

Report from the Planet Diversity Conference in Bonn, Germany

Consumers Union of Japan participated together with other Japanese NGOs at the large Planet Diversity conference in Bonn, Germany on May 12-16, 2008. It was a global congress on the future of food and agriculture, with a demonstration to celebrate biodiversity.

At the rally, anti-GMO activists including Percy Schmeiser and Vandana Shiva spoke to the 6,000 people who gathered from all over Germany and other countries for the event. At the workshops, participants discussed plant and livestock diversity, building knowledge around biodiversity, and key issues of the official biosafety negotiations held later in May.

Koketsu Michiyo from CUJ participated in the workshop on health impacts of GMOs organised by the Federation of Ecological Physicists, including Dr. Arpad Pushtai, who has a vast experience with GMO and has visited Japan. Organic farmer Raymond Epp from Hokkaido read a speech prepared by Shinji Asada, ex vice-governor of Hokkaido, Japan about how Hokkaido protects its farmers from GMOs. Also Shimizu Ryoko from Policy Research Institute for the Civil Sector gave a speech on Japanese activities concerning GMO contamination.

Shimizu-san also described how the No! GMO Campaign has been at the forefront of efforts to keep Japan GMO-free with a strong demand from consumers to have a mandatory, legally binding labelling system. Citizens in many regions around Japanese ports have also been volunteering to test if canola growing wild near the ports and roads has been contaminated by imported GM crops or not, and she presented data on the extent of the contamination so far.

The No! GMO Campaign presented a translated document about how buffer zones cannot prevent GMO cross-contamination, and how GMO cross-fertilization by airborne pollen has been found at surprisingly large distances in Hokkaido, Japan.

Many Asian activists participated and there were deep discussions about how to save rice from being genetically engineered. The core of this campaign is the Week of Rice Action (WORA) Network based in Malaysia. CUJ also participated in the workshop about GMO free world perspectives, with updates from Western Australia's battle to keep its moratorium against GMO crops.

“We don't only need networks between people, but between people and plants, and people and planet earth, “ notes Koketsu-san from CUJ, who says she became aware of this during the six days in Bonn, Germany.

Read more on the Planet Diversity website
www.planet-diversity.org

For information about the UN Biodiversity Protocol negotiations, please see the CBD Alliance website
www.cbdalliance.org