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### ***From the Editors:***

## **It Is All Connected**

This year ends with COP15 of the UN  
conference for biological diversity.  
We hope media will follow it as much  
as they did the recent COP27 of the  
UN conference for climate change.

In fact, these two global issues are  
interconnected and linked in many  
ways, that also influence us as  
consumers (and we, as consumers,  
can – and should - influence).

For example, by increasing the local  
and organically farmed food served to  
school children, Japan could go a

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9 million people sign drive against  
nuclear power

long way to contribute to both  
mitigate climate change and protect  
biodiversity.

Some 3600 people all over the  
country are ready to make it happen,  
according to Koa Tasaka’s report  
from the Special Forum held in Tokyo  
this fall.

Please 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 Special Forum for the Promotion of Organic School Lunches all over Japan**

By Koa Tasaka, CUJ

The forum was held on 26 October in Nakano, Tokyo. Over 1100 persons attended physically, and over 1800 joined on-line. In addition, 62 satellite places were set up all over Japan, with some 700 persons joining such events. Among those who attended in the main hall, there were 33 City Mayors including Mr. Ohta, Isumi City Mayor who has spear-headed the effort to introduce organic school lunches in his city. Nine Members of Parliament also attended. I attended the meeting as one of the organizers, and I found many persons I know in the hall such as Mr. Keisuke Amagasa of Consumers Union of Japan and representatives from the Civil Institute of Organic Rice Cultivation.

The program included reports by experts from France and South Korea, along with videos on the activities of school lunches with organic food from various places in Japan. There was a panel discussion as well as presentations by Prof. Nobuhiro Suzuki, Tokyo University, and by Ms. Seiko Uchida, representative of PARC. Ms. Yae, a singer and organic farmer, sang Amazing Grace at the end of the

meeting before the declaration for promoting organic school lunches was announced. In addition, there were short speeches by representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture, which is significant since these ministries will have to do something positive to promote school lunches with organic ingredients after giving speeches in front of so many people.

As a chemist, I know that the bread provided for everyday school lunches in Japan is made from imported wheat, which is highly contaminated with pesticides such as malathion, sumithion, or reldan. Recently, imported wheat from US has been found to be contaminated with glyphosate (Roundup) as well.

Japan's Ministry of Education has disclosed a statement that over six percent of Japanese school children have some mental problems, without discussing the cause of these problems. Although it is not possible to prove it, mental problems among children may be related to the chemical contamination of school lunches. That is the reason why I am involved with the movement to replace school lunches using bread made from imported wheat to organically grown rice and vegetables. In that sense, I am very happy to see the development of the school lunch system in Japan with

organically produced foods. I really hope that this movement develops further, so that children can grow in good health all over Japan!

### **Growing Movement to Prevent Distribution of Genome-Edited Tomato Seedlings to Elementary Schools and Welfare Facilities**

By Michiyo Koketsu, CUJ

There is a growing movement in Japan to prevent the distribution of genome-edited tomato seedlings to elementary schools and welfare facilities. The tomatoes have been genome-edited to contain high levels of GABA, and were developed by Sanatech Seed Co. The company is soliciting on its website that it will provide free of charge to schools and facilities that wish to receive them. Genome-edited foods and crops have not been confirmed as safe to eat and the impact on the environment is not known. A growing movement is calling on local governments not to accept genome-edited tomato seedlings, saying that it is outrageous to allow children to grow such an unsafe product.

This movement was triggered by an effort by a citizens' group in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, to send a letter of request to the local government. In December last year, the Hokkaido Association for Food and Life sent a letter to the heads of all 179 municipalities in

Hokkaido asking them whether or not they would accept genome-edited tomato seedlings, and also asking them not to accept the seedlings. 134 municipalities, or over 70%, responded, with 39 of them saying that they would not accept the seedlings. Of these, 39 responded that they would not accept the seedlings. Following this, citizens' groups in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Kumamoto, and other prefectures sent similar requests to local governments. So far, among 748 local governments that have received the requests, no local government has responded that they would accept genome-edited seedlings.

According to the Hokkaido Food and Life Association, municipalities that responded "other" as to whether or not they would receive the request have made comments such as "undecided or under consideration" and "lack of information and knowledge about genome-edited tomatoes," indicating that information about genome editing has not been disseminated. It also became clear that many municipalities are confused by the lack of information because Sanatech, the company developing the technology, has not disclosed the details of its plans.

Not only municipalities, but also consumers lack information about genome editing. Since no animal experiments have been conducted, it can never be said that the safety of the product as a food has been

confirmed. We also do not know how the cultivation of genome-edited crops will affect the ecosystem. Furthermore, we do not know much about the health effects of GABA. When the seedlings are distributed to elementary schools, children will not only grow the seedlings, but also eat the genome-edited high-GABA tomatoes. We will continue to work to prevent the distribution of genome-edited tomato seedlings to elementary schools and welfare facilities.

**Public Comment: Ban 30 Substances in Pesticides**

*Pesticides used in agriculture can contain many ingredients that are not well known and may be unsafe to humans and the environment.*

From: Consumers Union of Japan  
(CUJ)

Co-Chairperson: Ado Kameyama

Co-Chairperson Miyoko Sasaki

Co-Chairperson Martin Frid

20 October 2022

**Regarding the Proposed Ministerial Ordinance to list and ban the use of 30 auxiliary ingredients of agricultural chemicals in the Standards for Refusal of Registration under the**

**Agricultural Chemicals Control Law:**

We, Consumers Union of Japan, are a consumer organization working for the safety of food and agriculture, and the safety and security of our daily lives. We believe that there are several problems with the Ministerial Ordinance to Provide for Cases Specified by Ordinance of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of the Environment under Article 4, Paragraph 1, Item 11 of the Pesticide Control Act (12 October 2022), which was presented by the Ministry and for which public comments were solicited.

We hereby petition for reconsideration and improvement as follows:

**1. Proposal to Include 30 Auxiliary Ingredients of Agricultural Chemicals in the Criteria for Refusal of Registration**

(1) CUJ is opposed to the proposal to include 30 auxiliary ingredients of pesticides in the Criteria for Refusal of Registration if they account for 0.1% or more of the total weight of the pesticide. We demand that none of them shall be detected and that their use in small quantities also be prohibited.

(2) CUJ opposes the enforcement date of 1 October 2025. If the law comes into effect three years later,

some of the pesticides (preparations) currently on the market will contain these 30 auxiliary substances, and they will still be on the market. This could lead to a “rush to market” by manufacturers and distributors, and the continued use of pesticides even though it is known that they contain toxic auxiliary ingredients. The ministerial ordinance should be enforced immediately after its enactment.

(3) In addition to including these 30 auxiliary ingredients in the Standards for Refusal of Registration, we demand that the Standards for Refusal of Registration be applied to pesticides containing these ingredients that are currently being sold and used, and that all pesticides containing these 30 substances be promptly suspended or prohibited from use. This should result in their immediate recall from the market, and the cessation of their use, including in farmers’ inventories. It is unacceptable for pesticides containing toxic auxiliary ingredients to continue to be released into fields and the environment (It is well known that pesticides cause air pollution, soil contamination, and pollution of rivers, lakes, marshes, and the sea). A total ban on the use of pesticides (preparations) containing these auxiliary ingredients themselves should be promptly adopted.

(4) CUJ is opposed to the transitional measures that will allow registration

until the enforcement date, that will allow the registration of pesticides using these banned auxiliary ingredients, as well as their sale and use until their expiration date (generally said to be 5 years). Under the five-year grace period, pesticides containing 30 carcinogenic and other toxic ingredients will continue to be sold and used for almost five years. It cannot be denied that these 30 auxiliary ingredients are carcinogenic, chronically toxic, and having toxic effects known as endocrine disrupters or environmental hormones even at trace amount levels. They should be enforced immediately without transitional measures.

(5) CUJ demands that the trade names of the pesticides (formulations) currently on the market (including farmer-retained products) that use the 30 auxiliary ingredients be listed and made public immediately. The current labeling on pesticide containers and packaging only lists type and amount of auxiliary ingredients. With descriptions such as “surfactant” or “emulsion” as the type, it is not possible to determine whether these 30 toxic chemicals are included or not. The “right to know”, “right to choose”, and “right to be safe” of users, consumers, and citizens who may be exposed to pesticides when using them, such as farmers, users in non-farming areas, home gardeners, and residents living near areas where

pesticides are sprayed, should be ensured.

(6) CUJ demands that all applicable pesticides (formulations) be required to display a warning label with product names.

(7) CUJ demands that administrative guidance to encourage the recall and suspension of the use of these products be thoroughly strengthened as mentioned above.

## **2. Future Criteria for the Refusal of Registration and Review of Agricultural Chemicals**

(1) The 30 auxiliary ingredients of pesticides proposed this time are substances with extremely high toxicity, such as carcinogenic substances, which will be included in the Standards for Refusal of Registration based on scientific data, and their use will be prohibited. We request that the toxicity of auxiliary ingredients other than the 30 substances be promptly investigated and that substances with relatively high or moderate toxicity be promptly included in the Criteria for Refusal of Registration.

(2) In the Materials to be submitted in applications for registration of agricultural chemicals, the materials to be submitted as Test Results on Effects on Humans are still mainly related to active ingredients of the pesticide ingredients, and the overall toxicity of the pesticide (preparation)

is not included. Thus the overall toxicity of the pesticide (formulation) is limited to acute toxicity. Test results for auxiliary ingredients are not required to be submitted. In the future, we request that test results on chronic toxicity, carcinogenicity, neurotoxicity, developmental neurotoxicity, etc. of pesticides (preparations) be included in the submission materials, paying attention to the toxicity of auxiliary ingredients as well.

(3) We should not use chemicals that require gas masks in the cultivation process of producing food. On the other hand, with regard to many pesticides, such as neonicotinoid pesticides and organophosphorous pesticides, for which there is already scientific evidence showing health effects and a ban on their use has been suggested, the precautionary principle should be proactively adopted. CUJ is of the opinion that highly hazardous pesticides and substances that may be endocrine disrupters should be promptly banned.



## Press Release: “We Decide What We Eat Ourselves”

18 October 2022

Consumers Union of Japan

No! GMO Campaign

We, together with family farmers, small farmers' groups and citizens' groups around the world, have been opposing the domination of food by multinational corporations. We will promote the TABEKIME Campaign, an abbreviation for “We decide what we eat ourselves,” which was very popular last year, starting from World Food Day, until the end of November.

World Food Day is celebrated every year on 16 October, as designated by the United Nations.

Eating is the basis of life. Despite this, many people around the world are suffering from hunger, even though a lot of food is produced. The biggest reason for this is the domination of food by multinational corporations and the uneven

distribution of food in developed countries. Currently, the multinational corporations that control food are represented by agrochemical companies that develop genetically engineered crops and other products.

The company that has long reigned at the center of this domination has been the U.S. company Monsanto. For this reason, citizens around the world have been marking this day as Anti-Monsanto Day. Monsanto has now been absorbed by Bayer AG of Germany.

The campaign, Millions Against Monsanto has now become Billions Against Bayer.

New genome-editing technology foods have also been introduced here in Japan by domestic companies. We are very concerned that such efforts contradict the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and Codex Alimentarius rules regarding food safety.

We are launching the TABEKIME Campaign again this year, in order to assert that we decide what we eat, not what is forced upon us by the multinational corporations. The way to participate is simple. We hope you will join us and appeal to the world.

We are using the following hashtags in solidarity with our colleagues who resist the domination of food by multinational corporations abroad:

#WorldHungerDay2022

#FoodChained

#Hungry4Change

Best regards,

Michiyo Koketsu

Secretary General

Consumers Union of Japan

**In the News: Over 11 years, close to 9 million people sign drive against nuclear power**

*Quote:* An anti-nuclear petition drive begun 11 and a half years ago garnered an impressive 8,831,163 signatures, with the final ones delivered to the economy ministry on Nov. 11.

Journalist Satoshi Kamata, one of the driving forces behind the campaign that started soon after the March 2011 triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, met with reporters after submitting the last batch of signed names.

“After 11 years, the government is now trying to turn back the clock to nuclear power,” Kamata said. “While we will temporarily stop the petition drive, we also want to spread the anti-nuclear movement by joining forces with those promoting renewable energy sources.”

(From Asahi Shimbun, 12 November 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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