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210 Supermarket Chains Do Not Want To Sell GM Papaya

A study by the No! GMO Campaign has revealed that Japan's supermarket chains are refusing to sell genetically modified papaya.

August 29, 2012

The No! GMO Campaign was set up in 1996 to stop genetically modified foods. 16 years later, there is no commercial GM farming in Japan. Consumers and civic groups are continuing the battle against imported GM foods. In December, 2011 the government approved GM papaya and soon, the American producers in Hawaii were promoting the expensive fruit at a trade fair near Tokyo, giving out slices as free samples. The No! GMO Campaign started an effort to investigate if the GM papaya from Hawaii was actually sold in Japan or not.

Citizen and activists all around the country approached their local supermarket chains and the result was revealing. Not a single supermarket chain has decided to introduce the controversial virus-resistant papaya from Hawaii. Could it be that the Americans are hoping that people will simply forget about GM papaya, before they start the marketing introduction?

On July 25, 2012, the No! GMO Campaign sent a press release to thank the 210 supermarket chains, expressing appreciation that they do not sell GM papaya. "We will continue monitoring to make sure that no stores sell GM papaya in Japan," says Amagasa Keisuke, No! GMO Campaign director.

"Illegal GM papaya seeds from Taiwan were also imported to Okinawa, causing financial damage to papaya growers in Okinawa, southern Japan. The farmers brought GM papaya to the Japanese market without knowing that it was genetically modified. So far, 35 growers were forced to cut down their illegal GM papaya trees," notes Amagasa Keisuke. Better legal protection is needed to compensate farmers in such unfortunate cases.

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Ramsar Convention Adopts Anti-GM Rice Resolution

At the 11th meeting of the Ramsar Convention for wetlands, a draft resolution was introduced that came dangerously close to open a back door to genetically modified rice.

July 25, 2012

Rice paddy fields in many countries are supporting wildlife such as migratory birds and marine species. The use of pesticides has caused much damage to such sensitive ecosystems. Overuse also leads to resistance among the very pests the chemicals are designed to kill. Instead, traditional knowledge and local solutions should be encouraged to reduce the dangerous use of agrochemicals.

After fierce debate and opposition from NGOs at the meeting in Bucharest, Romania, the text of the resolution was amended at the last day. The final resolution clearly states that only “conventionally bred rice varieties” can be introduced in rice paddies, to protect wetland ecosystems.

“The good reputation of Ramsar was at stake,” notes Amagasa Keisuke, No! GMO Campaign. “Delegates strongly suspected that this document would be used to promote BT rice which kills insects.”

Background: At the meeting in July, 2012, the United States proposed controversial language that would have caused uproar in Asia, where most of the world’s rice is produced. No genetically modified rice has yet been approved in any country, while major rice producing countries are strongly opposed to GM rice. Delegates from Austria, France, Cyprus and Denmark, speaking for the EU, made a great effort to make sure that GM rice was not accepted by the Ramsar Convention. This anti-GM rice position was supported by Japan, South Korea, and China.

Recognizing that irrigated rice fields are a major type of wetlands under the Ramsar Convention, pesticide use should be reduced to protect biological diversity. To introduce genetically modified rice, such as BT rice that produces a toxin that kills insects, is not an option in this context. Farmers need help to learn how to reduce pesticide use, but not if that means corporate campaigns to introduce untested and poorly risk assessed GM rice. The message from the Ramsar Convention is: Do not allow GM rice in your country.

Report of the World Wetlands NGO Conference: Petruta Moisi, Eco-Counselling Centre Galati, Romania, on behalf of the World Wetland Network, reported on the recommendations of the World Wetlands NGO Conference, which took place just prior to COP 11, expressing concern over the continued degradation of designated and undesignated wetlands and the failure of many parties to apply the wetland wise use concept in practice. She drew attention to the draft resolutions on: sustainable tourism, stressing the need to balance tourism and local demands on wetland resources; institutional arrangements for the Secretariat, which should bring clear benefits and more involvement of civil society; energy, calling for cumulative impact assessment of small hydropower systems; and agriculture and pesticide use, expressing concern for the potential increased use of genetically modified organisms to control pests.

By Martin J. Frid, Consumers Union of Japan

Protect Life And Biological Diversity: Oppose Genetically Modified Food And TPP

An Appeal from the NO! GMO Campaign in Japan as part of our participation in Collective Rice Action (CORA) 2012

June 1, 2012

Protect life and biological diversity; oppose genetically modified food and TPP

We are very concerned about the efforts by the government, business interests, and mass media to get Japan to join the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement*. We hold that globalization is robbing us of the safety of the food we need to live, while destroying the natural environment, expanding poverty, and creating a society with huge differences between rich and poor, with little hope for our future. TPP is going to make things even worse as it pushes the globalization agenda even further. Moreover, the food rules of the United States or multinational corporations are promoted, especially in the push for world hegemony through the introduction of genetically modified (GM) foods. TPP will have a destructive influence on agriculture in Japan. The farmers here would not be able to survive, and we would constantly have concerns and fears about the dangers of the food on our tables. For example, food labeling rules may be changed for the worse so that we no longer know what it is we are eating.

Currently, the food from Japan's own islands may be contaminated with radioactivity due to the Fukushima disaster. Our self-sufficiency, meaning the ability to feed our own people, and the safety of our food are under threat. If Japan enters TPP then GM food and GM crops would be forced upon us in large quantities, posing a risk to both farmers and our food. While we are strongly opposed to TPP and GM, we wish to protect agriculture in Japan, protect the food on our tables, and protect life and biological diversity.

*)TPP is a new type of regional free trade agreement that goes beyond WTO rules in many areas and will have many detrimental effects for farmers and consumers. We interpret it to mean that Japan will be forced to further liberalize according to the agenda of multinational agribusiness corporations.

From 22 May to 5 June 2012, 14 countries in Asia will band together for the COLLECTIVE RICE ACTION (CORA) 2012. People's organisations, farmers, rural women, and rice consumers from PR China, Japan, Korea, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Iran will be "Reclaiming Our Rice and Biodiversity!" — the theme for CORA 2012.

CORA was launched as the Week of Rice Action in 2007. Since then, the impacts of the campaign have reverberated throughout the region, mobilizing millions of people to participate in rallies, workshops, festivals and other advocacy activities. CORA 2012 follows in the successful legacy of WORA 2007, WORA 2008, YORA (Year of Rice Action) 2009-2010 and CORA 2011. This is the first time Iran is joining the CORA campaign. CORA 2012 which will also be a run-up the CBD (Convention for Biological Diversity) Conference of the Parties and Meeting of the Parties in October, 2012 to be held in India.

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Asia Reclaims Its Rice And Biodiversity With CORA 2012

Press Release:

From May 22 to June 5, 2012, 14 countries in Asia will band together for the COLLECTIVE RICE ACTION (CORA) 2012.

People's organisations, farmers, rural women, and rice consumers from PR China, Japan, Korea, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Iran will be "Reclaiming Our Rice and Biodiversity!" – the theme for CORA 2012.

May 22 is the International Day for Biological Diversity and June 5 is World Environment Day. "These are particularly relevant dates as our rice heritage and biodiversity has been severely eroded since the Green Revolution in the 1960s and the advent of genetically engineered crops in the last two decades. Many communities depend on biodiversity for their sustenance and livelihood. It is time we reclaimed our right to a safe and biodiverse environment, especially at this time when communities need biodiversity the most to cope with the impacts of climate change," says Sarojeni V. Rengam, Executive Director of Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP). The Save Our Rice Campaign of PAN AP has been coordinating the CORA campaign since 2007.

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"We once had thousands of local rice and other crops varieties in India. People ate a good variety of healthy food. But ever since chemical pesticides and hybrid seeds came, we have lost our local seeds and crops, have less variety and a large population is suffering from malnutrition, especially women and children. We are no longer as healthy as we were before. I call upon my brothers and sisters across Asia to save their local seeds and food because it is only the diversity of these rich crops and seeds plus edibles gathered from the wild and our ecological farming practices which will ultimately save us from hunger, malnutrition and extinction," says Sudesha Behn, a 72-year old woman rice farmer and activist from the Tehri Garhwal District, Uttarakhand, India who is also one of the founders of Beej Bachao Andolan (BBA – the Save Seeds Movement). BBA is one of the CORA anchor organisations in India.



Food Inc. Director Robert Kenner To Visit Tokyo And Osaka

May 9, 2012

CUJ is glad to be able to invite US documentary director Robert Kenner to Japan. His film Food Inc. is a great exposure of the way the food industry and especially Monsanto have hijacked farming and food processing, creating a situation where it is almost impossible for consumers to know what we are eating. While the focus is on the US agribusiness, it also applies to practices in many other countries, and the frequent abuse against farmers, food factory workers, animals and the biodiversity on our planet.

Robert Kenner is an Emmy-Award winning film maker. He will participate at three screening events and give talks while in Japan. Everyone is welcome!

Tokyo: May 19 (Sat) 13:30-18:00

Tokyo Women's Plaza (Omotesando station)

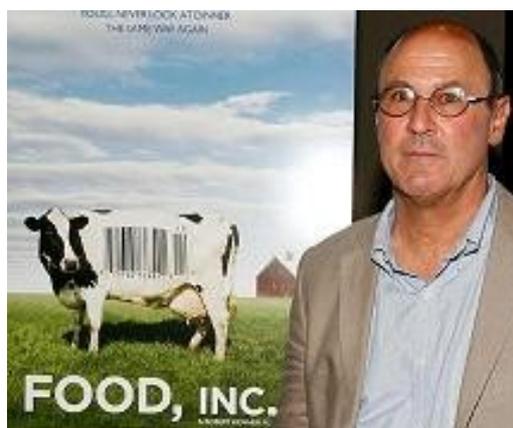
Tokyo: May 21 (Mon) 14:00-16:00

House of Representatives 2nd Bldg, Multi-purpose Hall (1st Floor)

(衆議院第2議員会館 1階 多目的ホール)

Osaka: May 22 (Tue) 13:30-17:30

Osaka International House Center



Food Additives:

MSG, Flavour Enhancers Not Properly Labelled In Japan

April 18, 2012

Processed foods often contain a type of chemicals known as “flavour enhancers” that are not explained on Japanese food labels. In Europe, they are listed as E621 (Monosodium glutamate) and so on. We looked at South Korean food labels and found that they list each chemical separately, just like in Europe, while they are all listed under one simple term in Japan. This term just means “amino acid etc.” or “amino acid group” and also another term is used that means “yeast extract” which is very confusing for consumers.

In a type of sauce called Hondashi made by Ajinomoto Co., which is flavoured by katsuo (Shipjack tuna) according to the Japanese label, the South Korean label has much more detailed information. In Korean, it lists the following additives and flavour enhancers (European food additive number in brackets):

Monosodium L-Glutamate (E621)
Disodium 5'-Ribonucleotides (E635)
Succinic Acid (E363) or possibly Sodium Succinate

A sesame dressing made by Mizkan Co. is also better labelled in South Korea, where the list of ingredients includes both E621 and E635, as well as several other food additives, like Tamarind gum and Xanthan gum, that are not listed on the Japanese label. Also, the Korean label clearly indicates that the amount of sesame in the dressing is 9%, with “natural sesame flavour” only 0.1% of the total!

A yakitori sauce made by Moranbong Co. was labelled very differently in South Korean compared to Japan. For example, the Korean label tells consumers that the product contains MSG (E 621) and other additives.

Even chocolate products are labelled in different ways: Lotte Co. makes a type of almond chocolate in its Urawa factory in Chiba, that is sold both in Japan and in South Korea. But in South Korea, the label clearly tells consumers that 25% of the product is almonds. The Korean label also lists each food oil that is used (Palm oil, Canola oil, Sunflower oil) while the Japanese label only lists “vegetable oil” without any details. As most people know, cheap chocolate contains a lot of lecithin. In Korean, Soy lecithin (E322) is clearly listed. In addition, the Korean label reveals that Shellack (E904), a glazing agent, is used, probably to coat the almonds, as well as Vanilla flavouring, which is not specified on the Japanese list of ingredients.

As these examples show, food labels in Japan are not as consumer friendly as in other countries, and identical products from the same food company are often better labelled abroad.

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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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