農林水産省

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES

Japan's Traditional Vegetables Promotion Project

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JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES

Most of the vegetables grown today in Japan, located at the eastern end of Asia, have come from overseas. Over the course of hundreds of years, vegetables originally produced in the south, the north, and arid regions have been adapted to suit the local climate, natural features and soil in different parts of Japan, and have become established as unique local vegetables there. Those that suit the dietary lifestyles of people living in those areas have been passed down through the generations as traditional vegetables. These local vegetables have then been taken to other parts of Japan by travelers and Buddhist monks, or by *kitamaebune* ships and other forms of trade, and their appearance was again altered to suit the environment in their new home. A famous story tells how the "Tennoji turnip," eaten for its root in western Japan, found its way to Nagano. There, it was transformed to *nozawana*, in which the leaves are eaten pickled.

In this way, vegetables of many varieties continue to be cultivated in their original shapes and appearance and loved by local people in various parts of Japan, in accordance with the local natural environment, and remain rooted in the dietary culture of those areas. And while some local authorities have recognized and certified these vegetables as "local traditional vegetables," many of these vegetables have been proudly protected and nurtured together with dietary culture and ritual by the local people.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES

Kyoto, once the capital of Japan, is home to numerous Buddhist temples. There, a type of vegetarian cuisine called *shojin ryori* (literally "devotion food") sprang up, and this gave rise to many indigenous vegetables. However, some of these died out after the war. In 1987, Kyoto Prefecture selected a list of "Kyoto traditional vegetables," in which 40 varieties of vegetable cultivated since before the Meiji Restoration have been certified. This was followed, from the 1990s onwards, by a growing movement to "Take another look at traditional vegetables" in Tohoku, Hokuriku, Nagano Prefecture, Tokyo and other parts of Japan. Thus, another characteristic of Japan is that traditional vegetables have become established in various parts of the country.

Kamo nasu eggplant,
Kyoto vegetable

Atsumi kabu turnip,
Yamagata traditional vegetable

Nozawana turnip leaf,
Shinshu traditional vegetable

Komatsuna mustard spinach,
Edo Tokyo vegetable

TYPICAL TRADITIONAL VEGETABLES

The most common of all Japanese traditional vegetables is the *daikon* white radish. It is found all over the country, mainly as an ingredient for pickles, providing preserved food in winter. Another is the *kabu* turnip, which provides food from both its root and its leaves, as well as pickles. Varieties of different shapes and colors still remain in various parts of the country.

Interesting in a different way is the *negi* spring onion. In east Japan, it is mainly the white part or *shironegi* that is eaten, but in west Japan, culinary uses focus exclusively on the green leaves, known as *hanegi*. Thus, another interesting aspect of traditional vegetables is the way in which the same produce has a different appearance and is eaten differently in different parts of the country.

The *daikon* white radish, most common of all traditional vegetables

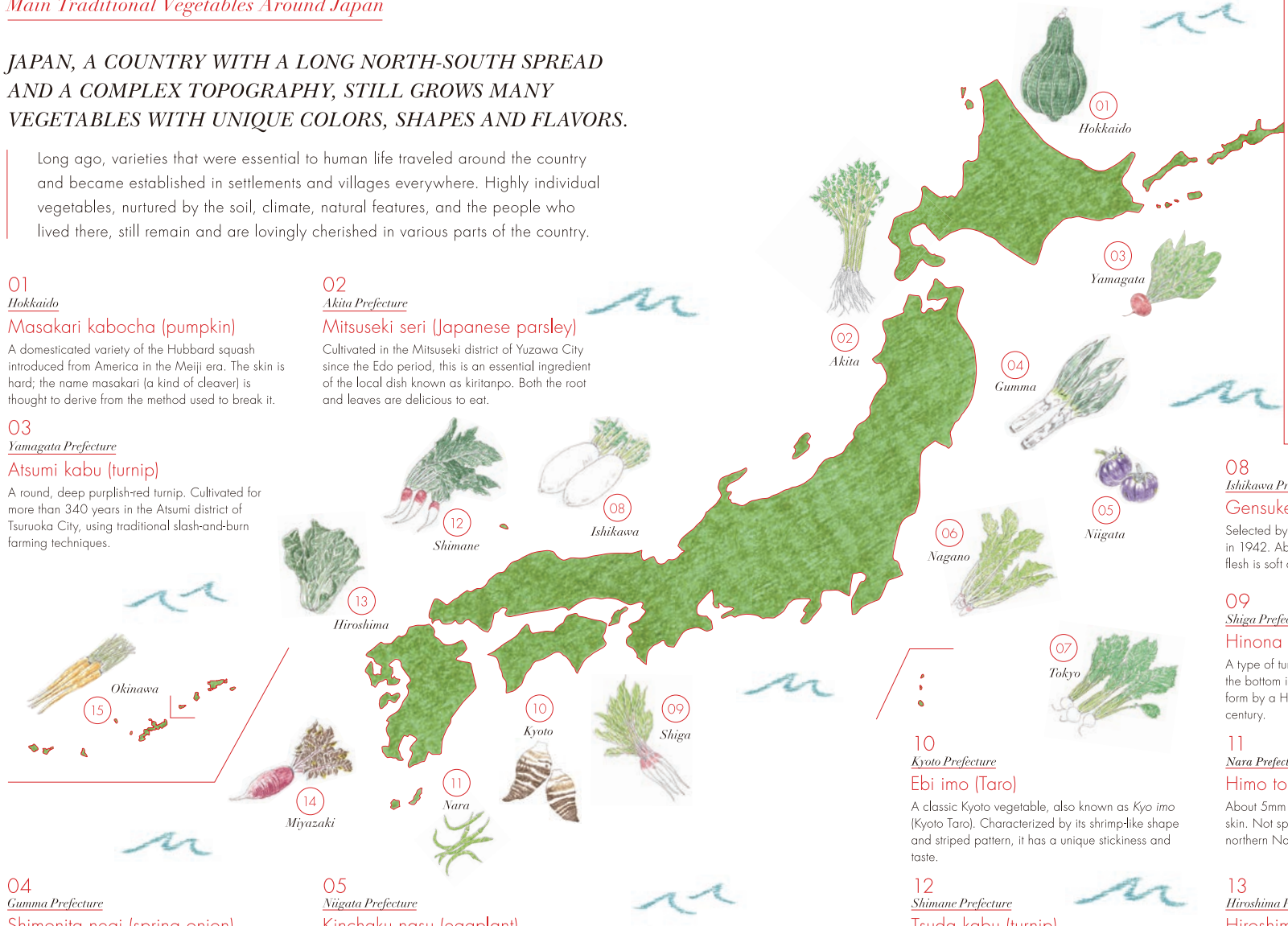
The *kabu* turnip, eaten for both its root and its leaves

Negi spring onions, with different appearance and preparation methods in different parts of the country

Main Traditional Vegetables Around Japan

JAPAN, A COUNTRY WITH A LONG NORTH-SOUTH SPREAD AND A COMPLEX TOPOGRAPHY, STILL GROWS MANY VEGETABLES WITH UNIQUE COLORS, SHAPES AND FLAVORS.

> Long ago, varieties that were essential to human life traveled around the country and became established in settlements and villages everywhere. Highly individual vegetables, nurtured by the soil, climate, natural features, and the people who lived there, still remain and are lovingly cherished in various parts of the country.



01
Hokkaido

Masakari kabocha (pumpkin)

A domesticated variety of the Hubbard squash introduced from America in the Meiji era. The skin is hard; the name masakari (a kind of cleaver) is thought to derive from the method used to break it.

02
Akita Prefecture

Mitsuseki seri (Japanese parsley)

Cultivated in the Mitsuseki district of Yuzawa City since the Edo period, this is an essential ingredient of the local dish known as kiritanpo. Both the root and leaves are delicious to eat.

03
Yamagata Prefecture

Atsumi kabu (turnip)

A round, deep purplish-red turnip. Cultivated for more than 340 years in the Atsumi district of Tsuruoka City, using traditional slash-and-burn farming techniques.

04
Gumma Prefecture

Shimonita negi (spring onion)

Very thick-stemmed, with a diameter of 5-6cm. The white part is sweet and soft. Also known as *Tonosama negi* ("the lord's negi") as it was served to the shogunate and feudal lords in the Edo period.

05
Niigata Prefecture

Kinchaku nasu (eggplant)

An eggplant shaped like a purse (kinchaku), with folds on its surface. Includes the *Uonuma kinchaku* of Uonuma City and the Nagaoka kinchaku of Nagaoka.

06
Nagano Prefecture

Nozawana (turnip leaves)

First grown in the Edo period, when a monk from Kenmeiji Temple in the Nozawa *onsen* village brought Tennoji turnip seeds back from Kyoto.

07
Tokyo

Kanamachi kokabu (small turnip)

Developed in Kanamachi, Katsushika Ward, at the end of the Meiji period, this variety was used in high-class *ryotei* restaurants and elsewhere. First grown all over Kanamachi, then spread across the country

08
Ishikawa Prefecture

Gensuke daikon (white radish)

Selected by an innovative farmer in Kanazawa City in 1942. About 25cm long and 8-10 cm thick. The flesh is soft and very sweet-tasting.

09
Shiga Prefecture

Hinona (turnip)

A type of turnip. The top is a bright crimson color, the bottom is white. Was developed to its present form by a Hino seed merchant in the mid-18th century.

10
Kyoto Prefecture

Ebi imo (Taro)

A classic Kyoto vegetable, also known as *Kyo imo* (Kyoto Taro). Characterized by its shrimp-like shape and striped pattern, it has a unique stickiness and taste.

11
Nara Prefecture

Himo togarashi (chili)

About 5mm in diameter. Dark green color with a soft skin. Not spicy hot, but has a crisp texture. Grown in northern Nara Prefecture.

12
Shimane Prefecture

Tsuda kabu (turnip)

Grown in the Tsuda district of Matsue City since the Late Edo period. Characterized by its curved jewel shape and bright crimson color. Mainly cultivated for pickles.

13
Hiroshima Prefecture

Hiroshimana (greens)

Midway between Chinese cabbage and turnip in character, this is a non-heading leafy vegetable. Cultivated since the Edo period, used in pickles.

14
Miyazaki Prefecture

Itomaki daikon (white radish)

Grown in Nishimera, on the border with Kumamoto Prefecture. The name itomaki ("winding thread") comes from the pattern, which looks as if purple thread is coiled around the surface.

15
Okinawa Prefecture

Shima ninjin (carrot)

A thin yellow carrot that reached Okinawa from the Silk Road via China. Used as an ingredient in the local dish *shiri-shiri*.

The present and future of traditional vegetables

Until about 50 years ago, highly individual vegetables could be found all over Japan. But the advent of mass production has made both species and varieties more uniform. Some long-surviving varieties are on the verge of vanishing altogether. But now, movements aimed at taking another look at the existence and attraction of "traditional vegetables" are starting to spring up. The fact that these vegetables still exist after so much change is proof that they are delicious and continue to be loved. Young growers are emerging, and as well as traditional local cuisine, new ways of preparing vegetables are being proposed.

Main Varieties of Traditional Vegetable

DAIKON
white radish

There are many examples of unique radishes in Japan – for example, the world's largest "Sakurajima radish" and the world's longest "Moriguchi radish." An essential ingredient of Japanese *oden* and *nimono* dishes, pickled versions have also developed as preserved food for surviving the winter. Meanwhile, *daikon oroshi* (grated radish) is known to go well with grilled fish.

Sakurajima daikon
Season: January-February
Producing area: Kagoshima Prefecture

The world's largest radish, nurtured by volcanic ash soil from Sakurajima. Normally weighs around 10kg, but some can be more than 20kg. The flesh is dense and stays firm when boiled. As well as being used in *nimono* dishes, it can be eaten raw or used in a saké lees pickle called satsumazuke.

Moriguchi daikon
Season: January-February
Producing area: Gifu and Aichi Prefectures

With a root extending to two meters, this radish needs 90 days to grow, compared to 60 days for ordinary varieties. As it goes so deep into the ground, it can only be grown in soft sandy soil. Long used as an ingredient in the lees pickle known as *Moriguchizuke*.

Shogoin daikon
Season: November-February
Producing area: Kyoto Prefecture

Round radishes developed by innovative farmers of Shogoin in Sakyo Ward, Kyoto, at the end of the Edo period. Each weighs between 1 and 2.5 kg. Sweet and firm when boiled, this is an essential ingredient of *oden* and *nimono* dishes. A "daikon cooking festival" is held in December every year.

A GROWER'S VIEW

Itomaki daikon
Yuuki Taniguchi of Hyakushoutai Co., Ltd.

In Nishimera, Miyazaki Prefecture, we grow itomaki daikon that have been cultivated for about 500 years. Although they are not uniform in shape, the flesh is dense and firm. We are proud that these have about twice the sugar content of ordinary white radishes. We hope people will savor the history and story of the white radish.

Season: November – early December Producing area: Miyazaki Prefecture

Also known as *suzuna*, the turnip is counted as one of the *nanakusa* (seven herbs) of spring, and has been a familiar vegetable since olden times. Sometimes round, sometimes long, sometimes curved. Red turnips, white turnips, and two-colored (red and white) turnips. Eaten not only for its root but sometimes also for its leaves (as in *nozawana*), this is a vegetable with a great breadth of variety in different parts of Japan.

KABU
KABURA
turnip

Mogami kabu
Season: late October – mid-November
Producing area: Yamagata Prefecture

A long turnip grown since ancient times near Shinjo City in Yamagata Prefecture. Reddish purple at the top and white at the bottom, the flesh is soft. Used in various pickles (*amazakezuke, shiozuke, misokabu* and *fusubezuke*), as well as in *nimono* and stir-fried dishes.

Shogoin kabu
Season: November-January
Producing area: Kyoto Prefecture

Cultivated for around 300 years. Can grow to more than 5kg. Japan's largest turnip. Sliced in paper-thin strips and pickled in barrels to make the Kyoto speciality *senmaizuke*.

Heike kabu
Season: December-January
Producing area: Miyazaki Prefecture

Grown in the village of Shiiba, where remnants of the Heike clan are said to have settled after defeat in the Genpei war 830 years ago. A very vigorous variety that can grow naturally by the roadside, it has many fibrous roots. The leaves are used in the local delicacy *nadofu*.

A GROWER'S VIEW

Tennoji kabura
Tadakiyo Kitano of Kitano Farm

A very sweet and delicious turnip. We get about 60 for every 100 seeds sown. This turnip was a labor of love by my ancestors, and I would like to make it even better for the future.

Season: October-January Producing area: Osaka Prefecture

Main Varieties of Traditional Vegetable

NEGI

spring onions

Soba noodles, *nabe* dishes, *sukiyaki*, chilled *tofu* – the sharp pungency of the spring onion is a vital part of so many Japanese foods. The dietary culture of the nation has been divided since ancient times, with "white *negi*" preferred in east Japan and the green leaves in the west. And there are many locally grown, locally enjoyed varieties, such as the thick-stemmed Shimonita negi.

Kujo negi

Season: November-March
Producing area: Kyoto Prefecture

Cultivated for more than a thousand years in Kyoto City. Has short roots and slime inside the leaves, which increases together with sweetness when exposed to cold. Has long been popular in Kyoto as an ingredient or seasoning for nabe dishes.

Shimonita negi

Season: November-January
Producing area: Gumma Prefecture

This single-stemmed variety is a speciality of Shimonita in Gumma Prefecture. The thickest and stockiest of all Japanese *negi*, it takes 14 months to grow. Very thick-stemmed, with a diameter of 5-6cm. Also known as Tonosama *negi* ("the lord's negi") as it was served to the shogunate in the Edo period.

Senju negi

Season: December-February
Producing area: Saitama Prefecture

Grown in Soka, Koshigaya and Kasukabe, Saitama Prefecture. It was introduced to Edo 200 years ago, when a *Senju negi* market was held. The soft white part is produced by piling earth around the leaf sheath and shielding it from light.

A GROWER'S VIEW

Unane negi
Ken Ebisawa, farmer

We started growing this variety about ten years ago. We called it Unane negi, as it had been repeatedly grown from seed by people in the Unane district of Setagaya for more than half a century. This is a soft variety that tastes sweet when grilled over a direct flame. We hope to increase cultivation gradually from now on.

Season: December – early January Producing area: Tokyo

MAME

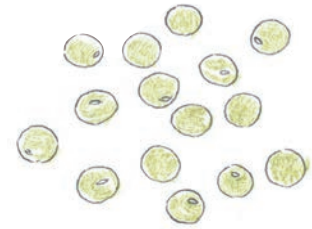
beans

As well as being seeds, beans can be used directly as foods when boiled, and have long been cherished in all parts of Japan. Soybeans, an ingredient for soy sauce, miso and natto; azuki beans, a vital ingredient of wagashi Japanese confectionery; and large-grain broad beans are among the many extant varieties that are unique in both color and shape.

Tamba kurodaizu (black soybeans)

Season: October
Producing area: Hyogo Prefecture

A Tamba region speciality first cultivated by the Sasayama clan in the Edo period. Their large grain size makes them easier to boil, but they still retain their skin and have sweetness. Large-grain black soybeans are an essential part of the *osechi ryori* food made at New Year's in Japan.



Koito zairai (soybeans)

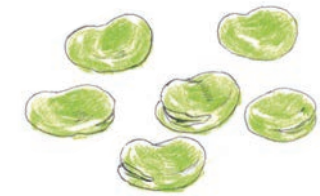
Season: October
Producing area: Chiba Prefecture

Chiba's leading domesticated soybean variety. The name derives from the Koito River in Kimitsu, the focus of cultivation in the prefecture. The Koito Zairai Fan Club has successfully applied to register "Koito Zairai" as a trademark.

Muko issun (broad beans)

Season: May
Producing area: Hyogo Prefecture

Cultivated in the Muko district of Amagasaki City, where it is said to have been introduced in the Nara period. The name comes from the large size of the bean, which grows to about 3 cm (= issun). Output had declined dramatically, but has been revived as a traditional vegetable of Amagasaki.



A GROWER'S VIEW

Shakkinnashi daizu (soybeans)
Maya Aoki, Tsuru Environmental Forum (NPO)

We produce Shakkinnashi daizu in Yamanashi Prefecture. These beans are so named because we grow so many that all debts (shakkin) can be repaid! They are small and sweet, and taste delicious. They also make very tasty soybean milk, kinako roasted bean flour, and miso. So we want to spread the word to as many people as possible!

Season: As edamame, mid-October to early November
As dried beans, late November to early December
Producing area: Yamanashi Prefecture

Thoughts on Traditional Vegetables

A CHEF, A VEGETABLE SOMMELIER, A SEED MERCHANT, AND AN EXPERT. PROFESSIONALS ACTIVE IN THE FIELDS OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON THE ATTRACTION OF VEGETABLES THEY WOULD LIKE TO PRESERVE AND PASS ON, AND THEIR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

I want to convey the knowledge and attraction of traditional vegetables in order to sustain them

Mikizo Hashimoto Owner of "ICHIRIN" Japanese restaurant

My relationship with traditional vegetables has been going on for more than 20 years, in one way or another. Although it takes time to pre-treat traditional vegetables, they don't take so long to cook. That's because they have so much character, strong flavor and underlying strength. But they will die out if they are sold cheaply, despite the hard work of the farmers. I want to convey the knowledge and attraction of traditional vegetables in order to sustain them. To this end, I will be glad to do whatever I can as a chef.

"ICHIRIN" is a Japanese restaurant serving courses in the style known as Kaiseki. Mikizo Hashimoto was born in Kyoto. Entered a cookery career at age 18, then gained experience in a well-known restaurant before opening "ICHIRIN" in 2007. Has been one of Japan's most prominent chefs since 2009, including accreditation by Michelin.

Traditional vegetables offer the enjoyment of growing for ourselves and raising from seed

Satoru Nakamura Managing Director, "Kougousei Hafuu"

The attraction of traditional vegetables lies above all in their flavor. In the old days, eggplant and cucumber used to be soft, but vegetables today have become hard through selective reproduction, to make them survive long transportation and look better in the shops. Although our self-sufficiency in vegetables is 90%, more than 80% of the seeds come from abroad. Traditional vegetables offer the enjoyment of growing for ourselves and raising from seed. I hope more and more people will choose to grow, eat, and take seeds from delicious traditional vegetables.

3rd generation owner of a seed and seedling store in Hamamatsu City. For the last 20 years, has been collecting seeds of endemic species, domesticated species and traditional vegetables from all over the country and selling them, mainly to home horticulturalists. Also gives guidance on soil preparation and cultivation tips for vegetable gardening.

I want to act as a "bridge" between traditional vegetable producers and consumers

Megumi Yoshida Vegetable sommelier / Cuisine expert

Traditional vegetables have a history and a story. For example, the *Nambu futonegi* (spring onions) of Aomori Prefecture were once in decline, but have been revived through the efforts of local senior high school students. A chance connection led to me selling vegetables from Aomori in my Tsukiji store. I also visited the producing areas. Growers in their 60s and 70s have asked me to do all I can to spread the word about Aomori vegetables in Tokyo and tell everyone how good they are. In future, I will continue to convey their attraction through seminars and other means, acting as a "bridge" between producers and people in the city.

Possesses many food-related qualifications, including Edo Tokyo Vegetable Concierge, Saké Taster and Junior Food Education Meister. Opened the Aomori Vegetable Specialist Store "Hidamari Marché" in Tsukiji in 2013.

Traditional vegetables are "hospitality foods" that convey Japanese history and culture

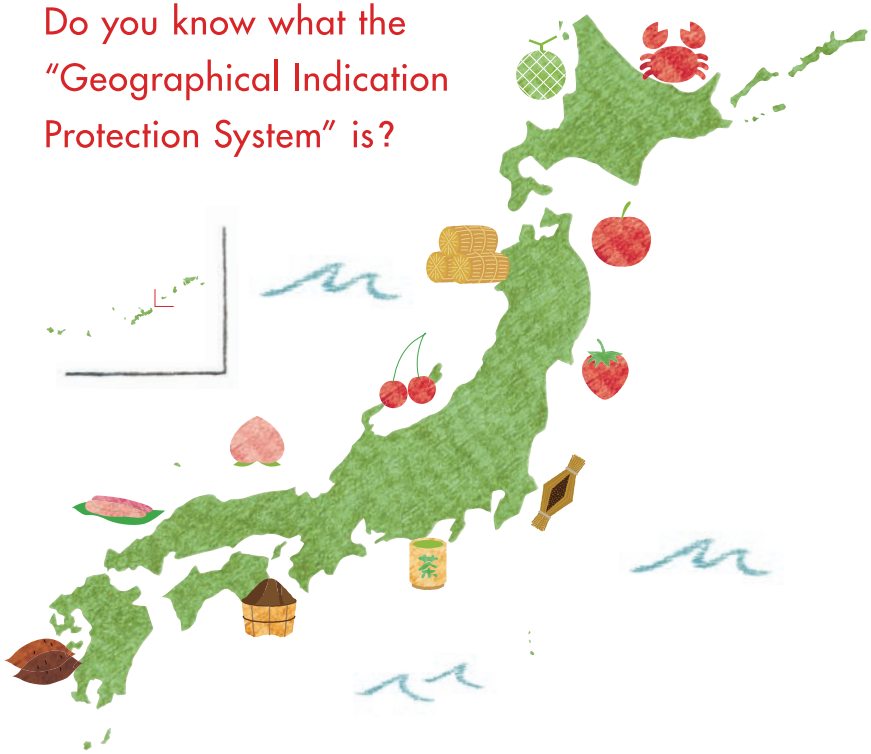
Michishige Otake Edo Tokyo traditional vegetable specialist

In the Edo period, when the population grew and food became scarce, the feudal lords in various parts of the country brought vegetables to the capital. These survive today as "Edo Tokyo vegetables." One of them, the komatsuna mustard spinach, was so named by the 8th Edo shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune, as an example of the close relationship with the samurai class. Traditional vegetables have remained alive since ancient times through their seeds, and have been cultivated without interruption in their respective localities. They have become "hospitality foods" unique to those localities. I hope people will go to those places and be sure to eat their vegetables – not only Japanese people, but those from other countries as well.

Undertakes initiatives to revive Edo Tokyo vegetables, such as leading the Edo Tokyo Traditional Vegetable Research Group. Holds a number of other important posts, including "Worker in Local Consumption of Local Produce" for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and "Local Strength Creation Adviser" for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Publications include Edo Tokyo Yasai ("Edo Tokyo Vegetables") (story edition).

The "Geographical Indication Protection System," a scheme for protecting Japanese tradition

Do you know what the "Geographical Indication Protection System" is?



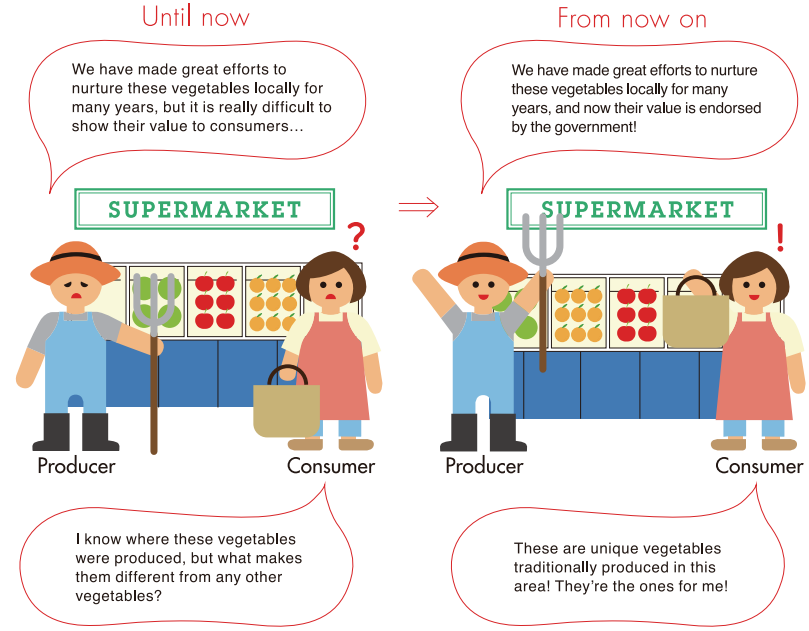
The "Geographical Indication Protection System" is a scheme that the government certifies and protects the value of local traditional products produced all over Japan, such as their special production methods and characteristics that have been cultivated over many years. This is a globally well-known system, having been introduced in more than 100 countries around the world. In 2014, a new law was enacted (the Act for the Protection of Names of Designated Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Products, etc.) so as to introduce the GI Protection System in Japan. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will strictly examine the validity of applications for registration, so all of the products which registered successfully are recognized as being of excellent quality. In addition, the quality standards of the registered products are published, and the government regularly monitors the condition of quality control. This means that "products endorsed by the government as being of high quality" are available on the market, and people can buy the products with reassurance. Also, this system will play a major role so as to achieve the future for the products of all over Japan; e.g. develop an environment in which registered products, as "Japan's genuine specialty products," can be expanded into overseas markets, while protecting their value. Then, how exactly will our lives from now on change as a result of establishing the "GI Protection System"? Please see the next page.

Changes after the establishment of the "GI Protection System"

The products registered the name as "Geographical Indication" are permitted to use the "GI mark", which certifies their quality. As a result, the use of GI mark enables the producers to easily show that their products have traditions and characteristics nurtured locally, and to seek differentiation with other products. Also, consumers can easily choose the products, which are certified as genuine specialty products by the government, from numerous commodity goods. This "intelligibility", beneficial for both producers and consumers, is expected to change people's lives for the better from now on.

GI: Geographical Indication

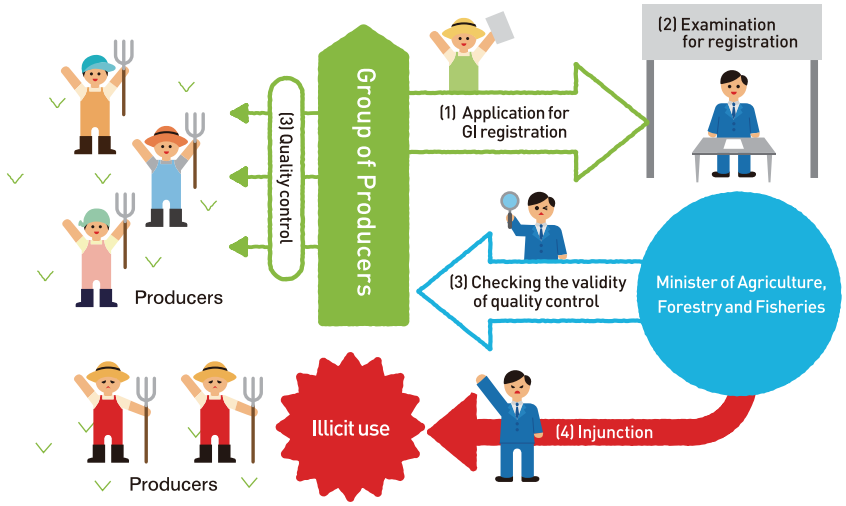
This is how people's lives will change with establishment of the "Geographical Indication Protection System"!



"Intelligibility" can achieve mutual happiness for both "producers" and "consumers"!

The "Geographical Indication Protection System," a scheme for protecting Japanese tradition

Outline of the "GI Protection System"



Step (1)

A group of producers submits the application for registration of the name of local traditional products.

Step (2)

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries examines the application, referring to public and expert opinion. Once registered, registered GI and quality standards are published, and the products meeting those standards are only permitted to use the GI and the GI mark.

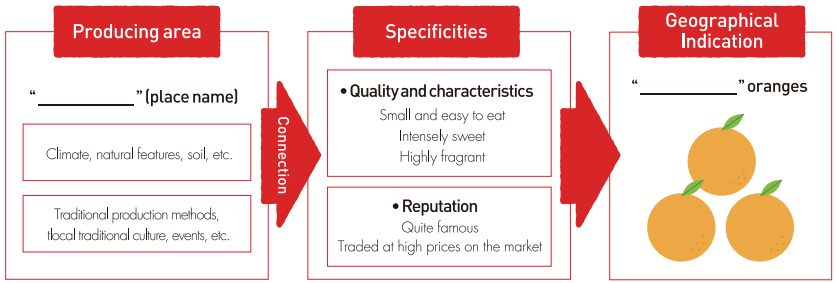
Step (3)

The registered group carries out quality control, and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries checks the validity of quality control.

Step (4)

If illicit use of GIs or GI mark is found, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries issues injunction to correct such use. As a result, producers can protect their brands without incurring extra cost.

Image of "geographical indication"



Q&A about the "Geographical Indication Protection System"

QUESTION 01 When will the "Geographical Indication Protection System" start?

ANSWER 01 Operation is planned to start by June 2015.

QUESTION 02 How much will it cost to register and renew?

ANSWER 02 If the product is registered, the registration and license tax will cost 90,000 yen per each application. Renewal will not be necessary after registration.

QUESTION 03 Is it possible to register the products intended to enhance their brand value such as new products?

ANSWER 03 As "the evidence of tradition" is one of the necessary conditions, and it will not be able to register the products not having been produced continuously for a certain length of time.

QUESTION 04 How does this differ from the "Regional Collective Trademark System"?

ANSWER 04 Major differences of GI Protection System, compared to Regional Collective Trademark System, are that establishment of quality standards and quality control pursuant to those standards are essential, and the government will take administrative action against illicit use of registered GIs. It is also possible to combine the use of both the "Regional Collective Trademark System" and the "GI Protection System."

*For more detailed information, see "Act on the Protection of Names of Designated Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Products, etc. (Geographical Indication Protection System)" on the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries website (http://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/sosyutu/GI/chiri_teki_hyouji_hou.html).*In Japanese only

MAFF

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