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Opposition Statement Regarding US Beef April 2007

April 19, 2007

(This text was sent to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Hakuo Yanagisawa, and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Toshikatsu Matsuoka)

Opposition Statement to Easing Import Conditions and Complete Removal of Japanese Import Restrictions for US Beef

At the summit meeting between leaders of Japan and the US at the end of April, it is expected that US President Bush will demand that Japan should completely remove its current import restrictions on American beef, or for example ask that the age limit of cattle should be changed from 20 months or less to 30 months or less.

We were strongly opposed to the reopening of imports of US beef due to the careless US countermeasures for BSE. The summit meeting agenda, to completely remove all import restrictions on US beef, is unacceptable. We insist that the Japanese government should reject the US demands, based on the reasons listed below, and instead argue that the US should adopt the strict Japanese BSE countermeasures.

Demands

Japan reopened its market to allow the import of US beef in July 2006. A number of cases where the US side has violated the import conditions have occurred, including the following: In November 2006, there was the discovery of a shipment of beef mixed with thymus glands. In February 2007, the required hygiene and age limit certificates were missing. In March 2007, US-made sausages and salami included prohibited ingredients such as beef. In April 2007, the required hygiene certificates were missing, and a shipment mixed with cattle tongue had no age limit certificates.

Those violations occur because the US Department of Agriculture has been unable to check if the beef exported to Japan follows the export agreement between Japan and the United States. Since the agreement is not observed, we find the import of US beef unacceptable.

It is a fact that BSE countermeasures in the US continue to be careless and faulty. There is no certain way to verify the age of cattle, and also there is no traceability system.

BSE inspection of slaughter and meat production is very limited in the US. Its purpose is only surveillance, and only few samples are taken. There is no blanket screening of all cattle in the US, as is the case in Japan, where every slaughtered carcass is being tested. In the US, Specified Risk Material (SRM) is only removed in the case of cattle that are 30 months or older. Also, meat and bone meal, as well as blood powder, is produced and allowed to be used as cattle feed. Cross-contamination is thus possible. This kind of careless and faulty US system of beef production makes it impossible for us to accept import of US beef.

Signed:

Food Safety Citizens' Watch (Michiko Kamiyama, Representative)
Consumers Union of Japan (Yoko Tomiyama, Chairperson)

ADB NGO Symposium

Mr. Yasuaki Yamaura from CUJ will make a speech about demands of Japanese farmers and consumers at the [Asian Development Bank NGO Forum](#) in Kyoto, Japan on May 6, 2007.

NGO Forum on ADB (FORUM) is an Asian-led network of non-government and community-based organizations that support each other to amplify their positions on Asian Development Bank's policies, programs, and projects affecting life forms, resources, constituents - the local communities.

From a loose network since 1992, network partners agreed in 1999 to evolve the network into an independent organization. Since then, the NGO Working Group became known as the NGO Forum on ADB. Forum was legally incorporated in the Philippines in May 2001.

Over the past decade and a half, the campaign has brought some modest yet significant gains. The ADB campaign has contributed to changes in the Bank's policy in terms of:

- improved social and environmental guidelines for projects
 - * new Bank-wide lending priorities
 - * Bank initiatives in defining sectoral priorities on forestry, energy, population, involuntary resettlement, and information disclosure,
 - * a more open attitude to dialogue with NGOs and communities,
 - * and more recently, the Bank's shift to poverty reduction as its "overarching framework."
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Since the NGO Working Group was created, practical lessons have been gained from the campaign experience. Whether the ADB can match its newly-enlightened policy rhetoric, however, will depend largely on the continued vigilance, monitoring and action by NGOs, public interest groups and social movements.



Asian Development Bank NGO Symposium

May 6, 2007

“Globalization and Japanese Agriculture”

Yasuaki Yamaura

Vice Chairperson

Consumers Union of Japan

1) The Decline of Agriculture in Japan Since the 1960s

After WW2, the Japanese industrial policy started to regard agriculture as important. Agrarian reform made it possible for independent farmers to appear as the Agricultural Land Law secured the farmers' ownership of their agricultural land, and the government policy to purchase rice from farmers warranted a high price, etc.

Agricultural modernization started in the 1960s. Many children from farm families chose to migrate to urban areas to become industrial workers. It became clear that the policy to support family farmers had failed.

Also in the 1960s, modernization of agriculture started, but compared to other industrial sectors, farm management was in decline.

As the USA pressured Japan, import of pork and grapefruit was liberalized in 1971. The import framework of beef and oranges was expanded, and by 1988 such items could be imported without restrictions.

Further trade liberalization was a result of the GATT Uruguay Round in 1993, while WTO has started to discuss trade liberalization of agriculture since 2000.

2) The Widening Gap Between Industry and Agriculture

In 1961, the Basic Agricultural Law was established and the government tried to reduce the gap between the industrial and agricultural sectors, but this reform failed. The government also tried to introduce a more efficient system of agriculture, by mechanization, chemical fertilizers and chemicals, and tried to increase the scale of farms. However, farmers could not benefit from this reform and instead were getting deeper and deeper in financial debt.

The current rice production control program was introduced in 1970, but has led to an increase to 40% of land that is set aside and not used for rice production. The government's rice price guarantee system led to lower and lower income for farmers. The responsibility for the control program was increasingly taken over by Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (JA).

In 1999, a new basic law was enacted for food, agriculture and farm villages. A basic plan was made in 2000 and revised in 2005. The law has four aims: a stable supply of food, the multifunctionality of agriculture, sustainable development of agriculture, and to promote farm villages. However, as farming increasingly became business-oriented, the effect is that farm villages have become more and more underpopulated.

In 2004, Japan's rice policy was changed and the idea of structural reform in agriculture has been stressed in 2007. Agricultural subsidies are now offered only to some farmers, but the rice production control program still continues. In addition to the mainstream system that emphasizes efficiency, large scale policy, and market mechanisms, the policy also aims to protect and promote farm land, water and the environment.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stressed that Japanese agriculture should become an export-oriented industry, in his speech to the Japanese Parliament in September, 2006.

The Organic Agriculture Promotion Law was introduced in December 2006, and a basic policy for organic food production was decided in April 2007.

3) Food Exporting Countries Applying Pressure on Importing Countries

Countries that are importing agricultural products have been under pressure to reduce their policies of supporting and protecting their farmers. Food importing countries have been under pressure to accept tariff rate reduction in the WTO agriculture negotiations.

Trade liberalization for agriculture is also being imposed on importing countries in FTA negotiations. For example, in the Japan-Australia FTA, Australia pressured Japan to reduce its tariff rates on rice, wheat, beef, dairy products and sugar. If such reduction will be realized, Japanese agriculture will collapse.

4) Demands from Japanese Farmers and Consumers

Japanese farmers and consumers want each country to be able to develop its agriculture in a sustainable way, and that each country's food sovereignty is respected.

We recognize that big food exporting countries and agribusiness are benefiting from the trade liberalization of agriculture. We oppose such liberalization. As each country's traditional farming has many functions (multifunctionality of agriculture) we want the importance of farming to be recognized also in terms of environmental protection in each country.

We are afraid that agricultural production for the purpose of making bio-energy will lead to increased imbalance between food supply and demand, and lead to environmental destruction.

(END)

Australia-Japan Free Trade Agreement- A bad deal should be stopped

Joint Statement from Australian and Japanese people

We, the undersigned people and organisations, believe that the Australia Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will not bring real benefits to the people of Australia and Japan.

A joint government Feasibility Study claimed that an FTA would deliver benefits to both countries, but was based on unrealistic assumptions and poor economic modelling. The Feasibility Study also failed to consider potential social and environmental impacts, and how these could affect people, workers and farmers.

Given that Australia and Japan already have a strong trading relationship; the predicted economic benefits are unlikely; and that social and environmental costs have not been considered, we believe that the negotiations of this FTA should not take place. Instead, we believe there is a need to rethink multi lateral trade rules and develop a global trading system based on real development, fairness, democracy, and sustainability.

Agriculture

We are concerned about agricultural issues in the agreement. Japanese farmers in particular will be heavily affected by ‘full liberalisation’ of agriculture, as Japan currently has agricultural tariffs of up to 700 percent in order to protect rural farmers and a sensitive agricultural industry. The livelihood of small farmers in Japan would be severely threatened by lower cost imports. In Australia there has already been a significant decrease in small family farms as a result of global competition and structural adjustments.

Consumers in both countries also seriously concerned that the large numbers of FTAs being negotiated could lead to pressures to reduce food safety standards and could in the future promote the global distribution of GM crops.

Trade agreements should not undermine farmer’s livelihoods. Instead, a global agricultural system should be based on food sovereignty, rural development and protecting farmer’s livelihoods.

Environment and Global Warming

We are concerned that Feasibility Study did not make reference to UN Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Any proposed agreement between Australia and Japan should thoroughly examine environmental issues and include legally binding commitments by Australia and Japan to ensure compliance with international environmental standards.

Of further concern is the Study’s conclusion that an FTA should include a minerals and energy chapter to ensure ‘energy security’. It is difficult to understand why a trade agreement is needed to address issues of supply security when this is dealt with by supply contracts between companies. The Australian government provides no assistance to the coal industry in the form of subsidies or export controls, and Japan maintains a generally open trade policy on minerals and energy, therefore an FTA will not impact on trade in energy and resources.

The coal industry is being encouraged to expand at a multi billion dollar rate, leading to devastating global warming and environmental consequences. Nuclear energy is also being promoted despite the unresolved problems of risks of accidents, waste disposal and increased spread of nuclear weapons. The focus should instead be on investing in alternative renewable energy, including provisions to mitigate impacts of trade on global warming.

Essential Services

Essential services, such as health, water and education, should be excluded from the FTA. Both governments should maintain the right to regulate essential services to ensure equitable access for all, and to meet social and environmental goals.

Of particular concern is the ‘GATS plus’ commitment outlined in the Feasibility Study. Australia and Japan are already making commitments on services under GATS, and to make commitments beyond this is very alarming as it suggests both governments are not prioritising protecting services for the national interest, but rather advocating that they be open to transnational service providers on a profit driven basis.

Public services should be clearly excluded from trade agreements.

Human rights and Labour rights

We are concerned that the Feasibility Study did not include an analysis of the current state of compliance by both Australia and Japan with human rights and labour standards, including the International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Any proposed agreement between Australia and Japan should thoroughly examine these issues and include legally binding commitments by Australia and Japan to ensure compliance with human rights and labour standards by investors, including effective monitoring mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance.

Public consultation and debate

We are concerned about the effectiveness and the transparency of the public consultation process employed in the Joint Feasibility Study.

Both governments should commit to effective and transparent community consultation about proposed trade agreements, with sufficient time frames to allow informed public debate about potential impacts on life, work and the environment.

It is important that there is a clear set of principles and objectives that guide both governments in the consultation processes for the FTA, and include regular consultations with unions, farmers, community organisations and the public.

We oppose the Australia- Japan FTA, and the proliferation of bilateral trade agreements around the world that will only result in unequal agreements that will not deliver benefits to the majority of people.

We believe that multilateral trade rules must be redeveloped towards an inclusive, democratic global trade system that delivers real economic development, and allows governments to retain their right to regulate in the public interest.

Signed in May 2007 by Consumers Union of Japan and 23 Japanese organisations, as well as 90 Australian organisations and networks.

(END)

OIE Rates the United States as a "Controlled Risk" Country: The BSE Risk in the US Still Remains High

On May 20, 2007, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) classified the United States as a "Controlled Risk" country, together with Canada, Switzerland, Taiwan, Chile and Brazil. This rating was decided at the OIE general meeting based on each country's BSE status. As a result of this OIE rating, exports of US beef will become unrestricted after Specified Risk Material (SRM) is removed, even for beef from older US cattle. We are concerned that this will lead to a US demand for the easing of the beef export agreement with Japan's government.

Consumers Union of Japan is opposed to the latest result from the OIE scientific commission. The reason is that the US countermeasures for BSE remain insufficient.

a) In the United States, slaughter and meat processing are based on HACCP, but inspection is done by the private sector, and the public officials from the US Department of Agriculture only examine the documentation. As a result of this, there have been a large number of violations reported so far.

b) Specific Risk Material (SRM) will only be removed from cattle that is 30 months or older. There is also a possibility that abnormal prions are present in cattle that are 30 months or younger in circulation on the market.

c) Since production of meat and bone meal, as well as blood powder, for the purpose of making animal feed is approved, there is a possibility that cattle is eating cross-contaminated feed.

In the future relations between Japan and the United States, the US side may raise the issue of its OIE rating, and apply pressure on Japan to remove its import restrictions on US beef, such as the 20 month or less age limit and the condition that all SRM should be removed. Such demands should not be accepted by the Japanese government, as Japanese consumers continue to be opposed to the import of US beef.

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(END)

To Ishihara Shintaro, Governor
Tokyo Metropolitan Government

June 15, 2007

“We demand that 100% BSE inspection should be continued in 2008”

Since the first discovery of BSE-infected cow on September 10, 2001, the Japanese government has allocated funds until 2007 to support blanket testing of all cattle in Japan as part of the BSE countermeasures. Such BSE screening of all domestic cattle has been conducted, and traceability, feed regulations and removal of specified risk material (SRM) have been put in place in order to eradicate BSE in Japan. While BSE prions have been found in younger cattle, such screening efforts ensure that no BSE prions enter the food chain. So far, Japanese consumers have been certain that meat from domestic cattle is safe.

In order to resume import of US beef, the Japanese government has decided that the cattle which are 20 months or younger do not legally require to be inspected in any way since August 2005. However, in Japan, local self-governance regulation in Yamagata, Miyazaki and Kyoto Prefectures are requiring local cattle producers to continue the testing program also in 2008. We want to request Tokyo Metropolitan Government to also consider this seriously, and support continued blanket testing of all cattle. We demand that the blanket testing system should be kept in place. In addition, Tokyo and other local governments in the country should demand that the national government should allocate funds for BSE inspections of all cattle in Japan.

Kamiyama Michiko, Representative
Food Safety Citizens' Watch

Tomiyama Yoko, Chairperson
Consumers Union of Japan

(A similar letter was sent to Japan's Minister for Health, Labour and Welfare on June 15, 2007)

(END)

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.

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