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Japan Resources

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Contents:

<i>From the Editors: Hot, Hotter & Hottest</i>
CUJ 50 th Anniversary Seminar
Japan-South Korea-Taiwan Joint Statement on RNA Interference Potato
G20: Ban Microcapsules in Home and Personal Care Products
Glyphosate in Bread
Please Join Our One Million Signature Petition Campaign: "Regulate All Gene-edited Food!"

From the Editors: Hot, Hotter & Hottest

This summer we are again seeing heat record being broken as the planet heads towards uncharted territory when it comes to climate change. Stronger than normal typhoons and irregular weather patterns make farming increasingly difficult. Consumers are not sure

what choices to make, as the major political parties and multinational industries continue to rely on unsustainable models of economic "growth" that we get little opportunity to debate or influence. Join our movement for sustainable consumption and production, and help us come up with solutions!

- Editors

CUJ 50th Anniversary Seminar

Consumers Union of Japan celebrated its 50th anniversary on June 15, 2019 with a seminar titled: “Dealing with the Threats to our Lives, Connecting with a Healthy Future.”

Consumers Union of Japan was founded in 1969. Our many campaigns include fighting against food additives, pesticides and herbicides, as well as synthetic detergents. CUJ is also opposing nuclear power plants. We have been on the front line to fight against genetically modified organisms and GM food since they were first introduced. Recent campaigns include raising awareness about harmful health effects from artificial fragrances and gene editing. At our 50th anniversary seminar in Tokyo, speakers outlined the problems with these issues and proposed ways forward to connecting with a healthy future.

Japan-South Korea-Taiwan Joint Statement on RNA Interference Potato

On 18 May 2019, Anti-Monsanto Day, Japan, South Korean and Taiwanese citizens’ organizations taking action against GMOs announced a joint statement protesting against a potato developed by J. R. Simplot Company using RNA interference. South Korea is very close to approving this potato and there is a possibility that Taiwan will also approve it.

In Japan, the potato is already approved for distribution as human food, but as it has yet to receive approval under the Cartagena laws, it cannot yet be cultivated. There is a possibility that the potato will be imported as fried potatoes or potato chips. Because of this, Consumers Union of Japan and other organizations are calling on fast food chains and family restaurant chains not to use the potato.

RNA interference is a technique to inhibit gene expression or translation. It was first discovered in 1998.

G20: Ban Microcapsules in Home and Personal Care Products

May 10, 2019

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ)

Japan Endocrine-disruptor
Preventive Action (JEPA)

Toxic Watch Network Japan

Chemical Sensitivity Support Center

Association for Voluntary Ban on
Fragrance

Consumers Union of Japan Kansai
group

Urgent Proposal To Ban Microcapsules in Home and Personal Care Products

We urge the Japanese government to lead the world in regulating microplastics at G20 in Osaka.

We are a coalition of six Japanese citizen groups acting against unacceptable fragrance attack called “KOGAI” (香害=scent damage) in Japan. Recently, many of home and personal care products contain more and more synthetic fragrance substances. Of note, fabric softeners have caused unprecedented adverse health effects to Japanese people including children. When CUJ opened a telephone consultation “KOGAI 110” for two days in 2017 to collect voices from KOGAI victims, it received more than two hundreds phone calls from all over the country.

Meanwhile, microplastic marine pollution is getting more serious worldwide and drastic measures are required. Although the efforts to reduce microbeads in cosmetics and toothpastes have been started voluntarily by the manufacturers, it seems that the microcapsule problems have not been clearly recognized in Japan and no measures have been taken. Since the major purpose of fragrance encapsulation technology used in home and personal care products is to last the fragrance long, we believe that the technology is one of the main causes of KOGAI.

The microcapsules used in fabric softeners and synthetic detergents are supposed to be broken into smaller pieces in the environment

and the debris could cause plastic pollution in the soil and the ocean. Moreover, micro-size particles, including air pollutant PM2.5, may reach deep into the lungs when inhaled. Consequently, the microcapsule debris could be very harmful to humans.

Therefore, we urge G20 governments to ban microcapsules in home and personal care products. We hope the Japanese government to lead the world in regulating microplastics at G20 in Osaka.

Proposals

1. The microcapsules in home and personal care products should be banned. In addition, the reduction plans for microcapsules should be explicitly included in “The Plastic Resources Recycling Strategy” proposed at G20 in Osaka.
2. It should be explicitly stated that microcapsules are included in microplastics in “The Law concerning Adequate Disposal of Marine Debris in the Way of Good Scenes and Environments on Beaches and Sea Surroundings to Protect Beautiful and Rich Nature” and “the Plastic Resource Recycling Strategy”.

Reasons for the Proposals:

1. Microplastics are fine plastics with a size of 5mm or less. There are two types of microplastics: “primary microplastic” which is intentionally manufactured in micro size such as microbeads and microcapsules, and

“secondary microplastic” which is manufactured in larger sizes and be broken down to micro size in the environment.

2. It is unclear whether microcapsules are included in the microplastics category in “The Plastic Resources Recycling Strategy” and “The Law Concerning Adequate Disposal of Marine Debris in the Way of Good Scenes and Environments on Beaches and Sea Surroundings to Protect Beautiful and Rich Nature” revised in June 2018. The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) submitted to the European Commission a proposal report on a regulation of “intentionally added microplastics” in January 2019. In the proposal, ECHA recommended that microcapsules contained in home and personal care products should be banned in the European region within five years.

3. Many fabric softeners, synthetic detergents, and other home and personal care products contain microcapsules made of plastics (synthetic resins) to encapsulate fragrance substances. The fragrance encapsulation technology is used in 10 to 20% of synthetic detergents and about 60% of

fabric softeners (including scented beads) worldwide. Therefore, numerous pieces of microcapsules could be emitted in the air, the ocean, and the soil from the laundry and the waste water. In any cases some of the microcapsules could be transported in human bodies and cause adverse health effects. The microcapsule wall materials are melamine resins, polyurethanes, polyureas, and polyacrylates. When microcapsule wall materials are polyurethane, an extremely dangerous substance called isocyanate could be released into the environment. We believe that the microcapsules in home and personal care products should be banned immediately, since it could exacerbate plastic pollution of the soil, the ocean, the air, and human bodies.

Glyphosate in Bread

A new study shows levels of glyphosate in many types of bread sold in Japan. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in the controversial weed-killer Roundup, and also in other herbicides. It is used in the US and Canada on wheat fields just before the harvest (wheat is not genetically modified). This method is called pre-harvest and farmers are supposed to follow guidelines to avoid excess residue levels in food.

The study showed no residue levels in bread made with Japanese wheat, but Japan is only producing 14% of all the wheat consumed in the country. The study was made by Japan Family Farmers Movement (Nouminren) and the results published also on the internet [here](#).

“We are really concerned about this result because most of the school food served in Japan includes bread made with imported wheat. This is our greatest cause of worry,” says Koketsu Michiyo, Secretary General of Consumers Union of Japan. Residue of glyphosate was also found in several types of wheat flour and pasta flour made with imported wheat.



Please Join Our One Million Signature Petition Campaign: “Regulate All Gene-edited Food!”

Dear Friends and Fellow Anti-GMO Campaigners,

Please Join Our One Million Signature Petition Campaign: “Regulate All Gene-edited Food!”

In March 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan concluded that no regulation is needed for most of gene-edited food to be sold in Japan. The Ministry of the Environment also announced its decision to require regulation only for limited gene-edited food using created with specific processes. Consequently, some sources expect gene-edited food to be available as early as this summer of 2019 in Japan.

We, Consumers Union of Japan, together with concerned grassroots organizations and Co-ops across Japan, have been advocating the strictest possible regulation at a level that is at least equal to GMO regulations over the last few years, but our voice has not been reflected in the government’s decision making as of now. Our demand is fully in accordance with our consumers’ rights stipulated in the Basic Act on Consumers Policies.

We are highly concerned about this situation. No regulation means basically no enforced safety tests, no transparency and no labelling. Due in part to the fact that Japan is a country with less than 40% of food self-sufficiency, consumers can only

expect a marketplace that is a virtual hell filled with uncontrolled gene-edited food produced possibly both domestically and globally, unless we take action.

We have decided that now is the time to scale up our campaign. As we launch this One Million Signature Petition Campaign throughout Japan, we have a request to our global friends and colleagues.

1. If you share our concerns and support our petition (below) addressed to the Japanese government, then please email (nogeneediting@nishoren.org) your name and title or the full name of your organization, the country which you are based and also the contact person name. The collected signatures will be submitted to the Government of Japan in September 2019 when we will hand over our signatures to it.

[Organization]

Name of organization:

Contact person:

Country:

Email:

[Individual]

Your name:

Title:

Country:

Email:

2. We are collecting pictures with the banner indicating "Regulate All Gene-edited Food!" We welcome your pictures with the banner attached in this email, or any banner you have. It will be great to see the keymessage in your language,

together with English message.

Please send us the picture to the email address (nogeneediting@nishoren.org).

We greatly appreciate your solidarity and collaboration.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at the office of Consumers Union of Japan.

Sincerely,
Keisuke Amagasa, Michiyo Koketsu,
Kaori Hirouchi and Martin J. Frid
The Anti-GMO Campaign
International Coordinators,
Consumers Union of Japan

To:

Mr. Nemoto Takumi, Minister of Health, Labor, and Welfare

Mr. Yoshikawa Takamori, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Mr. Harada Yoshiaki, Minister of the Environment

Mr. Okamura Kazumi, Commissioner of Consumer Affairs Agency

We strongly demand proper regulations for gene-edited food. As we learn that unpredicted results could occur by a gene-editing method, including "off-target" effects, our concern over the technology and its impact on our food has not been cleared. However, both Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare decided that gene-edited organisms are not regulated by law unless external genes remain in the organism.

The food with voluntary registration with no enforced labelling

system and no environmental assessment could soon be on our table. Our right to know, our right to choose and our right to live a healthy life are now at risk. We strongly demand that environmental assessment, food safety inspection and labelling on all gene-edited food without exception.

We demand:

1. Mandatory environmental impact assessment for all gene-edited food including crops and other produces, livestock and fish.
2. Mandatory food safety assessment for all gene-edited crops and other produces, livestock and fish.
3. Mandatory labeling for all gene-edited crops, other produces, and processed food that contain gene-edited ingredients.

Consumers Union of Japan

CUJ is a politically and financially independent non-governmental organization (NGO). We are funded by membership fees, sales of publications and donations.

CUJ was founded in April 1969 as Japan's first nationwide grassroots consumer organization. CUJ is officially certified as a non-profit organization by the Japanese NPO legislation.

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