

## Organic Foods / Health-oriented Foods

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### - THE DOMESTIC ALLERGEN-FREE FOODS MARKET -

The number of people suffering from allergic diseases is growing in Japan as it is elsewhere.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare estimates that half of the Japanese people have some kind of allergy. In January 2018, the Ministry and the Japanese Society of Allergology opened the “Allergy Portal” (<https://allergyportal.jp>), a dedicated website about allergies.

The rate of food allergy cases among infants in Japan is also rising year after year. A survey by Tokyo metropolitan government in 2014 found that 16.7% of three year olds had already exhibited and been diagnosed with allergy symptoms. That result indicated that the proportion of infants with food allergies had roughly doubled compared to 10 years earlier. The Japan Atopic Dermatitis Patients Association has reported that 4.5% of children in elementary school and 4.8% of those in junior high school had shown symptoms of food allergies.

The Kumitasu website (<https://www.kumitasu.com/#page/1>), where people with food allergies can search for and buy foods, is an example of the websites and other resources which are being created for food allergy sufferers, and are increasingly gathering attention.

First Baking Co., Ltd, which manufactures and markets various bread, *wagashi* (Japanese cake), cake, and cookie products, estimates that as the number of people with allergies has grown, the market for foods to support them has grown from JPY6.67 billion in 2016, and will reach JPY8.93 in 2020. It expects the market to go on expanding.

In Japan, seven categories of foods among those known to trigger food allergies which are involved in particularly large numbers of cases, or which cause particularly severe and potentially life threatening symptoms, are designated as the “seven specified raw materials”.



From the upper left, they are: crab, shrimp, egg, milk, peanut, wheat, and buckwheat.

(Picture: <https://www.space202.com/news/1751>)

If a food includes any of the above allergens, it must be labeled as such in Japan. These allergens are equivalent to the “main food allergens” in the USA.

In addition to the seven allergens, 20 items corresponding to them are defined as “Items equivalent to specified raw materials”, for which labeling is encouraged where possible.

From the upper left, they are: abalone, squid, salmon roe, orange, cashew nut, kiwi, beef, walnut, sesame, salmon, mackerel, soy beans, chicken, banana, pork, *matsutake* mushroom, peach, Japanese yam, apple, and gelatin.



(Picture: <https://skin-story.com/alle-additive/> Labeling marks for food allergens (specified raw materials))

Within the allergen-free market, the gluten-free market is gathering particular attention, with the growth in numbers of foreigners coming to Japan.

With the rising interest in health and beauty overseas, the proportion of people preferring gluten-free foods is growing more than it is in Japan. In response, there is increasing demand from Japanese hotels and restaurants for foods supporting gluten-free needs, such as bread made with rice flour instead of wheat flour, so that they can serve foreigners with gluten-free preferences who visit Japan.

There is also lively competition among Japanese companies looking to distinguish themselves from competitors by launching gluten-free and other allergen-free products.

First Baking Co., Ltd. has launched its new “Fahan” brand of rice bread products, which use 100% Japanese-grown rice flour and use none of the seven specified raw materials. It launched “*Shokuji Bread Genmai*” (whole-rice meal bread) in June 2018. The brand started from the concept of “We want to make delicious bread, which anyone can eat with peace of mind, an everyday food option”. Its *Shokuji Bread Genmai* uses whole rice puree to produce a moist and chewy mouth feel in bread that does not use wheat flour, eggs, or any of the seven specified raw materials.



(See <http://www.daiichipan.co.jp/?p=7917>)

The fast food chain Mos Burger has started selling low-allergen burgers and hot dogs as low-allergen menu options. Pork is the only one of the 27 varieties of specified raw materials etc. used in these products, and the buns use 100% rice flour.



(See Mos Burger- <https://www.mos.jp/menu/detail/110032/32/>)

Nippon Ham has launched processed food products in its “*Minna no Shokutaku*®” (Everybody’s Dining Table) Series that accommodate food allergies.

It is developing products which use none of the seven specified raw materials. Other than hamburgers and meatballs, it markets bread made from rice flour, so it can provide frozen

foods to support children's boxed lunches. The following photos are from Nippon Ham website.



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