

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Japan

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### March 22 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**

Concerns over radioactive contamination in food continued to dominate the food and agricultural news in Japan. Subsequent to the detection of radioactive substances exceeding the provisionally-set tolerance levels in spinach (in four prefectures) and milk (in Fukushima), Prime Minister Kan gave directives to the governors of affected prefectures to ban shipments of spinach and milk. This directive is considered voluntary, as the federal government does not have the authority under the Food Sanitation Law to mandate that prefectures halt shipments. In total, 17.4 percent of spinach shipments in 2009 came from Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, and Gunma prefectures.

Radioactive iodine 16.4 times higher than the safety standard stipulated by the nuclear reactor regulation law was also detected in sea water in the vicinity of the Iwasawa Seacoast, located 16 km south of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. It is too early to tell the impact that these increased levels will have on seafood, and the seafood market, but concern is growing that fish, a staple of the Japanese diet, will be contaminated.

Governments around the world are responding to this new food safety scare in various ways. In Taiwan radiation was detected in fava bean imported from Japan. Despite the fact that the radiation was well below Taiwan's legal limit, the shipment was destroyed. Indonesia will reportedly ask Japan to certify that all food products exported to Indonesia are not contaminated.

In the short term these food safety scares will have a psychological impact on the Japanese consumer. Japanese food products are generally regarded by Japanese consumers as being safer and healthier than imported food products. Evidence and sentiment to the contrary will cause rather significant market disruptions, as consumers avoid purchases of food produced in the affected regions. Over the medium term, however, Japanese consumers will probably lend credence to government reports of the safety of the food, and will return to purchasing from Ibaraki, Gunma, Fukushima, and Miyagi.

One interesting development is that some Tokyo food retailers are having "Strong Yen" promotions in their stores. Because of the unprecedented strength of the yen, and the food safety concerns surrounding domestic food products, many food related businesses may start to look to foreign suppliers for consistent, and lower cost, product.

## **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. As of today, the National Police Agency report; 9079 dead, 2633 injured, and 12,645 missing from the earthquake/tsunami.

## **PORTS**

The Russian government has enhanced radiation checks on travelers and cargo originating from Japan, with every incoming passenger from Japan being screened for possible radiation contamination at ports

of entry across Russia. No higher-than-average radiation has been detected thus far.

The USS Essex is probing the status of seaports in Aomori and Iwate Prefectures to see whether those harbors are usable for unloading relief and other relevant goods. Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, and Osaka ports are experiencing congestion due to inconsistent power and extra cargo from diverted ships.

### **EMERGENCY FOOD AID**

FAS/Japan has worked with MAFF and USAID to ensure that food donations made to MAFF are delivered to the affected areas by the U.S. military.

The Health Ministry announcement that approximately 880,000 households are still suffering from cuts in water supplies as of Monday in the Kanto and Tohoku regions. Disrupted water supplies continue at some 460,000 households in Miyagi, followed by Ibaraki at 180,000 households, and Fukushima at 120,000 households.

### **GRAINS AND OILSEEDS**

No reported changes from 3/18

### **SEAFOOD**

The emergency fisheries council established by fishery cooperatives following the quake and tsunami have initially estimated damage to the fisheries industry in Mie prefecture at 5 billion yen (JPY 3.8 billion to aquaculture; 1.28 billion to cultured pearls and oysters; JPY 630 million to seaweed). In addition, JPY 20 million in damage was incurred by fishing vessels.

Initial estimates for damage in Hokkaido prefecture are estimated to be JPY 33 billion including damage to 746 fishing vessels (717 sunk), port facilities, equipment, and aquaculture. Damage specific to aquaculture including scallops, kelp, sea urchin, and oysters is estimated at JPY 16.63 billion.

### **WOOD PRODUCTS**

No reported changes from 3/18

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

At Itoham Food Inc.'s ham and sausage factory in Kashiwa, Chiba prefecture, output is down by almost 50 percent because of power outages. \_

### **TOXICITY**

As reported in today's overview, food safety and toxicity issues dominate the conversation in Japan.

Radioactive traces have been discovered in spinach, milk, chrysanthemums, fava beans, fresh water sources, and now sea water. The government has asked the affected prefectures to not ship certain products outside of their areas, so as to limit the scope and size of the contamination. A detailed report on this issue will be prepared by FAS/Tokyo in the coming weeks.

## **HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

Wholesalers at Tokyo's produce market report that there is a 10-15 percent oversupply of fruits and vegetables in the market, which has driven prices down considerably. There is also significantly less demand for leafy green vegetables due to reports of radioactive contamination, which has also driven prices lower. Due to gasoline shortages and power outages, wholesalers are finding it difficult to move product into the affected regions near Sendai, where the demand is greatest.

## **RETAIL AND DISTRIBUTION**

Some semblance of normalcy is returning in the Tokyo area. Supermarkets that were having difficulties restocking their shelves are now finding it easier, but shelves are still lacking the usual colorful packages, lined neatly in a row. This differs by region and town, and even sometimes by store. Rice was almost gone from one store in the Akasaka area, while another store, about a block away had ample stocks. There seems to be a lull at different locations and at different times. This will most likely continue because trucks still cannot get sufficient gas to make deliveries.

Japanese consumers are still browsing, playing video games, eating, reading, window shopping, and buying without a sense of emergency. In Kawasaki (southwest of Tokyo), an electronics store had a special section ready to sell batteries and flashlights, but there didn't seem to be a great deal of interest. Perhaps people just wanted to get out and forget about all the tragedies for a moment.

McDonald's Japan reopened one of their restaurants in Sendai, Miyagi on March 21. The menu items are still limited but they plan to add items as distribution of supplies improve. Store hours are also limited.

In the affected areas, supplies are still difficult to come by. Reports from Morioka, about 100 km west of the affected area said that people were waiting up to 6 hours to buy ¥2000 (about 12.5 liters) of gasoline.

FAS Tokyo researched food prices at two supermarkets in Akasaka, Tokyo, near the U.S. Embassy on March 22, at around 1:00 p.m. The researcher found considerable recovery of food supply at the stores except for cup noodle products. Fresh meats, beef and pork, showed higher unit prices than the average price before the earthquake hit. Canned food also showed a higher price, and the researcher noted that there was far less supply of canned products than demand. Other grocery and perishable products show stable prices and sufficient supplies. Frozen foods seem to be in decent supply, perhaps due to the fact that rolling blackouts are dampening demand for refrigerated products. In general, however, consumers are feeling higher prices because there are no sales or discount offerings, as there were before the quake.

## Market Price Research

On Tuesday, Mar/22/2011

Items	Brand/Origin	Total qty	JPY	Remarks
Rice	Koshihikari, Niigata	5 kgs	2,280	Higher price than usual
Rice	Akitakomachi, Hokkaido	5 kgs	1,980	Higher price than usual
Breads	Hojun, shokupan	1 loaf	168	Better supply than last week
Udon (Noodle)	PB Brand, frozen, 2 meals	400 g	98	Made from Wheat flour
Tofu	Made of domestic soy, regular	350 g	88	Better supply than last week
Soy sauce	Kikkoman	1 litter	338	Higher price than usual
Soy sauce	PB Brand	1 litter	158	Average price
Lettuce	Fresh iceberg, domestic	1 head	158	Average price
Spinach	Fresh, domestic	1 bunch	198	Average price
Banana	4-5 bunches, regular, Philippine	1 pack	198	Average price
Apple	Fuji, Aomori	1 pc	198	higher price than usual
M. Orange	6-7 pcs, L-size, domestic	1 pack	598	higher price than usual
Beef	Loin, steak cut, domestic	100 g	680	higher price than usual
Beef	Short plate, sliced, Australian	100 g	208	higher price than usual
Pork	Loin, block, domestic	100 g	248	higher price than usual
Chicken	Debone, thigh	100 g	188	higher price than usual
Sugar	Spoon brand, superfine	1 kg	228	higher price than usual
Canola oil	Healthy Light, Nisshin Oilio	1 litter	399	higher price than usual
Sausage	"Showessen" brand, Vienna type	276 g	598	138 g x 2 pack per bunch
Ham	Boneless, sliced, 4 packs x 40 g	160 g	299	As usual
Frozen Chinese dumpling	Ajinomoto, Gyoza 12 peaces	252 g	378	higher price than usual
Milk	Morinaga, regular	1 litter	215	higher price than usual
Milk	Morinaga, low fat	1 litter	208	No promotion
Egg	Fresh, L-size, domestic, 10 pcs	1 pack	239	higher price than usual
Canned corn	Kernel, pull tab can	130 g	149	higher price than usual
Potato chips	Callbee, low salt, 60 g	1 pack	118	No promotion
Cup noodle	Nisshin, Cup Noodle	1 cup	168	Sold out completely

Mineral water	Major brand, PET bottled	2 litters	159	Higher price than usual
Salmon	Atlantic, Norway, sliced fillet	2 slices	550	higher price than usual
Tuna, marble	Blue-fin tuna, domestic, frozen	100 g	980	Average price
Tuna, lean	Mebachi tuna, pelagic, frozen	100 g	450	Average price
Shrimp	Black-tiger, ML-size, 20 pcs	1 pack	680	Average price
Squid	Yari type, a whole, domestic	1 body	175	smaller size

## **MEDIA**

- Tuesday morning's Tokyo Shimbun reported on the GOJ announcement on Monday that it will begin measuring radioactive material both in the air and in the soil by collecting samples to see whether they are laced with iodine and/or cesium. It added that MOD is planning to mount equipment on SDF helicopters to measure gamma radiation as a means of surveying possible contamination in a wider area.
- NHK-TV reported at 11:00 on a NISA press conference that started at 10:30, at which a NISA official reported that studies of the seawater taken about 100 meter off the drainage ditches of the No.1 – 4 reactors at 14:30 on Monday, detected cobalt, radioactive iodine, and cesium. The official said that although the level of these radioactive substances is above the normal level, it would not provide any adverse health effects to people living within the 20-km radius. Regarding the resumption of efforts to spray water on the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors, a decision will be made around noon.
- Sankei reported at 10:31 on its website saying that MEXT Minister Takagi held a press conference this morning at which he said "school lunches have not been affected at this point" in relation to the government order to suspend shipments of certain agriculture produce from Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, and Gunma prefectures. According to the daily, Takagi said many schools will enter a spring break this week and stressed that all possible measures will be taken to ensure the safety of school lunches.
- CNN reported online at 09:56 that short-term exposure to food contaminated by radiation from Japan's damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant poses no immediate health risk, according to comments by a World Health Organization spokesperson on Monday.
- On Monday, March 22, the Government of Japan (GOJ) ordered Fukushima and its surrounding prefectures -- Ibaraki, Tochigi and Gunma -- to suspend shipments of spinach and *kakina*, a leaf vegetable following the detection of radioactive substances in the produce at levels beyond legal limits.

## **DONATIONS**

The Ag Office and the ATO have been receiving many inquiries regarding donations to help the victims of the Great Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami. Please note that the U.S. Embassy is not a point of contact for relief efforts. The following is a list of organizations that are coordinating relief efforts for the stricken area.

There are several ways to contribute to the relief effort:

- 1) Cash Donations – This is most likely the best way to contribute at this time. NGO's and aid organizations need basic items like bread, rice, blankets, bottled water, non-perishables such as cup noodles, and temporary housing. Japanese officials are looking to purchase much of these needs from within and outside Japan.
- 2) Goods Donations from within Japan – If you are interested in donating products, the most effective way is to donate product that is already situated in Japan. U.S. Cooperators, Trade Organizations, and Companies would be well served to work with their Japanese contacts to coordinate any aid or donations. For instance, Campbell's has contacted us about donating canned soups and we understand that they will use stocks currently in Japan to make these donations. This method ensures that the product already meets Japanese standards, is readily available, and can be quickly transported.
- 3) Goods Donations from U.S. - Shipping products from the U.S. is not effective unless it has been specifically requested or contracted for by an NGO or a Japanese Gov't office. The below website is set up to accept offers of goods and match them with needs.

<http://www.cidi.org/commodity-available-registration?view=commodityavailable> - This site, run by USAID, allows companies to register and list offers of in-kind donations, which then will be matched to stated requests from the Government of Japan, if any.

Again – we are relisting many of the websites of aid organizations:

[www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org) - This link lists a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that respond to crises globally and have operations on the ground in Japan.

[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) - This is the main USAID website.

The Red Cross - <http://www.jrc.or.jp/english/index.html> - This is the Japanese (English Language ) web site. But you may want to contact the American Red Cross for Options - <http://www.redcross.org/>

Airlines – United Airlines allows you to donate miles to the cause or donate miles to help aid workers travel to Japan - <http://www.ua.com>, American Airlines has a similar program - <http://www.aa.com/homePage.do>

If you are a Member of the Chamber of Commerce – email to [helpjapan@accj.or.jp](mailto:helpjapan@accj.or.jp) or e-mail to the U.S. site - [BCLChelpdesk@uschamber.com](mailto:BCLChelpdesk@uschamber.com)

The Japan America Society – There are many Japan America Societies throughout the U.S. Here is a link for the Colorado Chapter - <http://www.jascolorado.org/index.php> - Please look up links for your local chapter.

GLOBALGIVING: Established a fund to disburse donations to organizations providing relief and emergency services to victims of the earthquake and tsunami. [www.globalgiving.org](http://www.globalgiving.org)

SAVE THE CHILDREN: Mobilizing to provide immediate humanitarian relief in the shape of emergency health care and provision of non-food items and shelter. [www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

SALVATION ARMY: The Salvation Army has been in Japan since 1895 and is currently providing emergency assistance to those in need. [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org)

AMERICARES: Emergency team is on full alert, mobilizing resources and dispatching an emergency response manager to the region. [www.americares.org](http://www.americares.org)

CONVOY OF HOPE: Disaster Response team established connection with in-country partners who have been impacted by the damage and are identifying the needs and areas where Convoy of Hope may be of the greatest assistance. [www.convoyofhope.org](http://www.convoyofhope.org)

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS: Putting together relief teams, as well as supplies, and are in contact with partners in Japan and other affected countries to assess needs and coordinate our activities. [www.internationalmedicalcorps.org](http://www.internationalmedicalcorps.org)

SHELTER BOX: The first team is mobilizing to head to Japan and begin the response effort. [www.shelterbox.org](http://www.shelterbox.org)

The Alaskan Seafood Marketing Institute wrote a touching condolence letter to the Japanese people and ASMI customers, which was published in a major Japanese seafood trade journal. A scanned copy of the letter is below.

## Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Partners in Seafood in Japan

It is with heavy hearts that we hear of the terrible news and tragedy unfolding in Japan. We wish to send our condolences, our prayers, and our hopes for your steadfast resolve through this difficult time. Alaska and Japan have a long history together in seafood and we are naturally saddened to know our partners and friends are affected by this catastrophe. The Alaska Seafood Industry and State of Alaska have a deep personal connection with many of the areas most impacted by this tragedy, including the Sendai, Shiogama, Ishinomaki, Aomori, Hachinohe, Fukushima, Kesennuma, Kushiro and others. I would like to express my respect to the bravery and determination of the Japanese people. We know that this is a time of great suffering, yet we know that Japan and the Japanese seafood industry will both survive this disaster and return to prominence. The Alaska Seafood Industry and State of Alaska wish to reaffirm our support during this challenging time and commit to working together as we look forward to brighter days ahead.

Gambatte Kudasai.

With sincere regards,  
Ray E. Riutta  
Executive Director,  
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

### 日本の大切な友人、仲間たち、そしてビジネスパートナーの皆様へ

私たちアラスカ水産業界関係者一同、このたび日本を襲った恐ろしい震災と数々の悲劇の知らせに接し、ただただ驚愕し、胸をおしつぶされる思いで言葉を失っております。

未曾有の災害に見舞われた日本の人々の心に少しでも早く平安が戻ってきますよう、私たちは祈りを捧げ、慰めの気持ちを日本へ届けたいと遠くアラスカから日々思いを馳せております。

アラスカと日本はお互いの水産業発展のために長きに渡り手と手を携えて共に歩んで参りました。今回の大災害によって多くのアラスカの尊いパートナー、友人たちが甚大な被害を蒙ったことに心からお見舞いを申し上げます。特に最も大きなダメージを受けた宮城県仙台市、塩竈市、石巻市、気仙沼市、青森県八戸市、青森市、北海道釧路市、などなどは、業界のみならず個人的なレベルに至るまで深い関係を築きあげ、私共をいつも暖かいおもてなしと真心をもって迎えてくださり、親しい交流の場を常に与えてくださった特別な場所でもあるだけに、アラスカのみならずアメリカの水産業界のメンバーたちも大きなショックを受けています。

このような人知を超えざる非常事態の中でも、苦勞と悲しみに立ち向かう日本の方々の勇気と強い志に心から敬意を表します。その姿を通じて、私共は日本の国民、そして水産業界関係者の皆様方がきつとこの大きな困難を乗り越え、多くの命を守りつなぎ、きつと素晴らしい輝きを取り戻すであろうと信じております。

アラスカ水産業界ならびにアラスカ州政府は、今もそしてこれからも、日本への支援と協力を惜しむことなく、災害に遭われた方々の心と地域に一日でも早く灯りを取り戻すため、共に前に進んで行くことを願っています。どうか皆様頑張ってください。

アラスカシーフードマーケティング協会  
専務理事 レイ・リユッタ



ASMIジャパンウェブサイト [www.alaskaseafood.org/japan](http://www.alaskaseafood.org/japan)  
e-mail: [alaskaseafood-japan@rlassociates.co.jp](mailto:alaskaseafood-japan@rlassociates.co.jp)