

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Hawaiian "Rainbow" Papaya - the First Consumer-Ready Biotech Food to be imported into Japan; Noda Cabinet Launched

General Information:

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Hawaiian “Rainbow” Papaya - the First Consumer-Ready Biotech Food to be Imported into Japan: The Office of Agricultural Affairs and the Agricultural Trade Office sponsored a seminar, science café, and celebration of the approval of biotech papaya for commercial sale in Japan. The event, attended by more than 70 traders, importers, and end users, was held at U.S. Ambassador John Roos’ residence. The seminar featured a presentation by Dr. Dennis Gonsalves, USDA/ARS, the chief developer of biotech papaya “Rainbow”. The seminar discussed the development of the Rainbow variety and how it saved the Hawaii papaya industry. After Dr.



Gonsalves’ seminar, Mr. Sam Choy, renowned Hawaiian chef, gave a cooking demonstration using Rainbow papaya. After the demonstration, dishes incorporating papaya were served to the attendees. The seminar was sponsored using the Department of States’ biotech outreach funding, and the cooking demonstration was supported by using Quality Sample Program funds.



In 1995, Japan was a \$20 million market for Hawaii papayas. However, soon after, the ringspot virus began to attack Hawaiian papayas and growers were left with smaller and smaller harvests. In the 1990s, the papaya ringspot virus threatened to wipe out Hawaii’s papaya industry completely. Cultivars that had been genetically engineered to be resistant to the virus (including 'Rainbow'), were developed by

scientists at USDA/ARS. Replacement of conventional papaya plants continued steadily until 2010, an estimated 80% of Hawaiian papaya plants were transgenic. The effort to gain access Japan for biotech papaya began in the mid-1990’s. As the Hawaiian production switched more and more to biotech production, there was less product available for the Japanese market. In addition, other countries, most notably the Philippines and Taiwan sharply increased papaya shipments to Japan. In 2010, the value of HI papaya shipments to Japan was just over \$1 million.



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On September 1, 2011, after years of hard work by numerous U.S. government and industry officials, Japan announced the final rule allowing the import of biotech Hawaiian papaya. Officially, commercial shipments may begin on December 1, 2011. Hawaiian biotech papaya the first direct to consumer biotech product approved by Japan. Other biotech products have been approved for years, but they were all either used for further processing, an ingredient, or for animal feeds.

USDA/FAS Tokyo estimates that in the medium term, Hawaii papaya exports could once again reach its potential of \$20 million per year.

Noda Cabinet Launched: Japan's new Prime Minister, Yoshihiko Noda, formed his cabinet on September 2, reassigning Michihiko Kano as the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and promoting Yoko Komiyama from the Senior Vice-Minister position to the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Kano is a veteran Diet member, having been elected 11 times since 1976. He served as the Agriculture Minister in 1989 under Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu. Before his initial appointment as MAFF Minister, Kano was Chairman of the Budgetary Committee of the Diet's Lower House. He is well respected by a wide spectrum of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) members. His position of MAFF Minister became considerably more difficult following the Great East Japan

Earthquake, though Kano has gained kudos for his competent handling of farmer compensation claims from the Tohoku region.

Komiyama has served as MHLW Senior Vice Minister since 2010. First elected in 1998 to the Upper House and in 2003 to the Lower, she is well known for her support of women's and children's issues. She is a native of Tokyo, and the daughter of Ichiro Kato, a former president of the University of Tokyo. Her maternal grandfather, Kazuo Aoki, served as Finance Minister.

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