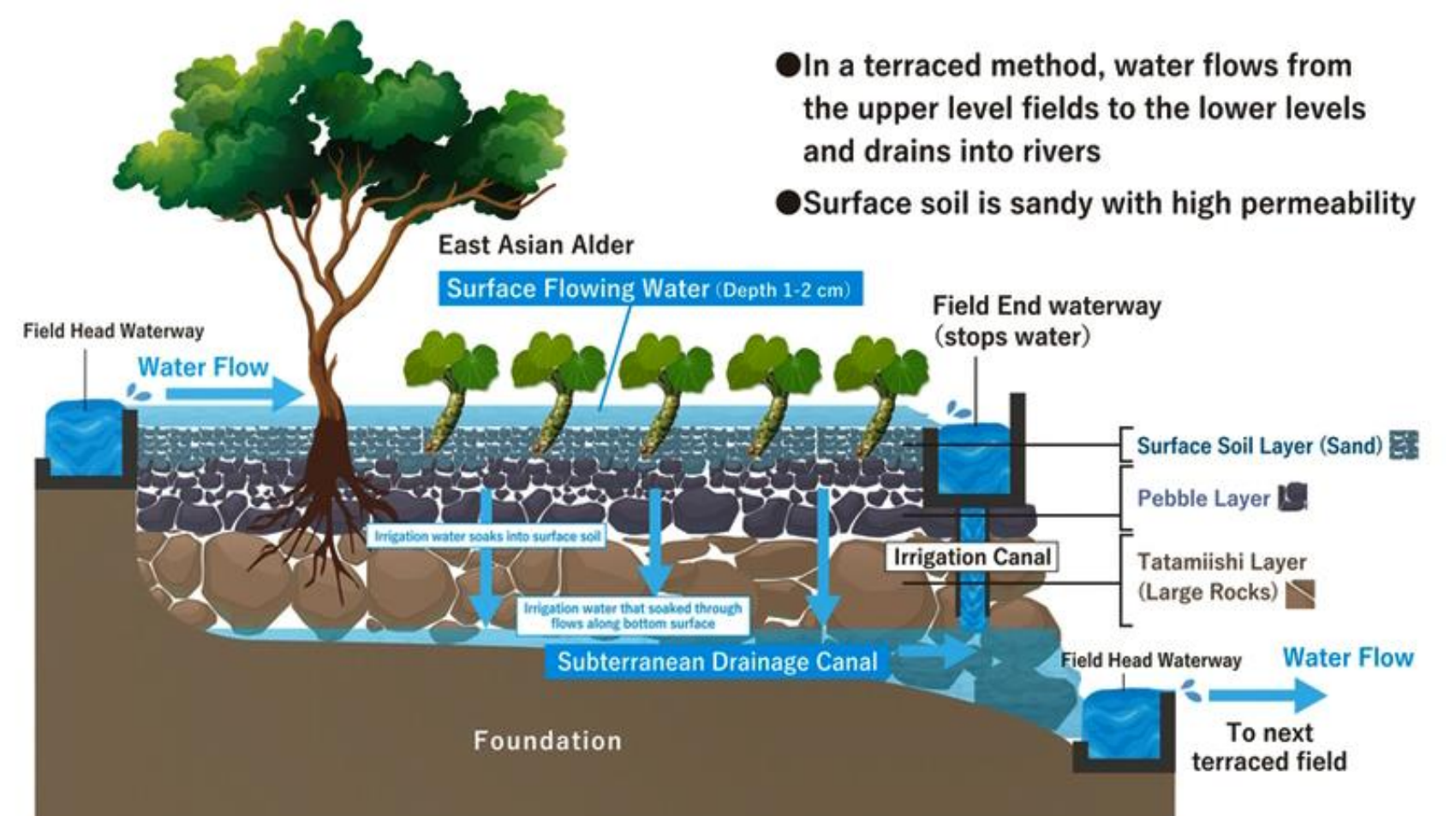
Wasabi is a highly profitable key crop in mountainous areas, contributing significantly to an improvement in farmers' incomes and promoting local development through a thriving processed goods industry run by both farmers and organizations.



Birthplace of wasabi cultivation and "Tatamiishi style" wasabi fields

Wasabi cultivation began more than 400 years ago in Utogi, located in what is now the Aoi Ward of Shizuoka City, and which is today considered its birthplace.

In 1607, the first shōgun of the Edo Shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu, when spending his later years in Sunpu Castle, took a special liking to the wasabi presented to him, leaving behind a legend that claims he banned wasabi from leaving the Utogi area. "Tatamiishi-style" wasabi fields, developed around 1892 in what is today Izu City, align large rocks along a bottom layer and pile rocks of increasingly smaller sizes towards the top, passing water through the wasabi field. This stabilizes water temperature while supplying nutrients and oxygen, which in turn enable steady production. This method of cultivation produces high-quality wasabi that is shipped all over Japan throughout the year.



A farming method that nurtures biodiversity

Wasabi cultivation employs an environment-friendly and sustainable farming method, as it avoids using fertilizers and chemicals as much as possible. Found in mountainous areas with steep topographies, wasabi fields slow downward water flows, creating conditions where diverse aquatic organisms can thrive, while the surrounding forest environments, in which many birds live, also serve an important role as destinations for environmental education.



Japanese Clawed Salamander

Wasabi Harvesting Lessons for Local Elementary School Student