

# **Consumers Union of Japan**

## **Japan Resources**

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

## **Victory for Consumers**

Consumers Union of Japan and other organizations have for over 50 years fought against food irradiation. This practice went on at one facility in Hokkaido that has finally been closed down.

Organic farmers and many others never allowed their produce to be irradiated with the radioactive isotope Cobalt 60. Many violations have been recorded over the years as imported

foods, most recently from China, Taiwan and Vietnam, were found to be irradiated (Please see our updated list below).

We call this a victory for Japanese consumers, and appeal to others around the world to raise their voices as well. Stay tuned to our campaigns and join us as we keep up the good work...

- Editors

**Appeal Against Food Irradiation:  
Global Solidarity in the Campaign  
to Stop Irradiated Food**

Liaison Committee Against Irradiated  
Foods

National Meeting for Total Abolition of  
Irradiated Foods

30 October 2023

In Japan, irradiated potatoes were sold since 1974 to prevent germination. Despite being an A-bombed country, Japan was the first in the world to sell irradiated potatoes. This was promoted by those who support nuclear power as “irradiated food has been approved even by Japan.” However, many consumers had concerns about irradiated potatoes and opposed their sale.

Apart from preventing germination, the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission conducted experiments to permit irradiated foods for other uses, including insecticidal (rice and wheat) and sterilising (sausages and citrus fruits) purposes. However, the experimental data showed risks and the World Health Organization (WHO) requested a follow-up study.

In 1980, the WHO suddenly declared that irradiation up to 10 kGy was acceptable, based on political rather than scientific judgement.

In Japan, we were shocked by a case of illegal irradiation of baby food vegetables, which was revealed in 1978. In the trial that followed, company witnesses argued that the WHO had accepted food irradiation and that it was practically harmless. They argued that the company was innocent. However, the court ruling did not accept the WHO's 10 kGy safety limit and found those involved guilty.

The court noted that “the WHO report lists items that require scientific consideration for irradiation up to 10 kGy, but the required items have not been considered and scientists have pointed out that there are problems” (First trial, 1984; second trial, 1985). This ruling made Japanese consumers aware that the WHO was driven by the political considerations of food irradiation proponents.

The Japanese Government was the only country in the world to conduct toxicity tests on seven irradiated foodstuffs from 1967. The following is a list of the dangers found in the tests on potatoes and onions.

Data from animal experiments showing the dangers of irradiated foods:

- Animals were fed irradiated potatoes, ovary weight loss (600 Gy), weight loss (300 Gy), increased mortality and abnormalities in the thyroid gland and pituitary gland were

observed. The reproductive organs and other vital organs were also found to be affected.

- Animals were fed irradiated onions (300 Gy), and a follow-up study was conducted after bone abnormalities called rib cartilage fusion and weight loss of the ovaries and testicles were confirmed in the third generation. The irradiation dose was halved (150 Gy) and the amount mixed in the feed was also halved to 2%, but the second generation showed twice as many abnormalities in the cervical ribs, which are ribs attached to the neck bones (cervical vertebrae).

Despite opposition from consumers in Japan, the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative in Hokkaido continued its unprofitable business of irradiated potatoes, saying that the market must be enlarged so that the enormous government funds spent on research and development were not wasted. The irradiated potatoes of the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative were also summarised as follows (1989): "There was a big difference between the laboratory data and the irradiation of potatoes harvested in the actual field."

1. Irradiation of damaged potatoes at harvest accelerated rotting

2. Irradiation of immature potatoes caused internal blackening

3. Immediately after irradiation, the rate of reducing sugars increased rapidly and crisps turned brown. It took about three months to reduce this rate of reducing sugar.

4. Long-term storage required temperature, humidity and ventilation control even after irradiation.

5. Storage at room temperature caused browning, so storage below 5°C was necessary.

As this shows, actual irradiation was not as effective as expected, and in reality nearly half of the irradiated products had no commercial value and were disposed of.

Fifty years passed without the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative being able to resolve these major discrepancies. Finally, the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative decided to stop producing irradiated potatoes, and in 2023 the irradiation facilities were dismantled. Consequently, irradiated potatoes will no longer be produced and sold in Japan from 2023.

We want to inform consumers around the world about this fact and share with them the problems with spices and beef that are now irradiated at similar facilities around the world. We also call on those countries that still irradiate their foodstuffs to stop doing so.

**Cases of Food Hygiene Law  
Violations in Japan due to Food  
Irradiation (1996-2023):**

Year of notification, Product name,  
Weight/Amount, Description of  
violation, Country of manufacture

1996 Ginseng Drink 1,400 kg,  
Irradiated, China

1996 Ginseng drink, 1,680 kg,  
Irradiated, China

1996 Processed sockeye salmon,  
11,000 boxes, Irradiated, USA

1996 Pollen processed food, 165.5  
kg, Irradiated, USA

1996 Powdered soft drink Baibao,  
324 kg, Irradiated, China

1997 Powdered shark cartilage, 100  
kg, Irradiated, Taiwan

1997 Health food NOPAL, 300 kg,  
Irradiated, Mexico

1997 Shark cartilage powder, 5.4 kg,  
Irradiated, Canada

1999 Agaricus tablets, 4.25 kg,  
Irradiated, Brazil

2000 Agaricus extract, 5 kg,  
Irradiated, Brazil

2001 Roasted guarana beans, 3,000  
kg, Irradiated, Brazil

2001 Bees larvae powder, Unknown,  
Irradiated, China

2002 Maca powder, Unknown,  
Irradiated, Peru

2004 Maruja hockey shells,  
Unknown, Irradiated, China

2004 Herbs, Unknown, Irradiated,  
China

2004 Powdered Dianheshi ginseng,  
Unknown, Irradiated, China

2006 Soyact, Unknown, Irradiated,  
USA

2007 Paprika, Unknown, Irradiated,  
Germany

2008 Dried shiitake mushroom,  
Unknown, Irradiated, China

2008 Maca, 300 kg, Irradiated, Peru

2008 Dried red chillies, Unknown,  
Irradiated, China

2009 Dried kale powder, Unknown,  
Irradiated, China

2009 Dried shiitake mushrooms  
unknown Radiated China

2009 Black pepper, Unknown,  
Irradiated, China

2009 Cinnamon (spices), Unknown,  
Irradiated, USA

2009 Dried shiitake mushrooms,  
1,550 kg, Irradiated, USA

2009 Frozen shako (baby chub  
mackerel), Unknown, Irradiated,  
China

2009 Boiled shako (chub mackerel),  
Unknown, Irradiated, China

2009 Dried leeks, Unknown,  
Irradiated, China

2009 Oolong tea, Unknown, Irradiated, China	2019 Dried strawberries, Unknown, Irradiated, China
2009 Boiled shako, Unknown, Irradiated, China	2020 Dried strawberries, Unknown, Irradiated, China
2010 Dried capsicum, Unknown, Irradiated, Thailand	2020 Capsicum annuum (hot pepper powder), Unknown, Irradiated, Taiwan
2010 Dried shiitake mushrooms, Unknown, Irradiated, China	2020 MARINADE POWDER, Unknown, Irradiated, Taiwan
2011 Dried bean curd, Unknown, Irradiated, Thailand	2020 SEASONING Condiments, Unknown, Irradiated, Taiwan
2011 Dried capsicum, Unknown, Irradiated, Thailand	2020 SEASONINGS Seasoning preparations, Unknown, Irradiated, Taiwan
2011 Hacca, Unknown, Irradiated, Chile	2020 Paprika powder, Unknown, Irradiated, Spain
2012 Dried radish leaves, Unknown, Irradiated, China	2021 Onion powder, Unknown, Irradiated, China
2013 Tea Bag Mint, Unknown, Irradiated, Brazil	2022 Dried garlic (black garlic), Unknown, Irradiated, China
2013 Cilantro, Unknown, Irradiated, Bangladesh	2022 Dried shiitake mushrooms, Unknown, Irradiated, China
2013 Cumin, Unknown, Irradiated, Bangladesh	2023 Shrimp (black tiger), Unknown, Irradiated, Vietnam
2013 Boiled shako, Unknown, Irradiated, China	2023 Dried bay leaves, Unknown, Irradiated, China
2014 Tea substitute, Unknown, Irradiated, Singapore	
2016 Frozen natural shrimp, Unknown, Irradiated, Vietnam	
2019 Dried ginger, Unknown, Irradiated, China	
2019 Frozen farmed peeled shrimp, Unknown, Irradiated, Vietnam	

## **Commentary: Lack of Public Acceptance for Food Irradiation**

By Hara Eiji, published in the October issue of CUJ's monthly newsletter, Shouhisha Report

Every year in early spring, the Liaison Group Against Irradiated Foods has called on consumers across the country to find irradiated potatoes in supermarket shops, inform the supermarkets concerned of the problems with irradiated food and request that they stop selling them. Many supermarkets have responded to our request to stop selling them.

This year, in 2023, information was sought, but the supermarkets that had sold them in previous years did not sell them. When we contacted the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative in Hokkaido, which produced irradiated potatoes, the answer was that the irradiation project had been stopped and the facilities were being dismantled. The reason given was that the facilities had become decrepit. It has been 50 years since the Shihoro Agricultural Co-operative started the potato sprouting business, the only irradiation of food permitted under Japan's Food Sanitation Law, but that has now come to an end.

They say the reason is that the facilities have become old, but if the irradiation project was going well, wouldn't they have renewed the facilities and built more splendid ones? In recent years, irradiated

potato production has continued to decline, to one tenth of its original volume. This is proof of the lack of social acceptance. This can be said to be the result of our opposition movement, which has been appealing to society about the problems of food irradiation.

However, we must not be too optimistic. Radiation sterilisation of raw liver is being studied. Radiation sterilisation of spices is also pending and has not been withdrawn. Irradiated food from abroad, which is not permitted in Japan, continues to be imported and violated.

The liaison group held a lecture on food irradiation in September, reviewed 50 years of campaigning and shared information on future issues. We will hold another meeting on 31 October. We hope that many of you will join us and let's put an end to food irradiation with the voice of consumers!



(Photo) Hokkaido Shihoro Agricultural Cooperative Isotope Irradiation Centre, demolished as of 2023

In the News:

## **Thousands join climate protest in Tokyo calling for '100% renewable energy'**

*Consumers Union of Japan participated in the 18 September 2023 rally in Tokyo, protesting against nuclear power, for 100% renewable energy.*

Quote: As the world witnessed record heat this summer and rain disasters become more frequent, thousands of people joined a climate protest event here on Sept. 18, calling for a society powered 100% by renewable energy with stricter climate policies and no nuclear power.

The gathering, part of the “climate action” protests worldwide, was organized by the youth group Fridays for Future Tokyo and others. The Tokyo version featured a panel discussion and live music performance at Yoyogi Park in Shibuya Ward. The organizers said a total of some 8,000 people participated in the event and protest march from the park to Shibuya Station, with signs that read, “No to fossil fuel” and “Passing Earth to the next generations.”

19 September 2023

Source: Mainichi Shimbun

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20230919/p2a/00m/0na/009000c>



### **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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