

# Zero Waste Roundtable

## In the Eco-Model City of Minamata

Nobuhiro FUJIMOTO

Faculty of Social Welfare, Kumamoto Gakuen University

Member of the Minamata City Eco-Model City Promotion Committee

# Minamata City's Declaration for Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy

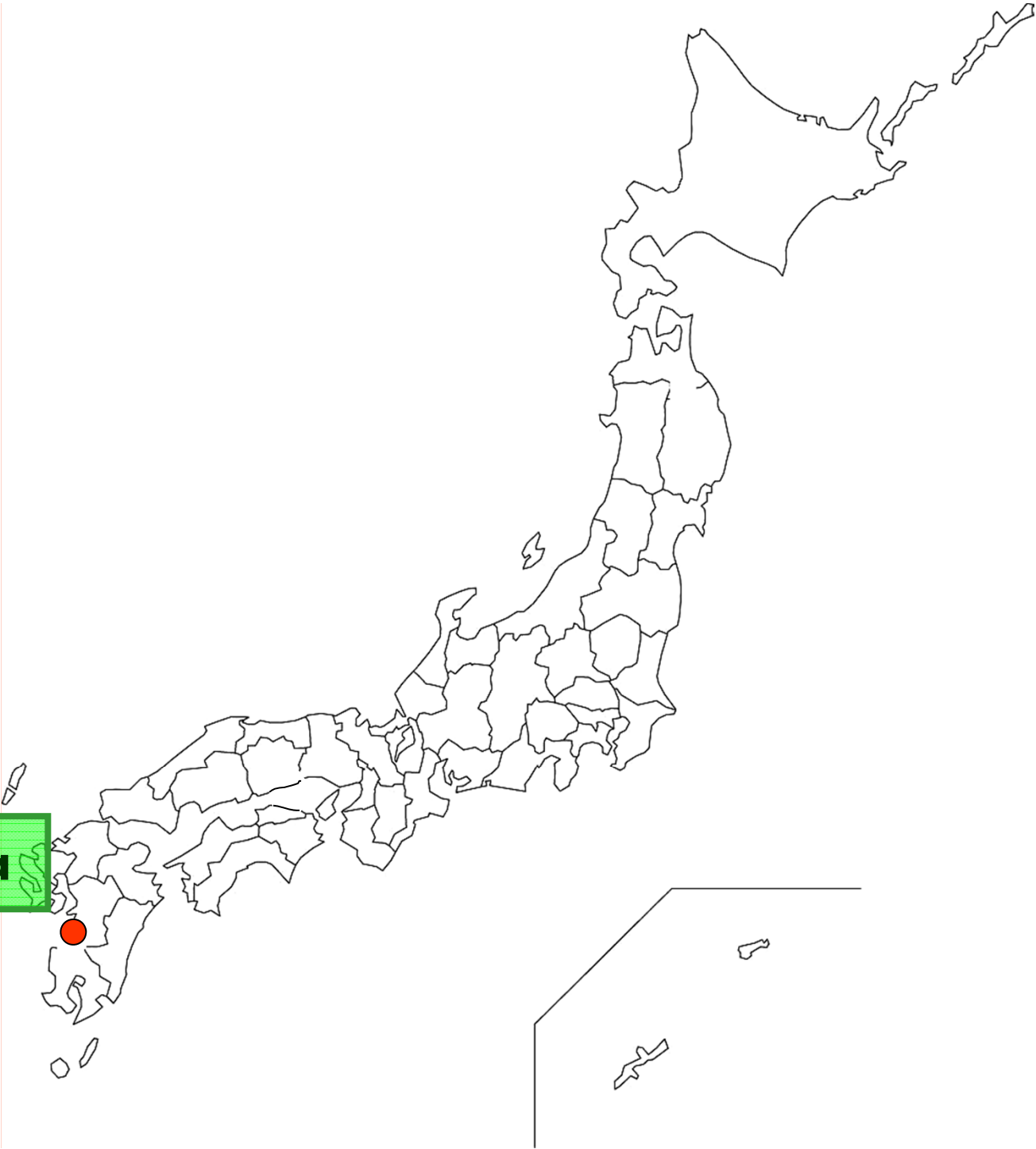


Minamata disease is caused by food poisoning from eating fish and shellfish contaminated by mercury-tainted water from chemical factories. The outbreak of the disease caused heavy casualties and local communities were damaged.

The outbreak brought home to us what it means to “co-exist with nature,” telling us that “everything is interconnected in nature and that if we throw anything away in nature, it will surely come back to us.”

From “Minamata City's Declaration for Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy”

**Minamata**

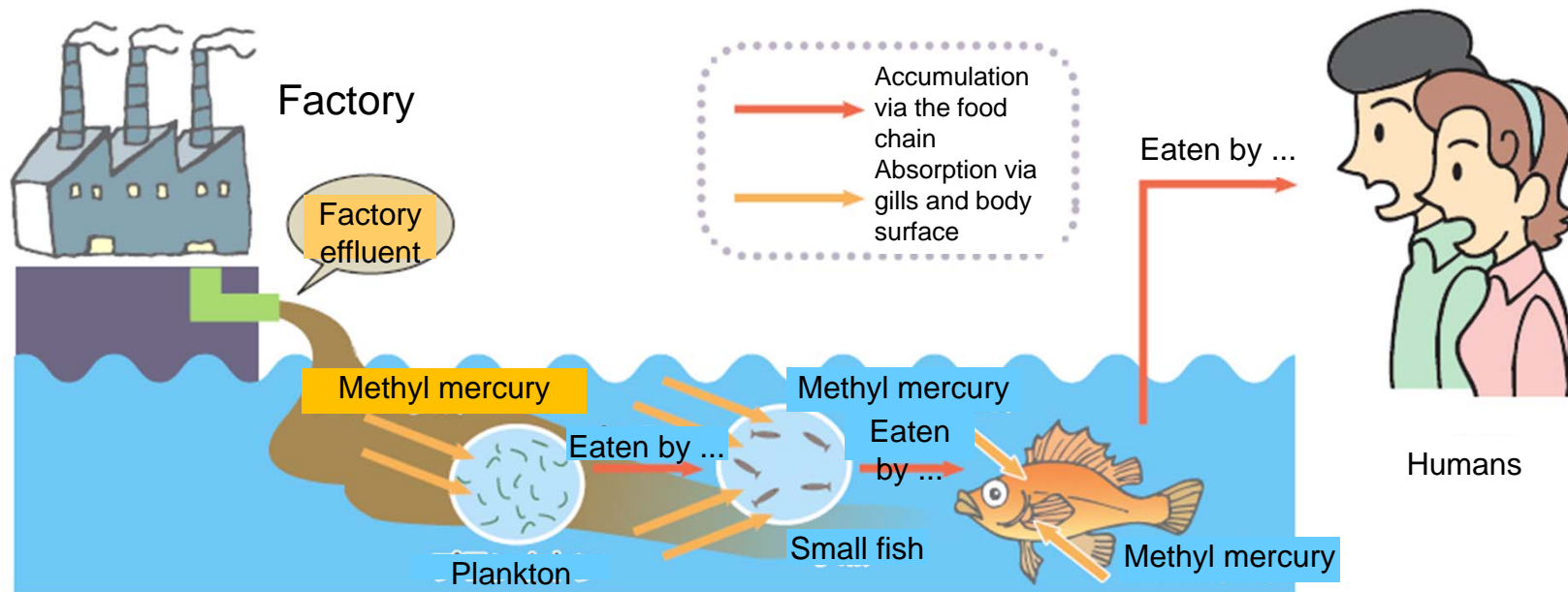




Minamata

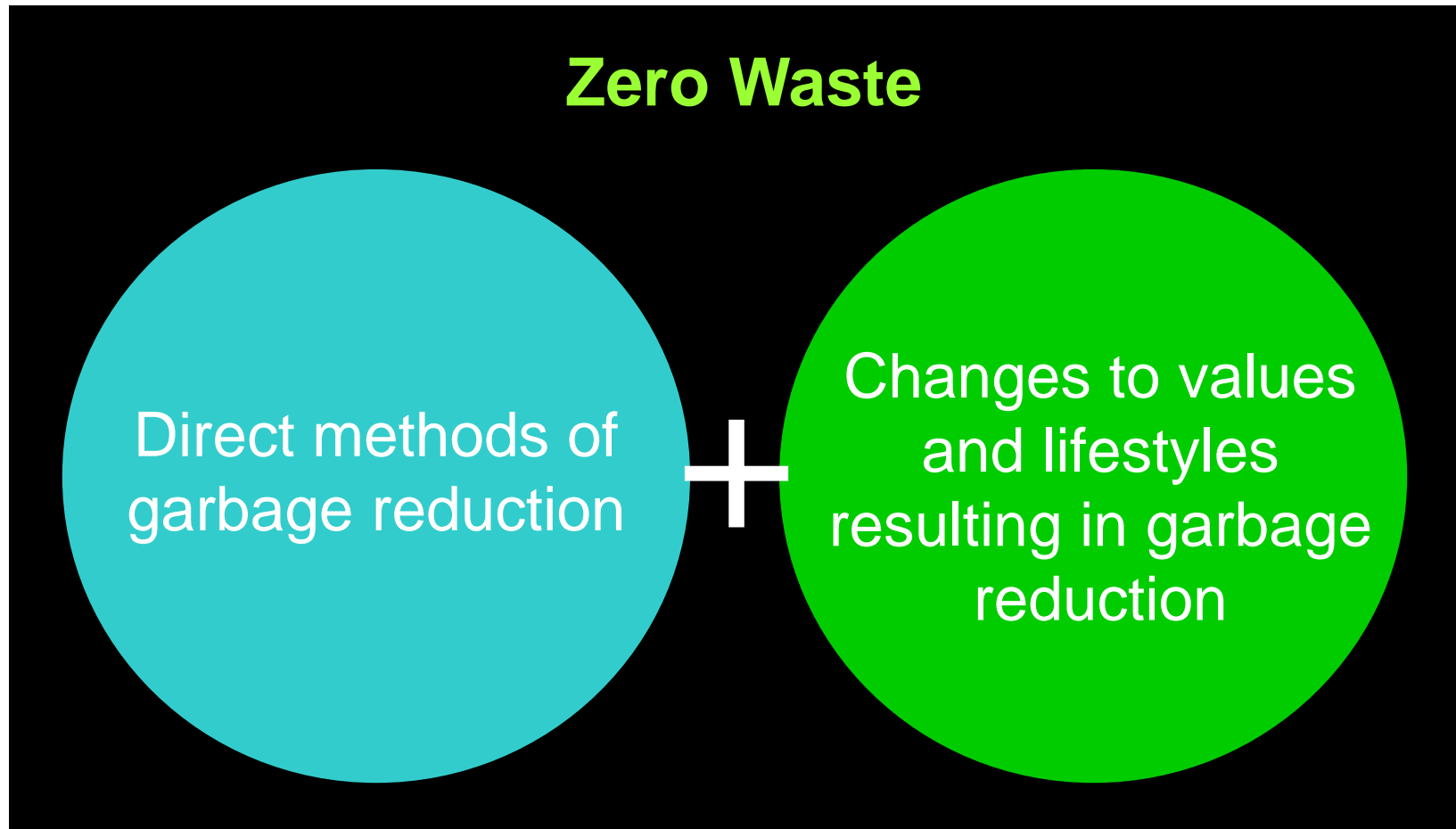
Population: Approx. 27,000  
Area: Approx. 160 km<sup>2</sup>

# The Food Chain and Minamata Disease



From *Hajimete manabu Minamata-byo*  
("Introduction to Minamata Disease")  
by the Kumamoto Prefectural Government

# Zero Waste and Daily Life



How much can we **reduce** + How well can we **live**

# Launch of the Zero Waste Roundtable



# Drafting “Minamata City’s Declaration for Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy”





# *Cha-nomiba* tea refill stations and survey of garbage stations



Residents themselves are devising ways of reducing waste



Residents themselves are rethinking the garbage collection system

# From the Zero Waste Roundtable to five roundtables



# Aims of the Zero Waste Roundtable



**Minamata and its citizens** are aiming towards our “Vision for Zero-Waste” initiatives.

From “Minamata City’s Declaration for Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy”

# **Minamata City's Declaration for Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy**

**Minamata City**

## **1. Preamble**

Minamata City enjoys rich cultural resources and natural surroundings, including Mt. Yahazu, forestry towns and villages, rich water supplies in the woods, the Yude River, the Minamata River and Koji Island in the Shiranui Sea. We were affected by mercury poisoning known as “Minamata disease” in such a rich natural environment. Minamata disease is caused by food poisoning from eating fish and shellfish contaminated by mercury-tainted water from chemical factories. The outbreak of the disease caused heavy casualties and local communities were damaged. The outbreak brought home to us what it means to “co-exist with nature,” telling us that “everything is interconnected in nature and that if we throw anything away in nature, it will surely come back to us.”

Our concept for the zero-waste policy is: “to reduce natural resources and energy consumption as much as possible”, “to recycle what we use in our daily lives as efficiently as possible”, “to reduce waste in nature as hard as possible”, and “to create and support living conditions and systems with collaborative efforts.”

More and more cities around the world are presenting “zero-waste declarations” because they share the same idea of “securing comfortable lives for all future generations.” We also share the same feeling and expressed it in the Eco-Model City Development initiatives which we have continued to promote since 1992.

For our shared goal and the collaboration among people around the world, we, as Minamata citizens, declared the “Minamata City's Community Development Based On Zero-Waste Policy.”

## **2. Our Vision for Zero-Waste**

Minamata and its citizens are aiming towards our “Vision for Zero-Waste” initiatives.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on the lessons learned from Minamata disease

One of the lessons we learned from Minamata disease was that we should not undermine the foundations of life by being wasteful. Our zero-waste initiatives are intended to put this lesson to its utmost use.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on anti-industrial waste disposal plant construction

In order to protect life and rich water resources, we objected to the construction of industrial waste disposal plants planned in Minamata City. The idea of “not depending on landfills” is a choice we should make.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on high-level sorted trash collection

We have been promoting high-level sorted collection of household trash at local community levels since 1993. Through this action, we increased awareness and the practice of recycling. We will apply this to the concept of “reuse and reduce” as well to realize zero-waste.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on the 1992 Eco-Model City Development Declaration

Minamata City’s Eco-Model City Development Declaration in 1992 was intended to promote the preservation of ecological systems according to the lessons learned from Minamata disease and to raise questions as to how a civilized society should be. We took various actions based on the declaration. We will promote our zero-waste policy on the basis of these ideals and practices.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on the 2008 government-driven Eco-Model City initiatives

As one of the government-designated eco-model cities in 2008, we will strive to realize a low-carbon society through our zero-waste initiatives and disseminate the policy to the other model cities.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on the concept of Me, My House and My Community

The idea of zero-waste can be applied in our daily lives. You can use personal environmental-friendly shopping bags; you can use soap for the laundry at home; and you can collect and sort trash in your local communities. We are always aware of how

closely our zero-waste policy is connected with the daily practice of not bringing unnecessary items home, choosing environmental-friendly things and using things for a long time.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on specific goals

For the realization of zero-waste, we set specific goals backed by solid ideas and draw up specific action plans through collaboration between citizens, private businesses and public administrators. Furthermore we constantly reexamine the current situation and reevaluate our goals to achieve the realization of total zero-waste.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on continuation and sustainability

We will continue our discussions and will also continue to provide opportunities for discussions to realize zero-waste. With a focus on economic sustainability, we will also continue to take necessary actions even after the achievement of our goals to maintain zero-waste.

- Zero-Waste Policy intended to promote Minamata as a role model for local communities around the world

We aim to be a role model for local communities around the world as a major zero-waste model city and will provide information about zero-waste achievements and how we reached our goal.

- Zero-Waste Policy based on the collaboration with local governments across Japan and around the world

We will develop and continue significant collaborations with municipalities across Japan and around the world which have made similar zero-waste declarations.

- Zero-Waste Policy as our global strategy

We will promote the widespread activities of local governments which have made zero-waste declarations not only from Minamata to the whole of Japan, but also from Japan to the rest of the world. We will also exercise leadership in this promotion.

### **3. Minamata City's Declaration for Community Development Based on Zero-Waste Policy**

We will reconsider our daily lifestyles and pay special attention to our rich natural surroundings. We are committed to establishing lifestyles and systems which use limited resources and energy with utmost efficiency.

In order to maintain our local communities with rich natural resources and protect the lives and health of all living things, by 2026 we will have established lifestyles and systems in which waste disposal is free from incineration and landfills.

We are proud of the initiatives and actions we have continued since the 1992 Eco-Model City Development Declaration and will promote our zero-waste policy on the basis of our experiences and achievements.

In implementing zero-waste initiatives, we will work cooperatively through sharing necessary information between citizens, private businesses and public administrators; provide opportunities for continuing discussions; and constantly review our goals, actions and results.

We will collaborate with ordinary citizens and local government officials who share the same goals at national and global levels in seeking effective solutions and will facilitate the networking of zero-waste-minded collaborators for environmental preservation across Japan and around the world.

November 22, 2009  
Minamata City, Kumamoto Prefecture