

JCCU submitted an opinion document to the government.

JCCU has submitted an opinion document about the state of the Consumer Committee to Mr. Goto Hitoshi, the Cabinet Office Deputy Minister on September 29 2011. (Top picture: L, Mr Asada; R, Mr. Goto)

Two years have passed since the inauguration of the consumer committee and in September 2011 a review of the system was launched.

Although, JCCU pointed out many of the problems with the Consumer Agency and the Consumer Committee during the inauguration, one year has passed, but both organizations haven't shown any substantial improvement.

Based on this point and also from the perspective of strengthening and Consumer Affairs Agency, JCCU has summarized a written opinion demanding further improvement about the state of the Consumer Committee and was submitted by Mr. Asada Katsumi, president of JCCU to the Cabinet Office Deputy Minister on September 29 as follows:

- Structural reinforcement of the Consumer Committee Secretariat
- The need for improved monitoring function of the Consumer Committee
- The need for strengthening co-operation with enhanced external relations
- The need for clarification of the issues covered in the Consumer Committee and proper selection of solution methods
- The need for strengthening co-operation with the Consumer Affairs Agency



Countdown to International Year of Co-operatives 2012

Japanese Co-operatives are leaving no stone unturned in their effort to successfully launch IYC 2012. Prefectural IYC committees in various regions and other inter-co-op joint projects are in active preparation for the launch.

Progress on the preparation is summarized here.

1. IYC National Committee:

The Japan National Committee for IYC 2012 (IYC National Committee), consists of 21 Executive Organizations. The Committee's bureau, including JCCU, Zenrosai, JA-Group, Seikatsu Club Union and the Workers' Co-op Union is engaged in the following activities.

(1) Making of tool and goods

The committee has already made some posters/panels, leaflets and DVD to be used in the regional events and meetings. The leaflet is to inform the role of co-operatives and IYC while the unified-format panels would be displayed in events and other activities to introduce Co-ops' various regional activities.



Poster



DVD

Also, commemorative novelty goods with IYC logo are being produced, which would be given to event participants as present.

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(2) Making list of participating Co-ops in each prefecture.

To ensure the participation of more co-operatives in the IYC promotion, a list of regional member co-ops of different Co-op federations participating in the IYC National Committee is being made. The list would be useful when organizing prefectural committees and inviting people to the events.

(3) Execution of events

The National Committee has planned the following events.

| Date | Event |
|--------------|---|
| Jan 13, 2012 | Kick-off Event |
| July 18 | International Co-operative Day, Tokyo - Japan |
| Nov 17 - 18 | Co-operative Festival, Saitama - Japan |
| Nov 28 | ICA-AP Co-operative Forum, Kobe - Japan |

The kick-off event in January will include a brief report of IYC, panel discussion and other events. Co-operative festival will be held in many places, along side with the regional Co-ops' events.

The ICA-AP Co-operative Forum will be co-hosted by the IYC National Committee and JJC (Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives).

(4) Review for the Co-operative Draft Charter

As UN holds up the following three targets of IYC;

- Increase public awareness about co-operatives and their contributions to socio-economic development,
- Promote the growth of co-operatives,
- Encourage governments to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives.

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Based on the above three targets, the National Committee has formed the 'Co-operative Draft Charter Committee' to draw up a co-operative charter to prompt the Japanese government to establish a Co-operative Charter, following after the 'Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Charter' approved in the Cabinet in July 2010. The Draft, which will be completed by the end of January 2012, is to show the basic philosophy of co-operatives, including its social and economic role, as well as the government's principle to handle issues on co-operatives.

A booklet to deepen understanding of the Draft will be published in February 2012.

(5) Action for students and professionals

The National Committee will promote some activities to enlighten students who may bear the future of Co-operatives. For example, some courses would be provided to get students learn about co-operative by sending some officials and staff to give lectures as guest speakers, accept university students on internship and middle and high school students on work place experience program.

2. IYC & Inter-Co-op projects in the prefectures

IYC planning committees in the prefectures and inter-Co-op committees are also preparing for the launch of IYC 2012.

In Miyagi prefecture, on July 2, five Co-ops (JA, JF, Forest Co-op, Nissenren and Consumer Co-op Federations) announced the 'Joint Declaration to Recover from the Tohoku Earthquake'. Also, in Nagano prefecture, on July 7 the first conference of the Nagano planning committee was organized with a lecture titled 'sustainable society and the role of co-operatives'. Similar events are being organized in other prefectures and reported in IYC newsletter produced by the national committee.

Exchange meeting held as a pre-IYC event in Sapporo

As part of the kick-off event for the launch of IYC 2012 in Hokaido Prefecture, an exchange meeting was held on October 6, 2011 between Co-op Sapporo and the Federation of Finland Co-operatives (SOK) where the guest of honor Ms. Anne Santamaki gave a special presentation about SOK.

The main purpose of the meeting was to establish special ties for further strengthening the growth of both co-operatives.

Co-op Sapporo regarded the meeting as a kind of case studies with the main aim of learning the success stories about SOK which has close similarities with them in terms of business operation and with approximately the same number of membership (2 million).

Co-op Sapporo intends using the experience to raise the loyalty of its members as well as business innovation by following the examples of SOK that has earned them a great force to reckon in consumer co-operative business in Finland.

Audience raised questions whether there is a disparity in salaries for full-time and part-time employees, for which she replied that there's no pay gap.

Answering a question related with student's part-time job, she mentioned that most students worked on part-time at their own convenience of time.



Ms. Anne Santamaki paid a visit to one of Co-op Sapporo's store.

Great East Japan Earthquake: 10 million yen donation received from the Association of Suppliers of JCCU

The Association of suppliers of JCCU "Rainbow Association" made a contribution of 10 million yen to the fund-raising account opened by JCCU to assist victims of the earthquake.

On October 6, 2011, a presentation ceremony was held in Tokyo, where the Chairman of the Board of the Rainbow Association, Mr. Ito Masatoshi, also the President/CEO of Ajinomoto Co., Inc. presented the amount of the donation to Mr. Asada Katsumi, the President of JCCU.

JCCU affirms that the fund would be delivered to the affected areas and would ensure its maximum utilization for the reconstruction exercise.

As of October 14, the total amount of donation drawn to the JCCU fund-raising account and that opened by the individual member Co-ops totals 3.3 billion JPY.

Eight months have passed since the earthquake, and little by little, the stricken area is on the way to recovery.

Co-op is determined to continue to expand its mutual support and spirit of share to assist in bringing relief to the victims in the disaster area.



Mr. Ito (left) presents the donation to Mr. Asada.

Special gratitude to ICA towards fund-raising

The ICA President Dame Pauline Green launched a Global Appeal for funds for the victims of the Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan and a total amount of US\$540,000 was realized and had been presented to the Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives during the president's visit to Japan in July. Out of this amount JCCU received US\$152,500 to assist in the rebuilding process of the consumer co-operatives.

On behalf of JCCU and its member Co-ops we would like to express our gratitude for this generosity to the donor organizations.

“Sendai cabbage” the symbol of earth- quake disaster reconstruction

Miyagi Co-op has been working on a recovery project 'Food & Agriculture Miyagi Recovery Network' with the co-operation of producers and food-related businesses.

As part of this activity, more than three thousand nursery plants of Sendai cabbage were planted on September 11 in a field in Natori city.

As Sendai cabbage is relatively resistant to salt pollution of the soil, it was chosen as the right plant to grow to represent a symbol of recovery.

Miyagi Agricultural High School (Natori) students cultivated the seedlings at their temporary school, Watari High School, which is declared as a refuge place.

Other than the students, 21 people made up of students and teachers from Meisei Gakuen High School (Sendai), JA staff and local food producers joined in transplanting the seedlings.

Mr. Takahashi, a Meisei Gakuen teacher said with enthusiasm 'By learning one-hundred-year history of Sendai cabbage, we will build up the next one-hundred-year of cultivation'.



Seedlings being planted carefully



Seedling cultivated by the students of Miyagi Agricultural High School.

Ofunato city and Rokko Medical Co-op continue “home-visit activity”

In Ofunato city, in Iwate prefecture, the construction or lease agreement of the temporary houses started in May and by mid-August most of the disaster victims had finished moving from evacuation centers to the temporary houses.

Currently evacuees are being temporarily housed in about 1,800 houses together with 585 rented ones and about 100 public housing facilities.

An emerging issue in these places is to prevent isolation of the victims who have moved into unfamiliar communities.

To keep in touch with the victims, staff of the city of Ofunato visits these people to check on their health conditions through the distribution and collection of health survey sheets. The purpose is to identify those who need mental healthcare and recommend them to visit the clinic.

Since July, Rokko Medical Co-op has joined in the activity. Dr. Chiba Makoto, a physician at the Co-op's Nada Clinic, has been supporting the affected areas immediately after the earthquake.

The visit has revealed that a greater number of people who are fighting against the disaster are losing their mental balance.

The regional medical experts in the region have requested encouraging support from people in the Awaji area to cheer up Ofunato city using the experience they had with the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake of 1995.

Okayama Co-op sets up a disaster support corner at a food festival

Consumer Co-ops nationwide keep supporting the earthquake stricken areas through various forms of business and social activities.

On October 1, Okayama Co-op hosted 'Happy Food Park 2011' at Convex Okayama, which attracted 18,000 visitors.

This annual event is held as an exchange program between co-op members, staff, producers and manufacturers.

This year the event had a disaster support corner for the Great Tohoku Earthquake with exhibitions of some suffered manufactures dealing with Okayama Co-op.

The festival had a food-tasting corner and also booths to sell products from Iwate Co-op as part of its disaster support activities. There was also a panel exhibition and a message corner for the victims.

Two staffs, a nurse and a care worker are sent to Iwate in a week-term to join the medical support team consisting of experts from Iwate and other prefectures to offer medical support to the evacuees in the region.



Blood pressure measurement



Scene of a home visit



Realizing the importance of co-operation through volunteer co-ordination



Mr. Nakamura Hitoshi
Co-op Net Federation

In late September and mid-July, I worked as a disaster volunteer co-ordinator at the 'Life Reconstruction Assistance Center' in Miyako city, Iwate.

Various activities were performed based on the request of the victims and the government, mainly disaster area survey, preparation of necessary materials, arrangement of transportation to the locations and volunteer placement.

Although the needs were various from "cleaning mud" to "life reconstruction assistance" I felt the importance of the word "mutual assistance" once again seeing volunteers who have come from the whole country to assist.

It is obvious that the feeling of volunteers is directly connected with every step towards recovery.

During the struggle to take back a life in an earthquake disaster, I realized the community's power of mutual support and strong ties between them.

Future restoration exercise can be accomplished by the active involvement of many volunteers.

The long term goal is to collaborate with the local government and the people in order to work together to create hubs for reconstruction. The long-term activities require more volunteers.

News in Brief JCCU-ILO Program

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) in collaboration with ILO and the Co-operative Facility for Africa (ILO/COOP Africa) organized a 5-day study visit, from September 25 to October 2, for African Co-operative Leaders from five African countries (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda).

After receiving a brief overview of the Japanese Co-operative Movement and the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Business, participants paid study tour to the National Federation of Workers and Consumer Insurance Co-op (ZENROSAI), Waseda University Co-op, The Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA), Norinchukin Research Institute, Inc., National Association of Labour Banks and finally inspected one of the retail stores of Saitama Co-op.

As part of the study tour, participants were introduced to various kinds of co-operative activities in Japan, the role of members in co-operative business and co-operative social responsibilities.

A final presentation session was held where participants discussed their impressions about the study tour, what they have learnt and possible implementation of what they observed during the training.

This is the second time the study tour has been organised for the African Co-operative Leaders following the tour which was held in August 2010.



Study tour to JA Tokyo Musashi



Final review of the study visit



Participants pose in a group photograph

Minister's award for employing disabled people

The Minister of Health Labour and Welfare prize for an organization that has shown excellence in the recruitment, retention and progression of disabled employees was awarded to Co-op Tokyo in a ceremony held in Tokyo on September 7, 2011.

Employment is central to the economic and social inclusion of disabled people and the award intends to motivate and deepen the concern of more organizations to make room for employing the disabled in a variety of posts. Co-op Tokyo accepts disabled people for workplace training, practical work at their home delivery centres and store outlets. Presently about 70 disabled people are employed at 60 business offices in Co-op Tokyo.

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Scene of the awarding ceremony

Co-op Tokyo will remain committed to this good practice to remove barriers regarding job opportunities for disabled people.

JCCU News is published by the International Department.
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