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***From the Editors:***

**Out of the Fire, Into the Frying Pan?**

It seems this year we are dealing with a number of difficult issues at the same time, from the Covid Pandemic and Climate Change, to Russia's war in Ukraina. Food security and energy supply issues are now in the news on a daily basis.

Japan's PM Kishida meanwhile failed miserably in the United Nations to get a meaningful result at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, with profound disappointment especially in the City of Hiroshima, which he represents.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) notes that 13,080 nuclear weapons still exist on the Earth, with the U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles together constituting approximately 90 percent of the total.

We ask you to stay updated with CUJ's activities and news on our English website, as well as on our English Twitter account:  
<https://twitter.com/consumerunionjp/>

## **Report on the GMO-Free Zone Movement in Japan**

### **©April 2020: GMO-Free Zone Area Surpasses 100,000 Hectares**

In 2020, the 15th year of Japan's GMO-free zone movement that began in 2005, the declared GMO-free zone area finally exceeded 100,000 hectares. Although this represents only 2% of the total cultivated area in Japan (4.37 million hectares), it is a significant achievement for each and every farmer who has voluntarily declared that they will not grow Genetically Modified Organisms.

### **©February 2021: GMO-Free Zone National Exchange Meeting in Shiga Prefecture**

Shiga Prefecture is a memorable place where the first GMO-Free Zone National Exchange Meeting was held. It is also the land where environmentally friendly agriculture efforts are underway to protect the waters of Lake Biwa. Although the event was held online amidst the ongoing outbreak of the new coronavirus, nearly 300 participants

shared their efforts to oppose GMOs in various regions of Japan under the theme of "No Need for GMOs, No Need for Genome Editing". In addition, organizations from South Korea and Taiwan participated online and reported on the status of their anti-GMO movements.

### **©March 2022: GMO-Free Zone National Exchange Rally in Hiroshima Prefecture**

Some 400 people participated in the online rally held in Hiroshima Prefecture in March 2022. 106,036 hectares of GMO-free zones were registered, up 1,320 hectares from the previous year. With the distribution of genome-edited fish beginning in 2021, the theme of the rally was "Expanding the GMO-free Zone in the Ocean." This time, two fishery companies engaged in pelagic fishing in the Pacific Ocean were registered as marine GMO-free zone declarants, and the number of supporters who support farmers who do not grow Genetically Modified crops has reached approximately 23,700.

## **Japan Animal Welfare Scandal: The Consumer Response**

PRESS RELEASE

7 July 2022

*Consumers Union of Japan is protesting against the lack of public access to Japan's Animal Welfare Opinion Exchange Meetings and problems with the way the meetings are being run.*

Japan has not adopted modern rules for animal welfare, especially in the chicken and egg production. A scandal erupted as LDP politician and former agriculture minister Takamori Yoshikawa was found guilty of taking bribes from Akita Foods Co., an egg producer based in Hiroshima Prefecture. At the same time, Japan had opposed globally binding rules for egg production at the United Nation's organization for animal health, OIE, where international standards are supposed to be agreed upon. The fallout from the scandal continued to grow as Koya Nishikawa, also a former farm minister, resigned as a special Cabinet adviser amid criticism over his own intimate ties with Akita Foods.

Yoshiki Akita, the former head of Akita Foods Co., was found guilty of bribery in October 2021 and given a suspended sentence. Mr. Nishikawa said that whenever Mr. Akita gave him money, he always asked for help,

not just for Akita Foods, but for the domestic egg industry as a whole. According to the Asahi Newspaper, Mr. Nishikawa set up a meeting between Mr. Akita and Mr. Yoshikawa, when he was farm minister. Mr. Akita then asked Mr. Yoshikawa to help Japan's poultry industry by ensuring the Japanese government would oppose the proposal at the United Nation level to improve animal welfare standards.

According to the Mainichi Newspaper, at the time Mr. Yoshikawa is said to have received the money, discussions were proceeding over the formulation of animal welfare standards requiring farm animals to be raised in stress-free settings. The Japanese egg farming industry was opposed to such a plan for international standards proposed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The former head of Akita Foods petitioned Mr. Yoshikawa for revisions to the OIE proposal and in January 2019 and again in July that year, Japan presented opinions opposing part of the OIE's proposed standards.

Japan's 1973 Act on Welfare and Management of Animals makes it a crime to kill, injure, or inflict cruelty on animals without due cause. But egg producers are still mainly sticking to old-fashioned methods, such as confining egg-laying hens to very cramped cages. This also involves using antibiotics and other drugs.

95.2% of eggs in Japan are from caged hens and there is little awareness of the availability of free-range eggs, according to Rob Harrison, Ethical Consumer, who has extensive knowledge of the situation in Japan.

Consumers Union of Japan was supposed to join an opinion exchange meeting about animal welfare at Japan's Agriculture ministry (MAFF) but just days before the meeting in January 2022, it was announced that it would be closed to the public. After careful consideration, CUJ decided not to participate in such closed meetings anymore. Koketsu Michiyo, co-chairperson of CUJ writes in CUJ's letter to the Japanese government:

"As for the reason for keeping the Animal Welfare Opinion Exchange Meeting closed to the public, you say, "It is necessary to ensure a frank exchange of opinions among the committee members, and in order to hear frank opinions on issues in the field, it is also necessary to take into consideration concerns about the possibility of a ripple effect from the identification of the speakers. As the committee had decided to hold the meetings openly when it was reaching out to each committee member, the committee members would have accepted the request knowing that the meetings would be open to the public."

"The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) bears a heavy responsibility for unilaterally declaring the meeting closed to the public just before it was to be held. The MAFF response to CUJ states that "there will be a ripple effect from the identification of the speaker." What kind of ripple effect are they concerned about? We should understand that a ripple effect would indeed occur if the public's interest in animal welfare is that high. In addition, a summary of the meeting is just that, a summary, without the names of each speaker, and it cannot be said that transparency is being ensured."

The Animal Welfare Opinion Exchange Meeting was established to verify the fairness of the poultry and egg administration in response to the indictment of former Minister Takamori Yoshikawa on bribery charges. It is only natural that the meeting should be open to the public," says Michiyo Koketsu, CUJ.

On 5 July 2022 both Michiyo Koketsu, CUJ and Kaori Yamane, Shufuren Association of Consumer Organizations resigned from the Animal Welfare Opinion Exchange Meeting to protest against the lack of public access to the meetings and problems with the way the meetings are being run.

## **Energy Shift**

### *Urgent Statement Against the Resumption of Nuclear Power Plant Operations on the Pretext of Tight Power Supply and Demand Due to the Extreme Heat*

The rainy season ended about 20 days earlier than usual this year, and since the last week of June, there have been extremely hot days in many parts of Japan. As a result, the government has issued an “Electricity Supply-Demand Stress Alert” in the service areas of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and other areas, and has issued a request for power saving. As if in response to this situation, there is a growing demand for the restart of nuclear power plants. Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) feels a strong sense of crisis over this trend toward restarting nuclear power plants, and we hereby express our clear opposition to it.

Following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in 2011, nuclear power plants, which had provided nearly 30% of the nation’s electricity needs, were completely shut down. Until now there has never been a problem with the supply and demand of electricity because there is enough absolute capacity.

The current tight power supply-demand situation is a result of the government’s decision to shut down aging thermal power plants with low

profitability during this period, while leaving it up to individual power companies to make their own decisions. The danger of nuclear power plants is not only a matter of the government’s own judgment but also that of the public.

The dangers of nuclear power are self-evident to both those directly involved in nuclear power plants and to local residents, especially in Japan, where earthquakes and disasters are frequent.

The power supply must be converted to renewable energy sources such as solar power, wind power, and biomass as soon as possible. However, mega solar power plants and giant wind turbines are causing various problems such as environmental destruction in the surrounding areas. Rather than relying on huge power capital, it is desirable to decentralize and bottom-up energy systems so that local residents can participate in building systems that contribute to local revitalization.

At the same time, along with appropriate energy-saving lighting and air conditioning in offices and houses, we should also promote insulation and energy saving in buildings without going all-electric, use of public transportation and bicycles in urban areas, and other efforts. It is necessary to clarify the power generation capacity and other

aspects of in-house power generation owned by companies and other entities, and to formulate measures to address electricity supply and demand.

Let us urgently work on an energy shift away from dependence on nuclear power and fossil fuels.

### **“We Will Not be Complicit in War, and We Will Not Let it Happen”**

By Yoko Sugiura, Editor-in-Chief of CUJ’s Magazine Shohisha Report

Taking advantage of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Japanese government has announced plans to maintain an “enemy base attack capability” and to increase defense expenditures to more than 2% of GDP \*.

Under Article 9 of the Constitution, which clearly states the renunciation of war and the non-retention of military forces, a major shift is about to take place in Japan’s policy of defending itself exclusively against invasion.

Since the Abe administration took office in 2012, the Secret Protection Law, the Security Law, and the Conspiracy Crime Act have already been passed, overcoming opposition from citizens, to bring about a wartime regime.

Finally, there is a growing movement to revise the Peace Constitution itself.

We are determined not to be complicit in any war and not to let any war happen, and we will appeal against war together with those who are fighting in their own spheres of life.

\*This is twice the 1% of GDP ratio that has been used to halt the war so far, amounting to about 11 trillion yen, or 10% of the national budget.

### **In the News: Failed NPT Treaty**

Quote: Seven groups of survivors of the Aug. 6, 1945, atomic bombing of Hiroshima also criticized Russia and other nuclear powers during a news conference at the Hiroshima city government office on Aug. 29.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who represents a constituency in Hiroshima, became the first Japanese leader to attend an NPT review conference, but the hibakusha groups, based in Hiroshima Prefecture, said the Japanese government “barely made its presence felt.”

“Kishida says Japan is willing to serve as a bridge (between the nuclear and non-nuclear states), so I want him to show his commitment by bringing other non-nuclear states together, instead of acting like a third party,” said Kunihiro Sakuma, who heads the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-Bomb Sufferers Organizations.

Sakuma urged Japan to first sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which came into force in January last year.

The Asahi Shimbun

30 August 2022

## **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.**

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