



The Management of Japan's Food Supply from Colonial Korea and Rice Control Policies through the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs from the Late 1920s to the Early 1940s

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Abstract

In the agricultural sector, the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs prioritized expanding Korean rice production as a medium to long-term strategic reserve for Japan's food security under quasi-wartime conditions. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs basically sought to purchase surplus Korean rice or store it in agricultural warehouses, which led to conflicts with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Also, since the establishment of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, most communications between the Government-General of Korea and the Japanese central government were conducted through the Ministry of Colonial Affairs. Although, under the formal administrative system, the governor-general of Korea was not supposed to be under the direction of the minister of colonial affairs, the minister nevertheless intervened in the affairs of the Government-General of Korea.

Keywords: Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs, Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Government-General of Korea, Korean rice, food, rice control

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Introduction

In June 1910, shortly before Korea's annexation, the Japanese government established the Bureau of Colonial Affairs (拓殖局) as a Cabinet-level agency to administer its colonial territories. The Bureau was charged with overseeing Taiwan, Korea, and Sakhalin while also handling affairs in Kwantung Province (關東州) in addition to its diplomatic responsibilities. During the Taishō era, it underwent several abolitions, reinstatements, and name changes.

In 1929, in response to the growing demands of overseas settlement and development projects, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs (拓務省) was created to assume and expand these functions. The minister of colonial affairs thereby supervised the Government-General of Korea, the Government-General of Taiwan, the Kwantung Office (關東廳), the Sakhalin Office (樺太廳), and the South Seas Bureau (南洋廳), in addition to overseeing the South Manchuria Railway Company and the Oriental Development Company.

The Ministry of Colonial Affairs comprised one department and three bureaus: the Korean Affairs Development Department (朝鮮部), which managed the Government-General of Korea's administration; the Bureau of Industrial Development (殖産局), responsible for industrial, transportation, communication, financial, taxation, and monopoly affairs across Taiwan, Kwantung, Sakhalin, and the South Seas as well as the supervision of the South Manchuria Railway Company and the Oriental Development Company; the Bureau of Management (管理局), which handled miscellaneous administrative matters for Taiwan, Kwantung, Sakhalin, and the South Seas; and the Bureau of Colonial Affairs (拓務局), which directed overseas settlement and development projects not covered by the other bureaus. In 1934, the Kwantung Bureau (關東局) was established at the Japanese Consulate-General in Xinjing (新京), the capital of Manchukuo, to administer the South Manchuria Railway Company, and the Kwantung Office was also reorganized and managed as the Kwantung Province Office (關東州廳) under the Kwantung Bureau. In 1940, the Bureau of Colonial Affairs was split into the Northern Development Bureau (拓北局), charged

mainly with Manchurian immigration, colonization, and supervision of the Manchuria Colonization Company, and the Southern Development Bureau (拓南局), tasked with other overseas settlement and development projects (Naikaku sōri daijin 1929; Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1930, 1–6; 1941b, 3, 7–9; Yamazaki 1943, 19–39). The Ministry of Colonial Affairs was abolished in 1942 (Shingisitu shuseki jimukan 1942).

Among these offices, the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs maintained especially close ties with colonial Korea, yet few scholars have examined this relationship. Previous studies of colonial-era policy history have tended either to treat the Government-General of Korea and the Japanese government as a single, unified entity, or to focus on conflicts between the two. As a result, they have paid relatively little attention to the roles of major ministries within the Japanese government, particularly the Ministry of Colonial Affairs. Existing research largely focuses on the ministry's overall institutional history (Katō 1998, 2008; Kumamoto 2012; Sogō 2023), or on anti-ministry campaigns—led by pro-Japanese factions advocating Korea's exclusion from the ministry's jurisdiction and mobilizing the Petition Movement for Korean Suffrage (D. Kim 2006, 378, 427–438; Taehoon Lee 2010, 218–232; Ji 2011, 64–74; Ki 2013; Jongsik Kim et al. 2022, 382–392)—but offers little analysis of the ministry's concrete role in colonial governance. One notable exception documents the ministry's involvement in drafting the 1934 Farmland Law in Korea, a tenant-farming statute in colonial Korea (Choi 2023, 293–345).

At the time, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs itself acknowledged that nearly all of Japan's key industries depended on overseas raw materials. Because these industries underpinned the Japanese economy, it was deemed essential to direct and accelerate colonial development in resource-producing regions to protect and advance the interests of the mainland (Takumushō 1929, 5–6). As economic development assumed greater importance, the ministry insisted that the economic and industrial organs of the “outer territories,” including colonial Korea, cooperate organically with the central supervisory authority (Tōka Lee 1934, 22). In effect, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs emerged as the principal Japanese government body overseeing colonial Korea's industrial policies.

The present study seeks to investigate the management of colonial Korean policies by the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs, with particular emphasis on key industrial sectors. It begins by analyzing the Ministry's role in provisioning food supplies and implementing rice control measures for colonial Korea between the late 1920s and early 1940s, focusing specifically on the agricultural domain. This approach elucidates the Ministry's planning and execution processes for Korean policy initiatives and clarifies the interactions among the Government-General of Korea, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. While existing scholarship touches on food provisioning to Japan and rice control policies of colonial Korea (S. Lee 2008, 51–115; Jejeong Kim 2012; Chung 2014, 417–418, 422, 432; 2024, 56–63, 424–446; S. Lee 2021, 226–291, 307–375; Y. Lee 2022, 15–17, 29–31, 182–185, 204–208, 243–249, 280–300, 308–317; Choi 2025), these treatments remain superficial and often fail to identify the principal actors driving policy implementation. To address these gaps, this study primarily draws on contemporaneous Korean newspaper accounts—cross-referenced with Japanese media reports—and incorporates archival records from the Ministry of Colonial Affairs accessible in both Korea and Japan, thereby revealing the colonial administration's underlying intentions.

Response of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs to the Movement to Control the Import of Korean Rice in Japan from the Late 1920s to the Early 1930s

During the late 1920s, Japan experienced an agricultural depression that depressed rice prices. Contributing factors—population stagnation, consecutive bumper harvests, and large-scale imports of colonial rice—exacerbated supply surpluses and drove prices downward. After the outbreak of the Great Depression in 1929, the increase in rice production in Japan and colonial Korea further intensified the sharp decline in Japan's rice prices. The Japanese government had initiated discussions on rice control measures, including restrictions on colonial rice imports (Kaneda 1988, 49;

Jejeong Kim 2012, 229). The movement to curb foreign rice (外米) imports, notably Korean rice, emerged alongside the global economic downturn.¹ From this moment until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Tokyo—especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry—sought to limit Korean rice (朝鮮米) imports to stabilize domestic markets (Chung 2014, 417; 2024, 424).

Upon its founding in June 1929, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs immediately elevated rice policies to a core colonial policy issue. Shortly thereafter, it deliberated on future directives for Taiwan and Korea, framing rice policies within broader concerns of population and food security.²

Crucially, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs argued that regarding the movement to control Korean rice in Japan from the late 1920s, colonial industrial policies should abandon the “mother country priority principle” (母國本意主義) in favor of a “mutual benefit principle.” At the September 1929 Colonial Affairs Meeting, this mutual benefit framework was endorsed. Yet the Rice Investigation Committee—a cabinet advisory body advocating import restrictions on Korean and Taiwanese rice—remained aligned with mother-country prioritization, underscoring the need for a foundational policy statement.³ In November 1929, the committee resolved to introduce regulations establishing a monthly import-quota system (移入制) for Korean rice. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea opposed transforming this quota into a permit system, contending that such a regime would stifle Korea's industrial growth and undermine colonial

1. In this paper, “foreign rice” refers to both rice produced in foreign countries and rice produced in the colonies. Likewise, “imports” and “exports” encompass both inflows and outflows within and beyond the Japanese Empire, including its colonies. Readers are therefore advised to determine which meaning is intended from the context.

2. “Joseon-ui migok jeongchaek-gwa tongchi-ui geunbon bangchim” (Colonial Korea's Rice Policy and Fundamental Principles of Governance), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 19, 1929.

3. “Beikoku chōsakai no shudai wa wansenbei no inyū seigen” (Theme of the Rice Investigation Committee is Restriction of Import of Taiwanese and Korean Rice), *Osaka asahi shimbun*, September 8, 1929; “Cheongmu gandamhoe uigyeon yogang” (Outline of Opinions from the Ministry of Colonial Affairs Meeting), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 11, 1929; “Kaigai hatten ni isseimen” (New Field on Overseas Expansion), *Tokyo asahi shimbun*, September 11, 1929.

governance through discriminatory measures. Despite continued deliberations by the Rice Investigation Committee on restricting Korean and Taiwanese rice imports, Tokyo's policymakers remained divided. Korean rice imports were regarded as a critical concern for Japan's future supply and demand balance, since seasonal export peaks from Korea depressed domestic market prices.⁴ In December 1929, the committee examined the temporality of the Korean rice release period (出廻期) and explored mechanisms for averaging those exports over time.⁵ The Ministry of Colonial Affairs countered that any unilateral restrictions on Korean rice constituted a governance issue for the colony and that discriminatory measures by the mother country were fundamentally untenable.⁶ It maintained that Japan and colonial Korea must devise a unified, cooperative framework to address the rice question (Takumushō 1930, 22).

To that end, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs proposed establishing a substantial government fund to purchase Korean rice and constructing national rice warehouses within Korea. By acquiring and storing Korean rice during peak export periods, this measure aimed to stabilize Japanese market prices and shield mainland farmers from price shocks.⁷

4. "Joseonmi iip bangji joheun bangbeop-i eobseo gyeoljeongchi mothago gyesok simui jung" (No Good Way to Prevent the Import of Korean Rice, So We Are Still Deliberating and Have Not Made a Decision), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 10, 1929; "Senbei inyū kyokasei ka" (Is Japan Moving toward a Permit System for Importing Korean Rice?), *Chosen shimbun*, November 13, 1929; "Mi iip jehan-i pilgyeong-e hyeonsil nan" (Restricting Rice Imports is Ultimately Difficult to Achieve), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 19, 1929; "Joseonmi jehan bandae-reul cheongmuseong-eun jungdaesi" (Ministry of Colonial Affairs Is Taking Seriously Opposition to Restrictions on Korean Rice), *Maeil sinbo*, November 19, 1929; "Senbei inyū kyoka seido ann jitugen konnan no moyō" (Proposed Korean Rice Import Permit System Appears Difficult to Implement), *Chosen shimbun*, November 20, 1929; "Jungsonong bonwi-ui migokchaek" (Rice Policy Centered on Small and Medium-sized Farmers), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 25, 1929.

5. "Mijo soweronhoe-eseoui joseonmi-ui bangchaek" (Korean Rice Policy at the Rice Investigation Subcommittee), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 29, 1929.

6. "Chabyeol daeu bulneung, Matsuda cheongsang dam" (Discrimination Is Impossible, Matsuda Takumu daijin Talks), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 24, 1929.

7. "Mi jehan-ui bandae-reul cheongmuseong-i jungsi" (Opposition to Rice Restrictions Emphasized by Ministry of Colonial Affairs), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 19, 1929.

In collaboration with the Government-General of Korea, the Ministry formulated in 1929 a dual-warehouse scheme to mitigate seasonal export concentration (Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1941b, 195). Under the 1930 budget, it resolved to build both agricultural and commercial warehouses, subsidizing approximately 60 percent of construction costs and delegating building and management responsibilities to private operators. The agricultural facilities were slated for completion within 15 years, with a total capacity of two million *seok* (1 *seok* = approximately 144 kg) of brown rice, while commercial warehouses were to be operational within five years, holding up to 1.5 million *seok* of brown rice. To finance the commercial warehouses, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs requested roughly 40 million JPY in low-interest loans from the Ministry of Finance's Deposit Department.⁸

Even so, the Rice Investigation Committee persisted in urging the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea to curb Korean rice exports to Japan. In January 1930, it demanded that the governor-general enact an Ordinance or that the minister of colonial affairs or the governor-general publicly declare regulations governing Korean rice. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs responded that such measures disregarded the necessities of colonial administration and carried both theoretical and practical risks. It further criticized the mother-country priority policy as ill-advised, especially in light of frequent student-led independence demonstrations in Korea. The minister of colonial affairs himself attended the committee meeting to repudiate these demands.⁹

Nonetheless, by March 1930, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs had

8. "Senbei inyū tōsei no keizaiteki shisetsu naiyō" (Economic Facilities for Controlling Import of Korean Rice), *Chosen shimbun*, December 20, 1929; "Joseonmi-e daehan gyeongjejeok tongje naeyong" (Economic Controls on Korean Rice), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 20, 1929; "Joseonmi-ui ilsi yuchul bangjichaek" (Measures to Prevent Temporary Outflow of Korean Rice), *Maeil sinbo*, December 28, 1929.

9. "Joseonmi tongjean cheongmu cheuk-i bandae" (Ministry of Colonial Affairs Opposes Korean Rice Control Plan), *Joong-oe ilbo*, January 17, 1930; "Joseonmi-ui tongje-neun tongchi sang jungdaehan munje" (Control of Korean Rice a Major Issue in Governance), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 18, 1930.

acquiesced to the committee's proposal to regulate monthly averages of Korean rice exports to Japan, announcing that, in concert with the Government-General of Korea, it was hastening the formulation of appropriate controls.¹⁰

Thereafter, the ministry conferred with the Government-General of Korea and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on specific export-regulation measures. Around September 1930, rice prices in mainland Japan collapsed as a bumper rice harvest was anticipated. Korea, like Japan, also experienced a bumper harvest. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, foreseeing that a harvest-season influx of Korean rice would depress prices domestically and in Korea, preemptively designed seasonal import limits. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General arranged to secure approximately 5 million JPY in low-interest government loans, channeling these funds through private agricultural and commercial warehouses both to store rice to be imported and to stabilize the monthly average volume (Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku nōsanka 1934, 4; Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1941b, 195).¹¹

However, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry proposed restricting imports of Manchurian millet (滿洲粟), which Koreans had been consuming as a rice substitute. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs opposed this measure, arguing that it would seriously undermine colonial governance. It pointed out that authorities were already preventing rice exports by banning foreign rice imports into Korea, and that curbing millet imports would force northern Korean farmers—who depended on millet as a staple—to purchase comparatively expensive Korean rice. Such a policy, the ministry asserted,

10. "Joseonmi-ui ichul wolbyeol pyeonggyun-ui jojeol" (Adjustment of Monthly Average of Korean Rice Exports), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 23, 1930.

11. "Dai hōsaku wo mae ni muryokuna beikoku seisaku" (Rice Policy That Is Powerless in Face of Bumper Harvest), *Osaka mainichi shimbun*, September 7, 1930; "Joseonmi-ui iip jojeol bangchaek-eul hyeobui" (Discussion on Measures to Control the Import of Korean Rice), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 27, 1930; "Joseonmi jojeolchaek-eul nongnimseong-eseo bandae" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Opposes Korean Rice Control Policy), *Chosun Ilbo*, September 29, 1930; "Migok changgo jeoja iyul 2, 3 il jung gyeoljeong" (Interest Rate for Low-interest Loans for Rice Warehouse to Be Determined within 2 or 3 Days), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 1, 1930.

would effectively deprive Korean cultivators of essential sustenance and was therefore unacceptable within the colonial administration framework.

In place of millet restrictions, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs proposed extending Japan's 1921 Rice Law to Korea and Taiwan as a remedy for the crisis. The Rice Law was enacted to regulate the supply and demand and market prices of rice. It was established in response to instability in the rice market following World War I and provided for government purchases and sales of rice. In fact, from shortly after its establishment, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs took the position that the Rice Law should be implemented in Korea in order to regulate Korean rice. The ministry emphasized that effective enforcement required substantial funding and that increasing low-interest loans to Korea and Taiwan represented the only viable mechanism for controlling rice imports of Japan (Choi 2025, 206).¹²

The Government-General of Korea, aligning with the ministry's position, strongly advocated for the full application of the Rice Law in the colony to facilitate rice purchases. Consequently, in November 1930 a Joint Council—comprising the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and Colonial Affairs, the Government-Generals of Korea and Taiwan, and the ruling party—met to discuss amendments to the Rice Law. During these deliberations, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs proposed that, in addition to the already enforced Article 2, Article 1 also be applied in Korea and Taiwan to regulate and limit rice exports to Japan. Article 2, effective in Korea since February 1928, authorized the restriction of rice imports and exports and enabled price adjustments via import-tax modifications, though its impact was limited when applied only within Japan. Article 1 granted the government authority to purchase, sell, exchange, process, and store rice as necessary to regulate supply and pricing—powers already exercised

12. "Chōsen ni beikokuhō wo tekiyōsuru no kahi" (Whether to Apply Rice Law to Colonial Korea), *Chugai shogyo shimpo*, June 23, 1929; "Sok suib jehan-eun Joseon tongchi sang budang" (Restricting Import of *Setaria Italica* Is Unjust under Korean Government), *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 10, 1930; "Migokbeop jeonbu-ui joseon sihaeng-eul jilmun" (Questioning the Implementation of All Rice Laws in Colonial Korea), *Maeil sinbo*, October 24, 1930.

domestically in Japan (Choi 2025, 206).¹³

And the matter reached the Japanese House of Representatives. In February 1931, during a session of the House's Rice Law Committee, lawmakers questioned the apparent contradiction between promoting Korea's Rice Production Increase Plan and imposing monthly average limits on Korean rice imports. The minister of colonial affairs clarified that the overarching aim was to coordinate and regulate colonial industries, and consensus emerged that enforcing the Rice Law in both Korea and Taiwan was appropriate.¹⁴

Ultimately, in July 1931, the Cabinet resolved to amend and implement the Rice Law in Korea. Whereas foreign rice imports into Korea had previously required the governor-general's approval, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry now proposed that import decisions be made in consultation between the governor-general and the minister of agriculture and forestry. Although this proposal initially encountered resistance from the Government-General of Korea, mediation by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs secured a final agreement that the governor-general would consult with the minister of agriculture and forestry on future foreign rice imports (Takumu daijin et al. 1931).¹⁵

Thanks to proactive advocacy by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, funding for rice purchase—including Korean rice—was significantly augmented. By January 1931, existing appropriations could secure no more than two million *seok*, yet actual Japanese harvests far exceeded projections, compelling large-scale state intervention to stabilize rice markets. At the

13. "Miga daechaek jujang gwancheol-e noryeok" (Efforts to Enforce Rice Price Measures), *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 12, 1930; "Seigenryō enchō to kanjei hikiage de gaibei yunyū tōsei" (Controlling Foreign Rice Imports by Extending Restrictions and Raising Tariffs), *Osaka asahi shimbun*, October 14, 1930; "Eikyūteki senbei seisaku juritsu wo yōbō" (We Call for Establishment of Permanent Korean Rice Policy), *Tokyo asahi shimbun*, November 20, 1930; "Migokbeop yeonjang silsi-e daehayeo" (Regarding Extension of Implementation of Rice Law), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 22, 1930.

14. "Sanmi jeungsik-imyeonseoo iip jehan-eun mosun" (Rice Production Increases While Import Restrictions are Contradictory), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 26, 1931.

15. "Migokbeop gaejeong-e chongdokbu jujang tonggwa" (Amendment to Rice Law Passed the Governor-General's Claim), *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 3, 1931.

same time, the Ministry and the Government-General of Korea had long petitioned the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to authorize Korean rice purchases, ultimately resulting in the expansion of purchase funds. With an estimated surplus of 12 to 13 million *seok* and a target acquisition of approximately six million *seok* (inclusive of Korean rice), the initial budget proved insufficient, necessitating further increases in rice-purchase allocations.¹⁶

Concurrently, the Korean Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance (朝鮮農業倉庫令) was enacted to underpin the creation of agricultural storage facilities. Originally drafted by a Government-General envoy in Tokyo and modeled on Japan's Agricultural Warehouse Law, the ordinance required extensive modification by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs to suit local conditions. After referral to the Legislative Bureau at the end of March 1931 and completion of interdepartmental review by mid-April, mid-May issuance had been anticipated.¹⁷ However, delays in Cabinet submission postponed promulgation until July. The Korean Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance was enacted in response to the increasing financial burdens faced by landlords and farmers as the amount of rice required to be stored grew and the storage period became longer. It was intended to expand access to financing for landlords and farmers who entrusted their rice for storage by allowing rice warehouses to issue warehouse receipts.¹⁸

16. "Mija jeungaek joseonmi-e hoyeonghyang" (Increased Rice Funding Has Positive Impact on Korean Rice), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 25, 1931.

17. "Nonggeop changgoeop ryeong balpo-ga daso jiyeon" (Issuance of Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance Was Somewhat Delayed), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 13, 1931; "Nongchangnyeong balpo sigi 5 wol 1 il-il deut" (Date of Issuance of Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance Likely May 1), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 26, 1931.

18. "Joseon nongchangnyeong" (Korean Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance), *Chosen shimbun*, July 2, 1931; "Nonggeop changnyeong bulwon-e balpyohanda" (Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance to Be Announced Soon), *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 2, 1931.

Compromise between the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for Rice Control of Colonial Korea in the Early 1930s

Also, after negotiations among the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and the Government-General of Korea, it was agreed that the Ministry of Finance's Deposit Department would provide 15.8 million JPY in low-interest loans to the Government-General in two tranches. These funds were to be channeled through the Korean Industrial Bank to private agricultural and commercial warehouses and to farmers, with the aim of smoothing the monthly average of Korean rice imports into Japan. However, widespread reluctance in Korea to accept government loans and to store rice led to poor uptake: the first installment of 5.8 million JPY was only partially used, and less than half of the second tranche of 10 million JPY was disbursed. As a result, the averaging scheme collapsed, and rice imports from November 1930 to mid-April 1931 increased by 1,437,995 *seok* over the previous year, placing renewed downward pressure on Japanese rice prices and leaving the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry scrambling for solutions.¹⁹

In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, in concert with the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, the Government-General of Korea, and the Government-General of Taiwan, drafted a comprehensive rice-import management plan for the next extraordinary Diet session. They reached near-consensus to raise purchase funds to 100 million JPY and to amend the Rice Special Accounting Law, adding 55 million JPY for colonial rice purchases and expanding the fund ceiling to 155 million JPY. This amendment was designed to prevent an influx of colonial rice into the Japanese market during the release period.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, mindful of a quasi-

19. "Joseonmi iip tongje-neun silpaeida" (Controlling Import of Korean Rice a Failure), *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 7, 1931.

20. "Nongnimseong-ui singminji mi iip gwalli gucheon" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Specific Plan for Managing Import of Rice from Colonial Areas), *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 14, 1932.

wartime mobilization framework, aimed to preserve the landlord system in colonial Korea and to sustain long-term production increases (Choi 2023, 29, 319–320). Under this stance, it continued negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and both Government-Generals on coordinating controls over Korean and Taiwanese rice. In December 1932, the Special Committee of the Rice Control Society convened to address rice-control issues in earnest. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs, together with the Government-General of Korea and the Government-General of Taiwan, opposed discriminatory treatment of Korean and Taiwanese rice for the following reasons:²¹

- 1) They were absolutely opposed to a rice control policy centered on Japan, particularly one that sacrificed the colonies to protect and rescue Japanese rice farmers, as this would cause significant governance issues.
- 2) Restricting the production of Korean and Taiwanese rice due to the pressure on Japanese rice would have serious implications for future population and food supply issues.

In 1932, as Japan's rice harvest exceeded the previous year, calls within the government to restrict foreign rice imports grew louder, and the Government-General of Korea began to acquiesce to controls on Korean rice exports. Rather than submitting an independent Korean plan, policymakers decided to append Korea's measures to Japan's broader Rice Control Law and present them jointly to the Diet, with the central government shouldering most of the financial burden,²² for example by purchasing Korean brown rice during the release period.²³

The Diet ultimately approved the Rice Control Law, including

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21. "Kakaku kôteisei wo kiso ni beikoku tōsei wo hakaru" (To Control Rice Based on Fair Pricing), *Chugai shogyo shimpo*, November 13, 1932; "Sang migyeol-ui migok tongjeon" (Rice Control Plan Still Undecided), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 7, 1932.
 22. "Chongdokbu jakseong-ui jomi tongjeon" (Korean Rice Control Plan Prepared by Government-General), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 31, 1933.
 23. "Migok gaejeongan-ui joseon gwangye johoe" (Inquiry into Colonial Korea's Relationship with Rice Amendment), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 31, 1933.

provisions for Korean rice, and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs soon formulated corresponding control measures. In February 1933, the ministry convened a high-level meeting at the minister of colonial affairs' residence to discuss fundamental approaches to autonomous rice control in Korea. In consultation with the Government-General of Korea, they resolved to cap exports at 2.5 million *seok* by adopting a monthly-average export system to alleviate downward pressure on domestic prices.²⁴

Under the Rice Control Law, the Japanese government mandated the monthly averaging of rice exports from Korea and Taiwan to Japan. To implement this policy, the government decided to purchase rice during the rice marketing season for resale at a later date. The legislation required the purchase and monthly sale of roughly 1.3 million *seok* of Korean rice and 0.4 million *seok* of Taiwanese rice. However, the fixed price under the law far exceeded the prevailing minimum standard, provoking concerns that expanded colonial imports would further depress domestic rice markets (Takumu daijin 1933; Chūō jōhōsha 1933, 647–649).²⁵ Questions also emerged regarding the long-term viability of the substantial funds needed to purchase both domestic and colonial rice under these regulations. In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry proposed strengthening the Rice Control Law, one of which was the overseas sale of Korean rice outside Japan. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General, however, vehemently opposed any restrictions or reductions on Korean and Taiwanese rice, since both territories were still pursuing production-increase programs.²⁶ However, by late 1933, the Japanese government terminated the Rice Production Increase Plan for Korea and

24. "Migokbeop-eul pyejihago migok tongjebeop jejeong" (Abolish Rice Law and Enact Rice Control Law), *Maeil sinbo*, January 31, 1933; "Jomi jachijeok tongje-ro" (Korean Rice under Autonomous Control), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 18, 1933.

25. "Tongjebeop sihaeng hu-neun joseonmi ichul jeungga" (Will Korean Rice Exports Increase after the Implementation of Control Law?), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 8, 1933.

26. "Naigaichi wo ikkan no kome seisan tōsei dankō" (Consistent Rice Production Control on Both Mainland and Outside the Country), *Osaka mainichi shimbun*, September 8, 1933; "Saengsan tongje-reul jungsim-euro ilbon naeji jehan-eun jeoldae bulganeungsi" (Restrictions on Japan's Mainland, Centered on Production Control, Are Absolutely Impossible), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 9, 1933.

Taiwan (Chūō jōhōsha 1935, 110).²⁷

Simultaneously, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry investigated additional measures to regulate colonial rice output under the Rice Control Law. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs opposed any production-control policies that would disadvantage the colonies and advocated adopting the “principle of equality” to avoid discriminatory treatment.²⁸ In contrast, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry opposed restricting rice production in Japan, arguing that even if such restrictions were introduced, it would be difficult to impose them on Japan and the colonies on an equal basis. As a result, the ministry could hardly avoid criticism that it was discriminating against the colonies.²⁹

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sought to solidify its control over Korean and Taiwanese rice imports by any means available. It proposed establishing government monopolies on the import and export of colonial rice or adjusting trade volumes to Japan in accordance with domestic supply conditions. However, strong opposition from the Ministry of Colonial Affairs prevented these measures from being incorporated into the Rice Control Law. Facing projected supply surpluses, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry renewed its efforts to restrict colonial rice imports.³⁰

The Ministry of Colonial Affairs rejected the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's proposal for a “Permit System for Exported Rice” in Korea and Taiwan, and the Government-General of Korea likewise opposed curbs

27. “Hyeonjae-ui dap-eul myeonjak-euro jeonhyang” (Converting the Current Rice-field to Cotton Production), *Chosun joongang ilbo*, September 10, 1933; “Nongseong an-eul bandae” (Opposition to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Plan), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 10, 1933.

28. “Seisan tōsei ni kintōron wo shuchōsu” (Asserting the Doctrine of Equivalents in Production Control), *Kobe yushin nippo*, September 9, 1933; “Saengsan tongje-ga haegyeoldoedeolado dangmyeon-ui daechaek-euro iip gwalli-ga munje” (Even If Production Control Is Resolved, Import Management Remains a Problem as an Immediate Solution), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 10, 1933.

29. “Cheogseong bandae-neun pilyeon” (Ministry of Colonial Affairs Opposition Is Inevitable), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 15, 1933.

30. “Joseon, daemanmi-ui ichulip jeongbu dogjeom” (Government Monopolizes the Import and Export of Korean and Taiwanese Rice), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 14, 1933.

on its rice exports. Instead, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs—joined by the Government-General of Korea—championed expanded rice purchase and enhanced storage initiatives (Tōyō keizai simpōsha 1933, 274; Chūō jōhōsha 1933, 665).³¹ It emphasized that national policy must prioritize rice reserves to mitigate risks from poor harvests or future demographic pressures, a stance echoed by military authorities.³²

Ultimately, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and the Government-Generals of Korea and Taiwan reached consensus on a long-term colonial rice storage program. Under this agreement, storage capacity was set at three million *seok* of Korean rice and one million *seok* of Taiwanese rice, following the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's original proposal. Storage in Korea would commence with the 1933 harvest, while facilities in Taiwan would begin operations after the ensuing harvest season. The program adopted the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's autonomous storage model rather than the previously considered parallel system of government purchase and autonomous storage. Plans to reduce paddy acreage and promote alternative crops were suspended.³³ After months of deliberation over rice-control measures, the issue was ultimately resolved with the adoption of a plan for the long-term storage of rice. Although the Government-General of Korea had initially

31. "Migok saengsan tongjean yangseong-ui uigyeon hyeongyeok" (Two Ministries' Opinions on Rice Production Control Plan Are Significantly Different), *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 24, 1933; "Ishutsu kyokasei ni tomonau shokuminchi no kajōbei wa seifu kaiage" (Government Purchases Excess Rice from Colonies under Export Permit System), *Kobe shimbun*, September 25, 1933; "Ichulmi heogajean jeoldae bandaekilo gyeoljeong" (Decision to Absolutely Oppose Proposal to Permit Rice Export), *Chosun joongang ilbo*, September 27, 1933; "Kome ishutsu kyokasei wa tōchi jō ni yūgai" (Rice Export Permit System is Harmful to Governance), *Osaka jiji shimpo*, September 30, 1933.

32. "Geunbon gyeonji-ga dalla nongnim, cheongmu-ga daerip" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Colonial Affairs at Odds Due to Fundamental Differences in Views), *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 4, 1933.

33. "Nōshō, momi chojō ni shokubō" (Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Looking Forward to Rice Storage), *Osaka asahi shimbun*, October 8, 1933; "Momi chojō kyū shi ni kessu" (Decision Made to Urgently Implement Rice Storage), *Osaka mainichi shimbun*, October 9, 1933; "Joseon-eun geumnyeondo san 200-man seok jeojang" (Colonial Korea Will Store 2 Million Seok of Rice This Year), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 1, 1933.

proposed a different scheme, it accepted the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's plan as the least objectionable option. However, the Government-General of Korea ultimately conceded to this option, as it was relatively preferable to reducing cultivated acreage or restricting the export of Korean rice.³⁴ Disagreement over financing persisted: the Government-General of Korea requested full funding from the central budget, but the Ministry of Finance insisted that Korea bear two-thirds to three-quarters of the costs, leaving the remainder to general revenues. Unable to accept a contribution exceeding one-third, the Government-General of Korea enlisted the Ministry of Colonial Affairs to petition the Ministry of Finance for a revised cost-sharing arrangement.³⁵

Management of Japan's Food Supply from Colonial Korea by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs from the Mid-1930s to the Early 1940s

Subsequently, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea forged a more comprehensive rice policy that went beyond acreage reduction and stockpiling. Proposed in 1934 to both the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Finance, these measures sought to prevent Korean rice from flooding the Japanese market by ensuring its primary consumption remained in Korea. Recognizing that many Korean households were already forced to curtail or substitute their staple diets, policymakers deemed it essential to elevate Korea's overall food supply to parity with Japan. To this end, the Rural Revitalization Movement called for farm-level economic recovery plans addressing food self-sufficiency, debt relief, and fiscal stability, backed by a dedicated 1934 budget. Low-interest financing, provided through the Ministry of Finance and disbursed by the Bank of Korea, funded debt settlements. The

34. "Bulmanjok hana chongdokbu-do seungin" (Dissatisfied but Approved by Governor-General), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 1, 1933.

35. "Jeongjo jeojangbi budam" (Cost of Storing Rice is Burdensome), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 13, 1933.

Government-General of Korea also revived the Rice Repayment System, using local funds to purchase rice and extend loans directly to farmers, thereby strengthening rural livelihoods.³⁶

The issue of colonial rice policy reached the Council of Five Ministers—the prime minister, the ministers of the army and navy, the ministers of finance and foreign affairs—tasked with forging a unified approach. They agreed to establish a standing committee to fix Japan's annual colonial rice import quota and to entrust export cooperatives in colonies with its implementation, while any surplus would be acquired through a special colonial account.³⁷ Both the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs welcomed this proposal, and in Korea and Taiwan, Rice Sales Control Associations were established to regulate the sale and export of rice to Japan.³⁸ However, the Government-General of Korea objected, equating export cooperatives to an import-permit regime. It insisted that export volumes be determined by a joint committee—including representatives of the Government-General, Ministry of Colonial Affairs, and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry—and that stored reserves be released at the governor-general's discretion to stabilize local markets.³⁹ In

36. "Joseonmi-neun joseon-seo sobi" (Let's Consume Korean Rice in Korea), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 13, 1933; "Joseonmi bangji daechaek-ui daejak jangnyeo gyehoek seongan" (Plan to Encourage Alternative Crops Was Drafted as a Countermeasure against Korean Rice), *Chosun joongang ilbo*, November 14, 1933; "Sanmi hanggu tongjechaek surip" (Permanent Control Measures for Rice Production Established), *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 14, 1933.

37. "5 sang hoeui-seo gyeoljeongdoen joseonmi gwallian" (Korean Rice Management Plan Decided at Council of Five Ministers), *Chosun Ilbo*, February 10, 1934; "Nongnim, cheongmu yangseong-ui uigyeon uiyeon bulilchi" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Colonial Affairs Still Have Different Opinions), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 13, 1934; "Ishutsu kumiai no kahi, sarani chōsa kenkyū" (Re-examination and Research on Rights and Wrongs of Export Cooperatives), *Keijo nippo*, February 14, 1934; "Jayu ichul yongingo pyeongdeung daeu?" (Allow Free Export and Treat It Equally?), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 15, 1934.

38. "Ura no te de iku gaichibei ishutsu kyoka" (Permission to Export Rice from Other Regions Secretly), *Osaka jiji shimpo*, February 12, 1934; "Migok panmae-ui tongje johap seolchi" (Establishment of Rice Sales Control Cooperatives), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 13, 1934.

39. "Oejimi maesang-ui daeche suryang naejeong" (Internal Determination of Approximate Quantity for Overseas Rice Purchase), *Chosun Ilbo*, February 15, 1934; "Maesang jageum-

response, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs proposed, with the agreement of both Government-Generals, the creation of Special Rice Accounting Funds in Korea and Taiwan. Rather than relying on export cooperatives, each Government-General established an internal rice department empowered to negotiate purchase and free-export volumes with Tokyo on an as-needed basis.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, on the question of legally capping colonial rice imports, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry insisted on statutory restrictions, whereas the Ministry of Colonial Affairs advocated for market-based modulation through strategic government purchase.⁴¹ In its compromise proposal to the prime minister, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs rejected binding import quotas and instead recommended establishing special colonial accounts to purchase surplus Korean and Taiwanese rice.⁴²

Despite interdepartmental disagreement, the Temporary Rice Import Control Law, drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, passed the House of Representatives. In the House of Peers, debates centered on accusations by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea that legal import limits would constitute discriminatory treatment of the colonies (Tōyō keizai simpōsha 1934, 219–220).⁴³ Ultimately, the Temporary Rice Import Control Law was enacted in March 1934, valid until March 1935, authorizing the Japanese government to acquire Korean and Taiwanese rice under its provisions to regulate import

eun gaggi gwalli” (Each Purchase Fund Managed Separately), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 16, 1934.

40. “Oejimi tongje-e daehan guchejeok silhaengan gyeoljeong” (Decision on Specific Implementation Plan for Controlling Foreign Rice), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 25, 1934.

41. “Samto cheolsang tahyeoban” (Railway Minister Mitsuchi’s Compromise Proposal), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 4, 1934; “Gaichibei mondai dakai no sesshō” (Compromise to Resolve the Problem of Foreign Rice), *Osaka asahi shimbun*, March 8, 1934.

42. “Cheongmuseong tahyeoban geumil susang jesi” (Ministry of Colonial Affairs Presented a Compromise Proposal to the Prime Minister Today), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 8, 1934.

43. “Kyū, jū lyō nendo no gaichibei kaiage mikomi daka” (Estimated Purchase Amount of Foreign Rice in 1934 and 1935), *Keijo nippo*, March 17, 1934; “Jigmul, cheongju iip gwanse-neun chabyeoljeok daeu” (Import Tariffs on Textiles and Refined Rice Wine Are Discriminatory), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 26, 1934.

volumes (Naikaku sōri daijin et al. 1934; Chūō jōhōsha 1934, 58).⁴⁴

However, by autumn 1935, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs projected that recent surpluses would dissipate and a supply shortage would resurface, necessitating revival of the suspended Rice Production Increase Plan for Korea.⁴⁵ Although the Rice Autonomy Management Law was promulgated in 1936 (Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1936, 12–13, 231–234; 1938, 56; Chūō jōhōsha 1936, 12–14), its implementation was overshadowed by the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, which in turn prompted reinstatement of the Rice Production Increase Plan from 1939 (Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1939, 108–110; 1941a, 154). Under total-war mobilization, the Japanese government prioritized securing stable food supplies for national defense and regarded colonial Korea as a vital production base to meet both military and civilian demands (Chūō jōhōsha 1938, 155–156; 1939, 347–350; Chung 2014, 418; 2024, 424–425).

In the wartime context, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry proposed a comprehensive rice control policy from the perspective of securing food, including the management of Korean rice imports. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea strongly opposed this. They also resisted centralization of rice policy under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Takumu daijin kanbō bunsho-ka 1939, 290; Chūō jōhōsha 1939, 574–577). However, the Government-General of Korea also stated that it would actively cooperate with rice policies in Japan, while acknowledging, in particular, the need to regulate the distribution system in order to ensure the smooth distribution of rice within Korea.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, recognizing the integrated economic zone

44. “Migok geunbon daechaek josahoe-reul jumok” (Pay Attention to the Rice Fundamental Measures Investigation Committee), *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 30, 1934.

45. “Jungjidoeeotdeon sanmi jeung gyehoek buhwal-ui giun nonghu” (Momentum for Revival of Previously Suspended Rice Production Increase Plan Is Strong), *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 4, 1935.

46. “Joseonmi ichul gwalli chongdokbu cheuk jeoldae bandae” (Government-General’s Absolute Opposition to Management of Korean Rice Exports), *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 23, 1938; “Joseon-do jungang-e chusu migok baegeup gigu gaejeong” (Colonial Korea Also Revised Its Rice Distribution Organization According to Central Government), *Chosun Ilbo*, March 10, 1939.

spanning Japan, Manchuria, and China—where Manchurian rice was subject to a monopoly system and Taiwanese exports were already regulated—the Government-General of Korea agreed to cooperate with mainland rice controls. Both the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry implemented export controls on Korean rice beginning in 1939 to align with broader imperial food-security strategies (Chūō jōhōsha 1939, 288–289, 357–359).⁴⁷

Disputes over Korea's 1940 rice import quota prompted repeated negotiations among the Government-General of Korea, the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and Colonial Affairs, and the Planning Board. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry insisted on securing roughly three million *seok* of rice from Korea, but the Government-General vehemently opposed this figure, citing the 1939 drought and food shortages.⁴⁸ The Ministry of Colonial Affairs mediated a compromise, ultimately reducing the quota to 1.5 million *seok* and arranging for the export of miscellaneous grains from the mainland to Korea.⁴⁹

Rice production from colonial Korea and export data from colonial Korea to Japan (1920–1939) underscore the limited success of early export controls. Korea's export ratio to Japan rose steadily to approximately 40 percent in the 1920s, dipped slightly during the 1929–1930 depression, then climbed again to 53 percent by 1935. With the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the export ratio plunged into the 30 percent range and fell to about 20 percent by 1939. Although 1938 saw a temporary uptick, 1939 exports remained below 1937 levels. These trends indicate that attempts by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to restrict Korean rice

47. "Joseon sanmi ichul gwalli" (Management of Korean Rice Exports), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 10, 1939.

48. "Nongnimseong 300-man seok gojip" (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Insists on Three Million Seok), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 6, 1939.

49. "Joseonmi ichul suryang 150-man seok-eul mogpyo" (Targeting 1.5 Million Seok of Korean Rice Exports), *Maeil sinbo*, December 13, 1939; "Zakkoku ishutsu ni kyokasei" (Permission Required for Export of Miscellaneous Grains), *Osaka asahi shimbun*, December 16, 1939; "Japgok ichul heogaje cheongmuseong-seo bandae pyosi" (Ministry of Colonial Affairs Expressed Opposition to Miscellaneous Grain Export Permit System), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 18, 1939.

shipments in the early 1930s failed to limit exports. Although the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sought to secure food supplies during wartime, the sharp decline in Korean rice exports to Japan suggests that this policy also failed to achieve its objectives.

Under total-war mobilization, the Japanese government—including the Ministry of Colonial Affairs—imposed comprehensive controls on food transport, distribution, and consumption. In 1940, colonial Korea’s suspended Rice Production Increase Plan (1940–1945) was revived,

Table 1. Rice Production in Colonial Korea and Exports from Colonial Korea to Japan (1920–1939)

Year	Production (thousand <i>seok</i>)	Export to Japan (thousand <i>seok</i>)	Export ratio (%)
1920	12,703	1,750	13.8
1921	14,882	3,080	20.7
1922	14,324	3,316	23.1
1923	15,014	3,624	24.1
1924	15,174	4,722	31.1
1925	13,219	4,619	34.9
1926	14,773	5,429	36.8
1927	15,300	6,136	40.1
1928	17,293	7,405	42.8
1929	13,511	5,609	41.5
1930	13,701	5,426	39.6
1931	19,180	8,409	43.8
1932	15,872	7,570	47.7
1933	16,345	7,972	48.8
1934	18,192	9,426	51.8
1935	16,717	8,857	53.0
1936	17,884	9,513	53.2
1937	19,410	7,162	36.9
1938	26,796	10,703	39.9
1939	24,138	6,052	25.1

Source: Adapted from Chōsen sōtokufu nōrinkyoku (1940, 2–3).

accompanied by food requisition and allocation measures. Despite these efforts, the plan did not meet its production targets (Chūō jōhōsha 1940, 130, 225–227, 436–438; Chung 2014, 422, 432; 2024, 437–439; S. Lee 2021, 233–236, 270–280, 352–369; Y. Lee 2022, 17).

Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1929, the Japanese Ministry of Colonial Affairs regarded rice policies as a strategic priority. Foremost, the ministry asserted that colonial industrial policies should not be governed by metropolitan interests—a principle it championed during late-1920s debates over Korean rice imports to Japan. On this basis, it recommended that the central government purchase large quantities of Korean rice, and together with the Government-General of Korea, establish agricultural warehouses to alleviate seasonal export surges of Korean rice. Nonetheless, the Rice Investigation Committee continued to press for stricter export controls, and the ministry eventually acceded to its proposal. Thereafter, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs consulted with the Government-General and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to frame regulatory measures. However, when the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sought to restrict Manchurian millet imports—a vital subsistence grain in Korea—the Ministry of Colonial Affairs objected, warning that such a ban would undermine colonial governance by depriving Korean farmers of essential food. Instead, it proposed extending Japan's 1921 Rice Law to Korea and Taiwan as a comprehensive solution. Aligning with this view, the Government-General of Korea pressed for full application of the law to facilitate state purchases of Korean rice. And in 1931 the Cabinet resolved to amend and implement the Rice Law in Korea. Thanks to sustained advocacy by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, rice purchase budgets—including allocations for Korean rice—were increased, and the Korean Agricultural Warehouse Ordinance was promulgated to facilitate the construction of storage facilities.

The Ministry of Colonial Affairs, mindful of a quasi-wartime mobilization framework, aimed to preserve the landlord system in colonial

Korea and to sustain production increases. However, policymakers faced mounting pressure in 1932 to curb foreign rice imports amid a bumper Japanese harvest, and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and the Government-General of Korea signaled acquiescence to export controls of Korean rice. Ultimately, the Diet enacted the Rice Control Law, stipulating monthly averaging of rice exports from Korea and Taiwan and empowering the government to purchase surplus colonial rice for resale. The Rice Production Increase Plan for Korea and Taiwan was suspended in 1933. However, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs expressed reservations about the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's proposal to introduce a permit system for the export of rice from Korea and Taiwan. After protracted negotiations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Colonial Affairs, Government-General of Korea, and Government-General of Taiwan agreed on an expanded colonial rice storage plan, abandoning permit-based restrictions.

In 1934, the government convened a Council of Five Ministers—comprising the prime minister and the ministers of the army, navy, finance, and foreign affairs—which entrusted a special committee with setting annual import quotas of rice. Surpluses above the committee's ceiling would be purchased through dedicated colonial accounts. Despite agreement on the overall framework, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry insisted on legally binding import limits, whereas the Ministry of Colonial Affairs advocated for flexible adjustments via strategic purchase. By autumn 1935, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs forecast that recent surpluses would dissipate and shortages would recur, prompting revival of the Rice Production Increase Plan in 1939. After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry pressed for a wartime rice-control regime that would regulate Korean rice imports, and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs agreed to impose export controls on Korean rice. Under total-war mobilization, the Japanese government—including the Ministry of Colonial Affairs—imposed comprehensive controls on food transport, distribution, and consumption.

Drawing on these findings, two main conclusions emerge:

First, in the agricultural sector, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs

prioritized expanding Korean rice production as a medium to long-term strategic reserve for Japan's food security under quasi-wartime conditions. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs basically sought to purchase surplus Korean rice or store it in agricultural warehouses, which led to conflicts with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Second, since the establishment of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, most communications between the Government-General of Korea and the Japanese central government were conducted through the Ministry of Colonial Affairs. Although, under the formal administrative system, the governor-general of Korea was not supposed to be under the direction of the minister of colonial affairs, the minister nevertheless intervened in the affairs of the Government-General of Korea.

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