



Food Safety Commission of Japan

Who We Are

Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ) conducts food-related risk assessments to ensure human health.

People expect their food to be safe, though all foods are not so. Some food materials derived from animals or plants may contain harmful substances (e.g., natural toxins including puffer fish toxins, solanine contained in green tubers or buds of potatoes, and others). Inappropriate and excessive consumption of these foods causes food poisoning. Our ancestors have dealt with food-borne pathogenic bacteria by treating food with heat, vinegar, and other skills gained from long-standing experience. Even today, however, food poisoning cases are prevalent. Humans have been contriving to make these toxic foods edible to survive throughout our long history. For example, to reduce arsenic content in hijiki seaweed, the water used to soak hijiki in the pre-cooking process is drained away and not used. Furthermore, by the end of the 20th century, food safety has been strengthened through monitoring and management by regulatory authorities to ensure that food is not harmful to human health at the time of consumption.

However, food safety has not been sufficiently ensured solely through these measures above.

Today, in the 21st century, risk analysis*, a comprehensive framework for food safety, provides preventive measures for food safety through science-based approaches.

FSCJ conducts science-based risk assessment of foods requested from risk management organizations including Ministry of Health Labour Welfare (MHLW) and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

Use of pesticides, food additives, veterinary medicinal products ensures food productivity and quality, while risk assessment is required for establishing the standards for their safe use.

Humans eat food to sustain life, but, at the same time, we eat for enjoyment. We enjoy foods we have never tried before or try new ways of eating. Such food may raise food safety issues we have never experienced before, and therefore FSCJ also conducts risk assessment for these foods. In recent years, cases of food poisoning have been found linked to people's preference to eat raw foods, many of which have not been previously eaten raw. A new regulation was introduced based on the risk assessment for raw

meat. Emerging Anisakiasis, a parasitic infection, is a foodborne disease caused by the consumption of raw seafood. FSCJ also makes efforts to guide the public to consume such food in a safe manner.

FSCJ has also promoted "risk communication" in foods through which the information on risk assessment results are provided correctly in an easy-to-understand manner to consumers and food industries. Through risk communication, FSCJ should provide people with the knowledge and information on food safety. FSCJ aims to support the consumer to choose a safe and enjoyable dietary lifestyle. FSCJ also responds to questions and listens to opinions from consumers.

Moreover, FSCJ disseminates relevant information at both the national and international levels. Having gained our experience in risk assessment since the beginning of the 21st century, FSCJ plays an important role in providing information to Asian countries with which Japan is actively involved in food trading.

Communication with overseas organizations involved in food safety is essential, and includes international cooperation and information exchange. A Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) signed with overseas organizations engaged in food safety such as European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has created a successful framework for enhanced cooperation. Food Safety -- the official online journal of FSCJ -- has been successfully founded to commemorate the 10th anniversary of FSCJ. With the launch of this journal, FSCJ disseminates risk assessment results and scientific articles (originals and reviews) related to food safety to a worldwide audience.

Recently, FSCJ is promoting research and investigation to introduce new risk assessment methods using advanced computational approaches that explore alternatives to animal experiments. The approach aims to promptly and efficiently implement risk assessments, and also to consider animal welfare.

FSCJ will continue to work under its fundamental principles to protect the public.

Chairperson

Hiroshi SATOH, M.D., Ph.D



※Risk analysis

Risk analysis is a comprehensive approach to control and reduce risks of any adverse health effects from food-related hazards (an agent in, or condition of, food with the potential to cause any adverse health effect). Risk analysis consists of three components: risk management, risk assessment, and risk communication. Each component interacts with the other to better accomplish the intended purpose.



Mission

FSCJ conducts a science-based risk assessment (assessment of effects of food on health) in an objective, neutral, and impartial manner with the recognition that the protection of public health is the top priority. Moreover, FSCJ promotes risk communication to share risk assessment results and scientific findings. FSCJ was established in July 2003 as a risk assessment organization which is functionally separated from risk management organizations*. (*Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Environment (MOE), and Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA))

Food Safety Commission is comprised of seven commissioners, including four full-time and three part-time commissioners. All of the weekly Commission Meetings are open to the public.

The process flow of FSCJ's risk assessment is as follows:

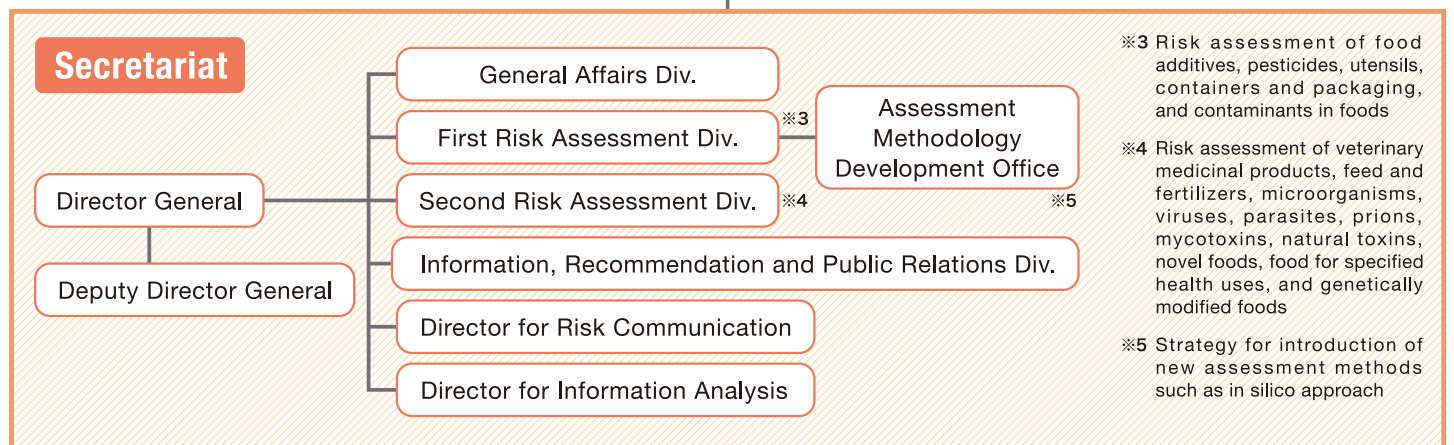
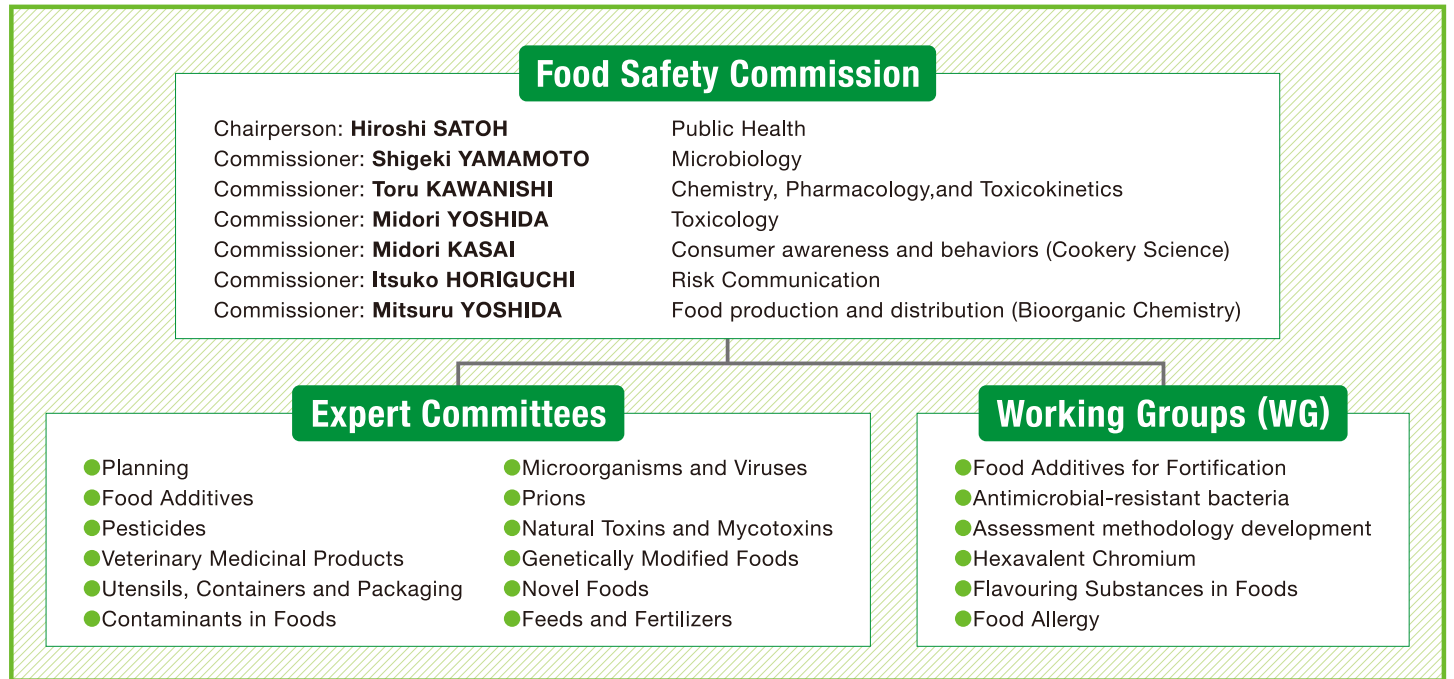
Risk assessment request that the Commission receive from risk managers are assigned to the relevant Expert Committee or Working Group for the development of the draft risk assessment. The draft assessment is reported to the Commission for discussion. Commission will finalize the risk assessment and notify the risk managers who made the request.

Risk management organizations establish standards and criteria for use based on the result of the risk assessments.

The FSCJ Secretariat works for the Commission and Expert Committees by preparing draft reports, communicates with risk managers, and promotes risk communication.

The secretariat is comprised of the director general and staff, including officials, technical advisers, and assistants.

Risk Analysis, the Framework to ensure food safety





Risk Assessment

FSCJ assesses risks to human health posed by microorganisms, chemical substances, and others contained in food, on the basis of the scientific evidence.

The assessment is conducted in response to requests from risk managers. However, if it is judged necessary, FSCJ also undertakes risk assessment on its own initiative, the so called "self-tasking" risk assessment.

Expert Committees and Working Group (WG)

FSCJ consists of the Planning Expert Committee, which develops its annual work program and Expert Committees/Working Groups, which carry out risk assessments on specific hazards. Currently, more than 250 experts (part-time) from universities, research institutes, and other organizations belong to one of the committees or groups and participate in risk assessment of their respective field of expertise.

Planning Expert Committee	Implements FSCJ's Annual Work Program. Deliberates to identify candidate substances for self-tasking risk assessment, the assessment conducted on FSCJ's own initiative.
Expert Committee on Food Additives	Assesses issues on risks related to food additives including preservatives, sweeteners, colouring and others.
Expert Committee on Pesticides	Assesses issues on risks related to pesticide residues in foods
Expert Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products	Veterinary drug residues in livestock and fishery products can be ingested through the consumption of these products. The expert committee assesses issues on risks related to residues in veterinary medicinal products and medical devices used in food-producing animals, such as cattle, pigs, chickens, and fish.
Expert Committee on Utensils, Containers and Packaging	Assesses issues on risks related to chemicals used to produce food utensils (such as tableware, cooking utensils), food containers and packaging, mainly focusing on the substances that may migrate into foods.
Expert Committee on Contaminants in Foods	Assesses issues on risks related to contaminants and chemical substances, such as methyl mercury, that cannot be categorized to other expert committees. A working group is individually organized to deal with a specific hazard given the diversity of chemicals involved.
Expert Committee on Microorganisms and Viruses	Assesses issues on risks related to microorganisms, viruses and parasites. In some cases, risk profile is constructed for foodborne pathogenic microorganisms through collection of scientific findings to implement the risk assessment.
Expert Committee on Prions	Assesses issues on risks related to prions. MHLW, the assessment requestor, will revise the current counter measures against BSE based on the risk assessment of FSCJ.
Expert Committee on Natural Toxins and Mycotoxins	Assesses issues on risks related to natural toxins and mycotoxins

Expert Committee on Genetically Modified Foods	Conducts safety assessment on issues related to genetically modified foods .
Expert Committee on Novel Foods	Conducts safety assessment on issues related to novel foods and food for specified health uses (FOSHU). FSCJ deliberates on issues relevant to safety assessment of FOSHU.
Expert Committee on Feed and Fertilizers	Assesses issues on risks related to residues in feed, fertilizers and a part of veterinary medicinal products (antimicrobial substances, substances commonly used as feed additives, and the Exempted Substances).

Working Groups (WG)	Working Groups (WG) are organized for intensive examination and deliberation for specific hazards. Cases of WG organized: WG on Antimicrobial-resistant Bacteria, WG on Assessment Methodology Development, and WG on Food Allergy.
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FSCJ has already notified the results of the following risk assessments to risk management organizations: food additives: 208 cases, pesticides: 997 cases, veterinary medicinal products: 573 cases, utensils, containers and packaging: 14 cases, contaminants in foods: 66 cases, microorganisms and viruses: 18 cases, prions: 58 cases, natural toxins and mycotoxins: 13 cases, genetically modified foods: 281 cases, novel foods: 86 cases, feed and fertilizers: 221 cases, and Antimicrobial-resistant Bacteria: 12 cases. (current as of 12. 2018)

FSCJ's main activities in recent years

Expert Committee on Food Additives:

Risk assessment on aluminium ammonium sulfate and aluminium potassium sulfate

Expert Committee on Pesticides:

Decision on the One-year repeated dose oral toxicity study in dogs for the toxicological evaluation of pesticides

Expert Committee

on Veterinary Medicinal Products:

Risk assessment on monepantel, a parasiticide

Expert Committee

on Utensils, Containers and Packaging:

Risk assessment on n-diethyl phthalate, a plasticizer

Expert Committee on Contaminants

Risk assessment on acrylamide in foods generated through heating

Expert Committee

on Microorganisms and Viruses

Risk assessment on the amendment to standards for aseptic-filled tofu

Expert Committee on Prions

Risk assessment on revision of the current countermeasures against BSE in Japan- Risk to human health by ceasing BSE testing for healthy slaughtered cattle-

Expert Committee

on Natural Toxins and Mycotoxins

Risk assessment on deoxynivalenol (ongoing)

Expert Committee

on Genetically Modified Foods

Risk assessment on “Low acrylamide potential and reduced black spot bruise potato (SPS-00E12-8)”

Expert Committee on Novel Foods

Risk assessment on trans fatty acids in foods

Expert Committee on Feeds and Fertilizers

Risk assessment on tocopherol (vitamin E)

WG on Flavouring Substances in Foods

Risk assessment on seven flavouring agents – isobutylamine, isopropylamine, sec-butylamine, propylamine, hexylamine, pentylamine and 2-methylbutylamine–

WG on Antimicrobial-resistant Bacteria

Risk assessment on colistin sulfate, an antibacterial substance

WG for discussion on so called “health foods”

Provision of the report and messages on “health foods”

WG on Assessment Methodology Development

Report on “Methods for risk assessments toward a new era: Effective use of BMD (Benchmark Dose) approach for analyzing dose-response data”



Research Grant Program and Contracted Survey Program

FSCJ has implemented research and survey program to generate scientific evidence for improving risk assessment. FSCJ has developed a road map, “Strategic direction for promoting research and survey to ensure food safety” The roadmap defines overall research and survey directions for the next five years to seek effective and strategic approaches to ongoing research and investigation. Every fiscal year, the research and survey program is selected on a priority basis.

Research Grant Program for Risk Assessment on Food Safety

Seven to eight programs are selected annually.
Research period is approximately two years

The research grant program is implemented to collect scientific evidence necessary for conducting risk assessment and developing assessment guidelines.

Survey Program for Collecting Data on Food Safety

Four to six programs are selected annually

The survey program is implemented to collect, organize and analyze the data and information necessary for the risk assessment.



International Cooperation

FSCJ is proactively working to strengthen international collaboration, such as by holding periodic meetings with overseas bodies involved in risk assessment to exchange the latest information and opinions.

Cooperation with overseas agencies involved in ensuring food safety

FSCJ has signed memorandum of cooperation (MOC) with the following overseas agencies to build cooperative relationships. Under the MOC, FSCJ exchanges information and opinions on risk assessment methods and individual issues to further strengthen collaboration with risk assessment agencies.



- European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
- Economic and Food Safety Authority of the Portuguese Republic (ASAE)
- French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health Safety (ANSES)
- Federal Institute for Risk Assessment Germany (BfR)
- Technical University of Denmark (DTU)

International Seminar

FSCJ invites experts from overseas and organizes seminars, workshops and symposia on various topics in the area of risk assessment of food.



Gathering and disseminating information on food safety

For ensuring food safety, we need to deal with current and emerging food-related issues. FSCJ collects information on human health effects, hazards in foods, and risk assessments from overseas, which is organized and shared with risk management organizations including MHLW and MAFF, who also collect and analyze relevant information. The information is posted on the website under the section titled “Information on Food Safety-related Issues.” Fact sheets* covering the hazards of high public interest are available online. Both domestic and overseas information is collected to develop the fact sheet.

※Fact sheet

A scientific evidence-based summary document compiling the following information in a hazard-specific manner:

- risk assessment published by national and international-risk assessment organizations
- information on the latest research results and risk management measures



Activities of monitors assigned to report on food safety

FSCJ recruits about 400 monitors annually from all over Japan to fulfill its role by reflecting public opinion and to confirm the implementation level of risk management measures.



Risk Communication

FSCJ promotes risk communication on the basis of report on “Future Direction of Risk Communication”, which was compiled by Expert Committee on Planning on May 2015.

“Future Direction of Risk Communication”

http://www.fsc.go.jp/osirase/pc2_ri_arikata_270527.html



Provision of Information

We provide and share information with stakeholders and the public through various tools/ channels such as website, Facebook, official blog, E-mail newsletter, You Tube, and annual magazine of FSCJ.



Information exchange on risk analysis

FSCJ encourages public awareness and understanding about scientific knowledge on food safety through the following activities:

Food-safety workshop for public

- Participants include: Consumers
- Objective: To expand basic scientific knowledge on food safety to consumers

Advanced lecture - risk assessment of food

- Participants include: Personnel in the food sector and researchers
- Objective: To promote better understanding on the risk assessment process and its results

Meeting co-hosted with local governments to exchange opinions

- Participants include: School education professionals
(Including teachers in nutrition education and school nutritionists)



Other activities: We also offer our expert knowledge such as sending our lecturers to the relevant organizations upon request.

Communication with stakeholders

Communication meetings on food-safety are jointly held with relevant risk management organizations to exchange opinions. We provide information and exchange opinions with consumer groups, media, food-related industries, professional associations, academic societies, and local governments.



Food Safety Hotline

FSCJ receives inquiries from consumers for opinion, comments, etc.

URL <https://form.cao.go.jp/shokuhin/opinion-0001.html>





Various information is posted on the website, including reports from Commission Meetings and FSCJ meetings to exchange opinions. Information on issues of high priority is posted in "Important Notices."

We provide food safety topics of high public interest and information on food related materials with the potential to cause adverse health effects.



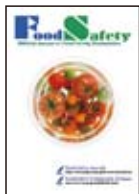
<http://www.fsc.go.jp/sonota/sns/facebook.html>

http://www.fsc.go.jp/official_blog.html



<http://www.fsc.go.jp/e-mailmagazine/>

- Weekly News: Schedules and minutes of meetings
- FSCJ News Topics: Columns posted bi-monthly with detailed explanation of food safety issues
- Latest information: Schedule of upcoming meetings, request of public comment



Food Safety -The Official Journal of Food Safety Commission of Japan

Food Safety is a peer-reviewed, open-access online journal in English published quarterly by FSCJ.

The aim of the publication of Food Safety is to gather and disseminate scientific and technological information in the field of food safety on human health, and thereby facilitate the development of science and technology for risk assessments of foods. We look forward to receiving original or review article.

<https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/foodsafetyfscj>



Annual magazine of FSCJ

Introducing activities of FSCJ and detailed explanation of risk assessments

http://www.fsc.go.jp/visual/kikanshi/k_index.html



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