

Zero Waste Town

In 2003, Kamikatsu became the first municipality in Japan to adopt the Zero Waste Declaration and uses recycling to avoid landfill or incinerator use. It currently recycles 80 percent of its waste, compared to the national average of around 20 percent. The town has never had door-to-door waste collection by garbage trucks, and residents cooperate to reduce the financial burden on the town. They compost all organic waste at home, bring non-organic waste to the Waste Center themselves, and sort waste into 45 categories.

Many innovative ideas motivate residents to cooperate. Points are rewarded for sorting things like paper, detergent pouches, toothbrushes, and disposable heating pads that can later be exchanged for merchandise. Loyalty points are given for refusing plastic bags when shopping, and for bringing containers for takeout food and when buying items like soy sauce that are sold in bulk by volume. Families with newborns have been given reusable cloth diapers since 2017. Diapers are among the products that cannot be recycled for hygiene reasons and stand in the way of a 100 percent recycling rate.

Various programs allow visitors to experience the local lifestyle. Inow is one such program and was launched in July 2020. Participants learn in-depth about Kamikatsu's philosophy on waste during a two-week program. They live in a private home inside the town and learn from the community about "zero waste" through activities tailored to allow them to experience Kamikatsu's lifestyle for themselves. Businesses in Kamikatsu also accept interns interested in the zero waste program who can stay for anywhere from a few days to several months.