Inspection results of the imported food monitoring and instruction program in 2006

An interim report

Department of Food Safety,
Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare,
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1. Introduction

In order to monitor and provide instructions to ensure the safety of foods, etc., imported into Japan (hereafter referred to as “imported foods, etc.”), the government established the imported food monitoring and instruction program in 2006 (hereinafter, “the program”). The program is based on the guidelines for monitoring and providing instructions in food sanitation (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Notification No. 301, 2003) as per the regulations of Article 23, Paragraph 1 of the Food Sanitation Law (Law No. 233, 1947; hereinafter, “the Law”); public comments were collected and risk communication was conducted. The program was published in the Official Gazette as an official report according to the regulations of Paragraph 3 of the same article, and the monitoring and instruction for imported foods, etc., is being conducted based upon the Program.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will publish an outline of the implementation status of the monitoring and instruction for imported foods, etc., conducted in accordance with the program, by June of the next year and will also publish the mid-year status around the middle of the fiscal year. An interim report on the results of the inspections conducted based on the program from April to September, 2006, which were summarized recently, will be published.

Reference: Website on “imported food monitoring operation”
http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/yunyu/tp0130-1.html

Inquiry: Office of Import Food Safety, Inspection and Safety Division, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau




2. Outline of the imported food monitoring and instruction program

① What is the imported food monitoring and instruction program?

This is a program implemented by the government for food monitoring and instruction with regard to imported foods, etc. (Article 23 of the Law)

[Aim]

The government promotes intensive, effective, and efficient implementation of inspections at the time of import and monitoring/instruction, etc. for importers and attempts to ensure further safety of imported foods, etc.

② The basic concept of the monitoring and instruction program for imported foods, etc.

In line with Article 4 of the Food Safety Basic Law (Law No. 48, 2003) (Food safety must be ensured through appropriate measures conducted at each stage of the food supply process at both nationally and internationally), a program is established to ensure the implementation of hygienic measures at 3 stages (export countries, import, and domestic distribution).

③ Items subject to intensive monitoring and instruction

- Assessment of any violation of the Law at the time of import declaration.
- Monitoring inspection *1 (124 food groups and approximately 78,000 articles was scheduled in 2006)
- Inspection order *2 (15 articles in all countries and 149 articles in 28 counties and 1 region as of September 30, 2006)
- Comprehensive prohibition regulations *3
- Emergent measures based on foreign information, etc.

④ Promotion of hygienic measures in export countries

- To direct the governments of exporting countries to establish hygienic management measures.
- To intensify and promote the management and monitoring system for pesticides, etc., for inspection prior to export through field investigations and bilateral talks.

⑤ Instructions for importers regarding voluntary implementation of hygiene management measures

- Instructions prior to import
- Instructions on voluntary inspection
- Preparation and storage of documents to confirm the distribution status of imported foods, etc.
- To disseminate knowledge and enlighten importers with regard to food sanitation, etc.

*1: A well-planned inspection based on statistical ideas with consideration to import volume, violation rate, etc., for each food article (Article 28 of the Law)

*2: Inspection at each instance of import is made mandatory for products with a high probability of violation, and a product not passed to inspection is prohibited from import and distribution (Article 26 of the Law).

*3: A regulation that can ban distribution and import without inspection if considered necessary with regard to hazard prevention (Articles 8 and 17 of the Law)

3. Inspection results of the imported food monitoring and instruction program in 2006 (an interim report)

Table 1 Notification, inspection, and violation statuses (April−September 2006: Preliminary figures)

Number of notifications	Amount of import	Number of inspections[*1]	Percentage[*2]	Number of violations	Percentage[*2]
Cases	Thousand tons	Cases	%	Cases	%
923,968	12,416	94,920	10.3	629	0.07
(Records of the previous fiscal year)					
945,349	13,370	96,107	10.2	432	0.05

*[1] Values obtained after excluding overlapping cases from the total values of monitoring inspection, inspection order, instructive inspection, etc.

*[2] Percentage of the number of inspections to the number of notifications

Table 2 Major violation cases (April−September 2006: Preliminary figures)

Violated article	Number of violations	Component percentage	Major violations
	Cases	%	
Article 6 (Distribution of prohibited foods and additives)	156	23.7	Aflatoxin-contaminated corn, peanut, pearl barley, pistachio nut, red pepper (spices, etc.), etc., contamination with toxic fish, detection of diarrhetic/paralytic shellfish toxin, cyanide poisoning from cassava, etc., decay, deterioration, and fungus formation due to accidents during rice transport, detection of the shellfish toxin, etc.
Article 10 (Limitation on distribution, etc. of additives, etc.)	56	8.5	Processed foods that use additives such as cyclamate, polysorbate, tertiary butylhydroquinone (TBHQ), azorubin, etc., which have not been designated for use as additives
Article 11 (Standards and specifications for foods or additives)	434	66.0	Violation of specifications for vegetable and dried vegetable (violation of standards for residual pesticides) Violation of specifications for seafood and its processed products (inclusion of antibacterial substances) Violation of specifications for frozen foods (viable cell count, *Escherichia coli* and coliform bacilli) Violation of standards for usage of additives such as sorbic acid, benzoic acid, etc. Excessive amount of residue: sulfur dioxide, etc. in dried vegetables
Article 18 (Standards and specifications for instruments and containers/packages)	12	1.8	Violation of specifications/standards for instruments and containers/packages Violation of specifications for each raw material
Total	658 (total number) 629 (number of violation notifications)		

Table 3 Implementation status of monitoring inspection (April−September 2006: Preliminary figures)

Products	Inspection items	Number of programs in the fiscal year*	Number of programs implemented	Number of violations
Food products obtained from livestock Beef, pork, chicken, horse meat, other bird meats, etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	2,850	1,299	4
	Residual pesticides	1,700	854	0
	Additives	-	1	0
	Specification, etc.	650	327	0
	Confirmation of removal of specified risk materials (SRM)	-	922	0
Processed food products obtained from livestock Natural cheese, meat products, ice cream, frozen foods (meat), etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	1,050	404	3
	Additives	1,300	751	1
	Specification, etc.	1,600	775	9
Seafood Clam, fish, shellfish (shrimp and crab), etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	3,100	1,668	7
	Residual pesticides	850	717	7
	Additives	300	189	0
	Sspecification, etc.	900	575	0
Processed seafood Processed fish products (fillet, dry food, minced fish, etc.), frozen foods (fishes and other aquatic animals), products processed from fish and shellfish eggs, etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	4,150	2,535	9
	Residual pesticides	250	734	0
	Additives	2,250	2,042	1
	Specification, etc.	6,050	3,266	33
Agricultural foods Vegetables, fruits, oats, corn, beans, peanuts, nuts, seeds, etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	650	1	0
	Residual pesticides	18,000	9,930	72
	Additives	600	369	0
	Specification, etc.	750	260	0
	Mycotoxin	2,700	1,383	1
	Genetically modified (GM) foods	1,553	602	0
Agricultural-product processed foods Frozen foods (vegetable processed products), vegetable processed products, fruit processed products, spices, instant noodles, etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	-	2	0
	Residual pesticides	4,800	2,476	21
	Additives	4,300	2,391	6
	Specifications, etc.	1,950	986	5
	Mycotoxin	2,300	886	1
	GM foods	150	24	0
Other food products Health foods, soups, flavors, confectioneries, edible fats and oils, frozen foods, etc.	Antibiotics, etc.	150	13	0
	Residual pesticides	250	12	0
	Additives	2,950	1,417	3
	Specifications, etc.	1,250	578	2
	Mycotoxin	300	135	0
	GM foods	-	35	0
Drinks Mineral water, soft drinks, alcoholic drinks, etc.	Residual pesticides	300	80	0
	Additives	1,200	705	0
	Specifications, etc.	900	467	1
	Mycotoxin	150	41	0
Additives, instruments, containers/packages, and toys	Specifications, etc.	1,300	651	0
Total (number) 4,500 programs were recorded in the total number of programs in the fiscal year as that for inspection reinforcement.		78,000	40,503 (The implementation rate of the programs in the fiscal year is approximately 52%.)	186

* The approximate number of programs counted by each test item such as antibiotics and pesticides in food products is shown..

Table 4 Items subject to reinforcement of monitoring inspection, etc.,*1 (as of September 30, 2006)

Countries/Regions	Subject foods	Test items
China	Strawberries, green onions, pearl barley	Methamidophos
	Chrysanthemum, qing-geng-cai	Indoxacarb
	Large peanuts	Acetochlor
	Cloud ear mushrooms	Bifenthrin, chlorpyrifos
	Processed rice products *2	Gene modification
	Processed buckwheat products	Aflatoxin
	Sea urchins for raw consumption *3	*Vibrio parahaemolyticus*
	Processed bee larvae products	Tetracycline, oxytetracycline
	Honey	Chloramphenicol
	Immature peas	Flusilazole, difenoconazole, fenpropathrin
	Vegetables, fruits *2	Heavy metals
	Royal jelly	Tetracycline, oxytetracycline
Thailand	Red pepper, cassod tree	Triazophos
	Feverweed	Cypermethrin
	Winged bean	Fenpropathrin
	Shrimp for raw consumption *3	*V. parahaemolyticus*
	Neptunia oleracea	Profenofos
India	Pigeon pea	Chlorpyrifos
	Rice	Bromine
	Egg powder	Semicarbazide
	Tea	Quinalphos
Korea	Chicken	Enrofloxacin
	Arch shell, Tairagigai, and sea urchin for raw consumption *3	*V. parahaemolyticus*
	Green stems of fresh garlic	Pyrimethanil
	Lettuce	Tetraconazole
Vietnam	Products processed from threadfins	Chloramphenicol
	Parsley	Chlorpyrifos
	Spinach	Permethrin Chlorpyrifos Indoxacarb
	Cultured shrimp	3-amino-2-oxazolidinone (AOZ) Chloramphenicol

Countries/Regions	Subject foods	Test items
Australia	Buckwheat	Chlorpyrifos, Dimethoate
	Coleseed	Fenitrothion
	Lettuce	Propyzamide
Taiwan	Oolong tea	Bromopropylate
	Green soybean	Oxycarboxin
	Guava leaves	Fenthion, Fenpropathrin
France	Soft and semisoft natural cheeses	Listeria
	Apple juice and its raw material juice	Patulin
	Arugula	Bifenthrin
U.S.	Beef	Residual materials, confirmation of SRM removal
	Processed corn products (excluding sweetcorn)	Aflatoxin
	Lettuce	Permethrin
Belgium	Horseradish	Difenoconazole
	Roots of Radish	Boscalid
Mexico	Cacao beans	Parathion-methyl
	Matsutake mushroom	Atrazine
Indonesia	Boiled octopus *3	*V. parahaemolyticus*
	Cultured shrimp	AOZ
Italy	Fennel	Chlorpyrifos
Ecuador	Cacao bean	Malathion, Cypermethrin
Canada	Beef	Residual materials, confirmation of SRM removal
Ghana	Cacao beans	Endosulfan, Fenvalerate
Guatemala	Fresh coffee bean	Cypermethrin
New Zealand	Lemon	Flusilazole, Thiacloprid
Philippines	Sea urchins for raw consumption *3	*V. parahaemolyticus*
South Africa	Grapefruit	Triflumuron
Laos	holy basil	Chlorpyrifos

*1 These items are subjected to inspection reinforcement after a violation is detected; this is usually done for half (50%) the total number of notifications.

*2 Major cases in which monitoring inspection was conducted anew based on foreign information (April−September 2006)

*3 Inspection reinforcement during summer was implemented for all the notifications (100%) (July−October 2006)

Table 5 Items applied to inspection order (April−September, 2006)

Countries/Regions	Subject foods	Test items
China	Eel	Malachite green AOZ Endosulfan
	Oolong tea	Triazophos
	Shiitake mushroom	Fenpropathrin
	White cloud ear mushroom	Methamidophos
	Green stems of fresh garlic	Pyrimethanil
	Matsutake mushroom	Acetochlor
	Cultured puffer fish	AOZ
Taiwan	Cultured eel	AOZ
	Mango	Cyfluthrin Cypermethrin
	Royal jelly	Chloramphenicol
Vietnam	Cultured eel	AOZ
	Squid	Chloramphenicol
	Sesame seeds	Aflatoxin
Thailand	Feverweed	Difenoconazole
	Winged bean	EPN
India	Cultured shrimp	AOZ
Indonesia	Turmeric	Aflatoxin
Ecuador	Cacao beans	2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D)
Ghana	Cacao beans	Chlorpyrifos Pirimiphos-methyl
Philippines	Mango	Cypermethrin
Brazil	Corn	Aflatoxin
France	Rabbit meat	Sulfadimethoxine

Table 6 Items subject to inspection order and inspection results (April−September 2006: Preliminary figures)

Countries/ Regions	Main subject foods	Main test items	Number of tests	Number of violations
All exporters (15 items)	Peanuts, nuts, pearl barley, Chili pepper, etc.	Aflatoxin	5,579	41
	Cyanide-containing beans, cassava	Cyanide	298	1
	Salted salmon roe, etc.	Root nitrite, etc.	328	2
China (42 items)	Chicken, honey, eel, shrimp, royal jelly, freshwater clam, etc.	Tetracylines antibiotics Enrofloxacin Malachite green Others	18,044	23
	Vegetables, fruits, etc. (Spinach, Matsutake mushroom, Shiitake mushroom, Oolong tea, lychee, etc.)	Chlorpyrifos, Cypermethrin, Fenpropathrin, etc.	6,038	8
	Clam	Paralytic shellfish toxin, etc.	5,059	5
	Processed eel products, etc.	Coliform bacteria, etc.	1,800	2
	All processed products	Cyclamate	2,738	0
Thailand (23 items)	Shrimp	Oxolinic acid	1,675	0
	Vegetables, fruits, etc. (Acacia, kale, leech lime leaf, mango, etc.)	Chlorpyrifos Propiconazole Parathion-methyl Others	601	1
	Basil seed	Aflatoxin	14	0
Korea (17 items)	Flounder, etc.	Oxytetracycline, etc.	10	0
	Vegetables (Paprika, red pepper, perilla, etc.)	Chlorpyrifos, Bifenthrin, Ethoprophos Others	2,869	0
	Clam, etc.	Paralytic shellfish toxin, etc.	2,629	0
Taiwan (15 items)	Eel, soft-shelled turtle, royal jelly, etc.	AOZ, enrofloxacin, etc.	1,703	5
	Vegetables, fruits, etc. (Spinach, Chinese chive, mango, etc.)	Chlorpyrifos, cypermethrin, etc.	119	0
	All processed products	Cyclamate	111	0
U.S. (12 items)	Corn, parsley, etc.	Pirimiphos-methyl, chlorpyrifos, etc.	185	0
	Almond, corn	Aflatoxin	1,423	94
	Apple juice	Patulin	76	0
Others (24 countries, 43 items)			8,614	33
Total			59,913	215

Table 7 Major cases in which monitoring was reinforced based on foreign information (April−September 2006)

Month of reinforcement	Country	Food and contents	Background and measurement status
April	U.S.	Chocolate (may contain high concentrations of lead)	Based on a recall case in the U.S., the aforementioned product was tracked, and when imported, appropriate measures were taken for return shipment.
May	China	Livestock, agricultural products, and seafood (possible contamination with nitrogenous compound)	When nitrogeneous compound contamination was reported at Sanchajiang (三叉江) in Wuchuan city, Canton, China, an appropriate measure was taken by instructing importers to ban the import of local products until their safety was confirmed.
July	All countries and regions	Soft drinks (may contain benzene at levels higher than that specified by the guideline)	Based on the investigation results for domestically distributed products, an appropriate measure was taken by instructing producers to voluntarily inspect for benzoic acid/ascorbic acid used as additives in soft drinks.
August	Italy	Natural cheese (possible contamination by *Listeria* species)	Based on a report from EU regarding the export of a product similar to *Listeria*-positive natural Italian cheese to Japan, the aforementioned product was tracked, and simultaneously the producer was subjected to inspection order at the time of import.
August	All countries and regions	Shark liver oil (may contain high concentrations of dioxins)	an appropriate measure was taken by enforcing the implementation of necessary measures such as the determination of dioxin concentrations after customs clearance.
September	U.S.	Spinach (possible contamination with pathogenic *E. coli* O157)	Based on a report from the U.S., regarding the occurrence of food poisoning after consuming spinach, an appropriate measure was taken by mandating the voluntary inspection for pathogenic *E. coli* O157 in cases of raw spinach consumption .
September	Australia	Dry fruits (possible contamination with metal pieces)	Based on a recall case in Australia, appropriate measures were taken in the case of a return shipment when the aforementioned product was imported.

(Reference) A description of key terms in the interim report

Terms	Descriptions
Sodium nitrite	Additive (color-fixing agent) whose maximum residual amounts as root nitrite are defined
Acetochlor	Pesticide (herbicide)
Atrazine	Pesticide (triazine herbicide)
Aflatoxin	Fungal toxin (produced by the fungus *Aspergillus*, etc.)
Gene modification	A technique in which a part of a gene of a bacterium, etc., is segemented, and the constituent elements are recombined and returned to the gene of the original organism or recombined with a gene of another organism
Indoxacarb	Pesticide (oxadiazon insecticide)
Enrofloxacin	Synthetic antibacterial agent (new quinolone)
Oxycarboxin	Pesticide (bactericide)
Oxytetracycline	Antibiotic (tetracyline antibiotics)
Oxolinic acid	Synthetic antibacterial agent (Quinolone)
Quinalphos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Chloramphenicol	Antibiotic (chloramphenicol)
Chlortetracycline	Antibiotic (tetracyline antibiotics)
Chlorpyrifos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Diarrhetic shellfish toxin	Shellfish toxin (mainly refer to toxins produced by a harmful plankton accumulated in clams; toxic clams cause diarrhetic poisoning)
Cyclamate	Undesignated additive (sweetener)
Cyanide	Cyanide-related compounds (e.g., cyanogenic glycoside) found in vegetables such as some varieties of beans
Dichlorvos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Difenoconazole	Pesticide (bactericide)
Ciprofloxacin	Synthetic antibacterial agent (new quinolone)
Cypermethrin	Pesticide (pyrethroid insecticide)
Dimethoate	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Streptomycin	Antibiotic (aminoglycoside)
Sulfadimethoxine	Synthetic antibacterial agent (sulfonamide)
Semicarbazide	Synthetic antibacterial agent, a metabolite of nitrofuran, nitrofurazone
Sorbic acid	Preservative
Thiacloprid	Pesticide (chloronicotinyl insecticide)
V. parahaemolyticus	Pathogenic microorganism (normal flora in seawater, a *Vibrio* species that mainly contaminates fishes and shellfishes and causes acute gastroenteritis)
Tetracycline	Antibiotic (tetracyline antibiotics)
Tetraconazole	Pesticide (bactericide)
Deltamethrin	Pesticide (pyrethroid insecticide)
Triazophos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Triflumuron	Pesticide (insecticide)
Sulfur dioxide	Antioxidant

Terms	Descriptions
Patulin	Fungal toxin (toxin produced by the fungi *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, etc.)
Pirimiphos-methyl	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Pyrimethanil	Pesticide (Anilinopyrimidine fungicide)
Fenitrothion	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Fenthion	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Fenvalerate	Pesticide (pyrethroid insecticide)
Fenpropathrin	Pesticide (pyrethroid insecticide)
Propiconazole	Pesticide (bactericide)
Propyzamide	Pesticide (herbicide)
Profenofos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Bromopropylate	Pesticide (insecticide)
Flusilazole	Pesticide (bactericide)
Permethrin	Pesticide (insecticide)
Boscalid	Pesticide (bactericide)
Polysorbate	Undesignated additive (emulsifying agent)
Paralytic shellfish poison	Shellfish poison (mainly toxins produced by a harmful plankton accumulated in clams, toxic clams cause paralytic poisoning)
Malachite green	Synthetic antibacterial agent
Malathion	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Methamidophos	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
Listeria monocytogenes	Pathogenic microorganism (a normal flora in the natural environment that contaminates milk products and causes listeriosis)
2,4-D	Pesticide (Phenoxyacetic acid herbicide)
AOZ	Synthetic antibacterial agent, a metabolite of nitrofuran furazolidone
EPN	Pesticide (organic phosphate insecticide)
SRM	Parts of a cow [the head (excluding tongue and cheek meat), the spinal cord, vertebral column, and ileum (up to a 2-m region from its connection with the cecum)] wherein accumulation of an abnormal prion protein that is a possible causative agent of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) is noted.
TBHQ	Undesignated additive (antioxidant)