

The Iida City Hall's ISO-related Initiative and the Study Group on the Community-Wide Initiative for the Environment and ISO Certification

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1. Iida City

Iida City is located in the southern part of Nagano Prefecture, which lies north-to-south in the middle of the Japanese archipelago. This mountain city is surrounded by the "Central Alps" to the west and the "Southern Alps" to the east. In the middle of the city flows the Tenryu River, which originates in Lake Suwa and runs south into the Enshu Sea.

Iida is known as a mountain city as it boasts natural beauty as exemplified by mountains and rivers, as well as a long history fostered by its natural environment. Along both sides of the Tenryu River run terraces shaped by the upheaval of the Alps and erosion by the river, constituting the landscape peculiar to the Ina Valley.

With a climate warmer than any other part of Nagano Prefecture, the region has been inhabited since the Jomon period (10,000 BC to 300 BC). People have established their lives here, taking advantage of the blessings of nature in the region.

Agriculture is prospering in Iida despite the fact that forest land accounts for 86 percent of the total area of the city. As Iida is situated at a latitude of 35 degrees north, where the northernmost part of the pear-producing region and the southernmost part of the apple-producing region overlap each other, various kinds of fruits are grown on the upper river terraces. Over the flat and lowest terraces extend rice paddies.

Iida City is a "town of *Ringo Namiki* (rows of apple trees) and puppet shows." The history of *Ringo Namiki* dates back to a big fire in April 1947. The fire was first a small one, but after being fanned by a strong wind, it became bigger and bigger and eventually burned down 80 percent of the densely-populated area in the city. Rows of old houses and other buildings that formed a beautiful city landscape, reminiscent of an old castle town, were reduced to ashes. Only the burned ruins remained. In the course of rebuilding the city, on their own initiative, the students of a middle school planted 40 apple trees along

the central reservation of the main street, in a bid to create a Ringo Namiki. Their efforts eventually culminated in the construction of the "Town of *Ringo Namiki*." In 1999, the entire *Ringo Namiki*, 400 meters in length, was turned into a park despite many hurdles such as thefts of the trees, plans to convert the street into a parking lot, and the general aging of the trees. Now *Ringo Namiki*, as a symbol of Iida City, gives the citizens peace of mind with the trees bearing beautiful white flowers in spring and red fruit in autumn.

As the "town of puppet shows," Iida City is filled with puppet shows during the "Puppet Show Festival" in early August each year. Since the first puppetry carnival in 1979, combined efforts to promote this cultural movement by citizens, puppeteers who love Iida, and the municipal authorities, have culminated in a form of regional culture. In 1999, the annual puppetry carnival was reborn as the "Puppet Show Festival," in which citizens and puppeteers take the initiative.

This year, nearly 300 puppet troops including some from abroad participated in the annual event. They played at a total of 85 locations throughout the city, including community centers and daycare centers. Under the slogan "everyone can take part—by seeing, playing or supporting," everyone was invited to the event.

2. Environmental Administration

Blessed with a rich natural environment, Iida City has been pursuing a progressive environmental administration. In June 1987, the city established a citizen's charter comprising five pledges, the first of which says "we are committed to cherishing nature and pursuing an Iida City with a beautiful natural environment." In October 1992, the city set up the Eco-Friendly Lifestyle Promoting Headquarters designed to encourage energy conservation and paper recycling within the city hall. In April 1996, Iida City drew up its basic plan aimed at pursuing a Cultural Environmental city in which citizens lead sound and healthy lives and conserve the beautiful natural environment. Under this basic plan, in December 1996, the city drew up the "Iida Environmental Plan 21" designed to realize a community that cohabits with nature.

In July 1997, Iida City was designated as an "Eco-town Area" by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). Based on the Eco-Town Plan (plan to build a eco-friendly city) and the "Tenryukyo Eco-valley Project," Iida City is pursuing a resource-recycling community with zero emissions.

In April 2000, Iida City opened part of the "Environmental Industrial Park" designed to promote recycling-related R&D businesses and environmental learning, as two such businesses were set up in the park with MITI's Eco-Town subsidies. The city is now proposing an "Eco Housing Village" (eco-friendly housing).

3. the Acquisition of ISO 14001 Certification

Iida City launched its efforts to win ISO 14001 certification with regard to the duties and affairs at all the facilities within the city hall with a declaration to this effort in July 1998. After a run-up period of one year, during which its own staff training without the help of external consultants was provided, the city announced its environmental policy in September 1999, commencing the operation of the environmental management system. After the appropriate examination and registration procedures, Iida City earned ISO 14001 certification in January 2000.

The acquisition of ISO 14001 certification by Iida City is significant for the following areas:

- (1) The municipal administration in general
 - (2) Local businesses, in that the acquisition sets an example to be followed by them
 - (3) City employees, in that the acquisition raised their environmental awareness
- In other words, Iida City has acquired ISO 14001 certification for three fundamental purposes.

- (1) To realize a "cultured eco-friendly city" and support the implementation of Iida Environmental Program 21, based on the steps the city's environmental administration has taken so far
- (2) To strengthen cooperative relations with local businesses through the activities of the Study Group on the Community-Wide Initiative for the Environment and ISO Certification
- (3) To further activities to reform the duties and affairs within the city hall.

In this context, Iida City is committed to continual improvement through its environmental management system.

4. ISO 14001 and "IEMS 21 (I-I-Mu-Su 21)"

While efforts by the city hall's headquarters culminated in the acquisition

of ISO certification, the branch agencies, including branch offices and municipal daycare centers did not make such efforts in a systematic way. Under these circumstances, the gap in environmental awareness between the employees at the headquarters and those at the branch offices has widened. To narrow this gap, Iida City launched, in June 2000, activities for environmental improvement called "IEMS 21 (I-I-Mu-Su 21)" as a simplified environmental initiative in line with the concepts of ISO 14001. These activities involve all city employees.

The IEMS 21 is designed to roll out the Iida Environmental Management System (IEMS) into the 21st century. "I-I" in "I-I-Mu-Su" also represents Iida and "Mu-Su" from "Mutosu," a catchword for local residents who are committed to foster community development on their own initiatives. The IEMS 21 initiative, involving all city employees, aims to realize a cultured and eco-friendly city. Some of the common goals are to reduce the consumption of kerosene, gas, electricity and copy paper, sort and reduce waste, and to encourage green purchasing.

Because IEMS 21 has been launched as a simplified system with a simplified PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, internal auditing and certification have been left out, and how these areas should be handled remains to be decided. Anyway, the initiative is significant in that it also serves as an experiment toward realizing self-compliance without examination or registration. The elementary and middle schools in the city launched an even more simplified version called "IEMS at School," in September 2000.

5. Study Group on the Community-Wide Initiative for the Environment and ISO Certification

The Study Group on the Community-Wide Initiative for the Environment and ISO Certification is a voluntary body born out of the "Eco-Town Saloon" within the "Eco-Town Project." Its aim is to "create a community culture for environmental improvement—conserving the local natural environment and creating a sustainable community."

A study group was launched in November 1997 by the city hall and five local businesses, and known as the "Study Group for the Community-Wide Initiative to Acquire ISO Certification." The idea was that local businesses have an obligation to work together for a better environment as corporate citizens. Further, it was hoped that initiatives by local businesses to acquire ISO

certification would develop into a major movement involving all citizens. Once a month, the study group members visited each other's plants, inspected waste management operations, and recycled waste paper to produce copy paper.

In July 2000, the study group reviewed its organization and operations and changed its name to the present one in light of its original mission and values, as the conventional loose organization could not meet the needs of the times. For the first time, a representative has been appointed and the steering committee and the secretariat were established. The focus has been placed on the activities of five subgroups classified according to the levels of members' activities. Now the study group comprises 22 entities, of which 10 have acquired the ISO 14001 certificate and 8 are now taking steps to do so.

In addition to encouraging local businesses to acquire ISO 14001 certification, both the subgroups and the study group as a whole are developing and operating the "Iida Version of Environmental ISO," which does not follow the examination and registration procedures that involve external examiners. The study group is also looking into the standardization of paper for recycling and the circulation of "eco-money." Now the group is attracting praise and attention as its activities are led by the private sector rather than municipal authorities.

6. Remaining Problems for Iida City

It has become apparent that as the first municipality to acquire ISO 14001 certification, Iida City has a heavier responsibility and a bigger role to play than expected. The city needs to establish "genuine" communication among its employees through basic training in energy conservation and the sorting of waste, so that they can exchange frank opinions even in the case of internal auditing. In this process, it may be a good idea for city employees to "enjoy" pressure from citizens, local businesses, and other municipalities. Through checks and corrective action, which have been insufficient so far, efforts to reform the municipal government amid the trend toward decentralization, and to enlighten city employees should be systematically incorporated into everyday operations.

The acquisition of the ISO 14001 certificate is just a starting point, as the scope of its application is limited. Iida City needs to make extra efforts to expand the scope of its activities through "IEMS 21" and "IEMS at School," so that the environmental management system will succeed in all relevant agencies

and operations.

Environmental improvement cannot be made by one municipality alone. It is the responsibility of Iida to exercise leadership and support local businesses and neighboring municipalities in acquiring ISO certification as the trailblazer in Nagano Prefecture. It is urgently required to firmly establish the "Iida Version of Environmental ISO," primarily endorsed by the Study Group on the Community-Wide Initiative for the Environment and ISO Certification. Among the many challenges now facing this "cultured eco-friendly city" are how to secure the budget for effective investment in environmental administration, as well as the successful implementation of the Tenryukyo Eco-valley Project."