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Kobe Beef Applies for GI Designation

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Report Highlights:

On August 21, 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) [announced](#) that it had received an application for the establishment of a Kobe Beef Geographical Indication (GI). As Kobe Beef is one of the most well-known beef brands in the world, this announcement is not surprising, but it underscores Japan's growing interest in agricultural export development and the Japanese GI system's inclusion of a specific geographic location within GI-protected product names.

Keywords: Geographical Indication, GI, Kobe Beef

General Information:

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) [announced](#) the receipt of the Kobe Beef Marketing & Distribution Promotion Association's application for the establishment of a Kobe Beef Geographical Indication (GI) on August 21, 2015. The Act for the Protection of Designated Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Products and Foodstuffs (the Act) entered into force in June of this year (see GAIN report [JA5008](#) for more information on the Act). According to the Act, MAFF has initiated a three-month public comment period and a two-month period during which the general public may inspect the content of the application package at the MAFF headquarters in Tokyo.

As Kobe Beef is one of the most globally well-known Japanese agricultural products, it is no surprise that the Kobe Beef Marketing & Distribution Promotion Association is seeking recognition of its product under the Japanese GI system. The Government of Japan (GOJ) established the GI system to enhance the image, the value, and the export potential of Japanese agricultural brands, including many that may be well known within Japan but still relatively unknown to the global consumer. While GIs registered under the Act are not enforceable overseas, MAFF expects that many of the products seeking GI recognition in Japan will use the data collected through the Japanese GI registration process to register the products for GI recognition in potential overseas export markets.

Kobe Beef is made exclusively from Japanese black wagyu cattle. GOJ is not permitting the registration of "wagyu" as a GI under the Japanese system, as wagyu refers to a group of cattle breeds rather than a specific product from a specific geographic location.

The announcement of the Kobe Beef application is currently available [online](#) (in Japanese only). MAFF is [accepting public comments on the application](#) until November 24, 2015. As of August 31, 2015, producer groups have submitted six applications to register products for GIs under the Act. Post anticipates that Edosaki Kabocha (a pumpkin from Ibaraki Prefecture) and Yubari Melon (from Hokkaido Prefecture) will be the first products to complete the GI registration process in late 2015.