



15 March 2013

(13-1440)

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

CURRENT STATUS AFTER THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ACCIDENT

COMMUNICATION FROM JAPAN

The following communication, received on 15 March 2013, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Japan.

1. The purpose of this document is to update the situation of radioactivity in Japanese food two years after the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in March 2011. The Government of Japanese has taken comprehensive risk management measures, and as a result, the situation has significantly improved as evident in the up-to-date monitoring data compared to the situation right after the accident. The level of actual contamination is far below the guideline levels which the CODEX General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (CODEX STAN 193-1995, "GSCTFF" hereinafter) defined as safe for human consumption.

1 INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

2. The "Guideline levels for radionuclides in food contaminated following a nuclear or radiological emergency" are included in the GSCTFF. Guideline levels for representative radionuclides such as Cs-137 are set at 1,000 Bq/kg for both infant foods and other foods. The guideline elaborates the implication of the guideline levels: "As far as generic radiological protection of food consumers is concerned, when radionuclide levels in food do not exceed the corresponding Guideline Levels, the food should be considered as safe for human consumption." In addition, according to the fact sheets prepared by the CODEX secretariat, "The Guideline levels for six radionuclides, applicable for one year following a nuclear accident, were based on very conservative assumptions and intended to be used in international trade as value below which no food control restriction needed to be applied."

2 RISK MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND CURRENT STATUS IN JAPAN

3. Japan has set the limits at 100 Bq/kg for general foods and 50 Bq/kg for infant foods and milk, adopting 1 mSv per year, consistent with the Codex Guideline Levels, as an intervention exemption level. While the Codex Guideline Levels are based on Import/Production Factor of 10% according to international statistical data, the Japanese limits are based on the assumption that 50% of nationally distributed foods are contaminated. Japanese national and regional governments have conducted decontamination of farm land, strict control over feeds and other agricultural materials and a risk-based comprehensive monitoring scheme since the nuclear power plant accident. In cases exceeding the limits, the foods are not allowed for marketing. Moreover, regional governments are required to prohibit further distribution of such food items from the surrounding regions and identify the source of contamination.

4. The Government of Japan compiled the results of monitoring inspections and published them at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare website (<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/2011eq/index.html>). Despite the prevalence assumption of 50%, the occurrence data shows the level and prevalence of actual contamination of Japanese foods to be negligible except for specific items such as wild animals and plants in specific regions which are practically impossible to be traded internationally. Accordingly, Japanese foods marketed

under current risk management schemes are scientifically safe enough for human consumption and can be safely traded internationally without extra food control restrictions.

3 FOR FUTURE

5. Regarding alcoholic beverages, Japan has done comprehensive examinations on radionuclides since June 2011, cooperatively with the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB). Until February 2013, more than 5,000 samples of alcoholic beverages from throughout Japan, including those produced in Fukushima prefecture, have been examined. Out of these samples, none has exceeded the domestic standards. Accordingly, none of the alcoholic beverages made in Japan after the accident has been prohibited from domestic distribution on the ground of radionuclide contamination. Japan has also examined water for brewing and has never detected radioactivity therefrom. According to the scientific research, including that conducted by the NRIB¹⁻⁴, even when ingredients made for brewing and/or distilling include radionuclides, they are mostly reduced in the production process of alcoholic beverages. As such, import regulations, including requirement of export certificates, are needless for alcoholic beverages. Based on these scientific standpoints, many countries, including the European Union, have already withdrawn requirements to attach the certificates. However, some countries still continue to impose excessive import restrictions including requirement of certificates. As Japan will provide scientific data continuously, as appropriate, Japan once again wishes to request WTO Members to take measures based on scientific evidence in line with the WTO Agreement.

6. As for other Japanese food, based on those facts, ten countries have already lifted import restrictions. The trade of Japanese food is gradually getting back on track. However, Japan is deeply concerned that some countries still ban the import of Japanese food or set ZERO limits for radionuclides. In the past, in many cases, Japan provided solely raw data without systematic analysis and assessments. These might not have been sufficient for importing countries to assess the risk of Japanese foods to be imported. Japan will soon provide importing countries with systematic analysis and assessments accompanied by complete data sources. With the help of such information, Japan believes that import bans on Japanese food for radiological reasons can be removed except in the case where a certain food from a specific region is prohibited for distribution in Japan due to exceedance of the limit for double assurance. If an importing country prefers a stepwise approach, Japan is prepared to provide export certificates of test results demonstrating compliance to both Japanese and the importing country's standards, as provisional measures towards normal trade, although Japan is of the view, in the long run, that Japanese food should be imported without any extra measures.

¹ EURANOS "Generic handbook for assisting in the management of contaminated food production systems in Europe following a radiological emergency", p. 126 and p. 134, 2009).

² G. Pröhl *et al.*: "The transfer of ¹³⁷Cs from barley to beer", Health Physics, 72, p. 111-113, 1997.

³ Reduction of radioactive materials during processing of plum liqueur (ume-shu) by Fukushima Agricultural Technology Centre.

⁴ Experimental result on nonradioactive cesium concentration in sake brewing process by NRIB.