

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: June 30,2020

Report Number: JA2020-0134

Report Name: Introduction of Mandatory Plastic Bag Fee Creates Opportunities for Bioplastic

Country: Japan

Post: Tokyo

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Biofuels, Climate Change/Global Warming/Food Security, Grain and Feed, Wood Products

Prepared By: Daisuke Sasatani

Approved By: Mariya Rakhovskaya

Report Highlights:

From July 1, 2020, Japan will require all retailers to charge a fee for the use of plastic shopping bags, with the exception of biodegradable plastic bags and plastic bags containing at least 25 percent of renewable plant-based materials. The exemption is expected to increase demand for biomass-based plastic bags.

Background

To reduce Japan's plastic consumption, from July 1, 2020, all Japanese retailers, including grocery stores and restaurants, will be required to assess a mandatory fee of at least 1 yen (approximately \$0.01) per plastic shopping bag (Figure 1). No fee will be assessed for the use of (i) non-plastic (i.e., paper and cloth) bags, (ii) plastic bags without handles, (iii) reusable thick plastic bags (50 micro meters or thicker), (iv) biodegradable plastic bags, and (v) plastic bags containing at least 25 percent of renewable plant-based biomass materials (hereafter biomass-based plastic bags).

Figure 1. Categories of Shopping Bags Based on the New Plastic Bag Fee Program



Source: [METI](#)

Every year Japan generates about 9 million metric tons (MMT) of plastic waste, of which 4 MMT are from single-use plastics¹. Japan's annual consumption of plastic bags is approximately 45 billion sheets, of which 30 percent are provided by convenience stores at the point of sale. On May 31, 2018, the Government of Japan (GOJ) released [the Plastic Resource Recycling Strategy](#). GOJ committed to a 25 percent reduction in single-use plastic consumption by 2030. Simultaneously, GOJ aims to double the use of renewable biomass plastics to about 2 MMT by 2030. Biomass-based plastics are manufactured from renewable materials, such as corn-based ethanol, wood fiber, starch and others.

¹ https://www.maff.go.jp/j/plastic/attach/pdf/pura_kaigi-37.pdf

At the 2019 G20 Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable Growth in Karuizawa, Japan, GOJ joined other G20 member countries to adopt an implementation framework for action to globally tackle marine plastic waste. Consequently, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) revised the [ministerial ordinance](#) related to the [Container Packaging Recycling Law](#) and implemented the mandatory plastic bag fee program. According to METI, biomass-based plastic bags are exempted from the fee because they can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to media sources, a number of large fast food restaurants and grocery stores have begun to introduce biomass-based plastic bags.

Attachments:

No Attachments.