

Company Profile

Headquarters: Sapporo, Japan
Major products: Restaurant chain, food industry
Further information:
www.aleph-inc.co.jp/english_business/mission_en.html

Aleph Inc. was established 1968 in Morioka city, Iwate. The company manages about 300 restaurants all over Japan. The mainstay of Aleph's restaurant divisions is the hamburger steak restaurant chain "Bikkuri Donkey". It also operates seven factories that process materials to supply to its restaurants.

Aiming to provide high quality food with customers' safety, Aleph launched an experimental farm in 1988 and started to work on sustainable agriculture by decreasing chemicals in the procured materials. Through its business activities,

Aleph also contributes to building a recycling-oriented society, reducing energy consumption, decreasing waste, minimizing water use, recycling kitchen refuse and conserving biodiversity.

Challenges and How Aleph Takes Responsibility

No one can live without natural resources and companies are no exception. Restaurant management needs buildings, uniforms, tableware and of course "food". The food industry is connected directly with society's health and agriculture. As Aleph developed, the deeper the company went into agriculture and the more keenly it understood the importance of a balanced nature. Aleph is dependent on biodiversity for its business activity. Therefore, Aleph also considers the environmental load it has with its restaurant kitchen and factory refuse including used vegetable oil, gray water and other wastes. It strives to achieve a reduction in the company's impact on the biodiversity of the natural environment.



Monitoring the living things at contracted rice paddy

Experience of traditional harvesting



Fields of Action

- Sites and facilities
- Supply chains, commodities and materials
- Product
- Production and manufacturing processes
- Transport and logistics
- Personnel



Passing on the rice-growing culture: transplanting with Aleph employees in traditional costume with local people

Best Practice: Three Projects of Rice Farming with Procurement

The Issue

Aleph Inc. serves 6,000 tons of rice per a year to its restaurant customers. To reduce the environmental loads resulting from these business activities, Aleph has implemented three rice farming projects that enable a sustainable procurement of rice.

The Response

The "Less Agrochemical Rice" (Shou-nou-yaku-mai) project started in 1996 and is Aleph's private-label rice. It is produced with only one application of herbicides, and no other chemicals. Farmers are encouraged to use organic fertilizers so that nearly 80 % of fertilizer meets Aleph's strict specifications.

The company also initiated the "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" project that ensures sustainable production of rice paddies with an eye for safe environmental conditions for living organisms. This project promotes environmentally-friendly practices for irrigation in winter, biotopes, fishways, production without agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers.

Furthermore, Aleph started the "Eniwa Demonstrated Rice Paddies" project by using a method of winter-flooded rice paddies (Fuyumizu-Tambo). This method keeps paddies flooded and left as wetlands until spring and not dried out as

usual from the post-harvest. This method has been adopted in some regions for various reasons such as for creating habitats for valuable migratory birds, or for organic rice farming and other beneficial purposes. Winter flooding acts as a substitute for fertilizers, weed and pest control through an increased number of sludge worms (tubifex) as well as other living things. In its demonstration paddies in Eniwa, 3,500 people including Aleph's employees and local people have had experience with the sustainable rice farming. They participate in seeding, transplanting, harvesting, among other activities without harmful health risks. This facilitates a rice-growing culture and offers educational chances for those involved.

The Results

Within the "Less Agrochemical Rice" (Shou-nou-yaku-mai) project currently about 700 rice producers have signed up for Aleph's contracts. Since April 2006 Aleph has been able to serve its private-label rice in all "Bikkuri Donkey" restaurants. In 2011 the company was able to increase the farming area of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddy" by 100 ha. (10 % of Aleph's current procurement volume). Starting in 2012 the company has begun serving its rice in 22 of its "Bikkuri Donkey" restaurants.

On these three types of rice paddies that use little or no agrochemicals, many living things have begun to thrive such as frogs, dragonflies, loaches and herons. Aleph considers the success of this project to be one step forward for its sustainable, low environmental impact business model.

