

JAPAN RESOURCES



Compiled News from

Consumers Union of Japan No. 158 February 2013 – June 2013

Address: Nishi Waseda, 1-9-19-207 Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo, Japan

Website: www.nishoren.org/en/



Energy Reform Symposium

June 20, 2013

What Will Happen With The Electric Utility Law Revision?

Japan is debating the future of its electric power system. A special committee at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry made recommendations for reform in February, 2013, and a bill to revise parts of the Electric Utility Law was submitted to the Parliament after a Cabinet decision in April. However, there is concern that the bill has watered down many of the proposals. It is doubtful if the bill can be enacted during the current session of the Parliament and we sense dark clouds gathering over the anticipated reform, which had just started to look promising.

After the earthquake and tsunami disaster on March 11, 2011 we face a situation where parts of the country have been so contaminated with dangerous radioactivity due to the meltdown at the nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi that it is impossible for people to live there. Society rapidly needs to be converted into relying on a wide range of power sources including wind, solar, cogeneration, etc., in addition to large-scale expansion of energy-saving efforts. This is the time for structural reform of the electric power system, and we need to move forward on creating a realistic work schedule to make this happen.

Civil society supports the Electric Utility Law revision. In this symposium, we will debate electric power reform and discuss its merits for consumers, as well as learn about the design of the electricity market. We will also hear from energy consultant Yamada Hikaru about the current situation in Europe and North America.

Organizers: e-Shift (Association for Nuclear Power Phase-out and New Energy Policies) / Consumers Union of Japan / Electric Power Reform Project
Date: June 20, 2013 (17:00-19:30)
Place: House of Representatives Multipurpose Hall, Tokyo

///

Biodiversity Day Event: Paige Tomaselli, Center for Food Safety

We are happy to welcome Paige Tomaselli, senior staff attorney at US-based Center for Food Safety, who will be speaking at 3 events in Tokyo in May. She is invited by Consumers Union of Japan, No! GMO Campaign and Japan Citizens' Network for Sustainable Food & Agriculture. May 18 is International day of biological diversity and the events will focus on the threat to biodiversity from genetic engineering and GM crops.

May 17 (11:00-13:00) **Current situation in USA, the world's leading GMO producing country** Place: Sangiin Giin Hall B107, Nagatacho station, Tokyo (Please meet in the lobby at 10:40) (500 Yen)

May 18 (13:30-16:30) **Genetically modified organisms, a threat to biological diversity** Place: Seiry Hall, Nagatacho station, Tokyo (1000 Yen)

May 20 (13:30-15:30) **Opportunity to ask Paige Tomaselli about the GM food labelling initiative campaign and the efforts to stop Monsanto in the US** Place: Tokyo Shohi Seikatsu Center, Iidabashi Central Plaza, 16F, Room A (500 Yen)

///

Peace Boat Anti-Nuclear Campaign in Europe

Katsutaka Idogawa, former Mayor of Futaba Town, the site of the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant, will travel to France, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, and Switzerland. He will be reaching out to municipal leaders and citizen groups about the ongoing situation in Fukushima.

Seven days after the disasters of March 11, 2011, Idogawa temporarily evacuated town residents 45 kilometers away to Kawamata City. After witnessing ashes floating down from the sky, fallout from the explosion at reactor no. 1, and measuring radiation levels on his dosimeter, he came to the conclusion that the only way for the people of Futaba to be safe would be to be as far as possible. Without waiting governmental advice, he put the safety of the people first and arranged for the town to be relocated to Saitama prefecture.

On May 12 he will meet with citizen groups at Penly Nuclear Power Plant in Le Havre, France on the English Channel where fires in April 2012 led to radioactive leakage. From May 13-15, he will participate in an international conference aboard Peace Boat on its way to Stockholm.

Participants include:

Alain Correa (STOP EPR Network, France)

Olivier Florens (Europe Ecology – The Greens)

Iida Tetsunari (Director, Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies)

Lena Lindahl (Sustainable Sweden Association)

Andrey Ozharovskiy (Nuclear expert with Bellona working to prevent the construction of a plant by Hitachi in Lithuania)

Sato Kenta (“Fukushima Conference” from Iitate Village)

Yoshioka Tatsuya (Co-founder and Director of Peace Boat)

After meeting with experts, politicians and citizens working on nuclear issues at an event organized by ICAN Sweden, IPPNW Sweden, and the Sustainable Sweden Association on the 16th, he will travel to the location of planned nuclear power plant at Pyhäjoki, Finland to meet with the mayor and citizens on 17-18. May 19-22 he will visit Helsinki and Latvia, making his way to the Middelgrunden Wind Farm in Copenhagen for May 24-25. He will end his tour with a presentation to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

For more information, please contact:

Meri Joyce, Peace Boat International Coordinator

Email: meri@peaceboat.gr.jp

(Note: Peace Boat is a Japanese NGO/NPO that made its first journey in 1983)

///

Support Soybeans!

If you like your proteins from soy, you already love tofu, natto and miso, important traditional foods here in Japan since a long time ago. But much of that soy is imported. No! GMO Campaign initiated a campaign some 15 years ago to encourage farmers to grow the beans again, and educate people about the importance of local consumption.

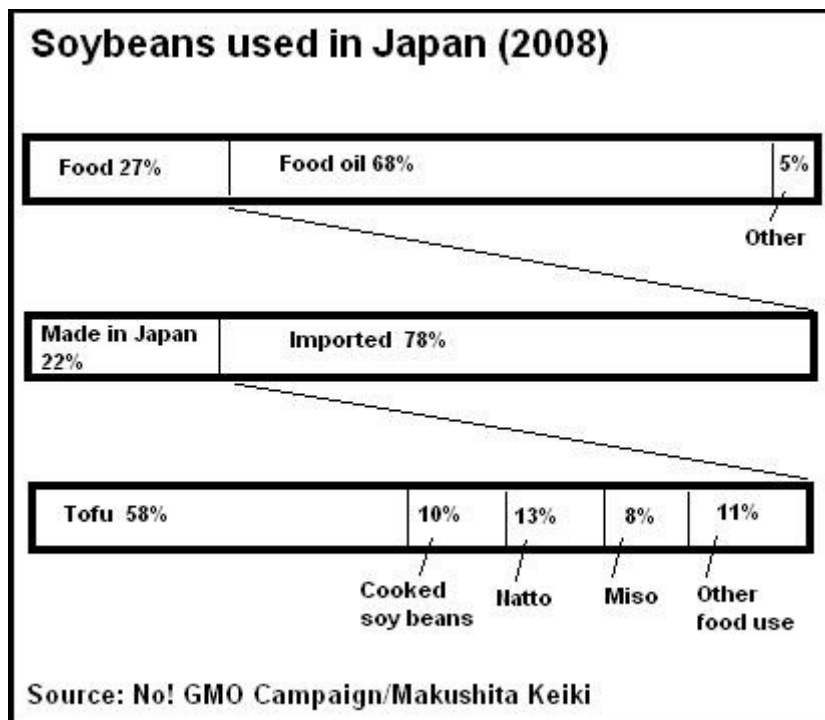
On February 15, 2013, a meeting was held with expert Makushita Keiki and others, to take a look at the progress so far. Yes, consumption of locally grown soy is increasing. But still, Japanese consumers are depending to a very large extent on imported soy.

Take a look at the graph: Of all the soy used, some 27% are used directly as food (while 68% is used for food oils, some of which is later used as animal feed). 5% goes to seed and other uses.

The interesting part is the soy used for food: some 22% comes from domestically grown soy, while 78% is imported (from North and South America, and possibly China). This data does not say anything about the amount that is organically grown, and there is also a portion of imported soy that is Identity Preserved (IP) and thus qualifies as non-GMO.

Of the soy grown locally in Japan, most comes from Hokkaido. 58% of the domestic soy goes to tofu, 10% to special cooked bean dishes, 13% to natto, 8% to miso (for soup mostly). Some 11% goes to soy meal used for special traditional products, especially sweets.

Look for the 国産 (kokusan) label if you want to support the movement to grow more soybeans in Japan!



///

No To TPP Participation!

Japan has a large number of consumer organizations, both on the national level and local level. Several, including Shufuren, Parc, Seikatsu Club, Pal System Coop, Dai-ichi Mamoru Kai, Shin Nihon Fujin Kai, have joined CUJ in protesting against the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP). Here is the latest statement from CUJ:

February 25, 2013

To: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Statement of Protest against the Japan-US Joint Statement Regarding TPP

According to the Japanese government's communique about TPP after the talks between Prime Minister Abe and President Obama on February 23, 2013, that "it is not required to make a prior commitment to unilaterally eliminate all tariffs upon joining the TPP negotiations."

However, in a news conference in response to this, Prime Minister Abe mentioned that there was no explicit promise regarding tariff sanctions during his meeting with President Obama. Meanwhile, the governing coalition of LDP and New Komeito is leaning towards announcing that Japan will participate in the TPP negotiations as early as possible.

Prime Minister Abe has then gone on to talk about formally announcing participation in TPP negotiations during speeches in the Upper and Lower House Parliament sessions on February 28, 2013.

This is in sharp contrast to the LDP election promises during last December's general election, to oppose Japan's participation in the TPP negotiations if abolishing tariffs without restriction becomes a precondition. Five conditions were included in LDP's election manifesto, including protecting the country's health insurance system, which covers all citizens, and food safety standards, as well as not accepting numerical targets for imports of cars and other manufactured products. LDP also promised it would not liberalize financial services or rules regarding public procurement. The TPP also stipulates a new type of dispute resolution system, known as Investor-state Dispute System (ISD) that will allow foreign corporations or financial investors to sue governments in other countries. The comment by the Prime Minister only five days after his meeting with the US President can only be construed as an absurd violation of LDP's election promises in key areas.

We regard it as unacceptable that such infringements of the rights of people can be proposed, that will infringe on our lives and all aspects of society. This is related to governance and Japan's national structure, its politics, and issues related to important national policy-making.

We strongly protest against your actions.

Consumers Union of Japan

///

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) is a politically and financially independent non-governmental organization (NGO). CUJ is funded by membership fees, sales of its publications and donations. CUJ was founded in April 1969 as Japan's first nationwide grassroots consumer organization. It was officially certified as a non-profit organization on May 1, 2006 by the new Japanese NPO legislation.

