



Progress Report Aleph Inc.  
2015/2016

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 (2015/2016) 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

### ■ New Activity for Estimating Impacts on Biological Diversity

In April 2015 when the new three-year term of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan began, we set a new target to estimate our lifecycle environmental load (e.g. carbon and/or water footprint) to clarify our corporate activities that have significant impact on the environment. Then Aleph joined the Water Footprint Academy that is held by the Corporation "Eco-health-food Laboratory" in order to start estimating our ecological footprint. We are now studying the estimation of our footprint in the Academy.

### ■ Activities so far

Aleph Inc. has not quantitatively analyzed all the influences of its corporate activities on biological diversity so far. However, we have recognized that the most important impact on biological diversity through our business activity is presumably caused by the procurement of food



Aleph Inc. manages about 330 restaurant stores all over Japan. Its mainstay is hamburger steak restaurant "Bikkuri Donkey".

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 700 ha through our procurement of rice supplied at our restaurant stores. Then Aleph has summed up the procured amount of food resources and materials and reported them in the Aleph Environmental Report (in Japanese) every year. The procurement volume in 2015 fiscal year was 31,332t of food resources and 703t of materials.<sup>1</sup>

Aleph also monitored and reported its energy consumption, water consumption, amount of food waste and its recycling rate every year, which are related to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that indirectly affect biological diversity through climate change.

## 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 were as follows (target 6 is on biological diversity):

### **Aleph Environmental Action Plan (from April 2012 to March 2015)**

- 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

1. CO<sub>2</sub> emission 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 be consisted 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 resolve them by themselves.
8. We will work with customers and local people for a better sustainable society.

In April 2015 when the new three-year term of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan began, Aleph reviewed the targets and set new agenda and targets sited below (target 2(2), agenda 4, target 5(2) and 6(1) are related to biological diversity).

### **Aleph Environmental Action Plan (from April 2015 to March 2018)**

- Agenda and Targets
  1. We will reduce energy usage and GHG emissions by our business. (Targets of agenda 1 are omitted.)
  2. We will use water sparingly while doing our business.
    - (1) We will keep water usage par sales at least on the same level as fiscal 2014.
    - (2) We will estimate lifecycle water usage (water footprint).
  3. We will restrain scrapping of our wastes by promoting refusal, reuse and recycling of them. (Targets of agenda 3 are omitted.)
  4. Aleph Inc. will procure sustainable materials and supply merchandise to all group restaurants and shops with consideration of environmental objectives.
    - (1) We will represent the value of our procurement of food ingredients (ex. by carbon footprint).
    - (2) We will sustain and improve our safety and sustainability criteria of food ingredients which are compatible with productivity through discussion with suppliers.
  5. We will provide the atmosphere in which all employees can be aware of and consider environmental issues and resolve them by themselves.
    - (1) We will implement education program of relevant environment laws to employees in charge.
    - (2) We will implement visiting program of employees to our contract farms (to make them aware of our procurement policy).
  6. We will work with customers and local people for a better sustainable society.
    - (1) We will implement biodiversity conservation program in our eco-theme park "Eco-ring Village".

### 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 appointee of this period is:

Mr. Yoshinori Hashibe, Manager of Agricultural Department (since February 2014)

In May 2015 he put new targets of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan on the agenda of the Management Board and obtained its approval. He also reported the first-year progress of the targets to the Board in September 2016.

In April 2016 Mr. Hashibe moved to the Human Resources Department. However, he will be responsible for biological diversity of Aleph until March 2018 that is the end of this three-year term of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan.

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

#### ■ Revision of Rice Paddy Target

Since April 2006 Aleph Inc. has served, in all *Bikkuri Donkey* restaurants, "Less Agrochemical Rice" that is produced with only a single application of herbicide, and no other chemicals, based on Aleph's strict specifications, whereas conventional rice farming requires 5-10 times agrochemical application in Japan. With regard to biodiversity conservation through its business activities, in 2009 Aleph Inc. began to ask some farmers to challenge organic rice farming and we are serving organic rice that is called "Living-Things-Friendly Rice" in some restaurants.



Aleph Inc. procures about 3,400t of rice a year and has about 400 accredited rice farmers.

Between 2009 and 2014 the biodiversity target of Aleph was to increase the area of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies". In 2015 we reconsidered

the target to decide on new targets of rice paddies that is applicable not only to “Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies” but also to the Less Agrochemical rice paddies, can enhance the biodiversity in rice paddies, and is sustainable also for the rice farmers<sup>2</sup>. After discussion among contracted farmers, in spring 2016 we set our new midterm targets to enhance biodiversity in rice paddies for our restaurants as shown below.

Item	Results 2015	Targets 2018
1. Production methods friendly to the organisms in rice paddies (irrigating in winter, biotopes etc.)	1,051	1,150
2. Production methods friendly to the organisms around rice paddies (fishways etc.)	201	225
3. Activities to raise awareness of non-farmers (wildlife monitoring etc.)	31	34

The results of 2016 for these targets are shown below. The result of target 1 decreased because in 2016 we strictly defined the production methods so that some results reported in 2015 became inadequate to the new definition. On the other hand, the result of target 2 drastically increased. Taking these into account, we revised the target numbers by 2019 as shown below and informed to the contracted farmers.

Item	Results 2016	Revised targets 2019
1. Production methods friendly to the organisms in rice paddies (irrigating in winter, biotopes etc.)	977	1,075
2. Production methods friendly to the organisms around rice paddies (fishways etc.)	362	398
3. Activities to raise awareness of non-farmers (wildlife monitoring etc.)	30	33

■ **New Biodiversity Targets**

In April 2015 when the new three-year term of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan began, Aleph set two new measurable objectives.

Target 5(2): We will implement visiting program of employees to our contract farms (to make them aware of our procurement policy).

Target is 100 employees' participation a year by 2017. Results of this objective 2015 and 2016 are as follows.

Ingredients	Programs	Results(employees)	
		2015	2016
Rice	Rice planting festival at "Eco-ring Village"	3	3
	Wildlife observation at contract farm with <i>Bikkuri Donkey</i> customers	7	12
	Making traditional new year's decoration for their restaurants using rice straw at contract farm	10	9
	<i>Yatsuda</i> restoration with local NPO	14	14
Beef	Aleph Natural Beef seminar	34	25
	Farm visiting by factory managers		5
Pork			2
Total		68	70

**Target 6(1): We will implement biodiversity conservation program in our eco-theme park "Eco-ring Village".**

Targets are 5 programs and over 1,700 participants by fiscal 2017. Results for fiscal 2015 of this objective are as follows. May 10 of number 1, number 2 and number 3 were carried out as the "Green Wave" related programs.

	Programs	Results fiscal 2015	
		Date	Participants
1	Forest management	Apr. 19, May 10, Jun. 7, Jul. 12, Aug. 9, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 14, Mar. 13	175
2	Eradicate activity of alien bumblebee	May 23	35
3	Rice planting festival	May 30, 31	136
4	Eradicate activities of alien frogs	Jul. 25 – Aug. 23	1,156
Total			1,502

In 2015 we reviewed existing programs. We reformed some programs and added some new programs to be carried out starting 2016 and defined the biodiversity conservation programs. The number of programs was increased. Results for fiscal 2016 of this objective are as follows. June 4 of number 1,

number 2 and number 3 were carried out as the “Green Wave” related programs.

	Programs	Results fiscal 2016	
		Date	Participants
1	Forest management	May 8, Jun. 4, 5, Jul. 3, Sep. 3, 4	143
2	Eradicate activity of alien bumblebee	May 21	51
3	Rice planting festival	May 28, 29	205
4	Annual rice paddy program	May. 29, Jun. 26, Jul. 31, Aug. 27, 28	77
5	Eradicate activities of alien frogs	Jul. 23 – Aug. 21	507
6	Dragonfly observation at rice paddy	Jul. 23 – 31	55
7	Wildlife observation in rice paddy	Jul. 23 – Aug. 21	171
8	Comparison of field soil worms and forest soil worms	Jun. 19	15
9	Lectures about insects during insects exhibition	Jul. 23, 24, 30, 31, Aug. 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21	377
Total			1,601

■ **Other Targets**

Aleph set other environmental targets in the Aleph Environmental Action Plan as mentioned above. The achievements of measurable targets by March 2015 are as follows<sup>3</sup>:

Item	Target	fiscal 2014 (or Apr. 2012 – Mar. 2015)
1. reduction of CO <sub>2</sub> emission from energy usage per sales	2.0% reduction every year (5.9% reduction for three years)	5.99% reduction for three years (attained)
2. reduction of water usage per sales	1.0% reduction every year (3.0% reduction for three years)	10.51% reduction for three years (attained)
3. recycling rate of kitchen refuse	90% by fiscal 2014	81.5% (not attained)
4. recycling loop of kitchen refuse	2 areas with 3 groups	3 areas with 3 groups (attained)

In April 2015 when the new three-year term of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan began, Aleph reviewed the targets and set a new agenda and new targets. New environmental targets and achievements of measurable targets by March 2018 are as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Item	Target	fiscal 2015
1. reduction of energy use per sales	1.0% reduction a year in average	1.48% reduction
2. reduction of water usage per sales	lower than fiscal 2014 level	3.81% reduction
3. reduction of kitchen refuse emission per sales	5% lower than fiscal 2013 level by fiscal 2017	4.2% increase
4. recycling rate of kitchen refuse	85% by fiscal 2017	80.6%

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

Aleph Inc. had annually reported its activities and achievements regarding biodiversity in the Aleph Environmental Report (in Japanese) until the report on the fiscal 2014 year (covering April 2014 to March 2015) was published in September 2015.

At the time of publishing the report on the fiscal 2015 year Aleph decided to limit the contents to the progress and achievements in energy consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> and CFC emissions, water and wastes. The activities and achievements in the biodiversity sector will be reported in the Aleph Social Activity Report (in Japanese) that we are editing now and will be published in 2017. It will be available on the Aleph website;

[http://www.aleph-inc.co.jp/Company\\_outline/actionplans.html](http://www.aleph-inc.co.jp/Company_outline/actionplans.html) (in Japanese)

We also publish the Aleph Activity Summary, which describes our main biodiversity action in English. This was last revised in November 2016. It is also available on the Aleph website;

[http://www.aleph-inc.co.jp/english\\_business/outline\\_en.html](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 (1)

According to newly set target 4(2) of the Aleph Environmental Action Plan "We will sustain and improve our safety and sustainability criteria of food ingredients which are compatible with productivity through discussion with suppliers", and based on our experience of "Living-Things-Friendly Rice Paddies" project so far, in spring 2015 we started to discuss revision of our biodiversity target for rice procurement with contract farmers, so that we can say that all the rice served in *Bikkuri Donkey* restaurants is wildlife-friendly. After the discussion, we reviewed our specifications for "Less Agrochemical Rice" to take effect as of 2016. First, we set additional prohibitions that were not included from a biodiversity standpoint in the former specifications. Secondly, we revised the list of herbicides that farmers can use in growing their "Less Agrochemical Rice", and added three herbicides to the list of prohibited agrochemicals. Aleph Inc. notified direct contracted farmers and contracted rice farmers with *Bikkuri Donkey* franchisee companies of the new "Less Agrochemical Rice" specifications in spring 2016.

Aleph Inc. has held a conference with direct contracted rice farmers every December since 2009 to discuss and exchange their experiences and information about the methods of rice farming and biodiversity enhancement. In addition to direct contracted farmers, in 2013 Aleph began to call to contracted rice farmers with *Bikkuri Donkey* franchisee companies about this conference for the purpose of informing all the *Bikkuri Donkey* rice farmers about Aleph's biodiversity objectives. In 2015 one group of farmers contracted with a franchisee company participated in the conference. In 2016 the number of participants increased to 2 groups.

### ■ Informing and integrating activities (2)

*Bombus terrestris*, buff-tailed bumblebee, was introduced in Japan as a pollinator for greenhouse tomatoes in 1992. Since then it had increased for tomato farming because it can efficiently pollinate tomatoes without using hormone drug. However, the anxiety about flight from greenhouse to the wild was raised by



Buff-tailed bumblebee.

researchers from the beginning. In 1996 a natural nest was firstly observed, then they have rapidly spread in Hokkaido. In 2013 this bee was observed in 129 municipalities out of 179 in Hokkaido. As problems of this bee, competition with native species, interference of native floras pollination, hybrid, and introduction of alien parasites are pointed out. It was designated as Invasive Alien Species according to the Invasive Alien Species Act of Japan.

Cherry tomatoes are used with our main item "Hamburger steak dish". When we got to know the problems of this bee at the biodiversity symposium in 2003, many accredited cherry tomato farmers used this bee for pollination. Since 2005, we have requested accredited farmers not to use this bee for pollination. The situation of cherry tomato procurement in fiscal 2014 and 2015 is shown below. We have two challenges for reducing the rate of this bee, one is to increase accredited farmers, and another is to have accredited farmers change the pollination method.

Item	Procurement ratio	
	fiscal 2014	fiscal 2015
Without <i>Bombus terrestris</i> pollination	65.3%	73.6%
With <i>Bombus terrestris</i> pollination or not aware (procured from market)	34.7%	26.4%

**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 rice paddy project as Rice Paddy Biodiversity Enhancing Decade project<sup>5</sup> and Double 20 Campaign (*Nijyu-maru*) project<sup>6</sup> hosted by the Japan Committee for IUCN (IUCN-J). These projects aim to build a network of active members working together toward the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

In this term Aleph participated in two side events of international conference held by NPO Ramsar Network Japan that is a member of IUCN-J for the purpose of encouraging all the stakeholders to take action of enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies and to mainstream biodiversity in agriculture; COP12 to the Convention on Wetlands on June 2015 Punta del Este, Uruguay and CBD COP13 on December 2016 Cancun, Mexico. Aleph introduced its rice project for the mainstreaming of biodiversity in rice paddies.

■ Cooperation with NGO for the employee awareness

In 2012, Aleph started the cooperation activities on *yatsuda* restoration with the non-profit organization Tsukuba Environment Forum<sup>7</sup> in Ibaraki, Kanto district. *Yatsuda* is the Japanese word for a certain type of rice paddies, located at the end of ravine in forest. Many types of wildlife species live in a *yatsuda*. However, the *yatsuda* is liable to be abandoned because it's usually small and hard to cultivate with agricultural machines. Rice paddies stay as wetlands as they are periodically cultivated by farmers. Once abandoned, however, a *yatsuda* will gradually dry out and eventually become forest, following the process of ecological succession. The wetland ecosystem will be lost. That's why a *yatsuda* is a hot spot of biodiversity.

In 2012, we decided to have employees in Kanto district participate in activities to conserve restored *yatsuda* four times a year, such as transplanting, weeding, harvesting, maintenance and using rice straw to make traditional New Year decorations for their restaurants. It is difficult for restaurant employees in Kanto district to access the rice paddies that produce the rice they serve in their restaurants because we have no contact farmers in the area. This cooperation therefore helps employees to get a feeling for the rich biodiversity of rice paddies and to understand the importance of our rice-procurement policy. This is the advantage that we have gained. On the other hand, Tsukuba Environment Forum has gained by obtaining a stable supply of human resources, the most important factor in maintaining *yatsuda*.



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

We have undertaken these activities for five years and will continue to do so in the future. The number of employee participants in 2015 and 2016 are appeared in chapter 4.

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

In 2015 the Hokkaido Council for Promoting Measures for Buff-tailed Bumblebee was established for the purpose of preventing the spread of this alien bee in Hokkaido and making local people aware of the problem. Aleph joined the Council as a member among Hokkaido government, Sapporo city government, Hokkaido Environment Foundation and so on. Hokkaido government and Aleph had jointly held the buff-tailed bumblebee eradication activities in Eniwa city, Hokkaido with local people and employees annually since 2011. Since 2015 the activities have been held by the Council and Aleph. In 2015 and 2016 we also held these activities in Eco-ring Village once a year in May. The number of participants was 35 in 2015 and 51 in 2016.

In July 2015 fifth International Wildlife Management Congress was held in Sapporo city, Hokkaido. Aleph Inc. reported its alien species eradication programs at Eco-ring Village in the session of invasive alien species control.

References:

- 1: Aleph Environmental Report 2015 p.7 (in Japanese)
- 2: The reason why we decided to reconsider the rice paddy target is described on the "Progress Report Aleph Inc. 2013/2014 on the Leadership Declaration of the 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative" p.5. You can see it on the following website;  
<http://www.business-and-biodiversity.de/en/about-us/members/aleph/>
- 3: Aleph Environmental Report 2014 p.5 (in Japanese)
- 4: Aleph Environmental Report 2015 p.5 (in Japanese)
- 5: <http://www.ramnet-j.org/tambo10/> (in Japanese),  
<http://www.ramnet-j.org/tambo10/tambo/en/> (in English)
- 6: <http://bd20.jp/> (in Japanese), <http://bd20.jp/en> (brief introduction in English)
- 7: <http://tef298.sakura.ne.jp> (in Japanese)