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Japan

Organic Products

U.S. Organic Export to Japan: Export Procedures 2004

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Report Highlights:

Under a liberal equivalency agreement, since April 2002, U.S. organic products may be exported to Japan. The two basic routes to export to and market U.S. organic products in Japan are 1) exporting NOP certified organic products to JAS certified importers, and 2) exporting products certified to JAS in the U.S. by the last producer or manufacturer to handle the product before export. MAFF is in the process of establishing JAS standards for organic animal products, but currently there are no specific requirements to label animal products as organic.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Tokyo [JA1]
[JA]

Since April 2001, the Japan Agricultural Standard (JAS) law has required that organic products sold in Japan (not including animal products which are not covered by current regulations) conform to the JAS organic labeling standard. Since April 2002, under a liberal equivalency agreement, U.S. products easily meet these standards.

Two basic routes to export to and market U.S. organic products in Japan are discussed below: 1) exporting NOP certified organic products to JAS certified importers and 2) exporting products certified to JAS in the U.S. by the last producer or manufacturer to handle the product before export.

U.S. Organic Product Certified to NOP Standards

U.S. organic products certified to NOP standards may be exported to Japan as long as three requirements are met. 1) Three prohibited materials are not used in production. The three prohibited materials are alkali extracted humic acid, lignin sulfonate, and potassium bicarbonate. 2) Products must be accompanied by an Export Certificate. The organic certifier will provide an USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Export Certificate (TM-11) if requirement 1 is met. The TM-11 must include the organic certified producer or manufacturer AND whomever is on the bill of lading. A sample TM-11 is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/TradeIssue/exportcertificate.pdf>. 3) The product must be imported by a JAS certified importer. The certified JAS importer can affix a label on the product or invoice and sell it as JAS.

For the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), this is route 2 in the English explanation at http://www.maff.go.jp/soshiki/shokuhin/hinshitsu/organic/eng_yuki_how.pdf.

U.S. Organic Product Certified to JAS Standards

U.S. organic products that are certified to JAS standards by a JAS registered certification organization may be exported to Japan as JAS organic products. As long as the last producer or manufacturer to touch the product is JAS certified and labels the product, any U.S. exporter and Japanese importer can trade the product as JAS organic. Inputs for this “last producer or manufacturer” may be JAS or NOP. In the case of NOP, the three prohibited materials, alkali extracted humic acid, lignin sulfonate, and potassium bicarbonate, may not be used.

For MAFF, this is route 1 (via Registered Foreign Certification Organization) and route 3 (via Registered Certification Organization in Japan) in the English explanation available on their web page at http://www.maff.go.jp/soshiki/shokuhin/hinshitsu/organic/eng_yuki_how.pdf.

MAFF Websites for Organic Foods

General information on Japan’s organic labeling system is available on MAFF’s web site at http://www.maff.go.jp/soshiki/shokuhin/hinshitsu/organic/eng_yuki_top.htm. Q&As on the Inspection and Certification System for Organic Foods may be viewed on this home page at http://www.maff.go.jp/soshiki/shokuhin/hinshitsu/organic/eng_yuki_qa2.pdf.

Organic Livestock Product and Organic Feed

MAFF is in the process of establishing JAS standards for organic animal products, including dairy and processed animal products. There is no timeline but once adopted, organic animal products sold in Japan must meet these. In the mean time, there are no restrictions on labeling animal products as organic.