

Consumers Union of Japan

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From the Editors:

Rice and Peace in the News

This spring, high rice prices have been in the news almost daily. As consumers, we cannot understand how the cost of such an important commodity has doubled. And in many shops, there was no rice at all.

Farmers protested in the streets of Tokyo. What about the cost of imported inputs, such as oil, fertilizers and pesticides? We again raise our slogan of local production, local consumption. And of course, we do not want genome-edited foods...

Beyond that, this 197th issue of Japan Resources has a focus on peace in Asia, with two contributions from Japan and from our friends in South Korea: "Citizens of the World Against Military Expansion"

We will add a feature soon, so you may contribute to Consumers Union of Japan, with a donation online.

- Editors

1) Citizens of the World Against Military Expansion

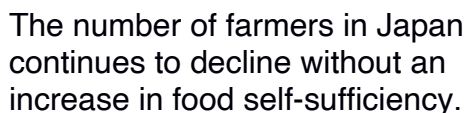
By Michiyo Koketsu (Secretary
General, Consumers Union of Japan)

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) has continued to voice its protest against these evil laws. In addition to issuing a statement of protest against the revision of the three Security Treaty documents in 2010, we also issued a joint statement with Shufuren, the oldest consumer organisation in Japan, opposing the possession of enemy base attack capability and increased defense spending.

However, since the revision of the three security documents promised to double defense spending, the expansion of military business has become all the more obvious.

Therefore, in March 2024, Consumers Union of Japan, together with Shufuren and the Network Against Japan Arms Trade (NAJAT), held a protest demonstration in front of the headquarters of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Mitsubishi Electric, both of which are in the forefront of arms exports.

Then in June, we held another protest in front of MHI's general meeting of shareholders.



If this trend continues, our food security will be in a critical situation. Consumers also need to demand a political system that enables many more people to engage in agriculture.

Consumers should get involved in agriculture, even if only a little, so that we can not only consume, but also support each other's livelihood from the standpoint of producing food.

Together with the farmers who organized the “Peasant Revolt in March 2025” let us learn from the efforts of Japan’s Co-ops and other organizations and think about what we can do as consumers.

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In addition to domestic actions, in August 2024 we released a Joint Statement for Peace in Asia by Consumers Union of Japan, together with Shufuren, and the Dore Consumer's Cooperative Union in South Korea.

This was because we felt the "Taiwan contingency" that was being propagated at the time of the revision of the three Security Treaty documents was problematic.

We believed that solidarity among citizens not only in Japan but also in Asia was necessary to prevent Asia from once again becoming a battleground.

We had shared a sense of crisis with the Dore Co-op since we received a solidarity message from them for the international symposium called "Let's Connect Citizens for Peace in Asia" commemorating the general meeting of CUJ in 2023.

In the statement, we said, "At a time of ongoing global military expansion, Asian consumer and citizen groups need to stand in solidarity and appeal for anti-war and peace," and urged that all international confrontational issues be resolved through dialogue, not military force.

Endorsements have come not only from Japan, but also from Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and New Zealand. They are mainly friends who stand in solidarity with the movement against genetic modification and GM foods. For these groups, peace is not merely the absence of war and conflict, but a peaceful and prosperous state free from violence, poverty, suppression

of human rights, discrimination, and environmental destruction.

I was reminded that peace activism is by no means the work of peace organizations alone.

War does not just happen one day. It creeps into our lives little by little. In Aomori, Kyoto, Oita, and other locations around Japan, preparations are underway to build new or additional ammunition depots to store missiles. There are also plans to build them in areas close to residential areas, causing widespread anxiety.

Resident evacuation drills are being held in many parts of Japan to prepare for the possibility of ballistic missile attacks.

Although Japan has a Peace Constitution that renounces war, it has begun to become a "war-hungry nation."

Consumers Union of Japan opposes the military buildup that is the origin of war, and we will continue to raise our voice persistently, to ensure a healthy life for the future.

I was reminded that the Korean Peninsula is still in a state of truce and that Taiwan has a complicated relationship with China.

I also learned that it is not easy to appeal against military expansion. In this series of articles, we will introduce citizens around the world who are resisting war and military buildup, as a step toward building peace.

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2) Citizens of the World Against Militarization

South Korea: Pathways to Confront War and Militarism: From Arms Trade Monitoring to Climate Crisis Response

By Yeo Ji-woo (Action Name: Joo)
(Coordinator, Arms Trade Monitoring Campaign, World Without War)

The South Korean NGO World Without War is an organization of pacifists and anti-militarists working to eliminate war and its various causes, based on the belief that all war is a crime against humanity. It began in 2003 as a group of service-deniers and their supporters and has been active ever since.

Today, World Without War has three main pillars of activity: the Arms Trade Monitoring Campaign, the Refuse to Serve Organizing Campaign, and the Climate Crisis and Militarism Campaign.

Arms Trade Monitoring Campaign

The first pillar is an arms trade monitoring campaign. South Korea exports deadly weapons such as firearms and missiles to countries in conflict and police weapons such as tear gas and water cannons to dictatorships. The South Korean government sees the conflicts and international instability in Ukraine, Palestine, and other countries as an opportunity to make money, and is further expanding and supporting arms exports. Meanwhile, efforts to diplomatically resolve such conflicts and promote peace are sparse.

Therefore, since 2013, World Without War has been resisting the arms

industry in South Korea, especially arms fairs, by creating a network called “Action Against Arms Fairs”. To inform the public about the unethical nature of the arms industry, we have been conducting artistic actions, rallies, lectures, exhibitions, and lawsuits for the disclosure of information.

Organizing Campaigns for Refusing to Serve in the Military

The second pillar is a campaign to organize those who refuse to serve in the military. Refusers of military service in South Korea, a conscription-based nation, were held in prison for more than a year until a few years ago. After almost 20 years of effort, an alternative service system (*) was introduced in 2021 for conscientious objectors, requiring them to serve in a correctional facility.

However, there are various problems, such as the alternative service period being twice as long as military service and the service institution being limited to correctional facilities, and efforts are being made to improve the system. Also, as for support for people outside of South Korea, we have supported service refusals from Thailand, where the right to refuse military service has not yet been recognized, and Russian service refusal refugees who fled the war and came to Korea, and we have worked in solidarity with them as well.

Climate Crisis and Militarism Campaign

The third pillar is the Climate Crisis and Militarism Campaign. This campaign, still in its early stages, focuses on the interrelationship

between war and the climate crisis. The climate crisis is both a cause and a consequence of war. A report by the Conflict Environment Observatory (CEOBS), a British environmental research organization, estimates that national defense forces account for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. However, greenhouse gas emissions from the military sector are not properly regulated by national laws or international treaties.

World Without War is therefore planning case studies of military greenhouse gas emissions and management in major foreign countries, as well as artistic actions and other activities to show that military activity is a form of violence that exacerbates the climate crisis.

World Without War hopes to achieve peace through these activities. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but the realization of a situation in which all people can live with dignity, free of violence and threats. Let us work together to create that path.

(*) A system that allows people to fulfill their conscription obligations in organizations other than the armed forces for reasons such as personal beliefs or religion.

Yeo Ji-woo (Profile)

Born in 1988. Peace activist and board game designer; translator of English-language books on conscientious objection and peace, including *Refusal to Serve: A Guide for Change* (originally titled “Conscientious Objection”) and *Teenagers Design Peace* (originally titled “World Peace and Other 4th-Grad”)

He is also a translator of books on conscientious objection and peace in English, including “Conscientious Objection.”



Members climb on top of an armored vehicle displayed at the DX KOREA 2022 Arms Fair and play violin and guitar in protest.



Members participate in the 2024 Climate Justice Parade with placards that read “War is a Main Culprit of the Climate Crisis” and pink symbols.

###

Our Future and the Future of Wetlands

9 May 2025

By Yoshimasa Harano

What image do you have of “wetlands”?

Waterlogged. They are damp. There are bugs and gnarly, disgusting creatures. Filthy, grimy places...

For lovers of living things, it is a treasure trove of birds, fish, amphibians, aquatic insects and rare plants. However, many people are aware that the land is economically unproductive and would be more useful to humans if it were reclaimed and turned into factories and residential areas.

But wetlands are purification systems, buffer systems for heavy rainfall and storm surges, carbon dioxide storage systems and food production systems. Destroying wetlands is destroying these human-useful systems.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which aims to conserve and make wise use of wetlands, holds a Conference of the Parties every three years, with COP15 scheduled for July 2025 in Zimbabwe. This year, the theme is “Protecting Wetlands for our Common Future”.

Wetlands exist for our common future. We must never forget that “we” includes you and me.

<https://nishoren.net/new-information/21250> (Japanese)

###

US-Japan Trade Negotiations: We are firmly opposed to the selling out of agriculture and food

2 May 2025

Negotiations are underway between Japan and the US in response to the Trump administration's demand for high tariffs. There is no justification for such tariff demands in the first place. We should not accept unjustified demands, but join with other countries in demanding a change in policy from the US. Any attempt to outflank other countries in order to get better terms only for our own country will only lead to a loss of international credibility. Such negotiations can hardly be described as talks between nations, which should be on equal terms, and will only lead to greater concessions.

We are very concerned that in these negotiations, in exchange for securing exports of industrial products, imports of agricultural and livestock products will be greatly expanded and standards relating to food safety will be drastically eased under the banner of “non-tariff barriers.” These items are listed by the Office of the US Trade Representative.

The US has repeatedly asked Japan to increase imports of US rice and beef, with many other agricultural and livestock products also on the list.

Rice is our staple food and a crop where Japan aims for self-sufficiency. Instead of increasing imports, we should try to increase domestic production. Importing large quantities of wheat and soybeans, considering Japan's low self-sufficiency rates, and

beef and pork, will have a devastating impact on domestic production.

The US Trade Representative calls for Japan to relax rules for post-harvest pesticide use, change our pesticide residue standards as well as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) related import conditions.

Protecting domestic agriculture should be a top priority. Food safety should never be sold off for the sake of industrial exports.

We strongly urge the Government to ensure that Japan's agriculture and food safety is not undermined by negotiations with the US.

<https://nishoren.net/new-information/21231> (Japanese)

###

Statement of Protest against the Government Decision on the Seventh Strategic Energy Plan

21 February 2025

On 18 February 2025, the Japanese government approved its Seventh Strategic Energy Plan, which sets forth a return to a policy of promoting nuclear power generation.

The Sixth Strategic Plan for 2021 states that an important theme is to show the path of energy policy toward achieving carbon neutrality in 2050, and that renewable energy will be positioned as the main source of power and raised to 36-38% in the power source composition. Also, nuclear power will be reduced as

much as possible, in line with the policy since 2014.

However, in the Seventh Strategy Plan, this phrase has been deleted, and the FY2040 power source composition forecast calls for the utilization of approximately 20% nuclear power plants. This justifies the resumption of nuclear power plant operations, which have been aggressively pursued during this period. It also further promotes the rebuilding and development of next-generation innovative reactors. A record number of 41,421 comments were received in the one-month public comment period that began at the end of last year, many of which were negative toward a return to the use of nuclear power plants.

The 2011 TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident completely destroyed the so-called “safety myth” and also revealed that the accident was a “man-made disaster” caused by TEPCO management’s prior knowledge of the tsunami hazard and yet neglecting to address it.

After the Fukushima nuclear accident, the nuclear power plants that supplied nearly 30% of the nation’s electricity needs were completely shut down, but the absolute capacity of the facilities was sufficient and the demand for electricity was never interrupted.

The Three Mile Island accident, the Chernobyl accident, and the Fukushima Daiichi accident have all led to a common understanding around the world that nuclear power plants cannot coexist, especially in

the earthquake-prone country of Japan.

The time has come for modern society, which has globalized in pursuit of economic growth based on the idea of supreme productivity, to clearly realize that the earth is finite. It is necessary to fundamentally review the mass-production, mass-consumption, and mass-disposal society itself. However, the new plan proposes the expansion of nuclear power plants on the assumption that the demand for electric power will increase due to the spread of artificial intelligence (AI) and other factors.

Now is the time for all of us to seek a way of living that is within our means based on a new paradigm, without placing economic growth as the highest priority.

In Japan, a power shift is spreading through various local initiatives. Through the power of local communities, the shift away from nuclear power and toward natural energy is steadily progressing in Japan, albeit belatedly.

Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) strongly protests the government decision on the Seventh Strategic Energy Plan, which promotes a return to a policy of promoting nuclear power generation, and demands that it be rescinded.

###

Request and letter of inquiry regarding the sale of genome-edited tomatoes

To: Y's Mart, Inc.

We are a consumer and citizens' group seeking food safety and campaigning against genetic engineering of food products. We sent a similar request and letter of inquiry to your company in June 2024.

We were disappointed that you could not answer the concerns and questions of consumers, and then we received information from a consumer that your stores continued to sell genome-edited tomatoes, so we sent the request and letter of inquiry again.

As we informed you in our previous letter of request, genome editing technology is a technology that primarily destroys specific genes.

Genome editing of plants uses genetic modification technology, and there is a possibility that genes are damaged in the process of genetic manipulation, resulting in the production of unexpected harmful substances.

Furthermore, the safety and environmental impact of the process has not been reviewed by any independent government agency. Genome-edited foods are not required to be labeled, and the products sold in your stores have only a small label indicating that they have been genome-edited.

This means that some consumers may purchase tomatoes without knowing that they are genome-edited tomatoes.

In addition, it is said that these genome-edited tomatoes may contain 4 to 5 times more GABA than ordinary tomatoes. It has been pointed out that pregnant and lactating women need to be careful not to take too much GABA, so, there is no end to the concerns.

We, as consumers, are concerned about genome-edited foods whose safety cannot be said to have been confirmed. Food safety and consumer trust are of utmost importance to food companies. We hope that you will reconsider your handling of these products.

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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