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JCCU Releases Business Summary

JCCU Summarizes the January 2016 business turnover of the 66 community-based co-ops nationwide.

For ten consecutive months the turnover for both the store and the home delivery had exceeded the previous years.

The total turnover in January is higher than the value recorded in the same month last year with an increase of 2.1% to a value of 216.56 billion JPY.

During the month under review both the store and home delivery turnovers had a marginal increase of 0.7% and 0.4% respectively. The amount of home delivery sales was 131.14 billion JPY accounting for about 60.6% of the total turnover of the community-based co-ops. Of these, the individual delivery sales alone increased by 2.4% to a value of 86.92 billion JPY. The store turnover was 81.09 billion JPY accounting for 37.4% of the total turnover.

The cumulative growths for the ten month period, from April 2015 to January 2016 show a year-on-year increase of 2.7%, 3.2% and 2.9% respectively for the total turnover, the store turnover and the home delivery turnover.

One particular feature underlying the January business performance is that while the year-end and New Year holidays were blessed with a strong fine weather for the first time in several years, the later days were affected by cold weather and snow on some part of the region which was a little upset.

A glimpse of Japanese University Co-op Business

In Japan, university co-ops are not just a convenience store inside campus, as people may have misconstrued, but serve as a bridge for a fulfilling campus life. Membership consists of students and faculty staffs.

Unlike the consumer co-ops that supply goods and services to community members through store outlets and home delivery services, the university co-ops operate dining hall and general store, conduct career assistance programs for students, implements disaster recovery programs, get involved in environmental activities and many more.

There are a total of 204 university co-ops nationwide with one National Federation serving as the national union of the co-ops.

In university co-ops, the members' opinions and requests are reflected in their management. This is possible through their participation in various opportunities, such as hitokoto card (opinion card), questionnaire, meetings, committees (students, graduate students, international students, faculty and staff), daily activities of the Board of Directors and General Assembly.

There are also many committees that conduct various activities such as welcome party for freshmen, store decoration and decision about its goods, mutual aid activities, sports and environmental activities which is based on the interest of the members.

One of the major business activities is the operation of dining hall (cafeteria) to support everyone's healthy diet. The co-op also conducts many events, such as food fairs, to promote exchanges in the dining hall and also put a great deal of effort in dietary education activities. The University co-op offers a search system for cafeteria menu called "Gakusyoku Dot Coop". The system enables its users to search any menu and its details.

The user can put the food he/she ate at the co-op cafeteria to the virtual tray to check the nutritional value, amount of energy and price.

A university co-op store operates by a convenience store style, and sells groceries for everyday life together with original merchandise featuring the university's characters. Some university co-op stores provide original rice balls and bread created together with members, by cooperating with manufacturers.



A typical format of a university co-op store.

In Konan University a new book store has been opened based on three concepts:

1) Knowledge: A store that offers intellectual pleasure. 2) Encounter: Setting the stage for members to meet books. 3) Challenge: Aiming at the assortment of products that can support students in their exams and qualification acquisition.



Bookstore at Konan University

Ibaraki Co-op wins "Excellence & Encouragement Awards"

On January 15, Ibaraki Prefecture sponsored the "2015 marriage and child-rearing support Forum", which is an award ceremony designed to recognize and encourage outstanding achievements by individuals or institutions in the prefecture for supporting marriage and child care issues. The Prefectural Government solicits nominations and selects recipients for the aforementioned Awards.

In 2015 Ibaraki Co-op won both the award for excellence in "work and child-rearing support" and the encouragement award for "child care home support" by introducing a childcare leave and childcare shorter working hours system that exceeds the legal one instituted by the government.

Also for the "Encouragement Award" received from the "prefectural child care home support department", was the result of the co-op's conducting a two-year free home delivery fee of ordered items to families with children less than 1 year old and expecting mothers and also a reduction of home delivery fee for families with children up to elementary school enrollment.

The co-op has started this free service for child-raising families as part of the solution to the aging population and low birth rate which is now a social problem in Japan.

SATO Yoichi Chairman of Ibaraki Co-op received the certificate of commendation from MATSUOKA Terumasa Health and Welfare director.



Co-op Mirai held lectures on the "Social Community and the Co-op"

Co-op Mirai, as part of its social contribution to the community, has been organizing lectures under the theme "community and co-op" to students of Seigakuin University in Ageo city, Saitama Prefecture.

During the fall semester (October 2015 to January 2016), a total of 15 lectures were given with the participation of 32 students at each lecture.

The lectures were organized on voluntary basis, aiming at promoting the visibility of Co-op among the younger generation, regarding the role of co-operatives in the social community.

Guest speakers have been selected from Co-op Mirai executives, board members and regional organizations.

The subject of the lectures include, structure and history of co-ops, co-op business including store operation, home delivery, welfare and member activities especially the peace initiatives of co-op.

One of the resource persons, Otaka Kendo Professor (Political Science and Economics) spoke on the theme "community and the co-op" emphasizing on the significant role co-operatives play in the socio-economic development, as a means to nurturing the students to acquire basic knowledge regarding citizens power in community activities and development as a whole.

He stressed the importance of solving community problems by the power of cooperation and the solidarity in the area by making reference to how integral co-operative associations are to the community and how they work together along with its members to achieve goals that otherwise would not be possible.

For a period of 4 years from 2009 to 2013 Co-op Mirai organized similar lectures in Saitama

University which left the students with a general feeling that co-operatives are the epitome of good business practices.



Pic. shows the introduction of member activities in Ageo city. Group work to discuss about things students can do together with co-op Mirai members (Jan. 14, 2016).



Mr. TANAKA Terumi President of Saitama Prefecture Atomic Bomb Victims' Council lecturing on peace initiatives of Co-op (Dec 10, 2015).

Toyama Prefecture Environment Department Merit Award

G-7 Environment Ministers meeting was held in Toyama city in Japan on January 30, 2016.

As one of the related events under the theme "climate change symposium in Toyama", individuals and organizations adopting good environmental practices to preserve the environment with remarkable achievements for many years were awarded certificate of commendation.

Toyama Co-op won the award for its achievement in positively pushing forward the prevention of global warming activities with its members and the acquisition of ISO14001.

Toyama Co-op has been working on environmental education activities with the members and encouraging them to transfer their knowledge into

positive environmental action in their own homes and the communities.



Constitution learning session

Shimane Prefectural Consumer Co-operative Union held a constitution learning lecture on February 5, 2016.

It was attended by 23 people including co-op members, board members, executives and staff members for the purpose of helping them individually to deepen understanding about the Constitution of Japan and the Security Legislation of the country.

Mr. OGUMA Takehiko Manager of JCCU Policy Planning Department as the resource person delivered an understandable lecture to the participants, mentioning how the Security-related legislation and the Constitution is connected to one's life and the need for all citizens to understand and protect it in order for children to live in a peaceful world.

He also mentioned that currently the problem with the amendment of the security bill in the Constitution is causing anxiety in the country particularly with its interpretation so there was the need for them to fully understand the constitution and its effect on their lives.

An easy-to-understand quiz was used to make things easier for them to understand.



Scene at the learning session

Nara Co-op Cherry Tree Planting Event

On December 5 2015, Nara Co-op organized tree-planting festival in corporation with "Sakura Line 311" an incorporated nonprofit organization engaged in planting trees along the same line where the water had advanced furthest during the East Japan Earthquake disaster of March 11, 2011.

The Sakura Line 311 project represents "Hope and Remembrance" and aims to educate future generations on the importance of being prepared during a disaster as well as ensuring that we never forget about the tragic events of 3/11.

The project plant trees over a 170km stretch of land, marking the least distance from the coast one must travel in order to reach safety during future emergencies.

On the day of the event, in Iwate Prefecture Rikuzentakata city, 24 people consisting of Co-op members and staff together with 80 volunteers gathered from outside the prefecture planted 59 cherry blossom trees at 10 meter interval along the 170km line supposed to be the arrival point of tsunami to the city. Nara Co-op has supported this activity since 2014.

After the planting the people in the city expressed their feeling of looking forward to seeing the blooming cherry trees and asked participants to come around to see during the cherry blossom time.



Co-op Sapporo launches Smartphone business

Co-op Sapporo is working with operators in the mobile business to provide a mobile communication service in a well-defined fee structure that is suitable for smartphones under the brand name "Todokkusumaho". On February 9, commencement of the business was announced.

A centralized settlement using the Co-op Sapporo's clover Todokku card (credit card), together with the installation of a dedicated call center and a counter will clearly provide a high level security for members smartphone use.

The major features are:

1. Significantly cheaper pricing compared to the major carriers.
2. Employing a configuration that focuses only on the "pay-as-you-go" with respect to a call on a land phone, it is possible to minimize expensive monthly call charges.
3. There are various calling plans for smartphones and data-only plan for tablets with specific charges depending on the

memory size of the appliance in terms of gigabyte (GB).

On April 1, the dedicated call center will be commissioned and the Co-op intends to narrow down the model of the smartphone and begin to sell from May 1.

The CEO and President of the Co-op Mr. OMI Hideaki had a press interview at the headquarters of Co-op Sapporo to explain the business contents.

Detail information regarding the use of the service is provided on the co-op's homepage, at the store counters and through the home delivery outlets.

The co-op anticipates that the new business will further enhance its network with members.



Co-op Kobe held children health marathon

On January 31, 2016 Co-op Kobe held the 25th "S&B Children Health Marathon" at the Kobe City General Sports Park Universe Memorial Stadium. About 2,000 elementary school students took part in the event. The competition is carried out each year by gender for school children in grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 running for a course of 1.5km, 2km and 3km respectively.

The idea is to help the children develop positive lifestyle to sports and help convince them that exercise is important to their well-being and increase the chance that physical activity will become a permanent part of their daily lives. The activity is conducted in a manner that ensures fun and satisfaction among the children.



Kids Concert Held

Wakayama Prefecture Consumers' Co-operative Union held kids concert for kids between the ages 0 and 3 on January 18, at the Wakayama Citizen Co-op Hall, as part of its 2016 fiscal "child care support" initiatives.

Adults and children altogether 164 attended the concert, of which 76 were children between the ages 0 and 3. On the day, the audience was entertained with violin, contrabass, piano trio ensemble performances by the "Wa corda" group while participants also joined in the songs and performance with maracas made with plastic bottles.

Participants expressed their feeling of satisfaction with the live performance saying it was very entertaining and a chance for parent-and-child as well as parent-parent interaction.

News in Brief

F Co-op household accounts circle activities awarded "Excellence Award"

F Co-op household accounts circle activities, was awarded the Fukuoka Prefecture Eco family support business "Excellence Award" for the fiscal 2015.

Fukuoka Prefecture has been working on energy saving and resource saving both at home and offices towards the prevention of global warming.

Currently in the prefecture, about 18,000 households and 3,200 business establishments have registered as "Eco Family" and "Eco-office" respectively.

F Co-op members engage in voluntary club activities in the household accounts and they have been participating in the "Fukuoka Prefecture environment household account book (Fukuoka Eco Life support book)" by presenting data on CO₂ emissions from energy consumption via electricity, gas, kerosene, gasoline and water of their households.

For one year period (April 2014 - March 2015), 11 households and 4 organizations (groups) whose activities were recognized by the prefecture as being outstanding were given an excellence award.

F Co-op household account circle was among the groups that received the award.



Young agriculture producers and consumer exchanges

Co-op Net business federation organized a workshop on November 21, 2015 at the Saitama citizens' cultural center with "New Farmer's Workshop" which is a nationwide young farmer's organization to think about the future of agriculture in Japan.

"New farmer's" was founded in 2009 with the aim to explore the possibility of finding a solution to the decrease in the agricultural workforce as a result of aging of old farmers through interaction with each other and motivating new generation young agricultural producers in exchanges held once a year.

This time producers engaged in Co-op "Sanchoku" which is a specific type of community-supported agriculture developed by the Japanese Consumer Co-ops gave presentations and raised a platform for exchanges with the young farmers.

The presentations emphasized on sanchoku which has grown from a local to a nationwide system and continues to evolve in response to changes in society and the lifestyle of consumers, while ensuring consistent supply of good quality and safe products.

Agricultural producers from 20 production areas of which 16 production areas were young farmers, took part in the presentation and the exchanges.

Through this meeting the problems faced by producers during farming activities were shared with consumers paving way for young farmers to explore and expand their dreams in the future farming business.



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