

Establishment of Food Safety Commission

Food Safety Commission (FSC) was established on July 1, 2003, as a part of Japanese Cabinet Office, based on its founding regulation of Food Safety Basic Act (refer to the end of this brochure). Its mission was set as 'implementing science-based risk assessments in an objective, neutral and impartial manner'. As an independent risk assessor, FSC's role is different by nature from that of risk managers, such as the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA), in that the responsibility of those risk managers are to develop administrative measures and regulations of food safety.

○ Background of setting up FSC

Food is essential to life. But, sometimes food contains undesired agents that may cause adverse health effects, or 'hazards', to consumers. No food can be free of risk, therefore it is not realistic to assume 'absolute guarantee of no risk' in food. This 'no zero-risk' concept is driven from the internationally recognized 'risk analysis' framework, in which the scientific method is used to prevent or contain food-related adverse effects under precondition of 'certain risk does exist in every food'. The analysis is organized by three elements (risk assessments, risk management, and risk communication; see page 4). According to this concept, efficient management is ensured, firstly, by scientifically assessing the probability and severity of hazard-driven adverse health effects, known as 'risks' in food. Then, the risks are minimized in accord with appropriate management plans, which have been designed based on the risk assessment.

Situations surrounding Japan's food safety have changed dramatically. For example, Japan's foodstuff imports have increased extremely in past few decades. Also, Japan has experienced the emergence of new hazards such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and enterohemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, while also facing new types of food production technologies such as DNA recombination. To properly deal with all those challenges combined with heightened public concerns toward food safety at once, Food Safety Basic Act was enacted in 2003 to support new administrative plan formation in food safety.

Situation changes around food safety administration

Changes in food safety situation in Japan

- Region-to-region and international expansion of foodstuff distributions
- Emerging hazards such as *E. coli* O157:H7 and prions
- Newly developed technologies (e.g. GMO)
- Improved quality of analytical techniques for detection of environmental contaminants

Food safety crisis

- Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)
- Excessive pesticide residues in imported foods
- Food containing pesticides that are not registered in Japan

New approach to food safety

- Ensuring safety at every stage of food production; from farm to table
- Generalization of the concept (risk analysis) that there is no zero-risk in food, thus appropriate risk assessments and assessment-based regulation should be implemented
- Creation of risk assessment organizations overseas:
 - French Food Safety Agency (Agence Française de Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments: AFSSA), 1999
 - European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), 2002
 - Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Germany (Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung: BfR), 2002

Establishment of the Food Safety Basic Act