

# What are Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems?

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) are recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. These regional systems are characterized by traditional and unique agricultural, forestry, and fishery practices that have been passed down through generations while adapting to society and environment. They also embody a rich interconnection of culture, landscapes and agricultural biodiversity that has been nurtured through these practices.



## About the Arida-Shimotsu region

The Arida-Shimotsu region is located in the northwestern part of Wakayama Prefecture and encompasses the mikan-producing areas of Kainan City (formerly Shimotsu Town), Arida City, Yuasa Town, Hirogawa Town, and Aridagawa Town (formerly Kibi Town and Kanaya Town). More than 90 percent of farmers in the region cultivate mikan, forming the largest mikan-producing area in Japan.

### Access to the Arida-Shimotsu Area

- By Car:** Approx. 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes from Osaka city center via the Hanwa Expressway. Exit at Shimotsu IC, Arida IC, Yuasa IC, or Hirokawa IC.
- By Train:** Approx. 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours from Shin-Osaka Station via JR Kinokuni Line. Get off at stations between Kamogo Station and Hirokawa Beach Station.
- By Airplane:** From Kansai Airport: Approx. 45 minutes to 1 hour by car, 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes by JR.  
From Shirahama Airport: Approx. 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes by car.

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Arida-Shimotsu Region Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems Promotion Association

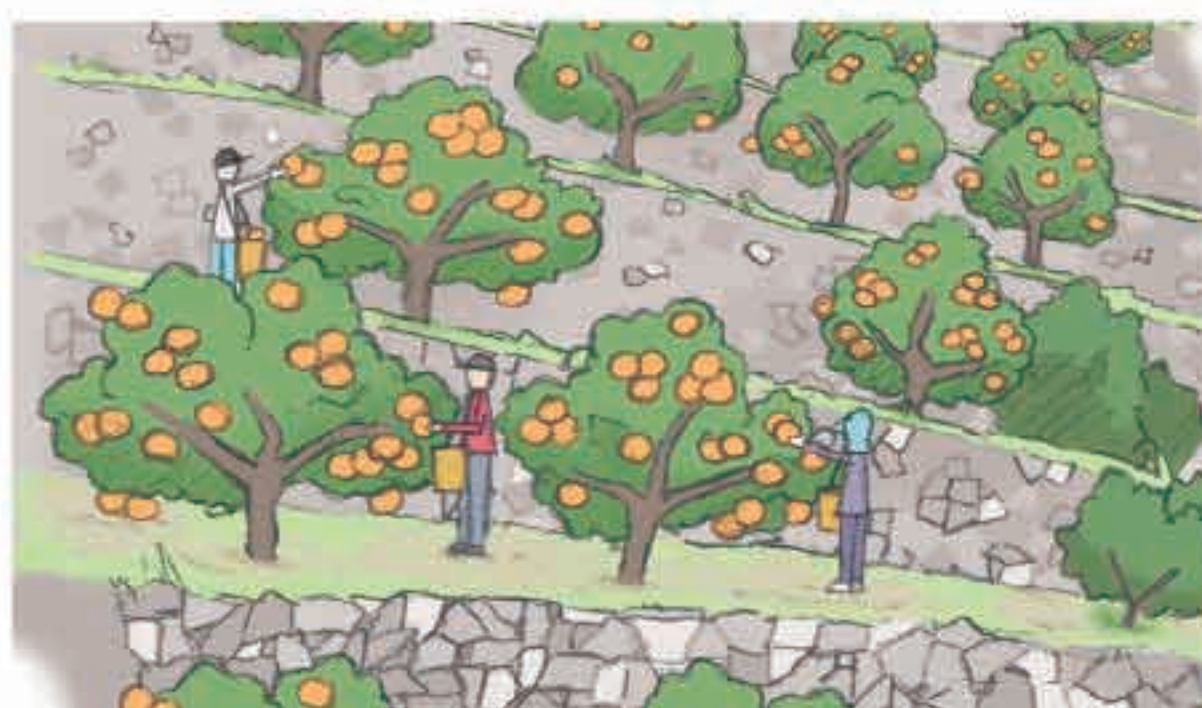


# The Stone Terraced Mikan Orchard System of Arida-Shimotsu region

In the Arida-Shimotsu region, the stone terraced mikan orchards have been built and maintained by farmers for more than 400 years. During 17th century, they organized Japan's first citrus joint shipping organization, "Mikangata." The stable production and continual shipment of mikan for a long period of eight months have been realized through skillfully utilizing natural conditions to introduce various mikan varieties and effective use of fruit storage technology. This agricultural system is globally unique and important.

## Features of The Stone Terraced Mikan Orchard System

### 01 Stone Terraced Orchard



Since 17th century, the mountains have been cultivated, and stone terraced orchards have been built to produce high-quality mikan. This land use has created a globally unique landscape.

### 02 Mikan storage room



In the Shimotsu region, harvested mikan are stored in wooden mud-walled storage rooms and shipped from January to April of the following year, when the balance of sugar and acidity has improved.

### 03 Traditional Shinto rituals

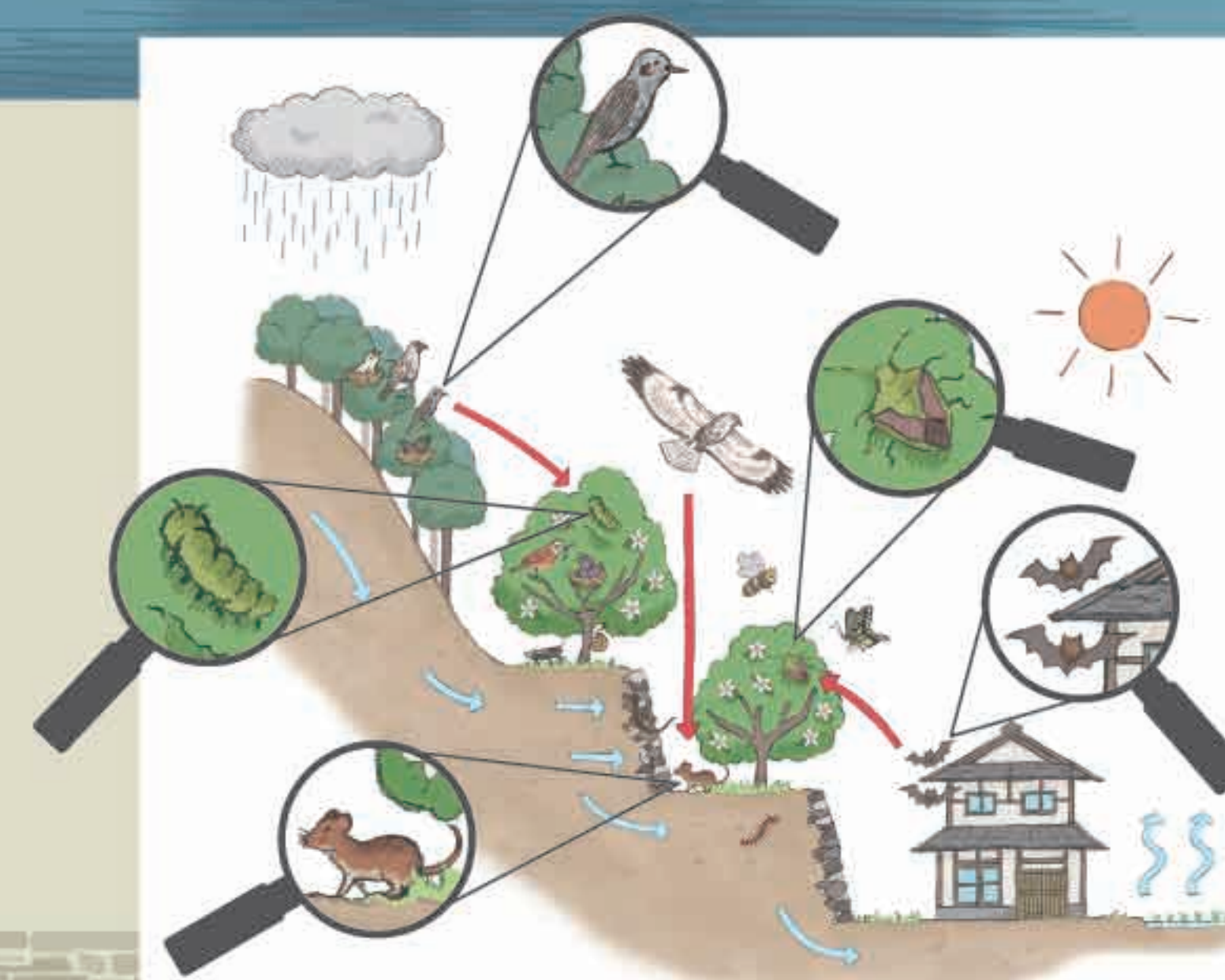


The region has a deep-rooted culture surrounding mikan, with rituals held to pray to the god of mikan for a bountiful harvest, and a festival held every summer to commemorate a famous figure associated with mikan who is known throughout Japan.

### 04 Supply of Mikan seedling



In this region, some citrus farmers are engaged in producing and supplying seedlings. Local seedling growers cultivate plants grafted from trees that are either close to the original variety or from those producing high-quality fruits that best reflect the variety's characteristics. This practice helps preserve the region's unique genetic traits and ensures consistent fruit quality.



## Symbiotic relationships fostered by mikan farming

In the Arida-Shimotsu region, the traditional landscape consists of woodland on the mountain ridges, stone terraced orchards on the slopes, and residential areas at the foot of the mountains. In the stone terraced orchards, mikan trees are planted with enough spacing to create a welcoming environment for small birds, which build their nests and feed their chicks on caterpillars that damage the citrus leaves. The forests above provide habitats for birds of prey, which hunt mice that would otherwise gnaw on the roots of the mikan trees. In the residential areas, bats make their homes and consume insects such as stink bugs and butterflies that feed on the citrus fruit and leaves. Together, the forests, terraced orchards, and residential areas are closely interconnected, forming a unique ecosystem nurtured by mikan farming.