

# Know Before You Go: A Primer On Japan's Export Requirements

By Tetsuo Hamamoto

Japan is one of the United States' best customers for farm products, a success that comes in part from the careful attention U.S. exporters pay to the country's import requirements and food laws.

Here are some guidelines on meeting Japan's food and ingredient requirements.

## Testing the Waters: Prior to Export

Before shipping a new product, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) strongly suggests that the exporter work with the importer to ship a product sample.

That sample should be sent to the ministry's port inspectors office for certification of compliance with product regulations. To prevent costly delays at port, exporters should not try to ship their product until these samples clear inspection.

FAS' Office of Agricultural Affairs in Tokyo recommends that the sample be tested by one of the MHLW's officially registered laboratories in the United States, listed in the sidebar to this article.

## The Challenge of Nutraceuticals

Food products associated with special health benefits, called nutraceuticals or functional foods, can present problems when exported to Japan. MHLW classifies a product with implied health claims as a food or a drug.

Examining a sample is necessary, particularly for products that come in tablets or capsules or have pharmaceutical ingredients.



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**HONORING THE REGS AND  
REQUIREMENTS OF YOUR TARGET  
COUNTRY BUILDS CONFIDENCE  
IN YOUR RELIABILITY.**

## Laboratories Approved by Japan

### California Department of Food and Agriculture

#### Chemistry Laboratory Service

3292 Meadowview Rd.  
Sacramento, CA 95832  
Tel.: (916) 262-1434  
Fax: (916) 262-1572

### Oregon Department of Agriculture

#### Export Service Center

Albers Mill Building  
Suite 320  
1200 N.W. Front Ave.  
Portland, OR 97209-2898  
Tel.: (503) 229-6557  
Fax: (503) 229-5933

### ABC Research Corporation

3437 S.W. 24<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Gainesville, FL 32602  
Tel.: (904) 372-0436  
Fax: (904) 378-6483

### Acts Testing Labs, Inc.

100 Northpoint Parkway  
Buffalo, NY 14228-1884  
Tel.: (716) 505-3300  
Fax: (716) 505-3301

### ANRESCO, Inc.

1370 Van Dyke Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94124-3313  
Tel.: (415) 822-1102  
Fax: (415) 822-6614

### Bolin Laboratories, Inc.

17631 N. 25<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85023  
Tel.: (602) 942-8220  
Fax: (602) 942-1050

### Cargill Analytical Services Laboratory

Crowder Industrial Park  
4301 Doniphane Dr.  
Neosho, MO 64850  
Tel.: (417) 451-5973  
Fax: (417) 451-5478

### Central Analytical Laboratories, Inc.

101 Woodland Hwy.  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037  
Tel.: (504) 393-5290  
Fax: (504) 393-5270

### C.L. Technology, Inc.

280 N. Smith Ave.  
Corona, CA 91720  
Tel.: (909) 734-9600  
Fax: (909) 734-2803

### Columbia Food Laboratories, Inc.

36740 E. Historic Columbia River  
Hwy.  
Corbett, OR 97019  
Tel.: (503) 695-2287  
Fax: (503) 695-5187

### Food Products Laboratory, Inc.

12003 N.E. Ainsworth Cir.  
Suite 105  
Portland, OR 97220-1099  
Tel.: (503) 253-9136  
Fax: (503) 253-9019

### Irvine Analytical Laboratories, Inc.

10 Vanderbilt Dr.  
Irvine, CA 92618  
Tel.: (714) 951-4425  
Fax: (714) 951-4909

### Midwest Research Institute

425 Volker Blvd.  
Kansas City, MO 64110  
Tel.: (816) 753-7600  
Fax: (816) 753-8420

### Michelson Laboratories

6280 Chalet Dr.  
Commerce, CA 90040  
Tel.: (310) 928-0553  
Fax: (310) 927-6625

### The National Food Laboratory, Inc.

6363 Clark Ave.  
Dublin, CA 94568-3097  
Tel.: (510) 828-1440  
Fax: (510) 833-8795

### OMIC USA, Inc.

1200 N.W. Front Ave.  
Suite 100  
Portland, OR 97209  
Tel.: (503) 224-5929  
Fax: (503) 223-9436

### Primus Laboratories

3130 Skyway Dr.  
Suite 308  
Santa Maria, CA 93455  
Tel.: (805) 922-0055  
Fax: (805) 922-2462

### Silliker Laboratories of Illinois, Inc.

1304 Halsted St.  
Chicago Heights, IL 60411  
Tel.: (708) 756-3210  
Fax: (708) 756-2898

### West Coast Food Center

12423 N.E. Whitaker Way  
Portland, OR 97230  
Tel.: (503) 254-5143  
Fax: (503) 254-1452

To sell a food product in Japan that makes a health benefit claim, check with FAS Tokyo on import requirements.

### Watch Your Additives

The Japanese operate on a positive approval system, meaning that approved additives, both artificial and natural, appear on a list. If a substance is not on the list, it cannot be used. You can obtain a copy of the list online at: [www.ffcr.or.jp/zaidan/FFCRHOME.nsf/pages/e-info-foodchem](http://www.ffcr.or.jp/zaidan/FFCRHOME.nsf/pages/e-info-foodchem)

Many additives that are commonly used in the United States, such as some food colorings, cannot be sold in Japan. Foods containing even traces of these ingredients will be stopped at the dock and denied entry.

Japan's MHLW restricts the use of additives in all food products. The ministry's goal is to limit the amount of additives consumed in a normal diet.

Exporters may be frustrated that an additive is allowed for some products, but not others. However, a company may petition the MHLW for approval to use an additive





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in its products—provided the company can make the case that the use of the additive causes no harm to human health.

To ensure expedited clearance through customs at port:

- **For synthetic additives** that have limits set by the MHLW, chemical names and contents must be listed.

- **Artificial colors** must be identified by their chemical names and international color index numbers. U.S. color descriptions must also be provided.
- **Artificial flavors** must be identified by their chemical names as they appear on the Japanese approved additive list.

and signature of the company representative and a product description.

Japan requires labels on biotechnology products and allergens. Japan also has certification and labeling requirements for organic products that suppliers must fulfill.

### Use FAIRS-To Be Sure

FAS provides detailed reports on regulations for exporters in many target markets, including Japan. You can access these documents, called Food and Agriculture Information Reports (FAIRs), from the FAS home page: [www.fas.usda.gov/itp/ofsts/fairs\\_by\\_country.asp](http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/ofsts/fairs_by_country.asp)

For more details on requirements for exporting foods and ingredients to Japan, consult FAIR No. JA8063, or visit FAS Japan's Web site: [www.atojapan.org/intro.html](http://www.atojapan.org/intro.html) ■

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### Taking Care of (Produce) Business

Shipments of fresh fruits, vegetables and unprocessed grain products must include a phytosanitary certificate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In addition, some fresh fruits and vegetables are currently prohibited under Japan's quarantine regulations, including apricots, bell peppers, cabbage, chilies and eggplant.

A certificate from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service must accompany shipments of frozen fruits and vegetables that are prohibited entry as fresh products.

All other frozen fruits and vegetables may be self-certified by the U.S. processor, exporter or state department of agriculture. The shipper's invoice should include the date and temperature of freezing, the name