



---

# JAPAN RESOURCES

---

*COMPILED NEWS FROM*  
**CONSUMERS UNION OF JAPAN**  
**No. 145**  
**July-October 2008**

---



*Japan Resources* is available on a web site in English.

You can join us from a link "English" on the front page of CUJ's

Japanese Web Site: <http://www.nishoren.org>

You can read new articles and announcements on CUJ's

New English Web Site: <http://www.nishoren.org/en>

---



## **Consumers Union of Japan**

1-9-19-207 Nishi-Waseda Shinjuku-ku

Tokyo 169-0051 Japan

Phone: 03-5155-4765

FAX: 03-5155-4767

E-mail: [office.j@nishoren.org](mailto:office.j@nishoren.org)

Web site: <http://www.nishoren.org/en>

**Message from Namiko Ono,  
No! GMO Campaign  
to  
Australian Farmers**

October 30, 2008

I am representing the consumers of Japan. I come here to ask you, all the Australian farmers, to continue farm the non GM canola.

Please understand. Consumers in Japan are very sensitive about the quality of the food. We would like to avoid the food additives, and the agri-chemicals, as much as possible. And we really want to avoid the GM food. But the labelling in Japan is not so good for GM foods. Especially food oils are not labeled. Consumers don't know if GM raw materials have been used, or not used. It is difficult to choose in the supermarket. (So, until now, we enjoy using Australian canola oil, because it is non-GM.)

Why do consumers feel worried about GM? There are many reasons. Let me tell you about a few of the concerns.

First of all, we are worried about allergies. There is new DNA in the GM crop, which is not in the plant naturally. Experts are warning that there can be dangerous allergic reactions from this. In Japan, we have many consumers with food allergies. People are also allergic to pollen and air pollution. We think there is a possibility that more people will become allergic from GM foods.

Another big worry is the residue of agri-chemicals. For GM crops, the Roundup is used on the herbicide tolerant plants. Before GM crops were introduced, what did Monsanto do? They asked every country to increase the previous residue level of glyphosate, the level that was previously considered safe. They had to get approval for much higher residue levels, because the plants are going to be sprayed. In Japan, soybean residue was raised to 20 milligram. Rape seed residue was raised to 10 milligram. Consumers are very angry about this high level. Of course, we are worried that Roundup is a strong agri-chemical. It has side-effects and risks, such as cancer. This is a serious food safety problem for us.

Dear farmers, and others listening to me. I am a grandmother, I have a grand-daughter who is 3 years old. She has food allergy troubles. We have tried many foods for her. Your Australian canola oil is the only one in the world that is safe for her. We use it to cook for her and the family. It is also used in candy that she likes very much.

Dear Australian farmers. Please continue farming non-GM canola for us, also in the future. Thank you very much.

\* \* \*

*Namiko Ono and Michiyo Koketsu visited West Australia to join the rally against genetically modified crops organised by the Conservation Council of WA. About 1000 protesters turned out and a banner announcing "Keep WA GM free" was carried along the main streets of Perth to the front entrance of Parliament, according to Farm Weekly (081106). A petition with about 27,000 signatures asking the new WA government to extend the GM moratorium was handed to new Agriculture Minister Terry Redman. The petition also asks for the introduction of liability legislation and labelling for food products. Mrs. Koketsu from Consumers Union of Japan made a speech at the rally,*

**Speech by Michiyo Koketsu,  
Consumers Union of Japan  
to  
Australian Farmers**

**"We Don't Want to Eat GM Canola!"**

October 30, 2008

Good afternoon. I am Michiyo Koketsu. I come from Japan as a representative of NO! GMO Campaign. I am very glad to be with you here in Western Australia.

I came here to ask the new state government to keep the GM moratorium and to ask you the farmers in Western Australia to continue farming non-GM canola.

The NO! GMO Campaign is led by Consumers Union of Japan. NO! GMO Campaign and CUJ have been working very hard on the GM issue to make our world GM free. Last year and again this year, we came here with 3 million signatures asking the Western Australia government to continue its moratorium on GM crops. 3 million signatures against GMOs!

You may wonder why we Japanese consumers are worried about what is happening in Western Australia. Why do we want you to keep the GM moratorium? Well, it is because for us, the canola you are farming is the last non-GM canola that we can consume. For example, Canada introduced GM canola about 10 years ago, and now it is impossible to segregate. So we cannot import non-GM canola from Canada any more. We don't want to eat GM canola.

Last time I came here I heard some people say we are selfish, because we are trying to force farmers in Western Australia to produce non-GM canola. We are working on the GM issue not only because we want to continue to eat non-GM food. We are worried about GMOs also because GMOs have many problems for the world.

Now that the big food exporters like US and Canada have converted to GM crops, your state is our only hope. If your entire state remains GM-free, you will keep your special advantage for the Japanese market. That's a big advantage!

We sincerely appreciate your effort to farm natural canola. Please do keep in mind that your choice has big impacts on the daily lives of many people in the world and on the global environment. Thank you for listening to the Japanese consumers' voice. I look forward to hearing good news from Western Australia soon.

\* \* \*



## World Foodless Day in Tokyo

October 16, 2008

Rising food prices, food contamination, reduced food production induced by climate change — food insecurity is spreading all over the world. Japan is suffering from low food self-sufficiency (barely 40% on calorie basis), a string of food safety scandals and frauds. The occasion of World Food Day on October 16 organised by the FAO is an opportune time to send a strong message of food sovereignty and highlight consumers' strategies to address the food crisis.



How can consumers cope with this crisis? Several NGOs will organise a forum, Another World Food Day, in Tokyo to discuss a wide range of current food problems and solutions.

The forum titled “Sky-rocketing food prices and crisis: hype and reality” will include the following themes:

- The real cause of the rising food prices
- How genetically modified foods are accelerating the food crisis
- Can Japan feed itself?

Organised by:

- NO! GMO Campaign
- Consumers Union of Japan
- No to WTO/FTA Grass-roots Campaign
- Japan Organic Agriculture Association

\* \* \*

### **Stop Aerial Spraying of Banana Plantations!**

Consumers Union of Japan supports the campaign against aerial spraying (using airplanes) on bananas in the Philippines. CUJ signed the online petition of the Dirty Bananas campaign in August, 2008.

In the Philippines, only export Cavendish banana plantations use aerial spraying to apply pesticides. Communities within and around these plantations complain of the health effects they suffer, contamination of water sources and destruction of their livelihoods.

After enduring this for years, affected residents and civil society groups waged an intensive campaign to stop the aerial spraying practice of banana plantations.

For more information, please visit the website <http://www.dirtybananas.org/>

\* \* \*

## Rice Scandal: Protest Declaration and Questions

September 16, 2008

To:

Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Mr. Masuzoe Yoichi  
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Seiichi Ota

***We demand rapid clarification about the current situation, where the government is responsible for not being able to regulate the circulation of the contaminated rice***

Over 3000 metric tones of contaminated rice, most of it Minimum Access (MA) rice, was imported to Japan and resold to food manufacturers. It has been widely used as raw material for food products and even as food rice. This is an illegal criminal business activity, and the legal responsibility must be thoroughly investigated. The government's responsibility in failing to check and regulate the illegal dispersion of MA rice in the country must be carefully questioned. We strongly request the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to understand the deep concern consumers already have this year about food safety, and we demand answers to the following points before the end of September.

1) Did the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries perform any kind of inspection of the imported MA rice, which was sold to Mikasa Foods Co., Asai Co. and Ota Co. and what kind of inspection was performed of the imported MA rice?

a) Was the contaminated rice registered at the quarantine station of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare? And was it specified for industrial use or for use by the food industry?

b) Was there any question about the possibility that the contaminated rice, intended for industrial use, violated the Food Sanitation Law or not?

c) How was the inspection at the quarantine station carried out?

d) Why was it not possible to return the rice contaminated with aflatoxins?

e) Why was it not possible to return the rice with illegal levels of pesticide residue?

f) When was it discovered that the rice was contaminated with aflatoxins and pesticide residue?

g) Regarding this kind of defective imported rice, was the exporting country paid, and why?

2) How and where is MA rice normally dealt with if it is illegally contaminated with mold and pesticides?

3) Is it possible that the rice contaminated with aflatoxins is used as animal feed?

4) Why was the rice which was intended to be processed into industrial products including glue used by food manufacturers?

5) How is the industrial glue actually being used? For example, is it used as wallpaper glue in people's houses?

6) Is other MA rice which was not involved in this scandal being circulated inside Japan as food?

7) Has the rice involved in this scandal also been used as food aid to other countries?

8) Regarding the bidding and inspection of the rice, it has been reported that the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries have offered certain advantages to Mikasa Foods Co. and others. Is this true? If that was the case, why did the government offer such advantages?

9) How will the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries take responsibility for this latest problem?

*Note: Based on the Uruguay Round agreements of global trade negotiations, Japan accepted the so-called "Minimum Access" measure (MA) as a special treatment in order to get extensions for its rice tariffs. MA rice should only be distributed to the rice processing industry. Japan's self-sufficiency ratio for rice is 100% and the country only accepted MA rice after much pressure from other trading partners.*

\* \* \*

### **International Conference on Consumer Policy**



Consumers Union of Japan participated in the International Conference on Consumer Policy, held in Tokyo on September 9, 2008. The theme was "The Future of Consumer Policy for a Globalized Society" and over 200 people attended. We were glad to hear Consumer International's president Samuel Ochieng speak about consumer rights. He also noted the importance of consumer representation in national, regional and international consumer policy forums. Action Points:

A regional/international consumer policy must

- be credible, high common level of consumer protection
- Be effectively enforced at the national level
- effectively engage consumer organisations
- integrate consumer interests in other policies
- Empower consumers

At the very end of the conference, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda appeared briefly to congratulate the participants and shake hand with each of the speakers. The conference was organized by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government.

**Japanese Consumers Ask the Californian Rice Commission  
to Implement the Moratorium on Experimental Planting of  
Genetically Modified Rice**

August 6, 2008

We appreciate your continuous effort in providing high quality rice to consumers and in protecting the environment to conserve wildlife habitat.

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) has been working to secure a healthy life for consumers since it was founded in April 1969. CUJ represents approximately 3,000 individuals and 11 organizations whose total membership amounts to 460,000. We are very pleased to learn that you adopted a resolution calling for a moratorium on experimental plantings of genetically modified rice in your state. We also understand that you have a unique opportunity as an industry under California's Rice Certification Act legislation to make recommendations on the planting and handling of genetically modified rice varieties. We urge you to utilize this authority to the maximal possible extent.

We are still concerned about the undetermined events that led to the contamination of long grain rice in the Southern States and skeptical about the federal control of genetically modified crops. The events in the South demonstrate that even experimental plots of small sizes could cause a large scale of contamination. The fact that a California mill was contaminated by Liberty Link rice is of great concern to us.

We have learned that field trials of genetically modified rice in California have taken place even after the adoption of the rice field trial moratorium resolution. We are aware that genetically modified rice varieties have been experimented with for over a decade in California near rice farms and research facilities. We are very concerned about the ongoing risk of contamination of short and medium grain rice in California that this presents.

Many Japanese consumers are opposed to GM foods for the following three reasons:

1. The safety of these foods for human consumption has not yet been confirmed conclusively through scientific study.
2. There is a possibility that their production might result in irreversible damage to biodiversity. Long-term studies have not been done.
3. Biotechnology companies and other multinational corporations will be able to dictate to all farmers how to farm by controlling the seeds.

We therefore ask you to strictly implement and enforce the March 2007 moratorium on GM field trials in California in order to ensure the best and purest quality non-genetically modified California rice is being produced. Furthermore, we would ask that you provide us with information on the method and terms of its enforcement as soon as you have established the policies to do so.

Yoko Tomiyama  
Chairperson of the Consumers Union of Japan  
Keisuke Amagasa  
Representative of the NO! GMO Campaign (a campaign of Consumers Union of Japan)



**Japanese Consumers Ask the Australian Food Producers to  
Continue Raising Dairy Cattle with  
Non-GMO Feed**

April 1, 2008

We are the No! GMO Campaign, that started in 1996 as a Japanese group of citizens that were alarmed by the many problems associated with genetically modified (GM) food. Our goal is to keep not only Japan but also the world GM-free and make sure GM foods are completely eliminated.

As you probably know, Japan has a low food self-sufficiency rate, importing some 60% of the food from other countries. Japan currently imports farm products, beef and other meat products, dairy products, natural cheese, and wheat from the following top four countries: The United States, China, EU and Australia. Due to the outbreak of BSE in North America, Japan has increased its imports of beef from Australia and New Zealand, as we are aware of the fact that safe and delicious beef as well as dairy products are produced by grass feeding. In particular, we understand that since Australia has sufficient pasture land, you are raising cows with grass instead of feeding large amounts of grain.

However, we are very concerned that several states in your country lifted their moratoria against farming GM crops. We agree with the Australian NGO "Mothers against Genetic Engineering", who say: "We want our children to drink milk from cows that are not fed with GM feed!"

Since Japan imports most of its feed from North America, GM feed is generally used for domestic dairy cows. Under such circumstances, we strongly support all dairy farmers here and abroad who are raising cows with non-GM feed. Japanese consumers actively choose dairy products from such dairy farmers. Japan imports dairy products including natural cheese from Australia, and we also import natural cheese from EU countries. If you allow GM feed for raising cows in Australia, Japanese consumers may choose European dairy products that are produced with milk from cows and goats raised locally with non-GM feed.

Australian food producers and Japan's consumers should cooperate to secure GM-free dairy products.

Sincerely,

Amagasa Keisuke  
Representative of the NO! GMO Campaign (a campaign of Consumers Union of Japan)

\* \* \*

## ***Make the Hokkaido Summit the Last Summit of the G8!***

### ***Declaration of Participants in the International Solidarity Days of the G8***

The G8 Summit opened in Hokkaido in July, 2008 with the usual rhetoric of concern about conditions in Africa. These are statements that few people in Africa and the rest of the world take seriously, given how far the G8 governments are from raising the \$20 billion they pledged for Africa at the Gleneagles Summit in 2005.

Indeed, if there is anything that distinguishes this particular G8 summit, it is its low credibility. In George Bush, Gordon Brown, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Yasuo Fukuda, we have a group of discredited leaders who are very unpopular with their own electorates. Moreover, in addition to their broken promises on Africa, the G8 have also failed miserably to deliver on their other pledges, notably, canceling the debt of the poor countries, raising aid levels to 0.7 per cent of the GDP of the G8 countries, promoting development through trade, and tackling climate change.

As the G8 meet, the world is reeling from four crises that are unfolding simultaneously: the skyrocketing price of oil, the massive rise in the price of food, the financial crisis that is bringing the global economy to its knees, and the acceleration of global warming. To expect the G8 to come up with solutions to these crises is to expect the impossible since these are the inevitable consequences of the G8's promotion of a project of globalization that has mainly benefited and enriched their corporate elites.

Structural adjustment under the aegis of the G8-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund and trade liberalization through the World Trade Organization and free trade or economic partnership agreements have destroyed the productive capacity of agriculture in the developing countries. This is one of the central causes of the tremendous rise in food prices, along with speculation on food commodities by financial operators and the diversion of corn and other crops from food to agro-fuel owing to subsidies provided by the US, EU, and other rich country governments. It is important to note that the agricultural crisis has increased the misery of children and of women, who make up the bulk of global agricultural work force.

The sufferings of people throughout the world from the dizzying rise in the price of oil is the inevitable result of the conversion of global transportation systems into extreme dependency on oil by an unholy alliance between the big oil monopolies and the automobile giants of the G8 countries.

The subprime crisis that has unraveled global finance stems from the push for financial deregulation by banks and other financial institutions in the G8 countries, which has triggered scores of other crises over the last three decades including the devastating Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the Argentine financial crisis of 2002.

Global warming's fundamental cause is the continuing overconsumption in the G8 and other developed countries that is inextricably linked to policies encouraging high rates of economic growth to sustain the profits of transnational corporations. To protect corporate profits, the US, Japan, and Canada, in particular, have opposed meaningful binding targets for reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

We expect that the G8 later today will come up with so-called solutions, like committing money to support the World Bank's Climate Investment Funds, promising more cash for the World

Bank to support agricultural production, or promising support for a new Green Revolution in Africa based on genetically modified seeds. Not only will these initiatives not address the fundamental causes of the crises; they will most likely exacerbate them. Among the likely consequences is a greater debt burden for the developing countries.

People throughout the world are today paying for the malevolent policies of pro-corporate globalization. Among those who have suffered the most from developments not of their own making are the world's indigenous peoples, including the Ainu people of Hokkaido. This is ironic, given the fact that the Ainu and other indigenous nations have placed a supreme value on a respectful human relationship with the environment which G8 economic policies have sundered. We declare our solidarity with the Ainu people and call on the Japanese government to take measures to make real and meaningful the Diet's recent recognition of their status as indigenous people under the United Nations' Indigenous Peoples' Covenant.

The current crises are a forceful reminder that the G8 is a self appointed agency of rich country governments that has no legal status. It was set up in 1975 to serve as some sort of informal government to manage the world economy to ensure the maintenance of the status quo at a time when developing countries were emerging as global actors. After over 30 years, this regime has become a massive fetter to the advancement of the welfare of people and the planet. Symbolic of the anti-people character of the G8 are the Japanese government's deportation of international activists who sought to participate in the democratic discussions of the parallel people's assemblies, its refusal to grant visas to others, and the police's excessive and abusive control of peaceful demonstrators. In this regard, we express our solidarity with the 24 deported Korean activists and the four people arrested during the Peace Walk of July 5.

The world today demands economic arrangements that are built on equality and peace, are subject to democratic control, promote gender equality, and sustain rather than pillage the environment. The world is ready for such people-based solutions to the pressing problems of our time. One indication of this heartening development is the active participation of large numbers of concerned Japanese youth in the anti-G8 activities. Another is the proliferation of anti-G8 activities in different parts of the world during the last few days, including the People's Forum against the G8 in Mali.

The G8 stands in the way of the people. It is high time to disband this mafia of the rich and powerful. Let us join together to make the Hokkaido Summit the last summit of the G8.

\* \* \*



Participants from Japan joined the anti-GM rally in Perth, Western Australia (see page 2-3)

---

**Japan Resources** is published by Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ). CUJ was founded in April 1969 and was officially certified as a non-profit organization on May 1, 2006 by the new Japanese NPO legislation. We continue to be a non-political and financially independent organization (NGO). CUJ is funded by membership fees and donations. The main concern of CUJ and its members is to realize a world of liberty and equality, a world free of economic, social and legal discrimination, and to preserve a safe and healthy environment for our children's future.

CUJ pursues the following goals on behalf of consumers: (1) To secure for ourselves and our families safe and healthy lives, (2) to establish systems/laws to protect the rights of consumers, (3) to promote peace, social justice and economic fairness, (4) to support and empower consumers who care about the environment, and (5) to cooperate with foreign consumer groups/organizations.

**Consumers Union of Japan**  
**Nishi-Waseda 1-9-19-207, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0051, Japan**  
**Tel: (81)-3-5155-4765 Fax: (81)-3-5155-4767 E-mail: [office.j@nishoren.org](mailto:office.j@nishoren.org)**

Note: As of September 24, 2008, the English website of Consumers Union of Japan has moved to our very own nishoren.org server. Please change your bookmarks accordingly.

New link: <http://www.nishoren.org/en/>

