

Expansion of inter-Co-op relationship between HeW Co-ops and the Regional Retail Co-ops under the launch of IYC.

The health co-ops and the retail co-ops have some common roles to play in the community.

One is to co-operate in some issues such as 'Community Creation', 'Watching and Health Check'.

Health checks and workshops for healthcare in the co-op stores are most frequently carried out activities.

The second is 'Co-operation in food'. Co-op Aomori, Aomori Health Co-op and Hachinohe Medical Co-op are preparing to establish a subsidiary company that would provide total management and support for home delivery meal operations for senior citizens and welfare facilities. The co-ops will employ the services of registered dietitians who would plan well-balanced menus.

Such business collaboration is a key leading to inter-Co-op partnership.

The third is co-operation in housing. Because of the increase in the number of single and aged households, some HeW co-ops are planning a joint venture with estate developers to put up rented houses/apartments, which would be managed by HeW Co-ops, for the aged and welfare facilities.

Environmental preservation, which allows members to live in their community, is one of the roots of HeW Co-op business and it is our major critical issue.



The Role of Japanese Health & Welfare Co-ops

Promoting the community healthcare and nursing care with the power of residents.



Fujitani Keiso
Managing Director: HeW Co-op Japan

Fujitani Keiso was interviewed about the role of Japanese Health and Welfare Co-operative Federation (HeW Co-op Japan) under the present aging population of Japan and the widening regional disparity on healthcare of members and the community. The following are his comments:

The health and welfare co-ops had been working for 53 years as a department of JCCU responsible for healthcare. The social reputation heightened with our 53-year's achievement and the amendment of Co-op's Law in 2008 facilitated the expansion of our business activity through the establishment of Japanese Health and Welfare Co-operative Federation (HeW Co-op Japan).

On establishing HeW Co-op Japan, three main targets were set to pursue. Two years have passed since establishment and the following are our achievements.

Our first target was to let more people know about the organization. We have 111 member Co-ops (excluding JCCU) with membership of about 2.8 million as of end of 2011.

For the first time ever we have been able to establish a network between other healthcare organizations since the establishment of HeW Co-op Japan. This relationship between other HeW Co-ops (member co-ops) has expanded the business chances of member co-ops and has achieved some positive results.

The second target is to contribute to the promotion of member co-ops' business as a federation. To this, we have already started collaborative purchase of some medicines and medical equipments. This bulk purchasing brought a significant benefit to the small and medium-sized member co-ops' businesses.

The third target is to recruit and train doctors and nurses nationwide. Though we haven't started any specific efforts in this issue, since last year we have worked with some university co-ops to distribute job information through their Co-op stores. The HeW Co-op Japan would ensure that the required number of doctors and nurses would be available for posting to member co-ops when needed.

HeW Co-ops support to victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake:

When the Earthquake occurred, HeW Co-op Japan asked member co-ops nationwide, to send doctors and nurses to a hub hospital in Miyagi, which suffered greatly from the earthquake. The doctors attended to victims who mainly suffered from fractures and/or injuries.

After the first three-week's emergency assistance, HeW Co-ops sent those medical staff to support the evacuation centers in each prefecture. Support services included the provision of mental support and health check for the evacuees.

Nurses were recruited nationwide to work in shifts in Fukushima to relieve the hard-working nurses in the disaster-affected area. This campaign still continues.

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Miyagi Co-op launched prepaid gift card

Prepaid payment cards that can be used to pay bills or make purchases are becoming popular in the retail industry in Japan.

Miyagi Co-op (Sendai) launched a prepaid gift card named 'MiICA' on May 21, making it the first prepaid card ever produced by a Japanese Consumer Co-op.

The Co-op expects the card to increase member's convenience, which would lead to increasing membership.

The card is available at the service counter of the 44 stores of Miyagi Co-op.

A deposit of 1,000 yen or more is required to purchase a card.

At the same time the card could be used when purchasing at the 44 stores (except tenant shops).

Re-charging the card is possible in units of 1,000 yen, with upper limit of 30,000 yen.

No processing fee, admission fee and yearly fee are required.

Paying by traditional gift tickets at the cash register requires time to count, however, this gift card allows quicker checkout.

In addition, it is easier to manage the gift card than the tickets.

Currently Miyagi Co-op has two types of gift tickets (500 yen and 1,000 yen). The sale of the ticket is increasing with sales amounting to 930 million yen in 2010.

With the introduction of the prepaid gift card the use of paper tickets would decrease.

The prepaid gift card is a solution for innovative, convenient and a secure way to make payments.



Kids from Fukushima experienced the measurement of radioactive materials

In early April, a group of parents and children of Co-op Fukushima members visited the Products Inspection Center of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU), which has been measuring the radioactive material contained in food.

The purpose of their visit was to observe and experience the measurement activities by themselves.

The member group had previously cooperated with JCCU's project of "Survey of radioactive material intake from the diet at home," which was launched in November last year.

JCCU investigated the amount of intake of radioactive substances from household meals from November last year to this April.

The two days meal samples (6 meals and snacks), were provided by 237 co-op member households nationwide, 96 of which were from the Fukushima prefecture.

The test results revealed that the rate of the meals containing radioactive cesium exceeding the standard limit of 1 becquerel per 1kg was 5 percent.

It is estimated that if one continues to eat a meal that contains radioactive cesium that exceeds the standard limit on daily basis for a year, his/her

internal exposure doses with the meal is estimated to be 0.019 to 0.136 milli Sievert (mSv).

This estimate is significantly less than 1 mSv, the permissible dose of 1 year regulated by the Japanese Government.

In Japan, a lot of people, especially those in Fukushima prefecture, are living in anxiety about the possibility of exposure to radioactive material.

This study by JCCU is a part of the diverse activities of the co-ops' response to this anxiety, and it has been reported widely through the media.



JCCU releases new product series for health promotion

CO-OP's non-fried chicken *tatsuta* is a new product, which will be released on June 1, 2012.

The product can be easily cooked in the microwave, and still maintains its soft texture even when cold. In addition calories have been cut down by 25%.

This product, which is one of the JCCU's health promotion series, is aimed at reducing excessive intake of salt and fat.

CO-OP non-fried chicken *tatsuta* is frozen food and the chicken is already cooked and flavored.

Cooking in microwave takes about 1 minute 30 seconds or can easily be cooked by just warming.

Similar taste of fried chicken without using oil is achieved by cooking with superheated steam process. The superheated steam process suppresses calorie and fat.

In addition, because of moisture presence, the chicken is crunchy and soft inside.

Domestic skinless chicken breast is used, and since it is cooked wrapped in a cloth after marinated seasoning, the taste gets all the way inside.

Seasoning is done by use of soy source, sugar with ginger as base, and garlic moderately blended with Japanese style soy source makes it a match for cooked rice.

It is not only good as side dish for dinner due to its good taste, but also good for lunch box since it still remains soft even in cold state.



Ibaraki Co-op Environmental Preservation Fund

Ibaraki Co-op has launched an Environmental Fund, which aims to support the prefecture's environmental preservation by subsidizing organizations and individuals conducting environmental activities in the prefecture.

It was launched in 2001 and financed from the revenues of recycled paper containers collected from members and the income of plastic bags charged at the stores.

Until now a subsidy of 30.2 million yen has been given to 425 organizations.

On March 24, Ibaraki Co-op Environmental Fund's presentation ceremony and exchange party was held at Kasumigaura Environmental Science Center in Tsuchiura with 102 participants.

Four of the organizations reported on their activities while the others exhibited panels to show their activities.

The occasion provided the opportunity for environmental exchanges in Ibaraki Prefecture.

In 2012, 43 organizations have received subsidy amounting to 2.8 million yen.



At one of the ceremonies, Mr. Sato, the chairperson of Ibaraki Co-op, is seen presenting a note of subsidy to a beneficiary organization.



Co-op Sapporo launched 'Wood Pellet Expansion Project Council', with NERC and Hokkaido University

On May 17, Co-op Sapporo and other 24 organizations launched 'Wood Pellet Expansion Project Council' with the aim of utilizing wooden resources in Hokkaido.

This council is to promote home use of pellet as an alternative resource of oil, to develop low-price pellet-fueled stove, and to promote local production for local consumption in energy use.

In spite of high expectation for wood pellet as an eco-friendly source of heating, the penetration of pellet stove is very slow due to its high price.

The project council discussed lifecycle of wood pellet, including production and distribution of pellet, production of pellet stoves and recycle of the ash. The council purposes to install pellet stove into every regular home by the end of next winter.

Wood Pellet Expansion Project Council started with 25 members, including Hokkaido University, Hokkaido Research Organization, Co-op Sapporo, Ene Co-op and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to promote the use of wood pellet as a source of natural energy.

The use of wood pellet is expected to prompt effective utilization of timbers from the forest thinning in Hokkaido. Employment in the region would also increase as a result. Compared to imported oil, it would enable the realization of circulatory society with natural energy.

Currently in Japan pellet stoves are available only as imports. The high-price of the stoves prevents their prevalence.

However, as oil price continues to increase, promotion of the conversion from fossil oil to natural resources are necessary in the future.

Currently wood pellet is manufactured in 17 plants in Hokkaido; however, production is not at full capacity recording only about 17%.

Every year timber from forest trimming and waste woods, which can be used as ingredients of pellet, is about 300 thousand tons but most of them are remained unused.

Heating with wood pellet is also used in agricultural greenhouses in Kochi prefecture.



Miyagi Co-op added two vehicles to help victims in the disaster area.

Miyagi Co-op is operating its business in the area affected by the massive earthquake and has been involved in various activities aiming to create a better living condition for the victims.

One of the activities is to provide shopping convenience to the victims living in the temporary housing through the provision of moving trucks (mobile stores) equipped with all necessary facilities to maintain freshness of commodities and ensure food quality and safety.

The mobile store carries approximately 600 items including fresh foods. The co-op introduced the second mobile store in March.

Another activity is to promote the co-ops home delivery business through special events organized with a co-op event vehicle. The second event vehicle was introduced in March. The vehicles are equipped with a simple set of cooking facilities and carry co-op brand products for tasting.

Miyagi Co-op is providing assistance to the affected area based on thorough analysis and understanding of the local needs.



“Local Miyagi food and disaster reconstruction”

The earthquake deprived Miyagi prefecture with wide range of food products.

To activate the region, Miyagi Co-op, on July 2011, established “Local Miyagi Food and Reconstruction Project Network” with the co-operation of farmers, fishermen and the employees of the food industry in Miyagi Prefecture to create business chances within the prefecture related to total food, from production to distribution and consumption, which are activated by original local ideas and creativities.

The “Local Miyagi food and reconstruction project Network” has 182 supporter organizations as of April 18, 2012.

The details of the project include;

- 1) Protecting farmland
- 2) Promoting local produced items
- 3) Supporting local producers and manufactures
- 4) Re-evaluating the value of traditional food cultures
- 5) New product development.

Miyagi Co-op is responsible for the coordination and the supply chain management of the project and provides a ready market through its store outlets to supply the food products to consumers.

NOTE OF SYMPATHY on the earthquake tragedy in Italy

The President, management and staff of JCCU would like to extend their deepest sympathies to the people of Italy, especially the co-operative institutions who have suffered great losses and damages following the earthquake that hit Borneo in Italy and its surroundings on May 12.

We are all deeply affected by this terrible catastrophe.

News in Brief

JCCU develops BCP as part of disaster risk reduction strategy

When disaster strikes, how to remain in business becomes a big issue. It is, therefore, important to act before, not after disaster strikes.

Learning from the impact of the Great East Japan Earthquake on Co-op business, JCCU has developed Business Continuity Plan (BCP) given guidelines as to how to integrate the system in the co-op supply chain.

Experience learned during the East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent tsunami

The disasters that occurred on March 11 caused many companies to go bankrupt or to halt business operation for a significant period. Even some companies, which were not in the stricken area, suffered difficulties because of the indirect damage from the disruption in the supply chain. Co-ops were not exception since many co-ops fell victim to the disaster.

The former JCCU BCP was found insufficient during the earthquake and this has called for a new development of BCP that will provide

co-sharing of information, infrastructures as well as other facilities to be shared between JCCU and its member co-ops to reduce the impact of future disasters.

Issues for the new BCP

1. Challenges related to coordination and command and control at the time of disaster.
2. Challenges related to product procurement.
3. Issues related to logistics.
4. Challenges involved in using IT.
5. Issues related to recovery support.
6. Issues related to ways of cooperation with the government municipalities and local NGOs.
7. Challenges involved in disaster relief activities of co-op members.
8. Issues related to volunteer activities.
9. Issues related to funds.
10. Coalition between BCP of member co-ops and JCCU.

Miyagi Co-op receives delegates from iCOOP Korea

On May 21 and 22, a delegation of 17 from iCOOP Korea visited Miyagi Co-op in Sendai, one of the affected co-operatives by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Among the delegates were presidents and board members of primary co-operatives of iCOOP Korea.

After the welcome greetings by Ms. Saito Akiko the President of Miyagi Co-op, an overview of Miyagi Co-op was given followed by an introduction of Miyagi Co-op member activities during and after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Delegates were informed that although co-op members themselves were victims of the disaster, they wholeheartedly gave the necessary support services to the victims based on the spirit of co-operation. The report gave the delegates new features of the role of members in co-operative business.

Also, for practical illustration of member activities, a “5 A DAY” dietary food education program for school kids and the concept of Miyagi Co-op food safety were introduced to the delegates.

On the second day, the delegation visited two co-op stores, which have been installed with solar panels on the roof and received explanation regarding Co-ops effort in CO₂ emission reduction.



The visit proved to be an opportunity for the delegates to see the significance of member volunteer activities.

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