

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** Japan's MAFF Publishes Draft of International Standards Strategy

**Country:** Japan

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**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation

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**Report Highlights:**

On May 28, 2026, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) published a draft "International Standards Strategy for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries." MAFF aims to strategically leverage international standards as a tool to simultaneously solve global social challenges and create new markets for Japan's food and agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors. Public comments written in Japanese will be accepted by June 10, 2026.

## Background:

On June 3, 2025, the Government of Japan (GOJ) adopted the "[Intellectual Property Promotion Plan 2025](#)," which included a "[New International Standards Strategy](#)." Facing global challenges such as climate change, supply chain disruption risks, rapid technological innovation, and domestic population decline, the GOJ identified an urgent need to address such issues through the strategic use of international standards. The strategy designates eight "strategic areas" that require particularly urgent engagement, with "Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries" among them. From this basis MAFF developed its own policy framework through [expert committee meetings](#).

On May 28, 2026, MAFF published a draft "[International Standards Strategy for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#)," covering the entire food supply chain — from primary production to processing, distribution, and consumption — as well as supporting technologies and services. The strategy's scope extends beyond formal international standards such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and Codex to encompass all standards that could influence international markets and rule-making, including regional, national, and private standards. MAFF aims to strategically leverage international standardization as a tool — not an end in itself — to simultaneously solve global social challenges and create new markets for Japan's food and agricultural sector.

Following are the key points from the draft document:

## Priority Areas:

MAFF is focusing its standardization efforts on:

1. **High-quality, high-value, agricultural, food, forestry and fisheries products**
2. **Sustainable agriculture and food industry** (e.g., smart agriculture, food tech, sustainable aquaculture, and nutritional evaluation)
3. **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction and carbon absorption businesses** (e.g., forest absorption, paddy management, and soil carbon sequestration)

## Strategy to Create and Expand Markets:

MAFF identified **four market-creation directions** sought through standardization:

- **Regulatory compliance** — Help Japanese exporters meet overseas regulations (e.g., EU AI rules, sustainable fisheries requirements) by building internationally recognized, domestic certification systems.
- **New market creation** — Establish international definitions for uniquely Japanese concepts (e.g., *disaster food*) and evaluation methods for novel high-function biomaterials derived from agricultural products.
- **Market expansion** — Set international standards for product names, quality, and processes to raise overall market quality, crowd out low-quality imitations, and expand access for Japanese products (e.g., quality scoring for fresh produce designated for long-distance export).

- **Differentiation and market share** — Establish national or industry standards that objectively demonstrate Japan's unique value (e.g., promoting "overall dietary nutritional balance" as an evaluation concept to better reflect Japanese food companies' contributions to nutrition).

### **Strengthen the Standardization Foundation:**

MAFF recognizes that Japan's food and agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors have historically underutilized international standards, and plans to rectify this by:

- **Engaging with industry, academia, government, and finance** — Raise awareness among food manufacturers, trading companies, and exporters; provide financial and technical support, while encouraging universities to integrate standardization into research and development.
- **Building a standards ecosystem** — Develop human capital on both the industry (strategists and subject-matter experts) and support sides (standards bodies and certification agencies). Some key institutions include the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization (NARO), and the Food and Agricultural Materials Inspection Center (FAMIC).
- **Clarifying governance** — Establish Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycles within MAFF, set concrete targets and action plans for each priority area, and coordinate across ministries.
- **Strengthening international cooperation** — Strategically pursue leadership roles in ISO, Codex, and other international bodies; build coalitions with like-minded countries; proactively disseminate Japan-led standards internationally.
- **Protecting Japan's competitive edge** — Apply open-and-close IP strategies to prevent leakage of proprietary techniques (e.g., traditional production methods) while still pursuing standardization benefits.

Historically, MAFF's focus has been on domestic standards, such as Japan Agricultural Standards (JAS) (see [JA2019-0195](#)). MAFF now wants Japan to lead the international rule-making for food and agriculture, forestry and fisheries — not just comply with rules set by others — to protect Japan's food security, grow its export markets, and contribute to solving global challenges. The strategy calls for stakeholders across industry, government, academia, and finance to engage.

MAFF is accepting public comments via [eGov](#) in Japanese only by June 10, 2026. Based on the results of the public comment process, MAFF will then publish the final strategy most likely by the end of June.

### **Attachments:**

No Attachments.