

“Man ist, was man isst,” or in English, “You are what you eat.” Everyone knows that we cannot live without food.

However, I doubt how many people understand that access to food is very difficult. Today, we are living in a society where a lot of convenience stores exist nearby. We can buy fresh food in a supermarket everyday and we may think it is easy to have food. Is this true?

According to WFP, “Some 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life. That's about one in every nine people on earth.” Also, it states that “The world produces enough to feed the entire global population of 7 billion people. And yet, one person in eight on the planet goes to bed hungry each night.” Why is this happening?

Last two years, I grew some vegetables in a community garden with my family. It was a small garden but we harvested so well that we felt like we did not need to buy vegetables. However, although we brought some bagful of tomatoes and potatoes back home, we ate them up quickly. I learned how difficult it is to feed ourselves by growing food. I suddenly realized that I cannot live without buying food in a supermarket.

In the world, there are many places where those chains of store systems do not exist. Therefore, even though food is produced, there are not enough mechanisms to deliver food to people who need it. As a result, people are in hunger. Is this because they are living in a different part of the world? I do not think so.

In a science fiction of Shinichi Hoshi, there is a tale called “Fuyu No Cho,” or “butterfly of the winter.” It is a story about a world where people are living in an on-demand system. One push of button provides them with whatever they need: food, clothes, warmth and water. All the services are provided instantly on-demand. But, one day, a blackout strikes the entire city. People are frozen to death because they do not know how to warm them up. Only a pet monkey becomes a survivor because it knows how to build a fire. Furthermore, it knows how to get food.

When I found that growing vegetables by ourselves alone does not keep our lives, I think that the convenient lives we are enjoying today in Japan are like Hoshi's story. Our lives are supported by the web of invisible systems. Food, alone, cannot support our lives. We must appreciate the growers of foods but without the network of delivery, the food cannot be sold in the stores. Even in the stores, without energy, the food easily goes bad. When we say “You are what you eat,” we must understand “what we eat” includes such an invisible mechanism behind. Next time, when you eat a spoonful of food, why don't you imagine what is behind it?