

The Trend of Vegetable Demand by Intended Purposes and the Main Characteristics of Vegetable Demand

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With the background of an increase of single households and the convenience-oriented style of food consumption and the like, there is an increasing use of processed foods and tendency to eat out. Growing dependence on processed foods and eating out in food consumption is in the relation between the increase in demand for food processing and food services (catering and ready-to-eat meals industry) and domestic/foreign relations. Under such a situation, it is necessary to strengthen the corresponding capabilities of domestic production for food processing and services demand to improve food self-sufficiency.

With this issue as a backdrop, the goal of this study is to survey the trends and features of demand by intended purposes of major vegetable categories, and to clarify the main issues of domestic production.

This study estimates demand by intended purposes of major vegetable categories. Demand was categorized into two groups of intended purposes: household consumption, and food processing and food services. The estimation of the vegetable demand for household consumption was made mainly with reference to the amounts of fresh vegetables purchased, which were acquired from the "Annual Report on the Family Income and Expenditure Survey". Vegetable demand for food processing and food services was estimated by means of a questionnaire regarding types of vegetables, and whether they were imported or domestic, which was given to parties involved in the veg-

etable-processing and food-service industries; the findings were applied with the necessary factors which were added to the existing statistics in order to enable the estimation. As a result, the following points were clarified.

Firstly, in the major vegetable categories, the majority of demand was for the food-processing and food services industries, and this ratio has been increasing. The ratio of demand for food processing and food services has increased from 51% in 1990 to 54% in 2000. In particular, the ratio of carrots and spinach has increased greatly in favor of these industries, due to the increase in the demand for carrots as an ingredient in vegetable juice and the use of frozen spinach in the food service industry. Frozen vegetables are indispensable for the food service industries in that the inedible parts are removed beforehand and the prices and quality are more stable than fresh vegetables.

Secondly, an increase in the demand for food processing and food services has been proceeding while relating to the use of imports (Fig. 1). Meanwhile, the rate of imports of major vegetables increased greatly, from 12% in 1990 to 26% in 2000 for food processing and services demand, in comparison with a slight increase of 0.5% to 2% for household consumption. Especially, in the case of carrots, spinach, taro and onions, the rate of imports rose significantly due to the increased use of imported carrot paste, frozen spinach and taro, and fresh and dried onions.

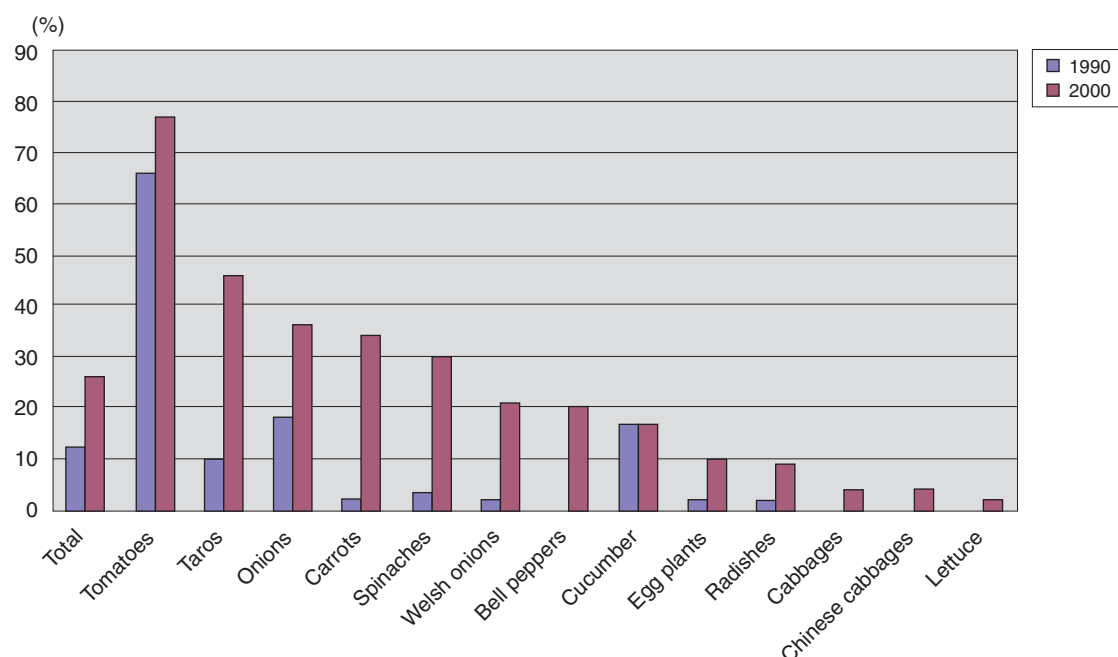


Fig. 1. Trends in Import Ratios by Food Processing and Food Services Demand

In these circumstances, it will be necessary to strengthen the correspondence capabilities of domestic production for food processing and services demand to improve the self-sufficiency rate of vegetable. However, the conventional production-supply correspondence required for household consumption is insufficient for that, because the main characteristics required for household consumption and for food processing and services are different (Table 1). For instance, as for the point of the content of the quality, the characteristics required according to the usage are various in

food processing and services while externals are valued in household demand. Moreover, when the handling form is seen, the purchase in preprocessed form is a feature for food processing and services while the distribution in a whole form is basic for household consumption.

Therefore, not only will low-cost production be needed, but also production of the varieties and to the specifications corresponding to needs according to the usage and the year-round stable supply by the relay between production regions and the like in domestic production.

Table 1. Main Characteristics of Household Consumption, and Food Processing and Food Services Demand

	For household consumption	For food processing and food services
Quality (varieties, specifications)	External qualities are valued.	Characteristics required according to the usage are varied.
Shipment from	The number is valued. Cardboard	Weight is valued. Returnable container
Handling from	Whole	Preprocessed
Correspondence to shipment amount change	Correspondence according to amount of shipment	Fixed quantity (year-round stable supply)
Correspondence to price fluctuation	Correspondence by change of sales unit	Fixed price (mid/long-term stabilized price)

Food Safety/Peace of Mind and Food Information: A Survey of Consumer Attitudes

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1. Objective

Consumer fears about food safety have grown more serious than ever because of several food-related incidents in recent years. Foods perceived as risky end up being left on the shelf; foods rumoured to be safe or healthy, by contrast, often become hot commodities. The present study involved conducting a consumer opinion survey and analysing the results. Three points were examined: 1) the factors behind consumer fears about food safety; 2) correlation between those factors and the objects of consumer fears; and 3) how the objects of consumer fears, sources of information about them, and the triggers for them correlate with scientific knowledge and the factors behind those fears. Directions in risk communication were then considered.

2. Method

A survey of consumer attitudes relating to

fears about food safety was conducted in June 2004. (A total of 2,000 people were selected at random in the twenty-three wards of Tokyo and the city of Shizuoka. The questionnaire, which was anonymous, was then mailed out to these subjects; 725 valid responses were received.) The resulting data was then processed using such methods as cross-analysis and factor analysis (a statistical technique for exploring the mentality behind responses).

3. Overview of Findings

(1) Results of factor analysis

As Table 1 shows, five factors were identified behind fears about food safety: 1) preference for safe, healthy foods; 2) distrust of society; 3) sympathy with slogans about getting back to nature; 4) aversion to artificial foods; and 5) nostalgia for a plain, rustic image.