



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Imported Food Notice 01/11

Issued: 28 March 2011

SUBJECT: Testing of some Japanese Food Imports for Radionuclides

General Information

Following the incident at the Fukushima nuclear facility in Japan, additional import testing requirements will be imposed on certain foods sourced from four prefectures in Japan close to where the incident occurred. The prefectures are Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki and Tochigi.

All affected foods will undergo additional food safety testing for high levels of radionuclides. Tested foods that show radionuclide levels below the safe level will be permitted entry into Australia. Foods that show radionuclide levels above the safe level will not be permitted entry.

Please Note: Only the foods mentioned below from the four prefectures are required to be tested.

Foods that are subject to Additional Testing

- Seaweed
- Fresh and Frozen Seafood (excluding fish pastes and fish sauces)
- Milk and milk products
- Fresh fruit and vegetables

Affected Prefectures

Foods of interest sourced from the following Japanese prefectures since 11 March 2011 will be subject to radionuclide testing:

- Fukushima
- Gunma
- Ibaraki
- Tochigi

All other foods sourced from the above prefectures will not be subject to this testing.

Import Arrangements Identifying these Foods to AQIS

As with current arrangements for clearing imported food, brokers will need to answer a specific question when lodging entries so that AQIS can identify if the goods should be subject to testing. Brokers will need to have information about the food being imported to correctly answer this question:

Have the goods been in the Japanese prefectures of Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki or Tochigi at any time since 11 March 2011.

Answering yes to this question will result in the food being referred to the imported food inspection scheme for testing.

Testing

Affected foods will be tested to determine levels of Caesium 137, Caesium 134 and Iodine 131. FSANZ have advised that acceptable levels consistent with Codex Alimentarius guidelines are:

- Caesium 137: 1000 Bq(becquerels)/kg
- Caesium 134: 1000 Bq/kg
- Iodine 131: 100 Bq/kg

Laboratories

Initially, the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) testing laboratory at 619 Lower Plenty Road, Yallambie VIC 3085, will undertake this testing. AQIS is informing appointed analysts of this new testing program and other laboratories may therefore be added to the list in due course.

Please note: As with other testing under the imported food inspection scheme, all testing costs are to be paid for by importers.

Sampling

Given the broad range of the foods affected, it is likely that when radionuclide testing is applied, existing tests under the inspection scheme will also need to be undertaken.

In this instance, AQIS will need to take two sets of samples, one set for radionuclide analysis and another set for any additional analysis other than radionuclide screening.

Further Information

If there are any questions about whether this notice applies to your imports contact:

The AQIS Imported Food Program
02 6272 5488 (ph)
foodimp@aqis.gov.au



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Notice to Industry
24 March 2011

31/2011

Processing imported goods and passengers arriving from Japan

Who is affected by this notice?

This notice is being issued in response to requests for further information following the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. In particular, questions have been raised about potential risks associated with passengers and cargo arriving from Japan.

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing are closely monitoring and assessing the situation, including the potential exposure to radiation of people and goods travelling from Japan to Australia.

Passenger processing

ARPANSA and the Chief Medical Officer have advised the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) that Australians returning from Japan are highly unlikely to be contaminated or to have been exposed to significant levels of radiation, and the risks to health are very low. This includes passengers arriving on commercial aircraft, cruise ships, and in other small craft.

In addition, the risk of any contamination being 'transferred' from passengers returning from Japan to other people (such as in crowded baggage or arrival halls, or while checking in for connecting flights or during baggage handling processes) are negligible.

Accordingly, no checks for radioactivity are required.

International mail, sea and air cargo and aircraft

The Japanese Government, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and ARPANSA have advised that there is a small chance goods from the Fukushima region and an isolated area near Onagawa have been exposed to very low levels of radiation.

However, the risk to health of people handling mail, containers or cargo arriving from these areas is assessed as very low. This includes handling 'permeable' goods such as leatherwear, textiles or other goods made from other plant or animal material.

The risk is also very low when boarding vessels (including aircraft) for clearance or loading/unloading purposes (for example, when clearing small craft, or unloading bulk goods from container ships or commercial aircraft).

Accordingly, at this point in time it is not considered necessary to introduce any radiation screening measures for mail, sea or air cargo, or aircraft arriving from Japan. This is consistent with the approach being taken in a number of other countries, such as the UK, Canada and New Zealand.

Imports of fresh produce

Current advice from Foods Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is that the risk of Australian consumers being exposed to radionuclides in food imported from Japan is negligible. Australia does not import fresh produce from Japan. In fact, Australia imports very little food from Japan. Imports are limited to a small range of speciality products, for example, seafood, seaweed-based products, and sauces.

As a precautionary measure, FSANZ has requested that the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) tests certain fresh or frozen foods originating from the Japanese prefectures of Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki and Tochigi. The foods are milk and milk products, fresh fruit and vegetables, seaweed and seafood (fresh and frozen).

Importers of this type of produce from Japan from the four prefectures listed above should be aware that their goods will be referred to AQIS for testing to check that the foods do not contain unacceptable levels of radionuclides.

DAFF is working closely with ARPANSA, FSANZ and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to ensure a coordinated approach to managing any potential risks to the Australian food supply chain.

As a purely precautionary measure, passengers and importers should be aware that the following products from affected areas should be avoided:

- foods that may have been outdoors (such as fresh produce from crops grown in fields, gardens or allotments or sold in outdoor markets),
- fish, shellfish and seaweed products, and
- milk.

Food that has been stored inside (such as in warehouses or other buildings) prior to export to Australia should be safe. Further information can be obtained from the 'What's New' section on the [FSANZ website](#).

Importers should note that all food (whether imported from Japan or elsewhere) must be declared to AQIS on arrival in Australia.

The risk of food contamination is considered to be negligible; no additional restrictions on imported food from Japan, other than the foods mentioned above, from the Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures have been introduced at this stage.

Ongoing monitoring

DAFF is working closely with ARPANSA and other Government agencies to monitor the current situation.

Stakeholders will be advised if there is any change to current advice that no additional screening of passengers, mail, cargo or produce arriving from Japan is required.

Further information

Further information can be obtained from [ARPANSA](#).