

**Topics**

**National Research Institute of Agricultural Engineering was Reorganised into a New Institute**

As of 1 April 2001, the National Research Institute of Agricultural Engineering (NRIAE), which was an affiliation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and one of the leading institutes in agricultural engineering in Japan, was reorganised to form a new institute, the National Institute for Rural Engineering (NIRE).

The key background behind this reorganisation was the expansion of the mandates assigned to the MAFF, which took place when the Government of Japan reformed its structure in January 2001. As a result the MAFF is now assigned not only a basic role in sustainable agricultural development, but also such extensive roles as food security, enhancement of multifunctionality of agriculture, and rural development.

In order to give technical assistance to engineering projects undertaken by the expanded MAFF, our institute, the NIRE, has also expanded its research fields. The objectives for the research projects of the NIRE are divided into the following three main themes:

1. Studies and evaluation on the multifunctionality of agriculture and rural communities
2. Development of maintenance/management technologies for agricultural infrastructures, such as canals, dams and farmlands
3. Development of strategies for establishing active rural communities

Such a wide range of research needs diversified expertise. The NIRE therefore expanded its organisation structure, especially in the field of rural planning and environment (see below).

Accordingly we welcomed several researchers specialised in agricultural economics, rural planning and environmental sciences. They are expected to undertake multi-disciplinary research projects together with the current staffs, who are mostly agricultural engineers, in the NIRE.

In addition to undertake research projects, we have also been engaged, for decades, in a range of training courses for agricultural, rural and environmental engineers across Japan. Moreover some of our staffs have offered classes in the JICA training courses, which are organised for engineers from developing countries. The reorganisation of the NIRE renewed our commitments to such engineering education.

Upon the reorganisation, we are designated a special organisation for undertaking emergency investigations under the Basic Law of Disaster Prevention. Thus our expertise will offer an important role in emergency investigations once a major natural disaster hits agricultural infrastructures.

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**NRIAE**

(～Mar. 2001)

- Dept. of Rural Improvement
- Dept. of Regional Resources
- Dept. of Land Improvement
- Dept. of Hydraulic Engineering
- Dept. of Structural Engineering

**NIRE**

(Apr. 2001～)

- Dept. of Rural Planning
- Dept. of Rural Environment
- Dept. of Regional Resources
- Dept. of Agricultural Environment Engineering
- Dept. of Hydraulic Engineering
- Dept. of Geotechnical Engineering

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