

FUKUSHIMA DESK NEWS

Sendai Diocesan Support Center

No. 22 February, 2016

Increase of Depressed Patients Among Local Government Officials Five Years Since the Earthquake

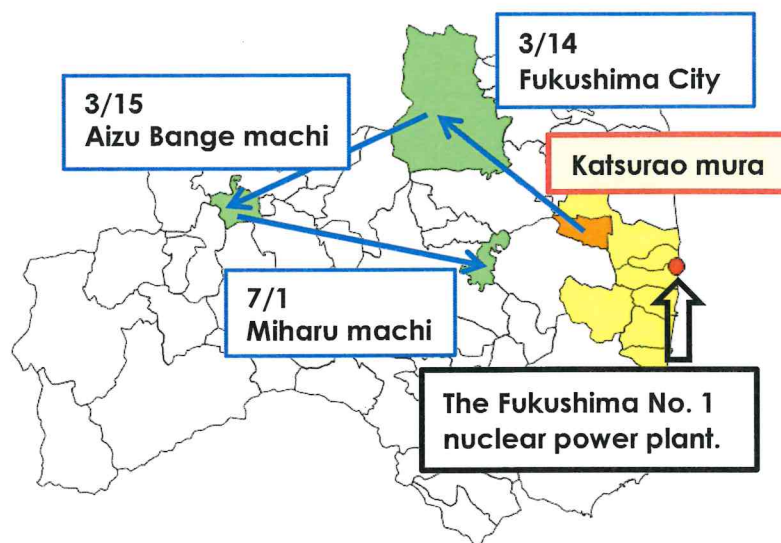
Five years have passed. During these years, a noted increase of those who suffer from depression is found among the local officials devoted to the reconstruction work in devastated areas. While people pay much attention to the disaster victims in many ways, they forget the men and women who are devoted to helping the victims in their professional duties. “After all, it’s their job, isn’t it?” The public officials themselves, too, try hard to sympathize with the sufferings of the victims, and to understand their dissatisfaction and anxiety.

At times the generous local officials suppress their own negative reactions against rude and ungrateful citizens. To help the situation, the national government provided financial support to Fukushima prefecture with which they established offices in five cities, i.e. Fukushima, Koriyama, Aizu, Soma and Iwaki, where people with emotional fatigue can be received for professional care.

The Village’s Wisdom Actualized Intensive Evacuation

We seldom hear about the small village called Katsurao Mura, situated in the Abukuma mountain chain with a population of only 1,500. However, the planning for evacuation of this small place had been simply excellent.

The planning for evacuation, announced immediately after the Earthquake in 2011, included



Evacuation Route Following the Radiation Accident

the elderly living alone, those who need care managers, the securing of buses and drivers, as well as saving all the important documents of the village office and the computer servers containing the information of every single resident of the village. Katsurao Village is mostly outside the 20km danger zone from the First Fukushima Nuclear Plant, but the mayor decided to apply the 20km zone evacuation policy for the entire village, keeping the Village Center just as it had functioned before the Earthquake.

While all the other villages and towns did not keep the original shapes, Katsurao kept the Pre-Earthquake form, thus enabling the residents to live in a much more peaceful atmosphere with its historical background of Miharu. Naturally there are difficulties and inconveniences, but the devotion of the village officials should deserve the appreciation of the residents who are still tasting something of their beloved history of Katsurao.

“Volunteer Work after Five” For Village Officials

It is the volunteers from Tokyo and Yokohama who come to visit at five p.m. to give hand treatment by aromatherapy to the public officials working for Katsurao Village who wish to be treated after their hard work for the evacuees. The generous visitors are the members of the Ibuki Juku, the volunteer group reported in the last issue of our Newsletter.



Going to town office after exercise. Support through aroma hand treatment

When volunteers visit the temporary houses of the evacuees, the first ones served are always the *regular members*, or the *authentic victims of the calamity*, while the public servants' turn is put off. The evacuation is prolonged, and the demanding hard work is always expected of the public servants. Their work must be quite hard, but their response with a pleasant smile manifests that the staff members are taking time generously to obtain good relationship with and understanding of the village administration.

The visiting volunteers from Tokyo area tell us that this recent additional help they

created for the village officials is proving quite meaningful, and that they are happy to have thought of this recent help. “These men and women who work so hard for Katsurao people must be extremely tired. Some of them soon fall asleep as soon as we start the therapy,” one of the volunteers from Tokyo says. Another one commented, “Once again I felt strongly that the suffering of Fukushima will still take a long time. What is it that makes a difference between Fukushima and Tokyo?” The sincere attitude of these volunteers from Tokyo convinced us that they are really with us.

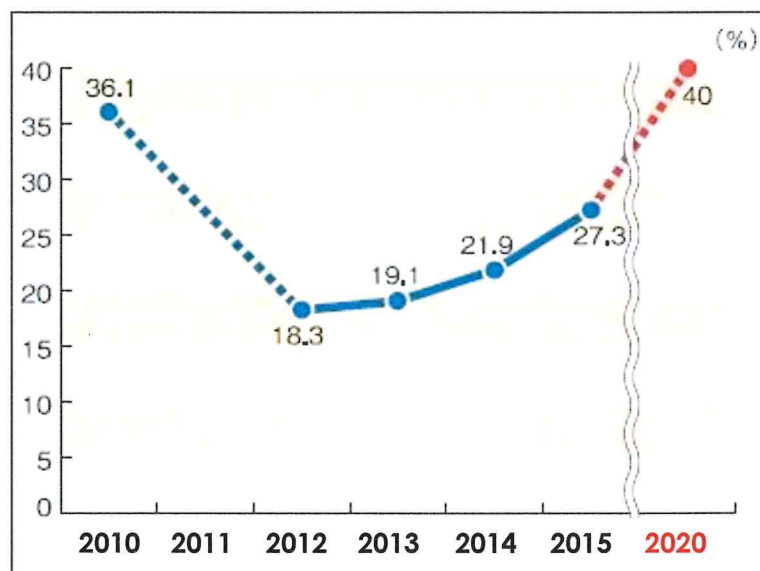
Utilizing Fukushima Products Becomes Promising Again for School Lunches

As is often reported in the present Newsletter as well, Fukushima Prefecture announces regularly the results of the tests of radioactive elements contained in the agricultural products.

The rice produced in this Prefecture during the past year has all passed (10,366,776 bags of 30kg each), including the earliest product of August 20, 2015. This means that 99.99% of the rice was all under the minimum, i.e. 25 Bq/kg.

However, this result is known only to 30 % of the people of the country. According to the investigation by the Board of Education of Fukushima Prefecture, the rate of utilizing the agricultural products of Fukushima for school lunches is 27.3%, which is 5.4% higher than the previous year. This is good improvement, but it is still inferior to the year before the Earthquake, when it marked 36.1%. Each city, town and village is organizing explanation meetings with the parents of the children on this matter. (Taken from *Fukushima Mippo* of January 15, 2016.)

**Percentage of the usage of prefecture products
for school lunches**

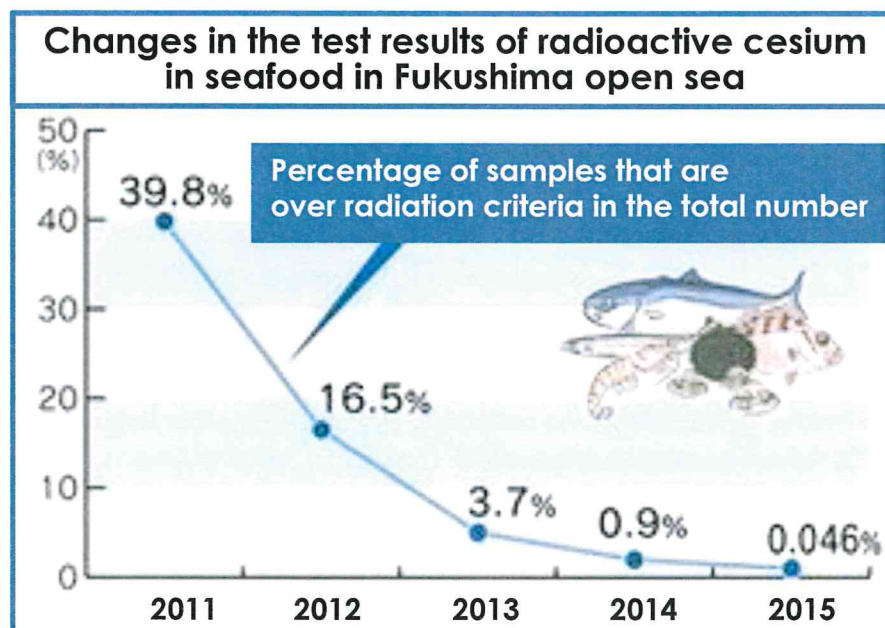


Test of Radioactive Elements in Fukushima Fish

In order to obtain basic information concerning the fish living along the coast of Fukushima, the Prefecture collected 71 kinds of fish, and gave them monitoring tests. The result was that out of the samples of 8577 individual fish which covered 180 species, only 4 kinds exceeded the standard value (100 Bq/1 kg), which was 0.046 %.

During the month of February, a new type of testing machine will be introduced at fish markets, which will not require destroying the form of the fish.

(Taken from *Fukushima Min-yu* of January 14, and *Fukushima Mimpo* of January 17, 2016.)



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