

Future directions and issues related to gender equality promotion

JCCU examined the retrospective and the future direction of the work on gender equality in the fiscal 2015 with particular reference to two sectors, "staff organization" and "co-op members' activities".

Regarding staff organization a committee was set up to carry out 5 discussions and the results compiled into a report.

Circumstances surrounding the employment in Japan has changed considerably and it is critical that co-ops provide a platform for employees of co-op to learn and share views concerning the changes.

Work-life-balance is the foundation of efforts of gender equality and its promotion is essential. The report examines efforts to resolve the problem with long working hours, workplace communication promotion, staff livelihood and efforts to participate in community activities and the promotion of female employees.

In the case of members' activities JCCU relied on the summary of the member co-ops Board of Directors meetings in each region. The report emphasizes the need for the organization to create a platform or provide chances for members to participate, such as education program, study tour, saloon activity etc. Emphasis is also given to the initiatives towards young generation and child-rearing generation.

Also efforts toward the promotion of senior citizen participation in the community is summarized.



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JCCU held Annual General Assembly

JCCU on June 17, 2016, held the 66th General Assembly in Tokyo. Out of the 655 representatives to the General Assembly, 436 attended in person, 9 by proxy and 210 by document.

The meeting was honored to receive congratulatory messages from many dignitaries including Ms. Monique Leroux, the President of ICA, Mr. YAMAMOTO Toru, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) and Mr. OKUNO Choe, Committee Chairman of the Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives (JJC) and also the president of JA-ZENCHU (Central Union of Agricultural Co-operatives).

All the five bills including "the 2015 business and financial reports", the 2016 business plan and the budget" were passed by majority votes.

At the opening remarks, the President of JCCU, ASADA Katsumi, expressed his appreciation to the co-ops nationwide for their effort in various ways towards the revival of the Kumamoto earthquake and further asked the co-ops to strengthen their effort to continue the reconstruction exercise of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

In addition he mentioned that, in 2015, the "Regional Protection Agreement" with the local governments which allow co-op to confirm the safety of the elderly and report any risk situation to the office of the local government in the town or village for appropriate action to be taken was quite successful. The recognition of the activity confirms once again the value of co-op as an organization of mutual help and the president urged the co-op to continue this goodwill.

There was a debate session after the bill was proposed, in which 16 representatives gave a remark.

Also among the major discussions that took place in a wide range of themes include, co-ops commitment to energy issues, initiatives towards regional development, peace efforts, the strengthening of business solidarity and management and the product development efforts.

Representatives from the co-ops in the areas affected by the 2011 earthquake also gave appreciation remark for the various assistance from co-ops nationwide.



Opening remarks: ASADA Katsumi President JCCU



Congratulatory message: Mr. YAMAMOTO Toru (MHLW)

Co-op Internet online shopping sales exceeds 250 billion JPY

The internet online shopping service for JCCU member co-ops nationwide keeps expanding in membership. The service is being used for the home delivery business.

The total registration number of co-op members nationwide ordering through these sites is 3.81 million (112% year-on-year), with a total turnover of 253.1 billion JPY (105% year-on-year).

Ordering procedure has been diversified. In addition to the conventional mark sheet method the use of smartphone and personal computer for ordering have been increased resulting in the increase in growth.

Among these, JCCU provides to members of five regional business federations and two-community based consumer co-ops a centralized online shopping service "e Friends" developed by JCCU in 2000 and since its launch registered membership has steadily increased and now membership stands about 2.23 million in the fiscal 2015 (111% year-on-year).

There is also rapid expansion of the use of any iOS and Android devices for ordering of goods, search for recipes and posting of opinions, impressions on products and membership promotion. About 1.3 million people visit the promotion site per year.

In fiscal 2015 the total number of comments from users increased by 19% (119% year-on-year) and co-op members who posted comments also grew by 28% (128% year-on-year).

The opinions and comments are shared with other users for the purpose of information exchange. About 1.3million people visit the promotion site per year.

JCCU and member co-ops plan to make the service more attractive through the expansion of community features.

2015 JCCU Business Report and Key issues in 2016



SHIMADA Hiroyuki
Managing Director (CEO)

At JCCU's General Assembly held on June 17, Mr. SHIMADA Hiroyuki, Managing Director/CEO reported that in fiscal 2015 (April 2015-March 2016) consumer co-ops achieved an increase in both sales and surplus. This trend has continued for three consecutive years.

According to the business report, membership of the community-based retail co-ops for the fiscal 2015 was 24.6 million an increase of 1.8% compared with the previous year.

The total business turnover obtained was 2.77 trillion JPY (102.6% year-on-year) and the ordinary surplus rate was 1.86% which is an extension of 0.14 point from the 2014 fiscal year.

The home delivery business sales increased by 2.1% from the previous year to a value of 1.73 trillion JPY given an ordinary surplus ratio of 3.49%. A new home delivery business model with the utilization of IT and improvement of delivery convenience through effective logistics distribution infrastructure was advanced.

In the case of the store business, reform towards overcoming the store deficit was advanced. To improve profit and loss, non-profitable stores were closed while advancing on store renewal and new store openings. In the fiscal 2014, 11 co-op stores became surplus and 34 stores also improved their profit and loss.

The estimated retail sales amount for fiscal 2015 is 902.4 billion JPY (year-on-year 103.3%) and the current account surplus rate has improved by 1.22% as a result of strengthening store delicatessen items.

With regards to CO-OP products, JCCU launched a new series of its sub-brand CO-OP Quality products which represent CO-OP products rich in taste. A total of 38 items have been developed and a renewal of 1,184 regular co-op brand items since its launch in 2014.

To raise members loyalty a two-year campaign was started in March 2014 and ended in March 2016 with a total participation of about 2 million Co-op members.

During the fiscal year under review, the total supply of CO-OP products was 3,757 billion yen (budget ratio of 100.7%) and the ordinary surplus 3.67 billion yen (budget ratio of 172.8%).

Key Issues in 2016:

In 2016 fiscal year, in order to achieve the targets set forth in "Co-op Vision 2020", JCCU has formulated the 13th three-year plan for the consumer co-ops in Japan which was approved at the 66th Annual General Assembly.

The plan calls for exertion of collective strength, further strengthening of ties and maintaining sustainable business structure to contribute to the improvement of members' livelihood.

Special challenges:

One of the major policies in 2016 will be the advancement of managerial competencies to maintain affordability of CO-OP products.

Also, co-op will continue to promote initiatives to strengthen co-op product competitiveness by expanding member's participation in product development and improvement.

On retailing business, while we focus on efforts to increase home delivery users we shall also advance efforts for their continuing use of the facility by strengthening the merchandizing of products in the category of frozen foods and convenient foods in response to the changes in the family structure.

We shall also work towards improving the profitability of the store by strengthening the fresh food division.

On Food issues, co-op will further advance effort towards a healthy eating lifestyle through information dissemination and catering services for parents with children and senior citizens.

On social issues, we shall continue to contribute towards improving local communities where any person can live comfortably, especially by putting emphasis on the elderly watch-over program "Regional Protection Agreement" and the moving van sales.

On environmental issues, co-op will further promote initiatives and enlightening activities among co-op members to shift to alternative energy, while reducing environmental load from its operations.

On disaster prevention and mitigation activities, we shall continue to conclude co-operation agreements with the local governments, pledging to provide emergency commodities, transport necessary supplies and support the relocation of disaster victims in the event of natural disaster such as earthquake, typhoons etc.,

16th ICA-AP Regional Workshop held in Singapore

The 16th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on "Management of Consumer Co-operatives" was held in Singapore from May 31 to June 3 2016. The workshop was organized under the aegis of the ICA-AP Consumer Committee and hosted by NTUC Fairprice (Singapore).

The 3-day training workshop was attended by 17 co-operators and 4 observers from Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Japan.

The objectives of the workshop were to promote understanding of the socio-economic role of consumer cooperatives, learn the human resources development experiences of two organizations and to establish international network of consumer cooperative leaders and managers.

A welcome address and an overview of NTUC Fairprice was given by Mr. Tng Ah Yiam, Deputy CEO, NTUC Fairprice followed by lectures on NTUC Enterprise, Retail Operations and Supply Chain Management.

Also there was a presentation of two case studies on staff training and human resource development of NTUC Fairprice and Saigon Co-op (Vietnam) emphasizing on the importance of such training since it imparts knowledge, improve understanding, build a bridge between departments and strengthen team work. Group discussion and presentation sessions on what participants learnt from the workshop was held followed by a debriefing on the presentation by Ms. Juliana Tan, Training & Development Manager, NTUC Fairprice.



Connecting with producers through rice planting

Co-op members and their families have several opportunities each year to take part in the various phases of rice cultivation, from planting seedlings in spring to harvesting in fall.

On May 7 2016, Co-op Mie in cooperation with JA Tsuage held a "rice-transplanting" exchange meeting with the participation of 90 people consisting of 26 families, producers and staff of the co-op.

This exchange meeting is an initiative to promote food education through rice planting while valuing the connection with producers.

After listening to instructions regarding planting of the seedlings from JA staff, the participants worked side by side with them planting the seedlings of "Koshihikari" (brand name of Japanese rice) with great care.

In addition, along with the rice planting "bucket rice cultivation" was also done and each participating family took home a bucket of seedlings to observe the growth at home.

The rice will be harvested in September. After the planting, participants joined the farming community for a fresh-cooked rice balls of Koshihikari.

Since it was the first experience of rice planting by the children, there was a feeling of excitement among them.



Co-op Sapporo begins sale of cheap smart phones

On June 1 2016, Co-op Sapporo began over the counter sale of cheap smart phone business with reduced usage charges.

Co-op Sapporo's smartphone referred to as "Todokkusumaho" has no in-house facilities but rather uses NTT DoCoMo line to make calls and data communications and as result can provide service at a reduced price.

At the end of March 2016, the service recorded approximately 5.4 million users and at the same period of the previous year about 2.13 million lines (+65%) have been increased.

The charges plan depends on the user package of the phone which basically consists of three, Data communication only plan, Data communication only plan (With SMS function) and Voice calling plan (Data + call option).

Co-op Sapporo has also started the supply of electric power to homes in Hokkaido.

Co-op Sapporo's sub-subsidiary company "Todoku Electric Power" which focus on renewable energy and "EneCo-op" a subsidiary company which uses surplus energy from factory are the two companies responsible for the power supply.

Co-op Sapporo together with some consumer co-ops in Japan have entered the electricity market

as new entrants.

With the anticipation of the increase in consumption tax in the near future, co-op member's living is likely to be affected greatly. In order to reduce the stress of members living, Co-op Sapporo has embarked on this businesses (sale of cheap mobile phone and the supply of electric power) besides the three core businesses, home delivery, store and mutual insurance).



Miyagi Co-op staff selected to play for the Japanese women soccer team

SASAKI Mayu who works for Miyagi Co-op and a regular player of Vegalta Sendai Ladies, a football team in Sendai city, has been selected to play for the Japanese national women's football team "Nadeshiko Japan". She is expected to play in Sweden from July 17-26 2016.

Miyagi Co-op as part of its social contribution and a means to regenerate the local community after the Great East Japan Earthquake has been supporting local sports through sponsoring to restore energy in the community.

Miyagi Co-op operates in Miyagi Prefecture with its headquarters in Sendai where Vegalta is home with.

Since 2011, Miyagi Co-op has been sponsoring the team through various activities and providing employment facilities to some of the players of the women's team.

Presently Miyagi co-op has employed three Vegalta Sendai Ladies' players who continue sports while working. The players are SASAKI Mayu, NISHIKAWA Asuka and KISHIKAWA Natsuki.



Pic. Mr. MIYAMOTO Hiromi, President of Miyagi Co-op (R) and Ms. SASAKI Mayu (L)



News in Brief

Co-op wins "best award for baby goods 2016"

Through questionnaire survey in the magazines "First Tamago (egg)-club," "Tamago-club," "Hiyoko (baby chick)-club" issued by the Benesse Corporation, Co-op was awarded the "Tamahiyo baby goods Award 2016" on March 3 2016. The questionnaire survey was performed with a

total of about 2000 respondents evaluating Co-ops as the organization producing books that serve the best interest of children between 0 month and 1 year six months old and convenient for pregnant women and mothers with small children.

"Children's dining room" being held by co-op nationwide

Some consumer co-ops nationwide are organizing "children's cafeteria" as a means to provide a place where children can spend time together through various activities such as cooking and eating to help children who suffer from poverty, prevent children from isolation and to ensure their safety. This activity is being spread nationwide.

On May 19, Ibaraki co-op in cooperation with the Shimotsuma city social welfare council organized "children's dining room" in the community café "platform".

The dining room aims as a place of petting and a platform of studies, instilling confidence in the children. Management of cooking, etc. is carried out by volunteer members of Ibaraki Co-op and the food items are offered free by JA Jyosou Hikari and JA ZEN-NOH Ibaraki (National Federation of Agricultural Co-operative Associations).

Also on May 10, Co-op Kobe organized children's dining for elementary school children. Cooking materials were supplied by the local people. 12 meals of Omelette rice were cooked to offer a platform of exchanges between the kids.



Co-op Kobe honored "good company certification"

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) has honored three organizations including Co-op Kobe, in the Hyogo prefecture as organizations where women play an active role at a ceremony held in the Hyogo Labor Bureau on June 3, 2016.

Following the enforcement of the female employees promotion law in April 2016, by MHLW, Co-op Kobe has proactively promoted women's career activities and having met the criteria stipulated in the policy such as the increase of more women employees, raising the ratio of women in managerial level etc, was awarded "good company certification".

A round-table discussion was held after the ceremony where Co-op Kobe announced that female managers proportion has grown from 4% to 16% in the last five years.



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