

Messages from FUKUSHIMA

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A 9-magnitude earthquake struck just off the Northeastern coast of East Japan at 2:46 PM on March 11 2011. It is said that such gigantic earthquake happens roughly once every 1000 years. A maximum 6 to 7 on the Japanese earthquake intensity scale was measured many times for a long time. It is indeed a threat by nature where Tsunamis following big earthquake would cause massive damages in Japan which is surrounded by oceans. The giant waves swept towards the shores several times between about 15 minutes and one hour after the earthquake, which deluged cities and rural areas. The death toll including missing persons was approximately 19,000 people in mostly three prefectures, Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate in Tohoku.

Fukushima-ken Hama-dori, in which I live, has been ranked as one of a collection centers for electric power plants in Japan. Among others, 10 nuclear power plants are concentrated. Units 1 to 4 at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant were exploded one after another after the earthquake. These awful accidents presented unprecedented difficulties for Fukushima. We had to live in anxiety and with fear as residents had to be evacuated from their beautiful land blessed with nature and their families and communities had been separated.

Those affected within 20 kilo meters from TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power plant were not allowed to go back home for more than a year while worrying so much about their families who may have been killed or have been missing. It still wrings my heart to think about their situations.

Without contamination by radioactive materials there would have been some course of action. Most of us living in this area have felt a sense of disappointment, emptiness, and strong anger, as we could do nothing about this.

Because of various factors, including weather conditions and geographical conditions, it has been confirmed that situation of radioactive contamination has been complex from highly contaminated areas to low contaminated areas. With this wide-spread of radioactive contamination, we have to decide how to live under the merciless pressure on us.

What we had heard about in every day's life, for example, 'the peaceful use of nuclear power' and 'the myth about the safety of a nuclear power plant' have been broken to pieces. Securing electric energy is, no doubt, important for our daily life. However, I strongly believe that there is a big question mark over the idea of putting too much stress on economic growth based on capitalist market economy which risks so many things in today's world.

I am a farmer, living with the land blessed with nature. In my daily life, I often notice that any measure against nature has to pay too much for it.

Our land in which we will live has been and will be in a difficult condition due to severe radioactive contamination. However, we learned much about how to deal with radioactive materials from a scientist who has experiences on Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Then I have started a 'Green Oil Project.'

I will continue to take a step forward towards the future where we will be able to live with beautiful nature again and have the joy of living.