

How Japan is Acting to Ensure Safety of Farm Produce Exports

Providing Accurate Information; No Need for Curbs on Travel to Japan

In response to global concerns about the safety of Japanese products triggered by damage to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the Government of Japan has taken every possible measure to make sure no contaminated farm product will be sold at home or abroad.

However, an increasing number of countries and regions are moving to screen imports from Japan by introducing tests related to radiation levels. “We take it seriously,” Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Tetsuro Fukuyama said during a press briefing on March 31 following a meeting at the State Secretary level called to discuss steps to be taken towards import restrictions. “We will keep a close watch on import curbs and take necessary action in liaison with this meeting,” he added.

Measures Taken by MOFA

Reiterating these remarks, Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeaki Matsumoto told a press conference on April 1 that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has been gathering information through diplomatic missions abroad while providing foreign embassies and international organizations in Tokyo with information and explanations. “We are approaching countries that seem to be taking excessive measures for corrective actions,” he added. Upon the request of the European Union, Japan is preparing to issue certificate of origin as one of the measures to ease its concerns, Minister Matsumoto said, citing remarks at the State Secretary-level meeting. “MOFA will continue providing each country with sufficient information on the latest state of the nuclear power plant, and will work in close cooperation with the ministries and agencies concerned in order to prevent excessive reaction or unreasonable import bans overseas,” he said.

Japan has requested countries and regions concerned not to overreact to the nuclear incident by imposing unjustifiable import regulations and restrictions. According to MOFA Press Secretary Satoru Satoh, the move is an effort to avoid unfounded rumors and ensure smooth economic activities, including foreign trade. As part of the effort, a Japanese envoy called on World Trade Organization (WTO) members to abide by the WTO rule that bans trade restrictions not based on scientific grounds. At the informal sessions of the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee on March 29 and SPS (Sanitary

and Phytosanitary) Committee on March 30, Ambassador Yoichi Otabe at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva said Japan will “continue to try to provide accurate information for the international community as quickly as possible with a view to ensuring maximum transparency.” He requested WTO members “not to overreact by implementing unjustifiable import regulations and restrictions.”

ICAO: “No Restrictions on Travel to Japan”

During his March 31 briefing, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuyama cited a report from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism(MLIT) showing there are no international restrictions on travel to Japan. The report is based on a statement issued on March 18 by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and other U.N. agencies. “International flight and maritime operations can continue normally into and out of Japan’s major airports and seaports, excluding those damaged by the tsunami,” according to the statement shared with the World Health Organization(WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency(IAEA), the World Meteorological Organization(WMO) and the International Maritime Organization(IMO).

“No Need for Radiation Tests on Passengers from Japan”

ICAO and IMO also posted the following information on April 1 stating that there is no need for radiation screening tests on passengers arriving from Japan.

“Radioactive material from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi plant is gradually spreading outside Japan into the global atmosphere but at extremely low concentrations that do not present health or transportation safety hazards, according to the U.N. organizations closely monitoring the situation”.

“Japanese authorities confirm that all airports in the country, with the exception of Sendai which was affected by the tsunami of March 11, continue to operate normally for both international and domestic operations. Continuous monitoring around these airports confirms that radiation levels are well within safe limits from a health perspective”.

“Japanese authorities also confirm that all international seaports not damaged by the earthquake and tsunami are operating normally and that no health risk has been detected around the ports, based on the results of measurements of radiation levels by local governments”.

“Screening for radiation of passengers arriving from Japan is currently considered unnecessary at airports around the world.”

Daily Government Briefing

To help convey accurate information globally, the Government of Japan is conducting a daily briefing for foreign media in Tokyo. Officials from MOFA and other ministries and agencies concerned participate in the briefing conducted at the Prime Minister’s Office each evening to provide detailed information such as radiation levels measured daily at selected points in areas surrounding the Fukushima plant, the outcome of work dedicated to ensuring the safety of the plant and the condition of each reactor.