

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

Voluntary _ Public

Date: 3/13/2017

GAIN Report Number: JA7024

Japan

Post: Tokyo

The WASABI - Hot News from Japan Vol. 13 Issue 3

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

FAS Japan assisted with the re-introduction of U.S. apples into Japan after a 15-year absence. Following the launch of Royal Gala apples in February, U.S. Honeycrisp and Pink Lady varieties are scheduled to appear on Japanese retail shelves in the months ahead. Separately, ATO Japan supported 15 American exhibitors at the USDA-Endorsed 2017 Supermarket Tradeshow; on-site sales and 12-month projected sales are estimated at \$6.6 million.

Keywords: WASABI, JA7024, Apples, SMTS, Beef, Wine, Orchid, Prune

General Information:

FAS Assists First U.S. Apple Exports to Japan in 15 Years

FAS Japan Officers and staff contributed to the re-entry of U.S. apples to the Japanese market for the first time in 15 years. Following the launch of the Royal Gala variety on supermarket shelves, Mark Powers of the North West Horticultural Council visited Kobe and Tokyo during the week of February 20 to meet with importers and retailers and to assess consumer reaction to the U.S. apples. Additional varieties will be introduced in coming months, including Honeycrisp and Pink Lady. Retailers informed FAS Japan that it may take several years to establish consumer recognition of these new varieties.



U.S. Royal Gala apples on display at Seiyu/Walmart in Tokyo.



U.S. exhibitors holding a business meeting with Japanese visitors to the show.

Supermarket Trade Show 2017

The Supermarket Trade Show was held at Makuhari Messe, near Tokyo, from February 15-17, 2017. The USA Pavilion featured a variety of healthy, high quality U.S. agricultural products and foods from 15 exhibitors, including the U.S. Meat Export Federation, the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, the California Milk Advisory Board, SUNKIST Growers Inc., and the Hawaii Papaya Industry Association. The USA Pavilion provided an excellent venue for U.S. food companies and their Japanese agents to promote their products to the Japanese retail sector. ATO Japan hosted an information booth and business lounge as well as producing the USA Pavilion guidebook to educate Japanese buyers. Best-selling products at the USA Pavilion included chocolate, beef and pork products, cheese, chicken and turkey products, as well as extra virgin and flavored olive oils. On-site sales at the show and 12-month projected sales are estimated at \$6.6 million.

U.S. Grains Council Introduces Gluten-Free Recipes

On February 22, ATO Tokyo Marketing Specialist Masayuki (Alex) Otsuka joined a natural food cooking seminar held at the International Hotel Restaurant Show (HoteRes Show) at Tokyo Big Sight. The prominent Executive Chef of the InterContinental Hotel Takeshiba performed a gluten-free cooking demonstration with support from the U.S. Grains Council in Japan. The event featured U.S. white sorghum and attracted a large number of professional chefs and cooking academies. The HoteRes Show is an annual three day-long showcase targeting hotel and restaurant businesses, while focusing on hotel kitchen hardware and technology.



Chef Tsukuda (right) demonstrates gluten free cooking.

Restaurant Chain Featuring U.S. Beef Wins Food Service Award

On February 22, 2017, the Food Service Press Club celebrated the winners of the 2016 Food Service Awards. Each year, the organization – comprised of trade publications specializing in food and agriculture – recognize restaurant operators who have achieved outstanding success as well as food service groups which have made notable contributions to the industry. Among the 2016 awardees was Mr. Akira Masuda, proprietor of the Red Rock chain of roast beef bowl / American steak restaurants. Mr. Masuda invented the wildly successful roast beef bowl, taking a twist on the traditional Japanese beef bowl by replacing thinly sliced beef short plate with sumptuous mounds of roast beef. There are currently nine Red Rock restaurants across Japan. At the award ceremony, Mr. Masuda unveiled plans to open the first Red Rock restaurant in the United States in 2017 or 2018.



Akira Masuda accepts an award for his Red Rock restaurant concept.

Washington / Oregon Wine Experience Tasting 2017

The Oregon Wine Board and Washington State Wine Commission teamed up to host the Washington / Oregon Wine Experience Tasting 2017, successfully attracting over 500 guests to taste wines from across the American Pacific Northwest. Eighteen importers and 15 vineyards representing over 300 different wine labels were represented at the event in Tokyo (February 8) and Osaka (February 9). ATO Director Rachel Nelson, Senior Marketing Specialist Tommy Aoki, and Intern Hikaru Henota attended the Tokyo event, noting the size of the crowd and the level of enthusiasm among the guests. Many in attendance were restaurateurs looking for new offerings and new opportunities.



Guests sample PNW wines at the Washington / Oregon Wine Experience Tasting 2017 in Tokyo.

Ushiwaka's U.S. Beef Renaissance 2017

FAS Japan Minister Counselor Gary Meyer and ATO Director Rachel Nelson both gave remarks at the 22nd “U.S. Beef Renaissance” event in Kyoto on February 22, thanking the audience for their long-standing support for U.S. beef. The annual event was co-sponsored by the U.S. Meat Export Federation and Ushiwaka Shoji Co., a major distributor of U.S. beef to high-end restaurants and hotels in Japan and a U.S.-Japan Agricultural Hall of Fame inductee. The event, which included an educational seminar and a reception, was attended by over 600 chefs and restaurant managers from the Kansai region and highlighted the great quality of U.S. beef, offering a variety of recipes and serving options.



Ceremonial sake barrel opening at U.S. Beef Renaissance 2017

All Japan Supermarket Association Exhibition Highlights U.S. Fruits

Minister-Counselor for Agricultural Affairs Gary Meyer, ATO Director Rachel Nelson and ATO staff visited a trade show held in Kyoto by the All Japan Supermarket Association (AJS) on February 23, 2017. AJS members are primarily regional grocery chains. The event has been a great opportunity to increase the awareness of new products for buyers and top executive of these grocery companies. This year, one importer exhibited U.S. apple varieties new to Japan, such as Gala, Honeycrisp and Piñata. Having only just been re-introduced to the market, the favorable reviews at the show demonstrated the potential U.S. apples have in Japan.

In addition, AJS prominently featured California prunes in the exhibition hall, highlighting new packaging. Large high-quality prunes were on display and available for sampling, with a large panel explaining their health benefits and background. California prunes along with other dried fruits and nuts have been successful for AJS members as private brand consumer products.



California prunes along with other dried fruits and nuts have succeeded as private brand products.

U.S. Dried Bean Council Focuses on Lima Beans

FAS Japan Agricultural Attaché Jess Paulson and Agricultural Specialist Tomohiro Kurai joined a delegation of California and Nebraska dried bean exporters in Tokyo on February 13, 2017 to discuss prospects in the Japanese market. Though U.S. beans have long been a staple of Japanese confectionaries such as “anko,” a sweet bean paste used in traditional sweets, U.S. bean producers and Japanese bean processors are looking for new applications in Japan’s ever-evolving consumer market. Japan was the United States’ largest market for baby lima beans, accounting for 72 percent of U.S. exports in 2016 at \$2.2 million, and the third-largest market for lima beans, accounting for 16 percent of U.S. exports in 2016 at \$2.2 million.

American Orchid Society Supports International Orchid Festival

On February 10, 2017 FAS Japan Agricultural Attaché Evan Mangino represented the U.S. Embassy at the awards ceremony for the 2017 Japan Grand Prix International Orchid Festival. Following speeches by Tokyo Governor Koike and Princess Takamado, winning entries across ten categories in the Grand Prix received awards, including one given by American Orchid Society President George Hatfield (pictured below). For nearly 20 years, the Japan Grand Prix has drawn orchid aficionados from across the world and strengthened the United States - Japan relationship through a shared passion for horticulture.



American Orchid Society President George Hatfield next to a species of cymbidium he developed over 20 years ago and was entered into the 2017 Japan Grand Prix.