The Inspection Certification System for Organic Products

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Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Food Safety and Consumer Affairs Bureau
I. Establishment of inspection certification system for organic products

1. Amid growing concerns of consumers over food safety and health consciousness, flooding of the labellings such as "organic", "reduced amount of pesticide", etc. became a hindrance to consumers' appropriate choice. "Guidelines for Organic Agricultural Products and Specially Cultivated Agricultural Products" were established in 1992, and the proper labeling had been tried, but organic products were not labelled appropriately, criteria of organic production were not unified and the labeling was confused as ever because of no legal force of the guidelines.

2. On the international front, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme) had started to discuss for the establishment of the guideline of organic products. In 1999, the Codex Commission adopted the "Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods" (GL32-1999).

3. In the light of these circumstances, the Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS standards) for organic plants and organic processed foods were established and labelling of organic products were made to be proper in accordance with revision of the Law Concerning Standardization and Proper Labeling of Agricultural and Forestry Products (JAS Law) in 1999. (Since then, JAS standards for organic livestock products and feeds were established.)

4. The JAS standards for organic products were laid out in compliance with the Codex Guidelines. In such other countries as United States, EU, etc. those organic standards were also laid out in compliance with the Codex Guidelines.

[Labeling regulations]

1. With regards to organic plants and organic processed foods of plant origin, confusion had been seen over name labels, and since there was fears that this would become a grave hindrance to general consumers choice, government ordinances was specified for commodities for which it is particularly necessary to plan appropriate name labeling.

2. Therefore, in order to fulfill Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic plants and Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic processed foods of plant origin, items except to which the certified operators attache Organic JAS logos cannot be labeled as "organic" or another designation which would be confused with this (effective as of April 1, 2001).
II. Inspection certification system for organic products

[Organization of inspection certification system]

1. Registration of registered certification bodies

The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries takes applications and, conducts assessments based on the standards specified by JAS law, and registers certifying bodies.

2. Certification of certified operators

The registered certifying body accepts certification applications from farms producing organic plants and processed foods manufacturers, and awards certification after conducting assessments based on the Technical Criteria for Certifying.

For certification, document reviews and on-site assessments are conducted to confirm:

a. Fields or processing plants meet organic production criteria (organic JAS standards)

b. Production management, and documentation of production management are conducted appropriately so that production will conform with said standards.

3. Inspection of certified operators

In order to confirm that producers and manufacturers are conducting production in accordance with organic JAS standards after being certified by a registered certifying body, inspections shall be conducted at least once a year.

4. Grading by certified operators

Certified farms producing organic plants and manufacturers of processed foods, grade the products they produce/manufacture based on the records etc. of the production/manufacturing process, attach the Organic JAS logos themselves and supply their products to the marketplace.
III. Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic products etc.

(1) Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic plants

1. Process of enactment

The Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic plants were laid out in compliance with the "Guidelines for Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods" adopted at the 1999 Codex Alimentarius Commission, and after resolutions by the Council for the Standards for Agricultural and Forestry Products, were notified by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries based on the January 2000 revised JAS law.

2. Details

The Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic plants in addition to stating production principles for organic agricultural products, also stipulate criteria of production methods and system of labeling of names.

(a) Criteria of production methods

1. Fields, Collection area
2. Seeds or seedlings to be used in fields
3. Manuring practice in fields
4. Cultivation sites, Fungus spawn, Cultivation management in cultivation sites
5. Control of noxious animals and plants in fields or cultivation sites
6. General management, Management of raising seedlings
7. Management concerning harvest, transportation, selection, processing, cleaning, storage, packaging and other post-harvest processes

(b) System of labeling of names

The labels "有機農産物" (which means organic plant in Japanese.), "有機栽培農産物" (which means organically grown plant in Japanese.), "有機物" (which means organic ○○ in Japanese.), "オーガニック物" (which means organic ○○ in Japanese.) etc. are stipulated.

(General names of plants shall be filled in "○○.")

○ Principles of organic plants

"To sustain and enhance the natural recycling in agriculture, the productivity of the farmland derived from the soil properties shall be generated by avoiding the usage of the chemical synthetic fertilizer and agricultural chemicals, and the organic agricultural products shall be produced in fields adopting such cultivation management method as reducing the load derived from the agricultural production on the environment as much as possible."

○ Criteria of production methods for organic plants

1. Soil fertility shall be maintained and enhanced by compost, etc and over a period of at least 2 years before the sowing or planting(at least 3 years before the first harvesting of perennial plants), synthetic fertilizers and agricultural chemicals shall not be used, in principle.
2. Seeds or seedlings shall not be produced by recombinant DNA technology.

○ Organic JAS Logo

Name of registered certifying body
Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic livestock products

1. Process of enactment
The Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic livestock products were laid out in compliance with the "Guidelines for Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods" adopted at the 2001 Codex Alimentarius Commission, and after a resolution by the Council for the Standards for Agricultural and Forestry Products, were notified by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in October 2005.

2. Principles of organic livestock products
Organic livestock products are, in principle, manufactured from organic livestock raised in deference to their physiological and behavioral needs, on the basis of providing feeds produced by reducing pressure on the environment as much as possible and the avoidance of use of veterinary drugs, to sustain and enhance the natural cyclical function of agriculture.

Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic processed foods

1. Process of enactment
The Japanese Agricultural Standards for organic processed foods were laid out with the JAS for organic plants in 2000. Along with the establishment of the JAS for organic livestock products, the JAS for organic processed foods were revised to include organic processed foods for organic livestock products in 2005.

2. Principles of organic processed foods
To produce organic processed foods by processing methods utilizing physical and biological functions, avoiding the use of chemically synthesized food additives and chemical agents, and by preserving the characteristics of organic plants and organic livestock products as ingredients in the manufacturing and processing.

Criteria of production methods for organic livestock products
1. Organic feeds shall be mainly provided.
2. Livestocks shall be raised by minimizing stress through pasturing in open-air, etc.
3. Antibiotics, etc. shall not be used in order to prevent disease.
4. Recombinant DNA technology shall not be used.

Note: The JAS for organic feeds were established in order to guarantee the organic feature with regard to purchased feeds.

Criteria of production methods for organic processed foods
1. The use of chemically synthesized food additives and chemical agents shall be avoided as much as possible.
2. Weight of organic plants, organic processed foods and organic livestock products shall be no less than 95% of the weight of all ingredients of organic processed foods (except for salt, water and processing aids).
3. Organic processed foods shall be produced or processed in the facilities controlled to avoid exposure to chemical agents
4. Recombinant DNA technology shall not be used.
### IV. Import of organic products from abroad

1. The two types of methods

(1) Method of attaching the Organic JAS logos to and distributing organic products produced or manufactured by foreign manufacturers that have received certification from a registered Japanese or overseas certification body.

(2) Method of having importers, that have received certification from a registered Japanese certification organization, attach the Organic JAS logos to and distribute the products (limited to organic plants and organic processed foods of plant origin that is imported from the countries which possess equivalence shown below (Article 15-2 of the JAS Law). Importers that have received certification from a registered Japanese certifying bodies can consign attaching Organic JAS logos to an operator who is certified by the grading system of a foreign country.)

2. Equivalence

The thinking behind 1 (2), a certificate or a copy thereof issued by governmental organizations of the export countries which are considered to be on equivalent level with the Japanese Agricultural Standard's grading system shall be attached. (Article 15-2, Paragraph 2 of the JAS Law)

Equivalence in 1 (2) requires the existence of

1) guarantee measures for the grading system and its appropriate application and system for securing reliability assurance of grading labels and that the contents of the system are of the same level as the JAS system;

2) standards regarding the concerned agricultural products which are equivalent with those of the Japanese Agricultural Standards.

3. Current status

With regards to organic agricultural products, the EU countries, Australia, United States, Argentina, Canada, New Zealand and Switzerland are noted as possessing equivalence in Article 15-2, currently (January 2015).