

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Japan Revises Sanitary Certificate Requirements for Fresh Oyster Imports

Country: Japan

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Report Category: Fishery Products, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On June 1, 2020, Japan will begin enforcing new sanitary certificate requirements on imports of oysters for raw consumption. State government sanitary certificates from approved states will be accepted, provided they contain specific information identified in this report.

Background

On October 24, 1962, the United States and Japan agreed to improve and standardize shellfish sanitation practices, and to exchange information on sanitary controls applied to the production and handling of oysters and other shellfish. Under the resulting [U.S.-Japan Shellfish Sanitary Practices Agreement](#), Japan currently allows oyster imports from Connecticut, New York, Oregon and Washington states.

In the United States, sanitary controls for shellfish for human consumption are managed through the [National Shellfish Sanitation Program](#) (NSSP). Under the NSSP, each state has its own shellfish sanitary control program. To export oysters for raw consumption to Japan, state governments need to individually request permission¹ from MHLW.

On June 13, 2018, Japan amended the [Food Sanitation Act](#) to require sanitary certificates for oyster imports destined for raw consumption. On November 7, 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) finalized a [new list](#) of required information (available only in Japanese) on the sanitary certificates. Starting on June 1, 2020, fresh oyster imports to Japan will need to be accompanied by a sanitary certificate detailing the following eight items:

1. Name of the imported food product (e.g., live oysters)
2. Weight AND quantity of imported oysters (e.g., 120 pieces at 12 kilogram)
3. Water area where the oysters were caught (e.g., Penn Cove, Hood Canal)
4. Catch date
5. The name and address of the facility that handled/processed the oysters (Note: certificate number referencing [Interstate Certified Shellfish Shippers List](#) (ICSSL) will no longer suffice)
6. Shipper's name and address
7. Importer's name and address
8. Statement confirming the equivalency of production and handling standards for oysters between the exporting country and Japan.

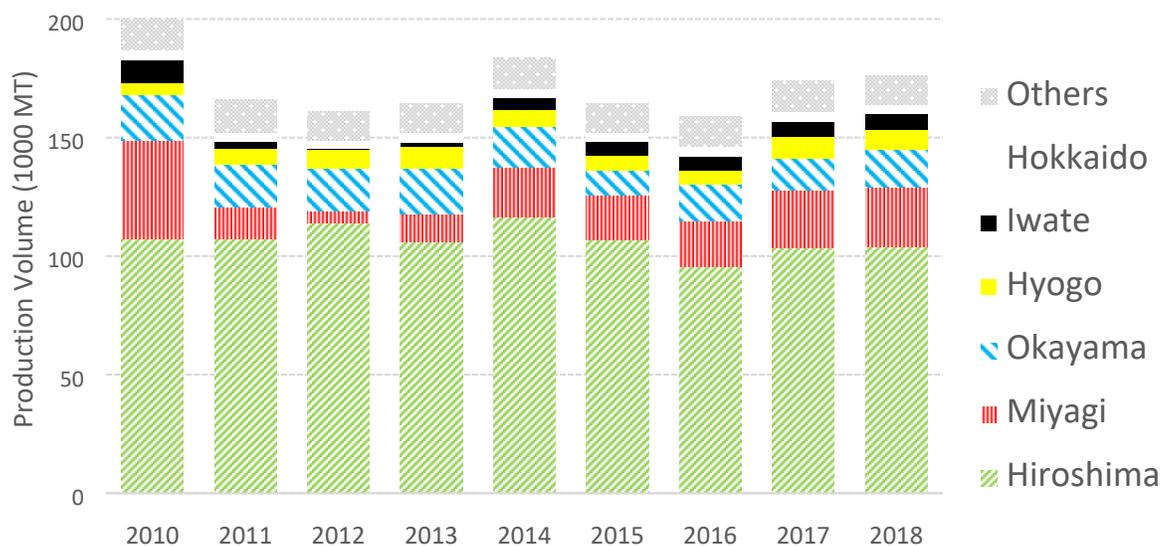
MHLW will continue to accept sanitary certificates issued by competent state authorities as long as the certificates clearly indicate that the oyster facility is in compliance with national guidelines established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to assure that oysters are handled in a sanitary and hygienic manner. State sanitary certificates may currently lack information for items 5 and 8, but that information will need to be included for imports scheduled to arrive to Japan after May 31, 2020.

¹ To satisfy Japan's inspection standards, interested state governments need to inspect oyster-growing waters for "total coliform" presence and report inspection results with the map of inspected area to MHLW. The "total coliform" measure should be below the Japanese permissible limit. FDA standard, on the other hand, is based on *fecal* coliform concentration in the water.

Japan's Oyster Production and Trade

In 2018, Japan produced 176,000 metric tons (MT) of oysters (Figure 1). Hiroshima prefecture is Japan's largest producer of oysters and accounts for roughly 60 percent of annual production. In 2018, Miyagi prefecture recovered from the 2011 tsunami damage to produce 25,000 MT or 14.4 percent of Japanese oysters. In Japan, water areas for oysters for cooking and oysters for raw consumption are separately designated. The great majority of domestic oysters are used for cooking and in processed food products.

Figure 1. Japanese Oyster Production by Prefecture



Source: [Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#)

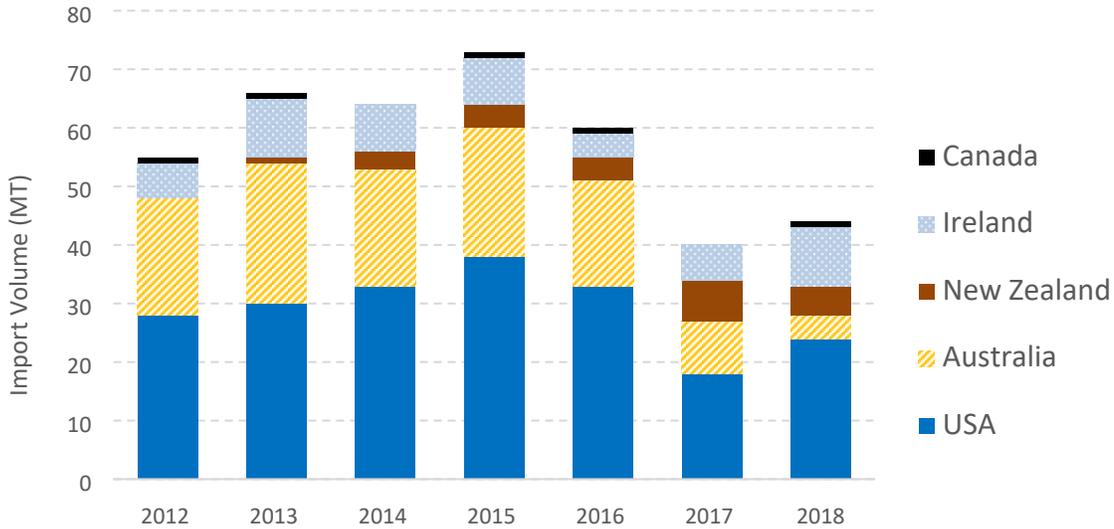
Following the tsunami damage in Japan's northeast, Japan imported 900 MT of fresh oysters in 2012, but by 2018, the import number fell to 276 MT. By volume, South Korea and China are the primary exporters of fresh oysters to Japan, and these oysters typically serve as affordable substitutes for Japanese oysters in cooking.

Fresh oysters imported from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Canada are for raw consumption (e.g., in oyster bars and high-end restaurants). The overall demand for these oysters is relatively stable with variability in import levels driven by supply. Typically, Japanese high-end restaurants serve domestically raised Pacific oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*) for raw consumption between September and April, while imported oysters and Japanese rock oysters (*Crassostrea nippona*) from northern Japan are consumed in the summer. In 2018, Japan imported 24 MT, valued at \$210,000, of fresh oysters for raw consumption from the United States (Figure 2). These U.S. exports were exclusively from Washington State² and accounted for 55 percent of Japan's market share for imported

² The exported Washington oysters are typically Pacific oysters and Kumamoto oysters (*Crassostrea shikamae*). Both species are native to Japan. The native U.S. oyster species, Eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) and Olympia oyster (*Ostrea lurida*), have some demand in Japan, but the supply is limited.

oysters for raw consumption. The current tariff on fresh U.S. oyster imports to Japan is 7 percent. Unlike U.S. oyster producers, exporters from signatory countries of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement do not have tariffs on oyster exports to Japan.

Figure 2. Imported Oysters for Raw Consumption



Source: Trade Statistics of Japan Customs

Attachments:

No Attachments.