

Ishikawa Prefectural Co-operative Union concludes agreement with the Local Govt

On February 8, Ishikawa prefectural co-operative union concluded welfare co-operation with the local government of Hakusan city.

According to the agreement, if a disaster such as earthquakes, typhoons, wind and flood damage occurs, the Union pledges to support the victims with emergency daily commodities including food, rice, milk, soap disposable diapers, blankets, and towels.

The signing ceremony was held in Hakusan City Hall between the Executive Director of the Union Kazuo Yokoyama and Hiroaki Sakuno mayor of the city.

The mayor pronounced that "I do not know when a disaster would happen but I believe that even when it happens the lives of the citizens would be protected in this agreement".

This MOU is part of the unions social contribution to the community and a drive to improve the visibility of co-op in accordance with the International Year of Co-operatives.



The mayor shaking hands with Sakuno (left) after signing the agreement.



IYC National Planning Committee engages in a talk with Government Officials

On January 31, 2012, Katsumi Asada, the President of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union and Mr. Akira Banzai, the Chairperson of the Central Union of Agricultural Co-operatives (JA Zenchu) paid a courtesy call on the Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Osamu Fujimura on behalf of the Japan National Planning Committee of IYC2012, seeking the Japanese Government's recognition for co-operatives and to foster their growth in line with the objectives of the International Year of Co-operatives.

Other representatives from the government side include Mr. Saito Tsuyoshi, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and Mr. Chikao Kawai, the Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary.

At the beginning, Mr. Banzai greeted the governments officials and requested that the government set forth a clear policy for a total recognition of co-operatives and their values in the country and foster their future development.

He further mentioned that the nationwide co-operatives have made important contributions in their respective areas towards the recovery following the Great East Japan Earthquake and their role have become visible and recognized by the society.

To this effect and also based on the request of the UN for the International Year of Co-operatives, the IYC Planning committee requested the government to value the importance of co-operative, especially their contribution to create a greater stability and prosperity for the Japanese society and provide the mechanism to help create a more level playing field for the co-operative sector.

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Furthermore, Mr. Hajime Taniguchi Managing Director of JA Zenchu and also the General Secretary for the National Planning Committee provided an overview of the draft charter petition of co-operatives and requested the government to secure its support.

The draft was completed at the end of January and it shows the basic philosophy of co-operatives, including its social and economic role, as well as how the government is expected to handle issues on co-operatives.

He stressed that modernising legislation relating to co-ops is key to realizing the theme for IYC 2012 thus, "*cooperative enterprises build a better world*".

Finally, Asada requested that the government backs up the publicity in respect of co-ops dramatic effort in the reconstruction of the earthquake devastated areas.



JA Zenchu Banzai greets at the beginning. JCCU president Asada sits next right to him.

Visit to disaster affected areas

After the sanchoku sectional meetings in Feb. 25, the participants visited some disaster-affected areas guided by the suffered producers.

They visited Taro Fishery Co-op in Iwate, Shizugawa Fishing Port in Minami Sanriku-cho and JA Miyagi Sennan in Miyagi.

Much as the reconstruction exercise has progressively been advancing in Sendai area the contrary is seen in other parts of the disaster-affected areas.

The visitors saw the remaining damages in some fishing ports, even after a year of the earthquake. However, some of the producers expressed their thanks to Co-op's continuous supports and encouragements and they pledged to continue to work with co-op to supply safe and reliable products to the members.



JCCU held Nationwide "Sanchoku" Research Exchange Seminar

The 28th National *Sanchoku** Exchange Seminar was held on February 24 and 25 in Sendai, Miyagi. The seminar had 372 participants from 157 organizations nationwide.

The theme was related to the 8th National Sanchoku Survey report, which is carried out once in four years, centering on food and agriculture in Japan and the mission of sanchoku.

The meeting addressed Co-op's future visions and challenges and the sharing of common policies to promote sanchoku business.

Issues raised include the promotion of eco-friendly agriculture to pursue sustainable society and to co-ordinate regional economy through sanchoku business by the co-operation of producers, consumers and Co-op members.

During the meeting a lecture titled "Co-op sanchoku, to open up new possibilities" was given by Hiroyasu Nakashima, associate professor of Tokyo University Graduate College.

He explained the significance of co-op concept of direct delivery from the farm in modern times under the present ongoing deflation.

He further stressed that sanchoku revival in the earthquake affected areas could accelerate the recovery process if the network between co-op and sanchoku producers is perused.

Shoei Kobayashi, the president of Taro Fishery Co-op also gave a practice report from the production work for the reconstruction of East Japan Earthquake.

Mr. Nonaka, the executive director of Co-op Fukushima spoke on the title "face to face to radioactive contamination due to the nuclear accident" and the role of co-op in the region to the sufferers.

Finally, Mr. Miyamoto the managing director of Miyagi Co-op also spoke on the title "a walk with the community by co-op" signifying the commitment of co-op in building the community.

Sectional meetings were held on 25th under different topics such as:

- Improving food self-sufficiency and Co-op sanchoku
- Reconstruction of regional community and Co-op sanchoku
- Practice and problems of the quality certification system for agricultural products
- Regional co-operation in the issue of local production for local consumption and participation of the members
- Co-op sanchoku and environmental issues.

Sendai was selected the venue to affirm co-ops role and leadership in the re-establishment and reconstruction from the great Tohoku earthquake and the radiation contamination caused by the nuclear power plant accident that require people's power of cooperation and solidarity.

This year 2012 is the International Year of Co-operatives and the reconstruction of the stricken area is a major theme. Co-op aims to raise its visibility through networking with sanchoku producers, members and the local governments.

The seminar was held in Sendai to help raise participant's awareness of Co-op sanchoku and to encourage themselves by feeling the energy of producers, Co-ops and members.



The scene of the meeting



Scene at the sectional meeting

*Sanchoku is a Japanese word translated as direct transaction or direct buying routes from producers to consumers.

Renewal of CO-OP Make Up series

JCCU, in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the launch of CO-OP cosmetics, has renewed the existing product line-up to strengthen its brand cosmetics.

A significant change has been made in the "mineral foundation" and the "BB Cream" or Blemish Balm cream.

"CO-OP make-up series" which is natural makeup cosmetics will answer members' demand for high quality foundation while sticking to the tenderness of skin finish regardless of age.

The oil-free, skin-perfecting "BB cream" has the characteristic of creating a flawless finish as it moisturizes and nourishes the skin. The cream also has a function of sun block, making it an economic skin care solution.

In this renewal, JCCU conducted interviews and surveys to monitor a total of 943 members and used the result as the baseline for renewal.



Example of Co-op cosmetics "makeup series"

Co-op Tokyo receives award

At the 60th Conference of Social Welfare organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in December 20, 2011, Co-op Tokyo was recognized as an organization who has made donation over the years that have contributed to the promotion of community welfare and was awarded the Chairman's Community Chest Award.

Since 2006, Co-op Tokyo has been donating to the Community Chest as part of its social commitment.

JCCU strengthens International Co-operative ties

JCCU in collaboration with National Federation of Italian Co-operative (Co-op Italia) has developed this prospective new product, which symbolizes inter-Co-op partnership to improve co-op visibility in accordance with the International Year of Co-operatives.

The product was developed in response to members request for easy-to-open product since can was a bit difficult and dangerous to open especially by senior citizens. Cans are also voluminous for disposing.

In attempting to find a solution to this problem the product department came across a tetra-packed tomato in the Co-op Italia's private Brand.

In Italy, the demand for tetra-pack is increasing for some reasons including convenience and eco-friendliness of it.

JCCU finally decided to enter into partnership with Co-op Italia to develop the product for consumers in Japan under JCCU Brand Name using paper bag container.

By adopting paper bag, opening is easy and can be stored in a refrigerator as well as having convenience in re-cycling.

JCCU will endeavor to promote global network of co-operatives as a means of strengthening the growth of co-operatives beyond national borders.



Great East Japan Earthquake disaster reconstruction

One of the remarkable things that occurred after the Great East Earthquake of March 11 was the rebuilding effort by Co-ops in the region and the amount of help the afflicted areas received from Co-ops nationwide, members and the national/local governments.

One of the significant moves as a symbol of the earthquake disaster reconstruction is the cultivation of the tsunami-devastated coastal areas for the production of Chinese cabbage under a new brand name "Sendai cabbage" which the initial plan was reported in the October 2011 issue of JCCU news.

The project has been carried out by a joint collaboration between the Agricultural Co-operative and the Consumer Co-operative with most of the effort coming from Miyagi Co-op, JA Zennoh (Sendai) and Co-op Kobe.

More than three thousand nursery plants of Sendai cabbage was planted on September 11 in a field in Natori city and on November 3, the first sales of the product was made in Miyagi Co-op stores.

Last December 64 Co-ops in the Hyogo and Osaka prefectures sold Sendai cabbage and other vegetables from Miyagi. The involvement of other co-ops helps in expanding visibility of Co-ops, which is one of the main objectives on the launch of IYC.



Sendai Cabbage displayed in Miyagi Co-op Store

Saitama Co-op marks first anniversary of "local station"

January 13, 2012 marks the first anniversary of the commencement of "local stations" by Saitama Co-op.

"Local station" is Co-op Saitama's designated place where ordered products are delivered once a week for subsequent collection by members at their own convenience of time.

This facility became necessary as a result of the withdrawal of stores from certain areas in the community posing inconvenience shopping to people living there.

Celebrations to mark the first anniversary include handicrafts making by community members, event to support members' child-raising life and senior citizen's health festival all organized in the station.

A total of 150 people participated in the activities symbolizing Co-ops commitment in energizing the community.



Scene at the "local station"



handicrafts making



Child-raising salon



health exercise

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 young Japanese Co-operators to NTUC Fairprice Singapore and Saigon Co-op Vietnam respectively.

This time young staff from 13 primary co-ops from the age 26 to 38 participated in the program. This year's tour, the fifth in succession since its commencement in 2008, was held from February 11 to 18.

The purpose of the study tour was to expose the young staffs into a different cultural environment to learn new ideas that could empower them in their respective fields of work.

Prior to leaving Japan, an inauguration ceremony was organized where participants set targets and reflected on their expectation 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, Participants were impressed to learn about Fairprice vision and strategies to build a community-based store that would fill the gap between local needs and store assortment, since Singapore is a multiethnic state with different colorful diet culture. Many of the residents have their own preference for ingredients.



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The story about Fairprice corporate strategy on stabilization of commodity prices was also a good lesson.

In Vietnam, Participants were briefed about the challenges facing Saigon Co-op in respect of operating stores that would serve the needs of the customers in the fast changing society. The strategies Saigon Co-op is adopting to become a brand owner was also explained to the participants.

The arrangement and preparations towards the joint opening of a hypermarket between Fairprice and Saigon Co-op was also explained.

One of the participants commented that seeing other foreign young co-operators working hard was a motivation and renewed feeling for his work.



The tour emphasized experiential learning through store visits that enabled the participants to explore new territories, way of work, cultures, and people.

The host co-ops also provided a variety of resources to help make the study tour enjoyable and rewarding.

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