



AJINOMOTO®

Our Hopes & Expectations for a Sustainable Future

Report to the board of directors from the

**Ajinomoto Group Sustainability
Advisory Council**

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Forward

The Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC) was established by Ajinomoto's Board of Directors in April 2021 as a multi-stakeholder forum with the mandate to advise the Board on Ajinomoto Group's long-term sustainability issues and the requirements for strategies to enable the further enhancement of sustainable value creation.

The SAC was originally proposed in 2020 by the then President Mr. Takaaki Nishii. Mr. Nishii's objective in creating the SAC, and the entire organizational framework and process in which it was to be embedded, was to further integrate and promote sustainability within the planning, implementation and evaluation of strategy throughout Ajinomoto Group in a way that would include everyone within the group, its stakeholders and partners.

This underlying theme of giving voice to people as partners in the ongoing process of transformation for defining and realizing a sustainable future came to define the work of the SAC over the two years up to 2022. Upon succeeding Mr. Nishii as President in April 2022, Mr. Taro Fujie reaffirmed Ajinomoto Group's commitment to promoting sustainability as a key strategic issue and in fully supporting the SAC and its work.

Throughout the past two years the SAC has received the unconditional support of the board,

executives and members of the Ajinomoto Group and has been given free access to all facilities and information as requested.

We wish to acknowledge the dedication of all the members of the Ajinomoto Group in promoting the ongoing achievement of shared sustainable value and thank them for their many efforts in contributing to and supporting our work.

We also wish to thank the members of the SAC's secretariat and staff who generously contributed their knowledge, experience and time to enable the work of the SAC.

These people include:

Takaaki Arashida, Takatsugu Asakawa, Sayaka Endo, Yoshiya Gunji, Chiharu Izawa, Keiko Kanae, Yasuaki Kanai, Masaki Kashihara, Kazuhiko Kunita, Shinichi Matsumoto, Takuya Miki, Masafumi Minomura, Chika Morishima, Hiroaki Nakai, Kaori Nakamura, Masashi Nishio, Fumio Ohta, Satoshi Okutani, Kensuke Sakakibara, Akira Sato, Yasushi Sawada, Atsuhito Shima, Kentaro Shimizu, Jo Taguchi, Yasushi Takagi, Yukiko Takatori, Eiko Takatsuki, Hiroyuki Teramoto, Masaya Tochio, Takuya Toyoda, and Hiroshi Toyosaki.

This report is the outcome of the SAC's work. Going beyond simply defining a set of isolated materiality issues we, as a multi-stakeholder forum, have identified a

framework and an integrated model of our expectations for the Ajinomoto Group as a creator of long-term, shared, sustainable value.

We are fully aware of the fact that our expectations are high and that meeting these expectations will require considerable effort, innovation and investment over time. We are at the same time, however, confident that the Ajinomoto Group's dedication to the creation of a sustainable future is genuine and that Ajinomoto Group's potential to contribute to this realization of a future of sustainability is huge.

Scott T. Davis

On behalf of the members of the Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Advisory Council

Scott T. Davis

Chair, Ajinomoto Group
Sustainability Advisory Council



Our hopes and expectations

The members of the Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Advisory Council (hereafter: “SAC”) expect that Ajinomoto Group can and will continue to make a substantial contribution in promoting the sustainable creation of value and look forward to seeing Ajinomoto Group assume an instrumental role in setting standards for the ongoing promotion of sustainability through innovation and transformation. In reflection of this we have named this report “our hopes and expectations for a sustainable future.”

In this section of the report, we will explain the:

1. Approach of the SAC and how it was designed and shaped.
2. Materiality issue definitions tabled by the SAC.

Our approach

Ajinomoto Group’s SAC was formed and implemented specifically to suit the needs and interests of the firm and its constituents. This has meant that while we have applied the best practices in the field of materiality definition, we have not hesitated to innovate to achieve our purpose of defining the issues that are critical to the specific case of Ajinomoto Group and its stakeholders.

Overall, the SAC’s approach was shaped by three factors, its (1) mandate from the board, (2) its members and composition, and (3) its interaction with and support and input from Ajinomoto Group as an organization.

The board’s mandate created a

strong connection to strategy, the composition of the SAC’s membership promoted a highly constructive inter-subjectivity, and its interactions and exchanges with executives and employees as they planned the mid-term strategic plan for the next three years and beyond, informed and enabled the SAC to link sustainability to transformation through strategy as a process.

Strategic orientation

The board’s mandate for the SAC was to:

1. Identify key issues for sustainability (both problems for resolution and opportunities for development) that should be addressed by Ajinomoto Group.
2. Consider these issues and their meaning for planning and implementing sustainable business and shared value creation in a constructive and future oriented

manner from the perspective of the interests of key stakeholders.

3. Based on these issues, define from an objective, multi-stakeholder perspective the materiality which Ajinomoto Group must consider in its planning and implementation of its business strategy on the long term.

This mandate required that the SAC identify both positive as well as negative opportunities for Ajinomoto Group to promote sustainability through its business processes and goals over the long term. Achieving this required that the SAC consider not just the impacts and outcomes of strategic action, but the direction and priorities of strategy itself.

Interactions and support

In discussions prior to establishing the SAC, former President Takaaki Nishii expressed his recognition of the value and importance of Ajino-

An introduction to the Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Advisory Council & the Report on Materiality

Figure 1: Organization

The SAC was created as an independent body by board mandate and was located as one component of an organizational structure which included the Ajinomoto Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Sustainability Committee and the AGES. Throughout its deliberations the SAC communicated regularly with three management bodies the: Executive Committee, Sustainability Committee and the AGES. The SAC was given full access to any information relating to current business activity and performance, and future business plans.

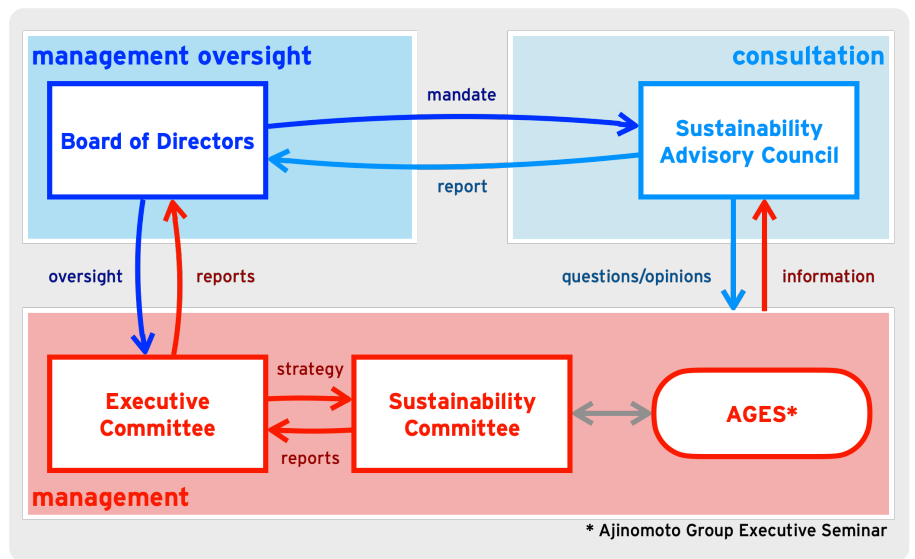


Figure 2: Schedule

The SAC (A) met for four main sessions. The sessions were primarily designed for: (1) dialogue, (3) narration, (5) deliberation and (6) determination of the final materiality issue definition. The SAC shared information and opinions with (B) the Executive Committee and AGES throughout the process by (2) giving input on stakeholder issue awareness and concerns and (4) feedback on the Story of Sustainability Strategy prepared by the Executive Committee and the AGES.

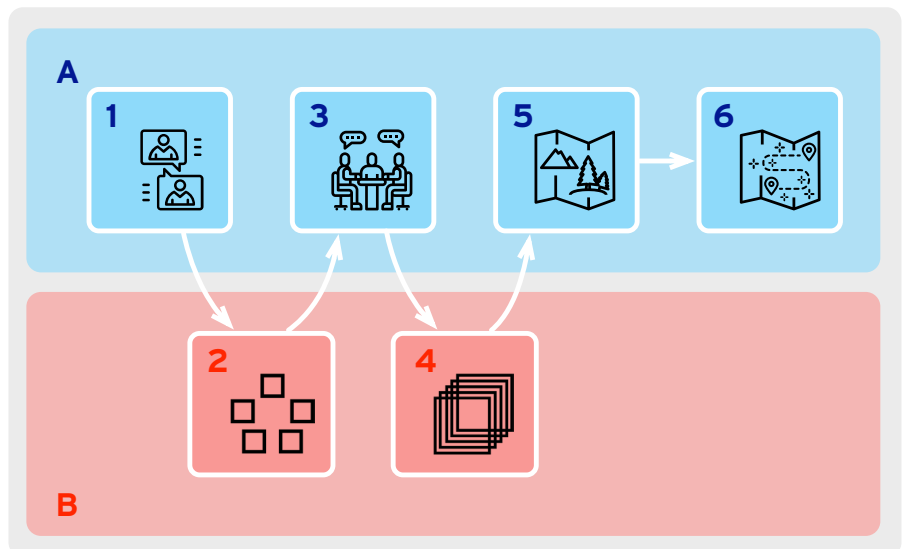
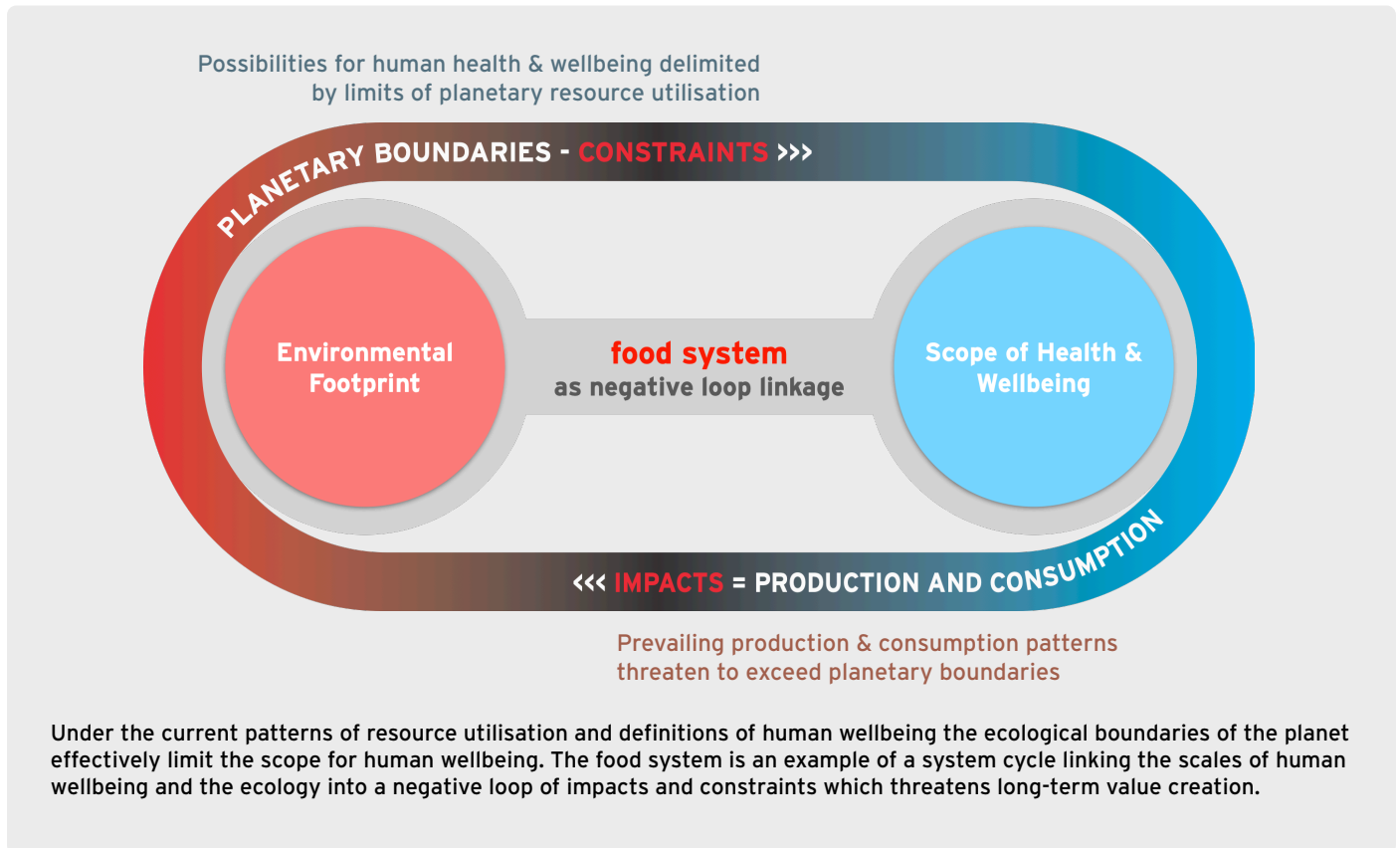


Figure 3: Paradigm of Constraint

Human health and wellbeing is dependent upon the utilization of the planetary resources of the world. The potential scope of human health and wellbeing is limited by the boundaries of the planet's ability to absorb the impact of prevailing models of production and consumption as the cost of achieving human health and wellbeing. Framing sustainability issues according to a paradigm of limitations results in solutions of trade-offs between costs and benefits. There needs to be a decoupling of the link between human health and wellbeing at the cost of an environmental footprint.



moto Group's existing materiality issue definitions.

However, he also recognized that Ajinomoto Group's need to move forward, to change and grow, would not be informed entirely by a set of materiality issues defined primarily upon the impacts and logic of past strategies and operations, but that the transformations required for the future would require new logics, new ways of thinking and new partnerships that could pull the company into a better future, and not simply just push it along a path leading from its past.

In the work of the sustainability committees in many other corporations, materiality usually follows strategy. It is common for corporations to finalize their strategic plans and then

ask their committees to define the material issues for sustainability after the fact. Ajinomoto Group's approach instead integrated the two processes of strategic planning by the corporate executive and material issue definition by the SAC.

The objective was to promote a dialog among members that was both constructive and forward looking and which would also challenge Ajinomoto Group to build upon its capabilities to innovate and transform.

To be viable, however, sustainability must also be built into corporate governance structures as a strategic issue. This is what Ajinomoto Group has done. This was achieved by locating the SAC as one component within a wider governance platform for sustainability. This platform consisted of

the Board of Directors, the SAC itself, and the Sustainability Committee (hereafter: "SC") established within the executive (see figure 1).

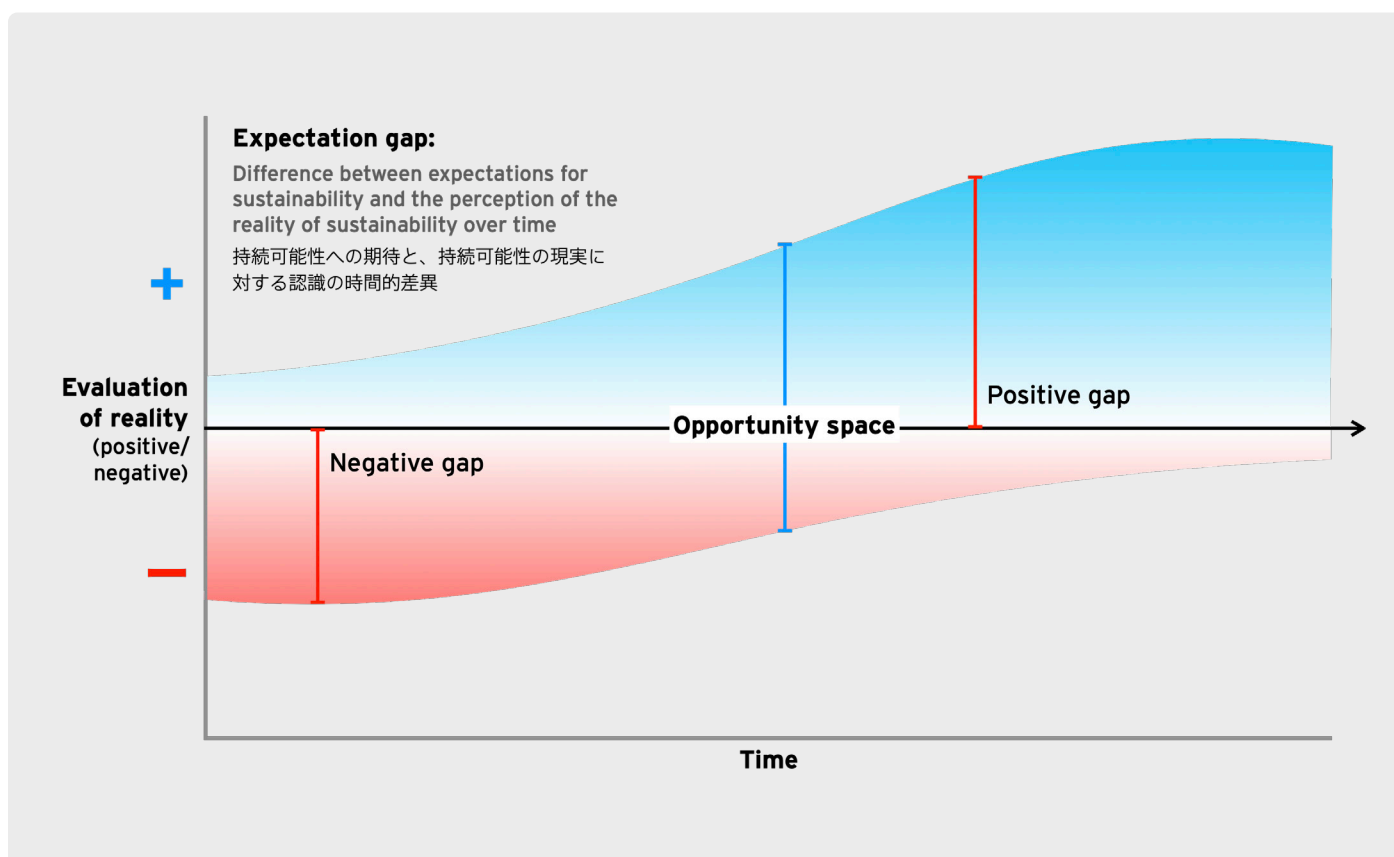
In 2020 Ajinomoto adopted the "three-committee" governance model that enables the Board of Directors to focus on corporate performance and long-term strategy – and sustainability was identified as a central part of this strategy.

The Board established the SAC and charged it with identifying issues of materiality and, at the same time, the executive established the SC to plan for and integrate sustainability into the strategic plan.

The SAC was to advise the Board on the direction and requirements for achieving sustainability, while the SC

Figure 4: Opportunity Space

Problems are easily identified as issues for sustainability. The task of identifying negative issues and classifying them into a framework is a relatively straightforward process. This process however often comes at the cost of atomizing the identity and interests of stakeholders and generalizing their concerns. A multi-stakeholder approach to issue identification which preserves the multi-subjectivity of the respective stakeholders, however allows the connection between problems and demands to be seen as negative and positive gaps which map out an opportunity space strategic action to promote sustainability over the long term.



was to plan for the implementation and evaluation of business strategy for sustainable value creation.

SAC member and Board Chair Ms. Iwata referred to this as a process of weaving a rope from three strands, strategic planning by the executive, materiality definition and direction by the SAC, and oversight by the Board of Directors. This structure was reflected in the procedure adopted by the SAC.

Composition and dynamics

At the initial meeting, during our self-introductions, one member looked at the faces around the conference table and observed that the council profile was remarkable because it contained none of the people that would usually participate in

such a committee. Seeing none of the “usual suspects” among the members seated around the table, this council member voiced their opinion that there was clearly something different about this initiative.

This difference was the result of a deliberate choice. The council members were not chosen based upon their experience as the sustainability committee participants in other corporations, but upon the salience of their knowledge and perspectives as experts in fields of strategic importance for Ajinomoto Group in its multiple roles as a corporation.

Council members were selected as representatives of Ajinomoto Group’s key constituencies – those groups and communities that must see Ajinomoto Group as a valuable partner for the

future in order for Ajinomoto Group to be able to fulfill its mission of creating sustainable shared value as a business over time.

Rather than attempt to define the ideal criteria of a good, sustainable corporation and then apply these criteria to Ajinomoto Group, the SAC members have focused instead on defining the role and expectations that Ajinomoto Group must fulfill in order to become the best possible partner for them as representatives of their own particular constituency in terms of their identity, interests, rights, resources and goals for the future.

In doing this, the SAC members sought to preserve their relative subjectivity as stakeholders in Ajinomoto Group’s present and future, and present a multi-dimensional picture of the

expectations for Ajinomoto Group.

Procedure

As shown in figure 2 the SAC was implemented over four joint sessions which were preceded by one preliminary session. The preliminary session was designed to introduce the council members to each other and to Ajinomoto as a corporation. Working according to the theme of mutual understanding without consensus building, the council sought to develop an appreciation of Ajinomoto Group in terms of both its accomplishments and capabilities from the respective perspective of each council member in their role of a representative of a distinct group of stakeholders.

The first session was used to communicate the general expectations of the council members to the executive. At the second session the executive side responded with its working plans for sustainable business and sought the council's feedback and evaluation. At the third session the executive presented their "sustainable growth story" plan which was evaluated by the council members. At the fourth and last session council members shared their expectation for Ajinomoto Group as a sustainable business and approved the final materiality report contents.

The overall process was one of dialogue and co-narration of sustainability as strategy and transformation.

The definition of materiality that resulted from this process was defined to:

1. Serve as a framework to guide strategic planning, implementation and its evaluation over the long term.
2. Give voice to stakeholders and agency to management by integrating expectations for sustainability proactively within the business planning process.
3. Maintain obligations for fulfillment of the existing (legacy) materiality issues formalize in 2015 and recently revised in 2020.
4. Ensure the relevance of plans and goals for achieving sustainability

within the context of dynamically evolving business, social and environmental contexts.

Framework and model

Over time several themes came to define the flow of the SAC's deliberations. One was the point that sustainability issues were located within a paradigm of limitations wherein the potential scope of human wellbeing was constricted by the ongoing impacts of current models of production and consumption (see figure 3). A second point was that while within this many negative sustainability issues could be defined which required solutions, these negative issues often existed in relation to positive issues that could be developed strategically as opportunities to promote sustainability and wellbeing (see figure 4). Seen from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, these various issues could be seen to be both negative and positive opportunities that were interrelated and embedded within different system scales.

Throughout all the sessions the positions voiced by each of the council members, the concerns and expectations they explained, and their conceptualizations of their views of sustainability were recorded, collated and organized. The points given by each council member were then collated and prioritized individually and then organized into the multi-stakeholder materiality figure (shown in Figure 5). The twenty eight issues defined – termed "expectations" – shown in this figure constituted the foundation of the materiality issues identified by the council. These expectations were subsequently grouped into twelve categories termed "requirements" which were in turn grouped into four larger categories termed "dimensions." The dimensions were ordered into a cycle of transformation – a Möbius strip comprising of four complementary transformations, as shown in Figure 5. By organizing the dimensions into an ongoing process of dynamic, transformative change and embedding the requirements and expectations in turn within this framework, the council sought to present Ajinomoto Group with a

set of long-term materiality issues that were both readily operationalization, yet demanding in nature.

Unlike the preexisting materiality issues which comprised of concrete and temporally sensitive objectives, the SAC's proposed transformation-based framework of issues is designed to serve as a guide for planning, implementing and evaluating sustainability as strategy over the long term.

Implementation of the framework requires that Ajinomoto Group's management identifies specific actions and goals for each expectation within their respective requirements and dimensions, defines these actions and goals as part of their business strategy and operations, measures their achievement, communicates their achievement with stakeholders, and renew them as they are either attained or replace them as circumstances requires that they be reiterated to further promote sustainable value creation over time.

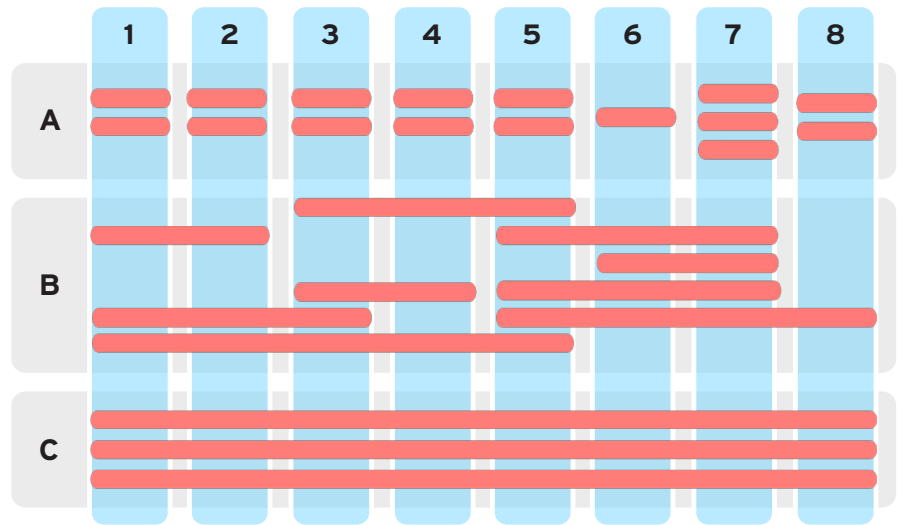
Although the SAC has deliberately limited its definition of the materiality issues for Ajinomoto Group to these twenty eight expectations as arranged within this framework of requirements and dimensions, we have provided management with an illustration of how the preexisting materiality issues can be located as concrete actions and goals in fulfillment of each of these expectations, as well as indicating those expectations which are not yet covered by any of the preexisting actions and goals and therefore requires attention and definition.

It is the hope of all the members of the SAC that Ajinomoto Group will, through the implementation of this transformation-based framework of materiality issues designed to facilitate the operationalization of a strategy of sustainability unique to Ajinomoto Group, will continue to both enable and promote wellbeing through its partnerships with its stakeholders in communities throughout the world.

Figure 5: Materiality Issue Definition Process: The materiality issue identification process used by the SAC was based on the Contextualized Issue Identification Process developed by Scott Davis as a component of the Good Business Initiative at Rikkyo University. The process is comprised of three phases as shown below.

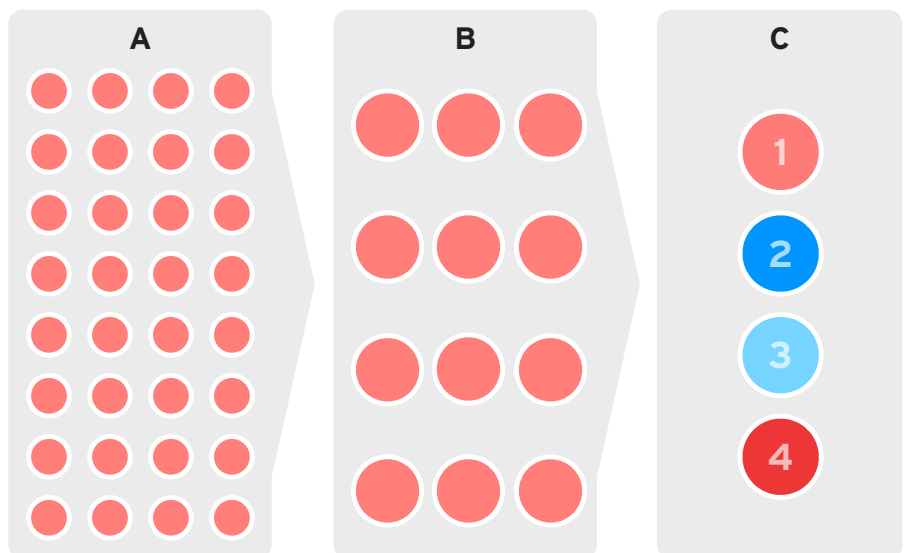
Phase 1: Mapping

Issues identified by each council member as representatives of their respective stakeholder perspective (SP) were analyzed and ranked within each perspective and then compared between perspectives. The result was the stakeholder map of issues which shows issues of importance from each SPs (1 to 8) which are (A) primarily specific to certain SPs, (B) of common concern to multiple SPs, or (C) of shared concern when seen from all SPs.



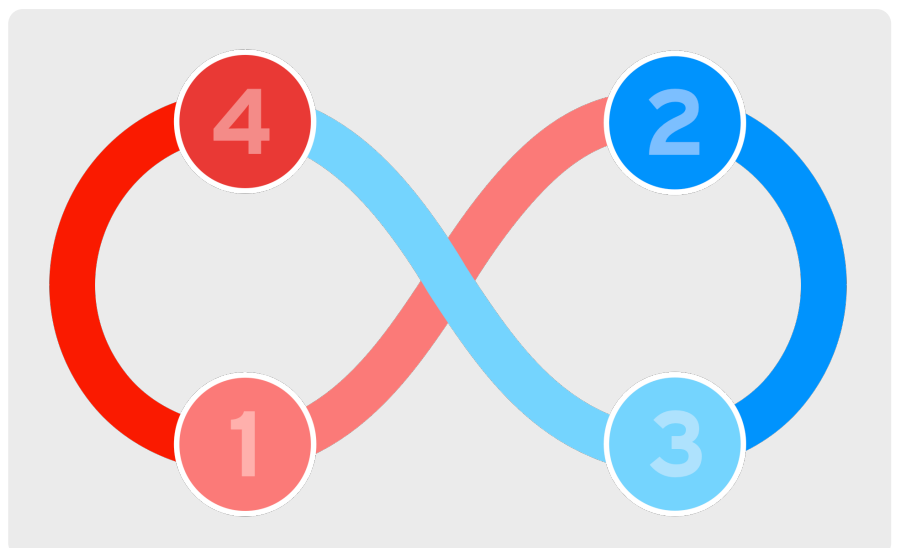
Phase 2: Classification

The 28 issues identified in the mapping phase of analysis were then categorized thematically to produce the typology upon which the issue framework is based. The 28 issues (A) defined as expectations were divided into 12 higher order categories (B) defined as requirements, which were in turn divided into 4 wider categories defined as dimensions (C).



Phase 3: Modeling

The third phase of analysis resulted in the definition of the issue model. Taking the form of a möbius strip of transformation, the issue model was designed to promote the integration of strategy and sustainability in an ongoing process of innovation starting from (1) co-creation, and leading on to (2) *seikat-susha** perspective, (3) wellbeing, (4) shared value and on again to (1) co-creation.



* See note on page 12.

Definition of Materiality Issues

Definition of materiality issues

The members of the SAC have striven to define a set of materiality issues that should be strategically integrated into the planning, implementation and evaluation of Ajinomoto Group's activities as a business in order to enable it to co-create sustainable, shared value as a dynamic process of ongoing innovation.

The 28 issues defined here are termed expectations and are divided into 12 groups of requirements

which are in turn classified into 4 groups of dimensions. In order to enable and promote the integration of sustainability into strategy, the materiality issues defined by the SAC have been presented in three formats: (1) a model, (2) a multi-stakeholder map, and (3) a framework.

Model of issues

The Model of Issues (Exhibit 1) is a dynamic representation of how the issues identified by the SAC should be integrated into Ajinomoto Group's strategy as an ongoing

process of transformation and innovation.

Multi-stakeholder issue map

The Multi-Stakeholder Map of Issues (Exhibit 2) shows the relative context of each issue in terms of their comprising a conscious, long-term concern from either specific or shared stakeholder perspectives.

Issue framework

The Framework of Issues (Exhibit 3) presents the 28 issues defined

Exhibit 1: Model of Issues

4. shared value

- 4.1 Living well
健幸寿命
- 4.2 Co-wellbeing
コー・ウエルビーイング
- 4.3 Value creating solutions
ソリューションによる価値創造

1. co-creation

- 1.1 Transformative innovation capability
変革能力
- 1.2 Transparent & objective
透明性・客観性
- 1.3 Constructive engagement for co-creation
共同力



The Materiality of Positive Change for the Co-Creation of Sustainable Shared Value

by the SAC in accordance with their categorization of dimensions, requirements and expectations. The higher order levels of dimension and requirements are used to explain the meaning of the issues as expectations. Some issues are located within more than one expectation, thus indicating their complexity as an issue and as a stakeholder concern.

Implementation of sustainable business

The SAC has defined these materiality issues in terms of the

member's hopes and expectations of Ajinomoto Group as a corporate partner in the co-creation of sustainable shared value. As such, the SAC has chosen to avoid defining the expectations in terms of specific and objective targets. Instead the SAC has defined the expectations as long-term subjective, pathways for transformation which will require Ajinomoto Group to create plans, invest resources, develop capabilities and set and measure concrete objectives as key performance indicators of their progress on each expectation.

The integration of sustainability into its strategy using the materiality defined by the SAC will require that Ajinomoto Group (1) sets and communicates concrete goals for each expectation as part of its business strategy, (2) measures the progress made in the attainment of these objectives, (3) communicates information regarding their progress to the stakeholders to whom the expectation is salient, (4) re-sets objectives in a timely manner in the event of their attainment, or replace them should the objective set be deemed to be inadequate or outdated.

AminoScience for Wellbeing



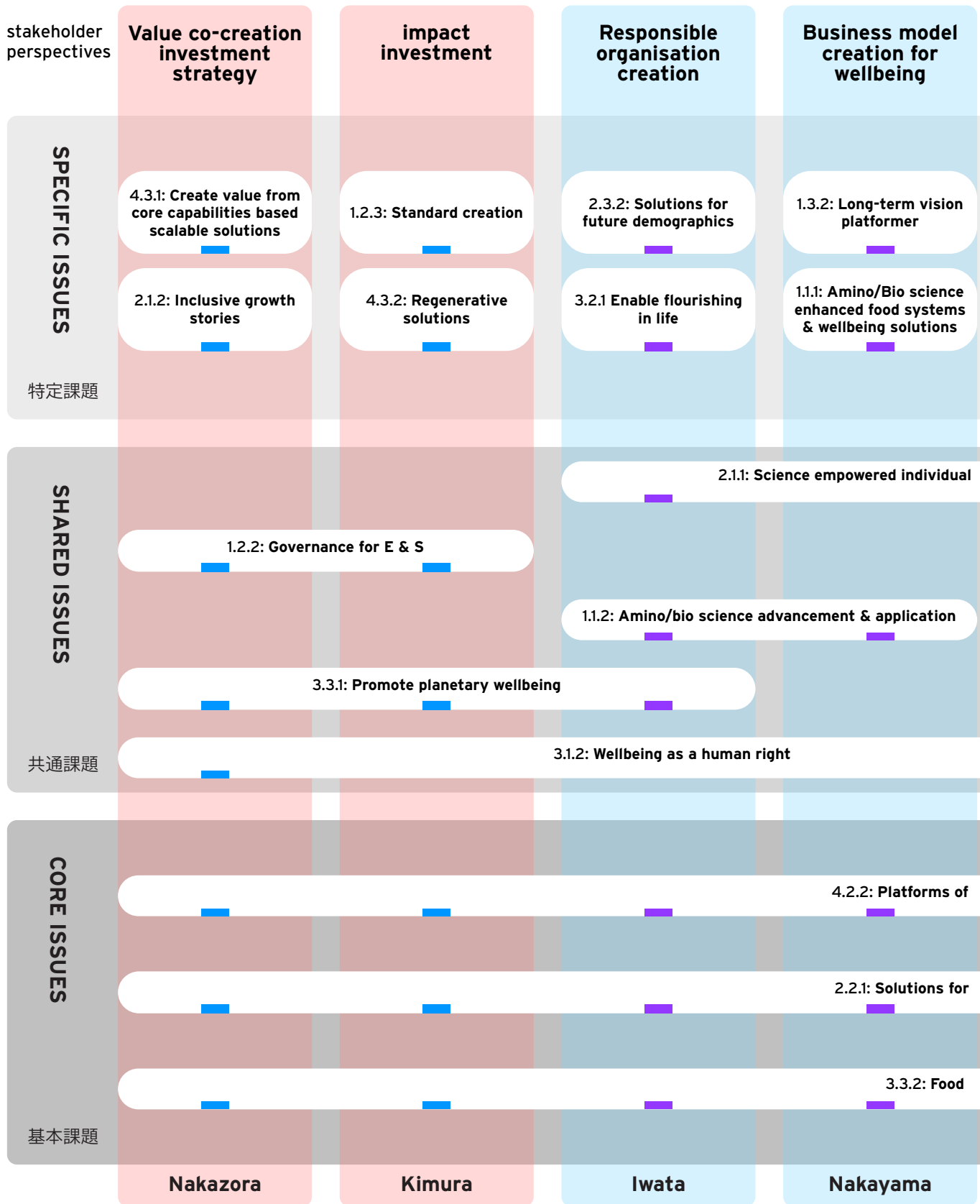
2. seikatsusha perspective

- Holistic & inclusive perspective
ホリスティック&インクルーシブ視点 2.1
- Local community perspective
地域コミュニティ視点 2.2
- Future generation perspective
未来世代の視点 2.3

3. wellbeing

- Human wellbeing
ヒューマン・ウエルビーイング 3.1
- Community wellbeing
コミュニティ・ウエルビーイング 3.2
- Planetary wellbeing
地球のウエルビーイング 3.3

Exhibit 2: Multi-stakeholder Map of Issues



An Overview of Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives

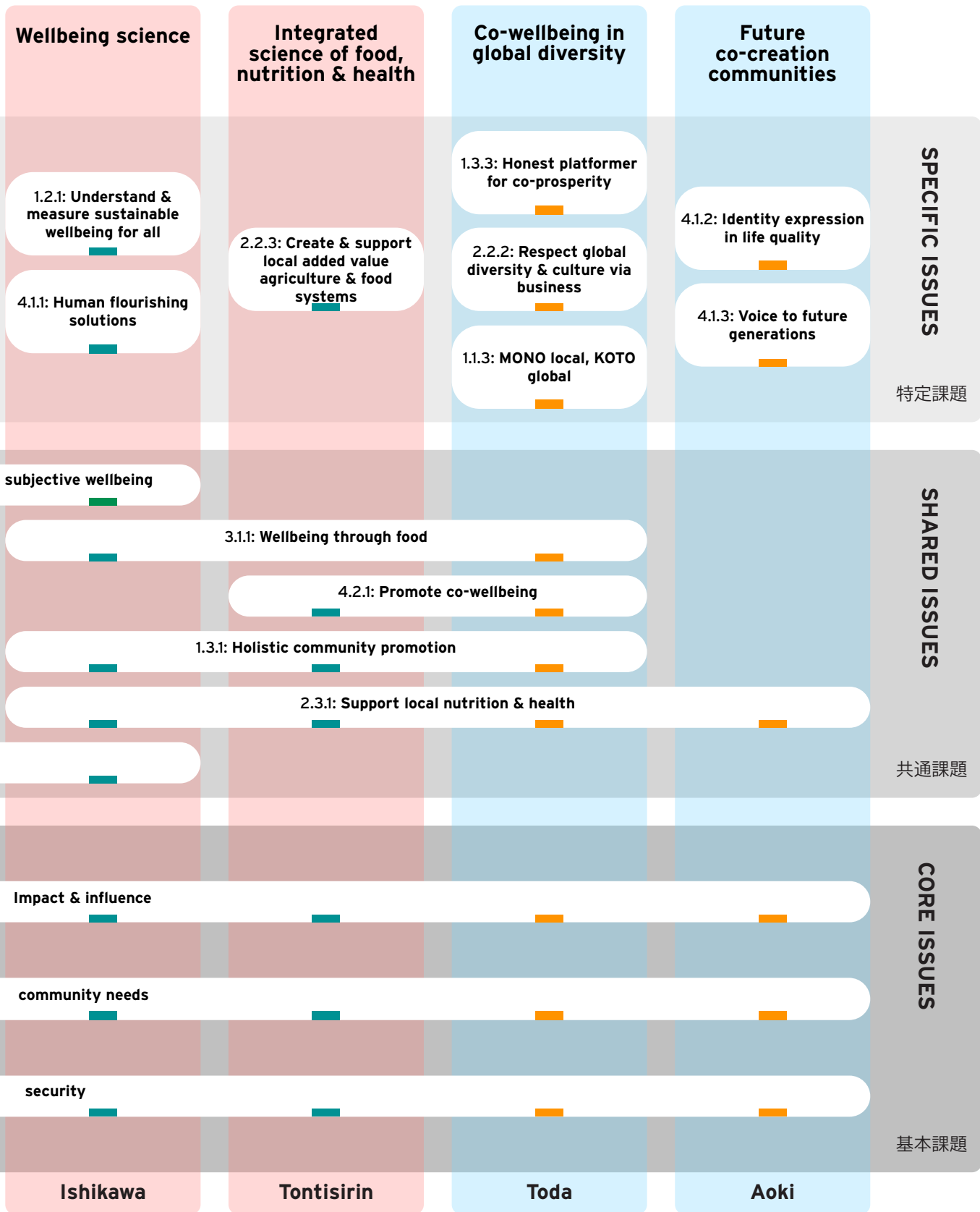


Exhibit 3: Framework of Issues

1. Co-creation

1.1 Transformative innovation capability

Promote the advancement & application of the Amino/Bio Sciences to enable innovations to promote food system quality, resilience & sustainability.

1.1.1 Amino/Bio science enhanced food systems & well-being solutions.

Enhance the resilience and sustainability of the food system and promote wellbeing through the development and application of Amino/Bio science.

1.1.2 Amino/Bio science advancement & application.

Contribute to the ongoing advancement of Amino/Bio science and promote understanding of its potential applications and value.

1.1.3 MONO local, KOTO global.

Facilitate the leverage of physical assets and resources (agriculture, production) on the local scale and promotion of the sharing and application of wisdom and intangible assets globally in order to support inclusive, non-exclusionary growth.

1.2 Transparent & objective

Promote governance structures essential for creating & promoting social & environmental issue solutions & assume an active role in the setting of standards to evaluate & measure social & economic value creation.

1.2.1 Understand & measure sustainable wellbeing for all.

Advance the scientific understanding of wellbeing and create tools to enable its objective measurement.

1.2.2 Governance for E & S.

Develop and implement the governance necessary to contribute to real and effective solutions to environmental and social issues. “G for E & S.”

1.2.3 Standard Creation.

Participate in initiatives to develop and apply effective standards and methods to measure and evaluate social and economic value creation.

1.3 Constructive engagement for co-creation

Holistically promote the long-term development of local communities by serving as an honest platformer that enables the efficient use of local assets & resources embedded within platforms of global knowledge.

1.3.1 Holistic community promotion.

Promote the development of local communities and regions in a holistic manner.

1.3.2 Long-term vision platformer.

Create and implement a long-term vision as a platformer that will resonate with partners and investors.

1.3.3 Honest platformer for co-prosperity.

Build ecosystems bringing together different communities, industries and entities and serve as an “honest platformer” to create co-prosperity.

The Dimensions, Requirements & Expectations for Sustainability

2. Seikatsusha* perspective

2.1 Holistic & inclusive perspective

Create a seikatsusha perspective oriented R&D capability that empowers individuals to realize their own subjective wellbeing.

2.1.1 Science empower individual subjective wellbeing.

Apply scientific and technological capabilities to empower stakeholders and promote their subjective wellbeing.

2.1.2 Inclusive growth stories.

Create stakeholder inclusive, transparent stories of growth and development.

2.2 Local community perspective

Create & promote food products & production that enables local rights, promotes interests based upon understanding & respect for culture & values.

2.2.1 Solutions for community needs.

Understand the multi-domestic nature of food and promote adaptability to local food needs and values.

2.2.2 Respect global diversity & culture via business.

Understand and respect the values, rights and interests of local communities and promote them through business activities.

2.2.3 Create & support local AV (added value) agriculture & food system.

Respect local cultures of food and agriculture and promote the development of agriculture-based value chains.

2.3 Future generations perspective

Understand the challenges posed for life stages within future demographics & promote awareness of & enable lifestyles of long-term health through nutrition-based solutions.

2.3.1 Support local nutrition & health.

Respect local cultures of food and agriculture (food production) and promote nutrition for long-term health.

2.3.2 Solutions for future demographics.

Understand and provide solutions for the challenges posed by future demographics .

*** Note:** “Seikatsusha” is a unique Japanese concept that, unlike the partial concept of “consumer” used in business and “citizen” used in political science, seeks to define people holistically. A seikatsusha is a person with agency who defines their own life priorities based on their own (shared) interpretation of their communities’ values and long-term interests. A seikatsusha is the ultimate and most fundamental stakeholder representing humans living together in society.

3. Wellbeing

3.1 Human wellbeing

Promote & support human wellbeing as a right through business activity both short & long term.

3.1.1 Wellbeing through food.

Promote both short-term and long-term human wellbeing through food.

3.1.2 Wellbeing as a human right.

Promote and support wellbeing as a human right through business activity.

3.2 Community wellbeing

Promote & support the wellbeing of individuals in communities including workplaces by contributing to the attainment of fulfillment & reward in both life & work.

3.2.1 Enable flourishing in life.

Enable individuals to flourish in both life and work and realize their own subjective wellbeing.

3.3 Planetary wellbeing

Promote the availability, access & utilization of food in a manner which ensures sustainability on a global scale.

3.3.1 Promote planetary wellbeing.

Promote the wellbeing of the earth and environment that nurtures human life.

3.3.2 Food security.

Promote food availability, access, utilization and sustainability.

4. Shared Value (ASV)

4.1 Living well

Empower current & future generations to express, co-create & realize healthy lifestyles in a manner free of trade-offs & compromise.

4.1.1 Human flourishing solutions.

Health and wellbeing life expectancy enhancing value shift.

4.1.2 Identity expression in life quality.

Enable stakeholders to express their own identities by co-creating the infrastructure for healthy lifestyles.

4.1.3 Voice to future generations.

Give voice to future generations to co-create high quality lifestyles that do not compromise natural resources and the environment (from “trade-offs” to “trade-ons”).

4.2 Co-wellbeing

Create & promote sustainable business models based on value chains wherein value is created & shared in manner which promotes wellbeing among people regardless of differences in regional location, resources & capabilities.

4.2.1 Promote Co-wellbeing.

Promote co-wellbeing among and between people in different life situations through the creation of sustainable value chains of food production and nutrition. Connect with and between people (1) from groups with different capabilities and resources, (2) living in regions with different environmental contexts and risks, (3) located in markets with different resources levels and (4) with different personal abilities and challenges.

4.2.2 Platforms of impact & influence.

Create business platforms of sustainable value creation that consider both aspects of impact and influence.

4.3 Value creating solutions

Leverage core capabilities as a business to create scalable & collaborative solutions that promote regenerative food systems & societies.

4.3.1 Create value from core capabilities based scalable solutions.

Leverage core capabilities to realize sustainable, shared value and create scalable solutions.

4.3.2 Regenerative solutions.

Promote regenerative food systems and societies by creating proactive, collaborative solutions.

Council Members



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Former Executive Officer & Senior Vice Presi-
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Terms of Service

* March 2022 - December 2022

** April 2021 - March 2022

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Chair of the Board
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George Nakayama

Independent Director
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Yoshiki Ishikawa

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Department

Mana Nakazora

Whenever I was sad or frustrated, my mother didn't say anything. She would just make me a feast, even more than usual. When I was happy or having a great time, my mother would make me a feast, even more than usual, with a big smile on her face. Yes, I am convinced that "eating" is the only thing that can bring people together in times of sadness, frustration, happiness, and joy. When people's stomachs are full, they can take another step forward with sound ideas. If this is not well-being, what is?

The strength of the Ajinomoto Group lies in the fact that it is rooted in the concept of "eating." Will people forget eating in the 30 years until 2050 because of so much evolution? In the pursuit of efficiency, will we be getting the nutrition we need in vitamin form? I have a feeling that this world, which has been bound by the law of the jungle since the time of the dinosaurs before the birth of mankind, will basically never forget about eating. In this sense, I would like the Ajinomoto Group to fundamentally differ from other companies that have been caught up in the growing craze regarding well-being and ESG, as well as the SDGs, and which are only pretending to be working on these issues. I would like to make three requests, so that the Ajinomoto Group of 2050 will evolve into a form that makes sense.



"I would like the Ajinomoto Group to fundamentally differ from other companies that have been caught up in the growing craze regarding well-being and ESG, as well as the SDGs, and which are only pretending to be working on these issues."

Solving social problems related to food

First, I would like the Ajinomoto Group to actively solve social problems related to food. 30 years from now seems far away but close at hand, and close at hand yet far away. Even if the behavior and role of eating do not change, it is already

being assumed that problems will come in terms of food safety and food security. To begin with, the Ajinomoto Group's core business of food products and seasonings (the Group's so-called core competency) will directly contribute to solving these social problems. Moreover, these efforts will not only address the food situation in Japan. The Ajinomoto Group's global expansion

Well-Being as the Result of an Evolved Form that Makes Sense

will bring about solutions to the world's food situation. What a thing to be proud of: to be able to develop "the sharing of the significance of eating" through the Ajinomoto brand, while inheriting the tastes, traditions, and cultures of different parts of the world.

Taking risks

Second, do not be afraid of risks. While I have said that humans will remain the same in terms of "eating," humans' daily lives also undergo rapid evolution. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find someone who does not have a cell phone, whereas no one used one 30 years ago. This means that companies must change, too. Even if the way that amino acids and umami ingredients are used might make sense, their utilization may need to change. Core competencies are important, but this is not the same as insisting on them. While wanton risk-taking is undesirable, companies should not be afraid to expand into new opportunities that are rooted in their existing skills and experience. The fact that the Ajinomoto Group's technology has been transformed into Ajinomoto Build-up Film (ABF), an interlayer insulation material which now accounts for almost 100% of the global market share of personal computers, shows that something which seems unrelated can contribute to the creation of corporate value through a change in thinking.

Solid earnings based upon value creation

Third, I want the Ajinomoto Group to devise a way to consistently generate stable and solid earnings. As a joint stock company, it is desirable for the company to continue to excite multiple stakeholders, including investors, by generating profits and stability from core businesses, as well as actively generating additional value from derivative businesses. To do so, the Ajinomoto Group must strengthen its sustainability as a company. No matter how noble a company's philosophy, if it is not accepted, no one will buy their products, and if no one buys their products, the company will not be profitable. Profit supremacy is often disliked, but without profits, it will be impossible to protect the happiness of employees, let alone shareholders. That is no way for a company to solve social problems.

The power of eating, and the happiness of eating together; no one eats delicious food without a smile on their face. Fortunately, the Ajinomoto Group has the advantage of being involved in eating, which is a source of joy in the environment and society, in people's lives and health, and in the moments that bring them happiness. Even if the times and people's needs change, people 30 years from now will still require some source of energy, and well-being for humans will not change that much. It may seem like hyperbole to talk about world

peace, or too frivolous to say that human life is more precious than the universe, but eating is the basic principle that brings people closer together and enriches their daily lives.

In the year 2050, if the Ajinomoto Group is present at every dining table where each person can enjoy his or her own feast, and where each person can accumulate strength for their next step, then this will be none other than the embodiment of well-being as a result, which the Ajinomoto Group has been pursuing.

Naoko Kimura

Depictions of what the world might look like in 2050 – if we do not address the climate crisis with the urgency and resolve needed – are grim, some even suggesting the start of the demise of the human species. More of the world is uninhabitable due to extreme heat and suffocating air pollution. The Arctic ice sheets are melting at an alarming rate and sea levels continue to rise, wiping out coastal towns and entire island nations. Massive tropical storms and flooding have become regular occurrences, killing hundreds of people and displacing hundreds of thousands more. Water and food scarcity have led to endemic malnutrition and conflict, displacing families and resulting in hundreds of millions of climate crisis refugees. Moreover, the heartbreaking reality is that populations with the fewest resources to respond will be the hardest hit.

For decades we have known about the strains that economic development puts on our natural environment. The sustainability movement has been building over the years to counter this. In 1987, the Brundtland commission, which was formed to galvanize government efforts in pursuit of sustainable development, is largely credited for popularizing the term “sustainable development” and defined it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition helped shape how sustainability is understood by businesses today.



“I hope to see the Ajinomoto Group lead by example on the international stage to further drive global added value within agriculture and food systems.”

Through more and better data, as well as the real-world consequences of climate change, there is greater acknowledgment of the need for urgent action to reverse the trends we are seeing today. Sustainability historically has largely been about the conservation of natural resources for human benefit, with the aim of enabling continued economic activity focusing on doing less harm to the environment. Today, we know that mitigation is simply not

enough and that we must develop solutions that reverse the effects of climate change; solutions which will restore social and ecological systems to a healthy state and further evolve these systems to adapt and heal themselves. Businesses must shift away from extractive business models and sustainability as a risk mitigation exercise to contributing to restoring natural and social capital. Businesses can help cultivate inclusive, thriving communities and

My Hopes and Expectations

have real impact.

Due to population growth and climate change, food supply and food security will continue to be areas of growing concern for large swaths of the world's population. Food production needs to be done in a regenerative manner as the detrimental effects of extractive practices are well documented and are known to result in diminishing yields over time. Overall, more efficient food systems are needed to combat current and future food insecurity.

Founded in 1909, Ajinomoto Co. is a company with a long history rooted in the sciences, with core competencies in food products and bioscience and fine chemical technologies. Leveraging its core domain areas and partnerships, the Ajinomoto Group has demonstrated successes in building more circular life-cycles for its products, alongside creating symbiotic solutions that benefit stakeholders and the environment. Ajinomoto Group is also able to provide access to healthier foods that can contribute to better public health outcomes and the wellbeing of people. A healthier population can drive cost savings for governments, which can be redirected towards efforts to diminish climate change. By continuing to scale successes and focusing the creation of new solutions on areas most in need, Ajinomoto Group can achieve its vision of contributing to the wellbeing of people and the planet.

Ajinomoto Group's opportunities

What can be achieved is quite clear. Getting there is the challenge. Opportunities exist for Ajinomoto Group to effect change through its various spheres of influence.

1. Start in the workplace. Give employees opportunities to learn about critical issues, the evolving narrative around sustainability, and how to move towards a regenerative future. Promote regeneration as an essential part of Ajinomoto Group's goal to contribute to the wellbeing of people and the planet.
2. Bring consumers closer to your products and services. Promote transparency in your operations, deepen your communications on what outcomes are being targeted, and show customers how they can be part of the solution. Companies can be drivers of change in the marketplace, helping to catalyze a shift in consumer priorities and behavior which is urgently needed if we are to lessen the burden on the world's already constrained resources. Moreover, Ajinomoto Group has operations and stakeholders in parts of the world most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Listen to local needs and become a trusted partner in helping to build healthy and thriving communities.

3. Collaborate and influence. Take a leadership role within the broader ecosystem in which you operate to support the development and adoption of definitions, standards and practices that help improve the understanding of impact. Ensure that stakeholder voices are heard and addressed, and that progress is being made to deliver real-world outcomes.

2050 may feel like a distant future, but it is within the lifetime of many of us reading this, and like it or not it is the future our children and grandchildren will have to face. As depicted earlier, 2050 could be an unbearable reality, or conversely a world where communities and ecosystems thrive and flourish if we collectively alter how we think and act today. Companies have an important role in moving us towards smarter production and consumption to ensure that the wellbeing of the Earth is restored, as the flourishing of our planet is what enables us to also thrive.

Kimie Iwata

Among the various kinds of management resources, human resources are special. Without them, other management resources cannot be created. The mindset that human resources are the source of all management resources is not just what I believe, but the view of the Ajinomoto Group, as well. Therefore, I would like to write about my expectations for the Ajinomoto Group from a long-term perspective from the standpoint of employees, who are stakeholders important to management.

Although it is difficult to predict the future in these uncertain times, it is possible to make predictions about the population to some extent. In other words, it is a certainty that Japan's population will decline, and its population will continue to age. Let's think about what people's work styles will be like around 2050 under the premise of a shrinking and aging population, and what we hope they will become.

First, because of the shortage of labor, the labor force participation rate of women and the elderly, as well as the number of foreign workers, will increase. Situations where some people have difficulty playing active roles because of obstacles such as their sex, age, or nationality will have been eliminated.

Second, as a result of the declining population, the value of individuals will increase. As a result, the relationship between companies and individuals will change. In other words, individuals will become



“the relationship between companies and individuals will change... individuals will become stronger in relation to their companies. Working at the expense of life will become a thing of the distant past, debates about work-life balance will be eliminated, and ‘work-in-life’ will become a reality.”

stronger in relation to their companies. Working at the expense of life will become a thing of the distant past, debates about work-life balance will be eliminated, and “work-in-life” (in which the goal of living is to have a fulfilling life, and work is positioned as one aspect of life) will become a reality.

Advances in technological innovations such as AI will also promote work-in-life, as per-capita labor

productivity increases and working hours become overwhelmingly shorter. As a result, individuals will be free to make decisions about where to work, how many hours to work, and when to work, based on their own life plans.

Third, the life plan for an age where people live to be 100 years old is 25 years of education, 50 years of employment, and 25 years of retirement. Considering that people will

Creating a Company that Everyone Wants to Work For

work for 50 years until the age of 75, the education received in one's youth will not be enough; lifelong learning will be essential. Also, it will be rare to work for only one company for the rest of one's life. Individuals will create their careers themselves, which includes changing jobs and taking on side work.

Based on the above image of the situation that will surround "work" in the year 2050, I would like the Ajinomoto Group to aim to accomplish the following tasks in order to make it a reality in the future.

Achieving diversity

The Ajinomoto Group previously set a numerical target for the percentage of directors and line managers who are women (30% by 2030), and a considerable number of female leaders and candidates for such positions have been developed. Non-Japanese employees are also appearing in executive and managerial positions at the head office. I hope that the Ajinomoto Group will become a company where a diverse workforce is one of its attractions, which in turn attracts new talent, by achieving a rate of 30% at an early stage and advancing to a level where numerical targets are no longer necessary.

Achieving work-in-life

By correcting long working hours through operational reforms and reducing the number of prescribed working hours, Ajinomoto has achieved annual working hours of 1,800 hours, and has been recog-

nized as one of the leading companies in Japan in reforming work styles. Through further promotion of digital transformation (DX), I would like the company to increase productivity per employee, shorten working hours, reduce working days, promote flexible work styles, and evolve as a company which allows people to work freely according to their own life stages and values.

Expanding investment in human resources

Various training programs are being systematically conducted at the Ajinomoto Group. Going forward, with changes anticipated to the business environment, I hope that recurrent education will be enhanced in order for the Group to obtain the human resources needed in the future as early as possible, and that a leave of absence system and financial support will be considered to assist individuals in their efforts to better themselves. If improved investment in human resources boosts labor productivity, which in turn increases profitability even more than its current level, it should be possible to create a virtuous cycle between investment in human resources and profit growth. Of course, as productivity increases, I would like to see the company implement appropriately higher levels of compensation.

Career development support

The most important thing for younger generations when working is

their personal growth. In order to grow, career building in terms of the kind of work experience they accumulate is important, in conjunction with the enhancement of educational opportunities mentioned above. Each individual must be able to design his or her own career and make it a reality through internal transfers and job changes, rather than leaving it up to their company. Although this is a relatively new theme for the Ajinomoto Group, I would like to see the company attract people as a company where they can experience growth through the disclosure of job-related information (what kind of jobs are available in which organizations, and what experience and qualifications are needed to take up those positions), transfers based entirely on an open recruitment system, and enhanced career education and counseling.

The above are four expectations from an employee viewpoint. From an individual's perspective, becoming a company that everyone wants to work for is a growth strategy for the Ajinomoto Group, as doing so will attract quality personnel, increase employee engagement, and improve labor productivity.

At the same time, I hope that the Ajinomoto Group will also contribute to society by demonstrating a successful model for a company that everyone wants to work for.

George Nakayama

Concepts for medium and long-term growth

I believe that this Advisory Council, where opinion leaders from various fields—especially young leaders—discuss important concepts for future corporate activities and society, will be crucial for the future growth of the Ajinomoto Group. In corporate management, having a clear and precise medium-to long-term direction and concept based on one's own aspirations is an essential condition for increasing a company's value and establishing a competitive advantage.

I believe that this is because the various transactions and deals in corporate management are equivalent exchanges. Whether or not the repetition of these transactions leads to increased value and the establishment of a competitive advantage depends on whether or not they are conducted under a consistent concept that captures the direction of the changing times.

I hope that the diverse ideas presented at this council will be reflected in the future development of the Ajinomoto Group's concept, and that the concept will be strong and profound.



“I believe that the Ajinomoto Group’s advantage lies in its roots in the most fundamental and enduring field of business for human beings; namely, food. It is based on a foundation of technology and science—Amino Science and bioscience—which have the greatest potential for future growth.”

Ajinomoto Group's development and challenges

I believe that the Ajinomoto Group's advantage lies in its roots in the most fundamental and enduring field of business for human beings; namely, food. It is based on a foundation of technology and science—

AminoScience and bioscience—which have the greatest potential for future growth. Going forward, I believe that the Ajinomoto Group should attempt to continue to grow based on these two areas: food and bioscience.

The most important issue for humanity today is dealing with global warming, the worsening of which

Contributing to the Provision of Food & Environmental Problem Solutions

will directly affect the acquisition and supply of food. Protecting food, preserving life, and supporting people's health through food will continue to be even more important parts of social infrastructure in the future, and in this area, the Ajinomoto Group has a tremendous responsibility, as well as major contributions to make.

The Ajinomoto Group's food business now enjoys strong support, especially in Southeast Asia and Japan. However, in light of growing geopolitical risks and the fragmentation of the international community, it is necessary to build stronger bases in Europe, America, China, India, and Africa to stabilize and hedge risks in business. This will require further globalization of the Ajinomoto Group on an even greater scale.

Biotechnology began at the end of the 20th century, and its power was most evident in the field of pharmaceuticals. Until then, while chemically synthesized pharmaceuticals exerted their effects by acting on proteins that carry out functions in the body, it had not been possible to create and administer the very molecules that carry out vital functions, such as proteins, since the molecules were too large to synthesize. The solution to this problem was biotechnology, which successfully created large macromolecules with the power of special cells. I believe that this biological power will be particularly important in solving environmental challenges. Efficient-

ly capturing CO₂ using extant chemical synthesis technology is not easy, but living things accomplish it efficiently through photosynthesis to make carbohydrates. Biotechnology harnessing the power of life has the power to potentially solve a variety of environmental issues, and the Ajinomoto Group has the potential to make a significant contribution to solving environmental issues in a wider range of areas beyond ICT and other fields that are expanding via AminoScience and bioscience technology, which will require an increased focus on innovation through these last two points.

Global warming is the result of the unrestrained use of fossil fuels stored over billions of years as an energy source for the industrial revolution, and it continues to be the ultimate challenge. Companies that are able to help solve this problem will survive and be the victors.



Going forward, how can the Ajinomoto Group increase its corporate value over the long term (until 2050)?

In this article, I will describe my expectations for the Ajinomoto Group regarding the aforementioned question from the viewpoint of well-being. Notably, the timeline of 2050 needs to look beyond the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors, which—from a global perspective—we are trying to achieve by 2030. Therefore, it is my hope that the Ajinomoto Group will not only increase its corporate value in a sustainable way, but also actively guide the international community in rule-making for the SDGs and Beyond after 2030 as an industry leader. My expectations include such hopes.

What I expect of the Ajinomoto Group can be summarized in the following two points, which will be discussed in detail below.

- Spearheading the post-SDGs agenda/indicators/rule-making
- Creating businesses where a virtuous circle between “the economy” and “sustainable well-being for individuals, communities, and the earth” can truly be felt by society

“In order for the Ajinomoto Group to sustainably increase its corporate value from the long-term perspective of 2050, it needs to gain widespread recognition in society as a symbolic company in the post-SDGs era.”

Spearheading the post-SDGs agenda: indicators & rule-making

The international community is now moving dynamically to achieve the SDGs by 2030, with industry, government, academia, and the private sector working in tandem. Notably, ESG has been established as a process indicator for companies, and they are required to take re-

sponsible actions as members of the international community. On the other hand, in terms of the global agenda for 2050, there are two main aspects of the current SDGs that should be supplemented. First, since the SDGs were originally based on the concept of “not leaving behind a negative legacy for future generations,” they are lacking the concept of “also passing down a positive legacy” from the viewpoint of well-be-

My Long-Term Expectations for the Ajinomoto Group

ing. The other is that the concept of development is strongly related to economics, and therefore political, cultural, and social perspectives, such as those regarding peace and the preservation of local traditional culture, are weak.

Taking these above aspects into account, the Sustainable Well-being Goals (SWGs) are now developing a loosely shared understanding among the international community as a concept appropriate for the post-SDGs era. That also means Sustainable Well-being for All, which is the idea that we should strive for the sustainable well-being of individuals, communities, and the earth. Of course, it remains to be seen whether the SWGs will become a formal consensus. However, if we are to believe that the future is not something to be predicted, but something to be created, it is our hope that the Ajinomoto Group will actively lead the industry in building a consensus on a global agenda which incorporates perspectives that are lacking in the current SDGs, such as the SWGs.

At the same time, we also hope that industry, government, academia, and the private sector will actively take the lead in composing symbolic indicators that the food-related industry should aim for, and in making the rules that should be adhered to in order to achieve this goal. For example: “What are the food industry’s indicators to gauge well-being for individuals, communities, and the earth for the view-

point of sustainable well-being?” Alternatively, “How should guidelines and regulations be ideally established to protect and promote sustainable well-being?” To respond to these questions, the Ajinomoto Group could, among other actions, sequentially publish and update the drafts, while emphasizing speed.

Creating businesses where a virtuous circle between “the economy” and “sustainable well-being for individuals, communities, and the earth” can truly be felt by society

The SDGs are based on the concept of aiming for a virtuous circle between the environment and the economy (without leaving behind a negative legacy for future generations). As symbolic examples of this concept, companies have worked on activities in the past such as planting trees, and recently, they have been working to replace plastics. Whether or not such examples are inherently meaningful and impactful initiatives is debatable. However, at the very least, they have been very meaningful in terms of creating public opinion trends.

In order for the Ajinomoto Group to sustainably increase its corporate value from the long-term perspective of 2050, it needs to gain widespread recognition in society as a symbolic company in the post-SDGs era. As mentioned in the previous

section, if the SWGs are to serve as the global agenda for the next era, a significant direction for them will be “achieving a virtuous circle between economy and well-being (which also connects a positive legacy to future generations).”

In order for society to accept the arrival of such a new era with hope, each person living in society needs to have experiences that feel real. Viewed from this perspective, “food” is an extremely straightforward experience, and the Ajinomoto Group is expected to play a major role. This is due to its great potential to appeal to society in an easily understood way, in the sense that the businesses provided by the Ajinomoto Group are connected to the sustainable well-being of individuals, communities, and the earth, which is the goal of the post-SDGs era.

In the above, I have described what my expectations for the Ajinomoto Group regarding what to do to enhance its corporate value over the long term from the viewpoint of well-being.

Kraisid Tontisirin

As a physician passionate about nutrition, food, health, social equity and the environment, it has been incredibly enriching for me to be a part of the Ajinomoto Group's Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC). From the onset, all SAC members were invited and encouraged to share our views, expertise and opinions, allowing us to continually learn from each other while informing the Ajinomoto Group's path to sustainability.

With increasingly globalized agriculture and food systems across the world, we must adopt a holistic approach that supports and involves local farmers and communities within production processes. Preserving local food cultures and agricultural practices enables the development of agriculture-based value chains that produce high quality foods and nutrients while safeguarding local economies and diets. When a variety of actors work together in solidarity, they create mutually beneficial food systems with improved community and farmer yields, economic viability as well as positive social and environmental impacts.

Based on this approach, the Thai government recently developed the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economy initiative that is beneficial to both the planet and its people as well as key to achieving several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Supported by science, research, technology and innovation, the BCG economy's key



“Pooling efforts through a holistic approach involving individual, communal, national and international levels is not only beneficial to bringing support and added value to agriculture and food systems. It also helps ensure community and individual wellbeing, health and dignity.”

measures of success are numerous. From human resource development and adequate investments to agriculture management throughout the food chain to ensure high productivity and value-added products. The Ajinomoto Group has aligned well with this concept when it launched the “Thai Farmer Better Life” partner project, which helps growers of cassava* increase their productivity and achieve financial

independence.

Through its unique transfer of knowledge and technology, the Group helps farmers to solve the problem of cassava mosaic disease and produce high quality agricultural products that can be used as raw material for the industry, such as in the production of amino acids. In turn, by recovering, reusing and recycling industry wastewater from cassava farms, organic fertilizers are

My Hopes and Expectations

produced enabling for high quality value-added products and by-products.

Following these achievements, I hope to see the Ajinomoto Group lead by example on the international stage to further drive global added value within agriculture and food systems. By sharing know-how, technology and best practices, the Group can help embed sustainability and equality in the food sector, not only within the company but across businesses and society. By motivating other private actors, it may also inspire and stimulate industry, government and academia to collaborate more closely and thoughtfully together, ultimately developing appropriate policies and partnerships for both the people and planet. I am convinced the Ajinomoto Group can harness its capabilities and resources wisely to bring positive environmental and societal change to food value chains across different markets. As a starting point, the Ajinomoto Group should make sure its sustainability practices and activities linked to the BCG economy are effectively communicated to global and regional stakeholders within major global partnerships and during major economic forums such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting.

Pooling efforts through a holistic approach involving individual, communal, national and international levels is not only beneficial to bringing support and added value

to agriculture and food systems. It also helps ensure community and individual wellbeing, health and dignity. We are witnessing a strong need and growing responsibility to promote co-wellbeing among populations with different life situations by creating and maintaining sustainable value chains of food production and nutrition. To achieve such positive outcomes on a global scale, we must leverage local food practices and knowledge by engaging groups:

- With different capabilities and resources
- Living in regions with different environmental contexts and risks
- Located in markets with various resource levels
- With varying personal abilities and challenges

In a nutshell, nutrition is the essential bridge between food, health and wellbeing. With this in mind, I expect the Ajinomoto Group to continue engaging and supporting local communities by co-creating circular networks that are deeply rooted in community values and traditions. I believe this will empower local actors to participate and actively learn from best food practices and processes, while maintaining their respective food preferences and individual dignity. This integrated approach is the key to ensuring fruitful co-existence of communities and agriculture.

Through such healthy and regenerative environments where economic opportunities thrive, the Group can further promote the development of successful agriculture-based value chains. In turn, I believe maintaining this open approach will unlock growth opportunities for the Ajinomoto Group by continually learning from actors on the ground to improve and optimize practices and processes across the global food sector.

* A staple raw material of amino acids such as MSG (mono sodium glutamate).

Takao Toda

Global Demographics & the Ajinomoto Group

The world's population distribution is going to change significantly over the next 30 years. In 2050, the global population will be approximately ten billion people. Africa and South Asia will have the greatest population growth. In particular, Africa will enjoy the longest and largest population bonus in human history. One in four people will live in Africa.

The population in Nigeria (the fourth-most populous country), will have about the same population as the third-most populous country, the United States (400 million people). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (the ninth-most populous) and South Sudan (the tenth-most populous) will enter the top ten. India (1.6-1.7 billion people) will become the world's most populous country. Pakistan (the sixth-most populous) and Bangladesh (the eighth-most populous) will also experience major population growth.

We need to remember that Africa and South Asia are regions where the nutritional problems of children are particularly severe. At least one in three children in these regions is nutritionally stunted, and will live with the negative legacy of their childhood for the rest of their lives. For the demographic bonuses in these regions to truly be a bonus, it is a prerequisite that people learn to live their lives in good health and on their own initiative. However, if the present conditions persist, many people who are unhealthy and unable to protect themselves will be born and raised



“If the Ajinomoto Group is to be a company that aspires to be a ray of light for people, or to help such lights, then the Ajinomoto Group will have to walk a thorny path going forward.”

in these regions. Incidentally, during this period, Japan will have the most significant population decline among nearly 200 countries and regions.

The path that should be taken by the Ajinomoto Group, which has become a global enterprise, will naturally be considered in light of these changes to the world situation. Without further engagement with these regions, it would probably be difficult for Ajinomoto Group to continue existing as a company that contributes

to the world in the fields of food and nutrition.

The Ajinomoto Group, Which Aims to Realize “Absolute Value”

The Ajinomoto Group underwent a drastic shift in 2020. Instead of the slogan of aiming for one of the top ten companies in the world in its

Taking on the Challenges for Co-Wellbeing

industry, the Group expressed its determination, both internally and externally, to contribute to extending the healthy life expectancy of a billion people around the world as its greater goal. Regardless of whether this number of one billion is too large or too small (note: I think it is too small) for the Ajinomoto Group's current capabilities and potential, this major shift has made Ajinomoto Group a leading front-line company in the world.

As a business, it is natural to seek to survive and expand. However, by making a major shift from the "relative value" of surpassing and outperforming others to "absolute value," which people can relate to and share widely with others, the Ajinomoto Group has been able to gain the support and endorsement of stakeholders around the world and attract even better human resources. By steadily taking concrete actions to realize this value in the future, the Group will be able to gain even more support and grow its business.

Those working on the front lines of the Ajinomoto Group's business are the people who feel this vision of the future most often. When they are struggling at work or worrying about work-life balance, each individual's effort and ingenuity will vary greatly depending on their having different foundations on which they plant their feet; whether they are working only to make money for the company, or for the people of the world.

The Ajinomoto Group, Which Will Take on the Challenge of Co-Wellbeing

How is it possible for people to live without losing hope in today's society, where poverty, environmental destruction, violent conflict, and many other difficulties have converged?

Where do the clear eyes and carefree smiles of children in poor countries come from?

Over the course of almost 40 years of international cooperation, I have lived in Africa, Europe, the U.S., and Asia, and traveled to nearly 120 poor and rich countries around the world to learn from the people.

"It is in the deepest darkness that the faintest lights shine brightest."

A widow from a poor community in Rwanda, which is struggling to make a miraculous recovery from the horrors of genocide, taught me these words. I learned similar lessons in many parts of the world: in rural Bangladesh, in Palestinian refugee camps, in the mountains of Guatemala, and at sites of bloodshed in Cambodia. Love for children, familial bonds, solidarity with friends, and community ties; without exception, those lights came from relationships with people, and became love for others, hope for the future, and sustenance for people's souls.

If the Ajinomoto Group is to be a company that aspires to be a ray of light for people, or to help such lights, then the Ajinomoto Group will have to walk a thorny path going forward. If so, the Group must take on the

challenge of moving beyond health—in the narrow physiological sense for individuals—in order to bring about a society that connects people through "deliciousness" and "vitality," and where people experience the happiness of being connected to others and to life. It cannot afford to rest on its laurels as a first-rate and popular company.

The ancient Greeks had "two lives." One was their "Bios" as individual life forms, and the other was "Zoe," which had linked lives together continuously ever since the birth of life on this planet. Paul Nurse, the world's greatest life scientist, said, "All life is connected. Life on Earth is born just once," and he was keenly aware of Zoe's existence when he was on the leading edge of global research. Well-being can only be achieved through co-well-being.

Will the outstanding people who have assembled at the Ajinomoto Group really take on these challenges? Will management and those on the front line have the courage to boldly attempt a new business model with a view to co-well-being, facing it head-on, then walk the thorny path without ever fearing failure?

At the very least, I want to support those efforts with all my heart and soul, because this is something that many people in Japan and around the world strongly desire, and it is also my own personal agenda.

“A Company That Creates Happiness at the Dining Table”

This was the image I associated with the word “Ajinomoto.” As I became a member of the SAC and attended meetings, that image was largely overridden. The company is confronting global challenges, and is engaged in serious discussions with management and outside experts. I was strongly inspired by the way Ajinomoto Group did not stop at holding discussions, but came up with concrete plans for implementation. If I were asked again about my image of Ajinomoto Group, I would give this expectant response: “A company that creates health and happiness around the world by solving problems in food and nutrition.”

To describe these expectations in more detail, they can be broken down into three points.

The first is making a next-generation co-creation community into a reality. When I attended Advisory Council meetings, what struck me was the absence of “young people” in the subject matter of the discussions. I think this is also because many of the members on the SAC were from the older generation. However, it is the younger generation that will build and support the Ajinomoto Group of the future. The Ajinomoto Group’s brand activities will be determined by incorporating the voices and opinions of young people in Japan and around the world, rather than making decisions



“I am looking forward to seeing Ajinomoto Group create a company that ‘creates health and happiness around the world by solving problems in food and nutrition’ through these initiatives, and I would like us to work together to realize that vision.”

solely from the top down. I think it would be a good idea to create a forum or on-line venue where such things can be discussed.

Ajinomoto Dialogue for the Future

To change the subject slightly, there is one action that came about as a result of the SAC. The “Ajinomoto Dialogue for the Future” initiative

(ADF) was launched as a collaboration between the Human Resources Department and Global Communications Department at Ajinomoto and my company. This is a training project in which young Ajinomoto Group employees, together with young managers from outside the company, actually go and visit food production sites across Japan to think about the future of the Ajinomoto Group.

My Hopes and Expectations

Dr. Kikunae Ikeda (Tokyo Imperial University professor), who was involved in the founding of Ajinomoto Group, became aware of the poor dietary habits of Japanese people through a trip to Germany, which led to the discovery of umami. To put this another way, being away from where you are normally located allows one to objectively look at that which is assumed to be normal by you. It was this experience of self objective reflection that made Dr. Ikeda's innovation possible. I hope that the ADF project will create new formative experiences for young Ajinomoto Group employees and will be the future of the Ajinomoto Group.

The second is spreading the Ajinomoto Group's sustainability-related initiatives to the world. I myself learned many things for the first time when I participated in the SAC. One of the things I learned was that even before the word "sustainability" became commonly known, the company had been working with an awareness of the global environment. However, such important efforts have not yet become widespread around the world.

What does corporate growth really mean?

Participating in this Council has given me more time to think about that question. Corporate growth and competition between companies places a burden on the global environment. As long as we live in a capitalist society, companies

must make efforts to be chosen by consumers and to continue to make products that meet the needs of the times. Times are changing, and companies need to adapt and grow with them.

To this end, I believe it is important to define the Ajinomoto Group's own corporate growth with the future world in mind. The Ajinomoto Group's growth is for the good of the world and the earth, because it engages in positive corporate activities for the global environment and humanity. If such logic can be propagated both internally and externally, Ajinomoto Group will be chosen more as a company and brand by the world, which will result in a positive impact on the global environment and humanity.

The third is promoting the true globalization of Japanese food. This is secondhand information from Mr. Nishii, the former company president, but while Japanese food is perceived by the world as being healthy, the reality is that there is little evidence. To solve this problem, I heard that the Ajinomoto Group is not working alone, but is collaborating with the heads of various Japanese food companies and involving the government to create such evidence.

To put it another way, I thought that building "weapons" for Japanese food to flourish globally, and creating indicators and rules, were significant actions. This is an effort to spread the "Japanese food system" to the rest of the world, rather

than "Japanese food" or "ingredients."

Increasing the reasons for choosing Japanese food will, in the long run, lead to Japan being chosen as a travel destination. More visitors to Japan means that more people will experience Japanese food in its authentic setting. The more visitors there are, the more opportunities there will be for travelers from around the world to experience Japanese food in their daily lives when they return to their home countries. It is my hope that the spread of Japanese food will increase the number of visitors to Japan and enrich the Japanese economy, which will further spread Japanese food culture throughout the world.

These three points are my expectations for the Ajinomoto Group from a long-term perspective: creating the seeds of new visions and businesses through a next-generation co-creation community with young people, becoming a company of choice by delivering the Ajinomoto Group's sustainability activities to the world, and playing a role in the revival of the Japanese economy by promoting the globalization of the Japanese food industry.

I am looking forward to seeing Ajinomoto Group create "a company that creates health and happiness around the world by solving problems in food and nutrition" through these initiatives, and I would like us to work together to realize that vision.

More information on the Ajinomoto Group and the Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Advisory Council is available online at:



www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/framework/advisory_council.php

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