



Progress Report Aleph Inc.
2013/2014

On the Leadership Declaration of the
'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative



This progress report features activities that Aleph Inc. has implemented in the last two years (2013/2014) and recognizes the seven points in the Leadership Declaration cited below.

Leadership Declaration

All signatory companies acknowledge and support the three objectives of the international "Convention on Biological Diversity":

1. Conservation of biological diversity
2. Sustainable use of its components
3. Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits that arise out of the utilization of genetic resources.

and commit themselves to:

1. Analyzing corporate activities with regard to their impacts on biological diversity;
2. Including the protection of biological diversity within their environmental management system;
3. Appointing a responsible individual within the company to steer all activities in the biodiversity sector and report to the Management Board;
4. Defining realistic, measurable objectives that are monitored and adjusted every two to three years;
5. Publishing activities and achievements in the biodiversity sector in the company's annual, environmental, and/or corporate social responsibility report;
6. Informing suppliers about the company's biodiversity objectives and integrating suppliers accordingly and step by step;
7. Exploring the potential for cooperation with scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or governmental institutions with the aim of deepening dialogue and continuously improving the corporate management system vis-à-vis the biodiversity domain.

To demonstrate ongoing commitment, member companies will provide the Initiative with a progress report every two years.

1. Analyzing corporate activities with regard to their impacts on biological diversity

Aleph Inc. has not quantitatively analyzed all the influences of its corporate activities on biological diversity.

However, we have recognized that the most important impact on biological diversity through our business activity is presumably caused by the procurement of food resources and materials for our restaurant chain. For example, our procurement policy and behavior will affect the environment and biodiversity of rice paddies of approximately 1,000 ha through our procurement of rice supplied at our restaurant stores. Aleph summed up the procured amount of food resources and materials and has reported on it in the Aleph Environmental Report (in Japanese) every year. The procurement volume in 2013 fiscal year was 31,633t of food resources and 635t of materials.¹

Aleph also monitored and reported its energy consumption, water consumption, amount of food waste and its recycling rate every year, which are related to CO₂ emissions that indirectly affect biological diversity through climate change.



Aleph Inc. manages about 300 restaurant stores all over Japan. Its mainstay is hamburger steak restaurant "Bikkuri Donkey".



Aleph Inc. procures about 4,000t of rice a year and has about 500 accredited rice farmers.

2. Including the protection of biological diversity within their environmental management system

Aleph Inc. already set up the Aleph Environmental Action Plan as its environmental management system in 2003. It consists of an environment policy and some environmental targets. The targets were reviewed every three years. Aleph included the target of biological diversity within the Plan during the review of 2012. The policy and targets of the Action Plan are as follows (target 6 is on biological diversity):

Aleph Environmental Action Plan

- Policy

Our aim is to contribute to building a sustainable recycle-oriented society, to reduce environmental loads resulting from our business activities, and to facilitate conservation of nature and environment.

- Targets (fiscal 2012-2014)

1. CO₂ emissions from energy usage per sales will be reduced annually by 2.0% every year.
2. The water usage per sales will be reduced by 1.0% every year.
3. The recycling rate of kitchen refuse will be 90% by fiscal 2014 and maintain the rate thereafter.
4. The recycling loop of kitchen refuse will consist of 2 areas with 3 groups.
5. Aleph Inc. will supply merchandise to all group restaurants and shops with consideration of environmental objectives.
6. Aleph Inc. agrees with the purpose of the Convention on Biological Diversity and will conserve biological diversity.
7. We will provide the atmosphere in which all employees can be aware of and consider environmental issues and achieve them by themselves.
8. We will work with customers and local people for a better sustainable society.

3. Appointing a responsible individual within the company to steer all activities in the biodiversity sector and report to the Management Board

Aleph EMS commission steers the Aleph Environmental Action Plan and a responsible individual is appointed out of the commission members. The appointees of this period are:

- Mr. Takahiro Sasaki, Leader of Eco Team (until January 2014)
- Mr. Yoshinori Hashibe, Manager of Agricultural Department (since February 2014).

4. Defining realistic, measurable objectives that are monitored and adjusted every two to three years

■ Biodiversity Target

With regard to biodiversity conservation through its business activities, Aleph Inc. set its target as enlarging the area of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" that meet some requirements.² After achieving the first target of 100ha, in 2012 Aleph set the target of increasing the farming area of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" up to 120ha by 2014. The results are as follows:

2012: 110ha	2013: 108ha	2014: 111ha
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The main reason for not increasing the farming area sufficiently is the difficulty of weed control under the organic rice farming. One of the requirements of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" is organic farming. However, the weed control method without herbicides is not established for everyone to do easily everywhere. Consequently, some farmers who took the challenge of organic farming suffer from spreading weed and declining their yields. In 2014 Aleph carried out a comparative survey covering "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" on the one hand and "Less Agrochemical Rice Paddies"³ on the other hand. The items of the survey were taste, functionality for health, soil microbial diversity, number of wildlife species that are observed and so on. As a result, we couldn't find a significant difference between the two methods as to the items that were examined this year.

Therefore, we began to consider defining a new target for rice paddies that is applicable not only to the organic rice paddies but also to the “Less Agrochemical rice paddies”, which is capable of enhancing the biodiversity in rice paddies and is sustainable also for the rice farmers.

■ Other Targets

Aleph set other environmental targets in the Aleph Environmental Action Plan as mentioned above. The achievements of measurable targets are as follows⁴:

Item	target	fiscal 2012	fiscal 2013
1. reduction of CO ₂ emission from energy usage per sales	2.0% reduction every year	2.09% increase	2.41% reduction
2. reduction of water usage per sales	1.0% reduction every year	4.59% reduction	0.86% reduction
3. recycling rate of kitchen refuse	90% by fiscal 2014	80.4%	80.5%
4. recycling loop of kitchen refuse	2 areas with 3 groups	3 areas with 3 groups	3 areas with 3 groups

5. Publishing activities and achievements in the biodiversity sector in the company's annual, environmental, and/or corporate social responsibility report

Aleph Inc. has been annually reporting its activities and achievements regarding biodiversity in the Aleph Environmental Report (in Japanese). The latest report on the fiscal 2013 year (covering April 2013 to March 2014) was published in December 2014. It is available on the Aleph website; http://www.aleph-inc.co.jp/Company_outline/outline.html (in Japanese)

We also publish the Aleph Activity Summary, which describes our main biodiversity action in English. This was last revised in October 2014. It is also available on the Aleph website; http://www.aleph-inc.co.jp/english_business/outline_en.html

6. Informing suppliers about the company's biodiversity objectives and integrating suppliers accordingly and step by step

■ Informing and integrating activities

Aleph Inc. has held a conference with directly contracted rice farmers every December since 2009 to discuss and exchange their experiences and information about the "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" project for more efficient methods of organic rice farming and biodiversity enhancement and for the encouragement of "Less Agrochemical Rice" farmers.

In addition to the contract farmers, Aleph began to invite contract rice farmers of the *Bikkuri Donkey* franchisee companies to this conference for the purpose of informing all the *Bikkuri Donkey* rice farmers about Aleph's biodiversity objectives. In 2013 one group of farmers contracted by a franchisee company participated in the conference. In 2014 the number of participants increased to two groups.



Conference with rice farmers (held every year)

■ An episode of this period

Aleph suggested to its "Living-Things-Friendly Rice" farmers to participate in the CBD COP12 that was held in October 2014. Mr. Koshi Chiba, a leader of one farmer group attended the COP and participated in the "CBD COP 12 Business and Biodiversity Forum" with Aleph delegates. He participated in the panel session where the Aleph delegate made a presentation about rice procurement. He answered to the question of the participant of the session, "(By joining Aleph's project,) it became fun to go to my rice paddy and look for creatures. I'm proud of operating the rice paddies that are designated as wetlands of international importance by Ramsar Convention." The participants were interested in his answer. It may be one example of Aleph's supplier integration.



Mr. Chiba (on the left) and Aleph delegate at CBD COP12, PyeongChang, Korea

7. Exploring the potential for cooperation with scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or governmental institutions with the aim of deepening dialogue and continuously improving the corporate management system vis-à-vis the biodiversity domain

■ Cooperation with NGOs for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

In 2013 Aleph registered its “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” project as Double 20 Campaign (*Nijyu-maru*) project⁵ hosted by the Japan Committee for IUCN (IUCN-J). This project aims to build a network of active members working together toward the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” project was certified as one of best practice examples among the projects registered as Double 20 Campaign in March 2014 by the Japan Committee for United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDB-J)⁶.

Aleph participated in the conferences held by IUCN-J or UNDB-J and introduced its project for the mainstreaming of biodiversity; for example, COP1 to Double 20 Campaign on February 2014 Osaka and the 3rd International Conference for Enhancing Biodiversity in Agriculture on December 2014 Miyagi.

■ Cooperation with an NGO for employee awareness

In 2012, Aleph started its cooperation activities of *Yatsuda* restoration with the non-profit organization Tsukuba Environment Forum⁷ in Ibaraki, Kanto district. *Yatsuda* is the Japanese name of a certain type of rice paddies that is located at the end of a ravine in a forest. Many types of wildlife species live in *Yatsuda*. However, *Yatsuda* is liable to be abandoned because it's usually small and hard to cultivate with agricultural machines. That's why *Yatsuda* is a hotspot of biodiversity.

On the other hand, restaurant employees in the Kanto district can hardly access “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” that produce the rice they serve in their restaurant stores because we have no contract farmers in the Kanto district. So Aleph decided to make employees in the



Yatsuda conservation activity by Kanto employees in cooperation with NPO Tsukuba Environment Forum

Kanto district participate in conservation activities of restored *Yatsuda* such as transplanting, weeding, harvesting etc.

This cooperation helps employees to feel rich biodiversity of rice paddies and understand the importance of our “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” project. We can also contribute to biodiversity conservation in *Yatsuda* through participation. In 2013 and 2014 we continued these activities.

- Cooperation with scientific institutions and government institutions for the better management of the field and alien species

In June 2014, the “Community for Intermediation of Science Education” (CISE) network⁸ and Aleph jointly held the parataxonomist training class at the rice paddy in Ecorin Village, theme park on agriculture and ecology managed by Aleph itself in Eniwa city, Hokkaido. We aimed to improve the skills of employees for making the inventory of wildlife in our managed area. Four employees were trained in the class.

Hokkaido government and Aleph have jointly held the buff-tailed bumblebee eradication activities in Eniwa city, Hokkaido with local people and employees annually since 2011. In 2013 and 2014 we also held these activities in Ecorin Village once a year in May. The number of participants was 44 in 2013 and 47 in 2014.

References:

- 1: Aleph Environmental Report 2013 p.6 (in Japanese)
- 2: Aleph Activity Summary p.7 & 13 about “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” and its requirements
- 3: “Less Agrochemical Rice” is Aleph’s private-label rice which is served in all *Bikkuri Donkey* restaurants, except ones where “Living-Things-Friendly Rice” is served; Aleph Activity Summary p.6 & 13 about “Less Agrochemical Rice”
- 4: Aleph Environmental Report 2012 p.5 & Aleph Environmental Report 2013 p.5 (in Japanese)
- 5: <http://bd20.jp/> (in Japanese), <http://bd20.jp/en> (brief introduction in English)
- 6: <http://undb.jp/> (in Japanese)
- 7: <http://tef298.sakura.ne.jp> (in Japanese)
- 8: <http://www.museum.hokudai.ac.jp/cise/> (in Japanese)