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Report Name: Revision for JAS Dimension Lumber and Other Wood Products

Country: Japan

Post: Tokyo

Report Category: Wood Products, Wood Pellets

Prepared By: Daisuke Sasatani

Approved By: Erica Summe

Report Highlights:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) invites public comments on three different proposed Japan Agricultural Standard (JAS) revisions until May 17, 2025. One proposed revision is for “JAS 600: Dimension Lumber and Finger Jointed Dimension Lumber" for 2x4 construction methods, which includes changes in species groups for design values. The other proposed revisions are for JAS wood pellet fuel and JAS labeling requirements.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) establishes and maintains Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) for many agricultural and related products. JAS currently maintains 13 wood product standards, which undergo mandatory review at least every five years. On April 18, 2025, MAFF invited public comments on three different proposed JAS revisions.

First MAFF Proposal: Revisions to JAS 600: Dimension Lumber and Finger Jointed Dimension Lumber

JAS 600 standardizes structural dimension lumber for 2x4 construction method.[1] The proposed revisions for JAS 600 (available in Japanese) include:

- Change of the English title of the Standard (from "~~Structural Lumber and Finger Jointed Structural Lumber for Wood Frame Construction~~" to "Dimension Lumber and Finger Jointed Dimension Lumber")
- Change of terms and definitions for Type A dimension members
- Change of species groups (see Table 1)
- Reorganization of machine stress rated (MSR) grades
- Change in the method of specimen preparation for moisture content testing
- Addition of chemicals for penetration testing
- Addition of test methods for absorption testing
- Change of the full-span table for each dimension type in bending tests
- Change of display items and display methods

Table 1: Proposed Lumber Species Group and Their Consisting Species (Appendix D)

Species Group (Abbreviated Name)	Including Species
D Fir-L	Western larch, Douglas-fir, Dahurian larch, ~~Japanese red pine, Japanese black pine, and equivalents~~
Hem-Tam	Eastern hemlock, tamarack, Pacific coast yellow-cedar, Alaskan yellow-cedar, ~~Taiwan cypress, and equivalents~~
Hem-Fir	Pacific silver fir, grand fir, Japanese hemlock, Western hemlock, ~~southern Japanese hemlock, and equivalents~~
S-P-F (spruce-pine-fir)	subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, Scots pine, **Norway spruce**, Sitka spruce, Jack pine, balsam fir, black spruce, white spruce, Ponderosa pine, Sumatran pine, radiata pine, red spruce, lodgepole pine, ~~Yezo spruce, Sakhalin fir, momi fir, and equivalents~~
W Cedar	Agathis (kauri), Western white pine, Western red-cedar, Australian cypress pine, Korean pine, red pine~~, and equivalents~~
SYP	shortleaf pine, slash pine, Loblolly pine, longleaf pine~~, and equivalents~~
JS I	*hinoki* cypress ~~and equivalents~~
JS II	*sugi* cedar ~~and equivalents~~
JS III	Japanese larch (*karamatsu*) ~~and equivalents~~
JS A	Japanese red pine (*akamatsu*)
JS T	Sakhalin fir (*todomatsu*)

Note: The strikethrough represents deleted categories from the previous version, and the yellow highlights represent newly added categories in the proposed revision.

[1] Japanese wood frame houses mainly adopt the traditional post and beam (P&B) construction method or the North American style 2x4 construction method. JAS 600 only specifies structural dimension lumber used for 2x4 construction. P&B construction does not require JAS-graded dimension lumber, and metric sizes (e.g., 12cmx12cm, 10.5cmx10.5cm, 36-15cmx12cm, etc.) are commonly used.

Design values of structural lumber depend on the species group. MAFF proposes revisions to the wood species included in these groups noted in Table 1. MAFF first deletes species that did not have empirical testing data and removes the ambiguous term "equivalents." Additionally, MAFF develops two new Japanese species groups: JAS A, consisting of Japanese red pine (previously categorized in D Fir-L), and JAS T, consisting of Sakhalin fir (previously categorized in S-P-F). MAFF also adds balsam fir and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) to the S-P-F species group. Some experts suggested that JAS 600 should differentiate between European-grown Norway spruce and North American-grown Norway spruce, however, this suggestion was not adopted.

Second MAFF Proposal: Revisions for JAS Wood Pellet Fuel
To align with the 2021 version of ISO 17225-2, MAFF requires reporting the ash melting behavior of wood pellets. For details, please see the proposal (Japanese only). MAFF newly developed the JAS Wood Pellet standard on June 15, 2023, mainly targeting domestic non-industrial pellet manufacturers (see JA2021-0148).

Third MAFF Proposal: JAS Labeling Requirements
The JAS label must include the name and address of the importer for JAS products produced overseas, including sawn lumber, glulam, CLT, LVL, OSB, plywood, flooring, wood pellet and dimension lumber (Japanese only).

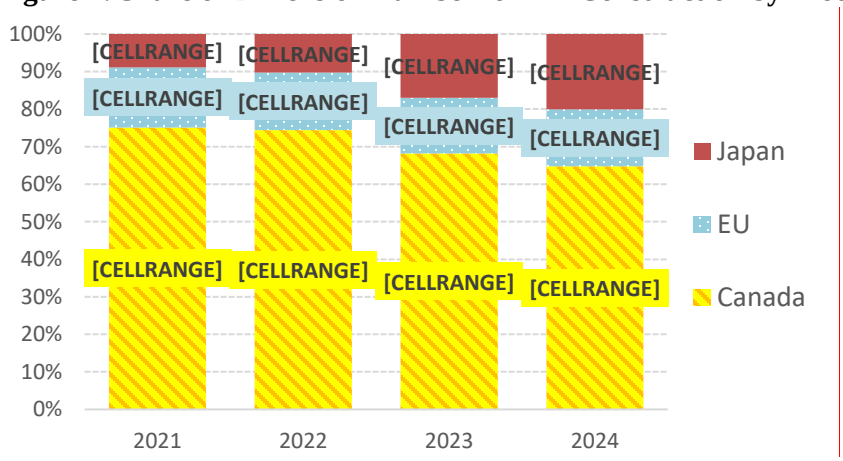
How to Submit Comments:

MAFF will accept comments in Japanese only on the proposed JAS revisions through May 17, 2025. Comments can be submitted:

- Electronically via e-Gov for structural dimension lumber, wood pellet and labeling requirements (click "意見入力へ" to submit comments).
- By mail to: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Minister's Secretariat, New Business and Food Industry Department, Food Manufacture Affairs Division, Standards and Conformity Assessment Policy Office, 1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8950.

Japan's Softwood Lumber Market:

Figure 1: Share of Dimension Lumber for 2x4 Construction by Production Countries



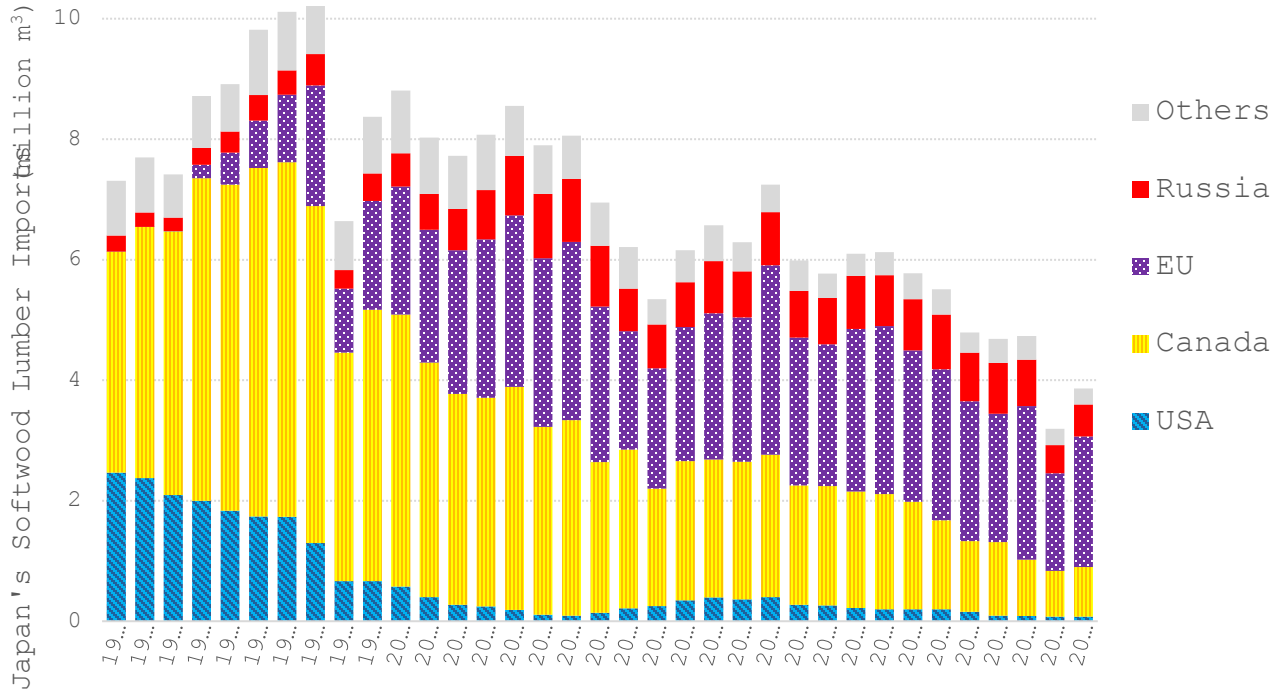
Source: Council for Utilization of Japanese Timber in 2x4 Construction

Canadian dimension lumber has historically dominated the Japanese 2x4 construction market. However, European and Japanese dimension lumber have increased their market share. According to a survey conducted by the Council for Utilization of Japanese Timber in 2x4 Construction, the share of JAS-grade Japanese dimension

lumber was expected to increase to 20.1 percent in 2024, while the share of Canadian dimension lumber would fall to 64.8 percent (Figure 1). In recent years, the Japanese 2x4 construction sector has rarely utilized U.S. dimension lumber. The Government of Japan has promoted domestic JAS-graded lumber, and detailed information can be found in JA2020-0087.

As housing demand declines and domestic lumber production has become more competitive, Japan has decreased its imports of softwood lumber from overseas. In 2024, Japan imported 3.86 million cubic meters (m^3) of softwood lumber, which was about one-third of the imported volume in 1997. Among these imports, 56.1 percent were from European Union (EU) countries, 21.4 percent were from Canada, 13.7 percent were from Russia, and only 1.9 percent were from the United States (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Import Volume of Softwood Lumber to Japan by Country



Source: Japan Customs

Unlike the 2018 Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the 2019 EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, the 2020 U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement (USJTA) did not address Japan's remaining tariffs on wood products, such as S-P-F South lumber, Southern yellow pine lumber, and larch lumber. As a result, many wood product suppliers to Japan, such as Canada, the EU, New Zealand, and Chile, enjoy a lower tariff rate than the United States. For a detailed discussion about the Japanese wood products market, please see JA2020-0209.

Attachments:

No Attachments.