



USDA Japan activity highlights



(December 02, 2011)

Japan Announces Approval of Hawaiian Rainbow Papaya:



On December 1, 2011, the Government of Japan notified in the Kampo (Federal Register) its official safety approval for commercial shipments of rainbow papaya to Japan. This announcement marks the end of a long process that began back in 1999, and the beginning of a new chapter for Hawaiian papaya growers. The approval of rainbow papaya is significant because it is the first horticultural biotech product and the first direct-to consumer food product to gain regulatory approval in Japan. At its height in 1996, the Hawaiian papaya industry shipped nearly \$15 million worth of papaya to the Japanese market. However, as Hawaiian papaya production was devastated by a virus, Hawaiian farmers adopted biotech papaya varieties. Since these varieties were not approved by the Japanese government, Hawaiian farmers lost access to their key overseas market. From 1996 to 2010, U.S. papaya exports to Japan shrank from an average of \$10 million to less than \$2 million a year. The stage is now set for Japanese consumers to once again have greater access to supplies of delicious Hawaiian papayas.