

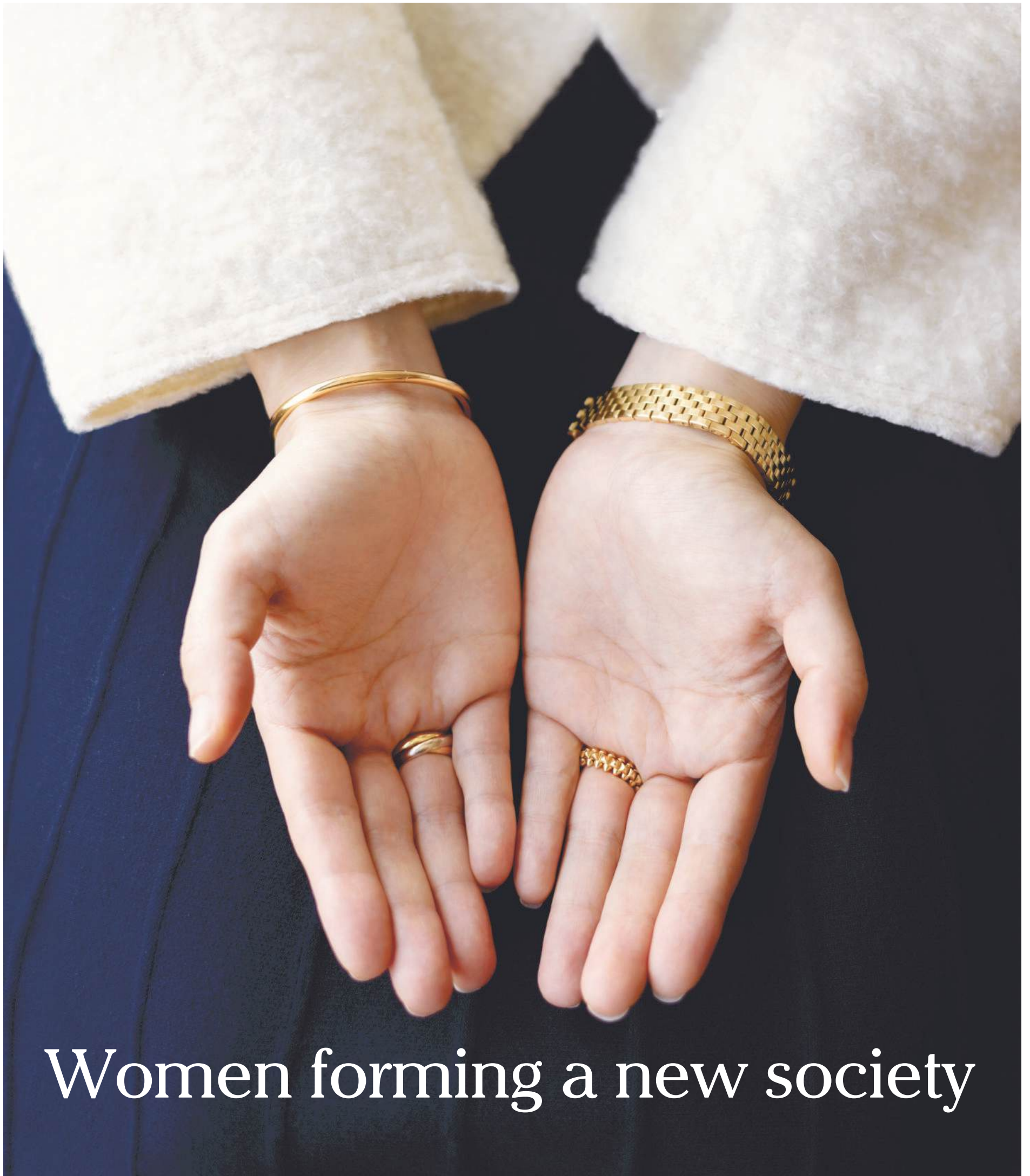
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# SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, February 22, 2025



Women forming a new society



## FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Every year, the World Economic Forum, a Swiss non-profit organization, publishes the Global Gender Gap Index, an indicator of women's equality by country. This year's figures have not yet been released, but in 2024 Japan was ranked 118th out of 146 countries (following on from 125th in 2023, 116th in 2022 and 120th in 2021). Particularly striking were Japan's extremely low scores in economic and politi-

cal participation, with the nation ranking 120th for the former and 113th for the latter. While it wouldn't be true to say that Japan's government and private sector are not taking any steps to address this situation, their efforts clearly fall well short of those made by other countries.

Therefore, this month's special issue showcases women who are active in Japanese society with an eye to applauding

their activities and supporting the next generation of women who might follow in their footsteps. Every year on March 8, the United Nations observes International Women's Day, a day of solidarity across the world that is aimed at improving the status of women and eliminating discrimination against them. As that day approaches, we hope you enjoy getting to know these impressive female leaders.

スイスの非営利団体「世界経済フォーラム」が毎年、国別の男女格差を表す指標「ジェンダーギャップ指数」を発表しています。今年の数値はまだ発表されていませんが、昨年2024年の日本は118位（146か国中）でした。特に顕著なのは、経済参画と政治参画の分野での値が極端に低いことで、経済参画120位、政治参画113位となっています。もちろん日本政府も民間企業も対策を講じていないわけではありませんが、他国と比較するとスピー

ド感が足りないと言わざるを得ません。

そこで今回は日本社会で活躍する女性にスポットを当て、その活動にエールを送ると共に、それに続く次世代の女性たちを応援する特集になります。毎年3月8日は、国連が定めた「国際女性デー」となっていて、女性の地位向上や女性差別の払しょくなどを目指す、国際的な連帯・団結の日になります。このことを胸に女性リーダーたちのインタビューを読んでいただければと思います。



Feature INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

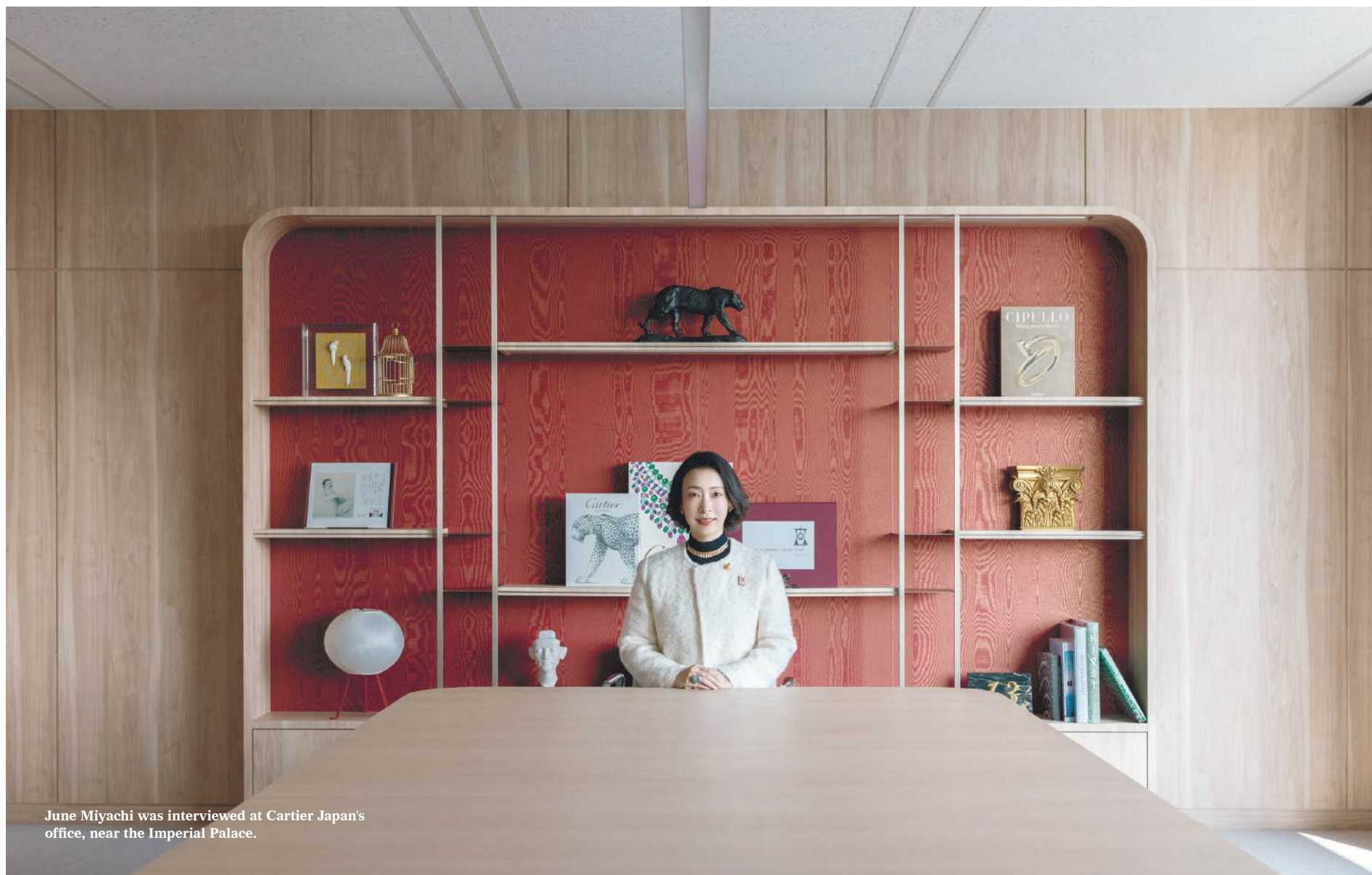
# LUXURY BRAND

## Supporting women's social participation is Cartier's commitment

By KAORU TASHIRO

✦ JUNE MIYACHI

After graduating from Kyoto University, she began her career in investment banking. After getting an MBA from INSEAD, she developed her career in the luxury industry. In 2017 she joined Cartier, Richemont Japan Ltd. and was appointed as Cartier Japan president and CEO in August 2020.



June Miyachi was interviewed at Cartier Japan's office, near the Imperial Palace.

PHOTO: YURI ADACHI

### ● Summary

〈カルティエ〉に流れる女性活躍支援のDNA。

ウーマンエンパワメントの取り組みを行う企業に〈カルティエ〉がある。同社は2006年に、女性インパクト起業家の支援を通して、社会に変革を起こすことを目指す『カルティエウーマンズイニシアチブ』を創設。2012年には、貧困のなかに置かれる地域のコミュニティの生活改善を目的とする『カルティエフィランソビー』を

設立した。さらに2020年ドバイ万博に続き、今年4月に開幕する大阪・関西万博では、内閣府、経済産業省、博覧会協会との共催で、女性のエンパワメントなどがテーマの「ウーマンズパビリオン in collaboration with Cartier」を出展する。

カルティエ ジャパン プレジデント & CEO 宮地純は「カ

ルティエにとって、女性は尽きることのないインスピレーション源で、創造性と価値観の基礎であり続けています。1933年にクリエイティブディレクターに抜擢されたジャンヌ・トゥーサンは力強い女性で、その精神はメゾンのDNAに脈々と引き継がれ、私たちが女性の活躍を応援することは自然な流れでした」と語る。



日本語全文はこちらから



The Cartier Women's Initiative is an international entrepreneurship program established in 2006 by Cartier to recognize, support and encourage female entrepreneurs. Thirty-three impact fellows received awards in 2024.  
COURTESY: CARTIER



When it comes to women's status and social standing, the unfortunate reality is that Japan trails much of the world. It ranked 118th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index in 2024, reflecting a strikingly low level of women's participation in society, especially in the political and economic spheres. Even setting such indexes aside, it is not uncommon to encounter situations and statements suggesting that many Japanese women themselves lack awareness of this. So how can things be changed?

One company that has made a notable commitment to women's empowerment is the French luxury house Cartier. In 2006, Cartier initiated the Cartier Women's Initiative, which aims to drive social change by supporting female impact entrepreneurs. In 2012, it established Cartier Philanthropy, which aims to improve the lives of communities living in poverty and in particular supports children and women.

Now it is collaborating with the Cabinet Office, the trade ministry and the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition on the Women's Pavilion at Osaka's Expo 2025, which opens in April, after following a similar project at Expo 2020 Dubai.

We visited June Miyachi, the president and CEO of Cartier Japan, at her office in the Hanzomon area of Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward to hear her thoughts on what underlies Japan's sluggish progress on women's empowerment.

Miyachi joined Cartier in 2017 and assumed her current position in 2020. Her appointment coincided with the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and so her first priority was to protect the lives of employees.

"The first mission I worked on as I assumed my role was to close all the stores. Every day, we were trying to keep our staff safe and employed. Our organization is of course supported by our staff as well as our clients, but during that period, I realized that a company is supported by a larger ecosystem that includes employees' families and their various circumstances," Miyachi recalled. Since that time, there has been four years of dynamism and growth, with the business getting bigger every year.

"As we went through that immediate crisis management and then our operational successes, we started being able to focus on our long-term vision in Japan: seek to enrich people's lives and our culture and society, through the quest for timeless beauty," she said.

So how should a luxury goods maker — a "maison," as they are known — contribute to society and culture? Women's empowerment has long been a part of the answer.

"For Cartier, women are a never-ending source of inspiration and remain the foundation of the maison's creativity and values," Miyachi said. "Jeanne Toussaint, who was appointed creative director in 1933, was a powerful figure known as 'Panther Woman' after the house's symbol, the panther. Her spirit lives on within the maison and I believe it was natural for us to support women's advancement."

She continued: "Ranking 118th in the Gender Gap Index does not necessarily mean Japan has not taken measures. However, in relative terms and from a global perspective, there is much room for improvement and acceleration. Other countries have been tackling the issue as well, and there is much to learn from exchanging common challenges and solu-

tions, which is also what we are aiming to initiate through the dialogues at the 2025 World Expo. I believe there are three major levers in order to accelerate the advancement.

"One is general awareness. We need to turn on the 'awareness switch.' Once you have awareness, then your perspective on the world changes and you start to notice things.

"The second is the commitment of leaders. I believe the commitment from leadership, especially in economic and political spheres, could have an impact in moving the needle.

"The third is environment to create an environment that encourages women to advance in society. Ideally, over time, this kind of encouragement would become unnecessary."

The Women's Pavilion will open its doors, aiming to raise awareness and engage the visitors to be inspired on this topic of women empowerment. The tagline of the pavilion is Living Together, Designing Together, For the Future.

The pavilion was designed by architect Yuko Nagayama. It is noteworthy because the facade has been made using the original facade of the Japan Pavilion at the Dubai expo.

"At the Osaka 2025 expo, we hope visitors can feel, think and then act," Miyachi said. "We want people to realize each one of us is a stakeholder."

More than 150 events are planned for the "WA" space — named from Japanese characters meaning "harmony," "dialogue" or "circle" — on the second floor of the Women's Pavilion. It is hoped those sessions will turn the "awareness switch" on and accelerate the advancement of women in society. With strong female leaders like Miyachi in charge, that would seem likely.

The exterior of the Women's Pavilion for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai was designed by Yuko Nagayama. The distinctive "three-dimensional lattice" facade was originally designed by her for the Japan Pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai and has been reused in Osaka.



COURTESY: CARTIER

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COVER PHOTO

Our future is in our own hands, and women must actively help shape a new society — such is the message conveyed by the hands of June Miyachi, president and CEO of Cartier Japan.

PHOTO: YURI ADACHI

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✦ JICA

The Japan International Cooperation Agency. Established in 1954. It is an incorporated administrative agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the integrated administration of Japan's official development assistance. It engages in international cooperation with developing countries in all kinds of fields, including technical cooperation, financial assistance, urban and regional development, and emergency disaster relief. Guided by its vision of "Leading the world with trust," JICA is a major presence in the international community as an organization supporting inclusive, sustainable, high-quality growth without damaging the natural environment.

Feature INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# COOPERATION AGENCY

## JICA's initiatives to support women's empowerment

By RIKO SAITO

As the incorporated administrative agency in charge of administering Japan's official development assistance (ODA), the Japan International Cooperation Agency undertakes international cooperation in developing countries. Guided by its vision of "Leading the world with trust," JICA is a major presence in the international community as an organization supporting socioeconomic development in developing countries.

Katsura Miyazaki took up the post of executive senior vice president at JICA in May 2024. JICA is engaged in proactive efforts to improve the proportion of women in management roles: In its 5th Medium-term Plan (April 2022-March 2027), the organization set a target of at least 27% for the ratio of women in managerial positions, but had already nearly achieved that by the end of fiscal year 2023, when the figure stood at 26.9%. As it has already achieved the target set by the Japanese government for the ratio of women in managerial positions at incorporated administrative agencies as a whole (18% by March 2026) as well, it would be fair to describe JICA as an organization with a positive attitude toward the promotion of women's empowerment.

"The executive senior vice president position was advertised publicly," Miyazaki said. "I'm always telling my female direct reports and other junior female colleagues that if they have a chance of a more senior post, they should take a shot at it, and that their whole perspective will change if they do. I realized that not taking on the challenge would be inconsistent with my stance, given that I met all the application requirements, so I applied. Even at JICA, it's certainly true that years ago, some departments were easier for men to get into, like those related to civil engineering, where technical expertise is required.



A photograph from Miyazaki's time as a staff member at the JICA Argentine Office in the late 1990s. COURTESY: JICA



✦ KATSURA MIYAZAKI

Executive senior vice president and chief sustainability officer at JICA. Born in Tokyo in 1965. After graduating from university, she joined one of Japan's major commercial banks. In January 1992, she joined the Japan International Cooperation Agency. In 2016, she was appointed senior deputy director general and senior director of JICA's Office for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in the Governance and Peacebuilding Department. She subsequently held the post of chief representative in JICA's Thailand Office from November 2018 and director general of the Governance and Peacebuilding Department from October 2020. In October 2022, she was appointed senior vice president. She has held her current position since May 2024.



Katsura Miyazaki speaks at the opening ceremony of the 21st Convention of the Pan American Nikkei Association in Paraguay last October. She told the audience that JICA intends to work with Japanese diaspora societies in pursuit of their sustainability and development. COURTESY: JICA

● Summary

JICAの「女性活躍支援」の取り組み。

独立行政法人国際協力機構（以下JICA）は、日本の政府開発援助（ODA）を一元的に行う実施機関であり、開発途上国への国際協力を行なっている。組織のビジョンとして「信頼で世界をつなぐ」を掲げ、開発途上国の経済・社会の発展を支援している。宮崎桂はそのJICAの副理事長に2024年5月に就任した。JICAは女性管理職

割合の向上に積極的に取り組んでおり、第5期中期計画期間（2022年4月～2027年3月）中に女性管理職比率を27%以上とすることを目標に掲げていたが、2023年度末には26.9%とほぼ達成。政府が定めた独立行政法人等全体の目標値（2026年3月までに18%）も既に到達している。JICAが実施している事業面に目を向ければ、「ジェン

ダー平等と女性のエンパワメント」をJICAグローバルアジェンダ（課題別事業戦略）の一つに据え、事業の推進において女性も含めた多様な視点を取り込むと共に、女性の経済的・社会的な能力発揮を推進する協力を実施している。かつてジェンダー平等・貧困削減推進室長という役職にあった宮崎も、この協力を推進したひとりだ。



日本語全文はこちらから

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA





COURTESY: JICA

Left: Miyazaki went to Tanzania in January 2025 to sign a Japanese ODA loan agreement. While there, she visited Zanzibar's Malindi fish landing, which was refurbished with Japanese ODA. Right: During the same trip, she also went to see the Kilimanjaro Agricultural Training Center in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region, which has been a partner in JICA's Tanzania projects for many years.

However, overall, there's no discrimination in the way staff are assigned to departments, and people now achieve success even in those fields regardless of gender. I'd be delighted if my appointment to the post of executive senior vice president could help, in however small a way, to change norms in Japanese society, where there's a tendency for men to dominate management positions in particular."

For JICA staff, who provide development assistance to developing countries, experience in overseas postings to developing countries is essential in order to succeed in a managerial role. However, many women miss out on the chance of overseas postings due to such factors as the timing of when they have children. To ensure women do not lose out on opportunities to be posted to other countries, JICA is working on solving this problem. The organization has introduced an innovative change under which all new graduate entrants are posted overseas as their third departmental assignment, or thereabouts, after joining JICA, thereby increasing career predictability and making it easier for staff to plan for the future.

Looking at JICA's operational side, gender equality and women's empowerment is positioned as one item on the JICA Global Agenda; as well as incorporating diverse viewpoints — including those of women — into the pursuit of its projects, the organization undertakes cooperation aimed at helping women to fulfill their economic and social capabilities. Having formerly served as senior director of the Office for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction, Miyazaki herself was one of those involved in promoting such cooperation.

"For example, when JICA was working on the Delhi Metro subway system project in India, we considered its user-friendliness for women, including not only increasing the number of female station staff to ensure women can feel at ease using it, but also devising ways to ensure that the saris they wear don't get caught up in escalators," she explained. "Introducing women-only cars means women can travel to school or hospital or to work with peace of mind, which helps support female participation in society. By nurturing female station staff and conductors, and ensuring they flourish in the workplace, we were also able to create role models for girls. Opening a subway reduces traffic jams and fosters an eco-friendly society, which is vital as well, of course. But at the same time, there's also the fact that it helps to create an environment in which women can feel at ease in daily life, and makes it easier for them to participate in society. It's that latter aspect to which JICA attaches importance."

In Tanzania, JICA has spent 40 years providing cooperation in the development of irrigation facilities and the improvement of rice cultivation technology. While

this does naturally involve developing facilities and providing guidance on cultivation methods, Miyazaki says that changing ways of thinking among farmers is also crucial.

"When we hold training courses over there, it's generally only men who take part, but in many cases, it's women who are performing the agricultural labor. In this kind of situation, we ask the partner government to assemble a group in which women are predominant. Or we have married couples attend together and ensure that the men properly learn about the size of the role played by women in agricultural settings in which women bear a substantial burden. There's also a tendency for women to make more effective use of the income they earn by putting it toward such things as their children's education. At JICA, we believe it's important not to forget women on the ground and to conduct activities that involve them, in order to improve the situation in developing countries, and that's what guides our practice."

It is a fact that Japan still lags some way behind many other countries in terms of female participation in society, ranking 118th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index published by the World Economic Forum in 2024. Miyazaki voiced

her discomfort that virtually all of the many top corporate executives she meets in the course of her work are men. JICA also takes care to ensure that those appearing as its representatives at symposiums or participating in negotiations are not exclusively male, she said.

"I think a major factor in why Japan is an underdeveloped country from the perspective of women's empowerment is its deep-seated societal norms, in terms of the fact that people around us — and sometimes even we women ourselves — think 'a job with this kind of responsibility's probably impossible for a woman' before we've even given it a try. I myself have a thick skin on that score — I didn't hesitate to become a working member of society and work in the same way as men, nor did my family or others try to put me off taking on such jobs. At the same time, not everyone thinks like me, or has supportive people around them, and I think a lot of women still find it hard to maintain the ambition to proactively go out and win positions, due to the impact of long-standing societal norms. Even in JICA, when we conduct questionnaires, the results show that fewer women than men aspire to gaining promotion. I think one factor behind this is that men have more opportunities to come into contact with those in

managerial and executive positions, so it's easier for them to regard promotion as the natural course of things. Accordingly, within our organization, we're now trying to increase those kinds of opportunities for women as well, and give them more chances to think properly about their career development by having women in senior positions mentor more junior female staff. The need to transform attitudes among men is undeniable, but changing ways of thinking among women is also key, so I'm keen to make effective use of my being in a position where I can readily give my backing to such activities."

JICA also conducts educational support activities overseas. This photograph was taken in India.

PHOTO: OSAMU FUNAO/JICA



Gender equality and women's empowerment is one item on the JICA Global Agenda. As well as incorporating diverse viewpoints — including those of women — into the pursuit of its projects, the organization undertakes cooperation aimed at helping women to fulfill their economic and social potential.

PHOTO: OSAMU FUNAO/JICA



AKI INOMATA

Contemporary artist born in 1983. Graduated from the Department of Inter Media Art at Tokyo University of the Arts in 2008. Lives and works in Tokyo. Inomata presents things born from or through collaboration with nonhuman creatures or nature. She has exhibited many works created in collaboration with living creatures, like "Think Evolution," a work in which an octopus encounters an ammonite, thereby bridging millennia of evolutionary distance. Her work is included in major collections such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto and the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art. <https://www.aki-inomata.com/>

From a hermit crab in a beautiful transparent shell to a wooden sculpture carved by a beaver, contemporary artist Aki Inomata's creations are often the result of collaborations with animals. But their message runs deeper than cute creatures — they pose questions about social systems and our preconceived notions.

Take, for example, "Why Not Hand Over a 'Shelter' to Hermit Crabs?" Hermit crabs have a habit of moving to new, more comfortable homes as they grow bigger. Inomata measured the internal structure of shells that the crabs have inhabited using a CT scan, then generated 3D computer graphics of the structures and reproduced them using a 3D printer. She then topped off her shells with mod-



In Inomata's work "I Wear the Dog's Hair, and the Dog Wears My Hair" (2014), she collected hair from her dog and herself over a period of several years and then used the hair from each of them to make a garment for the other, as though their coats had been exchanged.

© AKI INOMATA / I Wear the Dog's Hair, and the Dog Wears My Hair, 2014

Feature INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# ART

## Showing diversity is the best part of being an artist: Aki Inomata

By TERUKO IKE  
COURTESY: MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY



Aki Inomata at the Maho Kubota Gallery, which represents her, alongside "Memory of Currency" (2018-2021), a work in which she created "monetary fossils" from shells, which were historically used as currency. Small sculpted faces associated with countries' currencies, such as Yukichi Fukuzawa, Queen Elizabeth II and George Washington, were inserted into pearl oysters, and mother-of-pearl gradually coated these nuclei.

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

● Summary

芸術家の醍醐味は、多様な考え方を広げること。

かわいらしいヤドカリが美しい透明の貝殻に入った作品や、ビーバーに削らせた木を改めて仕立て直し彫刻作品にしたりと、現代美術作家AKI INOMATAが生み出す作品は動物とのコラボレーションの賜物だ。だがその愛らしい生き物たちを用いた作品の根底には、人間社会が作り出す仕組みや既存概念への問題提起がある。彼女

が芸術作品を通じ探求していきたいことは、「人間が人間のためだけを考えていくのではない世界観」だという。「アーティストは作品を通じ多様性を示すことで、人々の世界観や価値観を広げていくことが醍醐味だと思っています。私の場合は、人間界だけではなく自然界も含めた様々な生き物の多様性や、人間中心主義を変えてい

うということが作品づくりのテーマになっています。アーティストが訴えるものはそれぞれですが、共通しているのは既存概念にとらわれず、世界観を拡張していこうとすること。世界の見方が広がっていくことで、多様性を認めるような考え方が生まれ、個人が生きやすい社会をつくる一助になっているのではないかと思います。」



日本語全文はこちら





In Inomata's "Why Not Hand Over a 'Shelter' to Hermit Crabs?" (2009-), she used CT scans to measure shells, replicated them using a 3D printer and added models representing Paris, Tokyo and other cities. Hermit crabs moving between "cities" suggests migrants or refugees and makes us reconsider the nature of human identity and nationality.

©AKI INOMATA / Why Not Hand Over a "Shelter" to Hermit Crabs? -Border-(2009-)

els of landmark architecture from cities like New York City, Paris, Hong Kong and Tokyo. Her videos of hermit crabs moving from one "city" to another may overlap in our minds with shots of migrants or refugees we might see in the news. The work makes us think about the nature of human identity, appearance and nationality.

The works in the series were first made for the exhibition "No Man's Land" (2009), which was held at the French Embassy building in Tokyo, which had been earmarked for demolition. The building was demolished in 2009, and a new embassy was built on adjacent land. The land where the former embassy was located was technically part of France until October 2009, after which it was leased back to Japan on a fixed-term lease for 60 years and then will be returned to France. In other words, the land stays the same, and yet its country changes. Similarly, the hermit crab remains the same while the "country" it carries on its back changes. Inomata's work identified a common denominator in two very different things.

Another of her works that leaves a strong impression is "How to Carve a Sculpture," which uses wood carved by beavers. Inomata asked five zoos to allow her to set up short wooden beams in their beaver breeding areas. After the beavers had gnawed through the wood she collected it, and she found it was beautiful in a way similar to human-made sculptures. She then used a professional sculptor and a carving machine to create dual replicas on a human scale, three times the size of the originals. In other words, the beavers' creations were imitated by humans and machines. So, is the artist of the resulting work man, machine or beaver?

"I am interested in the creativity possessed by living things. For example,

beavers make dams and lodges using tree branches to store water, impacting their surrounding environment. I started by researching such habits. My focus was on wood that had been gnawed by beavers, but I realized the marks left on the wood were like those left on wooden sculptures by humans. In a sense, the beaver was the artist. However, it was also possible that the forms were the result of the beaver avoiding the harder parts of the wood, like knots. If so, then perhaps it was the tree that was the artist, because the tree creates its own form. If so, then who or what should be seen as the subject (in other words, the artist) of the creative act? I think this series makes us think about those questions," she explained.

What she hopes to explore through her artwork is "a worldview in which humans are not just thinking about themselves." During her time in college, her

first topic of interest was connecting with the natural environment.

"Born and raised in Tokyo, I didn't have much exposure to the great outdoors, so at the time I was creating works that brought natural phenomena into the exhibition space. The work I created for my graduation project at Tokyo University of the Arts was about digitally controlling natural phenomena. I projected ripples of water and dripping rain onto the floor. However, I felt that kind of work replicated the things I felt uncomfortable about, like the exertion of control over nature and the expulsion of living things from urban society. So then I thought, why not create works in collaboration with another being over whom I have no control at all? It was from this thought that the hermit crab work was created for the exhibition at the French Embassy in Tokyo in 2009," she said.

Finally, we asked her if she has ever

felt disadvantaged by her gender, either as an artist or as an individual. Noting at first that she does not think about the issue in terms of benefits or disadvantages, she expressed her belief that as an artist she can "show diversity."

"I believe that the best part of being an artist is to broaden people's worldviews and values by showing diversity through your art. In my case, the theme of my work is the diversity of living things, not only in the human world but also in the natural world, and also the idea of undermining anthropocentric thinking. Every artist will appeal to a slightly different audience, but what they all have in common is a desire to expand perspectives on the world without being constrained by preconceived notions. I believe that by broadening our worldview, we can create a way of thinking that recognizes diversity and helps create a society that is easy for individuals to live in."



Top: ©AKI INOMATA / How to Carve a Sculpture,2018- / Photo: Naomi Ito, Production Assistance: Izu Shaboten Zoo Bottom: ©AKI INOMATA / How to Carve a Sculpture,2018- / Production Assistance: Nasu Animal Kingdom



©AKI INOMATA / Mutual Aid. Art in collaboration with Nature 31,Oct 2024 - 23 Mar 2025, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

Right: Works at the exhibition "Mutual Aid: Art in collaboration with nature" being held at the Rivoli Castle's Museum of Contemporary Art in the suburbs of Turin, Italy, until May 23.

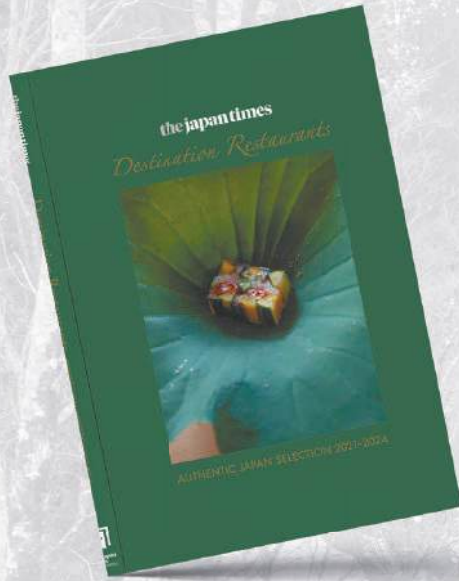
Left: In Inomata's "How to Carve a Sculpture" (2018-), a sculptor and a cutting machine were each tasked with carving human-size replicas (three times bigger than the originals) of wooden beams gnawed by beavers. The works represent attempts by a human and a machine to imitate the creative work of a beaver — is the artist the person, the machine or the beaver?



the japan times

# Destination Restaurants

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION 2021-2024



A list of the best restaurants in Japan, selected by Japanese experts with international diners in mind.

In 2021, The Japan Times created the Destination Restaurants list around the idea of Japanese experts uncovering top local restaurants for people around the world — hidden gems that not only offer unique culinary experiences but also contribute to community revitalization, sustainable food and the promotion of natural resources. We aim to differentiate ourselves from other selections by bringing countryside talent proper recognition.

This book, marking the fourth anniversary of the Destination Restaurants project, is a compilation of the finest restaurants we have selected so far.

Suggested price (without tax): **¥4,200**  
Circulation: limited to 2,000 copies

Number of pages: 160 (color)  
Sales agency: The Japan Times Publishing  
ISBN 978-4-7890-1889-0

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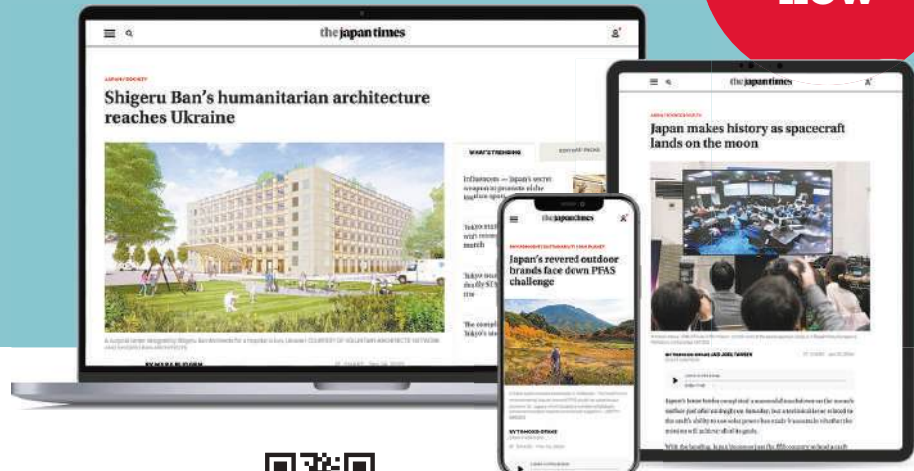
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## Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

### Toyama's Ebitei-Bekkan keeps traditions fresh

By TAEKO TERA0

Toyama, home to the restaurant Ebitei-Bekkan, is the capital of Toyama Prefecture facing Toyama Bay to the north and the Tateyama range to the east in the Northern Japan Alps. While it is Japan's second-largest regional capital in area and has a population of over 400,000, a little less than 40% of its land is habitable, and as a government-designated "environmental model city," it is currently aiming for a "compact city" urban design. Historically, the area flourished as a castle town around Toyama Castle and had devoted followers of the Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land) school of Buddhism. The Etchu Owara Kaze no Bon festival is held in the city's Yatsuo district in September, and throngs of tourists come to see dancers parade through the streets until dawn.

Ebitei-Bekkan is located on the bank of the Matsukawa River, one of Japan's top 100 cherry blossom-viewing spots. Its predecessor was a traditional restaurant that opened in 1911 under the name Ebitei. The restaurant's fourth-generation owner-chef is Kentaro Mura. After training at the restaurant Aoyagi in Tokushima Prefecture, Mura took over the family business in 2004 following the death of his father. Ebitei-Bekkan had previously been transformed from an inn to a restaurant and hosted weddings and banquets. He remodeled the restaurant in 2009 and changed its menu as well. The culinary style featuring simmered dishes (a foundation of Japanese cuisine) and matcha did not seem to go down well with the

existing customer base, however, and business had declined sharply. Still, Mura's cuisine gradually gained attention. After a famous guidebook bestowed a high rating and the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen train line brought more visitors to Toyama, business flourished. But in 2018, when the restaurant was on track to expand further, Mura closed its doors.

Mura said, "It was time to rebuild the restaurant, since the structure was deteriorating with age and our financial outlook was good, so I made up my mind to go back and study cuisine again." Though people he knew were astonished that he was starting afresh at the age of 40, Mura headed to Tokyo, where he went to work at a highly regarded Japanese restaurant. With the renewal of Ebitei-Bekkan in 2022, he made further changes to the restaurant. The atmosphere is modern and the course menu, which starts at ¥27,500 (\$180) including tax, is served at a counter and in private rooms. The ingredients used are from Toyama Prefecture and other areas of the Hokuriku region. In spring, there are Japanese glass shrimp, cherry salmon and firefly squid. The winter menu includes crab as well as more unusual ingredients such as bear or boar meat. The generous use of superb antique dishes handed down over generations is a luxury unique to such a venerable establishment. Incorporating fresh ideas while preserving and carrying on tradition is an approach that matches the character of Toyama.



The "rice companion set" features Koshihikari rice from Toyama Prefecture, which is well-known as a rice-growing region. Small dishes such as pickled vegetables, marinated firefly squid, salmon roe, simmered Toyama beef with ginger, and *ojako* (whitebait) go perfectly with freshly cooked white rice and are also excellent accompaniments to sake. PHOTOS: TAKAO OHTA



Toyama Prefecture (Japanese)

#### Ebitei-Bekkan

2-4-10 Yasunoyamachi, Toyama-shi, Toyama Prefecture  
Tel: 076-432-3181  
<https://ebitei-bekkan.com>



#### KENTARO MURA

Mura was born in Fukuoka Prefecture in 1977 to a businessman father who later became the third-generation owner-chef of the restaurant Ebitei. Mura studied marine resources at university and, after graduating from culinary school, apprenticed at the restaurant Aoyagi. After his father passed away, he took over the Japanese restaurant Ebitei-Bekkan in 2004. In 2009 he began offering gastronomic Japanese cuisine at the first-floor counter while also serving banquet meals. In 2018 he closed the restaurant temporarily for the reconstruction of its aging building. When Ebitei-Bekkan reopened in 2022, Mura changed direction and transformed the restaurant into an all-fine-dining establishment.

#### Summary

形を変えて代を継ぐ、富山の日本料理店。

『海老亭別館』がある富山市は富山県の県庁所在地。かつては富山城下として栄えた地域で、北アルプス立山連峰を擁し、北側には富山湾が広がる。『海老亭別館』は明治44年(1911年)に『海老亭』の名で創業した料亭をルーツに持つ。店主、村健太郎はその4代目として2004年に家業を継ぎ、結婚式や

宴会などを行っていたが、2009年にリニューアル。内容変更後の煮物や抹茶を出すスタイルは従来の客層には受け入れられずにいた。ところが、有名ガイドへの掲載や北陸新幹線開通により、繁盛店に。その矢先の2018年に村は店を閉め、単身、上京。名店での再修業を経て、2022年に店を一新した。

現在は富山県を中心に北陸の食材を盛り込んだ ¥27,500~(税込)のコースを提供。春は白海老やサクラマス、ホタルイカ。冬は蟹に加え、熊や猪なども顔を見せる。また、代々伝わる器が惜しげなく使われているのも老舗ならではの。守り、伝えながら新しい風を取り入れる姿勢は富山市の姿に重なる。



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VOL. 15:  
Kubota Corp.

**Kubota**

**Mission: Sustainability**

By OSAMU INOUE / Renew

**Kubota's strong points**

- 1** Drew attention at the CES trade show with a next-generation transporter and an automated electric tractor equipped with AI
- 2** Made CDP's A lists for climate change and water security in 2023
- 3** Promotes low-carbon farm and construction machinery despite technical hurdles
- 4** Has set up new businesses to support farmers and recycle resources, and contributes to water conservation



ILLUSTRATION: AYUMI TAKAHASHI

# Kubota tackles food, water and environmental issues

**O**n Jan. 8, Kubota Corp.'s booth drew a surge of attention at the CES technology trade show in Las Vegas.

The major Japanese maker of agricultural and construction machinery debuted at CES in 2024. The highlight of its new exhibits was a demonstration of the KATR, an all-terrain robot carrier that won the event's Best of Innovation award. The crowd roared over the technology of the next-generation transporter, which can keep loads of up to 240 kilograms level even while moving on rough slopes.

Kubota also unveiled the Agri Concept 2.0 electric tractor, which can drive autonomously and suggest tasks appropriate to crop and weather conditions. Reporters flocked to interview Kubota President Yuichi Kitao.

Cutting-edge technology, however, is not exactly what Kubota is after. The robot carrier and Agri Concept 2.0 are the result of its efforts to solve problems for farmers and help achieve sustainable farming.

Since its establishment in 1890, Kubota has introduced a wide range of products and services related to food, water and the environment.

It has a strong presence in its original waterworks business, making about 60% of the water pipes in Japan and 80% of the treatment equipment in advanced water purification facilities. With its high technology and strong track record, Kubota now supports the water infrastructure of many countries around the world.

Farm, industrial and other machinery is now its mainstay, accounting for 87% of sales. Kubota has manufactured 5.6 million tractors and for 22 years in a row has sold the most mini excavators in the world.

Kubota sells these products in over 120 countries, and overseas sales have grown to account for 79% of its total sales of ¥3 trillion (\$19 billion) in 2023.

As it increasingly makes its presence felt internationally, Kubota is also gaining recognition for its sustainability initiatives.

The international nonprofit CDP put Kubota on its 2023 A lists, announced in February 2024, in the water security category for the fifth time and the climate change category for the first time. Kubota was one of just 61 companies making both A lists,

and the only farm machinery maker.

Most agricultural and construction machinery is powered by diesel engines that emit substantial amounts of carbon dioxide. The fact that CDP evaluated Kubota highly even though it belongs to an industry that has a strong impact on the environment speaks volumes about Kubota's serious commitment to sustainability efforts.

**Management centered on ESG**

Agriculture is linked to global issues like the environment and food security. Agriculture and forestry are estimated to be responsible for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change is bringing natural disasters and crop shortages in emerging countries.

In Japan, the number of farmers has been steadily decreasing due to aging and a shortage of successors, leading to a decline in crops. Abandoned farmland leads to a collapse of the ecosystem and also has increased the risks of landslides and ecological collapses.

Aiming to address these issues, Kubota in 2021 formulated a long-term vision for 2030, GMB2030, and a midterm business plan running to the end of 2025, pledging to shift to business operations that emphasize "KESG" — a Kubota-style commitment to environmental, social and governance awareness (see the article in the box).

For example, it is in the process of replacing coke-burning furnaces with electric furnaces, which emit 20% to 30% less carbon, to melt iron for making machinery and water pipes.

Still, most of Kubota's farm and construction equipment has diesel engines, whose environmental impact is far larger.

Kubota's Scope 1 and 2 direct emissions totaled about 560,000 tons of

carbon dioxide in 2023, far more than the 42.3 million tons of Scope 3 indirect emissions from its supply chains. About 87% of this was from the use of its products.

Farm and construction machinery has been decarbonized more slowly than passenger cars. The reasons are specific to these products.

**Exhaust gas regulations**

First, heavy-duty agricultural and construction machinery requires significant power. Batteries and electric motors can operate for a shorter time and are not yet suitable under the conditions in which these machines are used.

Another problem is that charging stations are rarely installed in the rural and mountainous areas where these machines are often used, according to Kubota Director Masato Yoshikawa.

"For example, if the battery lasts for only three hours, would you be willing to take an hour to go home to recharge it (in the middle of work)? That would deter customers from buying the product," said Yoshikawa, who served as representative director and executive vice president in charge of ESG promotion until 2024. "So we need further innovation in batteries themselves, and we have to wait until the charging infrastructure is developed (to a more practical degree). So that's the situation we are in."

But Kubota isn't just sitting around waiting for advances. It is conducting its own research and development with a multifaceted and well-thought-out approach.

For starters, Kubota has been quick to make its industrial diesel engines that produce 100 horsepower or less comply with emissions regulations in various countries.

Kubota sells more than half of the



A demonstration of the KATR held at the CES technology trade show in Las Vegas on Jan. 8 © KUBOTA

**Summary**

「食料・水・環境」を一体で課題解決。

〈クボタ〉が手がける農機・建機は世界120カ国以上に展開され、約3兆円（2023年12月期）の売上高のうち、海外売上比率は79%を占めるまでに成長した。サステナビリティへの対応でも評価を高めている。

2021年、2030年への長期ビジョン「GMB2030」および、2025年12月期までの「中期経営計画2025」を策定。クボ

タ流のESG「KESG」を経営の中核に据えた事業運営への転換を高らかに宣言した。

ディーゼルエンジンを主流とする農機・建機の低炭素化や脱炭素化は、乗用車に比べ遅れている。駆動時間などで劣るバッテリーや電動モーターを適用することが難しく、EV化へのハードルは高い。

とは言え、手をこまねいて進歩を待っているわけではない。先回りして自社でできる研究開発を進めている。今、〈クボタ〉が注力しているのは「ビュアエンジン」「ハイブリッド」「フューエル」の3つのソリューション。それぞれ異なる角度から低炭素化・脱炭素化に挑んでいる。そのアプローチは多面的で隙がない。



日本語全文はこちら



industrial diesel engines it makes to other companies, and thus has a significant impact on farm and construction equipment around the world.

### Evolution of engines

Kubota is working on decarbonization from different angles, labeled “pure engine,” “hybrid” and “fuel” solutions.

The pure engine solution is aimed at improving the fuel efficiency of diesel engines. A combustion technology unique to Kubota called TVCR improves fuel efficiency by about 5% compared to conventional engines. The technology is used in electronically controlled compact engines, such as the D902-K, introduced in 2022, and the D1105-K, introduced in 2024. These models comply with tough emissions regulations in the United States, Europe and China.

Kubota is also working on hybrid engine technology. It developed a “micro hybrid engine,” in which an electric motor kicks in to assist the primary diesel engine the moment it detects a high load.

Kubota has also developed a hybrid that can switch to an electric motor. This system uses a diesel engine to generate electricity for the batteries. A prototype was exhibited at a trade show in Munich in 2022.

Kubota is also working to make its engines compatible with alternative fuels. All of the diesel engines it currently offers are compatible with “hydro-treated vegetable oil,” a biodiesel fuel made by adding hydrogen to vegetable oil.

“We believe we are the leader in low-carbon and hybrid technology for compact diesel engines,” Yoshikawa said.

Kubota is also working on technology to shift itself away from fossil fuels entirely.

In September 2022, the company announced it would introduce an electric tractor, Japan’s first. In April 2023, it launched a long-term rental service for the tractor for European local governments. Later that year, it announced it would introduce an electric mini excavator to the European market the next spring. This expanded its electric lineup to construction machinery.

But Kubota still faces a hurdle, according to Yoshikawa.

“There is demand for small electric agricultural and construction machinery in regions where regulations are strict, such as Paris, but are they commercially viable elsewhere in the world? No, they aren’t, for now,” the

director said.

Engines that run on hydrogen are seen as a promising, viable alternative.

When hydrogen reacts with oxygen, energy is released, emitting only water vapor. There are two types of technologies for generating power this way: fuel cells and hydrogen internal combustion engines (HICE).

In September 2022, Kubota announced it was developing an industrial-use HICE.

As a HICE is simply a type of internal combustion engine, one can be installed in an existing tractor, for example. Development of the technology is progressing steadily, and in January Kubota unveiled its prototype at the CES in Las Vegas and the Hydrogen & Fuel Cell Seminar in California.

Last March, Kubota also unveiled a prototype tractor with electric motors powered by fuel cells. That project qualified for subsidies from the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization in 2021 and has now shifted to the testing phase.

As next-generation technologies, fuel cells and hydrogen internal combustion engines have both advantages and disadvantages, but Kubota is betting on them both.

Kubota casts wide nets for its development projects. Issues do, of course, crop up in terms of performance, cost and infrastructure, and technologies may not find wide use quickly. But the company believes their time will come. “We’re going to do anything we can do” to make that happen, Yoshikawa said.

### Solar power, furnaces

Kubota contributes to sustainability in diverse ways. In addition to developing next-generation farm and construction machinery, it has initiated projects supporting sustainable farming operations and the circular economy. One such initiative is a farm-based solar power generation project that takes advantage of Kubota’s connections with farmers.

The project helps agricultural corporations and farmers set up solar power facilities on their land, and Kubota buys the electricity to use at its plants.

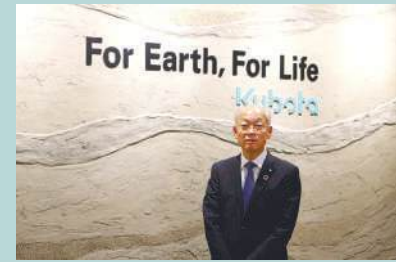
Currently, Kubota plans to expand the project to 50 locations in and around Tochigi Prefecture by April, targeting a total generation capacity of 5 megawatts. Kubota estimates the facilities will reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 2,600 tons annually. It aims to buy ¥5 billion in electricity by 2030.

“(This initiative) helps maintain

## DNA for solving problems

Masato Yoshikawa

Director, president’s special missions (formerly representative director and executive vice president in charge of ESG promotion)



In 2021, we placed “KESG,” a unique concept of ESG as interpreted and developed by Kubota, at the center of our management, and have been promoting it ever since.

Back in 2020 or so, when we worked out this policy, ESG and sustainability were buzzwords. We were already operating in the areas of food, water and the environment, and it was natural for us to work to reduce our environmental impacts. Most of all, our history was driving us.

Kubota was founded in 1890 by Gonshiro Kubota when cholera was still a major problem in Japan. Our founder decided to help solve this problem by supplying safe water through mass-producing water pipes and succeeded. Since then, Kubota has continued to provide solutions to social problems and issues through its products and services, including farm and construction machinery.

A look back on our history shows that providing solutions to emerging social issues has been our key theme since our foundation. I think it’s in our DNA, so to speak.

So, it was natural for us, when we worked out our medium- and long-term management plans in 2021, to place ESG at the center of our management and try to establish ESG itself as a business.

The farm and construction machinery sector, our core business, is full of challenges. The reality is

that energy infrastructure remains underdeveloped and the adoption of new power sources, such as electrification and hydrogen engines, is still expanding only slowly.

However, we have a sense of crisis that if we do not work on the development of such products right now, we may not lead the market after a decade or two. Our wish is to still be growing 10 and 20 years from now. To realize this wish, we inevitably have to take on the challenges of shifting to products with lower environmental impacts and adopting the business of reducing environmental impacts.

We wish to take on the challenge of solving social issues while directly or indirectly engaging our stakeholders in the process, including our employees (naturally) and shareholders, business partners, the local communities we are involved with and, above all, the customers who buy our products and services.

The “S” in ESG represents not just “social” but also “stakeholders” — that is one of the unique ideas we came up with, and KESG reflects such ideas. If I were to describe KESG in one line, I might call it guidelines for resolving social issues through joint efforts by everybody involved.

What we want to do is to face social issues squarely while working to convince more stakeholders about KESG and engage them.

farming, an essential industry, and contributes to securing food,” Yoshikawa said. “It helps us raise the percentage of renewable energy consumption. It may even lead to moves to set up charging stations for next-generation farm and construction equipment.”

Another new project that inspires high expectations is for recycling resources using Kubota’s technology for melting waste.

Kubota has melting furnaces whose temperatures reach 1,200 to 1,300 degrees Celsius, and has been supplying its “rotating surface melting furnace” to local governments and other entities. This furnace can melt down ashes and other residues produced through the incineration of garbage and other forms of waste. Kubota also continues to conduct demonstrations and experiments on recovering useful and valuable metals from slag.

Metals are conventionally extracted and transported overseas to Japan, inflicting enormous environmental impacts. Kubota’s initiative can be likened to realizing urban mines in Japan.

Although the melting process emits carbon dioxide, the amount “is less than that of CO2 emitted from mining metals in faraway countries and transporting them all the way to Japan, by our calculations,” according to Yoshikawa. Kubota believes the technology should be commercially viable in

overseas markets and is working to develop it further in Japan.

In the realm of water, Kubota operates a wide range of businesses for both water supply and sewage and contributes to the construction of water infrastructure in other countries. In Japan, it uses “aging diagnosis” of water pipes — a proprietary technology — and hydraulic analysis to suggest efficient ways to repair or replace infrastructure. Kubota also contributes to water conservation and preventing accidents caused by aging.

“What sets us apart from other manufacturers is the fact that we are engaged in food, water and the environment at the same time,” Yoshikawa said. “It may take longer than we expect for next-generation farm and construction machinery to begin to reduce the impact on the environment. But during that period, we aim to contribute to sustainability in other aspects, such as initiatives to conserve water or resource recycling, for example.”

When the times finally catch up, Kubota’s next-generation solutions will quickly blossom. Kubota regards food, water and the environment as inseparable and works to contribute to resolving issues related to them.

Kubota founder Gonshiro Kubota once said, “Our products should not only be technically excellent, but also useful for the good of society.” His spirit is still strongly reflected in Kubota today.

Kubota’s tractor with electric motors powered by fuel cells

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