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POLICY

Voluntary - Public

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GAIN Report Number: JA8101

Japan

Post: Tokyo

Japan to Hold U.S. Romaine Lettuce

Report Categories:

Vegetables

Agricultural Situation

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On November 22, 2018, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) notified Japanese ports to hold imports of U.S. romaine lettuce until the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notify the public of a change in the regulatory status of romaine lettuce in the United States. The United States exported \$2.5 million of romaine lettuce to Japan in 2017. Total U.S. fresh vegetable exports to Japan were \$226 million in 2017.

Keywords: JA8101, lettuce

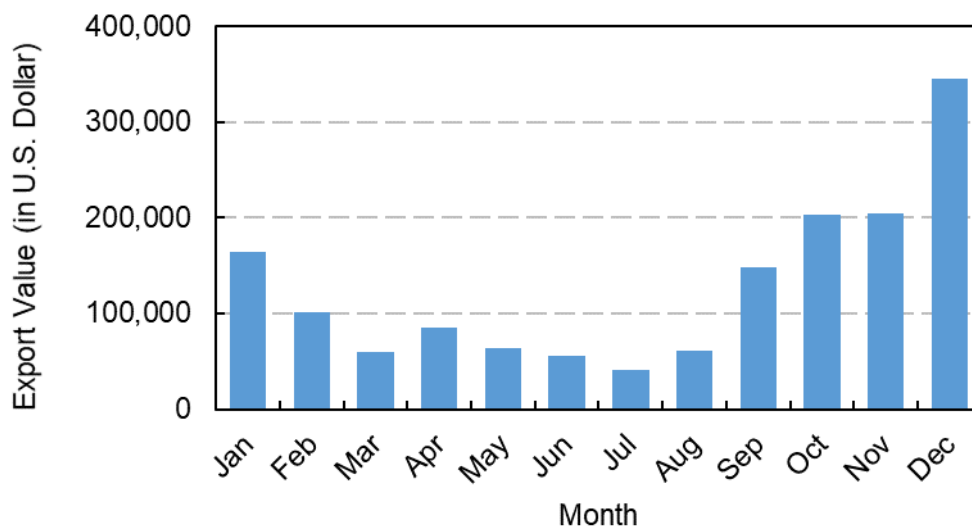
General Information:

On November 20, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a food safety alert for romaine lettuce due to an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 ([announcement](#)). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has launched a trace-back investigation and is providing updated information on FDA's [website](#).

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is Japan's regulatory agency responsible for food safety issues. On November 22, 2018, responding to the FDA and CDC's *E. coli* outbreak announcements, MHLW instructed quarantine stations at ports in Japan to hold lettuce shipments from the United States. Product is not being tested, which implies U.S. romaine lettuce is effectively not permitted for entry to Japan. This market closure will continue until the food safety alert is removed in the United States, or distribution and consumption of romaine lettuce grown in safe regions is resumed in the United States.

Japan imported approximately \$2.56 million of fresh lettuce (excluding cabbage; HS 0705.19.000), of which the United States had the largest import share of 95.5 percent with a value of \$2.48 million in 2017. Monthly trade analysis indicates that U.S. romaine lettuce exports concentrate in the winter with a peak in December (Fig. 1). FAS/Tokyo recommends that U.S. romaine lettuce exporters monitor the status of market access for U.S. romaine lettuce in Japan.

Fig. 1 - 5-Year Average Monthly Export Value of U.S. Lettuce (excluding Cabbage Lettuce) to Japan



Source: Global Trade Atlas