



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - Public distribution

Date: 5/28/2008

GAIN Report Number: JA8036

Japan

FAIRS Subject Report

Tokyo Government requires place of origin for frozen food ingredients

2008

Approved by:

Steve Wixom
U. S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Yuichi Hayashi

Report Highlights:

The Tokyo Metropolitan Consumer affairs Council announced on April 30, 2008 that frozen processed foods manufactured in Japan will be required to bear origin labeling for ingredients if sold in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. This new requirement may influence other local governments' food safety policy and the frozen food industry. There will be no direct impact on imported processed foods, but the policy could result in the domestic frozen food industry choosing to use domestic ingredients rather than imported.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Trade Report
Tokyo [JA1]
[JA]

Tokyo is the largest city in Japan and its population is almost 13 million. That is about 10% of the total population of Japan. Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara introduced new labeling requirements following an incident with pesticide tainted Chinese gyoza resulting in the illness of 10 people in Japan. The Tokyo Metropolitan Consumer Affairs Council announced on April 30, 2008 that frozen processed foods made in Japan will be required to bear origin labeling for ingredients if sold in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Please see the following website for more information regarding the regulation.

Press release link (Japanese)

<http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/INET/KONDAN/2008/05/40i51100.htm>

According to national requirements already in place under the Japan Agricultural Standards (JAS) law, only imports are required to label the place of origin for processed foods. Under JAS law, ingredients used in processed foods both imported and domestically produced have been exempt from origin labeling except for 20 designated categories, hereinafter referred to as "processed foods under coverage". Information regarding these 20 items can be accessed through the following link and in the Attached Table 2 on page 16 of the Quality Labeling Standards for Processed Foods. These 20 products include only minimally processed items such as salted fish. Also, place of origin labeling for ingredients is required for 4 types of processed foods such as pickles, frozen vegetable, dried bonito shavings and processed eels. The origin labeling is only required for the main ingredients, which make up at least 50 percent or more of the product. As such, the origin requirement is considered feasible since it does not present too much of a burden for manufacturers.

Quality Labeling Standards for Processed Foods (English)

http://www.maff.go.jp/soshiki/syokuhin/hinshitu/e_label/index.htm

(To reach the standard, click "Review of JAS" at the bottom of the page and click "Revised Quality Labeling Standard for Processed Foods" at the second line from the bottom of the page. Then go to page 16 and 17 to find the Attached Table 2.)

The Tokyo requirement is stricter than current JAS requirements and applied only to prepared frozen foods that are produced in Japan and sold in Tokyo.

- The origin labeling is required for the top three ingredients, which constitute 5% or more in weight.
- Ingredients that are required to be labeled include fresh foods, 20 processed foods under coverage, and 4 types of processed foods: pickles, frozen vegetables, dried bonito shavings and processed eels.
- The origin labeling is required for an ingredient included in the name of the product regardless of volume.
- Labeling should in principle be on the package.
- Providing information by website, fax and telephone is an alternative method.
- The requirements do not apply to imported foods.
- There will be no sanctions but Tokyo Metropolitan Government will offer administrative advice or issue a public notice of the company's name in case of violation. The stated purpose of the law is to provide more information to consumers so that they can make better choices in their selection of foods.
- The requirements will take effect around fall of 2008.

Comment

The new regulation will be effective for Japanese frozen processed food sold in Tokyo. Labeling regulations under JAS will remain the same and no direct impact is expected for

imports of processed foods from the United States or elsewhere. However ingredients shipped to Japan for use in Japanese processed foods could be negatively affected if place of origin labeling facilitates greater demand for domestically produced ingredients. Such an effect is a possibility since Japanese consumers tend to perceive foods that are produced domestically as safer and better tasting than imported foods. Manufacturers may also choose to use more Japanese ingredients if demand warrants it. Any negative effect on imported ingredients would be tempered by other factors such as price, seasonal availability, and supply. We will continue to follow the issue closely to determine the impact these regulations will have on imports.

End of report.