



Securing Stable Food Supply and Food Security in Japan (Part 2)

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(Continued from Part 1 uploaded on September 5, 2014)

I. Securing Stable Food Supply

Article 2 (The Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas)

1. In consideration of the fact that food is indispensable in maintaining human life and important as a basis for healthy and fulfilled living, a stable supply of good-quality food at reasonable prices shall be secured for the future.
2. In consideration of the fact that there are certain unstable factors in the world food trade and supply/demand, this stable food supply to the people shall be secured with increase of domestic agricultural production as a basis, together with an appropriate combination with imports and stockpiles.
3. Food supply shall be managed in such a way as to improve agricultural productivity and to comprehensively promote the sound development of agriculture and food industries, in response to the more sophisticated and diversified public demand.
4. Even in the case that domestic supply is insufficient to meet demand or is likely to be for a certain period, due to unexpected situations such as a bad harvest or interrupted imports, the minimum food supply required for the people shall be secured in order not to be a hindrance to the stability of peoples' lives and smooth operation of the national economy.

5. Food industries account for 30% of the destination of domestic agricultural products, and also have 70% dependence on domestic agriculture in terms of raw agricultural products supply. Therefore, food industries and agriculture should be inseparable in the function of a

stable supply of a variety of food to the Japanese nationals. In order to respond appropriately to the sophisticated and diversified public food demand, comprehensive development of domestic agriculture and food industries should be promoted. 'Food industries' include food manufacturing industry, food processing industry, food service industry and food distribution industry. Towards a stable supply of good-quality food at reasonable prices, productivity of overall food supply relating industries not only of agriculture but also the food industries should be enhanced. However, the reason why 'improve productivity' is especially mentioned only for agriculture in this article, shall be that still, agricultural productivity improvement would now be expected. Although the former Agricultural Basic Law had set the target of narrowing the productivity gap between agriculture and other industries, the gap had not been corrected even with agricultural productivity improvement. Regarding 'production adjustment', Article 2-3 of this basic law defines basic idea of no production where there is no consumption, as 'Food supply shall be managed in such a way as to improve agricultural productivity and to comprehensively promote the sound development of agriculture and food industries, in response to the more sophisticated and diversified public demand'.

6. Even in the case that domestic supply is insufficient to meet demand or is likely to be for a certain period, due to unexpected situations such as a bad harvest, the disturbances of war, or port strike, the minimum food supply required for the people shall be secured in order not to give anxiety to the public. Such a crisis management system shall be necessary to be considered and prepared in time of peace (Article 2-4). 'The minimum food supply required for the people means the necessary food for the stability of peoples' lives and smooth operation of the national economy, even in unexpected situations. Concrete meaning would be the level of food not to be a hindrance for the people's daily life and industrial activities.

'Unexpected situations such as a bad harvest or interrupted imports' refers the following example cases causing significant shortage of food supply beyond the generally expected situations for risk management;

- Unprecedented bad harvest within the country
- Continuous or simultaneous crop failure in the major exporting or consuming countries, interrupted imports or considerably reduced imports due to significant confusion of world agricultural production and trade caused by the disturbances of war
- Serious constraints for domestic agricultural production due to oil supply suspension

'A certain period' means a period beyond the food shortage period to happen in the normal year's supply cycle. For example, stockpile of major agricultural products has been kept currently for 2-3 months consumption, and import operations and procedures for major agricultural products can be expected to be managed within 2-3 months. Therefore, a

period that cannot be addressed by such arrangements shall be ‘a certain period’.

‘In order not to be a hindrance to the stability of peoples' lives and smooth operation of the national economy’ refers to the efforts to avoid the situation where maintaining the healthy and fulfilled living could become difficult due to the shortage of necessary food for human life, and at the same time, peoples’ economic activities could be hampered by going into a panic due to food shortage or soaring food prices, hence not be able to stay in normal economic operation such as production and distribution of the nation as a whole.

7. The relation between Article 2-1 and Article 2-4

Food is indispensable in maintaining human life so that a stable supply of food with certain amount and quality shall be secured universally as a basis for healthy and fulfilled living. Article 2-1 defines such a fundamental principle of food. On the other hand, Article 2-4 stipulates that even in the case that domestic supply is insufficient to meet demand or is likely to be for a certain period, due to unexpected situations such as a bad harvest or interrupted imports, the minimum food supply required for the people shall be secured. In other words, Article 2-1 stipulates the universal principle in time of peace, and Article 2-4 stipulates the basic principle for securing a stable food supply in an emergency, namely, attaching great importance to distributing available food to the public impartially with prioritizing the necessary amount rather than the quality of food.

(Source: “Commentary on the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas”, 2000, Taisei Publishing)

(To be continued)

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