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## Japan

**Post:** Tokyo

### March 21 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**

March 21 is a national holiday in Japan, Vernal Equinox Day (Shunbun no Hi). The U.S. Embassy, Government of Japan, and most businesses in Japan are closed today. In Japan vernal equinox day is a day to commune with nature and show respect for all living things. Because of the embassy closure, today's food and agricultural updates are rather abbreviated.

Over the past two days agricultural related news has been focused on the slightly elevated radiation levels that have been detected in milk, spinach, leaks, fava beans, and chrysanthemums (which are consumed by humans in Japan). In the early hours on March 21 the GOJ health ministry revealed that 965 Becquerel per kilogram of radiated iodine, three times the regulated limit of 300 Becquerel per kilogram, was detected in the tap water sampled in Iidate Village in Fukushima Prefecture.

The Japanese government has been working to control the message and educate the media about the relative size of the radioactive contamination. Nonetheless, conflicting messages and rumors are spreading throughout the country, and around the world. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuyama off-handedly told a reporter that he would let his kids eat spinach and drink water from Fukushima, but that his kids do not drink milk. In the coming days it is likely that many food and agricultural products with trace radioactive contamination will be reported. Several Japanese export markets have indicated that testing and sampling of Japanese products will increase. Thus far one food product from Japan, fava beans, was found to have slightly elevated radioactive traces in Taiwan. That shipment was destroyed.

## **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. According to the latest statistics released by the National Police Agency at on Monday, March 21, 2011, the death toll now stands at 8,450, with 12,909 persons still unaccounted for.

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## **PORTS**

No reported changes from 3/18

## **EMERGENCY FOOD AID**

Food aid continues to be mobilized to affected areas of the country.

## **GRAINS AND OILSEEDS**

No changes from 3/18

## **SEAFOOD**

No changes from 3/18

## **WOOD PRODUCTS**

No changes from 3/18

## **POULTRY, MEAT, DAIRY AND LIVESTOCK**

No changes from 3/18

## **TOXICITY**

On March 17 the Japanese Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare issued a press release and an advisory to municipal and prefectural authorities regarding the handling of food contaminated by radioactivity. Additionally, provisional values for radioactive contamination were proposed on March 17 by the Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare. On March 20 the GOJ officially requested the Food Safety Commission (an independent body charged with food safety standards) to establish permanent levels for radioactive contamination in food and water.



Press Release

March 17, 2011  
Policy Planning and Communication Division,  
Standards and Evaluation Division,  
Inspection and Safety Division,  
Department of Food Safety

### Handling of food contaminated by radioactivity (Relating to the accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant)

- Due to the accident at the Tokai Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant which occurred on March 11, 2011, radioactivity has been detected in the surrounding environment. Therefore, from the perspective of the Food Sanitation Act, which aims to prevent sanitation hazards resulting from eating and drinking, and thereby protect citizen's good health, the "Indices relating to limits on food and drink ingestion" indicated by the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan shall be adopted for the time being as provisional regulation values, and foods which exceed these levels shall be deemed to be regulated by Article 6, Item 2 of the Food Sanitation Act. Measures shall be taken to ensure that such foods are not supplied to the public to eat, and local governments have been notified as indicated on the separate sheet.

<Reference 1> Food Sanitation Act, Article 1  
Article 1

The purpose of this Act is to prevent the sanitation hazards resulting from eating and drinking by enforcing the regulations and other measures necessary, from the viewpoint of public health, to ensure food safety and thereby to protect citizens' good health.

<Reference 2> Food Sanitation Act, Article 6, Item 2 (Extracts)  
Article 6

The following food and additives shall not be sold (including cases of being delivered but not being sold to many and unspecified persons; the same shall apply hereinafter), or collected, produced, imported, processed, used, cooked, stored, or displayed for the purpose of marketing:

(ii) Articles which contain or are covered with toxic or harmful substances or are suspected to contain or be covered with such substances; provided, however, that this shall not apply to cases where the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare specifies that such articles involve no risk to human health.

【Original: Japanese】

Notice No. 0317 Article 3 of the Department of Food Safety  
March 17, 2011

To: All Prefectural Governors

All Mayors in cities with Public Health Centers  
All Mayors of Special Wards

Director-General, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour  
and Welfare  
Handling of food contaminated by radioactivity

On March 11, 2011, the Prime Minister issued a declaration of a nuclear state of emergency relating for the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

Therefore, from the perspective of the Food Sanitation Act, which aims to prevent sanitation hazards resulting from eating and drinking, and thereby protect citizen's good health, the "indices relating to limits on food and drink ingestion" indicated by the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan shall be adopted for the time being as provisional regulation values, and foods which exceed these levels shall be deemed to be regulated by Article 6, Item 2 of the Food Sanitation Act. We would like you to take adequate measures in terms of sales and other areas, to ensure that such foods are not supplied to the public to eat.

Inspections shall be conducted by referring to the office memo "Manual for Measuring Radioactivity of Foods in Case of Emergency" dated May 9, 2002.

Attachment

○Indices relating to limits on food and drink ingestion

Nuclide	Index values relating to ingestion limits in guidelines for coping with disasters at nuclear facilities etc. (Bq/kg)	
Radioactive iodine (Representative radio-nuclides among mixed radio-nuclides: <sup>131</sup> I)	Drinking water	300
	Milk, dairy products*	
	Vegetables (Except root vegetables and tubers)	2,000
Radioactive cesium	Drinking water	200
	Milk, dairy products	
	Vegetables	500
	Grains	
	Meat, eggs, fish, etc.	
Uranium	Infant foods	20
	Drinking water	
	Milk, dairy products	
	Vegetables	100
	Grains	
	Meat, eggs, fish, etc.	
Alpha-emitting nuclides of plutonium and transuranic elements (Total radioactive concentration of <sup>238</sup> Pu, <sup>239</sup> Pu, <sup>240</sup> Pu, <sup>42</sup> Pu, <sup>241</sup> Am, <sup>242</sup> Cm, <sup>243</sup> Cm, <sup>244</sup> Cm)	Infant foods	1
	Drinking water	
	Milk, dairy products	
	Vegetables	10
	Grains	
	Meat, eggs, fish etc.	

\*) Provide guidance so that materials exceeding 100 Bq/kg are not used in milk supplied for use in powdered baby formula or for direct drinking to baby.

## **HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

Fresh produce prices at the retail level seem to have decreased in the past week (likely due to overstocks at Tokyo ports) however, as of last Friday, pre and post catastrophe wholesale prices had not changed

significantly.

## **RETAIL AND DISTRIBUTION**

This week FAS/Tokyo will be tracking the retail prices of a food basket in order to measure changes to consumer prices since the earthquake, and going forward. \_

## **MEDIA**

For the past two days food and agricultural news articles focused on radiological contamination in food and water.

- Yomiuri ran a prominent inside-page feature on Monday morning on its finding that Tomioka Town, Iwaki City, and Miharu Town in Fukushima Prefecture have begun to distribute tablets of potassium iodide to their residents before receiving instructions from the central government. The paper wrote that although the municipal governments apparently made the moves in order to address local residents' concerns about the potential risks of radiation posed by the Fukushima nuclear plant mishap, the lack of coordination between the central and local governments is causing confusion among the local residents. March 21 morning's Sankei ran a similar inside-page report.
- Sankei reported on March 21 that the health ministry revealed on Monday 965 Becquerel per kilogram of radiated iodine, three times the regulated limit of 300 Becquerel per kilogram, was detected in the tap water sampled in Iidate Village in Fukushima Prefecture. Following this detection, the ministry called on the village to instruct the villagers not to drink the water. The village is located about 30 kilometers from the Fukushima nuclear power plant. An official of the health ministry has also said that drinking limited amounts of the water will not cause any health problems.
- Sankei posted a report on its website saying that Tochigi Prefecture announced on March 20 that radioactive substances (iodine and cesium) above the government-regulated limit have been detected in samples of spinach produced in the prefecture. The prefectural government has instructed agricultural organizations in the prefecture to suspend shipment of spinach. Radioactive substances were also detected in leeks and raw milk produced in the prefecture, but the radiation level was below the regulation cap.\_
- AFP reports that Taiwanese authorities discovered that a shipment of fava beans from Kagoshima in southern Japan were "very slightly contaminated," and within Taiwan's legal safety limits. The beans contained 11 becquerels (Bq) of iodine and 1.0 Bq of caesium-137 per kilogram. It is the first report of contaminated food being found outside Japan, and a Taiwanese official presumed that they might have picked up the radiation when transiting Narita. The beans will be destroyed.

## **DONATIONS**

U.S. pork producers are partnering with the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) to provide pork for victims of the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern sections of Japan on March 11. Estimates are that more than a half million Japanese residents are without adequate food and shelter. Food shortages are expected to last into the summer months. On behalf of U.S. pork producers and importers, the National Pork Board has allocated \$100,000 from the Pork Checkoff to provide pork product and to help get it distributed to those in need in Japan. USMEF, which represents the U.S. meat industry in Japan from its office in Tokyo, will work with U.S. pork packers and others who have established distribution networks in Japan to make sure the food gets to those who need it.

Also, the California Rice Industry Association, which the broadest umbrella group for the CA rice industry, voted yesterday to donate \$50,000 to Japan relief via the Japanese consulate in San Francisco.