

Okinawa Times, October 3, 2018

90% of open field chrysanthemum cannot be shipped due to blackouts and storms – JA (Japan Agricultural Cooperatives) Okinawa

On the 2nd, we found out that JA Okinawa (Tsutomu Oshiro, president) estimated that the total crop damage caused by Typhoon No. 24 was 1431.28 million yen. The estimated damage to sugar cane of 652.7 million yen that the prefecture announced on September 30 has not changed, but reaches 447.57 million yen with chrysanthemums. Damage is particularly great in the southern part of Okinawa, and it is impossible to ship out over 90% of the open-field cultivation due to the influence of blackouts, etc., and over 30% in one-story greenhouses totaling about 250,000 square meters. On the 2nd, JA held a Disaster Countermeasures Meeting in Naha City and decided on support for union members and an urgent request for early recovery to Okinawa Electric Power. The amount of damage to chrysanthemums alone in the southern region is expected to be 317.52 million yen. Stalks have fallen over in the storm, and some have had to be downgraded in quality, and prolonged blackouts have increased the damage.

Chrysanthemums need to be lit with electricity at night to adjust flowering so that buds do not open before shipment in December. They cannot be a saleable product when electricity fails for three days, because this causes the flowers to prematurely bloom. In addition, water sprinklers to minimize salt damage after the typhoon could not be used due to a power outage. There are many reports that leaves have died due to salt damage. In some parts of the north central area, the blackout continues as of 8pm on the 2nd. The damage is expected to spread further in the future. At the JA Disaster Countermeasures Meeting, they decided the entire organization would support affected farmers, financially and materially. They will also consider providing a JA labor force to mainly aid elderly farmers. The amount of support and the timing of its implementation will be determined shortly. They also decided to request Okinawa Electric Power Company for speedy restoration of electricity. They asked for the power supply to be quickly restored to electric lighting facilities for chrysanthemums and to the JA collection and shipping facility. The JA President, Mr. Oshiro, said, “Typhoon No. 25 will be approaching soon. I understand that restoration so people can return to normal lives is a priority, but this is a matter of life and death for farmers as well.”

(Yuriko Kawano, economics and politics reporter for the *Times*)