



EU-Japan- EPA

Fifth meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures

Tokyo, 7-8 December 2023

On 7 and 8 December 2023, the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, established under the provisions of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, held its fifth meeting co-chaired by, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), European Commission with the attendance from Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (MHLW), the Japanese Mission to the EU, DG TRADE and the EU Delegation to Japan.

Recalling the Joint Statement issued on the occasion of the Japan-EU Summit in July, both sides stated that some of the actions have been progressing since the fourth SPS Committee, and further efforts are needed to record progress. Both sides welcomed the efforts done in the framework of the mutual recognition project of regionalisation related to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Both sides also confirmed their commitments to work together and to complete it by January-February 2024. Both sides concurred on the need to make tangible progress on the African Swine Fever (ASF) part of the project in line with the Summit 2023 statement.

With regards to the competent authorities, the MHLW gave information that jurisdiction on the administration of food safety standards would be transferred to the Consumer Affairs Agency from April 2024, whilst the EU informed that there were no substantial changes since last committee meeting.

Under the agenda item “general concerns” on SPS measures, Japan highlighted the importance of considering measures on agricultural and agri-food products, taking into account different environmental and climate conditions among countries, when the EU considers its health and environmental standards applicable to imports into the EU.

On the EU general concerns, the EU requested simplification and expedition of the process pointing out the need for delivering results in line with the EPA provisions and with the Summit joint statement. Japan stressed that it is making efforts to expedite and simplify the procedures while taking into account the reality that each member country’s SPS situation is different and highlighted the importance of proceeding with SPS issues based on science. In reply, the EU reminded the harmonised legal framework and the consultation with the Member States to allow to get insight in the implementation of the rules in force.

Under the agenda item “specific SPS trade issues”, Japan reiterated its concerns about the EU’s regulation, which lowers the Maximum Residue Levels (“MRLs”) of clothianidin and thiamethoxam, pointing out that using MRLs to achieve environmental purposes is an extra-

territorial approach and clearly deviates from current principles for protecting human life or health. Japan asked the EU to provide details about requirements for setting and applying import tolerances.

Japan requested further information on the EU Regulation related to the Veterinary medicinal products calling for additional explanation about necessary process and time schedule for inclusion in the list of approved countries, new certificate regulation. Japan also requested sufficient transitional period, at least three years. The EU insisted that they had provided detailed explanations through the existing framework such as the WTO and ready to provide further information.

Japan raised the issue of re-listing of the country for exporting of poultry meat and poultry meat products upon recovery of its HPAI free status given that the mutual recognition project regarding HPAI regionalisation has made progress to complete the core body of the whole procedure. The EU indicated that the re-listing process was interrupted by the recurrence of HPAI in Japan and highlighted that this issue could be addressed once the mutual recognition project of regionalisation related to HPAI is finalised. Japan also sought clarification on the issue of heat treatment of processed meat products and the EU provided the state of play.

The EU requested the update of the situation on the market access application of the EU Member States (MSs) related to beef. Japan explained that their progress in the area of beef had been made since the last meeting. The EU reiterated the need to take into consideration the negligible risk status recognised by World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) for most of the MSs. Japan replied that it had already taken into account the WOAHA status in the risk assessment and that the updated Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) code of the WOAHA in terms of BSE surveillance is not reflected in the current EU rules.

Regarding the plants, both sides welcomed meetings conducted between MAFF and the EU side prior to the SPS committee meeting and the EU would work for defining the relevant pests so that Japanese side considers the concept of grouping. As regards the MS applications, the EU encouraged Japan to accelerate the process of approval by avoiding duplicative assessments, in line with some positive progress recently made. Japan highlighted the importance to proceed based on scientific evidence.

Regarding the food additives issue, Japan provided an explanation in response to the EU's request for additional information on the revision of the list of existing food additives in light of the latest exchanges on this issue between Japan and the EU. Japan asked the EU to provide further information on the use of certain additives. The EU will follow-up on these additives. Japan indicated 2 months as deadline for this information to be received.

Regarding the mutual recognition project of regionalisation related to HPAI, Japan explained that the scientific review process, which is the core body of the whole procedure, had completed by the end of August 2023, only remaining some administrative works to be done before the actual implementation of regionalisation in line with the project. The EU provided information on their progress including audit conducted in November 2023.

The EU sides informed the Committee of the Animal Health Technical Working Group discussion held in Tokyo in December 2023 recalling the importance of the cooperation on animal health. Both sides discussed the mutual recognition project of regionalisation related to

HPAI and ASF. In addition, some issues including vaccine strategies for the control and management of HPAI were discussed.

Both sides shared the wish to have the next SPS Committee in 2024 in person in Brussels or through online.

The EU proposed a mid-term call for reviewing to keep momentum for next SPS committee meeting.