

## Agricultural drones offer high-tech relief for struggling farms

The next generation farmhand in Japan's aging rural heartland may be a drone.

For several months, developers and farmers in northeast Japan have been testing a new drone that can hover above paddy fields and perform backbreaking tasks in a fraction of the time it takes for elderly farmers.

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Developers of the new agricultural drone say it offers high-tech relief for rural communities facing a shortage of labor as young people leave for the cities.

"As we face a shortage of next-generation farmers, it's our mission to come up with new ideas to raise productivity and farmers' income through the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as drones," said Sakakibara, who is also the head of JA Miyagi Tome, the local agricultural cooperative.

The drone can apply pesticides and fertilizer to a rice field in about 15 minutes – a job that takes more than an hour by hand and requires farmers to lug around heavy tanks.

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Nileworks is negotiating with authorities to allow operators to fly its drone without a license. It can be controlled with an iPad and runs on mapping software that is simple to operate.

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The drone can quickly analyze a rice stalk and determine how much pesticide or fertilizer it needs, making it easier for farmers to judge their input needs and estimate the crop size.

**Read full, original article:** [Drones Offer High-Tech Help to Japan's Aging Farmers](#)