

Sustainability

The Yakult Group Basic Policy on CSR was established based on our corporate philosophy as well as our corporate slogan of “In order for people to be healthy, everything around them must also be healthy.” We will also contribute to the achievement of a sustainable society through initiatives based on the material themes identified in March 2021.

Basic Policy on CSR

We at the Yakult Group will implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities by generating tangible benefits in accordance with our corporate philosophy and realizing sustainable corporate growth. Specific CSR activities in accordance with this objective are articulated in our Basic Policy on CSR, which was established in April 2012.

By systemizing the CSR initiatives undertaken at Yakult Group units, we increase the clarity of Yakult’s CSR management policies and undertake appropriate disclosure of information to stakeholders.

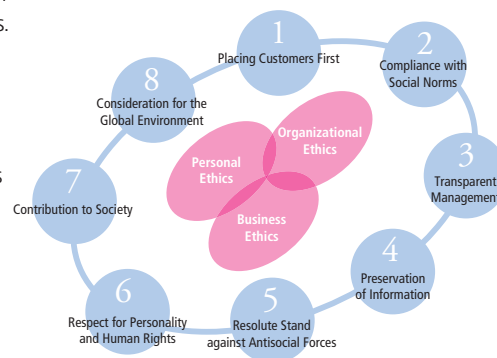
Basic Policy on CSR All of us in the Yakult Group will strive through corporate activities based on our corporate philosophy to earn the trust of all the Group’s stakeholders and promote mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders.

Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct

We established the Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct to serve as guidelines for proper corporate activities.

Over time, we have appended more specific conduct standards and concrete examples of such standards while making revisions as needed. Most recently, we published the sixth edition in April 2020 to extensively update items and contents and discuss how each item of the Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct are connected to the SDGs.*

A pocketbook including the Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct has been distributed to employees so that they can easily refer to them at any time when they need to confirm a particular decision-making process.



WEB For details, see the Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct >>>

<https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/csr/company/ethics.html>

* The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, are 17 global goals aimed at achieving a better and more sustainable world for all by 2030.

Signing the UN Global Compact

In May 2021, the Yakult Group signed the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the UN’s international framework for sustainable growth.

The UNGC calls on companies and organizations to take part in solving global issues and provides a principle-based framework for healthy globalization and a sustainable society.

The Yakult Group’s top management is committed to supporting the 10 principles of the UNGC relating to human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption, and we will work with the global community to apply these principles in all of our business activities as a good corporate citizen that contributes to society.



The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact (UNGCI0)

Human Rights	Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.
Labour	Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; and Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
Environment	Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
Anti-Corruption	Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

Related information

- p. 63 Human rights
- p. 63 Labor practices
- p. 19 The environment
- p. 90 Anti-corruption

The Yakult CSR Action Plan

In order for the Yakult Group to take effective actions based on the Basic Policy on CSR, from fiscal 2015 we have been systemizing our CSR activities in accordance with ISO 26000, the international standard for social responsibility.

Specifically, in fiscal 2016 we formulated the Yakult CSR Action Plan in accordance with the seven core subjects of ISO 26000. In fiscal 2021, relevant departments set concrete action targets and implemented activities accordingly.

WEB [Yakult CSR Action Plan \(fiscal 2021 achievements\) >>>](https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/pdf/csr_result_2021_en.pdf)

https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/pdf/csr_result_2021_en.pdf

WEB [Yakult CSR Action Plan \(fiscal 2022 action targets\) >>>](https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/pdf/csr_target_2022_en.pdf)

https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/pdf/csr_target_2022_en.pdf

Group-wide awareness of sustainability and CSR

The Yakult Group sees its business operations themselves as sustainability/CSR activities. To encourage all workers to be a promoter of such activities, we pursue sustainability/CSR-conscious conduct in all daily business operations and promote the permeation of such awareness through various approaches.

■ Promoting training in sustainability and CSR

We provide opportunities to learn and think about sustainability and CSR by way of new employee training and level-specific training. These training courses introduce the Yakult Group's sustainability/CSR activities, their significance and recent trends in sustainability.

We also provide training in sustainability as an e-learning program to all employees. In fiscal 2021, 88.9% of employees undertook the training.

■ Yakult CSR campaigns

We have implemented Yakult CSR campaigns for all workers since fiscal 1994 in line with Japan's Environment Month set forth by the Ministry of the Environment. The campaign in fiscal 2021 was held during the Global Goals Week that included September 25—the date on which the SDGs were adopted.

The theme for fiscal 2021 was the UN's ActNow campaign for individual action on climate change. Participants made and carried out a personal action



Campaign poster



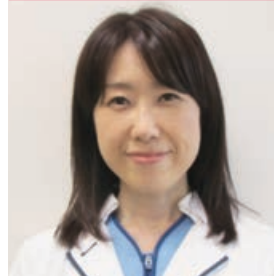
Poster detailing outcomes

declaration based on 10 recommended simple, daily actions. These actions were given points, and the total number of points from all participants were converted into a sum that was donated to the Japan International Forestry Promotion and Cooperation Center's Tropical Forest Conservation and Afforestation Fund. The motivation of seeing one's actions become a donation led to 40,090 participants raising a total of 1,089,077 yen. These donations were used to create a forest of native trees in Lào Cai Province, Vietnam. We also donated to OISCA's Children's Forest Program and implemented an afforestation project as part of the Environmental Actions (2021–2024).



The Yakult Forest of native trees in Lào Cai Province, Vietnam

Participant comments



Rumi Kaji

Senior Researcher
Research Planning Section
Research Management Center
Yakult Central Institute

Of the 10 simple actions listed in the ActNow campaign for fiscal 2021, I chose to work on “zero waste fashion,” which results in the biggest CO₂ reductions per month. I declared as the goal of my actions “minimizing clothing purchases and recycling used clothing.” After a month of implementation, I was able to recycle two cardboard boxes of used clothes, including those of my family. Finding a recycling facility and shipping used clothes can be time-consuming, but I am happy that the clothes we had grown fond of are now being worn by others. This action is in line with the achievement of the SDGs, so I will continue to do what I can to help.

■ Raising awareness of sustainability/CSR trends

Every year, we conduct activities to raise Group-wide awareness of sustainability/CSR trends, as well as of society's demands and expectations.

In fiscal 2021, we released a promotional video to advance Group-wide efforts to achieve the Yakult Group Environmental Vision and encouraged Group employees to watch it. The video explained the need for companies to work toward the sustainability of the global environment and promoted understanding and cooperation in achieving the goals of the Environmental Vision.

Materiality assessment

We have identified six material themes to achieve sustainability as a further step in realizing our mission of contributing to the health and happiness of people around the world based on our corporate slogan, “In order for people to be healthy, everything around them must also be healthy.”

To identify these themes, we established a cross-departmental working group that performed a materiality analysis with two mapped axes: “Impact for the Yakult Group” and “Importance for the sustainability of the planet and society.” We also worked together with external experts and referenced reports from groups like the IPCC* and World Economic Forum (WEF).

Using these six themes, we will establish strategies and plans that work toward improving the sustainability of not only our own Group but also of the planet and society to make our corporate philosophy and goal of uniting “People and Planet as One” a reality.

* IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which releases an evaluation report on climate change every five to six years. In its 2018 special report, “Global Warming of 1.5°C”, it detailed the ramifications of a 2°C rise in global temperature and pointed to the importance of taking immediate action to limit this rise to below 1.5°C.


Identifying material themes



Six material themes to achieve sustainability

To realize our corporate slogan of “In order for people to be healthy, everything around them must also be healthy” and achieve sustainability, we identified three social themes to prioritize within the value chain: innovation, value co-creation with communities, and supply chain management. We also analyzed factors such as climate change scenarios and water risk to identify three environmental themes: climate change, plastic containers and packaging, and water.

Six material themes

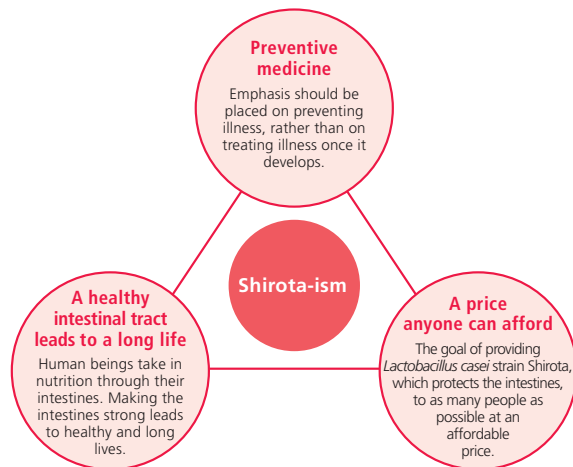
Innovation	Value co-creation with communities	Supply chain management
		
Evolve into a healthcare company, further pursue the potential of bacteria, provide new products and services, use resources effectively, and others ▶ p. 44 ▶▶▶	Connect closely with local communities, deliver information on health, provide safe and reliable health products and services, and others ▶ p. 49 ▶▶▶	Maintain sound relationships with business partners, promote sustainable procurement, ensure stable procurement of raw materials, and others ▶ p. 56 ▶▶▶
Climate change	Plastic containers and packaging	Water
		
Reduce GHG emissions (decarbonize), proactively shift to renewable energy, introduce energy-saving practices, and others ▶ p. 27 ▶▶▶	Convert to fully-recyclable containers and packaging, reduce environmental impact by changing container materials, and others ▶ p. 32 ▶▶▶	Use sustainable water resources, reduce water consumption, and others ▶ p. 36 ▶▶▶

What the SDGs mean to Yakult

Our passion for and approach to health can be traced back to our founder's wish to protect the health of people around the world. Yakult engages in business activities based on our corporate philosophy, expressed as: "We contribute to the health and happiness of people around the world through pursuit of excellence in life science in general and our research and experience in microorganisms in particular." We see these activities as contributing to Goal 3, "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Yakult's founder, Minoru Shirota, a doctor of medicine, began his medical studies in 1921. At the time, unsanitary conditions caused large numbers of children to die of infectious diseases in Japan. Under the circumstances, Dr. Shirota set his sights on the field of preventive medicine, which aims to help people avoid sickness rather than treating diseases after they occur. After years of microorganism research, Dr. Shirota strengthened and cultured *Lactobacillus casei* strain Shirota. Together with likeminded individuals, he then developed an inexpensive, delicious drink so that many people could benefit from *Lactobacillus casei* strain Shirota. This is how *Yakult* was born.

Yakult products are not just sold in stores but, since our founding, are also delivered door-to-door to homes and other locations. This approach of reaching out directly to customers is rooted in Dr. Shirota's principles of emphasizing the dissemination of information about preventive medicine and the idea that a healthy intestinal tract leads to a long life, as well as the value he placed on sincerity, gratitude and harmonious human relations.



In order to make good on the pledge to "leave no one behind," the SDGs aim to realize a society that does not overburden the planet, and where poverty has been eliminated.



The Yakult Group's philosophy and corporate activities are aligned with the underlying concept of the SDGs and Goal 3.

The SDGs were established as goals to be achieved by 2030 so that humanity can continue living on Earth. "Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere" is identified as the most important goal, and "leave no one behind" is the central promise of the SDGs.

The foundational philosophy of Yakult and our corporate slogan, "In order for people to be healthy, everything around them must also be healthy," are perfectly matched with the aims of the SDGs, so it is a matter of course for us to strive to achieve those goals. Yakult will thus continue working to create a society where humans can live in harmony with the planet, based on our goal of uniting "People and Planet as One."

The Yakult Group's contributions to the SDGs

The Yakult Group's corporate activities are broadly related to all 17 SDGs, but based on our materiality we have identified the following eight goals as being most closely connected to our business. Moving forward, the entire Yakult Group will continue contributing to achieving the SDGs.



How Yakult's material themes relate to the SDGs



Innovation



In keeping with its mission to contribute to the health of people around the world, the Yakult Group will continue to use its research findings and long experience with lactic acid bacteria and other beneficial microorganisms and pursue new possibilities through collaboration with outside resources to provide products and services that lead to solutions for health and social issues.



Value co-creation with communities



We will maintain respect for the cultures and customs in each region where we operate and contribute to the creation of safe, secure and healthy communities, engaging in dialogue with local communities about their own unique issues and proactively working toward solutions.



Supply chain management



A sustainable supply chain is essential in creating high-quality products that are safe and reliable. We will visualize our corporate social responsibilities, taking specific actions in the supply chain in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption.



Climate change



To address the many issues caused by climate change, such as resource depletion and natural disasters, we will promote energy conservation and proactively utilize renewable energy, as well as reduce our greenhouse gas emissions throughout the supply chain.



Plastic containers and packaging



On issues related to plastic waste and resource recycling, we will reduce the amount of plastic used in containers and packaging, transition to easily recyclable materials, and promote the reuse and recycling of plastic packing materials used in production processes.



Water



To tackle issues such as water inequality and water-related disasters, we will manage water risks at our production bases, strive to reduce water usage, and promote both conservation and sustainable use of water resources.

Raising awareness of the SDGs

■ Initiatives inside the Group

We conduct ongoing awareness programs for workers so that they can see the essence of the SDGs and take personal responsibilities themselves.

In 2018, we created posters showing the connection between the activities at each stage of the Yakult Group's business operations and the SDGs in nine languages (Japanese, English, traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Spanish and Portuguese).

In addition, the Yakult Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct were revised in April 2020 to include the SDGs related to each item of the Code of Conduct, in order to show workers that their thoughts and actions when properly carrying out corporate activities directly lead to the Group's CSR as well as contribute to achieving the SDGs.

■ Initiatives outside the Group

In February 2019, out of the 17 SDGs we presented our initiatives related to Goal 3 on health and exchanged views with about 30 students from 11 countries who were delegates of the Japan-ASEAN Students Conference (JENESYS 2018), an exchange program aiming to promote understanding of Japan run by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Participant comments



Ryoto Ishitobi

CSR Promotion Section,
Public Relations Department

We conduct a Group-wide campaign each year aimed at raising everyone's awareness of sustainability. In fiscal 2021, we participated in the UN's ActNow climate change campaign, a global call for action among individuals. Taking action to combat climate change is one of the 17 SDGs and is an urgent issue for the planet as a whole, so we called on individual Yakult Group workers to reexamine their daily activities and habits and to take steps to reduce the burden on the environment. Many workers participated from both Japan and abroad this fiscal year, fostering a sense of Group unity in our efforts to mitigate climate change.

We will continue to work as a Group to conduct campaigns that contribute to the global environment.

The SDGs Yakult is contributing through its business activities

Business activity	Related SDGs	Specific initiatives	
<p>R&D We undertake research to realize the concepts of preventive medicine and the idea that a healthy intestinal tract leads to a long life, and are applying research results in the development of food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics.</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of research results • Communication with consumers by opening the Shirota Memorial Museum to the public • Product safety evaluation at the product development and post-marketing stages • Product safety assurance by analysis and testing • Reliability assurance by auditing of research data • Joint research with universities, hospitals, and research institutes • Promotion of research grant programs • Sponsorship of academic conferences and symposiums • Thorough management of chemical substances by research institute internal committee activities, etc. • Strengthening of measures to prevent leakage of information by building a robust system and collaborating with external service providers 	
<p>Procurement We procure raw materials such as skimmed milk, sugar, and packaging materials through fair trade.</p> 		<p>Selection of sound business partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior consultation and credit checks for new business partners • Conclusion of contracts (including clauses regarding excluding anticompetitive forces) • Verification of financial status of business partners <p>Promotion of fair trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of an evaluation system for business partners <p>Stable procurement of raw materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing from multiple business partners (suppliers) and appropriate stock management • Promotion of business continuity planning (BCP) measures <p>Promotion of sustainable procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessment using CSR procurement survey • Formulation of Supplier CSR Guidelines • Hosting CSR procurement policy briefings for suppliers 	
<p>Production We use finite resources efficiently and employ environmentally conscious methods to manufacture high-quality products that are safe and offer peace of mind to customers.</p> 		<p>Reduction in occupational accidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and health education and safety and health inspection tours • Continuous capital investment to create a working environment where everyone can work in a healthy and safe manner <p>Promotion of energy saving, waste reduction and recycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in CO₂ emissions and energy consumption by introducing highly efficient facilities and equipment, improved workflows, LEDs and solar power • Waste reduction and appropriate disposal • Proper management of waste water and reduced water usage <p>Establishment of a risk management system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a system to enable production to continue and a fast recovery in the event of a disaster • Establishment and occasional review of BCP and disaster preparedness manual • Installation of earthquake early warning systems to achieve fast initial response <p>Understanding of environmental impacts and risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of water risk surveys • Implementation of biodiversity risk surveys 	
<p>Logistics By ensuring eco-driving (fuel-efficient driving) and choosing delivery methods that have reduced environmental impacts, we are reducing the amount of CO₂ emissions deriving from product shipments.</p> 		<p>Promotion of collaboration with other companies in the same industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of collaboration with other companies at distribution centers and in transportation to mass retailers to reduce energy consumption and costs <p>Promotion of day-to-day efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a system to visualize vehicle load factor and achieve a higher load factor by allocating vehicles appropriately, using two-temperature-zone transportation • Promotion of eco-driving by using terminals in logistics company trucks • Switch to eco-friendly vehicles and reduction in empty transportation zones 	
<p>Sales We provide customers with not only products but also accurate product information and health tips.</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch of guest lecturers for children • Health-related lectures for customers and businesses • Disclosure of information on our website • Health-related campaigns • Value dissemination activities at stores • Assisting support facilities for persons with disabilities • Diversification of ordering methods using Yakult Delivery Net • Increased efficiency by introducing an online payment system and mobile information terminals • Increased customer satisfaction by introducing cashless payment • Establishment of financial planning consultation desk to create worker-friendly environments • Eco-friendly center operations and home delivery activities • Introduction of heat pump vending machines 	

Dialogue with stakeholders

To continually grow as a corporation and fulfill our social responsibility, we believe it is essential to actively disclose our corporate activities and engage in two-way communication with stakeholders. The Yakult Group therefore promotes regular dialogue with various stakeholders, such as customers, local communities, shareholders and investors, workers, business partners and civil society organizations. The insights we gain are then reflected in our business activities. Moving forward, we will continue deepening our relationships with stakeholders and taking action to build trust.

Industry groups and academic societies

The Yakult Group is a member of the following industry groups and academic societies listed below. We share information and cooperate with each group to promote the interests of industry as a whole, in addition to striving to implement improvements in our own corporate activities.

- Japan Dairy Industry Association
- Japanese Association of Fermented Milks and Fermented Milk Drinks
- Japan Soft Drink Association
- Japan Society for Dietary Education
- Japan Food Safety Management Association
- The Beverage Industry Environment Beautification Association
- The Intestinal Microbiology Society
- Japan Society for Lactic Acid Bacteria
- The Japan Dietetic Association
- Japan Climate Initiative

Customers

We provide high-quality products and services based on an accurate understanding of customer needs and in consideration of the customer's point of view.

- Number of inquiries to the Customer Support Center (received by Yakult Honsha): 32,638 (fiscal 2021)
- Issues of the *Healthist* magazine: 6 per year (in Japanese only)
- Participants in plant tours*¹ (online tours only):
 - Around 11,000 in Japan
 - Around 290,000 outside Japan (January–December 2021)
- Participants in tours of the Shirota Memorial Museum at the Yakult Central Institute: Tours suspended*²

▶ pp. 70–73 ▶▶▶

Shareholders and investors

We promote fair and transparent corporate activities by disclosing accurate information to shareholders and investors in a timely and appropriate manner.

- General shareholders meeting
- Business results briefings: twice a year (year-end settlement, second quarter settlement)
- Conference calls: twice a year (first quarter settlement, third quarter settlement)
- Individual interviews, telephone interviews: as needed
- Business site tours: as needed*⁵
- Communication tools: shareholder newsletters, annual report, company profile, sustainability report,*⁶ Yakult overviews

▶ IR information ▶▶▶ <https://www.yakult.co.jp/english/ir/index.html>

Business partners

We are committed to fair, transparent and free competition and to conducting appropriate transactions with the aim of growing together with our business partners.

- Study session on logistics quality (training for business partners)*⁶
- Communication through purchasing activities
- CSR procurement survey (124 companies responded)
- Maintenance of a fair and impartial trading environment via online purchasing system: 88 participating business partners (Yakult Central Institute)
- Health-focused workshops for workers at business partners
- Logistics partners (approx. 200 companies)

▶ pp. 56–62, 85–86 ▶▶▶

Local communities

We respect regional cultures and customs and promote corporate activities in cooperation with local communities.

- Dispatch of lecturers*³
 - In Japan: 2,472 lectures, 111,541 participants (fiscal 2021)
 - Overseas: 10,228 lectures, 957,855 participants (from January to December 2021)
- Health-related lectures*³
 - In Japan: 11,471 lectures, 111,442 participants (fiscal 2021)
 - Overseas: 210,276 lectures, 7,303,118 participants (from January to December 2021)
- Courtesy Visit Activities: Around 35,000 elderly people visited (fiscal 2021)*⁴
- Community safety watch and crime prevention activities: 932 local governments (fiscal 2021)
- Cleanup campaigns: 71 venues (fiscal 2021, all plants and the Yakult Central Institute)
- Social activities with vending machines

▶ pp. 49–55 ▶▶▶

Workers

We strive to create worker-friendly environments, while also recognizing and respecting each person's individuality through a variety of interactions.

- Individual interviews
- Worker questionnaires
- Sharing information via the Company intranet
- Internal newsletter
- Training programs
- Employee consultation desk
- Staff social events

▶ pp. 74–83 ▶▶▶

Civil society organizations

We are working to further advance our business and CSR activities based on our policy of cooperating with civil society organizations that specialize in resolving various issues.

- Social contribution activities
- Internal and external seminars
- Support projects (Japan: OISCA's Children's Forest Program; Overseas: China's Million Tree Project)

▶ pp. 42, 49–55 ▶▶▶

*1 Online tours were conducted in Japan and at some overseas plants.

*2 Suspended in fiscal 2021 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

*3 To prevent the spread of COVID-19, we chose to reduce the dispatch of lecturers and health-related lectures in Japan and overseas. When group events are held, we take thorough protective measures. Some marketing companies in Japan are holding events online, and we will set up the necessary infrastructure so that this can be done nationwide. Some countries and regions overseas are also running events online.

*4 We hold sessions while taking thorough measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

*5 Suspended in fiscal 2021 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

*6 Called *CSR Report* through fiscal 2021.

Looking back on stakeholder dialogue



Yukihiro Misawa

Plastics Policy Manager, WWF Japan

Joined WWF Japan after working in the business sector. Is calling on both the government and private companies to drastically reduce the use of plastics in building a sustainable circular economy while working toward the early implementation of an international agreement addressing the problem of plastic pollution.

Assessment of environmental initiatives and future expectations

The Yakult Group Environmental Vision promotes measures for climate change, plastic containers and packaging, and water. In addition to being very important for the restoration of planetary sustainability, these are also appropriate material themes in view of Yakult's business operations, and I hope Yakult will continue to make improvements in these areas. I would like to focus here on efforts relating to plastic containers and packaging, given the policy advances that were made in 2022 both in and outside Japan to control plastic pollution.

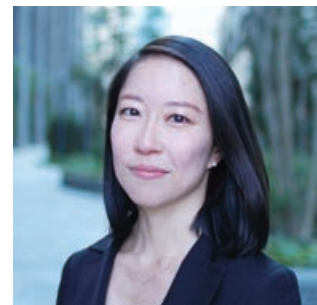
In March, the United Nations Environment Assembly adopted a resolution to complete a draft of a legally binding international agreement by 2024 to end plastic pollution. This resolution will promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics and the development and implementation of national action plans. Companies in Japan and elsewhere will be called upon to take greater responsibility over the full life cycle of plastics.

In April, the Plastic Resource Circulation Act came into effect in Japan. The law not only targets plastic containers and packaging but also requires companies to incorporate environmentally friendly designs and voluntarily collect used products.

Yakult's Environmental Targets 2030 includes the goal of *either* reducing or making recyclable 30% of the plastic containers and packaging used domestically. I would like to see Yakult set separate numerical targets for these goals as an expression of its strong resolve to end society's mass production and consumption of plastics.

Yakult also seeks to reduce the environmental impact of plastic containers and packaging by making them from different materials, but even plant-derived plastics and paper carry various production-related risks, such as deforestation, the release of stored carbon, and ecosystem degradation. Efforts are also needed to enhance the sustainability of alternative materials throughout their life cycle.

It is my hope that Yakult, given its strong presence among consumers and its significant social impact, will proactively implement initiatives based on the points raised above and demonstrate strong leadership in realizing a future free of plastic pollution.



Akiko Sato

Liaison Officer for Business and Human Rights, UNDP; Lawyer

Works to promote business and human rights by coordinating and advocating for human rights policy, human rights due diligence, and stakeholder engagement.

Assessment of human rights initiatives and future expectations

Since the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were endorsed in 2011, rapid advances have been made in the implementation of human rights due diligence and the enactment of legislation by the EU and Western countries to enshrine respect for human rights as a corporate responsibility. The establishment of a human rights policy and implementation of human rights due diligence by the Yakult Group are major steps toward the realization of corporate social responsibility. In particular, the clarification of the link between Yakult's Human Rights Policy and its management philosophy is a commitment both internally and externally to maintain this policy as a core management issue and will serve as a foundation for future efforts.

There is no right way to proceed with human rights due diligence; issues will need to be addressed in accordance with one's business structure and human rights risks among stakeholders in an ongoing basis. The fact that human rights due diligence review meetings were held to identify key human rights issues for the Group can be seen as initiatives that will help ensure consistency and effectiveness. I look forward to further debate and implementation in Japan—not just by Yakult but also by the sector as a whole—to address global issues like water access and sanitation, which are integral to Yakult's business, and consideration of human rights and discrimination in its advertising and promotional activities.

Future issues include a re-examination of the Yakult Ladies system from the viewpoint of gender equality, given the company's values and human rights policy. Efforts can also be strengthened to address human rights risks through the utilization of grievance desks and fuller disclosures, as well as through ongoing engagement with relevant stakeholders. Lending an ear to the those who are in vulnerable positions in society is particularly important in developing measures to effectively address human rights risks.

Also essential is creating a framework allowing employees to proactively perform their various daily tasks in ways that are rooted in human rights. Such an environment is indispensable for the human rights policy to permeate the workforce, for employees to view human rights as a matter of personal concern, and for the realization of the human rights of stakeholders.