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In Fukushima Prefecture, the radiation dose compared to the level after the earthquake has reduced considerably. In addition, with the government support indoor children's playground is continuously being developed. However, the residents with small children still have fear and anxiety of radioactive contamination and feel uneasy when their children stay outside too long .

4. Support for producers in the affected areas

The revitalization of the affected areas cannot occur without healthy recoveries by large industries, which exert a major impact on the region, as well as employment in addition to the infrastructure. Last fall the Co-ops in the affected areas launched the branding of products produced by producers in the region and called for use across the country as part of the agenda to revitalize the farming business in the region.

2016 fiscal year of the earthquake activity support policy

JCCU and its member co-ops through the "Co-op Action Campaign" will continue working on the reconstruction assistance of the affected areas, strengthen direct interaction with the victims of the disaster and continue to work on product diffusion of the brand in the region.

In Fukushima Prefecture, where reconstruction has become more difficult due to the impact of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, co-op will strengthen support for the recreational activities that allows children to play in safe environment.

Special Report: Five years since the Great East Japan Earthquake

Five years have passed since the unprecedented Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that struck Tohoku and Kanto region, and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster on March 11 2011.

More than 16,000 people lost their lives, and over 2,500 are still missing. About 160,000 people were also displaced from their homes and have been forced to live as evacuees in temporary housing.

Over the past five years, 26 trillion yen has been invested towards the reconstruction of the affected areas, through the construction of infrastructures such as protection walls, roads, railways, and the development of residential land. Re-construction exercise is still in progress, however, there is variation of the region and the population of the affected areas continues to decrease.

The earthquake relief efforts have entered into the sixth year. Thinking about the current severe situation of disaster area and the victims, and while the disaster areas look for long term and continuing support, JCCU and member co-ops nationwide will continue to offer support till situation improves.

Up to date earthquake support activities

Referring to JCCU aggregate data record for the reconstruction assistance, about 60,000 people participated in the volunteer activities, while 200,000 people also participated in the exchange planning activities. (cumulative total up to first half of 2015).

In addition, since the launch of JCCU "Life support fund-raising" in 2012 under the slogan "Let's get connected" a total amount of 565.7 million yen has been raised as at the end of 2014 fiscal year.

The total fund-raising amount is likely to reach over 640 million yen adding the expected figure for the 2015 fiscal year. These donations have been utilized to support the victims living as well as the volunteer activities at the stricken areas.

The feature of the support activity of Co-op nationwide includes supporting the sales of agricultural products from the stricken areas, supporting the children recreation project and playing the role of a secretariat for the dispatch of Fukushima children for homestay away from areas with higher dose of radiation, soil screening activities and many more.

Challenges in the support activities**1. Diversification of the needs of the affected areas:**

The needs at the affected areas are various. Also, while the reconstruction of permanent housing advances in some areas, development in other areas is hardly progressing. The need for assistance/support to the victims remaining in the shelter and readjusting from the old shelter to the new settlement is required.

In addition, most of the prolonged refuge dwellers are aging and some are having serious health problems.

Children's education and emotional/psychological care is also important.

2. Decrease in volunteers

In 2015 alone 58,000 people have been reported to have engaged in voluntary activities in the affected areas, however this number is only 6% of the total volunteers recorded during the peak time in 2011 indicating a great reduction in volunteers.

How the activities of these volunteers could be supported has become a challenge.

Regional Conference on Status of Women in Co-operatives

The "Tagaytay+20" Third Regional Conference on Status of Women in Co-operatives in Asia-Pacific was held from February 9-11 in Clark, Pampanga, Philippines in collaboration with the cooperative movement of the Philippines.

The conference was held to mark 20 years since the first conference in 1997 and 10 years after the second in 2006. It was attended by more than 50 participants from 9 countries, Japan, India, Iran, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Ms. SHIMBO Masako, Chair of ICA-AP Committee on Women who is also the board member of JCCU, in her opening remarks traced the history of the Women Committee and emphasized that since the beginning of its activities, the Committee's goal has always been to enhance women's participation in every sphere of ICA member cooperatives. More specifically, to realize gender equality in cooperatives and to support the exertion of women's leadership.

The Conference also called for enabling/supportive policies; building capacity of women; collaboration with cooperatives, international agencies and government; funding for women development projects and more research.

In terms of policies, ensuring balanced ratio of women to men members, employees, laws and regulations to promote Gender and Development (GAD) in cooperatives were demanded.



Participants pose for a group picture.

Exchanges on "From supporting victims to town development"

On March 3, 2016 Miyagi Co-op held an exchange meeting in Sendai under the theme "from supporting victims to town development by all citizens in the affected region".

Attention is now being paid to a town development where anyone can live with peace of mind. This called for the exchange meeting on March 3 to discuss the role of co-op in such undertakings.

About 200 people across the country including co-op members, officers and employees participated in the exchanges.

The President of Miyagi Co-op, Mr. MIYAMOTO Hiromu gave a report reflecting on the past efforts by co-op, emphasizing on volunteer activities that helped to reduce victim's anxiety through salon activities.

He gave his thanks to the support from various co-op nationwide.

Taken turns, Professor KASE Hiroko, Faculty of Human Science, Waseda University gave a lecture entitled "From victims petting cafe to community development where people can live in sense of security."

Finally Ms. TAKADA Tadayoshi, General Manager of Co-op Kobe reported on the volunteer activities organized during the recovery period from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake which hit Kobe city in 1995.

Participants shared views about how they could individually support the initiative to improve the community for a sound living.

JCCU and member co-ops nationwide will also continue to support activities in the future.



State of the discussions of the participants

JCCU Investigation of consumption tax

JCCU released a flash report about "Survey on Consumption Tax" through registered monitors of co-op members from 34 consumer co-ops with an aggregate target of 585 households in a 12-month investigation period from January 2015 to December 2015.

The survey based on the household account book of the co-op members and the calculated tax amount was obtained by subtracting the non-taxable spending (such as rent and school education expenses) from consumption expenditure multiplied by the tax rate.

In 2015, consumption tax rate was 8% and the average annual consumption tax per household was 256,257 yen, an increase of 15,374 yen from 2014.

This amount is about 5.76% and 3.83% of the consumption expenditure and the revenue respectively.

For the household receiving annual income less than 4 million yen the percentage of revenue was 5.44% which is the same as the value obtained in 2014, while the ratio for household receiving more than 10 million yen was 3.12% an increase of 0.18 points.

For annual household income less than 4 million yen, the annual consumption tax ratio was 1.74 times more than household with income more than 10 million yen indicating that regressivity tax is high for low-income households.

Like the previous years, the regressivity for "pension household" was 4.94% as compared to 3.49% of "salary household".

2016 Co-op members gathering held

Co-operative societies in Kanagawa prefecture have been holding "Co-operative gathering" each year since 1987 as a platform where co-operative societies in the prefecture could interact with each other and think about common issues affecting consumers.

Looking at the current living situation, the strain of the society is being felt in various fields including education, medical care, food, health, employment, etc.

The theme for this year's gathering is "in order not to leave a negative legacy to the next generation, what can be done to ensure that everyone lives in the community with a sense of security from the perspective of consumers' right".

It was held at the Kanagawa Citizen center under planning committee members selected from 20 organizations including consumer Co-ops and NGOs in the prefecture.

During the plenary Session which was attended by 224 people, a special lecture entitled "the ongoing troubles in Fukushima - our concern" was given by Mr. FUNAHASHI Atsushi followed by a keynote speech by Mr. ITAGAKI Yoshihiko (NHK Planning and Development Center Chief Producer) under the theme "Distortion of Japan as seen during the video coverage of the earthquake and the tsunami.

The nine subcommittee meetings also discussed various topics including the introduction of Hiratsuka town welfare initiatives, Japan's housing policy and housing problems, and the "food bank Kanagawa".



Sanchoku Research Exchange Held

JCCU held the "32nd Annual Sanchoku Research Exchange Meeting" on February 26 and 27 in Kyoto (Ryukoku University Fukakusa Campus) which was participated by 378 people including producers, researchers and representatives from consumer co-ops nationwide.

The theme for the event was to "think together the future of Japan's food and agriculture" by exchanging experiences and ideas about "Sanchoku" which is a direct transaction and cooperative activity between producers and consumers.

In the plenary session on 26th, Mr. FUJII Yoshitsugu, Executive Director of JCCU gave the opening remarks followed by a lecture by Mr. MOTANI Kousuke, chief researcher of Japan Research Institute entitled "Creation of a vibrant community". He explained the present situation of the Japanese aging population and the economic problems and mentioned that to make a community/area attractive for living the circulation of energy, food and agriculture are very indispensable.

It was followed by a panel discussion on the theme "What happens? Japanese food, agriculture, the community and Co-op Sanchoku" by 5 panelists with each panelist given 15 minutes to express his opinion on the theme.

The panelists were, Professor NAKASHIMA Yasuhiro, Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Tokyo, KAMAGATA Yoshifumi, Executive Director Takomachi Sanchoku Center, SAITO Kazushi, Director Shonai Rice Workshop, SHIBATA Hiromi, Vice Chair Kyoto Co-op and MORI Hiroyuki, President Nara Co-op.

Sectional meetings were held on 27 under the subtheme "Crisis of Japanese agriculture as a culture". Participants deepened exchanges under the following topics:

1. Considering the future of Japan's food and agriculture
2. Open space for young producer exchanges
3. Possibility of producer support and production area exchanges
4. Possibility of environmental preservation and community regeneration through co-op sanchoku
5. Thinking about agriculture and rural community and the co-op sanchoku under the influence of TPP

Final remark was given by Professor Nakashima stating that it is good for all the production areas nationwide to have a standard exchange norm, however, based on this each region could consider its own.

After the meeting "Sanchoku gourmet buffet" was held. The participants interchanged while enjoying the cuisine which has been prepared using sanchoku ingredients.



State of the meeting



Co-op Kobe new online service

On March 1 2016, Co-op Kobe started a new service for its members using the co-ops online supermarket.

The ordered items can now be received in private lockers installed in the "Seishinminami" subway station of Kobe city.

The traditional store closing time is 9 pm, but the service allows users to collect their items until 11pm.

Generally, ordered items are delivered to members home but since last September lockers have been installed also in the stores where users can receive the goods they have ordered in advance.

The system is useful since it reduces the waiting time of users at the cash register, hence reducing shopping time.

Ibaraki Co-op Social initiatives

On March 2, Ibaraki Co-op donated 155 bags of disposable diapers to children of the social welfare corporation Doujinkai infant home in Takahagi.

Ibaraki Co-op collects unused diapers from its members through the store and home delivery outlets and deliver to the welfare facilities as part of its social contribution to the community (picture below).

Also the co-op extends support to the NPO food bank Ibaraki activities. On March 3, the co-op installed a collection box nicknamed "Bond BOX" in front of the service counter of Co-op Ushiku store where at any time the surplus food from members' homes could be regularly collected and donated to NPO food bank Ibaraki for further redistribution to needy families and the Social Welfare facilities in the prefecture.



News in Brief

JCCU CO-OP Brand New releases:

1. CO-OP Quality onion dressing

JCCU has released an "onion dressing (domestic onion use only)" on March 1, 2016. The product falls within the category of "CO-OP Quality" a sub-brand of JCCU brand product in pursuit of taste.

In recent years, onion dressing is attracting more attention especially among Co-op members having strong consciousness to health and this called for the development of the new product.

The "CO-OP Quality onion dressing" is a blend of different onions (about 30% compounded rate). The raw material selection and production process conform to JCCU product development specification. Co-op Members have also played an active role through monitoring and evaluation of the product to ensure the product meets the required standards regarding quality, texture and deliciousness.

The new onion dressing takes advantage of the texture and the sweetness and crunch of the domestic material.

More than 80 percent of co-op members who monitored the product evaluated it as "delicious".

Because of its good flavor, the dressing can also be used as meat and fish sources.



Content: 300ml, 190ml

Sales channel: Store outlet & Home delivery

2. CO-OP fruit granola (Health care marked goods)

CO-OP fruit granola is also developed and marked as a health care good with the highest standard of quality and flavor and in comparison with the conventional product the lipid or fat, which is the source of calorie, has been reduced by half.

Also, the proportion of fruit has been increased by two with the addition of acai berries and strawberries.

CO-OP fruit granola is a serial made of grains of oats, corn, wheat meal, and brown rice flour mixed with five kinds of dry fruits with good color.

By using nuts seed that contains high amount of lipid, the amount of lipid used for CO-OP fruit granola is reduced by 50% compared with the conventional product.

In addition, in order to enrich the flavor "raisins," "pineapple", "cranberries", "acai berries" and "strawberries" have been added.

About 25% of the total blend is fruit, which is about twice the conventional product.



The new product will be released from April 1, 2016.

Sales channel: Store outlet & Home delivery

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