

The JAS Mark System for Transparency in Beef Production

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INTRODUCTION

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is one of the of the greatest food safety concerns among Japanese consumers. The outbreak of BSE-infected cows in September 2001 in Japan awakened consumers' anxiety about the safety of beef. Consumers became more concerned about how beef products are produced.

In order to reduce consumers' anxiety, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) introduced a compulsory traceability system for beef products, called the Beef Traceability System (BTS), in June 2001. However, while the BTS is effective for finding out when and where beef cows were raised and slaughtered, the BTS does not provide detailed information on how beef cows were raised on beef farms. Thus, the MAFF launched a voluntary traceability system whereby beef producers and traders provide detailed information to consumers on how beef cows are fed and medicated, called the JAS Mark System for Transparency in Beef Production (JASTBP). This paper aims to provide an outline of the JASTBP.

A beef traceability system based on the Beef Traceability Act

Before discussing JASTBP, it is useful to have a quick review of the BTS ¹ The BTS is based on the Act on Special Measures Concerning Traceability of Beef Products, commonly known as the Beef Traceability Act. The following is an outline of the BTS.

1. The National Livestock Breeding Center (NLBC), an independent administrative agency, is in charge of compiling and keeping a record of each beef cow in an electronic ledger for the BTS.
2. When a beef cow is born, the beef farmer tags its ear with a unique ten-digit identification number.
3. When there is a change in the situation of a beef cow (e.g., death, shipment to a slaughterhouse, or being purchased by a beef cow trader or another beef farmer), the beef farmer reports it to the NLBC along with the identification number.
4. When a beef cow is slaughtered, the slaughterhouse reports it along with the identification number to the NLBC and tags the carcass with the identification number.
5. Wholesalers, retailers, meat processors, and restaurant owners are responsible for maintaining and passing on the unique identification number throughout the process chain, from slaughtering the cow to selling the final beef products.
6. The NLBC keeps a record of eight attributes for each beef cow: identification number, birthday, gender, breed, the unique identification number of its mother cow, the dates of trade between beef farmers and beef cow traders, the date of slaughter or death, and the place of the slaughterhouse. Consumers can access this information on NLBC's homepage by inputting the unique identification number labeled on the beef product.

The JAS mark system

It should be noted that the BTS is compulsory for all beef producers. In contrast, the JAS Mark system is a voluntary system whereby farmers convey special information on the quality of food to consumers. The JAS Mark system was launched in 1950 when the Act on Standardization and Proper Quality Labeling of Agricultural and Forestry Products, commonly known as the JAS Act, was established.² The premise of the JAS Mark system is to assist consumers' decision-making by ensuring that the quality of agricultural commodities that carry the JAS Mark logo is guaranteed by the MAFF. The JAS Severance Committee, one of the MAFF's advisory boards, is responsible for establishing the JAS Mark quality standards. Currently, there are 201 standards for 64 commodity types (multiple standards are possible for one type of commodity)³.

In order to display the JAS Mark logo on commodities, food producers and distributors must take the following two steps. The first step is to establish contact with the requisite JAS Certification Organizations, which supervise inspections concerning the JAS Mark system standards. Each JAS Certification Organization must specify the standard for which it will provide inspection, and the organization must be approved by the MAFF to conduct such an inspection. For the second step, JAS Certification Organizations must inspect the food producers and distributors who want to display the JAS Mark on their commodities. The name of the JAS Certification Organization must be displayed on the JAS Mark logo.

JAS Mark standards for methods of food production

When the JAS Mark system began, all of the standards for the system were related to ingredients and commodity benefits. By the revision of the JAS Act in 2002, however, it became possible for the JAS Severance Committee to establish JAS Mark standards for methods of food production. The JASTBP was the first case of this revision. The JAS Mark system for transparency in pork production, transparency in processed food production, and transparency in farmed fish production were established in June 2004, June 2005, and March 2008, respectively⁴.

The fundamental structure of the JAS Mark System for Transparency in Beef Production

Fig. 1 illustrates the fundamental structure of the JASTBP. Currently, the MAFF approves eight institutions as JAS Certification Organizations for the JASTBP. Those who put the logo of the JASTBP on carcasses are called certified supervisors of the beef production process (CSBPPs). Legal or natural persons who are responsible for fattening and finishing beef cows and selling carcasses are qualified to apply to be CSBPPs.

In principle, CSBPPs should supervise the entire process of feeding and medically treating beef cows. This means that if a CSBPP is not a beef farmer, the CSBPP should draw up a program of feeding and medical treatments and consign it to a beef farmer. However, it is often the case that beef farmers do not own mother cows, and purchase calves at market (calves around seven months old are traded at the calf market)⁵. In that case, it is difficult for a CSBPP to supervise feeding and medical treatments in the nursing period (i.e., the period between the birth of a calf and its shipment to the calf market). To cope with this problem, the JAS Act stipulates that, as long as reliable records of feeding and medical treatments in the nursing period are kept, CSBPPs need not have consignments with beef farmers who ship calves to the calf market. Even in this case, CSBPPs should keep records of when and where

they began supervision of feeding and medical treatments.

Those who put the logo of the JASTBP on final beef products, such as hams, sausages, and dressed meat, are called certified beef distributors (CBDs). Wholesalers and retailers of final beef products are qualified to apply to be CBDs.

Unlike the BTS, for the JASTBP there is no single information institution such as the NLBC. Instead, CSBPPs and CBDs are obliged to show the methods for accessing detailed information on the beef production process in the labels on carcasses and final beef products. Detailed information should be available through electronic or paper documents (not by oral responses). Websites and facsimiles are popular methods for this purpose. Figure 2 gives an example of a label on final beef products under the JASTBP.

The contents of information provided by the JAS Mark System for Transparency in Beef Production

Fig. 3 provides an example of information on the beef production process revealed through websites or facsimiles. Table 1 compares the information provided by the JASTBP with that provided by the BTS. As can be seen, the JASTBP covers beef cows slaughtered not only in Japan but also in foreign countries. In addition, the JASTBP offers detailed information on feedings and medications (note 6). The names of feeds, including brand names, should be described for all the feeds and feed additives listed in Article 2 of the Act on Safety Assurance and Quality Improvement of Feeds. All the prescription legend animal drugs and animal drugs under the restrictions on use, which are designated by the MAFF based on Term 1 of Section 4 and Term 1 of Section 5 of Article 83 of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Act, should be described as information on medication.

Notes

1. This section provides a brief outline of the BTS. Further details of the system are described at http://ap.fftc.agnet.org/ap_db.php?id=530.
2. This section provides a brief outline of the JAS Mark system. Further details of the system are described at http://ap.fftc.agnet.org/ap_db.php?id=403.
3. The JAS Mark system encompasses three types of non-food commodities: namely, building materials, raw silk, and the outer layer of tatami mats.
4. The JAS Mark system for transparency in processed food production was abolished in December 2013.
5. Further details on the calf market are described at http://ap.fftc.agnet.org/ap_db.php?id=279.
6. Beef farmers usually provide feed not to each beef cow individually but to a group of beef cows in the same lot. Accordingly, it is difficult to keep a record of feeding for each single beef cow individually. In addition, some beef products are made by mixing the meat pieces of several cows. In those cases, the JAS Act allows CSBPPs to take a feeding record of groups of beef cows, as long as the number of beef cows in a group does not exceed 20.

Table 1. Comparison of the information provided by the JAS Mark system for transparency of the beef production system and the information provided by the Beef Traceability System.

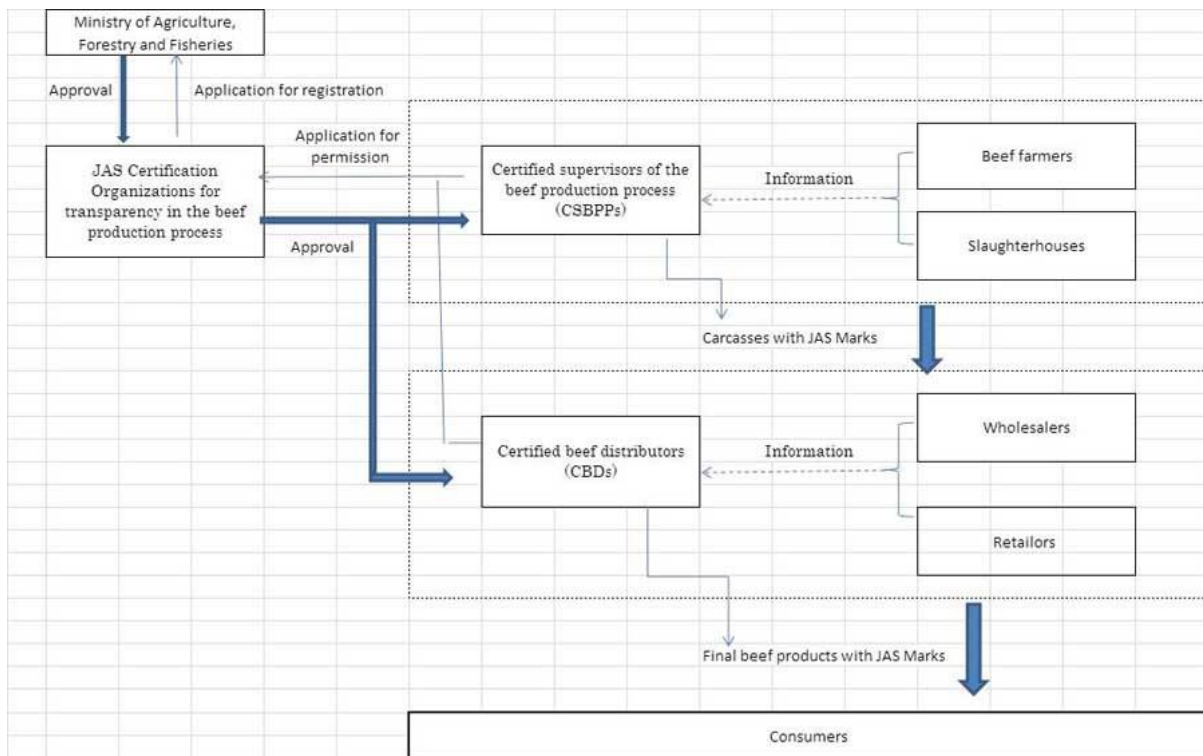
	Beef cows born, raised, and slaughtered in Japan		Beef cows born in foreign countries and then raised and slaughtered in Japan (imported as beef calves)		Beef cows born, raised, and slaughtered in foreign countries (imported as beef products)	
	BTS ^a	JASTBP ^b	BTS	JASTBP	BTS	JASTBP
Birth date of the beef cow	◎ ^c	◎ ^d		◎		◎
Sex of the beef cow	◎	◎	◎	◎		◎
Date of import of the beef calf			◎	× ^f		
Name of the importer of the beef calf and his or her contact address			△ ^e	×		
Name of the importer of the beef calf and his or her contact address			△	×		
Name of the country where the beef calf was born			◎	◎		◎
Date of import of the beef product						×
Name of the importer of the imported beef product and his or her contact address						×
Name of the person who is responsible for keeping records of the beef cow and his or her contact address	◎	◎	◎	◎		◎
Name and contact address of the beef farm and the period of raising	△	◎	△	◎		◎
Date of slaughter	◎	◎	◎	◎		◎
Breed of the cow	◎	◎	◎	◎		◎
Name of the person who slaughtered the cow and his or her contact address	△	◎	△	◎		◎
Name of the slaughterhouse and its address	◎	◎	◎	◎		◎
Names of feed	×	◎	×	◎		◎
Medication history of the beef cow	×	◎	×	◎		◎

Notes:

- a. Beef Traceability System based on the Beef Traceability Act.
- b. JAS Mark system for transparency in the beef production system.
- c. For the BTS, ◎ indicates that the information must be reported to the National Livestock Breeding Center and must be accessible to consumers.
- d. For the JASTBP, ◎ indicates that the information must be accessible to consumers.
- e. For the BTS, △ indicates that the information must be reported to the National Livestock Breeding Center and need not be accessible for consumers.
- f. For the BTS and the JASTBP, × indicates that the information is not accessible to consumers.
- g. Blanks indicate that there is no stipulation in the Beef Traceability Act or the JAS Act.

Source: Page 187 of Nihon Shokuniku Kyogikai and Nihon Shokuniku Kako Kyokai, 2014-15 Nihon Shokuniku Nenkan, Shokuniku Tsushin Sha, Tokyo: 2015, with the author's adjustment and translation from Japanese to English.

Fig. 1. Fundamental structure of the JAS Mark system for transparency in beef production



Source: Page 2 of the Japanese Agricultural Standards Association, *Tsukurite Ga Wakaru Anshin No Shirushi*, Tokyo: 2013, with the author's adjustment and translation from Japanese to English.

Fig. 2. Example of a label on a beef product under the JAS Mark system for transparency in beef production

①	Part of beef	Round
②	The place of origin	Name of prefecture
③	Volume of contents	200 grams
④	Name of the distributor	So-and-so Inc.
⑤	Contact address of the distributor	Lot number, name of subsection, name of village, name of prefecture
⑥	Method for accessing information on the beef production process	http://www.?.?.co.jp , Fax number
Logo of JAS Mark		

Source: Page 2 of the Japanese Agricultural Standards Association, *Tsukurite Ga Wakaru Anshin No Shirushi*, Tokyo: 2013, with the author's adjustment and translation from Japanese to English.

Fig. 3. An example of a document in which a certified supervisor of the beef production process conveys information on beef production to consumers

Information on the identification of a beef cow

Birthday	Date, month, year
Sex	Male
Name of the CSBPP ^a	So-and-so
Contact address of the CSBPP	Lot number, name of subsection, name of village, name of prefecture
Phone number of the CSBPP	Number
Date on which the CSBPP's supervision of beef production began	Date, month, year
Name of the place of the beef farm	Lot number, name of subsection, name of village, name of prefecture
Date when raising the beef cows at the beef farm began	Date, month, year
Date of slaughter	Date, month, year
Breed	Black hair, Wagyu
Name of the slaughterer and his or her contact address	So-and-so Lot number, name of subsection, name of village, name of prefecture

Information on feeding

		Period for nursing	Period for fattening	Period for finishing
Roughage	Pasture		○ ^a	○
	Japanese lawn-grass		○	○
	Rice straw		○	○
Concentrated feed	Maize	○	○	○
	Wheat bran	○		○
	Oil cake from soybean			○
Formula feed	Milk replacer	○		
	Synthetic milk	○		
	Commodity name A		○	○
	Commodity name B			○
	Commodity name C			○
Mixed feed	Commodity name D			○

Information on medication

Date of medication	Symptom	Name of medicine
Date, month, year	Coccidiosis	Dimethoxyethane
Date, month, year	Pneumonia	Terramysin

Note a: ○ indicates that the feed is used at the period.

Source: Page 11 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and fisheries, Seisan Joho Kohyo Gyuniku No JAS Kikaku No Q&A, 2008, with the author's adjustment and translation from Japanese to English.

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