

Waste Management Policy, Systems & Challenges in Japan – The Role of NGOs

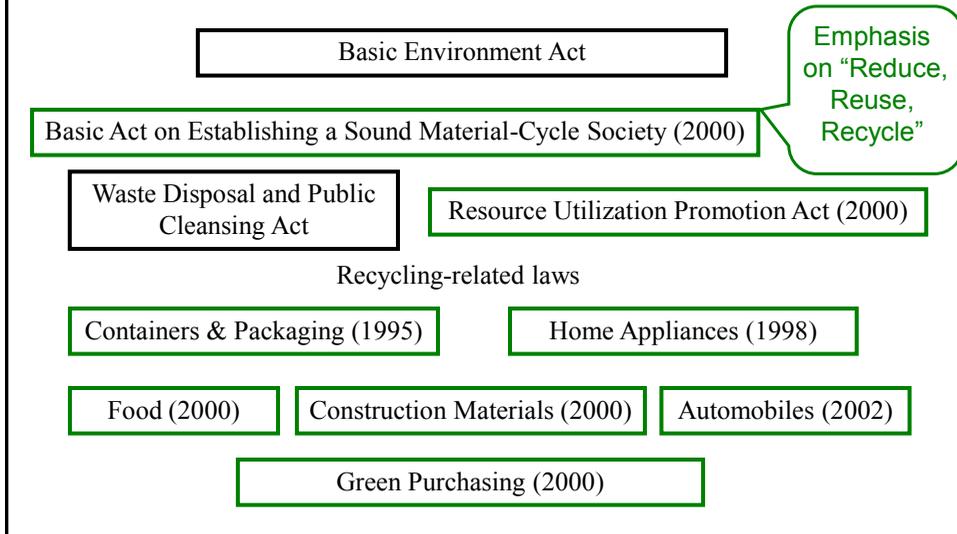
October 6, 2011
Asia 3R Citizens' Forum 2011 in Singapore

Yuko Sakita
Asia 3R Citizens' Network Japan
www.asia3r.net

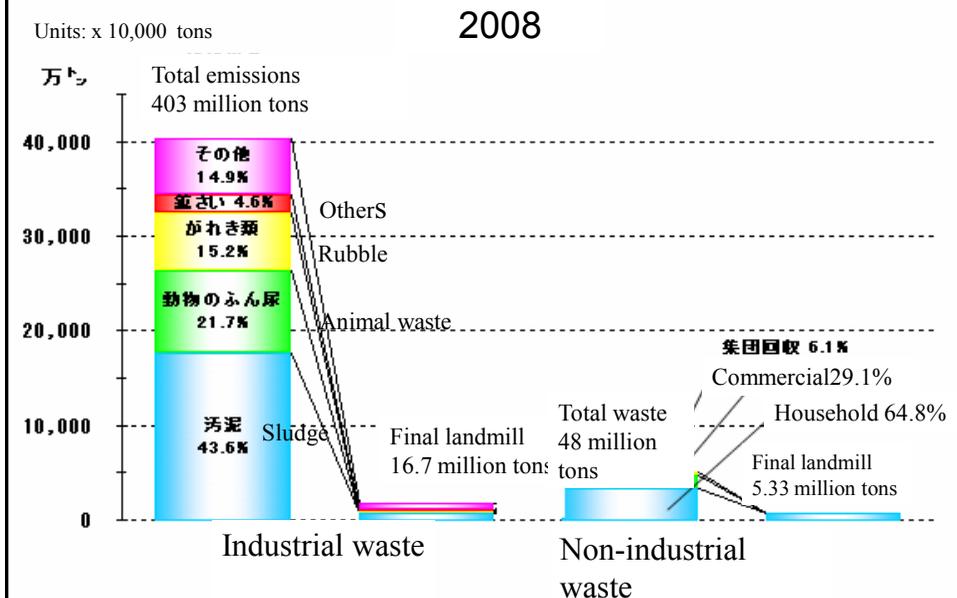
Evolving: Waste problems and waste-related policies

- Past: Waste treatment = public health issue (responsibility of governments)
- Now: Landfill sites are reaching full capacity
- Need to escape from the cycle of mass production, mass consumption, mass waste. Need to use resources more effectively (responsibility of corporations & consumers)
 - ➔ Recycling laws enacted, enforced

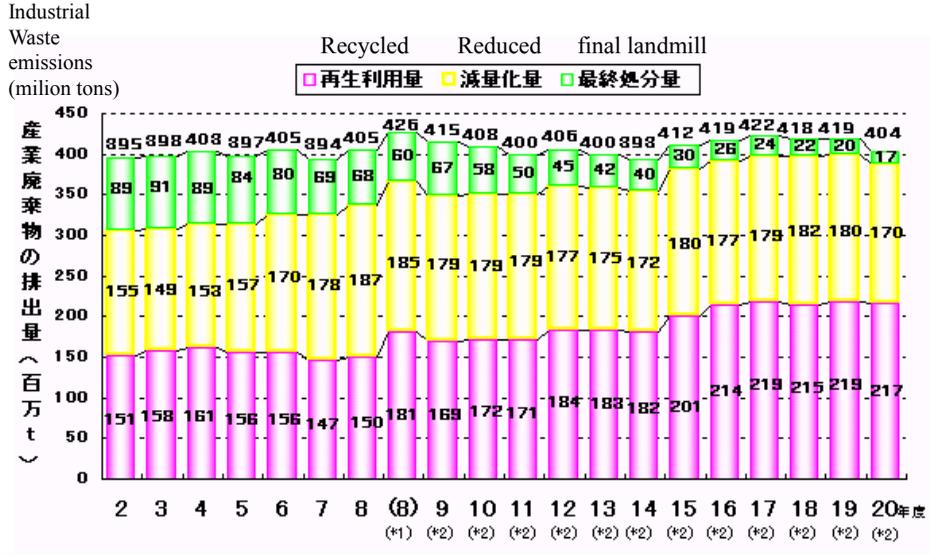
Legislation on waste & recycling ... to create a 3Rs society in Japan



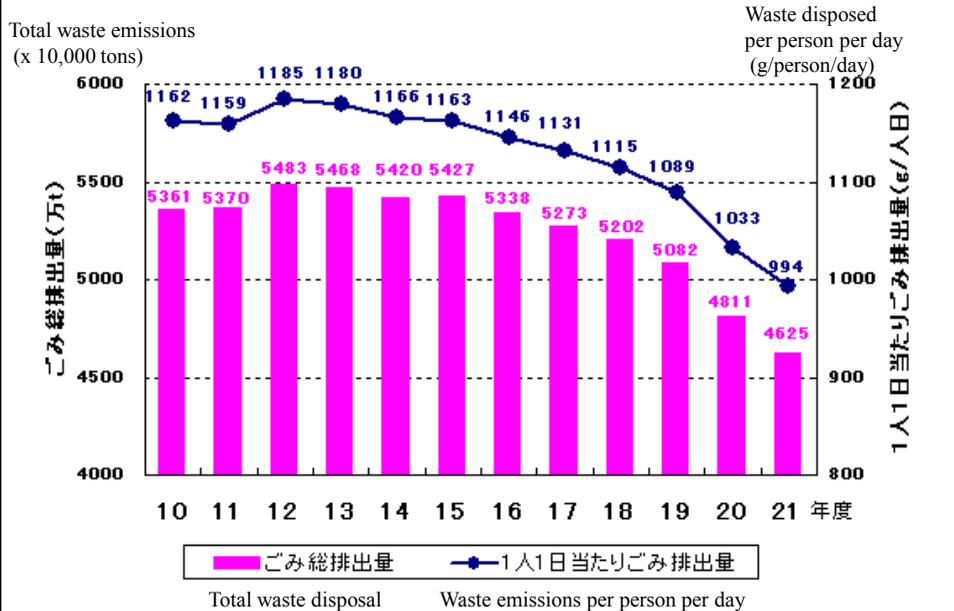
Categories & volume of waste



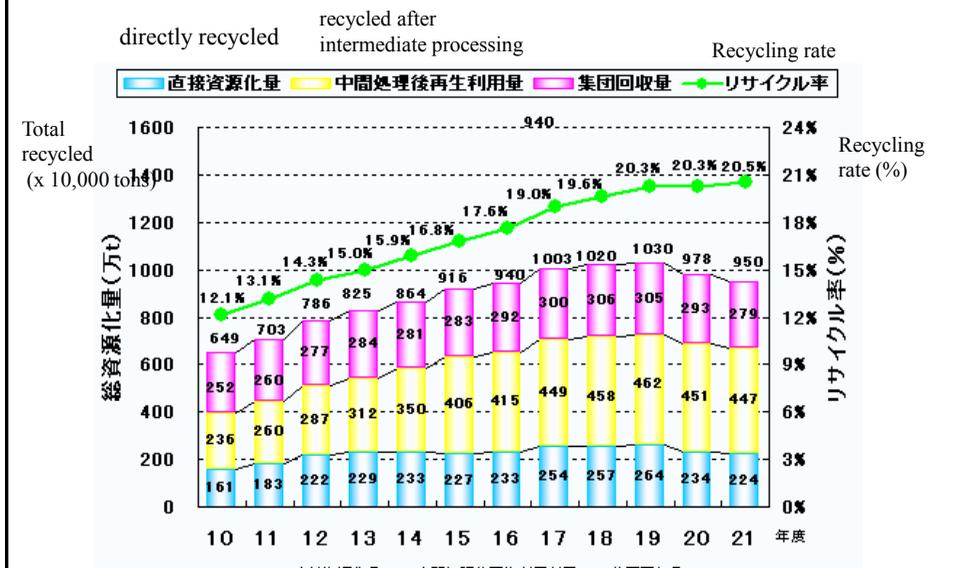
Volume & recycled rate of industrial waste



Non-industrial waste volume



Recycled volume & rate of non-industrial waste



Recycling is improving, but ...



More and more PET plastic bottles are produced

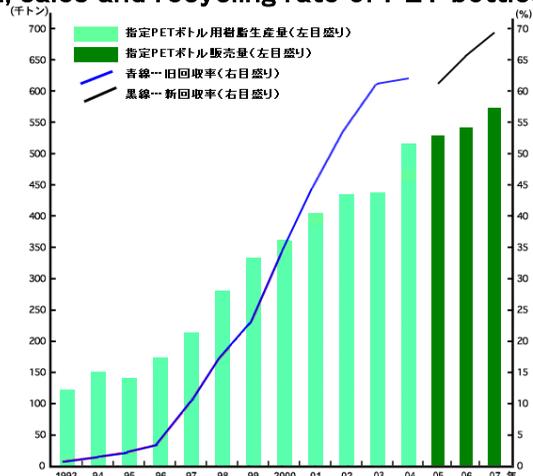
Production, sales and recycling rate of PET bottles

• New PET bottles on the scene: handy small size, special for hot beverages, etc.

• Sales of bottled water and tea are rising fast



Production volume of PET bottles has quadrupled since recycling legislation enacted



Source: Council for PET Bottle Recycling (2008)

Challenges for a 3Rs society ... and the roles of citizens

- Recycling has improved, but *garbage volume has not dropped*
⇒ Need stronger initiatives with emphasis on *3Rs*, plus expansion of *extended producer responsibility*
- Need action from perspective of *climate change*
- Globalization makes garbage an *international issue* (e.g., e-waste)
⇒ Need actions and program/regulatory design based on *cooperation across national boundaries*

March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake

20,000 people dead/missing by magnitude 9.0 quake & tsunami, followed by Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant accident



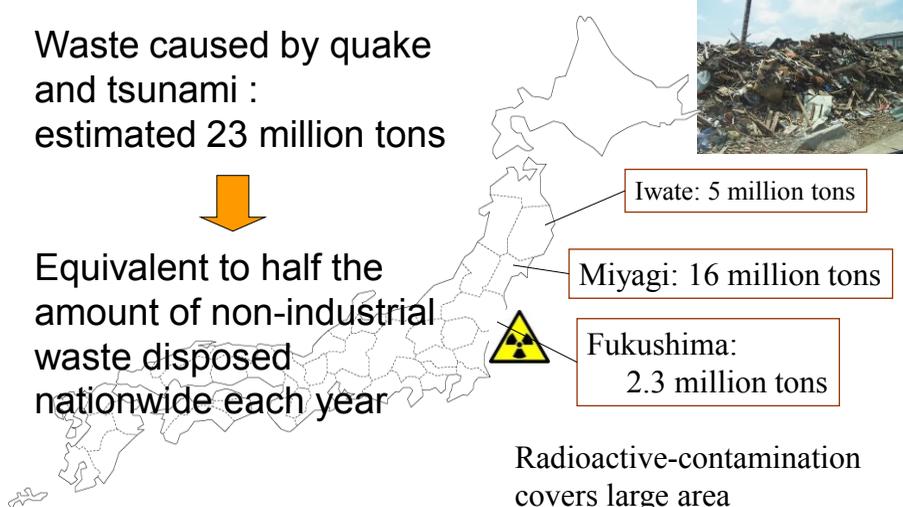
Photo:
Ministry of
Environment Japan

Waste problems caused by the earthquake and Fukushima accident

Waste caused by quake and tsunami :
estimated 23 million tons



Equivalent to half the amount of non-industrial waste disposed nationwide each year



Radioactive-contamination covers large area

Challenges dealing with disaster waste

- 1 Huge waste volume spread over a large land area.
 - Rubble alone is 23 million tons in 3 prefectures (equal to half Japan's annual waste). Worst-hit Ishinomaki City 6.2 million tons (equal to 100 years of the town's waste).
- 2 Radioactive contamination
 - Over a wide area, not only in Fukushima Prefecture.
 - Contamination is not only in rubble, but also in topsoil removed for decontamination, in sewage sludge, etc. – all over a wide area.

Disposal guidelines, status of disaster waste

- Unprecedented situation. Conventional wisdom does not apply. Government has created emergency response team, conducted studies, debated responses.
- Rubble from Iwate & Miyagi Prefectures to be incinerated in several municipal facilities over a wide region (incineration ash with below a certain level of radioactive cesium will be handled in usual way). Trucking of rubble starts in Oct 2011.
- But citizens in targeted municipalities are concerned about safety risks.
- Sewage sludge is highly contaminated. Regional storage facilities are already near capacity.

Diverse NGOs tackle the waste problem

- Scope: Local, national, international
- Themes:
 1. Processing & disposal site issues (landfill sites, incineration plants, industrial waste, illegal dumping, dioxins, etc.)
 2. Recycling (resource recovery, conversion of organic waste to fertilizer, etc.)
 3. 3Rs & reduction of waste (overall policies, reducing use of shopping bags, re-use, etc.)
 4. Other themes (clean-ups, green consumers, etc.)
- Methods: Practical hands-on activities, policy advocacy, research/studies, information sharing
- Targets of activities: Government, corporations, citizens
- Form of organization: Volunteer groups, registered non-profits, councils, networks

Conclusion

We must think together and work together to minimize environmental burden and to realize a sustainable society.