

News from Noumiren, La Via Campesina member in Japan

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« I do not think that I can farm this year, but with the members of local NOUMINREN, we will take one step after another to make a come back of our agriculture in our village! Your support is inspiring us to live through this crisis. » _ Miura san, member of NOUMINREN Hamadoori in Fukushima.

It has been 2 weeks since the huge earthquake and tsunami stroke Japan. 10,102 people (Mar 25th) have lost their life, and still 17,053 people are missing. Moreover, about 250,000 evacuated people who lost their houses are still in the shelters.

● Update information on disaster relief in Fukushima Prefecture

The Disaster relief team of NOUMINREN Fukushima has established a food dispensary with a variety of food donated by NOUMINREN members from both Fukushima and other branches. Soup was prepared to distribute to the refugees who had not eaten warm food since March 11th, the day the disaster struck. In days following the disaster, 15 elderly persons have already died in Fukushima and Iwate Prefectures from exposure to cold weather and food shortage. Beside this, due to the accident of the nuclear power plants, radioactivity that is over the regulated limit was detected in the some vegetables and milk of Fukushima, Ibaragi, Chiba, Tochigi, and Gunma prefectures. The government called on the prefectures to voluntarily refrain from shipping theses produces. Not only the producers are concerned but all Japanese consumers are worried.

● **Iwate Prefecture & Miyagi Prefecture** - areas severely hit by the earthquake and tsunami, and subsequent continuous aftershocks. 5000 persons already died. The disaster relief team of NOUMINREN Iwate is preparing to receive relief supplies coming from the rest of the country, while encouraging their members to assist. They also recently procured a storage area for these supplies near the NOUMINREN Iwate local office.

Miyagi Prefecture : Rice fields submerged 1 meter at deepest. NOUMIREN Miyagi is now coordinating with NOUMINREN Yamagata on disaster relief. A large amount of gas for transportation was bought to make transport possible again. NOUMINREN members were asked to offer their crops as well as other necessities. Water service and other public utilities are not recovered yet in the area.

For the chairman of Noumiren, “in order to reconstruct our life and agriculture, not only the support of the government is essential, but also our long term support is essential”.

On March 24th, NOUMINREN made five demands to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery. These included (1) supporting the affected farmers, (2) compensating the farmers affected by the radioactive accident (dairy farmers, crops that could not be shipped, and financial damages caused by misinformation), (3) ensuring the distribution and safety of rice and food, 4) Reconsider the reduction of rice acreage policy, and revive farmlands to urgently increase the production (as just the farmlands that were damaged by saltwater count over 20,000 acres. 5) Counter the shortage

of rice through distributing the reserved rice.

On the second point, the government along with Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO) answered that they will compensate the damages according to the law on compensation for nuclear damage. Any misinformation related to the accident will be compensated. Dairy farmers as well.

As not all shipping companies lowered their fees for shipping relief supplies, to send some food supplies like rice and plum pickles from Fukui pref to Fukushima pref. NOUMIREN faces very high shipping fees. The farmers have therefore asked the government to cover some of these transportation fees.

To check the level of radioactivity of the goods, Noumiren is trying to purchase a radioactive dosimeter and have asked La Via Campesina to help them to find one as in Japan the dosimeter are not available any more.

La Via Campesina Calls for Solidarity for the people of Japan

La Via Campesina expresses its deepest sympathies to all the people of Japan and all those who lost their families, friends, homes, livelihoods and all who are affected and now living in fear of a radiation leak from the damaged nuclear power plant. We are extending our support and solidarity and call on all our fellow social movements, peoples' organizations, civil society and all concerned citizens to join in and help the people of Japan in their time of greatest need.

The immediate task at hand now is to stand with the people of Japan in their moment of greatest need. We call on all of you to please help in any way you can. Any small amount can make a difference and will go a long way in the rescue and relief efforts.

You could send your support through :

NAME : Nouminundozenkokurengoukai

CONTACT NO : 81-3-3590-6759

BANK : MIZUHO BANK LTD.

BRANCH : Ikebukuro Nishiguchi Branch

ADDRESS : 1-15-2 Nishi Ikebukuro, Toshima-Ku, Tokyo

ACCOUNT NO : 229 1775644

SWIFTCODE : MHBKJPJT

OR

You could go directly to La Via Campesina website www.viacampesina.org and click the DONATE button.

AN EARTHQUAKE AND A TSUNAMI

On Friday, March 11, 2011, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake hit northern Japan, which in turn triggered a tsunami that reached heights of 10 meters. This was the strongest earthquake in recorded history to hit Japan and is the fourth strongest recorded earthquake since 1900. The major earthquake, together with the massive tsunami, devastated several cities, toppling buildings and homes and washing away everything in its path.

The official death toll in Japan as of Tuesday, March 15 has reached 2,475 with officials estimating this will increase as rescuers continue their search. Thousands are still missing and at least 450,000 are now living in shelters. There are reports of food and water shortages and aftershocks continue, with some reaching magnitudes of 6.0, making it even more difficult for both rescuers and survivors. And to make matters worse, the people are now faced with a radiation leak and threats of a potential nuclear meltdown as emergency workers exert all efforts to cool down and stop the fires at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

Japanese farmers are seriously affected by this tsunami. As shown in many media reports, many houses have been destroyed along with a lot of farm land and fisheries. Nouminren, the Japan Family Farmers Movement, a member of La Via Campesina, is itself unable to reach its own members in the hardest hit areas immediately following the disaster. However, Nouminren has set up a disaster-[countering] Assessment ? headquarter to measure impacts and assess the damage. It will be used to distribute food, water and, together with medical organizations, to save the lives and health of affected peoples.

EXTENDING OUR SOLIDARITY

Many of us are not strangers to tragedy and natural disasters and so many of us know that it is the immediate response and support that can save and change lives but also more importantly, it is the long term commitment and firm solidarity that helps rebuild lives and gives hope for a better future. We as peasants, believe that it is the rebuilding of livelihoods and farms and fisheries that will help people get back on their feet. But we also hope that this rebuilding will lead towards a nuclear free and clean energy not only for Japan but also for the rest of the world.

We believe that with your solidarity, we will be able to give hope to the people of Japan and help them take that first step towards rebuilding their lives.

Globalize the hope! Globalize the struggle!
