

By Power of Cooperation

We Can Recover!



Akira BANZAI (JA-Zenchu President)

It has been nearly seven months since the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake & Tsunami, a disaster of unprecedented proportions that claimed many precious lives and at the same time robbed survivors of livelihoods built up from previous generations. I sincerely mourn for the lives lost and I offer again my condolences to the persons afflicted by this disaster.

The backbone industries in the regions hit particularly hard by this disaster were the agricultural and fishery industries. Farmland along the coast was flooded by the tsunami, which also damaged irrigation/drainage networks and many other agriculture-related facilities. There is still no end in sight to the harmful repercussions of the TEPCO nuclear power plant accident, almost seven months after the disaster struck. This damage has had a major impact on operations of primary agricultural co-operative (JAs) in these coastal areas.

The JA Group will marshal its full capabilities in working toward an early recovery. In addition to a relief package exceeding 10 billion yen (133

million USD) and individual donations from members, officials and employees of JAs, we have continued our dedicated efforts to deploy JA Group Assistance Teams, to implement operational countermeasures at JA locations in disaster-hit areas, and to undertake measures to combat the damage caused by the TEPCO nuclear power plant accident.

At the same time, I believe that the central and local governments have an extremely large role to play in bringing recovery to the afflicted areas. We must seek to establish sustainable agriculture to encourage all JA members who have lost their means of production to remain in farming, and to reflect in the vision for recovery the genuine wishes of local communities so that those who have had their livelihoods taken from them can live with a sense of security in these communities.

The devastation caused by the disaster was of an enormity defying description. Despite the difficulties, JA members, officials and employees and local residents in the distressed areas are helping each other out in making a strong push towards recovery, and I have been deeply impressed by this collaboration. Indeed, let me express here my profound gratitude for the heartwarming support we have received not only from JAs nationwide but also friends of co-operative abroad in providing assistance to people in the afflicted regions.

The breadth and depth of the support that has arrived from all over Japan and around the world following the disaster seems to me to indicate a heightened sense of the value of mutual assistance and mutual ties. I have no doubt that the road to recovery will be a long and steep one, but I am convinced that the encouragement and help that so many people are providing each other will take us all the way down this road.