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TOM TOM ENGLISH



VOCABULARY

Stipulations =

A condition or requirement as part of an agreement or contract

Rural =

Related to the countryside

Approximately

=

Roughly, around, about, close to

Draw =

Pull or drag something towards something

Discussion questions

1. What do you think about this idea to attract people to the countryside? Is it good? Will it be successful? Why? Why not?
2. Would you like to live in the countryside? Why? Why not?
3. Do you think this is an attractive opportunity for urbanites? Why? Why not?
4. Can you think of some other ideas to attract people to dwindling communities?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in the city?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in rural areas?
7. When you retire, will you stay in the city or move to the country? Why?

VOCABULARY

Urbanite =

A person who lives in a town or city

Ingrain =

Firmly fix or establish in a place or community

Dwindling =

Reducing gradually in size, amount, or strength

As you may have heard, the population of Japan is getting older and smaller. While other people have debated the problems and complexities of this issue, we do know one thing: It's left a lot of prefectures without many young people. Some places are celebrating when the community has even a single wedding, but Tsuwano in Shimane Prefecture thinks they've hit upon an idea for injecting some new, young blood into their town. They're giving houses away for (kind of) free! Of course, there are a few **stipulations**.

This isn't the first time we've heard of a house being handed off without payment in Japan, but this time there's more than one house being given away. In fact, five lucky families were chosen to move to **rural** towns in Shimane and Hyogo prefectures to spend the rest of their lives living in the country.

Well, maybe not the entire rest of their lives, but it will certainly be quite a while. You see, to get ownership of these free homes, people will have to live in them for 25 years. And not rent-free either, though the 30,000 yen a month isn't bad for a brand new house. And after 25 years, (or about nine million yen in rent), they'll own the buildings and the land they stand on. Tsuwano is also offering free repairs for any work that needs to be done and will help potential new residents find jobs. For example, one family has decided to move from Tokyo to Shimane, and the father's new town has set him up with a job with a forestry company.

While only five families were selected from the 17 who applied for this round, another 20 houses are planned to be built by 2018, so there's still plenty of time to apply for the next batch. The houses are all **approximately** 94 square meters and sit on relatively large plots of land. We imagine that's a big **draw** for Japanese **urbanites** who may never have had a yard for their kids to play in.

If you're thinking this sounds like a pretty sweet deal and you want to apply for the next round, bear in mind that they're looking for families with children, and the adults must be 40 years old or younger. You'll also probably need to be willing to **ingrain** yourself in the community — we doubt they want any strange people messing up their nice town. And, of course, you'll have to live in the town for 25 years to get ownership of the house.

While it's certainly a big move for families, and expensive for the local communities building the houses, it's not a bad idea. With the **dwindling** number of young people, there's not much else they can do to ensure there are enough people to keep the prefecture running. And if you love the great outdoors, Shimane has a lot to offer.

But if something a bit more island-like is what you're looking for, be sure to check out Mishima. They'll even give you a cow!