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Japan

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Update on Upcoming JAS Law Revision Affecting Certification Bodies

2005

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Report Highlights:

Japan's Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) announced some details about the upcoming changes to the JAS Law, which will affect certification bodies for wood and organic products. The new information is open for public comment until July 10, 2005. The details that were given involve certification fees and renewal time frames.

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

On June 10 the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) announced some details about the amendment of the Government Order that will enforce the new regulations under the JAS Law. These details, which primarily address certification fees and renewal time frames, are open for public comment until July 10, 2005.

Background

In line with the current administration's reform policy calling for a smaller government, Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) Law is on the verge of going through a major revision. JAS Law governs Japan's national standards for agricultural, forestry and fishery products and includes the JAS certification and JAS-mark labeling programs.

According to MAFF, the bill is intended to reduce the central government's involvement in the administration of JAS program by transferring its monitoring and management authority from the MAFF Minister to certified Registered Certification Organizations in Japan (RCO) and Registered Foreign Certification Organizations overseas (RFCO). This should streamline some of the administrative and procedural requirements imposed by MAFF on RCO/RFCOs.

The revised Enforcement Ordinance will be enforced on March 1, 2006, the effective date of the revised JAS Law. Application to become RFCO will be accepted after September 1, 2005 under the new system. The details of how to apply have not been announced yet, but MAFF has said that the system will be based on ISO 65. Existing RFCO's will need to reapply under the new criteria or they will lose their status as of March 1, 2005. (See GAIN 5011 for more details).

Summary of Details of the Notification:

Amendments of the Enforcement Ordinance of the Law Concerning Standardization and Proper Labeling of Agricultural and Forestry Products (Government Order):

1) Fees for the Registration and Renewal of RCO and RFCO (in Yen)

RCOs

Regular Registration Fee: 128,600

Registration Fee for Organic Certifiers: 105,700

Regular Renewal Fee: 103,400

Renewal Fee for Organic Certifiers: 88,100

RFCOs

Regular Registration Fee: 84,800 + Travel Expenses

Registration Fee for Organic Certifiers: 61,900 + Travel Expenses

Regular Renewal fee: 59,600 + Travel Expenses

Renewal Fee for Organic Certifiers: 44,300 + Travel Expenses

Notes:

- We have heard that there will be an additional License Registration Tax of 150,000 Yen.
- A 300 Yen discount will be given when the fee is paid electronically.

-Because the country equivalency requirement will be abolished, the current reduction of the registration fee for the RFCO accredited by foreign government organizations will be also abolished.

2) Effective Period of the Registration of RFCO

The effective period of the registration of RFCO will be four Years. (The current period is five years.) After that certifiers will need to renew their registration.

How to Send Comments

Since MAFF will receive comments only until July 10, 2005, we would appreciate receiving any comments from U.S. industry by Wednesday, July 6. For comments relating to wood products, please send them to Ladd McDaniel at laddmcdaniel@gol.com and for comments relating to organic products or for general comments, please send them to Rachel Nelson at Rachel.Nelson@USDA.Gov. We will then compile the comments and translate them into Japanese in order to send them as official U.S. Government comments.

The announcement is available on the following website (in Japanese only):

http://www.maff.go.jp/www/public/cont/20050610pb_1.html

The reasoning behind the 4-year registration period is also included in this announcement.