

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Voluntary Public

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March 16 Update - Japan Food and Agriculture

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

Immediately following the **Great East Japan Earthquake** on March 11, 2011, FAS/Japan prepared a series of reports on Japan's rapidly evolving food and agricultural situation. These reports were designed to disseminate vast amounts of information to a broad audience of policy makers and private sector actors as quickly as possible. Topics covered in these reports include; food safety, soil toxicity, port damages, disaster assistance, feed supply infrastructure, commodity prices, retail trends, consumer psychology, and many other food and agricultural topics. As the post-quake series of reports were prepared quickly, often from Japanese translations, some liberties may have been taken with grammar and writing style.

Today's Overview

The predominant theme in the agricultural community revolves around fuel shortages and power outages. Long lines are forming in front of every gas station with available fuel. Rolling blackouts have been instituted country-wide. Power and fuel are limiting the capacity to produce and deliver much need food and beverage supplies.

Retailers around the country are reporting shortages of prepared meals, batteries, rice, candles, portable gas stoves, and other essential products. Food prices, especially for staple foods, are spiking at the retail level as available supplies continue dwindle due to infrastructure and fuel constraints. Confounding this issue is the fact that consumers are displaying some hoarding behavior in both affected, and unaffected, areas of the country

Background

A massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake and subsequent Tsunami hit Japan's north east pacific coastal region on March 11, 2011. The catastrophe devastated cities, towns, and villages of the prefectures located along the coast line. The most affected prefectures are Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, and Ibaragi.



Emergency Food and Beverage Distribution Plan

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is responding to requests for emergency food and beverages to be delivered to the affected areas. The amount requested through local, prefectural, and federal government so far is:

Food: 2.73 million portions

Water: 1.78 million bottles

Infant formula: 7 metric tons

Emergency food and beverages delivered, or being delivered, include:

Prefecture	Item	Quantity	Content
Aomori	Food	5,000 portions	rice porridge
Iwate	Food	256,000 portions	cup-noodles, bread, pre-cooked/packaged rice, canned food
	Water	50,000 bottles	
Miyagi	Food	822,000 portions	bread, onigiri, cup-noodles, pre-cooked/packaged rice
	Water	550,000 bottles	
	*Infant formula	7 metric tons	
Yamagata	Food	2,000 portions	rice porridge
Fukushima	Food	150,000 portions	bread, onigiri, cup-noodles
	Water	101,000 bottles	
TOTAL	Food	1,235,000 portions	
	Water	701,000 bottles	
	*Infant formula	1. metric tons	

Emergency food and beverages currently in the process of being prepared for shipment include:

Prefecture	Item	Quantity	Content
Iwate	Food	272,000 portions	bread, cup-noodles, pre-cooked/packaged rice, canned food
	Water	50,000 bottles	
Miyagi	Food	291,000 portions	bread, onigiri, cup-noodles, cooked/packaged rice
	Water	80,000 bottles	
Fukushima	Food	633,000 portions	bread, onigiri, cup-noodles, cooked/packaged rice
	Water	633,000 bottles	
Ibaraki	Food	89,000 portions	
	Water	91,000 bottles	
Other	*Food	210,000 portions	
TOTAL	Food	1,495,000 portions	
	Water	1,074,000 bottles	

Beyond government support, twenty-two private companies have offered 2.32 million portions of food,

300,000 bottles of water along with 8 kitchen-equipped vans. There are also numerous companies independently volunteering food aid outside of the government's official count.

From what we know so far, the current quantity of food donated by the private sector stands at:

Onigiri and bento: 1.59 million portions/day, supplied by 64 companies

Water: 5.58 million liters/day, supplied by 17 companies

Bread: 360,000 portions, supplied by 6 companies

Instant noodles: 1.88 million portions, supplied by 5 companies

Infant formula : 168 metric tons, supplied by 3 companies

Rice crackers: 20,000 packs, supplied by 14 companies

Canned/retort-packaged food: 790,000 units, supplied by 8 companies

Milled rice: 1,670-1,790 metric tons (11-12 million portions), supplied by 11 companies

Grains and Oilseeds

Today NHK news reported that Kamaishi port may be reopening very soon to emergency and aid shipments only.

Major Feed Grain Ports in Japan and the Quake/Tsunami Impact

Port	Damage	Compound Feed Production (in million metric tons)
Kushiro, Hokkaido	None	1.12
Tomakomai, Hokkaido	None	1.52
Hachinohe, Aomori	Severely damaged	1.82
Kamaishi, Iwate	Severely damaged	0.24
Ishinomaki, Miyagi	Severely damaged	1.14
Sendai, Miyagi	Severely damaged	0.46
Kashima, Ibaraki	Unloading facility partially damaged but compound feed production facility in tact	3.97
Nagoya, Aichi	None	1.34
Toyohashi, Aichi	None	0.72
Mizushima, Okayama	None	1.43
Yashiro, Kumamoto	None	0.71
Kagoshima, Kagoshima	None	1.39
Shibushi, Kagoshima	None	2.64
Other ports and inland production facilities	None	6.30
Total Compound Feed Production		24.80 million MT

The four severely damaged ports in the Tohoku area will not be operational for an extended period of time. The compound feed production capacity of these ports totals about 3.66 million MT, or 15% of Japan's total production of compound feed.

The port of Kashima is partially damaged, and it is expected to take about three months before it can receive vessels for unloading. However, the feed mills at the port are operational.

The plan is to increase production at unaffected mills and transport to affected areas (by boat from Hokkaido and Kyushu, and by truck from Western Honshu).

The challenge is to secure: 1) availability of boats; 2) inland routes; and 3) fuel.

Seafood

No updates from 3/15

Wood Products

No updates from 3/15

Meat and Livestock

The primary impact on livestock production on the Tohoku area is access to feed grains and the need for electricity to obtain fresh ground water supplies, particularly for pigs and for processing of hog waste.

Tohoku region cattle likely will remain on the farm longer than anticipated due to transportation issues and the inability of processing plants to resume full operating schedules without guaranteed power supplies. Less than half of the 17 wholesale cattle markets in the region have resumed regular operation, but only those producers in the immediate region should experience significant issues.

Toxicity

FAS/Tokyo continues to assess the toxicity and contamination issues that may result from this catastrophe. Possible effects of toxic substances and related issues, such as food production and safety due to Tohoku Earthquake, include:

1. Salinity – by tsunami and liquefaction
 1. In some area, sea water will remain for a long time. In area where water recedes, the soil might not be suitable for crop production due to the salinity.
 2. 1.2. Salinity problem would be also created by liquefaction of ground.
2. Radiation particles – short term and long term
 1. 2.1. Short term effects of released radiation particles

Wednesday, March 16, 2011; MHLW and MAFF had an informal meeting regarding the handling of agricultural products from areas possibly affected by nuclear reactors in Fukushima Prefecture. In short, the safety management of nuclear disasters, including the handling of current crops in the ground, are handled by the Emergency Command Center of Nuclear Safety Commission, in the Cabinet Office. Fukushima Prefecture's Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sent MAFF and MHLW an assessment of the situation. The assessment states that the authorities consider the agricultural products in the area of evacuation (20 km and 10km radius of No. 1 and No. 2 Reactor, respectively at the time)

will not be harvested nor distributed since all residents, including growers, have been evacuated. For this reason, the authorities believe that agricultural products affected by radiation will not be distributed domestically or internationally. MHLW/MAFF understanding is that the Command Center is allocating most of resource their resources to containing the situation and has not completed a risk assessment and of agricultural products (pls note that this is unofficial comment from MHLW).

Wednesday, March 16, 2011; Food Safety Commission released a note regarding the nuclear disaster in Fukushima (http://www.fsc.go.jp/sonota/emerg/emerg_genshiro_20110316.pdf). The note is basically the list of related GOJ websites such as Cabinet Office, Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, etc.

1. 2.2. Long term effects of released radiation particles

Fresh produce, different effects on leaf, fruit and root vegetables as well as tree crops and grains

Daily products

Meat products

Tree/wood products

1. Substances released from oil refinery – spill and burning
2. Residue released by collapsing building
3. Deficiencies in food sanitation due to programmed and unscheduled blackouts– Blackouts will make it difficult to control crop temperatures, and may cause an increase in microorganisms in food.
4. Food contamination by microorganisms may include; ingredient, final products, processing facilities, distribution facilities due to lack of sufficient water, chemicals, or other resource for proper management.

Horticultural Products

Other than increased retail prices, no updates from 3/15

Retail and Distribution

Convenience stores are critical to the distribution of food and beverages in Japan. Many people use convenience stores as their primary shopping supply. When the Kobe quake hit in 1995, it was convenience stores handing out free food and drinks before the government set up relief centers. Lawson, the second largest convenience store with 9800 outlets, has a total of 10 food preparation facilities in the Kanto region (Ibaraki, is in Kanto, all other affected prefectures are in Tohoku). One factory in Chiba prefecture suffered significant damage and has made it very difficult to distribute daily meals to Tokyo and Chiba prefectures.

On the other hand, Seven-Eleven Japan, the biggest convenience store (13,000 outlets), improves its supply ability better day by day. 7-11 Japan is able to shift its distribution system and is able to adapt the Kanto logistic network to serve the Tohoku region, and then use other plants west of Tokyo to serve Tokyo. As of March 14, both Lawson and 7-11Japan resumed business in more than a half of shop operations in Tohoku region. Lawson resumed operation of 450 outlets out of a total of 810 in Tohoku region. 7-11 also resumed sales at a 450 outlets out of a total of 920 in the region.

Food demand surges - Yamazaki Bakery is now running factories at 100%, but is receiving more orders. Major food wholesalers, Kokubu, Ryoshoku and Nippon Access, have received double the orders from retailers. Wholesalers are maintaining ordinary operations at their warehouses in the Tokyo region.

According to the Asahi Shinbum on March 15, sales results of the major retailers jumped dramatically in last two days. Purchases of bottled water vaulted to 10 times, Natto 3 times bigger, Tofu 1.7 times more, milk 1.5 bigger. Sales of chicken rose 9 times more than the sales of same period of last year, canned food 3 times bigger, rice 1.6 times more.

Major retailers are supplying significant amounts of relief supplies. AEON sent 33,000 bottles of water, 40,000 meals of Onigiri (rice ball) and 3,000 portions of cooked rice from Osaka to Aomori by air freight on March 12. AEON shut down all of 130 outlets in the Tohoku region right after the earthquake, but then sent 70 employees to Sendai to resume shop operation. For consumers in Tokyo, most of AEON's supermarkets in Tokyo region are open with plenty of food products. Even though supermarkets are well stocked well, there is some hoarding of food and beverages, emptying shelves within 2 to 3 hours. The retailer is now asking consumers to limit purchases per person. Other major retailers in the Tokyo region are in the same situation.

Media

Major newspapers reported today that there is enough food supply in Japan, and that consumers needn't rush to buy, or hoard, food stocks. MAFF Minister Kano released a statement today stating that there is more than enough rice supply in Japan.

Today's media reports reported the following:

- Rice, toilet paper and other daily necessities are growing scarce at stores, not only in the quake-hit Tohoku region, but also in the Tokyo metropolitan area. But manufacturers across a wide array of industries say they have sufficient capacity to meet the demand.
- The temporary shortage at retailers is likely caused by such factors as turmoil in logistics networks and anxious consumers stocking up on various goods.
- Retailers and manufacturers are working to fill store shelves depleted in quake-hit regions and the Tokyo area by using distribution networks and production bases in unscathed in Western parts of the nation.
- On March 15, Farm Minister Kano called out to the public to stay calm as there is sufficient amount of food supply. On March 16 the Minister released a statement that Japan has more than enough rice supply to meet the demand.
- Regarding the explosion at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, Nihon Nogyo Shimbun (aka Japan Agricultural News) reports that Farm Minister Kano suggested at a meeting of the Disaster Headquarters held on March 15 that impacts on farm products by the explosion should

be surveyed in order to find out the realities of the situation.