

## Mie held 2012 International Year of Co-operative Festival

This year is the International Year of Co-operatives and the prefectural IYC committees are organizing many activities and events in their regions throughout Japan, highlighting and demonstrating to a large number of local people the value and role of co-operatives in building a better society.

In Mie prefecture, "2012 International Year of Co-operatives Festival" was held with more than 4,700 participants. At the opening ceremony, the Governor of Mie Mr. Hideaki Suzuki gave a special greeting on behalf of the local government and acknowledged the role co-operatives played during the Great East Japan Earthquake. He stated, "One step made by hundred people is better than hundred steps made by one person" confirming his support to mutual help. There was a stage performance by school children playing drums as well as food tasting session of some seasonal vegetables and fruits, processed foods, marine products, etc. which were brought together from various parts of Mie prefecture. There was also an exhibition of co-op products and pamphlets explaining co-op activities such as the welfare, UNICEF and the environment.



## International Day of Co-operatives held in Tokyo

Every first Saturday of July is the International Day of Co-operatives and it is celebrated by co-operatives around the world.

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> commemoration and was uniquely held on July 18, 2012 in Tokyo under the joint co-operation of JJC (Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives) and the Japan IYC National Committee.

The theme was "Co-operative Enterprises Build A Better World" which links to the observance of the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives.

About 1,000 co-operative stakeholders nationwide, such as the consumer co-operatives, the forestry co-operatives, the fisheries co-operatives and the agricultural co-operatives participated in the meeting.

The opening remark was given by Mr. Banzai Akira, the vice president of IYC National Committee and also the Chairperson of JA-ZENCHU. He emphasized the importance of all stakeholders to contribute to the awareness improvement of the public regarding the contribution of co-operatives to the Japanese economy and the society in general.

### What should be done to create a better society?

After the remark, Mr. Uchihashi Katsuto (economic analyst) gave a remark on behalf of the IYC national committee. He pointed out three major challenges that co-operatives should clear under the present slogan of building a better society.

First of all the meaning of "building a better society" must be made clear.

Second issue is how to have the principle, ideas and clear thought to reach the theme.

The third is how the present day Japan could be changed including the state of the politics to help realize a better society?

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Mr. Uchihashi's remark



Contest award ceremony



## JCCU launch a buyback program of greenhouse gas emission reductions

Based on the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on environmental protection, transaction of greenhouse gas emission reductions in the market has started. A company having difficulty in reducing emissions by its own is able to purchase the amount of reduction from other companies which actually reduce emissions and claim the purchased reduction as its own. The system is expected to be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions of the entire planet.

Since it is difficult to measure the amount of reduction of greenhouse gas emission from each household, the transaction of the reductions from household have not spread widely. It is, however, easy to calculate the amount of the greenhouse gas emission reduction of a household with solar power system by measuring the amount of power generated by solar energy and the amount of power consumption.

Therefore JCCU has launched "Co-op Sun Sun Club," a program to buy the amount of greenhouse gas emission reduction from co-op member households equipped with solar power system.

At the initial stage, three co-ops, Co-op Kanagawa (Kanagawa Prefecture), Coop Shizuoka (Shizuoka Prefecture), Citizen Coop Yamanashi (Yamanashi Prefecture), have joined the program. A co-op member with solar power system has to be a member of the "Co-op Sun Sun Club" to sell the emission reduction to the co-ops. The co-op calculates the amount of emission reduction and buy the amount at a price of 2,000 yen per 1 metric ton CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent as far back as 2008. JCCU assumes the amount of emission reduction per household as 500kg a year (1,000 yen purchase amount). JCCU plans to expand the program across the country.

## News in Brief

### Co-op Sapporo invests in a mega solar business

The chairman of the board of directors of Co-op Sapporo, Hideaki Omi has announced the organization's intention to begin a large-scale photovoltaic power plant (mega solar) business as part of its environmental policy.

About 700 million yen is invested in the business to build a power generation facility in two places in Obihiro city Hokkaido with outputs about 1200 kW hr and 750 kW hr respectively, making it 2000 kW hr in total.

The operation of the plant will start by the end of next year. The generated electricity is to be sold to the Hokkaido Electric Power.

For the Co-op, Obihiro is a suitable location for the solar power plant, as there is plenty of sunshine on annual base as well as having large space at affordable cost.

Out of the total amount of investment, 300 million yen would be financed by bonds to the Co-op members and the remainder by its own account.

It is expected that 80 million yen sales per year would be realized and the amount of investment would be paid off in about 12 years.

Obihiro had large annual amounts of solar radiation, and also it judged as being suitable for the construction of a photovoltaic institution from its vast land.

In Hokkaido, all the Tomari nuclear power plants stopped operation in May, causing electric power shortage this summer. This has called for the need of diversification of power source in the region.

### Approximately 690 people participated in the events of "Resort project for Fukushima children"

After the accident of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, many residents of Fukushima Prefecture, except residents of the evacuated area close to the nuclear power plant, have been living with fear and anxiety of radioactive contamination at their original homes.

Especially for families having young children, it is a big problem that parents can not have their kids play outside without anxiety.

In order to provide children the opportunity to play with heart's content in areas of low dose of radioactivity, Fukushima Consumers' Co-operative Union, the Fukushima Committee for UNICEF and Disaster Recovery Research Institute of Fukushima University launched "Resort Project for Fukushima Children" in last December.

In response to the call for project organizers, many organizations such as consumer co-operatives and agricultural co-operatives, trade unions, local committees for UNICEF have been involved actively with the project and provide 18 events to entertain kids and their families from Fukushima in July and August in various parts of Japan.

The projects include about 690 kids and their family members from Fukushima are to participate in the events such as 5 days tour in Hokkaido, 3 days stay at a coast in Toyama Prefecture, and 3 days stay in Kanagawa Prefecture.

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The major part of the event cost is funded by donations to the participated organizations and the burden of the participants are kept at a low level. If the number of applicants exceeds the capacity, participants will be determined by lottery.



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