

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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### **The WASABI - Hot News from Japan Vol. 7 Issue 4**

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**Report Highlights:**

Health Ministry Ceases Enhanced Surveillance on Imports of U.S. broccoli; Stricter Sanitation Standards Considered Following E-Coli Food Poisoning Deaths; Horticultural Product Update; Feed Shortages Compel Anti-biotech Co-ops to rely on Biotech Feed; Agriculture Minister Counselor Describes "Food 2040" Initiative; ATO Director helps promote USA Cotton.

## General Information:

# The Wasabi

*HOT*News from Japan – Vol 7, Issue 4  
May 16, 2011

**Health Ministry Ceases Enhanced Surveillance on Imports of U.S. broccoli:** On May 12, 2011, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) officially informed Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)/Japan of its decision to no longer require enhanced testing for pesticide residues on U.S. broccoli shipments coming into Japan. A similar notification was also sent to Japanese quarantine stations. The increase in surveillance testing was imposed on March 8 following pyraclostrobin maximum residue level (MRL) violations on shipments of U.S. broccoli. FAS worked closely with U.S. broccoli growers to draft a comprehensive compliance plan which was well received by MHLW and effectively prevented further disruptions on U.S. broccoli trade. In 2010, U.S. exports of broccoli to Japan were valued at \$46 million, the largest value since 2003.

**Stricter Sanitation Standards Considered Following E-Coli Food Poisoning Deaths:** A food safety incident related to a popular dish called “Yukke”, a beef dish typically served raw at many Yakiniku\* restaurants, occurred in late April and has received wide public attention. Four persons, including two children, were hospitalized and died due to E-coli food poisoning from eating Yukke at several outlets of a Yakiniku restaurant chain located in various parts of the country and reportedly about 20 persons are still hospitalized and in serious condition (Note: The chain, operated by a Ishikawa prefecture based Food Service Company, with 20 Yakiniku outlets in four different prefectures, has been quite popularity for its low priced dishes.) The beef was reportedly claiming to be of Wagyu origin supplied by a Tokyo based meat wholesaler/processor, but was quickly determined not to be of non-Wagyu origin traced through the individual cattle I.D. numbers. How the dish was contaminated with E-coli bacteria (E-coli 0111) is still under investigation by police and health authorities. Many Yakiniku restaurants in the country (approximately 23,000 outlets with an annual market size estimated at 700 billion Yen) have been serving beef raw, but it is widely believed that the government’s health and sanitation standards to prevent food poisoning incident from eating raw meat were not sufficient and not followed in absence of effective enforcement and penalties. Given the incident, which has severely shaken consumer confidence, the Ministry of Health is reportedly decided to amend its policy to make the relevant standards, including labeling, much stricter than present standards. \**Yakiniku* is a Japanese term for meat barbecue and typically refers to Korean style barbecue dishes.

**Horticultural Product Update:** On May 9, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) banned shipments of bamboo shoots and “kogomi” (a wild leafy green) from certain areas of the Fukushima Prefecture as a result following detection of higher-than-permissible radioactive substances. A shipment ban for bamboo shoots is in effect in 6 municipalities in the central and eastern parts of the Fukushima Prefecture. A ban on “Kogomi” shipments is in effect in 2 municipalities in the north-central part of the Fukushima Prefecture. Both bamboo shoots and “Kogomi” are usually picked from early May to early June and are consumed locally.

**Feed Shortages Compel Anti-biotech Co-ops to rely on Biotech Feed:** Three consumer cooperatives who have been opposed to biotech crops and food are now using biotech feed to feed livestock animals. The March 11 triple-disaster caused tremendous damage to many feed plants in the Eastern Japan and led to a shortage of non-biotech feed. In their websites, the three co-ops made announcements that they will use biotech feed instead of non-biotech until the supply of non-biotech feed recovers. One of the co-ops estimates that supply recovery could take six months to a year. This could present a turning point in co-ops overall acceptance of biotech crops.



**Agriculture Minister Counselor Describes “Food 2040” Initiative to Japanese importers of California Raisins:** On May 13, Agriculture Minister Counselor, Geoffrey Wiggin, attended the 2011 Annual meeting of Japanese importers of California raisins. During the meeting, Mr. Wiggin, explained “Food 2040” a joint public-private sector initiative seeking to take a comprehensive and forward-looking examination of the relevant driving forces, issues and trends that will drive the future of food and regulations as it relates to wealthy, mature economies in Asia.



**ATO Director helps promote USA Cotton:** Steve Shnitzler, Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) Director, greeted over one hundred textile industry members at the Cotton Council International’s 2011 Cotton Day Media and Award Ceremony, held at the Westin Ebisu Hotel in Tokyo. The event theme for 2011 “Lifestyles with Cotton” and featured Japanese movie and TV stars Ken Watanabe (Inception, Letters from Iwo Jima, Memoirs of a Geisha) and Asaka Seto (star of two Japanese TV series and several TV movies) who were named Mr. and Mrs. Cotton 2011. Young upcoming singer Kitano Kei sang the new Cotton image song for 2011 - ずっと、いっしょだね (Always Be One). Cotton sales to Japan have rebounded strongly in the last year, reaching \$65 million in 2010, up 38 percent from 2009. In the first three months of 2011, cotton exports to Japan have already hit \$53 million.