

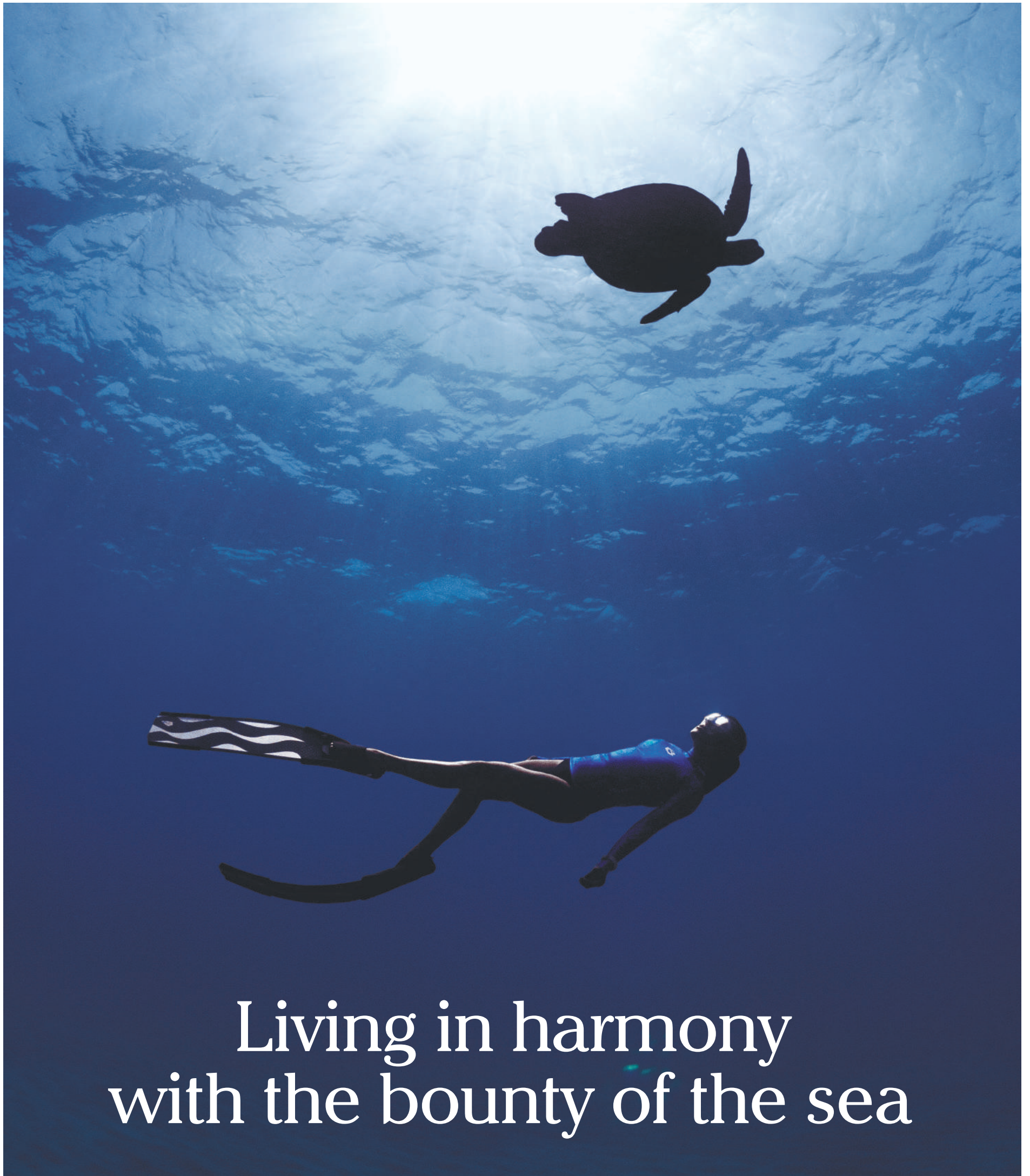
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ESG / SDGs

# SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, August 31, 2024



Living in harmony  
with the bounty of the sea

## FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

There used to be a secret spot in the waters off Iriomote Island in Okinawa Prefecture that I visited every summer. It was only accessible by charter boat, and the waters there were probably around 15 meters deep. Even from the surface you could clearly see the brightly colored coral and seaweed on the seafloor, and even the small fish that lived there. The water was so clear that as I snorkeled

there, stretching out my arms and legs, it felt like I was floating in midair.

I stopped visiting after the summer of 2016. Some might remember that was the year a massive coral bleaching event occurred in Sekisei Lagoon. I was stunned when I visited that summer. The coral was bleached and the fish had gone. The clear water just made it all the more eerie. It felt sad, like a

wonderful spell had suddenly broken.

The Ministry of the Environment has been surveying rates of coral bleaching at Sekisei Lagoon since 2016. According to the 2023 report, the coral does appear to be starting to recover, but it is still early days. While compiling this month's special feature, I couldn't help wonder what the coral off Iriomote Island looks like now.

沖縄県の西表島に、私が毎年夏に訪れる秘密の場所がありました。水深15mくらいでしょうか。透明度が高く、海の底にある色鮮やかなサンゴや海藻、魚までが、はっきりと見えます。シュノーケリングしながら両手両足を伸ばし、海面に浮かび底を眺めると、自分が宙に浮いている錯覚にとらわれ不思議な気分になったものです。

しかし私は2016年の夏を境に、この場所を訪れなくなりました。そう、石西礁湖で大規模なサンゴの白化現象

が起こった年です。その夏、海に潜ってみて唖然としました。サンゴは白化し、魚もいません。海の透明度が高いだけに余計、不気味です。私にかかった魔法が解けた悲しい瞬間でした。

環境省は2016年より石西礁湖で目視観察によるサンゴの白化率調査を行い、2023年発表の報告ではサンゴは回復傾向にあるそうです。今回の特集をつくりながら、「あのサンゴは今、どうなっているんだろう？」と考えています。



## THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

Established in September 1986 as a private nonprofit grant-making foundation with endowments from the Nippon Foundation and the Japanese motorboat racing industry, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation became a public interest incorporated foundation in October 2011. In April 2015 it merged with the Ship & Ocean Foundation (commonly known as the Ocean Policy Research Foundation, formerly the Japan Foundation for Shipbuilding Advancement), which had been established in 1975 to promote the shipbuilding industry and related industries. After the merger, the Ocean Policy Research Institute took over the Sasakawa Peace Foundation's work in international exchange and cooperation, along with the Ocean Policy Research Foundation's work in research, surveys and policy proposals. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation is currently headed by Yohei Sasakawa as honorary chairman (who is also the chairman of the Nippon Foundation) and Atsushi Sunami as president.



An ecotourism project utilizing mangrove forests.

COURTESY: THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

Feature OCEAN

# INTERVIEW

## Sasakawa works for a sustainable blue economy

By MINAMI NAKAWADA



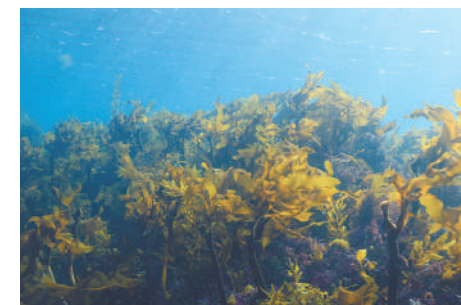
J Blue Credit was established by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation with the approval of the Japanese government. The initiative targets the conservation and development of marine ecosystems, with carbon credits earned for the regeneration of seaweed, an effective absorber of carbon dioxide.

COURTESY: THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

Japan is not large, at 380,000 square kilometers of land area, but add in its territorial waters and exclusive economic zones and it encompasses 4.47 million square kilometers, ranking sixth in the world, following the United States, Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand and Canada, according to the Japanese government. The sea is an integral part of the island nation's economy and culture, which are based in many ways on benefits derived from the sea. Take sushi, for example. The tradition of eating raw fish, now loved by people all over the world, is grounded in the abundant marine resources surrounding Japan.

The oceans are, of course, the common property of humankind, but they are now facing a critical situation. The "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate," presented at the 51st Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2019, noted that marine ecosystems already appeared to have passed a tipping point. The entire planet is in a state of crisis, and the warning bells are ringing: "The actions we choose now will determine our future," the report said.

In the face of these challenges, one private organization is at the vanguard of research addressing problems and issues related to the oceans, from both a policy and scientific standpoint: the Sasakawa Peace



The ocean absorbs thermal energy and carbon dioxide, helping to mitigate global warming.

COURTESY: THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

### ● Summary

持続可能なブルー・エコノミー、その実現を考える。

日本の領海と排他的経済水域 (EEZ) を合わせた面積は約447万 km<sup>2</sup>で世界第6位。日本は海の恩恵を受け社会を発展させてきたといえる。その海が現在危機的な状況に直面している。2019年のIPCC第51回総会での「海洋・雪氷圏特別報告書」では、海洋生態系はすでに転換点を越えたとみられる現象が起き始めているとされ、「い

ま選ぶ行動で未来がきまる」と警鐘を鳴らしている。海洋を巡る様々な課題に対し、「政策」と「科学技術」の両面から、海洋研究とシンクタンク活動を展開している民間団体がある。それが〈笹川平和財団〉だ。「海洋問題を環境という視点でとらえた時、私たちが目指しているのは持続可能なブルー・エコノミーの実現で

す。これは海洋資源の持続的な利用を通じ海洋環境を保全しながら経済発展を目指す考え方で」と角南篤理事長は語る。その例として「Jブルークレジット」を挙げる。財団が日本政府認可の下で立ち上げたクレジットのシステムで、大型海藻類を再生することでCO<sub>2</sub>を削減、カーボンクレジットを認証・売買可能にする方法だ。



日本語全文はこちらから

Foundation, established in 1986 to promote international exchange and cooperation. One of its five goals is the “realization of a peaceful world through the ocean.” To this end, it conducts research and development, policy dialogue and public awareness activities. We spoke with Atsushi Sunami, president of the foundation, about its efforts and methodologies for solving the environmental issues facing the oceans.

“Considering ocean issues from an environmental perspective, our goal is to realize a sustainable ‘blue economy.’ The blue economy is a concept that aims for economic development while preserving the marine environment through the sustainable use of marine resources. In a sense, we are trying to strike a balance between the ‘use’ of the ocean, through the harvesting of fish and so on, and the ‘conservation’ of the marine environment while at the same time protecting the environment and livelihoods of those who depend on the ocean,” Sunami said.

“One of the various initiatives we are undertaking to realize the blue economy is blue carbon credit system called ‘J Blue Credit’ ” he said. “Developed with experts and with the approval of the Japanese government, the system establishes carbon credits based on the regeneration of seaweed to reduce CO2. Instead of planting trees to reduce CO2, companies can regenerate seaweed forests. This is the J Blue Credit system. The idea is to include seaweed regeneration in the credit system and then use the funds from emissions trading for environmental conservation or to fund more seaweed restoration.

“The concept of blue carbon credits has existed for some time, but in order to make it operational, we had to produce scientific evidence showing how much CO2 could be absorbed by a certain amount of seaweed. We have now been able to do this. Our next step is to expand the system to all parts of Japan and to roll it out overseas. We are already in talks with ASEAN countries like Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia.”

The foundation is also advancing the project through research into technologies for the propagation of seaweed and workshops with seaweed experts in Japan and abroad.

Another of the foundation’s initiatives is what it calls “*umigyō*,” a strategy for regional revitalization that leverages local fishing ports and villages to deliver nonfishing activities like tourism, education and leisure.

“Umigyō is a policy the foundation has been promoting with the Liberal Democratic Party since 2022,” Sunami explained. “It aims to make wider use of fishing ports, not only to catch and sell fish, but also to support vibrant new businesses like restaurants and tourism operations. This will allow fishing associations and fishers to develop new businesses.

“However, it requires changes to regulations and the status quo. For example, the Fisheries Agency, which manages fishing ports, could be encouraged to allow more flexible use of fishing ports so they could house restaurants, or multiple fishing asso-



● **ATSUSHI SUNAMI**

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

Sunami was born in Okayama Prefecture in 1965. He is president of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. He is also president of the Showa University of Music, adjunct professor and special adviser to the president at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and guest professor at the Research Organization for Nano & Life Innovation at Waseda University. Within the Cabinet Office, he has served as counselor and is now chair of the Okinawa Development Council, a member of the Economic Security Legislation Council, a member of the Basic Policy Group under the Committee on National Space Policy and a member of the Expert Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation. He is vice president of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO. In the private sector, he serves as co-chairman of the Nikkei Blue Ocean Forum Expert Committee, chairman of the JAXA Consortium for Satellite Earth Observation and co-chairman of the Lunar Industry Vision Council. He earned his master’s in international affairs and Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University and bachelor of science in foreign service from Georgetown University.

ciations covering small areas could be united to revitalize an entire region. The goal is to promote the diversification of the fishing industry to a more general maritime industry.

“Currently, we are researching successful examples in Japan and other countries, proposing policies and conducting public relations activities to promote understanding of these policies with as many people as possible. We are also working to launch this umigyō model from Japan and to make it take root overseas as well.”

When it comes to such wide-ranging reform, private groups like the Sasakawa Peace Foundation can play an important role due to their strong relationships of trust with the government and other stakeholders. They can bring together the Minis-

try of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, which has jurisdiction over surrounding ports and roads, along with the Fisheries Agency, which manages fishing ports, making possible measures that go beyond piecemeal administrative frameworks. This approach can help move new policies forward toward realization.

The issues facing oceans are as boundless as they are. And, unless they can be solved through initiatives like the blue economy, they could have significant ramifications for Japan’s economy and society as a whole. With the oceans accounting for 70% of the Earth’s surface, everyone has a stake in these issues. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation is but one organization among many trying to make a difference, but its work seems to have real potential.



The Sasakawa Peace Foundation’s approach to revitalizing local communities is known as “*umigyō*,” a strategy to leverage local fishing port and fishing village assets to support tourism and other nonfishing activities.

COURTESY: THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

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Head Office:  
 Ichibancho-Daini-TG Bldg., 2-2 Ichibancho,  
 Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo  
 The Japan Times Cube Inc.  
 Tel: 03-3512-0330  
 Email: [jtc-csinfo@japantimes.co.jp](mailto:jtc-csinfo@japantimes.co.jp)  
 Web: <https://sustainable.japantimes.com/>

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: MINAKO SUEMATSU  
 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI  
 DIRECTOR: AYUMI KIMURA  
 MANAGING EDITORS: MARIANGELES DEJEAN,  
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 TRANSLATORS: EDAN CORKILL (B2, 4, 6),  
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 DESIGN DIRECTOR: QULLO & CO.  
 WEB DESIGNER: ERIKO OZAKI  
 WEB DEVELOPER: TAKAAKI OGURA

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COVER PHOTO

Ai Futaki, a self-described “subaquatic messenger,” has set two new Guinness world records for free diving. Active around the world, she aims to bridge the gap between ocean and land.  
<https://aifutaki.com/> <https://www.instagram.com/aifutaki/>

©AI FUTAKI PHOTOGRAPHED BY FABRICE DUDENHOFER

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The stunning waters off Okinawa are home to some of the world's largest coral reefs. One of the kinds of algae that the corals eat served as the source of AlgaleX's Umamo, a nutrient-rich health food that at scale could also replace expensive, inefficient imported feed for raising fish.

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Feature OCEAN

# ALGAE

## How algae could help save fisheries for the future

By RIKO SAITO



### What is Umamo?

Umamo is a powdery seasoning made from an algae grown using lees from the Okinawan rice-based spirit awamori. Rich in umami, it has a taste similar to *karasumi* (salted, sun-dried fish roe). Lees, glucose and algae are put into a tank, and as the algae grow they create not only umami, but also lipids that they store as DHA. <https://umamo.jp/>

Top: Umamo can be sprinkled on curry to give it a richer flavor.  
Below: Umamo also can be sprinkled on pasta, just like *karasumi*.

© ALGALEX INC.

**F**aced with climate change and overfishing, the world's marine resources are in a state of crisis, and Japan is no exception.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries says that fishery and aquaculture production in 2023 was 3,724,300 tons, down 192,700 tons, or 4.9%, from the previous year. According to Fisheries Agency white papers published in 2008 and 2023, the percentage of fishery resources caught at a biologically sustainable level has been gradually declining worldwide, falling to 65% by 2023. For example, the catch of Japanese sardines, which exceeded 2.5 million tons in the 1980s, declined to 561,000 tons by 2022. Sardines can no longer be considered a mass food source. Furthermore, a decline in small fish like these leads to a decline in the large fish that feed on them, which has a significant impact on overall fishery resources.

Aquaculture can help prevent overfishing and ensure the sustainability of marine resources. But Japan's aquaculture industry has its problems, too — namely that wild fish from South America are be-

ing imported as fish feed. The president of the company AlgaleX, Daichi Takada, who was once involved in importing fish feed for a major general trading company, says the situation is dire.

"Almost all of the fish meal and fish oil used to feed farmed fish (in Japan) is imported from South America, mainly Peru and Chile, and it is made from bluefish. In other words, fish raised in Japan are eating fish from South America. As long

AlgaleX's factory and headquarters in the Okinawa city of Uruma, near mangrove forests where it collects algae for research and development.



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### ● Summary

水産養殖に藻を活用し、未来の海に魚を繋ぐ。

水産資源を持続可能にするために養殖は欠かせないが、かつて大手総合商社で養殖魚の餌の輸入に携わっていた AlgaleX 代表取締役社長の高田大地は、日本の養殖が南米の天然魚に支えられていることに危機感を持った。「養殖魚の餌となる魚粉と魚油はほぼすべてペルーやチリなどから輸入されている青魚が原料。つまり日本の養殖魚

は南米の魚を食べているわけです。輸入は長距離輸送のためコストもかかり、二酸化炭素の排出量も多い。加えて、自然災害や政変などの不安定な要素もあり、ある日突然供給が止まるかもしれないリスクもあります」。

南米産の魚への依存を打破したいと思い高田は、2021年に会社を立ち上げ、生態系の最下部に位置しながら、

実は海の命を支えている「藻」に注目した。しかし藻は非常に弱く育てるのが難しい。大量に必要とされる水産養殖の餌の生産に対応するのは技術的にも困難だった。そこで人が食べて美味しく、栄養素が高く健康に良い藻という新しいマーケット作りを模索。捨てられている泡盛粕を使い藻を発酵させ「うま藻」の開発に成功した。



日本語全文はこちらから

as transportation remains costly and carbon dioxide emissions remain high, importing fish from South America is not sustainable at all," he said. "In addition, there are all sorts of risks, like natural disasters, political upheaval and import restrictions that could cause supplies to suddenly stop."

It was Takada's strong desire to break this dependence on imported fish that prompted him to launch his startup in 2021. Through fortuitous encounters with some leading researchers, he decided to focus his attention on algae, which are at the very bottom of the ocean food chain. Algae, which grow in waters throughout Japan, are abundant in the brackish mangrove forests in Okinawa. For this reason, he set up his research

Algae are notoriously difficult to grow, and developing Umamo took a lot of trial and error. AlgaleX hopes to achieve industrial-scale production using its own AI technology.

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and development center there.

"The one algae that caught our attention was (a type of) *Aurantiochytrium*, a microscopic algae that is one-hundredth of a millimeter in size and invisible to the eye. It has a 15% concentration of the nutrient DHA, which is much higher than the 1% concentration found in tuna and other fish. Algae are eaten by corals and plankton, which are then eaten by shrimp and small fish, which in turn become food for larger fish," Takada said.

"We thought that if we could produce large quantities of this algae cheaply and efficiently, it would be possible to cultivate fish without relying on other fish for food — in other words, without depleting the ocean's resources."

Takada and his staff began working on production of the algae in 2021. However, algae are notoriously difficult to grow, meaning that production at the quantities necessary for aquaculture would have been challenging, so they decided as a first step to try to create a new market for algae that could be enjoyed directly by humans as a nutrient-rich health food.

"There are products out there that take advantage of algae's functionality, such as *Euglena*, *Spirulina* and *Chlorella*, but they are health supplements and so are not marketed as foodstuffs for their taste. We decided to try making algae that would taste good. By growing algae using *awamori* lees," a sediment resulting from the distillation process for an Okinawan rice-based spirit, "we succeeded in cultivating a unique and delicious algae that is rich in umami. The lees would otherwise have been discarded, and so this also addresses the separate issue of food loss.

"However, when it comes to using such unused foods in new products, it is diffi-



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DAICHI TAKADA

President and representative director of AlgaleX Inc. Born in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1989, he graduated from Waseda Law School and then worked for a major general trading company, where he was responsible for mergers and acquisitions, business restructuring and venture investment. He established AlgaleX in March 2021.

cult to use them as raw materials or to industrialize them because their composition is not stable. This is where our AI technology came in" for growing the algae.

Dubbed Umamo, their algae contains 1.5 times more glutamic acid (the umami component) than kelp and four times more astringent succinic acid than *shijimi* clams. In terms of nutritional value, it contains more than 10 times as much of the omega-3 fatty acid DHA as mackerel, 10 times more GABA (an amino acid linked to lower blood pressure) than tomatoes and three times more of the vasodilator arginine than garlic, giving it such rich umami and nutritional content that it is

hard to believe it is just one single ingredient.

And thus a need to solve aquaculture problems has resulted in the development of a delicious new seasoning. In the future, Takada hopes to work again on his original goal of the production of aquaculture feed. If the algae can be grown using the company's proprietary AI technology, it will be possible to produce it remotely, right next to aquaculture farms. This would cut transportation costs, time and carbon dioxide emissions. An innovative and sustainable aquaculture beckons — and there are high hopes for Takada's efforts to help make it a reality.

Morishi-24, a unique AI-powered algae fermentation control system, was developed by AlgaleX CTO Kiyoshi Tada, who is also an algae cultivator and AI programmer. *Awamori* lees tend to be of inconsistent quality, but with Morishi-24, algae can be produced stably to targeted specifications.

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Have you heard of the nonprofit organization Tomorrow, which runs cultural activities focused on art, crafts and architecture? Its president, Kayo Tokuda, worked for many years as a curator on Naoshima, the famed “art island” in the Seto Inland Sea. Tomorrow’s board of directors includes the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Ryue Nishizawa, and its advisory committee includes Soichiro Fukutake, the honorary chairman of the Fukutake



Taiza Studio is located in a port town in Kyoto Prefecture facing the Sea of Japan. This renovated century-old house is used as a base for food events and other activities.

PHOTO: NOBORU MORIKAWA

Foundation, which was behind Naoshima’s art transformation.

Initially based in Kyoto, Tomorrow expanded its activities in 2020 by establishing a base in the Taiza area of the city of Kyotango. Although Taiza lies within the prefecture of Kyoto, the small port on the Sea of Japan is more than two hours from Kyoto by train. The base, Taiza Studio, is an experimental space in a century-old two-story wooden house that took traditional woodworkers and craftsmen in ceramics, glass, Chinese paper and plaster four years to renovate.

Tokuda refers to the project they are undertaking in Taiza as “Ashita no Hatake” (“Fields of Tomorrow”). When she thought about how she could use art to build a society filled with hope, she decided she needed to combine art with eating, the act most directly connected with our survival.

“Starting from the keyword of ‘food,’ ‘Fields of Tomorrow’ aims at creating a place for the act of cooking, cooking uten-

sils, housing and exchange. Its activities include events and tours that combine ‘art’ with ‘dining together’ in Taiza. The Tango Peninsula, where Taiza is located, is rich in traditional fermented fish foods like *heshiko* (mackerel marinated in rice bran), seaweed, Taiza crabs and other seafood, and it is attracting attention for its association with good health and longevity. Regular and also ancient rice varieties, organic vegetables and dairy farming thrive in the area,” she said.

“While savoring everything it has to offer now, we are also working with artists, architects, chefs and craftsmen to ensure that the area’s food, lifestyle and beautiful scenery grounded in its natural environment are preserved for the next generation.”

Tokuda says she has come to recognize food as the most important element in her curation.

“Japan’s food self-sufficiency rate is currently 38% on a calorie basis. We are in a situation where we cannot survive

without imports, and when I wondered what we would do if something happened and we couldn’t obtain enough food, I thought that seaweed would have potential as a good source of protein. We focused our attention on the seaweed that can be found in Taiza, which is located on the sea. South Korea and Japan are probably the only countries where seaweed is eaten daily. Especially in Korea, there are more than 10 kinds of *wakame* soup, and it is popular as a nutritional food — something that mothers eat every day immediately after childbirth to recover their strength. Not many countries use seaweed as an ingredient, but it is nutritious and healthy. We wanted to make something of it.”

The first step for this new project is an event scheduled for the end of September in Kyoto. A chef will prepare a special meal using *wakame* harvested at Taiza for all the participants to enjoy. Perhaps the “fields of tomorrow” are not just on land, but in the ocean too.

◆ KAYO TOKUDA

Born in Okayama in 1971, Tokuda was involved in art curation with Benesse Holdings and the Fukutake Foundation from 2001 to 2010. In 2016, she established the nonprofit organization Tomorrow. She currently serves as its president. <https://tomorrow-jp.org/>

Feature OCEAN

# SUSTAINABLE DINING

## Project focuses on harvesting ‘fields of the sea’

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI



Tateiwa, a large rock formation 20 meters in height, in Taiza, a village on the the Sea of Japan coast.

PHOTO: NAOYA HATAKEYAMA

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sept. 24, the nonprofit organization Tomorrow will host “Seaweed Cuisine with a Chef/Food Doctor” in Kyoto’s Sakyo Ward. The lecturer will be Sachi Sakabe, a researcher on cooking and the director of the Japan Food Doctor Association. Ken Sakamoto, the chef and owner of the Kyoto-based Italian restaurant Cenci, will cook a “*wakame* soup set meal” using seaweed from Taiza for everyone. ¥5,500 (tax included). Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis at <https://tomorrow-jp.org/program/sei-kitchen8/>. Participants will receive an e-mail from Tomorrow with the address and other details.



COURTESY: SACHI SAKABE



The “Seaweed Cuisine” event’s *wakame* soup meal will also be served at Taiza Studio from Oct. 25. It includes four dishes: Taiza *wakame* soup with grouper and a Korean type of *shiso* perilla, handmade kimchi *nattō* with three kinds of seaweed (*wakahijiki*, *mirin* and *tosakanori*) rolled in buckwheat crepes, tofu and eggplant, and black rice.

COURTESY: TOMORROW

● Summary

“海の畑”に着目する取り組み。

美術、工芸、建築を軸に文化活動を展開するNPO法人「TOMORROW」をご存じだろうか？ 代表の徳田佳世は瀬戸内海の直島で長年アートキュレーションの仕事をしてきたが2016年に団体を設立。2020年には京都市内に続き、京丹後市の間人（たいご）にも拠点を設け活動の幅を広げた。間人は京都中心部から電車で2時間以

上かかる、京都府内の日本海に面した小さな港町。徳田がここ間人で行うのが「あしたの畑」プロジェクト。芸術を通して希望に満ちた社会を築くために今どう行動すべきか？ を考えた際、生きるために大切な「食べる」こと×芸術との融合を図る取り組みを行うことにした。「間人がある丹後半島は「へしこ」など魚を発酵させた

伝統的な食品や、海藻、間人カニなど魚介類が豊富で、健康長寿との関わりが注目されている地域です。また、米、古代米、有機野菜の栽培や酪農も盛んに行われています。この地域の風土に根差した食べ物や暮らし方、美しい風景を、次世代へ継承したいと思い、芸術家や建築家、料理人、職人たちと話し合い活動しています。」



日本語全文はこちらから

瀬戸内の絶景を望み、極上の時間を愉しむ。

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PICK-UP ARTICLE

Painter Torajiro Kojima (1881-1929) purchased works of art in Europe that formed the core of the Ohara Museum of Art's collection.

COURTESY: OHARA MUSEUM OF ART



## Cultural resonance at the Ohara Museum of Art

By AYA TSUTSUI



COURTESY: OHARA MUSEUM OF ART

### Exhibition: "Cross-Cultural Resonance in the Ohara Collection"

Focusing primarily on the modern art that forms the core of the Ohara Museum of Art's collection, this exhibition reexamines the ways in which modern Japan has reacted to other cultures. By tracing the footsteps of Torajiro Kojima, who laid the foundations of the collection, and placing Eastern and Western artworks side by side to explore their resonance with each other, the exhibition follows the transitions in modern art to which the art museum has been witness, through works produced as a result of past and present artistic patronage.

● Ohara Museum of Art  
1-1-15 Chuo, Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture  
Exhibition will run through Sept. 23, with the museum closed on Sept. 2 and 9. Open: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (last admission 4:30) Admission fee: ¥2,000.



COURTESY: OHARA MUSEUM OF ART

White-walled warehouse-mansions, ink-black lattice-tiled *namako* walls, rows of willows swaying in the breeze: The picturesque townscape of the Bikan Historical Quarter stretches along the Kurashiki River, lying just a 10-minute walk from Kurashiki Station.

Located on the Seto Inland Sea, the town of Kurashiki originally prospered as a center of the spinning industry. The Ohara family not only supported the town's development, but also enthusiastically nurtured its cultural foundations. A privately owned museum opened by the family in 1930, the Ohara Museum of Art, is renowned for offering Japan's first permanent exhibition of Western fine art, including works by El Greco and Claude Monet. Funded by the family, the collection was initially assembled by the painter Torajiro Kojima but was gradually augmented and now extends to around 3,000 items.

The museum came under new leadership last year, when Atsushi Miura took over as director. Now it has opened an ambitious exhibition titled "Cross-Cultural Resonance in the Ohara Collection: A Door to Modernity." The Japanese title takes the form of a question: "Does cross-cultural resonance exist?" One might wonder why, given that the Ohara Museum of Art is already famous for its outstanding permanent collection, it has chosen to hold a special exhibition that phrases its title in the interrogative. The reason lies in the new director's hopes, expressed in the keywords "transmis-

sion" and "exchange."

The fact that the collection has an established reputation does, at the same time, invite the impression that the exhibits never change. Even if the exhibits are changed out periodically, the works remain strongly imprinted on people's memory, and that impression may well take precedence. Miura hopes that this exhibition will play a part in sweeping away those past memories and transmitting a new image to people. While the Louvre and many other art museums around the world primarily display items in their collection, Japan's art museums tend to focus on promoting special exhibitions of a short duration that hardly ever reference their own collections.

This exhibition reveals the challenge that the Ohara Museum of Art has taken on in tapping into its own strengths in a way that differs from the structure of conventional exhibitions, which primarily seek to orient the museum and its visitors toward consumption.

Consisting of four chapters, the exhibition spotlights the Ohara Collection from an assortment of angles, including retracing the footsteps of Torajiro Kojima and the history of artistic patronage.

The most direct focus on the question of cross-cultural resonance can be seen in the second chapter. This chapter takes up eight themes — "other cultures," "nudes" and "labor" among them — and mixes together Japanese and Western artworks on each theme. One widely known example of two-way cultural exchange is the way in which impression-

ism found a warm welcome in Japan, while ukiyo-e prints made their own impression in France. Naturally, a deeper understanding develops if one's viewing of the works is informed by that kind of knowledge, but regardless of one's prior knowledge of art, visitors will likely realize that the viewing experience is enriched even more by actually looking at a collection of artworks on the same theme brought together within an art museum. For example, let us look at the nudes of Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Kunishiro Mitsutani, one of the artists who was inspired by Renoir; as the Mitsutani painting included in the exhibition was painted in his later years, when he had changed his artistic style, one can tell that the resonance of these two artists changed its timbre. I would encourage you to visit the venue to see for yourself whether the pieces in front of you resonate or not, and what kind of notes they strike with you.

For the Ohara Museum of Art, this exhibition is just the start. One imagines it will further develop exchanges that take the art museum as their starting point. Interactions between the artworks and visitors, among the artworks themselves, and among the people viewing them can create new resonances for us today. Their resounding tones will no doubt progressively spread beyond the art museum and Kurashiki, eventually echoing extensively in a loud reverberation. I plan to keep an ear out for the foreseeable future, to see what kinds of sounds I can hear.



COURTESY: OHARA MUSEUM OF ART

### Ohara Museum of Art

This art museum was established in 1930 as Japan's first privately owned museum focused on Western art, whose collection primarily consisted of works acquired in Europe by Kojima with the support of the businessman Magosaburo Ohara. Following subsequent acquisitions of Japanese modern and contemporary art, along with Asian and Egyptian art, the museum's collection now encompasses around 3,000 items. The museum also actively undertakes a diverse array of other initiatives, including support for contemporary artists, educational outreach activities and holding concerts.



PHOTO: AYA TSUTSUI

### ● Summary 異文化は、 共鳴するのか？

岡山県の倉敷は、瀬戸内海に面した紡績業で栄えた町。(大原美術館)は、その発展を支えた大原家により1930年に開館した私立美術館で、モネなどの西洋美術を日本で最初に常設展示したことで知られている。歴史あるこの美術館では2023年、三浦篤を新館長に迎え、意欲的な展覧会『異文化は共鳴するのか？

大原コレクションでひらく近代の扉』が開催されている。タイトルに「？」を付け、来館者に問いを投げかけているのは「発信」と「交流」を試みているからだ。展覧会は4章構成だが「異文化の共鳴」に対する最も直接的なアプローチは第2章にみられる。ここではテーマごとに日本と西洋の作品を混ぜ合わせて展示し

ている。例えば、ルノワールと満谷国四郎の裸体像。満谷はルノワールに感化された作家の一人だが、出品作はさらに作風が転換した晩年作なため、二人が共鳴を経て、また別の音色を奏でている。目の前の作品たちが、共鳴しているのか否か、また聞こえる音はどのような響きなのか。ぜひ会場で確かめてほしい。



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thejapanimes

## Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

# Enowa: Gastronomy from the fields of Yufuin

By TAEKO TERAO

At the inn-style retreat Enowa, each of the 10 villas and nine guest rooms is furnished with an outdoor hot spring bath. It is located in Oita Prefecture, Japan's "onsen prefecture," which boasts both the largest number of hot spring sources and the highest yield of spring water. The Yufuin district of the city of Yufu is well-known for its branding strategy as a luxury onsen resort and as a city planning model for cities planning to become tourist destinations.

Until the prewar period, Yufuin was mainly a farming village. In the 1970s, a group of local ryokan inn managers, inspired by an observation visit to Baden Baden, Germany, promoted a tourism plan that would enable their businesses to survive by preserving the area's natural environment. They have succeeded in attracting customers by resisting large-scale development, instead operating small and medium-size inns focusing on quality food and service. Enowa, which opened in June 2023, has had a significant influence in the district. This is because executive chef Tashi Gyamtso has created the first innovative cuisine in Yufuin, and a new reason for Japanese and overseas tourists to head to the area.

Gyamtso was born and raised in a mountainous area of Tibet that is 3,000 meters above sea level. There, self-sufficiency in growing vegetables and raising cattle is the norm. "Pasturing the cows was my job," he said. "We were farming people, and we bartered for necessities with our relatives, who were nomadic people." His

family relocated to New York in 2008. After graduating from university, he pursued a career as a chef in earnest. Starting in 2015, he worked for four years, eventually becoming co-executive chef, at Blue Hill at Stone Barns, a restaurant near New York City that promotes the "farm to table" philosophy. Widening his culinary horizons further, he trained at renowned restaurants in Europe and Japan, and even at a sake brewery to study fermentation. He arrived in Yufuin in 2020, three years before Enowa opened, and began preparations for the restaurant by cultivating its fields.

"The environment of Yufuin and the owner's concept of 'offering cuisine in which just-picked vegetables grown in our own field play the starring roles' aligned with what I aspired to do myself," said Gyamtso.

Currently about 200 different vegetables and herbs are grown each year in the neighboring 10,000-square-meter field, without the use of pesticides. Gyamtso and the restaurant's staff members participate in the farm work under the guidance of agricultural adviser Teruhisa Ishiwari of Ishiwari Farm in Kyoto, who has earned the support of famous chefs. Based on the concept of "local production for local consumption" and with an eye to the future, they create dishes born of the soil.

Dinner at Enowa's main dining room, Jimgu, begins in the greenhouse, where a fresh vegetable appetizer is served amid the aromas of the herbs grown inside. The dishes that follow also feature an abundance of vegetables, combined with fish and



PHOTOS: KOUTARO WASHIZAKI

meat from Oita. In early summer, the vegetables include asparagus and fava beans. All of them are vividly flavorful. The style of cuisine may be different, but Gyamtso's philosophy of staying close to the land perfectly matches that of his predecessors in the district who have brought new vitality to Yufuin.



Arranged in a vase, Bouquet starts out as a delight for the eyes.



Oita Prefecture (Innovative)

### Restaurant Jimgu/Enowa

544 Kawakami-Maruo, Yufuin-cho, Yufushi, Oita Prefecture  
<https://enowa-yufuin.jp/>



### TASHI GYAMTSO

Gyamtso was born in Tibet in 1990. In 2008, his family moved to New York. From the following year, he attended university while also getting started in the restaurant world. After honing his culinary skills at American and Japanese restaurants, mainly in New York, from 2015 he worked at Blue Hill at Stone Barns for four years. For the last two-plus years of that time, he was the restaurant's co-executive chef. During that period he also trained for several months in Japan and the U.K., and in spring 2020 relocated to Japan and assumed the post of executive chef at Enowa.

### Summary

湯布院の畑から生まれる野菜主役のガストロノミー。

高級温泉地、大分県由布市湯布院町は1970年代に地元の旅館経営者たちが自然を残すことで自らも生き残る観光地づくりを推進してきた。そんな街で2023年6月にオープンした『エノワ』の影響は小さくはない。エグゼクティブ・シェフ、タシ・ジャムツォによるイノベーティブな料理はこの地を目指す県外

や海外からの観光客にとって、この地を目指す新しい理由となっているからだ。

タシはチベットで生まれ育ち、一家で2008年にNYに移住。NY郊外『ブルーヒル・アット・ストーンバーンズ』スーシェフを経て、『エノワ』を開業する3年前の2020年に湯布院町にたどり着き、畑を開墾する

ところから準備を始めた。現在は近隣にある畑で年間野菜やハーブを無農薬で栽培。タシはじめ、スタッフともども畑仕事に携わり、地産地消の、さらに先を目指して、土から料理を創造する。大地に寄り添うタシの哲学は、この町を盛り立ててきた街の先人たちのそれと重なる。



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## Destination Restaurants 2024

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VOL. 12:  
Kose Corp.

**Mission: Sustainability**

By OSAMU INOUE / Renew's

**Kose's strong points**

- 1 Has promoted "Creating Beauty in a Sustainable World" since 1991
- 2 Made it onto CDP's 2023 A list in both climate change and water security for the second consecutive year
- 3 Has transplanted coral across more than 12,000 square meters under its "Save the Blue" project since 2009
- 4 Works to reduce plastics in its products, including bottles and outer packaging



ILLUSTRATION: AYUMI TAKAHASHI

## Kose takes pride in creating beauty in the world

In July 2024, the cosmetics maker Kose Corp. launched a campaign to help coral reefs around Okinawa, part of the Japanese company's "Save the Blue" project channeling some of the proceeds from its flagship Sekkisei cosmetics into restoring reefs.

This is the 16th year for the summer campaign, and consumers now recognize Sekkisei as environmentally aware — the rare cosmetics brand whose purchase leads directly to promoting environmental sustainability.

Established in 1946, Kose also makes home products like shampoo and sunscreen and has gone global, operating in 68 countries and regions, with its international business representing about 37% of its sales.

Kose commands a high reputation as a company actively working on sustainability projects. In July it was included in the FTSE4Good Index Series, a major stock index for investors who look for environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, for the

fifth straight year. Its score places Kose among the highest-ranking cosmetics makers in Japan.

Furthermore, Kose was put on the 2023 A list for both climate change and water security announced this February by the international non-profit group CDP. Kose and Kao Corp. are the only Japanese cosmetics companies to have been included on the A list in two divisions for two consecutive years.

### Sustainability, gender equality

Kose's internationally praised sustainability efforts took a major leap forward in 1991, when it decided to increase its international presence by establishing a corporate identity. Regarding conservation of the environment as an important issue, it introduced the slogan "Creating Beauty in a Sustainable World" (see the article in the box).

In 1997, it set up a Global Environment Committee, cutting across groups, and initiated efforts for social

contribution through its business. In 2017, it joined the United Nations Global Compact, aiming to contribute to achieving the international body's sustainable development goals.

For this, it set up a body dedicated to designing sustainability strategies in 2019. In April 2020, it announced a sustainability plan that set targets for 2030. These moves drove Kose significantly forward in terms of contributions to people and society, as well as to the global environment. In terms of the former, "a source of adaptable products and services" is arguably a characteristic of Kose.

Kose does not have products specifically for men or women in its flagship brands, such as Sekkisei and Decorte. Yoshinori Haratani, director and general manager of Kose's Corporate Strategy Department, said: "We take pride in the way we approach gender, which we believe is most characteristic of our company. [Our products] help people maintain their skin in healthy conditions regardless of their gender. We don't need to make separate products for different genders, which helps us become more eco-friendly. The same goes for our business-use products — for example, complimentary toiletries at hotels, which our customers like because they are easy to manage."

This philosophy that skin care and makeup do not discriminate between genders is embodied by Los Angeles Dodgers slugger Shohei Ohtani.

Kose has enlisted Ohtani to serve as a model for Sekkisei and Decorte ads since 2023. During the World Baseball Classic held from February to March, Ohtani posted on his Instagram account a photo of his locker in which containers of Decorte toner and cream were visible. This attracted at-

tention in social media and helped boost the brand's sales among both male and female buyers.

As part of efforts to help conserve the global environment, Kose has been working to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide in order to achieve carbon neutrality in Scope 1 and 2 (direct and indirect) emissions by 2040, reduce its use of plastics, including through reconsidering packaging materials and using recycled plastics, and promote responsible purchasing of palm oil.

One especially unique characteristic of Kose is its goal of achieving an "increase in awareness of environmental issues through products and services," as mentioned above.

### Planting coral

Sekkisei, sold in 15 countries and regions, mainly in Asia, is a brand that represents Kose. Starting in 1985 with a toner made from Japanese and Chinese herbal extracts, Sekkisei has added new items and grown into a skin-care brand that is a major seller for the company. At least 67 million Sekkisei toners had been shipped by November 2023.

Sales growth accelerated in 2007 after Kose ran an ad campaign featuring a popular actress with the support of Kazutoshi Kobayashi, who became its president that year. Riding on the brand's success, Kose launched the "Save the Blue" project in 2009.

Under the project, Kose makes a donation to fund coral conservation activities for areas equivalent to the total area of the bottoms of the containers of all eligible Sekkisei products purchased during two summer months.

"Sekkisei is our signature brand, and we were considering ways to



The head of Kose's Corporate Strategy Department, Yoshinori Haratani (left), and Seiji Kawano, head of Sustainability Strategy Office. PHOTO: OSAMU INOUE

● Summary

人と地球への思いやり  
"美の創造企業"の矜持。

1946年創業の老舗の化粧品メーカーであるコーセーは、サステナビリティへの取り組みに意欲的な企業としても評価が高い。「CDP 2023年版」でコーセーは、「気候変動」「水セキュリティ」の2部門で最高評価を受ける「ダブルA」企業となった。とりわけコーセーらしいユニークな取り組みが、「商品・サービスを通じた環境課題の啓発

だろう。

「あなたが美しくなると、地球も美しくなる。」——。化粧品を購入すると、その分、沖縄の海にサンゴ礁が広がる。2024年7月、そんなキャンペーンが今年も始まった。コーセーを代表する化粧品ブランド「雪肌精」が展開する雪肌精「SAVE the BLUE」プロジェクトの一環。

夏のSAVE the BLUE活動は今年で16年目を迎え、雪肌精は環境意識の高いブランドとしても消費者から認知されるようになった。

世界的にも、購入や使用がサステナビリティに直結する化粧品ブランドは珍しい存在と言える。雪肌精の地球環境への貢献はこれにとどまらない……。



日本語全文はこちら

make use of its wide reach and popularity to launch a long-term project. The project has now developed into an annual event involving not only our customers but also our distribution partners,” Kose Director Yoshinori Haratani said.

In 2011, the project's target scope was expanded to include coral overseas. Now it supports coral conservation in a total of nine countries and regions, including Japan. Over the past 15 years, the project has planted more than 20,000 corals in areas totaling 12,269 square meters. It has played a significant role in stimulating consumer interest in environmental conservation and deepening their understanding of it, as the campaign is advertised widely using pop-up ads and displays.

The project expanded its scope of activity in the winter of 2022, when Kose began an activity to protect snow, not limiting its projects to one season. But these are not the only contributions to global environmental conservation that Sekkisei has made.

### Reducing plastics

In September 2020, Kose introduced the first full Sekkisei rebranding: Sekkisei Clear Wellness, a new series featuring unique ingredients extracted from plants grown in Japan. For this series, Kose reviewed all factors related to packaging and containers to reduce the use of plastics.

The bottles for the series use a “green nano” resin additive, reducing CO2 emissions when the plastic is incinerated as waste, and biomass PET, reducing the amount of petroleum-derived materials. In addition, a no-label design reduces the amount of plastic and ink used, and the plant-derived ink is biodegradable.

A cardboard material was chosen for the outer packaging, and instead of printed instructions, a QR code lets users access detailed instructions online. Kose also introduced refills for the series, part of its participation in a project initiated by the Ministry of the Environment in 2022 for a model project for investigating CFP calculation, reduction planning and presentation. In this series, the company made clear reductions in CO2 emissions across products' life cycles, from production to disposal.

Emissions calculations for the product Sekkisei Clear Wellness Pure Conc SS, for example, have shown that refills had 28% lower CO2 emissions than bottled products across their life cycles, from the procurement of raw materials through to disposal and recycling.

In addition, Kose launched in early 2021 the Sekkisei Clear Wellness products W Barrier Mist and UV Defense, the first to come in standing pouches made entirely of paper instead of plastic. Such pouches were believed to be practically impossible to develop, but Kose managed it with the help of Toppan Inc., a major printing company.

Furthermore, Medicated Sekkisei Brightening Essence Lotion, launched this March, uses biomass plastics and reduces overall plastic through things like doing away with wrapping film and using paper rather than plastic for the seal on the box. These measures allowed Kose to reduce CO2 emissions by about 9% for the product's regular size and 10% for the large one.

### Remaining a pioneer

Thanks to these efforts, the sustainability plan introduced in 2020 has been progressing steadily. This April, Kose gave an update on progress so far and at the same time strengthened its efforts.



The bottles for the Sekkisei Clear Wellness series use a “green nano” resin additive and biomass PET, and the outer packaging uses a cardboard material. The ink used is plant-derived and biodegradable.

© KOSE

“The most significant update is the addition of the target of achieving net-zero CO2 emissions, including Scope 3 emissions (in the supply chain), by 2050, clarifying the target we'll aim for after the existing target of 30% reduction by 2030,” said Seiji Kawano, general manager of Kose's office on sustainability strategy. “Going forward, we plan to work on horizontal recycling, where we'll collect bottles of cosmetics, including Sekkisei. We are also preparing to decide by April 2025 on target figures for the introduction of refills for more products.”

“So far, we have done what we've had to do naturally as a member of society,” Kawano continued. “So going forward, we aim to contribute to people and the Earth, especially where beauty is involved, while remaining what we are.”

“Working with external partners to inspire each other is a tradition of ours,” Director Haratani said. “I think we should seek relationships that benefit both sides rather than cushy, too-friendly relationships so that, for example, we can work with even industry rivals on open innovation projects or develop new products.”

“And I think it's in our DNA to do so,” he added.

In the past, Kose had a partnership with L'Oreal, the world's largest cosmetics maker. When Kose founder Kozaburo Kobayashi learned that L'Oreal was planning to crack the Japanese market, he visited the French company and signed a technological cooperation deal in 1963. A factory was built in the Saitama city of Sayama to manufacture L'Oreal products targeted at Japanese consumers, and the two companies also jointly launched a beauty salon business.

Although the two companies ended their partnership in 2001, the experience of that success stayed with Kose, leading to collaboration with Kao.

In 2021, Kose and Kao signed a

comprehensive collaboration deal on sustainability for cosmetics. In the first project under the deal, the two companies have been working to realize horizontal recycling of plastic bottles for cosmetics and other products since April 2022. They are also working on a project to recycle cosmetics into paints.

It is still uncommon for rivals to work together on sustainability, but “a pioneering spirit and showing examples for others to follow is also part of what makes Kose Kose,” Haratani said.

“Kose was a pioneering company to introduce [powdered] foundation and serum products in the skin-care genre,” Haratani continued. “We're doing the same thing in the sustainability field. We hope to offer products and services that have new added value and are good for the global environment.”

Kose will remain a pioneer with brands that show excellent awareness about the environment. The Earth must remain beautiful — helping to do so is the pride of this “beauty creation company.”

A Sekkisei display, referring to the “Save the Blue” project, at a Matsumoto Kiyoshi drugstore in Tokyo's Asakusa area.



© KOSE

In 1991, the Kose group introduced the slogan “Creating Beauty in a Sustainable World” with a strong determination as a “beauty creation company” to share our wisdom and work to benefit other people and the Earth.

Thirty-three years have passed since then, but the slogan has not lost color. On the contrary, it has become increasingly suitable to the current age. It is now the cornerstone of our determination to unite groupwide efforts to address sustainability issues.

What made us come up with this slogan and make it our cornerstone? Why are we so serious about sustainability? There are two reasons for this.

One is that cosmetics makers are kept alive by nature's blessings. In 1991, there were not yet terms like “SDGs,” or “sustainability” in the context in which it is now used, but in our company, we were already seriously discussing that we must ensure that limited resources never get used up.

Resource exhaustion would mean the end of plant-derived materials. As a chemical maker that uses nature's blessings, Kose naturally has a strong sense of responsibility for conserving the global environment. In my understanding, this is reflected clearly in the corporate slogan.

The other reason is that paying attention to a sustainable global environment and society is an indispensable factor for us as a company to be chosen by customers. In other

### Thoughts on corporate slogan

Yoshinori Haratani  
Director  
General manager, Corporate Strategy  
Department

words, consumers will turn their back on companies that are not serious about taking action for the global environment.

To be chosen, it is important for us to continue to live up to our promise to the Earth and people from a long-term perspective, rather than doing so in a one-off manner. I think this is symbolized by the efforts under the Sekkisei “Save the Blue” project.

This is a project in which we fund activities to protect the sea and forests using some of our profits. This year marks the 16th year since its launch. This initiative to use the established brand Sekkisei to protect the blue Earth has come to be recognized widely among consumers.

We were determined to never give up on the project, and our strong determination is what has led us to success. The fact that Kose is a family-run company had a positive impact on our thinking for the project and our determination to carry it through.

“Don't do things that future generations will be ashamed of” is a philosophy that remains among members of Kose's founding family. I have a very vivid memory of our president saying to us, when launching the Sekkisei “Save the Blue” project, “I would never tolerate it if you gave up on this project.”

Sticking with the project is a way for us to demonstrate our sense of responsibility, and it means we are keeping the promise we made in 1991 of contributing to people and the Earth. We are determined to continue to keep that promise into the future.



A great opportunity to enjoy bunraku  
National Theatre, Tokyo presents:  
Bunraku Performance for Beginners

Bunraku is a closely collaborative form that synchronizes narrative recitation, shamisen music and puppetry in performance. It vividly depicts the stories of passionate citizens in the Edo Period (1603-1868). This is a performance for beginners that presents the charm of bunraku in an easy-to-understand way.

Program

Performance

‘Datemusume Koi no Higanoko’

Guidance

‘An introduction to Bunraku in English’

Performance

‘Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami’

Venue

New National Theatre, Tokyo [The Pit]  
(1-1-1 Hon-machi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo)

Performance Dates

Sept. 7 (Sat.) – Sept. 22\* (Sun.), 2024  
\*except 9/13 (Fri.)

Curtain Times

11 am / 2:30pm / 6pm



For more information

Additional shows and venues

Traditional Japanese Dance Performance  
‘Discover NIHONBUYO with Animals’  
Aug. 10 (Sat.) 2pm  
Asakusa Public Hall

Traditional Japanese Music Performance  
‘Discover HOGAKU: The charm of KOTO’  
Aug. 31 (Sat.) 11 am / 3pm  
Bunkyo Civic Hall (Small Hall)

Kabuki Performance  
‘Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami’  
Sept. 1 (Sun.) – Sept. 25 (Wed.)  
New National Theatre, Tokyo [Playhouse]