

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 2015/12/08

GAIN Report Number: JA 5013

Japan

Post: Tokyo ATO

U.S. Beef Ranked in the Top 5 by Major Japanese Newspaper

Report Categories:

Agricultural Trade Office Activities

Livestock and Products

Market Promotion/Competition

Retail Foods

Promotion Opportunities

Approved By:

Rachel Nelson, Director, ATO Japan

Prepared By:

Masayuki (Alex) Otsuka, Marketing Specialist, ATO Tokyo

Report Highlights:

According to recent research done by Japan's main business newspaper, U.S. beef is the only foreign beef ranked among the top 5 of brands sold in Japan.

General Information:

According to research done by the Nikkei Marketing Journal (Nikkei MJ), an industrial newspaper, released on November 30, 2015, U.S. beef was ranked as the fifth best among 35 beef brands surveyed. The survey included 33 domestic brands plus U.S. and Australian beef. Matsuzaka beef, produced in Mie prefecture, was ranked first, followed by Kobe beef, Miyazaki beef (Miyazaki Prefecture) and Yonezawa beef (Yamagata Prefecture). The study ranked the U.S. beef as number five, scoring higher than many famous domestic beef brands such as Omi (Shiga), Maezawa (Iwate), and Saga (Saga). It also ranked above general domestic Japanese beef (non-branded). Australian beef was ranked tenth.

The research was done through questionnaires sent to 258 meat buyers of department stores and supermarkets from October, 23 through November 16, 2015. The questionnaire asked the buyers to score 17 different categories, and 143 buyers responded.

U.S. beef received the highest scores in several categories, such as adequacy of price, profitability, promotion supports with POP & in-store tasting, and consumer campaign with PR & events. U.S. beef also received high marks for low price, sales staff, supply availability, leanness, and repurchase rate. U.S. beef also earned high scores for its taste, equaling the scores of many major domestic brands. Many of these high scores for U.S. beef can be accredited to the successful marketing activities that have been carried out by the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

Although Australian beef did not rank as high as the U.S. in the taste category, it did get the highest scores for supply availability, low price, lean meat, and sales staff. Australian beef also received a higher score than the U.S. in the area of safety (10 compared with a 6 for the U.S.), but it scored lower in this category than domestic beef brands.

The areas where U.S. beef did not score as highly as other brands were safety, strength of brand, information disclosure about traceability. In these areas, domestic beef scored higher than U.S. beef. Although not reflecting actual safety levels, this survey is a useful indicator of the perceptions among traders about various beef brands in Japan.

The research also asked about buyers' criteria for making decisions on their beef procurement, and the chart below lists the criteria in order of importance. The highest priority was given to quality (freshness and exterior) – 78%. The second was taste – 68%, and the third was supply availability – 62%, the fourth was high level of safety – 55% and the fifth was marbling – 42%. Surprisingly, these were all shown to be more important than low price, which came in at 36%. A majority of the buyers are interested in increasing sales of lean meat, which can be a marketing advantage for U.S. suppliers.

Chart: Beef Brand Ranking and Scores

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Name of Brand (Prefecture)	Matsuzaka (Mie)	Kobe (Hyogo)	Miyazaki (Miyazaki)	Yonezawa (Yamagata)	U.S. Beef	Oumi (Shiga)	Domestic (Non-brand)	Maezawa (Iwate)	Saga (Saga)	Aussie beef (Australian)
Overall score	312	257	238	237	236	227	221	213	212	208
Quality (freshness/external)	36	22	28	26	14	20	14	18	20	16
Taste	37	30	23	26	22	22	10	20	28	8
Supply availability	6	4	13	4	19	3	17	3	8	20
High level safety	13	9	12	10	6	11	11	6	14	10
Marbling	35	29	27	21	8	20	8	17	25	1
Strength of brand	59	46	32	41	6	34	3	35	34	4
Low price	1	1	4	0	30	0	23	0	4	35
High profile	53	42	32	34	16	29	4	29	28	18
Adequacy of price	1	1	5	1	12	1	11	1	2	11
Information disclosure (traceability)	13	11	8	7	1	7	9	6	11	1
Repurchase rate	8	9	8	3	8	4	11	4	6	7
Leanness	7	7	4	2	15	4	14	2	6	23
Profitability rate	1	0	1	1	15	0	12	0	1	13
Promotion support with POP & tasting	1	1	3	0	8	1	1	0	4	5
Distinctiveness of feed and breed	6	4	3	3	1	4	1	1	2	1
Sales staff	1	1	1	0	4	1	4	0	1	4
Consumer campaign with PR & events	3	4	3	1	5	1	1	1	1	4

Resource: Nikkei Marketing Journal, November 30, 2015

