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From the Editors:

Over 90 Consumer Organisations Have Signed Our Peace Appeal

Consumers Union of Japan and Shufuren Association of Consumer Organizations, took the initiative to protest against Japan's proposal to increase its military spending. Over 90 groups including many local co-operatives have now joined together. It is a pretty impressive movement!

For our Annual Meeting on 18 June we have invited speakers from Taiwan and South Korea, who share our views on peace in this region of the world. You can join us in Tokyo or follow the Peace Action online.

- Editors

**Symposium: Let's Connect
Citizens for Peace in Asia! Peace
Action by Japan, Korea and
Taiwan**

Fueled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as the "Taiwan contingency" that the Japanese government has suddenly brought up, more and more people seem to think that Japan's defense forces need to be strengthened. Can war be avoided by possessing a large number of weapons? Japan's current state of increasing military spending and becoming a war-making nation may be seen as a threat, especially to Asian countries. Consumers Union of Japan, which rejects all threats to life, hopes to protect peace in Asia and, by extension, in the world through dialogue rather than military force.

This year, for our annual symposium, CUJ is honoured to invite speakers from South Korea and Taiwan to discuss what we can do as consumers and citizens in solidarity to prevent war and to create a society where people can live in peace. The symposium will be held both on-site and online. Please join us.

Introduction of Speakers:

Mr. Joo Young-Ho

Musician, peace and human rights activist. Member of the peace activist group "World Without War" and a member of "Mob Sul Band," a musical solidarity group of activists and artists.

Ms. Hwang Chia-lin
Executive Director of Daihyang Food Education Association. Co-founder of the GMO-free School Lunch Campaign in Taiwan; Secretary General of the Taiwan Housewives Federation from 2012-14.

Ms. Makiko Kawamura
President of the Housewives' Federation of Japan. Served as deputy secretary general for the campaign to establish a consumer affairs bureau. Co-chair of the Net for Realization of a New Accident Investigation Agency.

Mrs. Michiyo Koketsu
Secretary General of Consumers Union of Japan. She has been working on the issue of genetic modification and genome editing with citizens' groups in Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan, as well as in Europe and the U.S.

Date: 18 June 2023 (Sun.) 13:30-16:30

Venue: Conference Room 201, 2F, Rengo Kaikan (3-2-11 Kanda-Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo)

Access: Short walk from Exit B3 of the Shin-Ochanomizu subway station, 5 min. from Seibashi Exit of the Ochanomizu JR station.

Map of the venue:

<https://rengokaikan.jp/access/>

(Online participation is also available)

90 + Support For Our Consumer Peace Effort

12 May 2023

We, consumers, demand a peaceful society that respects life and livelihood.

We oppose the possession of an enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability) and increased defense spending.

Please support us!

Over 90 consumer organisations and co-ops locally and all over Japan have signed on so far. Thank you for supporting our Consumer Peace Effort.

On December 16, 2022, the Kishida administration passed a cabinet decision to revise the “Three Security Documents,” including the National Security Strategy. The “Three Security Documents” clearly state the policy of possessing an “enemy base attack capability (counterattack capability)” and increasing defense expenditures to 43 trillion yen. The “enemy base attack capability” is the ability to strike within the territory of an adversary, which is prohibited by international law.

Consumer organizations work daily to solve various consumer problems and have different areas of expertise. However, our activities are possible only with the guarantee of a peaceful society. If the Peace Constitution

were to be disregarded, consumer rights such as “the right to the basic needs of life,” “the right to safety,” and “the right to work and live in a healthy environment” could be shaken. In order to prevent such a situation from arising, we believe that it is significant for consumer groups to join together and raise their voices.

We have decided to ask consumer groups and other citizen groups to endorse the attached “Joint Statement.” The names of the organizations that endorse this statement will be listed in the joint statement. We ask for your cooperation in endorsing the statement.

GM Zucchini Found in South Korea: How about Japan?

In April, a South Korean civil society organization informed us here in Japan, that unapproved genetically modified (GM) zucchini had been found to be distributed in South Korea and that the government had initiated a recall.

Unapproved GM zucchini had been grown and sold in South Korea for seven years beginning in 2015. According to reports, GM zucchini seeds approved in the United States were imported and sold by a Korean company.

Consumers Union of Japan sent a letter of inquiry to MAFF on 11 April,

asking whether GM zucchini is checked at the time of importation in Japan, how much zucchini and seeds are imported from the US, and more.

In Japan, there was an incident in 2011 in which unapproved GM papayas were cultivated in Okinawa and Kagoshima prefectures. It appears that GM papaya seeds developed in Taiwan were somehow mixed with non-GM papaya seeds, but the details remain unknown. In Okinawa, 8,000 unapproved GM papayas grown at the time were cut down; farmers who grew the papayas without knowing they were GM papayas were unable to ship them that year, but received no income compensation from the government or other sources, only replacement seedlings were distributed.

Also in 2017, there was an uproar over the recall of seeds when it was discovered that unapproved GM petunias were being sold.

We note that GM crops can easily cross borders and enter the country. In addition to calling on governments to take strict border measures, monitoring activities by citizens in each country are also important. Do let us know if you have similar cases in your country.

Action Day to Bring Citizens' and Farmers' Voices to the G7 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

The G7 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting will be held in Miyazaki Prefecture on 22-23 April 2023. What will be discussed at the meeting, what are the necessary international cooperation and political decisions, and what is needed to promote policies to protect food sovereignty in Japan? The Japan Family Farmers Movement (Nouminren) calls for your participation in the action and study exchange meeting in Miyazaki on the 23rd to promote agroecology and shift to an agricultural policy that supports small-scale and family farming in the pursuit of a sustainable society.

Stop the Food and Agriculture Crisis:
Action Day to bring the voices of citizens and farmers to the G7 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

13:30-15:30 Learning and exchange session Combined with online
Main presenter: Seiko Uchida (Co-president of PARC)
Naoya Matsudaira (Member of the Smallholder Agricultural Society of Japan, Representative Director of AMNet)
Toshiro Hasegawa (President, Japan Family Farmers Movement)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to Stay GM Free

5 April 2023

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the world's leading forest product certifier, has decided to back away from a process that critics said would have opened the door to overturning FSC's long-time core certification policy that prohibits the commercial use of genetically modified (GM) trees. The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, which closely monitored the FSC discussions, noted: "The field testing and release of GM trees pose unprecedented threats to forests, wildlife, and communities that live near them."

In November 2022, Consumers Union of Japan joined over 130 environmental and social justice groups from 34 countries that signed a statement to stop GM trees.



Open Letter of Inquiry on Artificial Turf

20 March 2023

Tokyo Metropolitan Government,
Office of Education

To: Kayoko Hama, Superintendent of
Education

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ)

Co-Chairperson: Azuchi Kameyama

Co-Chairperson Miyoko Sasaki

Co-Chairperson Martin Frid

*Open letter of inquiry regarding
artificial turf*

We are a consumer organization
working for safe and secure living.

We understand that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is "promoting the turfing of schoolyards and other areas in all public elementary and junior high schools in Tokyo to further enhance the educational environment," and recently we often see schoolyards with artificial turf instead of natural grass. However, in recent years, plastic pollution has become increasingly serious, and efforts to reduce the use of plastic are being made around the world. Artificial turf, in particular, is the most common microplastic found in rivers.

Professor Hiroshi Okochi of Waseda University has pointed out that artificial turf may also contribute to

microplastic pollution in the atmosphere.

Therefore, we would like to ask the following questions, and would appreciate it if you could answer them by April 20. Your answers will be posted on the organization's website.

Please explain in detail the main purpose of the schoolyard turfing project. Do you think artificial turf is effective in achieving these objectives? For example, do you think that artificial turf is not appropriate as a place for children to connect with nature?

CUJ heard that the schoolyard turfing project was originally part of the "Green Tokyo 10 Year Project" and was intended to counteract the heat island effect. Will artificial turf work as a heat island countermeasure?

Artificial turf will eventually deteriorate and will need to be replaced. The artificial turf cannot be burned or recycled as it is, and most of it is land filled at final disposal sites. What is the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's policy on the disposal of artificial turf?

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government subsidizes the cost of turfing school grounds. If artificial turf is to be installed, will it be subsidized as well? We think it needs to be reviewed.

The Tokyo Shimbun (1 July 2021) reported: According to the Tokyo Metropolitan Office of Education, artificial turf schoolyards are used in

approximately 120 ward elementary schools in 23 wards, and in Adachi Ward, 28 of 69 ward elementary schools have adopted artificial turf.

How many of Tokyo's 23 wards' public elementary and junior high schools currently have artificial turf and how many have natural turf? If possible, please tell us by ward. We would also appreciate it if you could tell us the situation of elementary and junior high schools in Tokyo other than those in the 23 wards.

In the News: Corteva's Genome-Edited Maize Not Commercially Cultivated at Present

On 28 April 2023, Corteva Agriscience Japan replied to questions submitted by the Consumers Union of Japan and other consumer organisations about the gene-edited maize for which the notification was accepted in March, making it possible to market the maize in Japan.

In the response, the company stated, "The maize has been cultivated in the US for research and pre-marketing trial purposes, but at the present time commercial distribution and sales have not taken place," thereby clarifying that at present the maize has not been used for commercial cultivation.

(From BioJournal, June 2023)

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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