

Case Study

Enhancing the Dietary Environment to Promote Healthy Eating – Healthy Bento Promotion Project

Nagano Prefecture

Nagano Prefecture is promoting the Shinshu ACE Project as a prefecture-wide health promotion program that aims to achieve the longest (ACE) healthy life expectancy in the world by encouraging each and every citizen to focus on three key tasks in preventing lifestyle-related diseases: Action (taking exercise), Check (undergoing health examinations), and Eat (eating healthily). In the “Health Promotion and Shokuiku” field, which is one of the key fields in the prefecture’s Shokuiku Promotion Plan, initiatives are being promoted in conjunction with the “Eat (eating healthily)” element of this project, aimed at addressing health and dietary challenges faced by citizens of the prefecture by giving people the option of choosing healthy, low-salt meals with plenty of vegetables, even when eating out or buying ready-made meals.

In the case of ready-made meals, the prefecture is striving to raise awareness of healthy eating among citizens of the prefecture by promoting efforts to reduce salt intake and increase consumption of vegetables. To this end, it has worked in partnership with convenience stores – which are used by people of all ages – to develop “Healthy Bento (ACE Bento)” that meet certain criteria.

As well as the “Shinshu ACE Bento,” which is only available in Nagano Prefecture and was developed as a joint venture between the prefectural government and a leading convenience store, a number of other healthy bento options have been launched by Nagano Prefecture supermarkets and catering companies, so such bento are becoming prevalent throughout the prefecture.

Criteria for Accreditation as a Healthy Bento

- Includes a staple food, main dish, and side dish
- Has an energy rating of at least 500kcal, but less than 700kcal
- Contains at least 140g of vegetables (including mushrooms)
- Contains less than 3g of salt equivalent
- Bears a label showing nutritional information
- Uses ingredients produced in Nagano Prefecture, wherever possible



Campaign logo



“Shinshu ACE Bento” produced in partnership with a convenience store

Case Study

“Forging Bonds between People, Products, and Hearts through Diet” ～ Supermarket Initiatives to Support the Diet of Prefectural Citizens ～

Marui Co., Ltd. (Okayama Prefecture)

In partnership with a wide range of groups, including local producers, companies, schools, and local government bodies, Marui Co., Ltd. uses its position as a supermarket supporting the everyday diet of local citizens to provide dietary information and hands-on activities.

On Shokuiku Day, which takes place on the 19th of each month, its stores offer suggestions for dishes that use seasonal ingredients, as well as organizing regular cooking classes. It also works with food producers; for example, in partnership with a vinegar producer, it offered suggestions for low-salt dishes that use vinegar to enhance flavor instead.

Its collaborative initiatives with schools include introducing “local production for local consumption” recipes devised in partnership with local high schools and selling boxed lunches developed in partnership with local universities.

This supermarket, which is such a central presence in the lives of local citizens, is thus promoting sustained and evolving Shokuiku activities while positioning itself as a hub that links local citizens with a diverse array of groups, including producers, companies, schools, and local government bodies, as well as skillfully ensuring that these activities work in harmony with its business activities as a commercial enterprise.



Hands-on experience of agriculture enabling consumers to meet producers



Cooking class held in the eat-in section of a store

[Winner of the Food Safety and Consumer Affairs Bureau Director-General's Prize (Enterprise Category) at the Third Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Industry Awards for Excellence in Shokuiku Activities]

Chapter 5: Promoting Exchange between Producers and Consumers, and a Revitalization of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery in Harmony with the Environment

1 Promoting exchange between urban residents and agricultural/forestry/fishery workers through symbiosis and interactions

- Since FY 2008, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, MEXT, and MAFF have been working on “a city and village children’s exchange project” (children’s long-term stay in villages), and have promoted exchanges between urban and rural areas through children’s agricultural/forestry/fishery work and through nature experience activities, including Shokuiku.
- Since FY2013, MAFF has used the Grant for Comprehensive Urban-Rural Symbiosis Measures to support initiatives such as the collection, processing and sale of agricultural produce grown by market gardeners in combination with the supply/delivery of this produce, both within the same region and in other areas.



Harvesting vegetables

2 Agricultural/forestry/fishery workers’ activity to provide work experience

- Educational Farms and other first-hand experiences of agriculture, forestry and fisheries under the direct instruction of those whose daily work brings them into contact with nature is expected to increase people’s interest and understanding of local agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries, make them realize the blessings of nature, respect those engaged in those industries, understand the multiple functions of agriculture and practice healthy dietary habits. Increasing understanding of agriculture, forestry and fisheries is crucial, so MAFF is promoting the widespread popularization of initiatives focused on hands-on experience of these industries by distributing guides to the operation of such initiatives, teaching materials linked to the content of school textbooks, and manuals for companies seeking to introduce such initiatives.

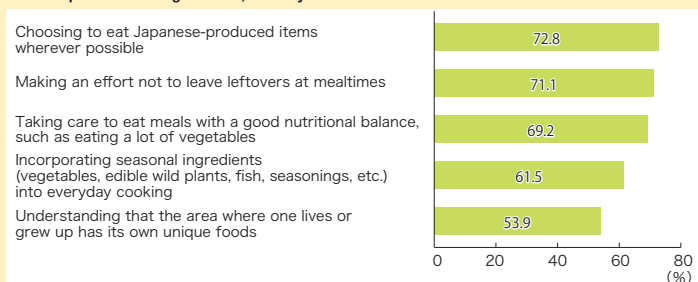
Special Feature

Experiences of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Industries and Attitude to Diet

According to a MAFF survey, most people who have participated in farm work or other hands-on activities at an Educational Farm report changes triggered by their experience, such as increased opportunities or awareness in relation to such behavior as “Choosing to eat Japanese-produced items wherever possible” and “Making an effort not to leave leftovers at mealtimes.” Thus, there appears to be a relationship between hands-on experiences of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and attitude to diet.

MAFF produced an educational pamphlet entitled “Let’s Go and See Where Our Food Comes from!” aimed at encouraging more people to gain a deeper understanding of diet through experiences of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Designed for parents and children to enjoy reading together, it showcases not only the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries, but also food factories and markets, providing ideas for hands-on experiences and tours at every stage, from production through processing and distribution.

Issues of which respondents gained a stronger awareness as a result of having participated in hands-on experiences of agriculture, forestry and fisheries



Source: MAFF survey

- Notes: 1) Questionnaire conducted among 636 people who had participated in hands-on experiences at an Educational Farm (published in March 2015)
2) Shows only the top five answers from the survey results



Pamphlet: “Let’s Go and See Where Our Food Comes from!”