



THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 11/21/2011

GAIN Report Number: JA1045

Japan

Post: Tokyo

Japan discusses establishing mandatory nutrition labeling in FY2012

Report Categories:

FAIRS Country Report

Approved By:

Benjamin Petlock

Prepared By:

Yuichi Hayashi

Report Highlights:

Japan's Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) is currently discussing the creation of a new mandatory nutritional labeling system for all processed food products, with submission to the Diet planned in fiscal year 2012. The required labeling will likely apply to imported processed foods also. Nutritional components to be displayed in the labeling will be: energy, sodium, fat, carbohydrates, and protein. Other details of the proposed labeling, such as inclusion of other components and format will continue to be discussed by CAA.

General Information:

Author Defined:

On July 20, 2011, CAA completed a series of review meetings regarding a nutrition labeling system. Originally, the purpose of the meetings was to discuss the addition of trans-fatty acid as a nutritional component. However, a decision on trans-fatty acid was not reached because the Food Safety Commission reported that Japanese average daily intake was 0.6 percent of total energy, well below the WHO recommendation of one percent or less. Instead adding trans-fatty acid, on August 23, 2011, CAA produced a final report recommending the establishment of a mandatory nutrition labeling system for processed foods, with implementation proposed in 2012. Members of the review meeting concluded that mandatory labeling could explain nutritional aspects of food in order to improve of public health. According to a November 2010 CAA survey, 82 percent of processed food products have nutrition labeling on a package which is currently voluntary in Japan. However, products which have a nutrient declaration, nutrient content claim, and/or nutrient function claim, are required to feature labeling in accordance with Nutrition Labeling Standards under the Health Promotion Act. The below website explains the current nutrition labeling system.

[Nutrition Labeling Systems in Japan](#) (English)

According to the August 2011 CAA report, the order of the nutritional components to show in the labeling will be: energy, sodium, fat, carbohydrates, and protein. Energy remains the first component to show on a label. Sodium labeling will appear second due to concerns about the Japanese average daily intake of sodium, which exceeds both the world average and the WHO recommended amount. In response to these concerns, the Japanese Society of Hypertension has requested CAA to display sodium amounts, in addition to the amount of salt.

The current voluntary nutrition labeling does not require a fixed format, in order to allow manufactures the ability to choose either information per serving, per pack, or per 100 grams. This inconsistency makes the current nutrition label difficult to understand, and since its 2005 implementation, surveys show that a majority of men, especially younger men, do not pay attention to the current nutrition labeling. The August 2011 report recommends that CAA will need to create for easy-to-follow format for the new system.

The August 2011 CAA report also states that Japan's new nutrition labeling system should be mandatory for all processed foods. Although, the report does not mention requirements for imported foods, with the issue to be discussed further in future meetings, Post believes that it is likely that there will be required labeling, in Japanese, for imported products.

The nutrition labeling system of the United States is regulated by Nutrition Labeling and Education Act, implemented in 1991, and becoming mandatory in 1994. Current U.S. labeling requirements include; Nutrition facts, basic per-serving nutritional information, serving size, number of servings per container, and the relationship between one serving size as a percentage of daily value. In comparison, U.S. requirements are more numerous than Japanese requirements. However, the August CAA report did not explain whether producers will be able to use existing U.S. required data to compose nutritional labels for products to be sold in Japan. Currently, importers are able to reuse data from nutrition labels of original U.S. packaging for Japanese nutritional labeling and Post believes that this customary practice will likely continue to avoid confusion.

In terms of next steps, CAA established a labeling law study group on September 30, 2011, which will discuss how the new labeling law will consolidate three other existing labeling laws; the JAS and Food Sanitation Laws and the Health Promotion Act. This group plans to conclude discussions on the new nutrition label by June 2012. This will be then followed by a comment period before submission to the Diet for final approval. Currently, submission for Diet approval is set at the end of the 2012 Japanese Fiscal Year (March 2013).

Post will continue to observe the discussion and will update when situation develops.