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The System of Foods with Function Claims: Current Situation and Issues

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<Summary>

The system of Foods with Function Claims (FFC) has been established since April 2015 and the number of notifications of FFC became over 1,000 during the third year after the enforcement of the system.

We, Consumer Affairs Agency, held "Investigative Commission on management of functional substances in the system of Foods with Function Claims", regarding how to manage "nutrients" and "foods with uncertain functional substances", which were studied in the Commission, and published as a report in December 2016. Also, we conduct various kinds of survey projects for proper implementation of the system. Furthermore, we are now working on improving the system based on the Regulatory Reform Implementation Plans decided by the Cabinet in June 2017.

The FFC system is a system which enables the businesses to label functions on foods by notification under the food business operator's own responsibility. Scientific evidence with high quality for safety and functionality, quality control, and proper labelling based on the scientific evidence are therefore important to increase reliability of this system.

We, Consumer Affairs Agency, would like to keep conducting the public propagation and raising awareness of food labelling systems including the systems such as the FFC system so that they can provide consumers with opportunities to make voluntary and reasonable product choices.

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Japanese Food Allergen Labeling Regulation and Detection Methods for Allergenic Ingredients

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<Summary>

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) decided to improve the allergen labeling system by amending the Food Sanitation Law in 2001. The Japanese labeling was divided into two stages, mandatory and recommended, according to the number of cases of actual illness and the degree of seriousness. The food labeling system for 7 specific allergenic foods (AF; egg, milk, wheat, buckwheat, peanuts, shrimp/prawn and crab) in Japan has been mandated. AF requires mandatory labeling by the ministerial ordinance. In addition the ministerial notification recommends that the 20 ingredients (Abalone, Squid, Salmon roe, Orange, Cashew nut, Kiwifruit, Beef, Walnut, Sesame seed, Salmon, Mackerel, Soybean, Chicken, Banana, Pork, Matsutake mushroom, Peach, Yam, Apple, and Gelatin) are labeled. To monitor the validity of the labeling system, the government announced the Japanese official methods for the detection of AF in a ministry notification in November 2002. The Japanese official methods consisted of ELISA methods kit for screening for AF, the western blot methods for egg and milk and the PCR methods for wheat, buckwheat, peanut, shrimp/prawn and crab as the confirmation tests. The MHLW has allowed them to monitor the labeling system. The notification includes the description that any foods containing AF protein greater than 10 μg/g should be labeled. The MHLW also described the validation protocol criteria in the 2006 official guidelines to standardize the Japanese official method for AF detection. Since the management of the food labeling policy was transferred from the MHLW to the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) in 2010, the CAA has established the Food Labeling Law, which went into effect in 2015.

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Towards a New Simplified Toxicity Test Using Human ES/iPS Cells and Realization of the Consortium

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<Summary>

Scientifically, fetuses are highly suitable for investigating the effects of chemical compounds on early human development. However, ethically, the use of fetuses for such experiments is impermissible. Consequently, compounds unknowingly toxic, such as thalidomide, have been discovered to have horrible side effects in users. Human stem cells may provide a model system equivalent to fetuses, but without the ethical complications. We previously developed a system that evaluated toxicity by administering compounds to human embryonic stem cells and analyzing the gene expression profiles (Fujibuchi et al. Joint Conference of CBI-Society and JSBi, 2011). We also showed that prediction of the toxicity category by gene networks and machine learning achieved higher accuracy than gene expression data or molecular structure descriptors (Yamane et al. Nucleic Acids Res., 2016). In this article, we discuss how to mature and commercialize this system with iPS cell-based drug discovery and introduce activities for future consortia.

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Recent Activities of CERA, ILSI RF

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<Summary>

CERA was established with a support of ILSI RF in Washington, D.C., USA, in March 2009. It was aimed to contribute to sustainable development of agricultural production through scientific development and application of ERA. Its activities involved four areas – systematic approach to ERA, receiving environment, LLP and ERA capacity building of developing countries. In each activity, efforts were focused to organize or participate in international scientific meetings and symposiums, and further to publish their outcomes in well-established scientific journals. The subjects have included agriculture, GM trees, aqua-ecosystems, RNAi, LLP and others, so as to contribute to disseminate scientific knowledge and information on ERA to wide international sectors. Particularly for the CERA's activities, some additional explanations have been added for easier understandings of the readers. The contents of the present article have been based on the confirmed information up to September 2015.

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< Research Institute of ILSI Japan Members >
Researches for "Eat Well Live Well" in the Ajinomoto Group

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<Summary>

To become a sustainably growing "global food company group," the Ajinomoto Group's R&D units are promoting a "shift to specialty" that creates high added value. We are doing so by concentrating and deploying our core technological strength – original, leading-edge bio-science and fine-chemical technologies derived from amino acids – with the deliciousness technologies and intangible strengths (customer-oriented value creation) generated from that technological strength in the two businesses of “Food Products" and "Amino Science.” In addition, the Group is working to enhance its R&D momentum by flexibly using open and linked innovation with research institutions and other companies in Japan and overseas.

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Report on Workshop "Application of Genome Editing Techniques in Agriculture in and Outside of Japan - Current Situation and Future"

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<Summary>

There have been increased expectations on application of genome editing techniques in plant breeding area. ILSI Japan Biotechnology Committee held workshops on genome editing in Agricultural area in 2013, 2014 and 2015 inviting speakers in and outside Japan, and had discussion on progress of technology, regulation and social acceptance of genome editing. Based on these workshops, ILSI Japan Workshop on "Application of Genome Editing Techniques in Agriculture in and outside of Japan - Current situation and Future" was held on July 10th 2017. Total of 273 people participated the workshop; 45% industry, 31% academia, 9% regulators, 6% media, etc. In this workshop, participants shared information on R&D progresses as well as regulatory considerations in and outside Japan and discussed significance of the on-going R&D programs and laid out challenges for the future among academia, industry, consumers, etc.

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< Friends in ILSI >

The Report of the 9th BeSeTo Meeting: Information Sharing amongst 5 ILSI Asian Affiliates on Issues and Challenges for Food Safety

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<Summary>

The 9th BeSeTo Meeting hosted by ILSI Japan was convened on August 31st and September 1st 2017 in Tokyo. It has been 9 years since the start and every year 3 affiliates ILSI Focal Point in China, ILSI Korea, and ILSI Japan take turns to host the meeting, and the 3rd cycle was about to finish.

This year over 50 participants from those 3 affiliates as well as from ILSI SEA Region and from ILSI Taiwan got together and exchanged the information and discussed issues/incidents on safety of food and nutrition, risk assessment, regulatory issues and the future branch collaborations.

Participants were not only the members and representatives of each affiliate, but also the head of Food Safety Standard Division of China National Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment, the Director and the researcher from Korea National Food Safety Information Service. The officer of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Japan presenting the situation of mandatory HACCP implementation in Japan and the Trustee of ILSI Japan providing special lecture on the concerns on Food Safety Assurance also attended.

Mr. Uzu, Executive Director of ILSI Japan chaired the 9th BeSeTo Meeting.