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Korea's Measures for Japanese Food Products Due to Nuclear Crisis

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Report Highlights:

In response to the earlier nuclear incident in Japan, Korea has started testing incoming Japanese agricultural and fishery products for traces of radiation. No violations have been reported. In addition, Korean authorities are requiring the Japanese government to certify that these products are free of radiation or where produced outside the affected regions.

General Information:

On March 25 2011, the National Policy Coordination Committee chaired by the Prime Minister decided on a temporary import suspension on food products originating from radiation contaminated regions in Japan. Consequently, the Prime Minister Office (PMO) published a press release, which replaced the policy issued on March 23, which had called for a thorough testing of food products imported from Japan.

Effective May 1, the Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA) is requiring a government issued certificate confirming that food items other than suspended products from the five prefectures and food products produced/manufactured in eight regions (Miyagi, Yamagata, Niigata, Nagano, Saitama, Kanagawa, Shizuoka, Tokyo) surrounding the nuclear plant are free from radiation contamination. Food items from all other regions are required to submit a government issued certificate proving that a product was produced or manufactured/processed outside of radioactively contaminated regions. Additionally, all food items from Japan are subject to 100% radionuclide testing for Iodine and Cesium.

Measures that Korea has taken to date

- Effective March 25, Korea imposed a temporary import suspension on food products that the Japanese government is not permitting to be released into the market or products that the Japanese government is calling for a limited intake by consumers. This provisional measure will remain in effect until the current radioactivity concern is cleared.
- Items subject to the import suspension are as follows:

Region	Item	Effective Date
Fukushima	Leafy vegetables, flower head brassicas (e.g. broccoli and cauliflower), turnip, mushroom, raw milk	March 25 (April 15 for mushroom)
Tochigi, Gunma	Spinach, kakina	March 25
Ibaraki	Spinach, kakina, parsley, raw milk	March 25
Chiba	Leafy vegetables and stalk & stem vegetables (e.g. welsh onion, leek, asparagus)	April 4

- Korea continues to plan to immediately suspend imports of any additional food items that may be restricted from marketing by the Japanese government.
- All food items including agricultural produce, processed food, dairy products, health functional food, food additives, and fisheries imported from Japan are subject to 100% radionuclide testing for Iodine and Cesium upon arrival.
- Effective May 1, food items other than suspended products from the five prefectures and food products produced/manufactured in eight regions (Miyagi, Yamagata, Niigata, Nagano, Saitama, Kanagawa, Shizuoka, Tokyo) surrounding the nuclear plant requires a government issued certificate and in addition, are subject to 100% radionuclide testing.

- Regarding the government issued certificate, it “shall” provide test results for Iodine and Cesium. If either Iodine or Cesium is detected, the certificate “shall” also show results for Strontium and Plutonium.
- Effective May 1, food items from all other regions are required to submit a government issued certificate proving that a product was produced or manufactured/processed outside of radioactively contaminated regions. The food items are also subject to 100% radionuclide testing.
 - If either Iodine or Cesium is detected during the arrival testing, a test certificate for Strontium will be required.
- These new measures “shall” apply to Japanese food products that are submitted to KFDA for import inspection on or after May 1.
- 100 % radionuclide testing is required for food products that are manufactured in a third country and stop in Japan for a short time and products that were produced in Japan prior to March 11.
- Testing of agricultural produce, processed food products, health functional food, and food additives is done by KFDA. Tests of dairy products and fishery products are done by the National Veterinary Research & Quarantine Service (NVRQS) and the National Fisheries Products Quality Inspection Service (NFIS), which are under the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- Between March 19 and May 11, KFDA received 5,707 import applications for food products including additives. KFDA tested 5,684 samples and found no violations. Similarly, NVRQS received 18 import applications for dairy products from Japan and found no violations. NFIS has received 953 import applications for fishery products from Japan. They have completed 853 tests and found no violations.
- MIFAFF is also carrying out a monitoring testing program for locally grown vegetables, local fish species such as squid, snow crab, flat fish, hair tail, mackerel, etc., and major fish species caught in the Pacific Ocean such as tuna, Alaska Pollack. As of May 11, 129 samples of vegetables have been tested and found negative for radionuclide. During the same period, NVRQS tested 86 samples of raw milk and found no violations. Similarly, NFIS tested 67 samples of local fishes and 36 samples of fishes caught in Pacific Ocean and found no violations.

Korea imports

- Korea is requiring a Japanese government issued certificate amid radiation fears by the Korean public. Korea’s food import from Japan dropped sharply in May. Compared to imports in April, the average number of daily import applications dropped to 30 cases in May. This represents 85 percent of the total drop in the number of applications in April. As for agricultural produce, there has been no import from Japan in May.
- In 2010, Korea’s customs cleared 46,350 import applications for agriculture/forestry products,

processed food products, food additives, health functional food, and food packages from Japan worth approximately \$514 million.

- Out of the total number of import applications, Japan accounts for 15.8 percent of imports. Agricultural/forestry products from Japan accounts for 0.1 percent of total import applications. Processed food products, food additives, and health functional food from Japan accounts for 15 percent, 37 percent, and 9.5 percent of total import applications respectively.
- Major imported items were sake, snacks, sauces, candies, health supplements, mixed food additives, flavors, and food packages.
- In 2010, there were 15,794 import applications for fishery products worth \$248 million. Major items included Alaska Pollack, hair tail fish, crabs, frozen mackerel, tuna, and shell fish. Imports from Japan account for 18 percent of Korea's total import applications for fish.

Import from Japan in 2010

Products from Japan	Number of Import Application No.	Volume (MT)	Value (1,000\$)
Ag/Forestry	40	137	524
Processed food	23,145	40,372	260,213
Food Additives	12,304	11,925	153,754
Health functional food	623	413	23,630
Food container/packages	10,238	7,513	76,080
Fisheries*	15,794	76,947	248,969
Livestock (mostly dairy)	149	527	2,128
Total	62,293	137,834	765,298

Source: PMO, KFDA, and MIFAFF, NFIS database*

Import applications for products from Japan between March 19 and May 11, 2011

	Ag/forestry	Processed food inc. functional food and food additives	Fishery	Dairy	Total
# of import application	1	5,707	953	18	6,679