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## Japan

**Post:** Tokyo

### **Japan Ramps Up Domestic GI Roll-out Ahead of June 1 Implementation**

**Report Categories:**

Trade Policy Monitoring

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**Report Highlights:**

On April 14, 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) resumed domestic efforts to promote the Japanese Geographical Indication (GI) system by launching a series of nine public information sessions across Japan. The new system will enter into force on June 1, 2015 (see [GAIN JA5008](#) for a more detailed description of the Japanese GI system). In addition to a detailed explanation of the application process, MAFF officials answered audience questions, noting that foreign products without GI status are eligible to register under the Japanese GI system. MAFF's emphasis on GIs underscores the importance the Government of Japan now places on developing Japan's agricultural export potential.

Key words: Japan, Geographical Indication, GI, JA5016

### **General Information:**

The April 24 seminar in Tokyo explained the step-by-step process for registering eligible products for GI recognition under the Japanese system. MAFF will place instructional manuals and application materials on its [GI website](#) shortly. At this time, these materials are only expected to be available in Japanese, as all GI registration applications must be submitted in Japanese, and the manuals, applications, and related documents are expected to total several hundred pages. As the GI system is neither mandatory nor food safety-related, it is possible that Japan may not translate any of this material into other languages. While MAFF will begin accepting applications on June 1, the official estimate for application review and approval time is a minimum of six months.

MAFF also discussed the GI mark (right) that Japan has recently been registering for use in overseas markets. Revealed through national media in early April, the GI mark is designed to be easily recognized by foreign consumers, who MAFF hopes will pay a premium for Japanese GI products. It should be noted that this mark is only intended to be applied to registered GI products made in Japan. MAFF will enforce domestic laws against GI infringement for imported products registered under the Japanese GI system, but there has been no discussion of a similar mark that could help Japanese consumers recognize imported GI products.



During the question and answer session, MAFF noted that it would be possible for an imported product not currently registered as a GI in the product's country of origin to be registered for protection under the Japanese GI system. MAFF emphasized that such a product as well as imported products already granted GI status in their country of origin would all need to meet the same strict requirements as Japanese products seeking GI recognition under the Japanese GI system. This leaves the door open for producers from countries not administering a GI system (including the United States) to apply for GI recognition and protection in the Japanese market.

Approximately 400 people representing patent offices, local government officials, processed food product manufacturers and others, attended the meeting in Tokyo. In addition to holding eight additional seminars in locations from Hokkaido to Okinawa ahead of June 1, MAFF began printing a monthly GI magazine (Japanese only) to provide updates on the GI system, to announce upcoming educational seminars, and to publish information on applications and successfully registered products; those interested in subscribing can register [here](#).