

Dear co-operators from the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives, colleagues from ICA and distinguished guests, I am Chitose Arai, the Vice President of Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, JCCU. Currently, I am also the Chairperson of Co-op Mirai, the biggest consumer co-op in Japan running businesses in Tokyo area, the Vice President of International Co-operative Alliance Asia and the Pacific Region, and a member of ICA Asia and the Pacific Committee on Women. Let me add that I am also a co-op member, a mother and a grandmother just like some of you.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for giving me the opportunity to extend my congratulatory address to ICA-ACFSMC Regional Workshop on "Re-work, Re-imagine and Re-shape: Advancing Women CEOs in Co-operatives". I would very much like to attend the Workshop today, but unfortunately I have a prior engagement. I hope all of you to have fruitful discussions during the two-day Workshop.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to present the direction and challenges of the Japanese consumer co-operatives regarding gender integration.

JCCU examined the achievements and the future direction of the work on gender equality in the Fiscal 2015.

During the evaluation activity, JCCU found out that in recent years, the circumstances surrounding workers, especially female workers and irregular workers have undergone major changes. And that responses are required in light of changes in circumstances, the circumstances that each employee's consciousness is also diversifying.

Moreover, JCCU noticed that balancing work and nursing care, work and childcare will become issues more than ever, facing the aging of the population and an increase of double-income households.

We are entering the era in which workers will choose their own work styles.

Co-ops also need to become organizations that allow workers to choose their job from a variety of work styles and where workers can respect such diversity among each other. Based on this background, JCCU identified three key perspectives to promote gender equality in the field of staff organization: work-life balance, empowerment of women, and diversity. And to promote gender integration according to each Co-op's circumstances.

<JCCU Targets>

JCCU will

1. further develop the capacity of female employees and give them opportunities for promotion. JCCU will enhance its efforts, aiming for women to account for at least 20% of all the executives by the end of the fiscal 2020.
2. continue its efforts to ensure that half of the new graduates who join JCCU are women. Regarding non-regular employees, JCCU will expand its efforts to develop their capacity, promote them to regular positions, and enhance educational systems.
3. provide training so that employees can build up a career while balancing work and family responsibilities.

As a member of the ICA-AP Women's Committee, I would like to also introduce the Committee's training activities aiming at women's capacity building.

The TOT manual, which is the manual for the Training of the Trainers, was developed in 2005 in collaboration with the International Labour Organization. In addition to this manual, ICA-AP Women's Committee released the Resource Guide for Advanced Training of Co-operatives on Entrepreneurship Development of Women and Gender Equality, a supplementary manual, in the spring of 2015. Both manuals have been translated in several languages and used not only for ICA trainings but also in other programs. I would be grateful if these manuals could be used in as many countries as possible.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development (the 2030 Agenda). In the Agenda, it is stated in Goal 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, and in Goal 8 to “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”. The situation by country is different but the “glass ceiling” for women still exists.

I believe that if we create a working environment that enables diverse individuals to continue working lively, we will be able to create a solid foundation for Co-op’s business continuity and development.

If the workplace is "vibrant", its value will be increased, and ultimately the increased value will enhance the brand image of the Co-op.

Finally, I would like to conclude calling that although it may be a small matter for us to act with the challenges occurring in our communities, these continuous efforts will lead us to the realization of a sustainable society.

Let us promote these activities for the further development of co-operatives and for the realization of a society in which all women shine.

I would like to finish my greetings wishing the success of the Workshop.

Chitose Arai
Vice President
Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union