

Is there a sustainable solution that connects food loss and waste to people in need?

Introduction

Even though there are people in need, a large amount of food is being wasted every day. During my study abroad in Canada, I met a homeless person on my way to school. One day, I bought us two muffins from the supermarket and we sat talking together. When I thought about how just one thin wall separated the food in the supermarket from the people in need outside, it made me feel that there was a contradiction in society, and that I needed to do something.

Current condition

Food loss and waste

- In Japan, 5.23 million tons of food loss and waste generated in 2021.
- 2.79 million tons came were generated by businesses, while 2.44 million tons were from households.
- There is a law promoting the reduction of food loss in Japan.

Poverty

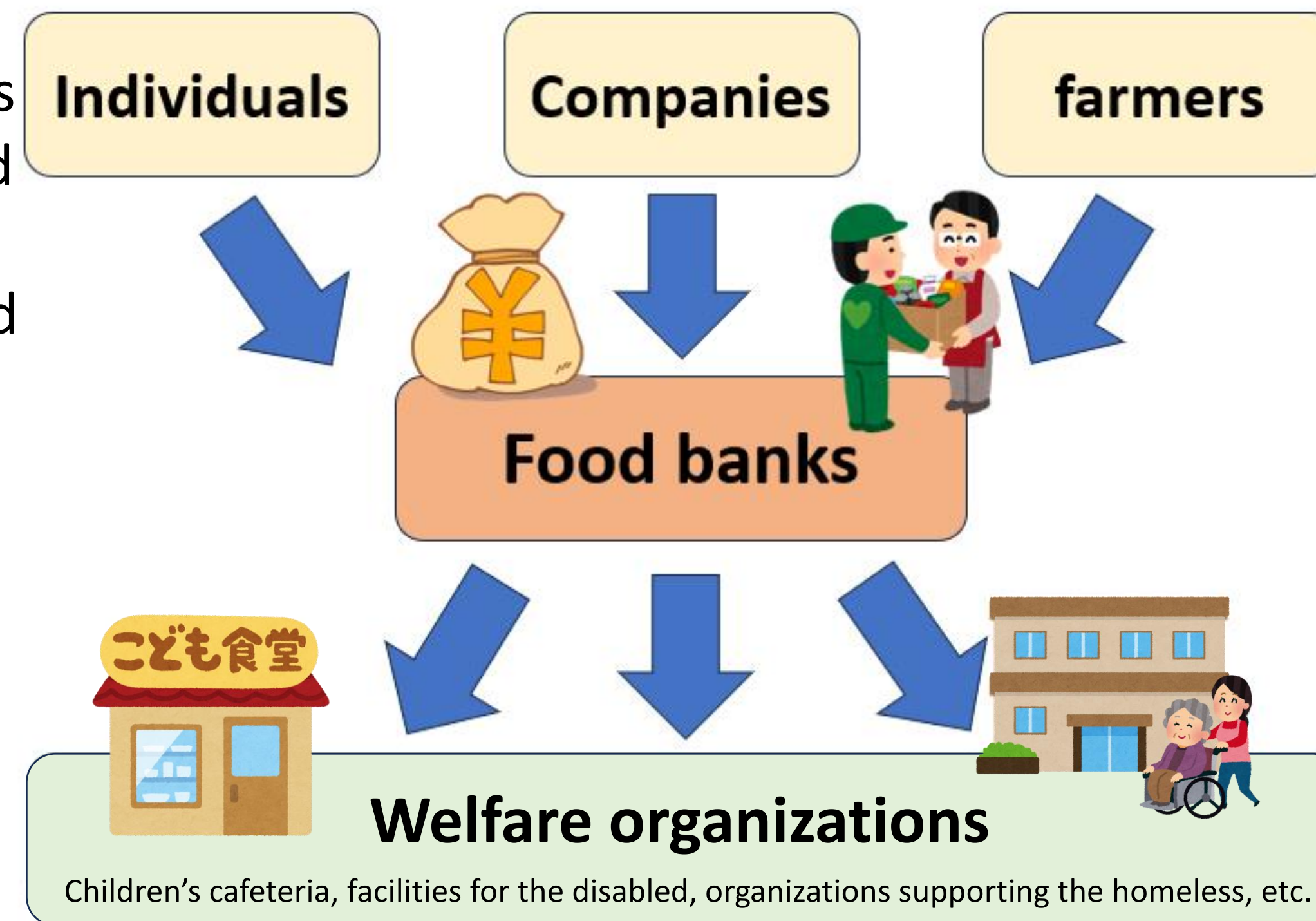
- The relative poverty rate in Japan is the highest among developed countries.
- 1 out of every 6 Japanese people are living below the relative poverty line.
- The number of people in need is increasing rapidly due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the rising cost of living.

System of Food banks

A food bank is a non-profit organization that collects donated food and distributes it to people in need.

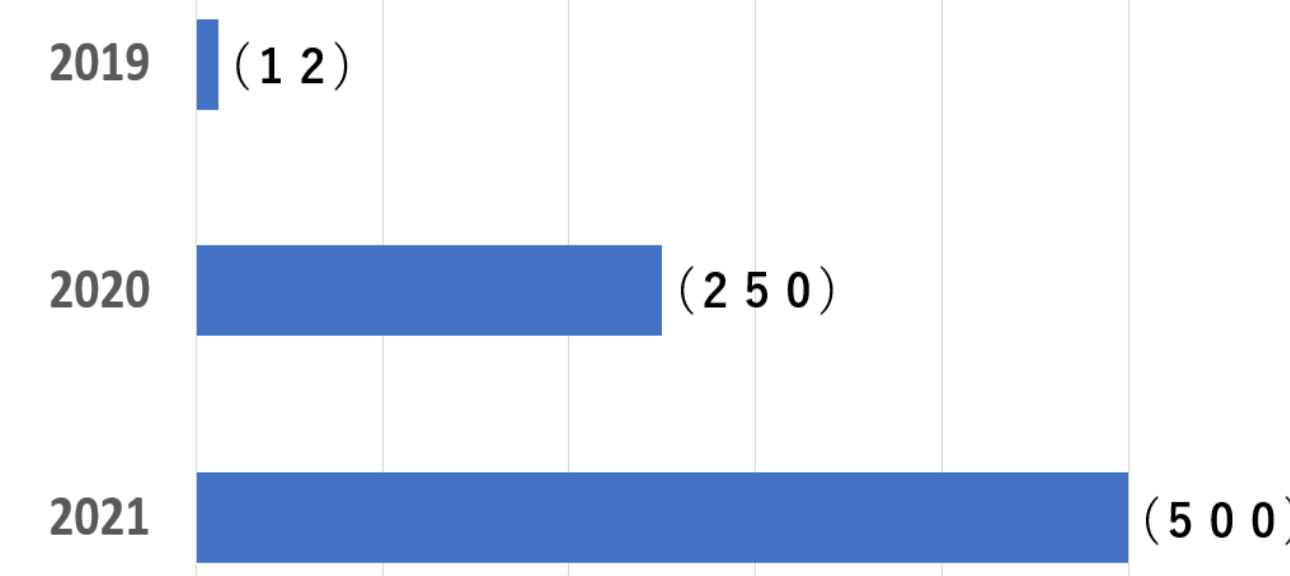
First, food manufacturers, retailers, farmers, individuals etc. donate surplus food to the food bank. The donated food will be managed by the Food Bank, and they will distribute it to different welfare organizations. The food is either shipped through a delivery service or transported by the food banks themselves.

One of the solutions is **Food banks**



Field study to food banks

Number of requests for food assistance from individuals (case)



What foods are donated?

- Food that is close to its expiration date
- Foods that don't meet certain criteria in terms of appearance
- Foods with damaged packaging or misprints
- Overstocked foods

*These foods are all safe to eat!

【Merits】

- ① Food can be stored for a long time
- ② Tax incentives are available
- ③ They have nationwide network in Japan

【Flaws】

- ① Insufficient manpower and operating expenses
- ② Liability from food-related accidents
- ③ Uneven distribution of food products
- ④ Burden of delivery

Research 【Method】 Reading, Interviews, In-person visits to sites

- Discussed the issue with students from other countries in class.
- Made a working group consisting of students from all over Japan, with regular online meetings every Saturday night.
- Interviewed over 20 people from 3 different sectors;
 1. Companies which donate food to food banks
 2. Food banks themselves
 3. Recipients of the food

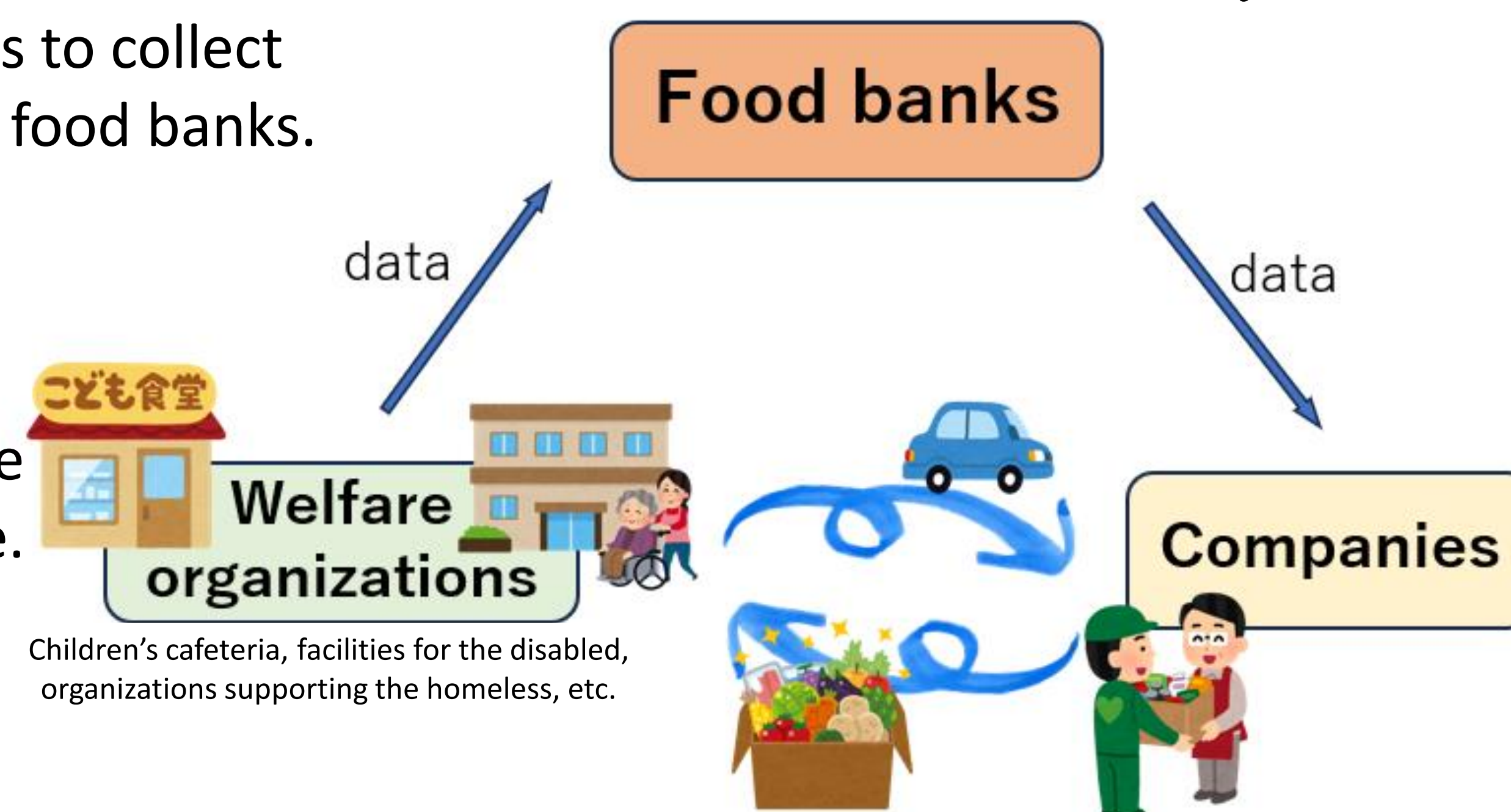
Sustainable...?



What is “Halows model”?

It is a system that allows recipient organizations to collect food directly from nearby stores without using food banks.

Halows Model is the key



Field study in Okayama Donated food in Halows model

【Difference from food banks】

Halows model reduces distance and time of transportation and allows companies to provide foods that are difficult for food banks to handle. This has diversified the options for welfare organizations and expanded the range of food available.

【Discussion】

...Why isn't it spreading?

① Legal

Companies are worried about responsibility when donating.

Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (1996→2023)
In the US, there is a law protects people who give food to food banks as long as they followed specific rules. It was further amended this year to expand liability protection to donations **provided directly to those in need.**

A similar law is going to be enacted in Japan next year. But the policy would be “Liability protection only for donations to certified food banks.”

It means Halows model may not be protected from liability.

② Social awareness

Food banks are viewed as a food loss reduction measure, and the welfare aspect is largely unknown to many Japanese people.

One reason is that food banks are not managed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

③ Budgetary

The budget for food banks comes mainly from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and it is not enough. Halows model is backed up mainly by the Consumer Affairs Agency.

There is a conflict in interest between Halows model and Food banks.

2023/10/22

Held online event with a Member of Parliament

I proposed that **liability protection be expanded** to include the Halows model, which would allow it to be widespread across Japan.

Conduct more research on the effects of food banks from a welfare perspective.

Seek new ways to increase social awareness.

They need to **talk with each other** and **develop a mutual understanding.**

They cover each other's weak points. Then, they may be able to get more budget from the government.