

Sanchoku tour

During the second day of the sanchoku exchanges participants were divided into five courses and paid visit to producers within the prefecture. Out of them, 31 inspected Soma Futaba fishing co-op under the guidance of a staff of the co-op.

The sanchoku exchange addressed the role of sanchoku in the earthquake recovery process and the visit was to examine the present condition of the fishing co-op and the measures needed for its revival.

Immediately after the earthquake, by using an emergency evacuation, workers were sent offshore to escape the tsunami but the fishing facilities were devastated. The region off the coast of Soma and Futaba where various fish species are caught in abundance were restricted from operation and shipment by the government as a result of the discharge of high-level contaminated radioactive water following the nuclear accident. More than a year after the disaster, business activity was stopped until June 2012 when the ban was lifted, after series of tests that finally confirmed the safety and the co-op has since expanded gradually its shipping of fish species. Participants inspected the progress of the restoration work and received report on the current status of the fishing cooperatives. They also inspected the rebuilt ice-making factory that was lost during the earthquake.



JCCU held Nationwide "Sanchoku" Research Exchange

JCCU on February 7 and 8 held the "30th Annual Sanchoku research exchange meeting" in Fukushima. Sanchoku is a co-op business that ensures consistent supply of quality and safe products from consumer's standpoint. 304 participants from 135 organizations nationwide including producer organizations, researchers and representatives from consumer co-ops attended it.

Since reconstruction of the earthquake affected areas is a major priority under co-ops 2014 fiscal year action policy, the exchanges was organized under the theme "how sanchoku could be championed and challenged in areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake to help quicken the pace of recovery and rebuilding".

Mr. WADA Toshiaki, Managing Director of JCCU, in his opening speech appealed to co-ops to exercise their total power to keep supporting efforts towards the reconstruction of the Great East Japan Earthquake. He touched on 2014 recovery initiatives of co-op and called for a continued support and increase participation of a large number of volunteers.

Ms. OZAWA Kazue, a board member of Co-op Fukushima, gave a lecture under the title "facing the radioactive contamination caused by the nuclear accident". She remarked that in order not to forget the Fukushima disaster reconstruction there is the need for active involvement of the government, the voluntary organizations and the general public.

Mr. MURAKAMI Atsushi, an environmental journalist, also lectured on "boosting community development by renewable energy" which participants evaluated as very informative.

Mr. ITO Kouji of Sunnet Business Federation, reported on the activities of "Miyagi Food & Reconstruction Project Network" which aims to create business chances for the stricken areas.

this issue

Sanchoku Research Exchange **P.1**

News from Member Co-ops **P.2**

New Release of Co-op Brand Products **P.3**

Report on Co-op Staff Study Tour **P.4**

Mr. ENDO Kazunori of Soma Futaba Fisheries Cooperative Association also reported on the current efforts to recovery and regeneration of the Fukushima Prefecture fishing industry.

The last report was by Ms. SEKI Naoko, a farmer in Fukushima who spoke on "sustainable agriculture and living" and emphasized on the significance of a network between people living in the community.

At the dinner social gathering held as part of the event, sales promotion of a fruit jelly, which was jointly produced by high school students of Date City and JA Date Mirai, an Agricultural co-op, was organized as part of the regional reconstruction effort of the area.



The scene of the meeting



Scene at the sectional meeting



The 15th Regional Collaborative Promotion Symposium

Toyama Consumers' Co-operative Union, the Agric Co-ops in the Prefecture and Toyama Prefectural Council of Social Welfare co-sponsored the 15th Regional Collaborative Promotion Symposium held in Tomiya on February 17, with an attendance of 170 participants of which 66 were from co-op organizations.

The theme for the symposium was "Living our lives and reexamination of nursing care insurance system".

The first Keynote lecture "The trend and its influence on the revision of nursing care insurance system" was given by Mr. YAMAMOTO Toshiyuki, Activity Promotion Department of Elderly Policy Division; Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives.

Dr. MINAMI Shinji, Director of Nanto Municipal Hospital gave the second Keynote speech and emphasized on the need to have a community general medical care facility that could support the life of each citizen in the community. General Discussion based on the current situation and challenges in the region was held.

The necessity to build an organized caring community where people of all ages could benefit from was emphasized. In order to do this, concerns were raised to build a community network, which is friendly and peaceful with swift flow of information exchanges. This will help strengthen neighborhood and community bonds.



Seen at the symposium

Co-op Kobe held symposium on "Co-op Forest"

By using the revenue from the sale of plastic shopping bags, Co-op Kobe is engaged in environmental education and activities in forest preservation and biodiversity conservation in the Nishinomiya woodlands referred to as "Co-op Forest *Shakegoyama*".

This program, which started in 2008, is scheduled to continue till 2018.

On February 2, a symposium was held, which was attended by 82 participants, to discuss achievements so far and the future efforts regarding the preservation and biodiversity activities in the Co-op Forest.

Also, learning session, which allowed for the sharing of common views regarding biodiversity conservation was carried out followed by a panel discussion.

Walking along a hiking course referred to as "road of four seasons", the participants learned about the various types of plants that grow in *Shakegōyama* and the relationship between their growth and the environment.



Co-op Kagoshima Ijuin Store won Customer Service Grand Prix Award

On July 2013, a Retail Support Service Industry, "AJIS Co. Ltd" organized the first Grand Prix Contest "Western Japan Customer Service Grand Prix" for 200 retail operators (663 stores) in the Western Japan region.

Co-op Ijuin Store was awarded the first place.

Greetings, personal appearance, cleanliness level, liveliness of the entire store and others were the focus of the survey.

It was conducted by a specially trained researcher disguised as a customer who visit the store to observe its service, particularly, about guidance received by customers making inquiry about products and their display location, the smile of the staff attending to the customer and the feeling of service, whether rude or service with a heart (politeness) were taken into consideration during the evaluation process.

Co-op Ijuin Store won the first place as a result of the dedication towards improving customer service.

During the morning meeting, before work starts, it is a routine at Co-op Ijuin Store for all staff to repeat practice of 8 customer service terms that are desirable for improving customer satisfaction level.

In addition, on the second Thursday of each month, representatives of each department hold a "reception committee".

Through specific themes each month, the improvement in reception power is tackled.

Encouraged by the results of being awarded the first place, the co-op is committed to improving customer services to the next level in the future.



Staff of Ijuin Store pose for a pic.

New arrivals of CO-OP brand products



JCCU continues to develop easy to use products for senior citizens. Taking advantage of the voice from the senior generation seeking for "bread with taste favorable for seniors", this new sprinkle bread with Japanese-style taste has been developed with the participation of Co-op members.



New release of the "CO-OP Easy dish" series. Easy to cook with available home ingredients using black vinegar sauce and onion.



Long-seller CO-OP cosmetics celebrate 20 years anniversary; "Co-op Medicinal Whitening series" has been renewed. The entire above products will be released on March 1, 2014.

Community development exchange meeting held

On November 29, Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, the Japan Health and Welfare Co-operative Federation and Japan CO-OP Insurance Consumers' Co-operative Federation co-organized the second "community development exchange meeting" in Osaka for the purpose of building networks to promote community welfare. 93 organizations (377 people), consisting of co-op members, staff and social welfare organizations, participated.

Diverse opinions from various fields including the Council of Social Welfare and NPOs across the nation were exchanged and shared approach to regional issues concerning living.

Mr. ASADA Katsumi, president of JCCU and Ms. MATSUMOTO Yoko, board member of Izumi citizen co-op, gave opening speeches stressing on the role of co-op in community welfare.

Professor UENOYA Kayoko of Doshisha University who presided as coordinator spoke on the importance of network that is rooted in the community.

It was followed by a panel discussion with three panelists discussing about "how a network of mutual support be made from the view point of consumers".

The subcommittee held in the afternoon was divided into four groups to discuss about community issues in relation to living.

Topics discussed include; 1) Diverse child care support and Multi-generational exchange, 2) Widening gap and support for poverty,

3) Supporting community activities that remove burden from the elderly, 4) Community revitalization and effort to prevent isolation.

Practical examples from various organizations and co-ops across the country were shared that addressed the importance of network among people in the community.



State of the exchange meeting

Co-op Gifu promotes disaster damage reduction activity

As part of Co-op Gifu's social agenda, it promotes disaster damage reduction activities with its members under the theme "Our Community Disaster Damage Reduction: Map Simulation".

This program was originally developed by JCCU in collaboration with the Cabinet Office of Japan and with the support of several local governments.

The Map Simulation exercise is a workshop that uses large neighborhood maps to help educate the residents of a particular neighborhood. Local community residents work with one another to identify locations of evacuation shelters, fire stations, hospitals, and other facilities that would be important in a disaster.

In January 24, 2014, Co-op Gifu held "our city disaster damage prevention Juku" in Ibigun, Gifu prefecture at the request of the members to help them to recognize the necessity of taking specific advance measures to protect themselves in event of an earthquake disaster.

The activity promotes networking among community members through talking with one another about community disaster management and what actions should be taken in an emergency.



Co-op members challenging Map Simulation Exercise.

Post-IYC Report

Cooperative Japan, the steering committee of post-IYC activities, has collaborated with universities in Japan to allow co-operative business model be taught to young students. Since IYC, Cooperative Japan has been contributing to university education in sending lecturers and donating funds for education promotion activities.

In this fiscal year that ends in March 20, consumer co-operative lectures have been given in 6 universities. Almost all the lectures emphasized on the role of co-op in community development especially co-ops initiative in the earthquake reconstruction and its activities to restore the businesses of small and medium enterprises in the affected areas. The difference between co-op model of business and that of the corporate organizations have been clearly understood by the students.



Scene at one of the lectures

Co-op appears in University Entrance Examination

The Government sponsored entrance examination for public and private universities in the fiscal 2014, held on January 18 and 19 (560,000 applicants nationwide, applying to 843 universities) included in the test, a question on the "International Year of Co-operatives" and "not-for-profit business activity" including Co-operatives.

It is first time co-operative related question had appeared in an examination for university entrance.

This might be the effect of the IYC activities in Japan, which involved Government officials, Academicians and Researchers for co-ops visibility enhancement.

News in Brief

Japanese Young Co-operators visit Consumer Co-operatives in Singapore and Vietnam

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union organized 8-day group study tour for 7 young Japanese Co-operators to NTUC FairPrice Singapore and Saigon Co-op Vietnam.

This year's tour, the seventh in succession since its commencement in 2008, was held from February 15 to 22.

The purpose of the study tour was to promote exchanges between the Japanese young co-operators and their foreign counterparts to build a network that would allow information exchange between the two sides aiming at finding solutions to the growing competitive environment facing co-op retail business in the Asia Pacific Region.

Prior to leaving Japan, an inauguration ceremony was held to brief participants on the business atmosphere and the consumer trend in Singapore and Vietnam. They also set targets regarding their expectations from the trip. It was also a chance for the members to get to know each other since they were all from different co-operative organizations.

In Singapore

At the FairPrice training center, participants were briefed on the marketing strategy that emphasizes, "various formats for different customer needs".

They also learned about NTUC group structure, that includes FairPrice and other social enterprises.

In store visit, participants were impressed about the warm relationship that existed between staff and customers as well as the energetic mood in which women staff were working.

They also paid a visit to NTUC First Campus, established as NTUC Childcare in 1977 and became one of the nine co-operatives of NTUC in 1992 and got understanding about NTUC's continuous struggle to enable working mothers continue their career with ease, by providing day care nursing facility for their children.



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In Vietnam

Participants were briefed on the business outline including Coop Mart supermarket chain.

In order to understand the retail market of Vietnam, the traditional market (wet market) and the Co-op Mart were inspected.

They also visited Co-op Xtra, a new concept of hypermarket and cash & carry business, which is a joint venture between Saigon Co-op and FairPrice. Participants were impressed by the huge floor size and variety of assortment at the store.

After store visit, participants visited Distribution Centers, which handle fresh food, grocery and household goods.



With the host co-ops' co-operation, the study visit was fruitful for every participant to explore new territories, way of work, cultures, and people.

JCCU is planning to have next study tour on spring 2015.

*JCCUNews is published by the International Department.
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