Rural schools and community needs. Rural schools traditionally have played a central role in their communities. Besides providing for basic education, they often have served as a cultural center in the community. Athletics, drama programs, music, and other social activities conducted at schools have played a vital part in rural community life and identity formation dating back to the 19th century. Examples of such projects include creation of a summer recreation program for youth and adults, passage of a bond for a new school, development of a community cultural center targeting at-risk youth, beginning a REAL program, and formation of a $200,000 private fund to provide community development grants. “More people from the city want a rural life. Here in Nagano prefecture we want to help them. But at the same time it takes a lot to become a farmer.” ‘A slower life’. The prefecture and the local branch of Japan Agriculture, a nationwide farmers' co-operative, offer support for those who decide to go ahead after a weekend of visiting farms. Lessons are available in the practicalities of agriculture, and help finding available land. Mentoring has also been successful. Image caption Hitoshi Kajiya left the city to become an apprentice for a farmer in Nagano prefecture. ... But in the nation which led Asia in its rush from the countryside to the cities a few young people are rediscovering the value of what was left behind. Share this story About sharing. Email.