

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Japan

**Post:** Osaka ATO

### Food Safety Seminar in Okinawa

**Report Categories:**

CSSF Activity Report

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**Report Highlights:**

FAS Japan organized two food safety seminars in Okinawa in September 2014 with cooperation from the U.S. Consulate General in Naha. These seminars were part of FAS Japan's ongoing efforts to better educate the Japanese trade about the U.S. food safety framework. The U.S. Meat Export Federation joined one of the seminars and explained about the U.S. meat industry's effort to ensure safety.

## **Summary:**

ATO Osaka organized seminars on U.S. food safety in Okinawa on September 18 and 19, 2014, at the Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center and the Naha Seika Cooperative in response to concerns about the safety of U.S. agricultural products. ATO Osaka has been actively developing a close relationship with the traders in Okinawa with assistance from U.S. Consulate General in Naha.

## **Background:**

A staff member of ATO Osaka visited Okinawa in the summer of 2013 for relationship building with local trade. Among the companies and organizations she visited, there was Naha Seika Cooperative, the leading importer of fresh produce in Okinawa. According to Naha Seika Cooperative, wholesalers and retailers of fresh produce in the prefecture are not well informed of U.S. food safety regulations and therefore are unsure about whether or not U.S. food products are safe. Therefore, the ATO suggested holding a food safety seminar in Okinawa in order to educate wholesalers and retailers of fresh produce on U.S. food safety framework. The Naha Seika Cooperative liked the idea and agreed to cooperate with ATO Osaka/FAS Japan in organizing the seminar.

ATO Osaka also seized the chance to hold an additional seminar with assistance from U.S. Consulate General in Okinawa. The U.S. Consulate General in Okinawa has an extensive network with the local businesses in the prefecture and introduced ATO Osaka to the Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center, which was also interested in hosting a U.S. food safety seminar for its members.

FAS Japan has been holding a series of food safety seminars in order to cultivate better understanding of the U.S. food safety system among the Japanese trade for some time. The September seminars featured a presentation on the U.S. food safety framework by Dr. Sato, Agricultural Specialist at U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. ATO Osaka coordinated with Dr. Sato to help him address the issues requested by Naha Seika Cooperative and the Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center.

The U.S. Meat Export Federation, which has also been working to educate the Japanese trade on U.S. meat industry's safety efforts, also joined the seminar as a speaker.

- **Naha Seika Cooperative**



The Naha Seika Cooperative is the leading importer of fresh produce in the prefecture and directly imports a wide variety of fresh produce products from many countries. It imports broccoli, celery, baby carrots, grapes, grapefruits, melons, oranges, and lemons from the United States. Naha Seika Cooperative has 18 member wholesalers, who cover over 90% of the fresh produce market in Okinawa.

- **Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center**



Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center was established in 1983 in order to make the distribution of goods in Okinawa more effective. Wholesalers of various product categories, who had been independently scattered across the congested city of Naha, were brought together in this wholesaler business center when it was

created. The Center has 69 companies as its members.

### Outline of the Seminars:



The first seminar was held at the Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center on September 17. Ms. Jennifer Nichols, Deputy Principal Officer at U.S. Consulate General Naha, made an opening speech at the seminar. A total of 20 members of the Center participated.

The second seminar was held at Naha Seika Cooperative on the following day and a total of 30 people among Naha Seika members as well as retailers of fresh produce attended the seminar.

- Seminar at Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center
  - Date: September 17, 2014 (10:00 – 12:00)
  - Presentation: “U.S. Food Safety Framework”  
by Dr. Suguru Sato, Agricultural Specialist, U.S. Embassy in Tokyo  
“U.S. Meat Industry’s Safety Effort and Communication Strategy”  
by Mr. Susumu Harada, Senior Director, U.S. Meat Export Federation
  - Attendees: 20 (members of Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center)
- Seminar at Naha Seika
  - Date: September 18, 2014 (13:30 – 14:45)
  - Presentation: “U.S. Food Safety Framework”  
by Dr. Suguru Sato, Agricultural Specialist, U.S. Embassy in Tokyo
  - Attendees: 30 (members of Naha Seika Cooperative and retailers of fresh produce)

- **Presentation Gist:**

- **Presentation by Dr. Sato**



The presentation started by answering basic questions such as why agricultural chemicals and food additives were used, and why a violation of the Food Sanitation Law might occur. It also covered the question of whether residues of agricultural chemicals or the use of food additives would pose a danger to human health. The presentation also explained how the standards for agricultural residues were set up. It also discussed the U.S. regulations on agricultural chemicals and additives as well as the control system applied by U.S. growers and manufacturers. The presentation suggested ideas on how to avoid violations of the law and how to respond when violations occur etc. In addition, Dr. Sato explained the role of FAS Japan in assisting food trade in Japan.

- **Presentation by Mr. Harada**



follow.

The presentation explained the food safety related efforts of the U.S. meat industry. The presentation also underlined the importance of risk communication in the industry. Safety is a difficult issue to deal with, as it often involves misunderstandings and in many cases, retailers or restaurants do not know how to clarify the problems to their customers. Mr. Harada described how and what to communicate to customers when safety problems occur, and showed some key steps to

## **Results**

A survey was conducted at the end of the seminars to evaluate attendee responses. The following is the summary of the results.

- Okinawa Wholesaler Business Center (16 responded the survey)
  1. Are you satisfied with the seminar contents?
    - 14 people replied that they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.”
    - Only 2 chose “no opinion”
  2. Was the presentation clear and easy to understand?
    - For Dr. Sato’s presentation, 14 people chose either “very easy to understand” or “easy to understand” while only two said “no opinion.”
    - For Mr. Harada’s presentation, again 14 people chose either “very easy to understand” or “easy to understand” while only two said “no opinion”.
  3. Was the information provided in the seminar more than you had expected?
    - For Dr. Sato’s presentation, 12 responded that “the seminar provided more than they had expected” or “as expected” while 4 chose “no opinion.”
    - For Mr. Harada’s presentation, 14 responded that “the seminar provided more than they had expected” or “as expected” while only 2 chose “No opinion.”
  4. Which topics covered in the seminar were you interested in? (multiple choices)
    - 6 selected “U.S. food safety administration.”
    - 8 people marked “Regulation of agricultural chemicals and the chemical control system by U.S. producers”
    - 3 selected issues of “Response to MRL violation.”
    - 11 chose “U.S. meat industry’s safety efforts.”
    - 8 marked “Risk communication in the meat industry.”
- Naha Seika Cooperative (28 responded to the survey)
  1. Are you satisfied with the seminar contents?
    - 23 people replied that they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.”
    - 5 chose “no opinion”
  2. Was the presentation clear and easy to understand?
    - All the people chose either “very easy to understand” or “easy to understand.”

3. Was the information provided in the seminar more than you had expected?
  - 21 responded that “the seminar provided more than they had expected” or “as expected.”
  - 7 chose “no opinion.”
4. Which topics covered in the seminar were you interested in? (multiple choices)
  - 14 selected “U.S. food safety administration”
  - 23 people marked “Regulation of agricultural chemicals and the chemical control system by U.S. producers”
  - Another 14 selected issues of “Response to MRL violation.”

### **Conclusion**

According to the survey results, most attendees were satisfied with the seminar and understood the topics. Many responded that the seminar helped them to understand better the food safety framework and regulations in the United States and were reassured that the United States maintains high standards of food safety. ATO Osaka will continue its efforts to educate trade in Western Japan on the U.S. food safety system and to respond to any other concerns that arise.