



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

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Japan

Agricultural Situation

Japanese Fresh Lettuce Price Up Sharply 2001

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Report Highlights:

Prices for fresh lettuce in Japan continue to be much higher than normal, creating good market opportunities for U.S. exporters. Poor growing conditions in Japan for leafy vegetables this winter reduced supplies boosting wholesale prices to as high as 5,500 yen (\$47.00) per 10 kg case, more than double prices at the same time last year. The tight supply situation is expected to continue through February.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Tokyo [JA1], JA

Executive Summary

The Japanese lettuce market has tightened once again with short supplies resulting unusually high prices at wholesale markets throughout Japan. Lettuce is currently traded at prices approaching 5,500 yen (\$47.00) for a 10 kilogram box at Tokyo's wholesale market, more than double prices normally seen at this time of year. The recent price hike was largely caused by the delay in harvest due to slow plant growth with excessive rainfall during the transplanting season last year, according to Tokyo's Ohta Fresh Produce Market traders. This was followed by record cold weather that hit Japan through January, further reducing production. Japan's winter lettuce is largely produced in the Kansai region (Kagawa and Hyogo prefectures) and the suburbs of Tokyo (Chiba prefecture.)

"The strong price situation for lettuce is likely to continue until late February," commented one Tokyo Ohta Market trader. Traders expect wholesale prices are gradually to ease toward the end of February approaching 3,000 yen (\$25.42) per 10-kilogram box as production gradually catches up.

At retail, lettuce is currently being marketed from between 350-398 yen (\$3.00-\$3.40) per head at Tokyo's major supermarket chains, up approximately 40 percent from the previous season. To reduce unit prices, some shop owners are marketing half-cuts to facilitate purchases by cost-conscious consumers.