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Post: Tokyo

Comments Invited on Proposed Revisions to GE Labeling Requirements

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

FAIRS Subject Report

Agricultural Situation

Grain and Feed

Oilseeds and Products

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Report Highlights:

On October 10, 2018, Japan notified the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (see [G/TBT/N/JPN/608](#)) of its intention to make revisions to its genetically engineered labeling requirements. The WTO comment period closes on December 7, 2018.

Simultaneously, Japan opened a domestic public comment period that closes thirty days earlier, on November 8, 2018.

General Information:

The Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) of Japan initiated a review of Japan's genetically engineered (GE) labeling requirements in April 2017, which concluded one year later in March 2018. FAS/Tokyo submitted multiple reports on the review process (see, e.g., [JA7067](#), [JA7093](#), [JA7121](#), [JA8014](#), and [JA8017](#)).

The key points of Japan's proposed revisions¹ are:

1. The term "Non-GE" shall only be used when GE components are non-detectable (effectively establishing a zero tolerance for GE components for product labeled with this terminology);
2. Identity preserved (IP) products with un-intentional commingling of GE components (up to 5 percent) will be referred to by a name other than "non-segregated" to help facilitate better understanding by consumers; and,
3. Alternative language will be developed to replace the term "non-segregated" when labeling non-IP products in order to represent the nature of those products.

On October 10, 2018, Japan notified the World Trade Organization's Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (see [G/TBT/N/JPN/608](#)) of its intention to make revisions to its GE labeling system, and included a summary of the amendments (see Attachment 1). The public comment period for this notification will close on December 7, 2018.

Simultaneously, Japan established a public comment period for domestic interested parties. This notification can be found online at: <http://search.e-gov.go.jp/servlet/Public?CLASSNAME=PCMMSTDETAIL&id=235080047&Mode=0> (in Japanese). Although this text is in Japanese, the content of the proposed revision is outlined in the above-cited GAIN reports submitted by FAS/Tokyo.

The Food Labeling Committee of the CAA has also initiated a discussion to validate the proposals developed during the 2017-2018 review. The majority of the discussion to validate the proposed changes from the 2017-2018 review will occur after the comment period for interested parties closes, and after the comments submitted are reviewed by the CAA.

¹ NOTE: Highly refined products such as vegetable oil and sugar will remain exempted from Japan's mandatory labeling requirements, as current technology cannot verify if these products are derived from GE or non-GE components.

ATTACHMENT 1

October 2018

Summary of the Amendment of the Food Labelling Standards regarding the GM labelling system

Prepared by the Consumer Affairs Agency of Japan

I. Objective of the Amendment

To secure the opportunity for consumers to make an autonomous and rational food choice by revising the requirements for “non-GM” labelling

II. Main point of the Amendment

In the current labelling system, Japan allows to use “non-GM” labelling in case of constant incorporation of unintended GM agricultural products (soybean and corn with 5%). In the Amendment of the Food Labelling Standards, “non-GM” labelling shall not be used without the product recognized to be not contaminated with GM in order to ensure the accuracy of the food labelling. Japan will revise the provisions of Article 3 and Article 18 of the Food Labelling Standards which stipulate the requirements for “non-GM” labelling.

III. Document subject to the Amendment

The Food Labelling Standards (Cabinet Office Ordinance, No.10, 2015), which is based on the Food Labelling Act (Act No.70, 2013)