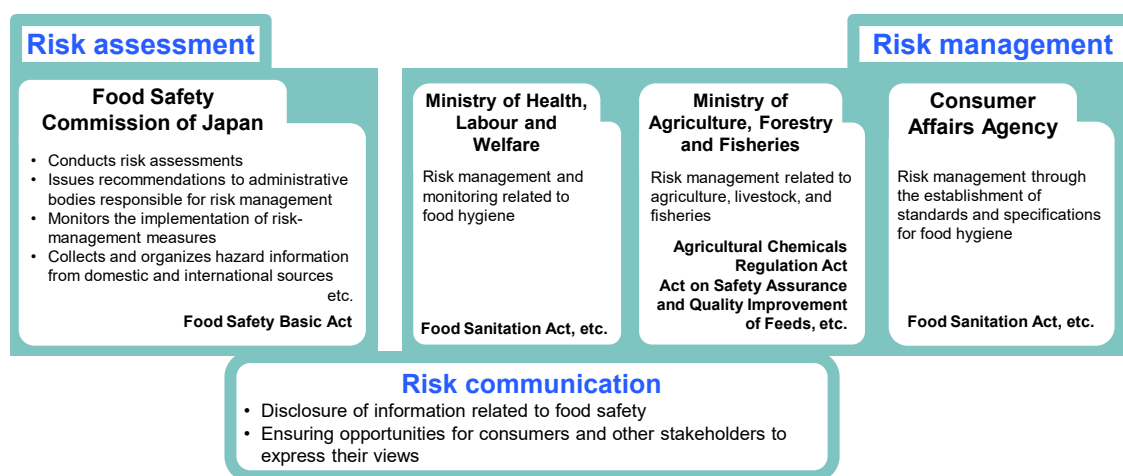


# Establishing standards for food hygiene

## We develop standards and specifications for food hygiene

### Framework for ensuring food safety

Ensuring food safety is carried out based on the concept of risk analysis. This approach aims to prevent or reduce risks to human health that may arise from substances contained in food. The concrete processes for reducing risk consist of risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. In Japan, the Food Safety Commission of Japan, established within the Cabinet Office, conducts food health impact assessments (risk assessment) based on scientific knowledge. Based on those results, the Consumer Affairs Agency undertakes the formulation of standards and specifications related to food hygiene (risk management).



### Food additives

Food additives are used in the process of manufacturing foods or for the purpose of processing or preserving foods. They include preservatives, sweeteners, coloring agents and flavoring agents. While food additives largely contribute to today's distribution of a variety of foods, much caution is needed to ensure the safety of additives, which do not have a long history of human consumption unlike foods.

For this reason, the Consumer Affairs Agency consults the Food Safety Commission of Japan and authorizes the use of them only when they are unlikely to harm human health. In addition, standards and specifications are established as necessary to ensure safety. Even for food additives that have been designated, the Consumer Affairs Agency continuously takes adequate measures to review the safety of authorized food additives, for example, by surveying daily intake levels per person.

### Contaminants and microorganisms in food

To understand the actual conditions of contamination in food, such as heavy metals and mycotoxins, the Agency conducts ongoing surveys. For substances requiring regulation, standards are established or revised as necessary.

For heavy metals and mycotoxins, regulatory measures have been implemented, such as setting standards for cadmium and deoxynivalenol, based on contamination levels observed in foods distributed domestically and the need for appropriate management.

Regarding radioactive substances, in April 2012, upper limits for radioactive cesium were established for each food category as standards under the Food Sanitation Act. These limits are set so that, even if the food is consumed continuously, the lifetime exposure to radioactive substances remains sufficiently low and within a safe range (no more than 1 millisievert per year).

In addition, for animal-derived foods such as milk and dairy products, meat, and fishery products, standards related to microorganisms are formulated in accordance with their specific characteristics.

## Residues of pesticides, animal feed additives, and veterinary drugs in foods

A positive list system has been implemented to prohibit the distribution of any foods that contain the residues of pesticides, feed additives and veterinary drugs (collectively “agricultural chemicals, etc.”) at concentrations exceeding maximum residue limits (MRLs) in the domestic marketplace.

MRLs for agricultural chemicals, etc. are set based on the levels expected to remain in food when these substances are used in accordance with prescribed application methods. When establishing MRLs, the Consumer Affairs Agency consults the Food Safety Commission of Japan and confirms that long-term consumption of foods containing such residues is unlikely to harm human health.

## So-called “health foods”

From the standpoint of preventing health damage before it occurs, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare designate certain ingredients that require special caution (“designated ingredients”). For foods containing these designated ingredients, a reporting system has been established requiring businesses to notify the authorities of any health damage information.

In addition, businesses that manufacture or process foods containing designated ingredients are required to implement manufacturing and quality control based on Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP).

To ensure that safer products are supplied to consumers, the Agency also works to secure the safety of other so-called “health foods” that do not contain designated ingredients. For tablet- and capsule-type foods, for example, the Agency has developed voluntary check guidelines on the safety of raw materials and guidelines on Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), which are provided to businesses to support proper safety management.

## Foods produced using biotechnology

Genetic modification technology refers to techniques that incorporate DNA extracted from another organism into the DNA within a cell. Foods produced using genetic modification may be distributed only after the Food Safety Commission of Japan has conducted an evaluation and the Consumer Affairs Agency has published the results confirming that there are no safety concerns.

Genome editing technology uses enzymes that recognize specific nucleotide sequences in a cell and induce cuts at targeted sites within those sequences. After the cut is made, the organism’s natural DNA repair mechanisms act, resulting in changes to the DNA sequence such as:

1. Deletions, insertions, or substitutions of nucleotides that could also occur in nature
2. Targeted mutations involving one or several nucleotides
3. Insertions or substitutions of longer sequences, such as genes

Foods produced using this technology are referred to as genome-edited foods. Genome-edited foods undergo a notification process with the Consumer Affairs Agency, followed by procedures for publishing safety-related information. However, if genes are inserted or similar modifications are made, the product is subject to the same procedures as genetically modified foods.

## Utensils, containers and packaging for food

Standards and specifications have been established for utensils, containers, packaging, and similar items used with food. Safety is ensured by prohibiting the use of raw materials that do not meet these standards and by prohibiting manufacturing methods that fall short of the required criteria.

### [Utensils and Containers/Packaging]

The standards and specifications for utensils and containers/packaging consist of (1) general standards applicable to all items, (2) material-specific standards applicable to each type of material, (3) use-specific standards applicable to uses requiring particular safety considerations, and (4) manufacturing standards. For synthetic resins used as raw materials in utensils and containers/packaging, a positive list system was introduced in June 2020, allowing only substances whose safety has been evaluated to be used.

### [Toys and Detergents]

Standards and specifications have also been established for toys and detergents to prevent sanitary hazards and protect public health. For toys, those designated by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare as posing potential health risks to infants and young children through contact are subject to regulation. For detergents, those primarily used for washing vegetables or fruits fall within the scope of regulation.