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## Japan

### Market Development Reports

## FAS introduces the face of America food in Japan to the Japanese media

### 2009

**Approved by:**

Geoffrey Wiggan, Minister Counselor for Ag Affair  
U.S. Embassy, Tokyo

**Prepared by:**

Michael Conlon and Hisao Fukuda

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**Report Highlights:** On January 22, FAS Japan and U.S. industry partners held a successful press event to launch the new face of American food in Japan: [www.myfood.jp](http://www.myfood.jp) and [www.us-ato.jp](http://www.us-ato.jp). *Charge D'Affaires* James Zumwalt introduced the two websites, which will educate the Japanese on the reliability, safety and high quality of American food products and will be the umbrella platform for the cooperators to market their products in Japan.

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## Introduction

On January 22, to correspond to the inauguration of President Barack Obama, FAS Japan held a successful press conference at the U.S. Embassy to re-launch the www.myfood.jp website along with the new sister business website, www.us-ato.jp.

FAS Japan is setting the stage for a new era of market development in Japan, in which we will show the face of American agriculture to the Japanese public by educating them on the reliability, safety and high quality of American food products and by showcasing the United States as the most dynamic food culture in the world. The activities of the campaign, like the websites, also provide a platform for the cooperators to work together to complement their individual work to market U.S. food and agricultural products in Japan. The websites are the first part of this new campaign.

For over 60 years, Japan and the United States have had a close relationship in agriculture and food. In fact, the unique partnership between U.S. cooperators, FAS and Japan's food and agriculture sectors has made Japan the most successful country for the market development of U.S. food products in history. Japan was the first country to reach \$1 billion in U.S. food exports in 1970, the first country to reach \$10 billion in 1995. Since 1946, the

United States has exported over \$280 billion worth of U.S. agricultural and food products to Japan.



The first stage in America's food relationship with Japan was between 1946 and the end of the 1970s, when U.S. agricultural exports were mostly bulk commodities such as corn, wheat and soybeans. In the late 1970s, the United States began exporting a large volume of high value products such as meat, forest products, fruits, vegetables and consumer ready products. Today, even though the United States is the largest supplier of food products to Japan, the image of U.S. food is obscure and some misconceptions exists. Moreover, cooperators have not had many opportunities to work together on projects

that would complement their individual activities.

## The Press Conference

Geoffrey Wiggin, Minister Counselor for Agricultural Affairs, opened the briefing by giving an overview of the relationship between the United States and Japan with respect to food and agriculture. He stated that we wanted to work with the Japanese on food security. According to Mr. Wiggin, Japan is very important for U.S. agriculture because it is our largest overseas market. Moreover, the United States is Japan's largest supplier of food and agricultural products. It is in our mutual interest, therefore, to further develop this important relationship.

Mr. Wiggin went on to discuss the two pillars in securing food access for Japan, domestic production and reliable imports. He said that it would be in the best interest of Japan to work with its closest ally



**Geoffrey Wiggin**  
Minister Counselor  
for Agricultural  
Affairs

and most reliable supplier to secure its food supply. Mr. Wiggin pointed out that these websites are important to show the face of American food to the Japanese, to educate them on the reliability, safety and high quality of American food and to showcase the most dynamic food culture in the world.



**James Zumwalt**  
**Charge D'Affaires**

After Mr. Wiggin's talk, *Charge D'Affaires* James Zumwalt introduced the two websites to the media. Mr. Zumwalt stated that American food has a long history in Japan and that the United States is the major supplier of products Japanese consume every day, such as wheat, soybeans, pork, wine, fruits and vegetables. Similar to Mr. Wiggin, he said that American agriculture is reliable, safe and high quality and that the United States has a dynamic food culture, with tradition and family cornerstones of that culture. Mr. Zumwalt pointed out that many global food trends originate in the United States. He used the example of California roll, which started out when a Japanese chef in the United States adapted a traditional Japanese food to local tastes.

Deanna Ayala, Deputy Director of the ATO, then gave a brief overview of our consumer focused website. Myfood.jp is a collaboration of interested parties in the American agricultural community designed to highlight the quality, variety, and healthy attributes of American foods. The site is made possible through a partnership between the U.S. food industry (e.g. California Ag. Export Council) and the ATO in Japan. With content tailored for Japanese consumers, the new *myfood* website will help us reposition American food as high quality, good value and healthy and American cuisine as innovative and trend-setting.



**Deanna Ayala,**  
**Deputy Director of**  
**the ATO**



**Tommy Aoki**  
**Senior Marketing**  
**Specialist**

Tommy Aoki, Senior Marketing Specialist for the ATO, briefed the media on the business website. Us-ato.jp facilitates potential business between the U.S. and the Japanese food industries by providing market, product and company information and trends from both countries. The English site provides American agri-business with information from Japanese food industry associations and companies. The Japanese site's main focus is to introduce U.S. agricultural products and companies to the Japanese food industry.

After the presentations, the journalists asked a number of questions of the Embassy team. Several of the journalists' questions referred to the fact that the Japanese people tend to feel uneasy about imports because of its effect on domestic production and the dangers to food safety. Mr. Wiggin responded that the United States was not trying to displace domestic production but that U.S. food and agricultural products together with domestic production provide food security for Japan. In addition, he commented that because of transparent and effective regulations in the United States, U.S. food is as safe as anywhere in the world.

Another common question from the journalists revolved around the idea that food in the United States was faceless and mass produced. The Embassy team reassured the journalists that American farmers pride themselves on the food they produce, and as the *Charge D’Affaires* commented earlier in the program, tradition and family are cornerstones of U.S. agriculture. The Embassy team also pointed out that there is an infinite assortment of consumer oriented food products to choose from in the United States that is a reflection of a dynamic food culture.



**The Embassy team answering questions from the press**

At the end of the press conference cooperators representatives joined the Embassy team on stage to show the Japanese media the face of American food in Japan. This was the first time that cooperators were given the

opportunity to be seen as one unit to the Japanese press.



**Cooperators are introduced to the Japanese media**

The press conference was followed by a reception where journalists were able to ask cooperators about their marketing efforts in Japan. A number of cooperators also showcased their food products at the reception.

The event was attended by 49 members of the Japanese press including representatives from television, national newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. The press conference was widely reported by the Japanese media. For example, Japan’s national news network, NHK, featured a 60-second spot on their morning show, which reached nearly 8 million viewers for a value of roughly \$113,000 in media exposure. The press conference was also the featured story on the popular U.S. Embassy Tokyo website.