

# **JAPAN RESOURCES**



*Compiled News from*

## **Consumers Union of Japan No. 159 July 2013 – December 2013**

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## **Biosafety Expert Meeting in Quezon City, Philippines**

Consumers Union of Japan and the No! GMO Campaign participated in a four-day meeting in the Philippines in November, to discuss the risks associated with genetically modified organisms (GMO). Of particular interest was the ambush by the biotech industry in countries like Bangladesh, where they want to introduce BT eggplants (after failing in India). Also on the agenda was Vitamin A rice (see details below) that is currently tested in field trials by IRRI and others in Asia. Experts and activists from 12 countries participated!

### **PRESS RELEASE**

26 November 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact person: Nina Somera, Third World Network

### **Biosafety experts arrive in Manila, question Golden Rice**

Respected scientists in the fields of agriculture and biosafety, Dr. Angelika Hilbeck and Prof. Jack Heinemann, are coming to Manila to share their assessment of Golden Rice's development. Golden Rice is a genetically engineered rice that is claimed to contain Betacarotene that can express Vitamin A and in turn, address Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) as well as blindness. Its proponents led by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) project that crop will be publicly released in 2016.

“The adequacy of human health and environment assessments for Golden Rice should address deficiencies in other food risk assessments especially because it is intended for use by an already vulnerable population of people. In addition, Golden rice release may create important liabilities for the Philippines. I caution against a release before these issues are properly addressed through scientific and socio-economic assessment,” Heinemann points out. The Philippines does not have a biosafety law that can comprehensively lay down risk assessment processes, including liability and redress mechanisms, in cases of health impacts and contamination, among others. Yet it allows genetically engineered food and crops in the country, despite Republic Act 10068, otherwise known as the Organic Agriculture Act.

Similarly Hilbeck questions claims around Golden Rice as a remedy for VAD. It remains unclear, for instance, whether Golden Rice includes the pre-stages of

Vitamin A such as the production of retinoids, a key component in anti-acne medication but in high dosage can be toxic. “GR does not totally address the causes of Vitamin A deficiency and for a ‘non-curative medicine’ that only treats symptoms, its proponents make far too big claims for it to be indeed a remedy,” she asserts.

Both Heinemann and Hilbeck share that the hype around Golden Rice is a distraction from practical solutions to malnutrition. There are likewise doubts over the so-called, humanitarian approach on Golden Rice. “Golden Rice 2 is a 100% corporate invention and is 100% owned by Syngenta! The company retains full control of their patent rights,” Hilbeck adds.

Heinemann is a professor of genetics and molecular biology in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand and is the Director of the Centre for Integrated Research in Biosafety (INBI). Meanwhile, Hilbeck is a senior scientist at the Institute of Integrative Biology at ETH Zurich, with her studies focusing on agroecology and biodiversity, biosafety issues of GMOs and environmental risk assessments. Their expertise has contributed to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Both scientists are authors of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), a five-year research exercise that was mainly supervised by the United Nations (UN) and endorsed by many governments.

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### **Protest against the New State Secrecy Act**

*We asked everyone to please send a message to express concern about the new State Secrecy Law by November 7, 2013*

The proposed State Secrecy Law will most likely be adopted this week by Japan’s Parliament, where the LDP can get a majority together with Komeito. However, many opposition lawmakers are trying to rally against the bill. They need your support! Please express your concern for how this new Law may violate people’s right to know. The clauses in the proposed Law are very vague on what exactly a “state secret” may be. It goes against democratic principles, and at different events, answers to questions have not been properly answered.

We call for citizens and people living in Japan to send the following demands to the leaders of the opposition parties:

1. The proposed National Security Council has many issues that remain great problems. The deliberation has been insufficient and more debate is necessary.

2. The State Secrets Act also has numerous problems which were not recognized during the deliberation process.

Please send your message to:

大島敦(民主・比例北関東)  
Ooshima Atsushi (DPJ)  
FAX 03-3508-3380

藤井孝男(維新・比例東海)  
Fujii Takao (SP)  
FAX 03-3508-3815

海江田万里(民主党代表・比例東京)  
Banri Kaeda (DPJ)  
FAX 03-3508-3316  
office@kaiedabanri.jp

You can also send a message directly through the website of the Democratic Party of Japan:

<https://ssl.dpj.or.jp/form/contact>

Thank you!

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### **TPP: Many Questions Remain**

*Civil Society Media Release from TPP Negotiation Round, Brunei Darassalam*

September 4, 2013

The Civil Society stakeholders for the Brunei round of TPP negotiations are very disappointed that no formal report from the Chief Negotiators was presented, nor the opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions in a forum where all could hear the answers.

At this round of TPP negotiations the stakeholder session ended with a mingling of negotiators with stakeholders in a stand-up format. While we found the negotiators to be friendly and open to questions, the setting did not enable many stakeholders to ask their questions and the answers given were not available to everyone.

There were a number of questions we would like to have heard answers to, of these the most pressing are:

- Will there be another round of negotiations?
- Will a full timetable be released?
- We know there are inter-sessional meetings planned for September, what, if any, arrangements are being made for stakeholder engagement at these meetings?
- Will there be media briefings at the inter-sessional meetings?
- The Civil Society represented at the Brunei round consisted of a number of NGOs and community organizations with very limited resources. To come to a negotiation round and not be able to question Chief Negotiators is a huge disappointment.

We continue to urge for greater transparency and accountability, and we ask again for the release of a draft negotiating text.

Signed:

Yasuaki Yamaura, **Consumers Union of Japan**

Yasuo Kondo, **People's Action Against TPP (Japan)**

Hadyn Green, **Consumer NZ**

Yoshiko Matsuda, **What is TPP?**

Trish Hepworth, **Australian Digital Alliance**

Patricia Ranald, **Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network**

Krista L. Cox, **Knowledge Ecology International**

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Announcements:

### **Soil & Peace Festival 2013**

There will be a Soil & Peace Festival in Hibiya Park, Tokyo on Sunday October 20, 2013. Starting at 10:00 hundreds of farmers and activists and artists will hold a great event until the evening.

A great opportunity to meet your favourite NGOs and learn more about organic food, anti-nuclear campaigns and the future of Japan. Look forward to lots of inspiration! Music by Katou Tokiko and many others throughout the day, starting with a taiko performance by Gocco.

### **International Film Festival on Organic Farming**

The 7th organic film festival will be held in Tokyo on November 23-24, 2013. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with recent trends and watch documentaries from Japan and abroad. The theme this year is "Holding on to the Soil" to reflect the hardships many farmers are experiencing, with special focus on Okinawa and Fukushima.

Location: Hosei University, Sotobori Campus (between Iidabashi and Ichigaya stations on the Sobu line)

Tickets: 1800 Yen (pre order) 2500 Yen (at the entrance)

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**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.

