



EU-Japan EPA

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

17 February 2025

On 17 February 2025, the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, established under the provisions of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), held its sixth meeting co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and DG Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission with the attendance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (MHLW), the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA), the Japanese Mission to the EU, DG TRADE and the EU Delegation to Japan.

Following up the previous SPS Committee meeting (December 2023), the EU evoked its high expectations since the entry into force of the EPA and noted that the sought progress remains to be achieved, in particular on the provisions related to (i) the adherence of both sides to international standards, (ii) the simplification of the procedures for import and risk assessment for EU Member States, and (iii) the recognition of the EU as single entity. Japan recalled its request to consider different environmental and climate conditions among countries when the EU considers its health and environmental standards applicable to EU's imports of agricultural and agri-food products. Japan also emphasized the importance for the EU to engage in thorough international discussions and have profound exchanges of views with reliable trading partners. Both sides concurred to deepen the discussion on sustainability within the framework of the future vision for Agriculture.

The EU requested Japan to continue working towards delivering results in line with the EPA provisions and with the 2023 Japan-EU Summit joint statement. The EU has underlined that the harmonised legal framework in the EU allows trade partners, including Japan, to benefit from the access to one single market, and one single set of import requirements. Japan responded that it intends to continue discussions with both the European Commission and the EU Member States, considering the simplification and speeding up of consultations, such as avoiding duplication in risk assessments regarding common rules within the EU.

Under the agenda item “specific SPS trade issues”, Japan reiterated its concerns about the EU regulation lowering 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. The EU explained that with that approach, introduced for the first time in 2023, the EU considered specific environmental issues of global concern when setting MRLs: for the two substances clothianidin and thiamethoxam, MRLs were set with the objective to ensure the protection of pollinators worldwide. Appropriate and detailed information on the matter was communicated (since 2020) to all trade partners. The EU noted that it remains attentive to the

calls and concerns raised and recalled that the EU provisions allow trade partners to request for import tolerances. Japan clarified that although the application of the EU regulation did not cause any problems for its exports to the EU so far, the consideration of the above concerns for future legislation should be taken into account.

The EU requested updates on various on-going meat market access applications of EU Member States. It was concurred that following a written submission on these, Japan will provide the status and upcoming steps of them.

The EU reiterated its request to Japan to simplify the procedures applied on the EU applications for plants, in line with Art. 6.7 of the EPA. Japan explained that considerable work has been already undertaken considering the differences in pest distribution across the EU Member States. Regarding the EU requested simplification for EU applications, Japan noted that the practice of using information from previously assessed questionnaires could facilitate an expedite assessment of new market access applications.

In relation to the issue on food additives, the EU enquired about the next steps and timeline in the on-going revision of the List of existing food additives. Japan noted the relevant WTO SPS notification of September 2024 had a commenting period until March 2025 and the adoption of the revised rules is expected in September 2025.

On plants, both sides welcomed the conclusions from the meeting of the EU-Japan Plant Health Technical Working Group of 4 February 2025. According to these, Japan would provide its first feedback on the EU pest list in approximately 1 month. It was also concurred that both sides will continue to discuss the grouping exercise. For the upcoming next practical arrangements, both Japan and the EU indicated their contact points.

The EU requested Japan to continue exchanging information and accelerate the process of approval of Member States' applications.

Regarding the mutual recognition project of regionalisation related to HPAI both sides reiterated the conclusions of the EU-Japan Animal Health Technical Working Group of 13 February 2025 and concurred to continue working towards finalisation of the project. The EU thanked Japan for the submission of a revised text and informed the latter that a follow-up discussion will be planned once its assessment is finalised. Both sides concurred on the importance of the exercise that could enable further international cooperation towards solutions to common threats.

Concluding, the EU and Japan expressed jointly their gratitude for the on-going collaboration and exchange to seek for further progress in all SPS areas. It was concurred that a mutual engagement in the preparation of the next SPS Committee at an early stage will be ensured by both sides with the objective to organise an in-person Committee meeting, in Tokyo, in December 2025.