

A new National Cooperative Alliance formed

On May 9 2013, at the JA building in Tokyo, a new National Cooperative Alliance "Cooperative Japan" was formed replacing the Japan National Planning Committee for IYC 2012, to commemorate the spirits of the IYC and to continue pursuing the goals set by the National Planning Committee for IYC 2012.

The formation was in response to the overwhelming request to create a successor organization by representatives of sectors of all co-operatives in Japan that constituted the IYC National Planning Committee which was dissolved on March 22, to continue joint efforts to raise awareness about the role and value of cooperative organizations after the 2012 IYC.

Cooperative Japan which consists of 23 national co-operative organizations and one welfare related organization will be engaged in various activities including; organizing workshops, outreach to the government for the development of co-operatives and providing various co-operative information regarding what is going on at the local level to increase awareness and promote the growth of co-operatives.

Mr. BANZAI Akira, Chairman of JA Zenchu and Mr. ASADA Katsumi, President of JCCU were elected as chairman and deputy chairman respectively of the new National Cooperative Alliance.



Co-ops Role in Japanese New Food Labeling Bill

Food labeling is a necessary and important source for consumers to choose, use, and dispose product properly. They should therefore not contain misleading information.

Since the 1980s JCCU has been engaged in activities in the area of food safety and food quality including food labeling in response to members demands: to have easily comprehensible and viewable labeling. JCCU has been revising food labelling when necessary according to the changes of members' demands.

On the national scene, JCCU became very vocal in support of revising legislation to strengthen food safety standards and regulations.

Due to these efforts, Co-op rightly shares credit for the passing of the revised Food Sanitation Act and the new Food Safety Basic Act in May 2003.

Since 1985, by establishing some research committees with specialists and experts, JCCU has put a great effort to collect and evaluate the most updated scientific information about the following food safety issues; safety of food additives including natural occurring additives; biotechnologies, radiated food and veterinary drugs.

Currently, The Food Sanitation Act, the Japan Agricultural Standard (JAS) and the Health Promotion Act are among the laws, which provide information describing the content of food in general.

The information that these three laws provide sometimes overlaps and has some discrepancies, and therefore, causes confusion to consumers, businesses and even governments regarding details of food labeling.

On April 5 2013, a Cabinet decision was made to merge the provisions related to food labeling of the three acts into one single food-labeling act for food in general, which if, approved by parliament, will be enforced in 2015.

Co-op Action and Role:

Since 1995, as a member of ICA, JCCU has participated in some meetings in the Codex Alimentarius Commission to collect up to date information on international standard of food safety, food quality including food labeling.

Nutrition declaration on food labeling:

The key elements of the new JCCU food labeling rules include the mandatory nutrition labeling. Nutrition labeling is voluntary in Japan, however JCCU, as a brand maker, offers nutrition information on labels on its prepacked food in accordance with Nutrition Labeling Standards under the Health Promotion Act.

JCCU brand products provide nutrient information such as energy value and amounts of core nutrients such as protein, total fat, carbohydrate and salt. The intention is to help consumers to make right and healthier dietary choices.

Food Allergen Labeling:

A further obligation of JCCU food labeling measure concerns allergens, which is highlighted in the list of ingredients. They are clearly distinguished from the rest of the list of ingredients and are indicated also for non-prepacked foods, which are sold to final consumers.

Country of Origin:

Another important element on which JCCU places priority is the compulsory declaration of country of origin to fresh meat and other agricultural products where failure to do so misleads the consumer. Country of origin has an important role in consumer purchasing decisions. JCCU remains committed to food safety and labeling issues, and keeps calling on government to review the suitability of the general principles and factors specific to country of origin labeling, as well as to establish Japan's own nutrient reference values for nutrition labeling purposes.

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2013 Citizens Meeting on Nuclear Free World

On May 24, the Hiroshima Prefecture Consumers Co-operative Union in corporation with 5 organizations in the prefecture organized citizen meeting to express their wish for a peaceful world and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Mr. OKAMURA Nobuhide, the chairperson of the Hiroshima Prefecture Consumers Co-operative Union and also Chairman of the Executive Committee organizing the event delivered the opening greetings. He emphasized the importance of mutual respect and the need for a collaborated effort to eradicate nuclear weapons for a peaceful world.

It was followed by messages of hope and encouragement from guest speakers Mr. MURAKAMI Takashi, the acting Governor of Hiroshima and Mr. KOMIZO Yasuyoshi of Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation.

During the first half of the meeting the Executive Director of Hiroshima Mayors for Peace Mr. YUASA Toshiro gave report on what's going on in the world over the nuclear weapons.

In the closing remark Hiroshima area women's organizations Liaison Committee chairman Ms. NAKASHIMA Takeko made an appeal that people get connected to ensure that the next generation could live everyday in a safe and peaceful environment rather than committing them to absolute evil of nuclear weapons.



The situation of "citizens' meeting"

Co-op's Internet circle "e Friends" expands in membership

e-Friends is a centralized online shopping service developed by JCCU in 2000 for all co-ops nationwide in an effort to establish Co-op shopping on the Web.

At the moment six regional federations and one community-based consumer co-op are using the service.

In recognition of the large investment required by individual Co-ops to set-up internet shopping, e- Friends was developed jointly to help defray costs and increase member communication on the net.

By the end of fiscal 2012 the service has more than 1.6 million registered users nationwide, which is, 115% compared with the previous years and a total turnover of 87.1 billion JPY.

In 2012 the "e Friends" web site was expanded to allow the use of smart phone for ordering. Since its inception, smart phone ordering has been increasing and as at the end of fiscal 2012, out of the total users of "e Friends" 14% use smart phone.

In general the "e Friends" internet order is increasing due to its multiple ways of accesses including PC, cell phone and smart phone.



*e-Friends became a registered Trade Mark in Japan on October 5, 2001

The 2012 overview of the home delivery business and the Internet ordering

The home delivery business of co-ops nationwide has about 10.7 million registered members and has an annual total turnover of 1.6 trillion JPY.

Apart from the JCCU internet site "e Friends", there are other consumer co-ops that operate their own internet site.

The total registered internet users of co-ops nationwide stand 3.21 million with approximately 213.8 billion JPY. Sooner or later 97% of the co-op home delivery ordering may come from internet ordering.

Co-op Mirai certified as child-rearing support company

Co-op Mirai has been certified as a child-rearing support company following the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Saitama Labor Bureau recognition as a company that has created a work place compatible for work and life balance based on the act for measures to support the development of the next generation.

This year 2013 is the third time Co-op Mirai has been certified with the award. The first and second certification was in 2007 and 2010 respectively.

This time seven goals were achieved under the authorized action plan.

These were; authorized vacations for men employees with young babies, promotion of reduction of overtime work, promotion of paid annual leave and the introduction of telecommuting system.

Co-op Mirai supposes that it will continue to amend the system to make it easier for more employees to use the childcare support system.

Act for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation

The law that defines the role national government, local governments, companies and individuals should play for environmental improvement that children of the next generation be born and raised in good health came into force in 2005.

Companies that have been certified as "child-rearing support company" are allowed to use the certification mark (nicknamed Kurumin) for products, advertising, and classified ads.



Co-op Mirai acquired the illustration

Co-op expands use of BDF vehicles

The number of biodiesel fuel (BDF) trucks being used by consumer co-ops nationwide for the home delivery business has greatly increased in recent years.

The introduction of BDF trucks is part of co-ops measures to reduce the environmental impact of delivery trucks. Increasing use of BDF significantly reduces the traffic-related greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global warming.

As at the end of March 2013, co-ops nationwide had on record 800 (1.5 t car) BDF trucks out of the total 18,000 trucks being used for the home delivery business.

In addition to promoting the introduction of the track of low-pollution to reduce CO₂ emissions Co-op is working to reduce fuel use through more efficient delivery course and eco-driving.

Besides, Co-op Sapporo collects oil waste (700,000 liters in a year) from the prepared-meal section at the stores and that from members' household trash as ingredient for the production of BDF.

Fuel from this process is used for 350 delivery trucks.

Co-op Sapporo becomes the number one company in Japan that uses more BDF trucks.

Again in 2010, at the parade of alternative fuel powered vehicles consisting of 300 cars the co-op was certified by the Guinness World Records.



BDF truck use to deliver safe and delicious food to both individual members and groups.

Nara Co-op celebrated Earth Day 2013

On April 21, Nara Co-op celebrated the "Earth Day 2013" in the Asuka Historical National Government Park.

As part of its efforts to counteract environmental problems associated with climate change, Nara Co-op has been holding Earth Day since 1990. This year marks the 24th event since it started. It is a day to think and act for the environment by promoting initiatives that would suppress the generation of greenhouse gases that are the cause of global warming.

Under the co-sponsorship of Nara Consumers' Co-operative Union, and some environmental protection funding bodies, about 800 people participated in then event.

It was a chilly day between partly cloudy and sunny. The program for the day consisted of three major events, the waking, learning session and booth event. At 10:00 am the walking participants set off from Asuka station and enjoyed walking for 5km.

Also, at three different gathering places, the Asuka village volunteer guide explained to the participants about the environmental initiatives of the village. At 11:00 all the participants converged at a designated place where booth events were taken place. Eight booths were provided by an environmental support organization, 10 from the Asuka village and business partners operating in the area. In all a total of 40 booths were provided.

Participants' also experienced environmental dice

game, recycling maneuvering and took part in a flea market.

There was also a corner for goat feeding and the collection of used oil intended for the production of bio-diesel fuel (BDF) by the rapeseed eco-project group, rounding off an incredible earth day celebrations.



Rapeseed planting "symbol of earthquake disaster reconstruction"

Soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake, Miyagi Co-op established a "Local Miyagi Food and Reconstruction Project Network" on July 2011 with the co-operation of local farmers, fishermen and the employees of the food industry in Miyagi prefecture to create business chances in the region leading to the restoration of victim's life.

One of the projects under the main network the "Rapeseed Project" was commissioned last year to plant rapeseed on the tsunami devastated coastal areas of Iwanuma in the Miyagi Prefecture which were not suitable for cultivation due to the risen salinity concentration resulting from the tsunami. This year, 3.8 hectors of flowers bloomed, which is 1.5 times of the previous year.

Rapeseed viewing festival was organized which attracted about 100 co-op members and others. Commemoration photographs were taken in front of the flowers and tempura of vegetables fried in oil that was squeezed from rapeseed harvested last year was tasted.

This years rapeseed will be harvested in July and it is expected that 1 ton of oil would be extracted from it. Miyagi Co-op will promote commercialization of the product.



Thirty-year anniversary of sale of CO-OP non-roll toilet paper

Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union commemorates the 30th anniversary of the sale of toilet paper "CO-OP core non roll" which is an original brand product of JCCU.

The "CO-OP core non roll" is the toilet paper, which considered environment, by excluding the paper core that becomes waste after use and using 100% recycled paper.

By eliminating the paper core and winding strongly, the length per roll becomes almost double of the conventional toilet paper.

It is a long seller item, which was first launched in 1983 in response to members request for voluminous toilet paper.

The product has been renewed and re-launched in June 1, 2013 in response to members request for a much softer toilet paper.

The raw materials used in the production of the toilet paper include industrial waste papers, goods fliers and milk cartons collected from members home through the home delivery business.



130m x 6roll (398 JPY)



News in Brief

Yamagata Co-op provides Cooking Experience for children

On Saturday, March 9 2013 "shopping kitchen" was held for the second time at Co-op Sakurada store members' cooking room of the Consumer Co-operative Kyoritsusha Yamagata (henceforth Yamagata Co-op) for elementary school children. "Shopping kitchen" is an initiative to promote food education to children by Yamagata Co-op, which started last year.

This food education activity allows the children to consider and choose materials required for cooking and purchased them with the money provided by their parents.

The children are provided with a written instruction that shows the flow of cooking. The menu this time was to make a "cream stew".

The children were divided into four groups with each group consisting of five. They were identified by the color of the head kerchiefs each group wore.

Group members consulted with each other and decided the required ingredient for the cream stew. After a decision was made the group went to the shop floor to purchase the items. A staff of the store supported them to overcome the difficulties they faced during purchasing.

After paying at the cash register they proceeded to the cooking room to start the actual cooking after selecting the necessary equipments (microwave, cooking utensils etc.) by themselves. Since the ingredients used were different for each group, different types of stew were made.

It was an incredible experience for the children that will remain in their memories for a lifetime. They felt a sense of accomplishment that they were able to do alone.



Upcoming Events

The first batch of the 2013 ICA-AP training program for Managers of Consumer Co-operatives will be held from July 19 to August 4. It will be attended by five co-operative managers from four Asian countries.

The training program will expose the trainees to Japanese Consumer Co-operative business for enrichments in the areas of store operation and management.

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