

<Press Release>

## Able Co. switches to biomass only at planned coal-fired power plant in Fukushima:

One less coal plant is good news, but there are still concerns

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Kiko Network

Kiko Network has discovered that Able Co. has switched to biomass only instead of co-firing with a coal and 30% biomass mix of fuel to generate electricity in its new power plant planned for the Iwaki Energy Park at the Yoshima Industrial Park, Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture. This is ninth unit in Japan that has been either cancelled or seen a change in fuel, among the total of 50 units at coal-powered electricity generation plants identified since 2012 (10 already operating and 31 at the planning or construction stage as of today's date). Kiko Network welcomes this news that yet another power plant originally intended to burn coal has ended up being abandoned.

This 112 MW project was just below the 112.5 MW threshold that would have made it subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment Act, so no assessment was conducted for the national government, although it is still subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance of Fukushima Prefecture. Under that ordinance, documentation on the environmental assessment methodology was released in May 2014 and the assessment report in December 2015, and all environmental assessment procedures had been completed. Despite this, there was strong community opposition to the plans for a coal-fired plant, and a critical line of questioning was often heard at Iwaki City Council sessions. Meanwhile, although the prefectural governor did not express strong objections to the project, he did indicate the desire to see a higher ratio of biomass in the fuel mix. The shift to biomass was included in a project revision submitted by Able Co. on November 5, 2018 under the prefecture's environmental assessment procedures. Kiko Network discovered this notification of intention to change plans.

The actual power plant construction plan has not been cancelled, and power generation by combusting wood biomass still raises some serious concerns. Thermal power generation from wood biomass can cause significant problems for sustainability if the use of biomass is not appropriate in terms of the material use of forest resources, and in terms of biodiversity preservation. The procurement of biomass from overseas can also result in sustainability problems and land use competition for the supply of food in source countries, and there are also questions for contributions to CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions. The details of Able Co.'s plans for the use of biomass have not been revealed. However, the company has no plans to redo the environmental assessment because the change was intended to "reduce environmental impacts" under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance.

Kiko Network is still concerned that power generation from biomass combustion can generate significant environmental impacts, that the scale of the project is large in terms of biomass use for power generation, that the project information on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has not been revised after shifting fuel from the coal mix to biomass only, and that the air pollutant emissions could still be significant. In addition, this news does not clear up our concern that in the event of difficulties in procuring biomass, the plant might return to burning a certain percentage of coal. Going forward we call on the proponent to disclose information proactively about the environmental impact assessment, to engage in environmental communication with civil society, including local communities and environmental NGOs, and to give adequate consideration to the sustainability of the project.

## References:

Able Co., Ltd: <http://www.abl-fukushima.co.jp/energy/> (Japanese)

Environmental impact assessment documentation on the Iwaki Energy Park:

<https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/eia-zisshianken/eia-anken-jyourei-29.html> (Japanese)

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