

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** February 23, 2022

**Report Number:** JA2022-0015

**Report Name:** Japan Frozen Food Sector Continues to Show Promise

**Country:** Japan

**Post:** Tokyo ATO

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation

**Prepared By:** Sumio Aoki

**Approved By:** Enrique Mazon

**Report Highlights:**

Frozen food production that was nearly zero in 1958 has transformed into an approximately \$6.6 billion market today. The growing popularity and convenience among consumers in Japan for frozen foods, continue to steadily increase, particularly since the 2011 Tohoku triple disaster: earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant meltdown. This report highlights frozen food production, the top frozen foods imported into Japan, the growing market trends within this segment and considerations for market entry.

## Summary

Approximately 11 years ago, and prior to the Northeast Japan Earthquake/Tsunami disaster, freezer space in convenient stores were only large enough for ice cream products. Today, frozen foods are widely available in convenient stores and local food shops. In addition to this, convenient store freezers have dedicated freezer space for ice. The disaster in 2011, forced Japanese consumers to think about the importance of having ample frozen foods available, particularly when perishable foods are not accessible or available. For the most part, Japanese diets rely heavily on perishable food products but have adopted including more frozen foods within the household.

The wide variety of frozen food products among Japan's consumer base has broadened substantially. There are categories such as frozen meat products, noodles, fried products, and rice meals. Even within these product categories there is a long list of subcategories such as meatballs, hamburger patties, pasta noodles, Korean noodles, and Japanese noodles.

The increase of dual-income, elderly households, and single households have contributed to the increased usage of frozen foods. The convenience, time savings and ease are also attributed to growth in frozen food products. Research conducted by one of the largest frozen food manufacturers, Maruha Nichiro, showed that 90 percent of 1,000 respondents said that frozen food is "our savior when you are getting tired of cooking."

## Frozen Food Production in Japan

Production in 2011 reached 1.41 million metric tons at a value of \$7.7 billion. While production since 2011 has not reached those highs, production value over the last six years has shown steady growth. According to data from the Japan Frozen Food Association, in 2020, production was up to 1.59 billion metric tons at a value of approximately \$6.6 billion.

Frozen Food Production in Japan (Volume and Value)

Year	Number of Factories		Production Volume		Production Value	
		Year-on-Year	(MT)	Year-on-Year	(million \$)	Year-on-Year
2016	476	99.2%	1,554,265	101.0%	6,073	111.3%
2017	466	97.9%	1,600,046	102.9%	6,147	101.2%
2018	444	93.3%	1,587,008	99.2%	6,479	105.4%
2019	438	98.6%	1,588,457	100.1%	6,403	98.8%
2020	442	100.9%	1,551,213	97.7%	6,585	102.8%

Source: Japan Frozen Food Association: <https://www.reishokukyo.or.jp/statistic/statics-eng/>

## Japan Frozen Vegetable Imports

In 2020, frozen vegetable imports totaled \$1.7 billion. Foods imported from China was the top destination and highest by value. This is attributed to Japanese food manufacturers with manufacturing facilities in China to specifically supply the Japanese market.

Among the frozen products imported to Japan, U.S. frozen potatoes (hashbrowns, tator-tots, etc.) were the top items, totaling approximately \$359 million, followed by sweet corn totaling approximately \$49 million.

## Japan Frozen Fruit Imports

Total value in 2020 for frozen fruits was \$240 million. China ranked number one; Canada number two followed by Chile. The U.S. was ranked fourth with \$23.8 million, according to data collected by the Japanese Ministry of Finance and Customs.

### Frozen Food by Category in Japan (Volume and Value)

Category	Volume			Value		
	2019 (MT)	2020 (MT)	2020/2019	2019 (million \$)	2020 (million \$)	2020/2019
<b>Fishery Products</b>						
Fish	14,177	16,903	119.2%	90.0	135.8	147.6%
Lobster/Shrimp	8,987	8,090	90.0%	63.2	58.3	90.2%
Squid & Octopus	4,377	2,239	51.2%	23.6	14.4	59.7%
Shellfish	8,187	8,055	98.4%	82.7	71.2	84.2%
Other Fishery Products	10,337	10,892	105.4%	110.5	89.4	79.2%
Sub Total	46,065	46,179	100.2%	370.1	369.0	97.6%
<b>Farm Products</b>						
Carrot	7,200	6,453	89.6%	12.2	11.3	90.3%
Corn	8,682	8,816	101.5%	22.9	24.5	104.8%
Pumpkin	5,096	4,248	83.4%	15.2	11.9	76.8%
Potato	25,829	24,992	96.8%	50.0	50.0	97.9%
Spinach	6,378	5,829	91.4%	23.4	21.2	88.9%
Other Vegetables	17,999	15,886	88.3%	77.4	69.4	87.8%
Fruits	1,890	2,557	135.3%	5.9	9.4	157.3%
Sub Total	73,074	68,781	94.1%	207.0	197.8	93.6%
<b>Livestock Products</b>	4,622	5,255	113.7%	23.1	30.6	130.0%
<b>Fried Foods</b>						
Fried Shrimp/Lobster	6,765	2,829	41.8%	57.8	32.4	54.8%
Fried Oyster	10,434	9,502	91.1%	77.1	73.4	93.2%
Fried Fish	14,746	13,309	90.3%	95.5	109.1	111.8%
Croquettes including cream croquettes	165,692	161,500	97.5%	515.6	526.0	99.9%
Cutlets	29,066	32,181	110.7%	104.8	118.8	111.0%
Fried Chicken	59,445	54,590	91.8%	350.2	341.6	95.5%
Tempura·Kakiage *1	13,190	13,772	104.4%	79.0	84.1	104.2%
Other Fried Foods	8,667	9,176	105.9%	65.7	82.1	122.4%
Sub Total	46,682	45,394	97.2%	250.0	255.6	100.1%
<b>Fried Foods except for Fried Foods</b>						
Chinese-style fried rice	325,621	310,072	95.2%	1,490.9	1,504.2	98.8%
Pilaf	83,309	99,523	119.5%	261.5	405.9	151.9%
Rice balls	53,835	42,082	78.2%	167.7	137.9	80.5%
Other rice	27,281	27,837	102.0%	74.7	78.4	102.7%
Udon *2	26,045	24,274	93.2%	118.6	111.5	92.1%
Spaghetti	192,378	199,864	103.9%	266.3	280.8	103.2%
Noodles	60,540	65,869	108.8%	168.8	186.3	108.1%
Other Noodles	65,087	60,159	92.4%	144.0	152.0	103.3%
Hamburgers	62,265	62,613	100.6%	148.4	183.1	120.8%
Meatballs	70,065	62,641	89.4%	291.1	332.1	111.7%
Shao-mai	27,102	20,743	76.5%	90.0	80.0	87.1%
Gyoza	38,364	41,878	109.2%	221.4	275.4	121.7%
Harumaki(Spring roll)	81,776	89,650	109.6%	442.3	482.3	106.8%
Pizza	25,100	22,715	90.5%	96.1	87.2	88.9%
Chinese Buns	11,918	9,511	79.8%	67.5	73.7	106.8%
Bread & Dough	14,728	12,527	85.1%	46.5	39.4	82.9%
Egg Products	18,866	19,166	101.6%	67.1	59.9	87.4%
Gratin	44,587	30,861	69.2%	182.9	149.4	80.0%
Stew, Soup, Sauce, etc.	26,196	29,288	111.8%	153.4	193.7	123.6%
Takoyaki & Okonomiyaki *3	11,937	10,675	89.4%	63.4	58.8	90.9%
Other Prepared Foods including soy products	49,135	45,024	91.6%	200.5	181.1	88.4%
including Chinese daily dishes	102,613	100,890	98.3%	726.9	660.9	89.0%
Sub Total	21,980	17,953	81.7%	74.6	62.0	81.3%
Prepared foods Total	6,565	5,881	89.6%	43.9	40.0	89.3%
Sub Total	522,387	495,569	94.9%	2,649.3	2,673.9	98.8%
<b>Confectionery</b>						
Western confectionery	1,093,126	1,077,790	98.6%	3,999.2	4,209.8	103.1%
Japanese confectionery	31,957	28,139	88.1%	236.4	188.2	77.9%
Confectionery	3,471	3,569	102.8%	24.7	25.7	101.7%
Sub Total	10,521	11,428	108.6%	51.4	59.7	113.7%
Grand Total	45,949	43,136	93.9%	312.5	273.6	85.7%
Grand Total	1,588,457	1,551,213	97.7%	6,402.8	6,584.9	100.7%

\*1 Kakiage (Mixture of vegetables and other ingredients fried in batter)

\*2 Udon (Japanese wheat noodle)

\*3 Takoyaki (Friedoctopus dumpling), Okonomiyaki(Japanese-style hot-plate pizza)

Source: Japan Frozen Food Association

## In-Demand Frozen Food Products

Ajinomoto Frozen Foods is very famous for their innovative products. These types of frozen foods have become a staple food item for many households. Ajinomoto's gyoza has become extremely popular. It was the most popular food served at the Olympic village for the [Tokyo Olympics 2020](#). Whereas most gyoza needs cooking oil, you can make Ajinomoto gyoza without oil, which offers consumers a healthier and efficient option.



Figure 1: Frozen Ajinomoto Gyoza



Figure 2: Frozen Udon Package

Udon (a thick and white noodle made from wheat flour) as a frozen food has become popular as it is very easy to cook as well as being [versatile](#).

## Consumer Survey on Trends

A recent survey released by the Japan Frozen Food Association on frozen food usage highlighted some interesting consumer trends. The survey captured 1,250 Japanese consumers, both men and women aged 25 and over.

### **Women**

- Approximately 88 percent of women use frozen foods. This was an increase of 5 percent from the previous year.
- 93.3 percent purchase frozen foods in supermarkets, 28 percent in drugstores, 17 percent in convenience stores, and 16.1 percent through delivery services.
- Popular product categories for women included: dumplings, vegetables, Japanese noodles, rice, fried chicken, and spaghetti.

### **Men**

- Approximately 80 percent of men use frozen foods.
- Approximately 96 percent purchase frozen foods in supermarkets. 33 percent in drugstores, and 27 percent in convenience stores.
- Popular product categories for men: Dumplings, rice, Japanese noodles, fried chicken, spaghetti, and vegetables.

- Overall, frozen food usage has increased. Approximately 80 percent of Japanese consumers believe that preparing frozen food is easier and convenient. 50 percent believe that frozen food products taste good. 39 percent were influenced by reasonable prices. Approximately 20 percent have less time to cook and rely more on frozen food. 18 percent responded that telework increased home eating and increased frozen food usage.

### **Considerations for U.S. Exporters**

When prepared frozen food products are being considered for entry into the Japanese market, the taste, smell, packaging presentation, and texture of the product are important factors for Japanese consumers. Product sampling and testing is highly recommended.

The frozen food industry in Japan is currently focusing on Koshoku, or individual eating or single serving sizes. These types of products are sold in high volume at supermarkets, convenience stores and drugstores. For prepared frozen food products, single-portion sized packages should be considered with convenience and time savings in mind.

### **Attachments:**

No Attachments.