The Japanese word "kirei" means beautiful or clean, not only on the outside but also on the inside. For us at Kao, Kirei is the value we want to bring to everyday life with our brands, products and services.

The little moments you enjoy, like the comfort of freshly washed sheets, the happiness you share with a smiling baby, the confidence you feel when you look in the mirror and see not only healthy skin and hair, but also your inner beauty shining through. The special pleasure that comes from using products you know have been crafted with care both for you and for the environment.

We believe these moments and the positive feelings you share with others have the power to shape the future. We want minds, lives and society to be Kirei—Making Life Beautiful.
Toward a Global Presence

The Kao Group has made the Kao Way, the Group’s corporate philosophy, the foundation of all of its corporate activities. Our mission is to strive for the wholehearted satisfaction and enrichment of the lives of people globally and to contribute to the sustainability of the world.

Since our foundation in 1887, we have delivered products to people worldwide through both our Consumer Products Business, which contributes to cleanliness, beauty, and well-being in everyday life, and through our Chemical Business, which contributes to the growth of a variety of industries.

Recently, changes have been accelerating as consumer needs have diversified, digital technology has advanced, and a preference for ethical consumption has spread. While responding to these major developments, it is key that we put into practice the slogan of the Kao Group’s Mid-term Plan 2020 (K20): “Transforming Ourselves to Drive Change.”

Going forward, we need to transform ourselves through new endeavors. It will be increasingly important to offer personalized products and services, and to apply advanced technologies like AI, IoT, and robotics. We must also intensify our ESG* activities, which are aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. We hope that these activities will deepen bonds among people, bonds between people and their communities, and bonds between people and the earth, to help create a brighter future for all.

We at the Kao Group are earnestly and sincerely undertaking activities that benefit society, and we are united in our efforts to achieve sustainable growth.

*ESG: Environmental, Social, Governance

Michitaka Sawada
President and Chief Executive Officer
Enriching the lives of consumers around the world

When your everyday life is filled with cleanliness, well-being, and beauty, you have a greater capacity to care for others and feel joy. We are committed to filling consumers’ daily lives with smiles through Yoki-Monozukuri.

Self-confidence in your skin that makes you smile
We want to help consumers who experience recurring dry or irritated skin. Effective skin care can contribute to self-confidence and a positive outlook. The happiness that results can also spread to the people around you. We offer skin care products grounded in dermatological research.

A healthy future for our children
Handwashing is the foundation of cleanliness and health. In Kao’s hand soaps, we pay attention to details such as the texture of the soap bubbles and the shape of the pump to make handwashing a fun activity for children. We also visit elementary schools and other educational settings to teach children proper handwashing techniques and to instill good hygiene habits.

Everyday life filled with joy and time to relax
We pursue breathability and gentleness in our products to put a smile on the face of every baby. When babies are able to sleep in comfort, it gives their families time to relax. Through our products, we provide a helping hand to families raising children around the world, bringing more smiles to daily life.
Bio IOS is a new surfactant that was created from Kao’s interface science research. It blends easily with oil and is highly water-soluble, properties that allow it to perform better than existing products and make it perfect for use as a detergent base. Bio IOS is made from the material left behind after extracting edible palm oil from the fruit of the oil palm. Until the creation of Bio IOS, there had been no effective way to use this leftover material. As the world’s population continues to increase, surfactant use is also expected to rise. We are pursuing sustainable procurement of raw materials through the widespread use of Bio IOS, an innovative new surfactant.

Sustainable, next-generation detergent base Bio IOS

Bio IOS is a new surfactant that was created from Kao’s interface science research. It blends easily with oil and is highly water-soluble, properties that allow it to perform better than existing products and make it perfect for use as a detergent base. Bio IOS is made from the material left behind after extracting edible palm oil from the fruit of the oil palm. Until the creation of Bio IOS, there had been no effective way to use this leftover material. As the world’s population continues to increase, surfactant use is also expected to rise. We are pursuing sustainable procurement of raw materials through the widespread use of Bio IOS, an innovative new surfactant.

Detergent that completely transforms the conventional concept of cleaning

The liquid laundry detergent Attack ZERO is the first commercialized product to use Bio IOS, a sustainable surfactant. The properties of Bio IOS allow it to penetrate deep into fabrics and demonstrate powerful cleaning action, all while leaving little dirt or detergent residue after rinsing, and maintaining its effectiveness even in cold water. Because everyone around the world deserves cleanliness in their daily lives, we will continue to explore the potential applications of Bio IOS from various angles.
A healthy planet for future generations

Kao is committed to reducing the amount of plastic used in its product container and packaging including offering refill packs so that consumers can reuse their original ones. To further reduce our environmental impact, we are now seeking to make our plastic containers and packages fully recyclable.

Promoting container reuse with refill packs
Consumers can refill and reuse original product containers. This greatly reduces plastic consumption.

Using Raku-raku Eco Pack Refills without the original container
This new holder allows consumers to use Raku-raku Eco Pack Refill packs directly, without needing to refill anything.

Making it easier to refill containers without wasting or spilling
The Raku-raku Eco Pack Refill’s new design updates the concept of refill packs. It’s now even easier for anyone to use them, contributing to their increased usage.

Film containers and packages use multiple layers of materials to protect their contents, making recycling more difficult. If they can be made using a single type of material, it will greatly reduce their environmental impact. We are now conducting research to make this a reality.

Developing 100% recyclable mono-material film packaging
Our goal is to make each and every day filled with joy by delivering products that resonate with our customers.

Cosmetics Business
We offer products to satisfy the diverse beauty aspirations of all of our customers. At the same time, we pursue unique brand development for the skin care brands Est, Sofina iP, and Curel, the cosmetics brands SUQQU and KATE, and the high prestige brands SENSAI and Molton Brown, among others.

Skin Care and Hair Care Business
We offer products that help consumers achieve truly healthy and beautiful skin and hair. These include Biore and Biore-u face and body washes and Jergens body lotion in the skin care family, the Merit, Essential, Rerise, and John Frieda product lines in the hair care family, and the Goldwell and Orbe product lines for professional hair salons.

Human Health Care Business
We offer products that support greater comfort and health in daily life, including sanitary products such as Laurier sanitary napkins, Merries baby diapers, and Relief adult diapers. Other products include Healthya functional health beverages, Pureora oral care products, Bub bath additives, and MegRhythm steam masks and patches.

Fabric and Home Care Business
We offer products to provide greater cleanliness and comfort in daily life, including fabric care products such as Attack laundry detergents and Flair Fragrance fabric softeners, Cucute dish detergents, and Magiclean home cleaners.
Chemical Business

Eco-chemicals contribute to the sustainability of society through technical innovation.

Chemical Business

The Chemical Business offers an expansive array of products globally, such as oleo chemicals manufactured from naturally derived raw materials, performance chemicals such as surfactants, and specialty chemicals such as toners and toner binders. We are helping to enrich people's lives in a wide range of industrial fields. The environment is another focus in our business activities. While ensuring product safety and high quality, we are committed to realizing a sustainable society through the development of products with reduced environmental impacts.

Reduction by extending the life of pavement through specialty asphalt additives

Our additives reduce damage to asphalt paving such as cracks and ruts. This improves pavement durability and reduces repair frequency, which in turn reduces the use of natural resources and contributes to decreasing environmental impacts.

High-quality, water-based pigment inkjet ink that reduces environmental impact

Using original pigment nano-dispersion technology, Kao developed a water-based pigment inkjet ink that enables high-speed, high-quality printing on clear film. Its VOC*-free design also contributes to reducing environmental impact.

*VOC: Volatile Organic Compounds

Kao Group by the Numbers

Sales composition by segment

The composition of net sales shown on the chart is calculated based on net sales to external customers. Net sales for the Chemical Business includes internal sales between segments.
Global Expansion

We provide thoughtfully crafted products and services in around 100 countries and regions worldwide.

The Consumer Products Business is closely connected to people’s everyday lives, while the Chemical Business contributes to the development of a wide range of industries. Kao is working to expand globally while developing synergies in these two fields.
Kao Group History

Over the past 130 years, Kao has worked to enrich people’s lives and help consumers have fulfilling lifestyles.

1930s–
Everything starts with consumer feedback
Kao has taken a consumer-driven approach since its founding by listening to consumer feedback and maximizing ways to use it.

1934 Housework Science Laboratory established
The laboratory conducted scientific research on practical housework and offered new lifestyle suggestions.

1971 Kao Life Science Laboratory established
The laboratory supported consumer consultations and education as well as research into housework, with the goal of improving customer support and responsiveness.

1978 Consumer Consultation Information System introduced
This system compiled consumer feedback in a database in order to offer faster responses to customers and to facilitate new product development.

1950s–
Expanding business fields to cleanliness, beauty, and health
Kao’s business activities now range broadly across beauty and health, and generate a series of long-selling brands.

1950s–60s Extending “washing” to hair, clothing, and the home
Kao developed new technologies mainly using natural fatty alcohols, which led to the creation of products that clean away various oils, dirt, and stains found in hair, on clothing, and around the home.

1970s–80s Expansion into the beauty and health fields based on research related to people
By focusing on basic research related to people, including skin and hair, Kao made great strides in beauty and health and diversified its business.

1980s–
Maintaining our lifestyle into the future
Kao continues striving to reduce negative environmental impacts so that we can all enjoy enriched lives now and in the future.

1987 Concentrated laundry detergent
Kao launched Attack, a concentrated laundry detergent that offers a powerful cleaning action with just a small amount of product. This reduced the amount of paper used in packaging and the energy used during transportation.

1991 Developing and promoting refill packs
Kao developed refill packs and refillable products to reduce plastic consumption.

1980s Expansion into the Americas and Europe Premium beauty care brands join the Kao Group Kao expanded brands that originated in Japan to other parts of Asia. In the Americas and Europe, premium beauty care brands joined the Kao Group.

1980s Expansion into the Americas and Europe Premium beauty care brands join the Kao Group
Kao’s technologies are used to pursue productive partnerships while building on the strengths and worldviews of the various brands.

1887 Kao is founded
A mission to enrich people’s lives
Tomiro Nagase, Kao’s founder, was determined to deliver quality products to as many people as possible. Kao has carried on his spirit of Yoki-Monozukuri for over 130 years.

1890 High-quality Kao Sekken (Kao soap) is launched in Japan
The soap available in Japan before 1890 was either a poor-quality Japanese product or a high-priced import. Determined to create an affordable, high-quality facial soap made in Japan, Nagase began product development and launched Kao Sekken.

1890 Kao Sekken

Statement, presenting its policy to conserve water and electricity.
Kao released the Kao Environmental Statement, presenting its policy for manufacturing with greater environmental considerations in mind.

1890s Reduced laundry-related water consumption with one rinse cycle
Kao launched Attack Neo, an ultra-concentrated liquid laundry detergent that allows consumers to conserve water and electricity.
Kao released the Kao Environmental Statement, presenting its policy for manufacturing with greater environmental considerations in mind.

1980s Reduced weight by 62%
Reduced box size by 80%

1980s Reducing laundry-related water consumption with one rinse cycle
Kao launched Attack Neo, an ultra-concentrated liquid laundry detergent that allows consumers to conserve water and electricity.
Kao released the Kao Environmental Statement, presenting its policy for manufacturing with greater environmental considerations in mind.

1980s–
Together with customers around the world
Kao expanded brands that originated in Japan to other parts of Asia. In the Americas and Europe, premium beauty care brands joined the Kao Group.

Kao’s business activities now range broadly across beauty and health, and generate a series of long-selling brands.

1990s–2000s
Product development to fit local lifestyles
The Consumer Products Business started by exporting products to Thailand. Kao Industrial (Thailand) Co., Ltd. and Taiwan Kao Co., Ltd. are established in 1994.

2009 Reducing laundry-related water consumption with one rinse cycle
Kao launched Attack Neo, an ultra-concentrated liquid laundry detergent that allows consumers to conserve water and electricity.
Kao released the Kao Environmental Statement, presenting its policy for manufacturing with greater environmental considerations in mind.

2014 Attack Just1 laundry detergent (Indonesia)

Kao engaged in product development to fit local lifestyles.