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Stop the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement

By Yamaura Yasuaki, Consumers Union of Japan

In October 2010, Prime Minister Kan suddenly declared in a policy speech to the Parliament that Japan would participate in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). There is strong opposition coming not only from farmer's organizations and local authorities, but also among elected politicians within Prime Minister Kan's own party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), who have risen up in anger and anxiety. The main arguments against the TPP include that fact that TPP will make it impossible to gain any exceptions from Free Trade Agreements (FTA) that will force Japan to abolish tariffs, which will be a fatal blow to Japanese agriculture and lead to a decline for the economy in rural areas.

Mass media, however, developed a chorus of "don't miss this opportunity" and not only the economic press, such as Nihon Keizai Shimbun and The Sankei Shimbun, but also The Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun all support TPP in editorials and articles, even going so far as to misinterpret and make false representations of how TPP will "open up the country to the world" and calling the "agricultural protection theory bigoted and obstinate."

Consumers Union of Japan submitted a letter of protest on November 12, 2010 telling the government that we oppose trade liberalization, either in the form of FTA or TPP. CUJ also noted that there is no national consensus regarding this and that to abruptly engage in such negotiations is not acceptable for consumers.

TPP is not only going to harm Japan's agricultural sector, but ruin the entire economy in rural areas. This also leads to destruction of the natural environment. The only survivors will be the export-oriented industry. It means a decline for the domestic industry which will affect workers greatly. Structural reform of agriculture, allowing large-scale corporations to run farms, will be the end of small-scale farming. Such policies are now promoted by the Democratic Party of Japan, in spite of their 2009 election manifest, in which they promised to attach special importance to farmers.

We are particularly concerned about what this means for food safety and food security. Japan's food self sufficiency rate, which is already low, will be further undermined. The United States, which will be a part of TPP, officially considers Japan's food legislation as a "non-tariff barrier" and lists their concerns each year in the USTR report on trade barriers in foreign countries including Japan. Their goal is to abolish Japanese rules, for example regarding genetically modified organisms (GMO) and beef products that the U.S. regards as one-sided.

Consumers Union of Japan is holding two meetings in February to discuss these issues and what they mean for consumers.

On February 16, 2011 we are holding a meeting in Conference Room B 109 at the Members' Office Building of House of Councilors of Japan:

Address: 2-1-1 Nagatacho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Title: Questions about the problems of TPP

On February 26, 2011 we are holding a symposium in Hall 1021, Meiji University Liberty Tower:

Address: Kanda, Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Title: Globalization through TPP will bring poverty: Living naturally in both towns and cities!

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Earthquake and Tsunami in Tohoku: Urgent Proposal for Emergency Measures for Pregnant Women and Children

To: Kan Naoto, Prime Minister of Japan

From: Tomiyama Yoko, Chairperson, Consumers Union of Japan (NPO)

March 18, 2011

Urgent Proposal Regarding Emergency Measures for Pregnant Women and Children in the Tohoku Region

Consumers Union of Japan is committed to a sound and healthy future for our children. We rely only on individual membership fees as the basis for our activities, thus ensuring the independence of our ideas as an NPO.

We feel very strongly for the people who have been affected by the huge earthquake and tsunami in the Tohoku region of Japan. There is very serious damage in many parts of the region. We are very concerned about the grave situation caused by the damage to the nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. We are feeling particularly apprehensive about the influence of radioactivity on the residents in their immediate vicinity.

Since Consumers Union of Japan was founded in April, 1969, we have strongly appealed against nuclear power generation on the basis that radioactivity cannot coexist with living beings. There are no safe limits. We have tried to stop nuclear power before such a serious accident occurred, using all possible means at our disposal to cooperate and work together with other networks of concerned individuals and anti-nuclear groups.

We strongly request a conversion to an energy policy that does not depend on nuclear power generation. We cannot help getting very angry and mortified about the reports of the severe damage at the Fukushima Nuclear Plant No. 1. Currently, our misgivings are deepening regarding the exposure to the workers who are doing their utmost to prevent the worst case scenario from happening. We strongly request that every measure is taken to ensure that the workers are not exposed to radioactivity.

In addition, we are concerned about the influence on the citizens living in the surrounding environment, in particular pregnant women and children. The effect on the embryo and on infants due to doses of radioactivity has been found to be about 10 times stronger than on children, and about 100 times stronger than on adults (National Academy of Sciences. NAS, 1972).

Hour by hour, the situation appears to be changing to a more serious state, as the forecasts of damage due to radioactivity have become more and more prominent. We strongly propose the following while at the same time we sincerely request that thorough measures be taken so that the worst possible situation is not allowed to happen:

1. Immediately expand the evacuation zone to prepare for every contingency, and make every effort to help pregnant women and children in particular to take shelter at a further distance away from the damaged reactors at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant No. 1.
2. Ensure that every effort is made to provide the people in the evacuation zone with food and water that have not been exposed to or polluted by radioactivity.

* * *

Food Contaminated by Radioactive Substances

To: Food Safety Commission

From: Food Safety Citizens Watch & Consumers Union of Japan

March 24, 2011

Regarding Limits for Radioactive Substances in Food

On March 20, Japan's Food Safety Commission received a request from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for opinions regarding regulation limits for radioactive materials in the Food Sanitation Law. A meeting to discuss the levels was held on March 23, 2011, and it was decided that decisions would be made within one week.

We regard this as a very important issue from the perspective of public health and we request that you take note of and carefully evaluate the following points:

1. It must be assumed that radioactive cesium and radioactive iodine are carcinogens.
2. The long-term effects on internal organs and the body must be considered.
3. We respectfully ask you to refer to the WHO guidelines for environmental disasters and health (2003) and the Codex Alimentarius report on common criteria concerning pollutants and toxins in food and feed.
4. Also, specifically regarding drinking water, please refer to the WHO guidelines for environmental disasters and health (2003).
5. Exposure to infants from mother's milk should be considered.
6. The accumulation of radioactive substances from water pollution in the feeding chain should be considered.
7. Soil contamination should be considered.
8. The evaluation should continue even after the current emergency situation ends.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare should have consulted with the Food Safety Commission before setting provisional regulation levels for the radioactive substances (including cesium, iodine, uranium and plutonium) in food. These levels were temporarily set on March 17, 2011 (see link below) without prior consultation.

We request that you reflect on why no regulation limits have been set for radioactive substances until now.

* * *

Action June 11: No Nuclear Power



June 11 marks three months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster triggered by the earthquake and tsunami. The plants are still spewing radioactive materials. No one wants such dirty electricity harmful to human and nature. Join us on June 11, 2011 with the million-people action throughout the world and let our voices be heard.

Consumers Union of Japan will be at Shiba Park in Tokyo, for the event starting at 13:00PM. The parade will start at 14:30PM.

Those who have organized anti-nuclear protests in Tokyo and the organizations called www.e-shift.org and [Fukushima Genpatsu Jiko Kinkyu Kaigi \(Fukushima Nuclear Disaster Emergency Congress\)](http://www.fukushima-genpatsu-jiko-kinkyu-kaigi.org) are jointly calling citizens of not just Japan but the world for the action against nuclear power on the day of the three-month-anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster.

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Pollution Problems In Tohoku Need More Attention

Writers Winnifred Bird and Elizabeth Grossman have written a very interesting article about the pollution issues and potential health effects in Tohoku. They note that damage to the region's industrial facilities has been extensive:

Oil refineries burst into flames in the days after the disaster, sending black smoke billowing into the air. Sewer and gas lines burst, and old electrical equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) was washed away. Petro- and agrochemical plants, iron foundries, steel works, and automotive, electronics, food processing, paper, plastics, and pharmaceutical plants were among those that suffered damage. As cleanup continues in the disaster area, questions remain about the fate of chemical contaminants released by these damaged industrial facilities and other sources, and the environmental health hazards they might pose to the hundreds of thousands of people living and working in this area.

Read the entire report for more details.

Bird WA, Grossman E, 2011 Chemical Aftermath: Contamination and Cleanup Following the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami. Environ Health Perspect 119(7). (July 1, 2011)

<http://ehp03.niehs.nih.gov/article/fetchArticle.action?articleURI=info%3Adoi%2F10.1289%2Fehp.119-a290>

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Regarding Food Safety

Some General Observations from the Consumer Perspective Regarding Food Safety in Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster on March 11, 2011

By Martin J. Frid, Consumers Union of Japan

July 11, 2011

The effects of the extraordinary catastrophe on March 11, 2011 in northeastern Japan are difficult to assess even as four months have passed since the 9.0 earth quake and tsunami. In addition, the ongoing crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant, with radiation leaking from at least four reactors, has led to evacuation of areas in Fukushima prefecture, and restrictions on food grown and produced in certain areas. It is a humanitarian disaster that affects all citizens in the Tohoku region, but specifically its farmers, fishermen and food producers; for consumers, it also poses specific challenges that need to be addressed based on what we know so far.



Testing of food at a public hall in Fukushima city, Japan

This paper will deal with general food safety issues in the wake of the crisis. It is not my aim to discuss the details of the radiation as such, or to go into great detail about the safety standards set by the government or others. We know that measurements of radioactive substances can give some information about the general level of contamination, but making specific statements about the safety of food is much more difficult. On-going official measurements are performed in Japan and the results are continuously published by the Ministry of Health and by the local governments. Also, private groups and non-governmental organizations are performing independent measurement and publishing data and analysis. Moreover, other chemical pollution such as dioxins should be carefully monitored. Based on this, what can be concluded about the general level of safety or risk, looking at it from the perspective of consumers?

Safety Standards

Setting safety standards or levels for radioactive substances in food is a task that gained a lot of attention after the Chernobyl accident in 1986. 1)

There are international standards agreed upon by FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, geared at facilitating trade in food. Codex calls them “guidance levels” rather than “safe levels” while Japan officially calls them “provisional regulation values.”

Countries may set national standards that are higher or lower than the Codex standards, depending on specific intake variations of local food and cultural preferences. After Chernobyl, the main concern was for grazing cattle, sheep, and reindeer in Europe. Japan, instead, is a country where people consume a large amount of rice, vegetables and fish. Thus, the country

may decide to set more strict safe levels for such foods, as the total exposure will be higher than in a country with other dietary traditions and preferences.

The safe levels are based on estimates on annual consumption, which means that eating a product with elevated levels is unlikely to have any harmful effects if it is eaten only once or not eaten over a long period of time. Other doses, for example by inhaling radioactive particles in the air, as well as by receiving radiation from external sources such as soil, will also add to the total health effect and should be taken into consideration. Generally speaking, safe levels are different for the adult population and for pregnant mothers and infants/children, as there is a scientific consensus that vulnerable consumers need extra protection.

Japan did not have any guidance levels or restrictions for nuclear substances on food at the time of the nuclear disaster, and hurried to draw up provisional regulation values by March 17 2) and legislation by March 29, 2011.

Japan's Food Safety Commission (FSCJ) notes:

“Due to this radiation leakage, from the perspective of the Food Sanitation Act, which aims to prevent sanitation hazards resulting from eating and drinking, the “Indices relating to limits on food and drink ingestion” indicated by the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan was adopted for the time being as provisional regulation values. So the foods which exceed these levels are regulated to ensure those foods are not supplied to the public to eat, and local governments have been notified by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on 2011 March 17. This provisional regulation values [sic] were adopted without an assessment of the effect of food on health by FSCJ because of its urgency, therefore on 2011 March 20, the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare requested FSCJ for an assessment of the effect of food on health.” 3)

WHO does not appear to have made any serious effort to look into the specific situation in Japan post-March 11, which is unfortunate, and we would urge them to make more efforts to consider the wider health issue in Tohoku, especially in the coastal areas. WHO notes: “The Japanese authorities have regulations in place relating to provisional regulatory limits of radioactivity in food and food monitoring is being implemented. Measurements of radionuclide concentrations in food are now taking place and are being released by the Japanese authorities. The presence of radioactivity in some vegetables and milk has been confirmed...”

4)



品名	産地(産地不明)	測定値	結果	品名	産地	測定値	結果
①	福島県産 白菜	2011/3/27	2.2	福島県産 白菜	1.2	2.1	2.1
②	伊豆市産 白菜	福島県産	2.1	福島県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
③	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
④	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑤	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑥	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑦	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑧	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑨	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑩	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑪	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑫	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑬	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑭	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1
⑮	群馬県産 白菜	群馬県産	2.1	群馬県産 白菜	2.1	2.1	2.1

Some of the results of the radiation testing event in Fukushima city, Japan

Mainly, the isotopes being measured in Japan are radioactive Iodine and Caesium, but other substances like Plutonium and Strontium are also relevant and should be measured carefully. It is unclear which radioactive isotopes were tested for or detected in the early days of the crisis. The way sampling is done at the local level is still sometimes unclear at this point, and needs to be further investigated and assessed by independent experts to increase consumers' trust in the process.

The initial data published by the government showed extraordinarily high levels of Iodine-131

on vegetables such as broccoli, spinach, parsley and celery in many locations in several prefectures, especially in Fukushima 5), but also in Ibaraki 6) and Chiba 7). Raw milk was tested and found to have slightly elevated levels in all parts of Fukushima with levels above the safe levels in certain areas 8), 9) and slightly elevated levels in Saitama and Gunma, 10) but not nearly as high as in Fukushima.

Note that such food products are not for sale. In all the cases where detected levels were found to be higher than the government's provisional regulation values, the foods have been prohibited from being placed on the market. Hence, no milk from the places where high levels were measured is allowed to be sold three to four months after the crisis. Of course, this does not mean that all food products with high levels have been kept away from consumers; some may have been shipped before testing had been initiated. There is also a possibility that vegetables or milk from areas that had not yet been tested were put on sale. That does not mean that the public has been exposed to unsafe amounts of contamination, as the exposure would appear to be for a short time only, especially in the case of spinach or broccoli harvested in mid-March in the most heavily contaminated areas in Fukushima prefecture.

There are efforts to urge consumers to show support for farmers in the Tohoku region, both through special marketing events and by commercial groups that sell directly to members. One such effort that seems to require particularly thorough testing and measurement is the "Cheer Up by Eating" boxes sold by Daichi wo Mamoru Kai, a Chiba-based company, with produce sourced directly from selected farmers in the Tohoku region. 11), 12)

Three to four months after the initial release of radioactivity, high levels of radioactive Caesium were still found in a few products, mainly takenoko (bamboo shoots) and shiitake mushrooms, and these levels do not appear to decrease. Most of such contamination is confined to certain areas in Fukushima prefecture, especially in areas directly north and northwest of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant.

Caesium isotopes have a long half-life and will likely be present in contaminated soil for a long time. 13) This could have consequences for rice production, and the harvest later in 2011 should be carefully monitored. It is worth noting that levels of radioactive Iodine has mostly decreased to levels that cannot be detected, which is consistent with expectations, as its half-life is 8 days.

In one incident, beef from cattle raised on hay exposed to very high levels of radiation (because the hay had been stored outdoors) at one farm in Minami Souma city in Fukushima, which is just to the north of the nuclear reactors, was found to have elevated levels of Caesium. 14)

These cows were raised immediately outside the evacuation zone between 20 and 30 km radius from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. The evacuation zone includes the Katsurao, Namie and Iitate towns. On April 19, MAFF decided to order some 20,000 meat cows and dairy cows inside the evacuation zone to be moved to other parts of Japan, but it is unclear how successful this policy has been. The same farm has previously shipped cows to Tokyo and Tochigi, but no checks were made at that time. The Fukushima prefectural government has now asked the Minami Souma city government to stop shipping or transporting cattle that has been raised in their area and not allow it to be processed for consumption. 15)

It is obvious that livestock in Fukushima must be monitored much more closely than first thought, and wild game from the region is very likely contaminated to a large extent. Even though we now know which areas that need special attention, three to four months after March 11, there is a great uncertainty about the lack of consideration for the sentiments of consumers who are worried about radioactivity in their food. Those who want to take short-cuts in order to

make a profit are seriously undermining the efforts of all the other, more careful food producers, as well as everyone from areas that are clearly safe. It is a tragedy if all food from Fukushima will be regarded as unsafe while it actually may be only the most heavily contaminated towns and cities that deserve such severe judgment.

Regarding fish and seafood, large amounts of radioactive substances have been released into the Pacific Ocean. This contamination is observed in the measurements done on fish and seafood along the Pacific Ocean coast in Japan. Three to four months after the initial release, and most likely also due to continued release over the time period, low levels of both Caesium-134 and Caesium-137 have been found in a large number of samples, ranging from salmon in Hokkaido, 16) mackerel in Chiba prefecture, 17) and in a range of other types of fish and seafood products in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures. 18) In most cases where sampling has been undertaken, however, no radioactive substances have been detected, or the levels are considerably lower than the government standards.

The contamination of inland waterways (and possibly lakes) appears to be serious. On June 23, 2011, high levels of Caesium were detected in five samples of river fish out of 36 investigated near the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. The fish with levels above the safe levels had been caught in Mano River and Niida River in Minami Souma city and in Abukuma River in Date City. 19)

For tea, high levels of Caesium-134 and Caesium-137 were found in Gunma prefecture 20) and in Chiba and Kanagawa 21) prefectures. The nation's largest tea producing region in Shizuoka prefecture, some 300 km southwest of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant, has also found elevated levels of radioactive substances on its products. 22)

The radioactivity levels in so-called "first harvest processed tea" were all somewhat high, but not above the government standard. Voluntary tests conducted on June 9, 2011 by a private company reported that tea produced in Warashina and Ryogohchi areas, both within Shizuoka City, exceeded regulatory values. Official tests were immediately conducted, and it was indeed confirmed that radioactive levels had exceeded regulatory values in Warashina area.

The Shizuoka Prefectural Government called for shipment restraint and voluntary recall of the concerned tea sources. However, according to research conducted by Shizuoka Tea Research Center, "when brewed for drinking, the radioactive cesium level significantly drops (1/85) and therefore does not present any negative health influence." It is unclear how Caesium-134 and Caesium-137 have accumulated on or in tea leaves, and why it took so long for tests to reveal the contamination. It is also important that tests are being done on tea for other radioactive nuclides.

Criticism of Testing

Is everyone satisfied with the methodology of the measurements? We note that none of the figures published by MHLW are explained or presented in a particularly academic way. We do not know how the testing has been done or which equipment was used. Greenpeace, the anti-nuclear environmental organization, notes that Japan needs to improve its testing regime and use the more sophisticated monitors that were used by European governments after Chernobyl. 23)

Simply put, the data as presented on the government's website would not stand up to peer review for an academic paper. We now desperately need detailed studies, however, they should be done by experts with a background in food safety science and consumer protection. So far, no independent organization or research institute has published any real analysis of the Japanese government's data, and frankly we are at a loss. The data is sparse and incomplete even after three to four months. It is not presented on the official websites in a way that is easy

to search or understand. One independent website that provides such useful service is the ATMC.jp website. 24)

Unsystematic sampling methodology means we do not have a clear grasp of how the levels of radioactive contamination have decreased, for example in the case of Iodine, with its 8-day half-life, on products such as broccoli and spinach. Consequently, and due to a lot of other reasons related to the mishandling of the great nuclear crisis since March 11, some consumers feel that they cannot rely on the official data.



Radiation detection in food requires special equipment

Japanese citizens are responding to this by taking matters in their own hands. One example of an activity at the local level in Fukushima prefecture is the use of a sophisticated device (LB200) kindly provided by CRIRAD, who visited Japan and Fukushima from May 24 to June 3, 2011 as part of a joint effort with a group of Japanese citizens. This equipment is now used by citizens who have been trained by CRIRAD experts to test their own food. 25)

Other Health Risks

Other pollution except for radioactive nuclides will also enter the food chain, and may pose completely different risks to consumers. Chemical factories, oil refineries, and other petrochemical industrial complexes were destroyed or seriously damaged along the entire 400 km coast of Tohoku from Iwate and Miyagi to Fukushima, Ibaragi and Chiba. The large number of fires immediately after the earthquake and tsunami as well as indiscriminate burning of debris and garbage will have health effects that are very difficult to estimate. Data is not yet available from systematic testing of the substances such as asbestos or dioxins that have been released into the air and water after March 11, 2011 as testing of air quality, public water areas, groundwater, soil, seafloor, and tsunami sediment is still in the planning stages.

The burning of a large, open-air pile of debris as part of the clean-up effort in Minami Sanriku harbour could be observed by this author on July 9, 2011. Thick, black smoke and a smell that is associated with burning plastic could be observed. There appeared to be no effort by anyone, be it government officials or private initiatives, to monitor the airborne pollutants. Concerns about similar fires have been voiced by Bird and Grossman in their very important article in *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 26)



Indiscriminate burning of debris observed in Minami-sanriku, Miyagi, Japan on July 9, 2011

Bird and Grossman note: "Such fires have great potential to emit additional hazardous contaminants such as dioxins. These known human carcinogens result from incomplete burning of PVC, which is used extensively in wiring, construction materials, and numerous other consumer, industrial, and infrastructure applications. Dioxins can also be produced by burning seawater-soaked wood."

Soil testing for dangerous chemicals have begun in certain areas, including Sendai city in Miyagi prefecture, and has so far revealed oil contamination and persistent organic pollutants (POPs), and low levels of other chemicals such as arsenic, PCBs or heavy metals. But a more pressing concern for farmers in the tsunami-hit areas is the salt content in their soil, and if it can be washed out from the fields quickly enough to allow farming to resume. 27)

Consumers in Japan and other countries have held Japanese agricultural products in high esteem thanks to the diligence of the farmers, fishermen and food producers. It is impossible to estimate the real effects of this crisis and how Japan's food supply system will recover. The damage in the coastal Tohoku region to the fisheries sector is overwhelming, with over 21,500 boats and 319 harbours damaged or destroyed. For the agricultural sector, over 33,000 farms, facilities, sewerage facilities, drains, pumps etc. have been damaged or destroyed. The total damage to agriculture, forestry and fisheries by July 5, 2011 was estimated to be 2,115 billion yen, a staggering amount. 28) We can only express our deepest sympathies to everyone involved in the rebuilding of the Tohoku region.

Conclusions

It is important to note that vegetables or other foods that are being measured outside of the most contaminated region in Fukushima prefecture show very low levels or do not show any detectable levels of radioactive substances three to four months after the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. In most parts of the Tohoku region in northeastern Japan, there is zero or almost no detectable nuclear contamination. In the rest of Japan, consumers can rest assured that there is no radioactive material on their dinner tables.

Based on the official data as published by Japan's Ministry of Health, thus, it emerges that three to four months after March 11, with the exception of food from certain areas in Fukushima prefecture (and possibly tea that have grown outdoors on tea shrubs since March), Japan's farmed food supply and its products can be generally regarded as safe. However, at this point, fish and seafood caught in rivers in Fukushima and possibly along parts of coastal region of the Pacific Ocean need more attention and surveillance before any conclusions can be made.

Thinking ahead, the issue of soil contamination and accumulation needs to be addressed and carefully monitored, as it will affect rice production, especially in parts of Fukushima prefecture.

Pollution problems such as asbestos, dioxin and PCB due to post-March 11 fires and indiscriminate burning of debris and garbage will also add to the health risk. There are also those who worry that there are small or large radioactive “hot-spots” in areas with higher levels of contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. More precise maps of the contamination must be prepared by reliable methods.

A lot needs to be done in order to limit long-term contamination and protect consumers in addition to generally help regain the trust and confidence in Japanese food. Farmers, fishermen and food producers need to be compensated and their loss of income should not be used as an excuse to encourage consumers to purchase questionable products; the damage is much too big for that, and the stakes too high.

For references and notes, please refer to the online version of this article on the CUJ website:

<http://www.nishoren.org/en/?p=1068>

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Japan Resources is published by Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ). CUJ was founded in April 1969 and was officially certified as a non-profit organization on May 1, 2006 by the new Japanese NPO legislation. We continue to be a non-political and financially independent organization (NGO). CUJ is funded by membership fees and donations. The main concern of CUJ and its members is to realize a world of liberty and equality, a world free of economic, social and legal discrimination, and to preserve a safe and healthy environment for our children's future.

CUJ pursues the following goals on behalf of consumers: (1) To secure for ourselves and our families safe and healthy lives, (2) to establish systems/laws to protect the rights of consumers, (3) to promote peace, social justice and economic fairness, (4) to support and empower consumers who care about the environment, and (5) to cooperate with foreign consumer groups/organizations.

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