

Sanchoku contd.

He mentioned that the present day capitalist society where priority is given to the economy brings the expansion of the difference and excessive individualism, coupled with various problems including the collapse of the community. He further mentioned that with the adoption of co-operative principle that allows social business to be conducted in the interest of the people, and putting them first, he believes that the society and the economy will be brought to live.

Furthermore, Mr. FUKUNAGA Shinsuke, Chairman of JCCU Sanchoku Business Committee (Kyoto Consumers' Co-operative) gave a report on the results of the survey conducted in the summer of 2014 on *Sanchoku* Business and Co-ops effort towards the Food and Agriculture problems in Japan.

Final remark was given by Professor NAKAJIMA Yasuhiro, Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Tokyo, stating that Co-op *Sanchoku* is a movement that involves a tie-up between producers and consumers and has a history of solving various problems of the society. Since the system involves communication between the two parties, it has come the time to address new challenges.



Report by Mr. FUKUNAGA



Japanese Foreign Minister commended Co-op for its efforts towards peace

On February 9, 2015, the President of JCCU Mr. ASADA Katsumi paid a courtesy visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had a conversation with Mr. KISHIDA Fumio the Foreign Minister, in connection with the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which will be held in New York in April 2015.

In the discussion, Mr. Kishida commended Co-op for its efforts, through peace related activities, aimed at the realization of a peaceful world without nuclear weapons. He further mentioned that he expects Co-op to continue its effort towards the enhancement of everyday life of members through working in a variety of activities for better lives.

Mr. Asada remarked that Japanese consumer co-ops value members' yearning for peace in one's

daily life and in response to this, for many years, co-ops have been sending delegation to NPT Review Conference and intend to send a delegation to the conference to send a message to the world expressing co-op wish for peace.



Mr. KISHIDA (right) and Mr. ASADA (left)

"Sanchoku" Research Exchange Held

JCCU held the "31st Annual *Sanchoku* Research Exchange Meeting" on February 6 and 7 in Tokyo which was participated by 300 persons including producers, researchers and representatives from consumer co-ops nationwide. They exchanged experiences and ideas about "Sanchoku", direct transaction and cooperative activity between producers and consumers.

Mr. WADA Toshiaki, Managing Director of JCCU gave the opening remarks followed by a lecture by Professor UCHIYAMA Takashi of the Rikkyo University graduate school of Intercultural Communication, under the theme "Building a society with social bond in the era of reform".



Lecture by Professor UCHIYAMA Takashi

(cont. on left column)

JCCU submits opinion to the Agency for Natural Resource and Energy

On February 13, 2015, JCCU submitted an opinion for the electricity rate hike re-approval application by Kansai Electric Power Co., Ltd. to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Agency for Natural Resources and Energy (ANRE).

Kansai Electric Power on December 24, 2014, made an approval to the application seeking price increase of residential electricity rates from April 2015 to the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry. In this new deal the average increase of electricity rate in the regulation department (household and small store) and the liberalization sector (large building and factory) will be 10.23% and 13.93% respectively.

The application made by Kansai Electric Power pushes forward examination whether or not it is proper in the Ministry, in light of Electricity Business Act, general electric utility supply agreement fee accounting rules and the public electricity company supply article rate examination point.

A subcommittee specialized in electric bill examination was formed by the Ministry to accept wide range of opinion from the general citizenry through the holding of public hearing and offer a decision that reflect the voice of the nation.

JCCU, from consumer point of view, suggests that if Kansai Electric Power is seeking an understanding with respect to price increases, it expects the organization to advance more management efficiency and cost reduction and makes the electricity charges reflect on the substantial falling of crude oil price.

JCCU also suggests that an easy-to-understand explanation to the general consumers was necessary.

Five hundred and fifty thousand signatures collected for expanding Natural Disaster Victims Relief System

On February 12, 2015, the prefectural union of consumers' co-operatives of six prefectures of Tohoku northeastern region of Japan, (Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Miyagi, Yamagata and Fukushima) held "Diet petition signature presentation meeting for the radical expansion of the Natural Disaster Victims Relief System" at the Diet Members' Office Building.

March 11, 2015 is four years since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami that devastated the northeastern coast of Japan, which also triggered Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident, however, the recovery and reconstruction of the affected areas is still ongoing and at a slow pace in certain areas.

The consumer co-operatives engaged in business and activities in the affected areas wrestled for Diet petition signature for the expansion of the support system that matches the state of affairs of persons who suffered from the earthquake and the tsunami.

The consumers' co-operatives nationwide

cooperated with this, and a total number of 560,000 signatures were collected.

The petition signature was submitted to the Diet members of both houses of Representatives and Councilors at a meeting and demanded the expansion of the life rebuilding system of the victims.



Above: Picture showing the participants of the petition signatures presentation meeting.

Constitution Learning Meeting Held

Consumer co-ops nationwide have been holding constitutional learning meetings at various places to deepen understanding about the Japanese Constitution.

On January 28 and 29 at the cities of Ube and Iwakuni respectively, Co-op Yamaguchi held constitution learning meeting which were participated by 95 people, in the two days, 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.

Mr. OGUMA Takehiko Manager of JCCU Policy Planning Department as the resource person delivered an understandable lecture to the participants, mentioning how the constitution is connected to one's live and the way to think about the right to collective self-defense.

After the lectures, participants were divided into groups and discussed about the implications of the constitutional amendment and expressed their opinions.

There was a general feeling expressed by the participants that it was a good chance for them to learn about the constitution of Japan and requested that the lectures be organized in various places for all ages.



Lecture by Mr. OGUMA



Ube meeting on 28th

JCCU releases Business Summary

JCCU summarizes the January 2015 business turnover of the 65 major consumer co-ops nationwide.

Total turnover is higher than the value recorded in the same month last year with an increase of 2.8% to a value of 209.96 billion JPY.

The store turnover is 99.1% compared with the previous year at a value of 80.4 billion JPY.

On the other hand, the total turnover for the home delivery business is 124.7 billion JPY (up 102.3%), of which the individual delivery exceeded the previous year in 19 consecutive months with a value 81.266 billion JPY (up 104.4%).

Co-op's Internet online shopping site "e Friends" takes the second place

The top 100 Internet mail order survey report for the fiscal 2014 has been published by the Impress Research Institute, with Co-op's Internet circle "e Friends" taken the second position after Amazon Japan.

The total sales for e Friends under this investigation was 223.7 billion JPY for all co-ops nationwide.

e Friends is a centralized online shopping service developed by JCCU in 2000 for co-op nationwide as a common online shopping site for the home delivery service.

The service has seen a steady growth since the introduction of smart phone ordering and the provision of WEB catalog for tablets and smartphone users which can be viewed at any iOS and Android devices.

JCCU plans to make the service more attractive through the expansion of community features.

Japanese Young Co-operators study visit to Singapore and Vietnam

JCCU organized 8-day group study tour for 8 young Japanese Consumer Co-operators to NTUC FairPrice Singapore and Saigon Co.op Vietnam from January 31 to February 7.

This year's tour is the eighth in succession since its commencement in 2008.

The purpose of the study tour was to give the young co-operators opportunity to learn how co-operatives in other countries are operated, understand by experiencing how co-operative model is accepted by the citizens, and have some exchange with the staff of the co-operatives they visited to think together about finding solutions to the problems their organizations meet today.

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

Participants visited the new head office of NTUC FairPrice which was opened last December and received briefing on the marketing strategy of NTUC FairPrice. They also learned about NTUC group structure, that includes FairPrice and other co-operatives and social enterprises.

Participants were impressed by the many CSR activities of NTUC FairPrice, especially volunteer leave system for staff and FairPrice "Share-A-Textbook Project" to donate used textbooks for needy students.

Later in the day participants paid study visits to NTUC FairPrice stores with various store formats, such as "FairPrice", "Warehouse Club", "Finest", and "Extra". They were impressed to see the store staff working with vigor and enthusiasm. They also found the new checkout system "Scan2Go" very attractive and efficient. Participants also visited National Museum of Singapore, Peranakan Museum, and traditional markets (wet markets) in Chinatown and little India to learn about history and present situation of Singapore.



In Vietnam

Participants first visited Saigon Co.op headquarters to be briefed on the business outline including Coop Mart supermarket chain.

They found the historical background of Saigon Co-op very interesting. They also learned about the upcoming new co-operative law in Vietnam.

In store visit, participants were impressed by the BtoB corner of a joint-venture hypermarket between Saigon Co.op and NTUC FairPrice.

They also found that private brand items of Saigon Co-op is of wide variety from grocery to clothes, in order to realize their mission of "meeting the target customers' daily needs".

Participants also visited War Remnants Museum, Củ Chi Tunnels, and a traditional market (wet market) in Ho Chi Minh City.



Through the study visit participants learned that both NTUC FairPrice and Saigon Co.op have different processes of growth from the Japanese co-operatives, but the philosophy behind the co-operative businesses itself is the same.

Participants learned much from various activities by both co-operatives which will help find solutions for the problems they are meeting in their daily work.

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

International

On February 9, 2015, Mr. ASADA Katsumi, President of JCCU, met with H.E Mr. Don Pramudwinai the Deputy-Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand in Tokyo at the request of the Minister for a talk during his official visit to Japan.

At the meeting, Mr. Don expressed his appreciation to JCCU for the past handling of Thai products. He also mentioned that he would appreciate the effort of consumer co-ops nationwide to help in introducing Thai products that are still not known to Japanese consumers.

Mr. ASADA expressed his thanks to Mr. Don and mentioned that Thailand is an important partner for Japanese consumers and the relationship is very indispensable. He also stated that JCCU cooperates with research institutes in Thailand that are working to improve the quality of food and that JCCU will further deepen the relationship in the future.

ICA Collaboration Seminar

On February 12, 2015 in Tokyo, the Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives (JJC) organized a seminar inviting ICA to join in the movement to oppose the JA-ZENCHU reform currently under review by the Japanese Government.

The ICA President, Dame Pauline Green and Mr. Jean-Louis Bancel Director attended the seminar from ICA and gave lectures.

In her lecture the ICA president emphasized that the reform goes against the worldwide recognition cooperatives have and the significant role it plays in socio-economic development.

Mr. Bancel also mentioned that demutualization of cooperatives would be unsuccessful and that reforming the movement would be tantamount to robbing members of the share capital they have accumulated and it is unrealistic.

News in Brief

Policy recommendation

- JCCU on February 16, 2015, submitted an opinion on the "2015 fiscal imported food monitoring and guidance plan (draft)" to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare from the standpoint of the members/consumers.

JCCU considers the safety of imported foods as an important issue in order to secure the "food safety" of members and the Japanese people as a whole.

Social initiatives

- On January 21, 2015, Shiga Prefecture and Shiga Prefecture Consumers' Co-operative Union jointly organized a symposium on food safety and security under the theme "How safe is imported food now?".

145 people including government officials, business operators, related organizations, co-op members and executives attended the symposium.

Two keynote lectures were given "the risk assessment of chemical substances in food" by Ms. UNEYAMA Chikako, National Institute of Health Sciences safety information section and "the initiative of safe securing of imported food" by Mr. SUZUKI Norihiko, Osaka Quarantine Station food import consultation and guidance office.

It was followed by panel discussion and exchange of views, enriching participants with valuable information concerning food safety and security.

- On February 5, 2015, Co-op Gunma concluded senior citizens watch-over agreement with Gunma Prefecture Nanmoku village where the percentage of senior citizens over 65 years has a record of being the highest (57.2%) in Japan according to the national census conducted in 2010, by utilizing co-op's delivery networks for the weekly delivery of ordered goods to members' homes at a designated time and day.

During delivery of items, co-op delivery person is to confirm the safety of senior citizens and report any risk situation to the Health and Welfare Division of the village so that appropriate actions may be taken.

- At the second food industry waste grand prix contest sponsored by the Biomass resources comprehensive utilization Promotion Council, Miyagi Coop recycling center, received the Food industry Director General Award for excellence in their recycle activities to reduce environmental impact.

The center commenced running in 2006, making compost by thermal drying of fruit and vegetable wastes from stores and home delivery outlets. In the autumn of 2014 the facility started producing "Eco feed (liquid feed)" by fermentation resulting in further reduction of environmental impact. The current food recycling rate is 95%.

- Co-op Sapporo will from this spring sequentially install automated external defibrillator (AED) on its home delivery vehicles. The co-op has experience of cases that the elderly had fallen down by sudden illnesses at the time of delivery. In such situations, if necessary, the delivery person will perform a life-saving treatment by the AED installed in the vehicle. Training to learn how to use the AED will be organized for all the delivery staff to strengthen the watch system of the elderly.

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