

A groundbreaking initiative by manufacturers, distributors, and consumers working together to reduce food loss: Toyama Food Loss Zero Strategy—reducing food loss beginning by revising business practices

Toyama Prefecture



Background and Reason for the Project

Cutting to the essence of the food loss issue following the G7 Toyama Environment Ministers Meeting

The G7 Environment Ministers Meeting, held in Toyama Prefecture in 2016, adopted the “Toyama Framework on Material Cycles,” which endeavours to promote the reduction of food loss and food waste and steadily implement initiatives such as the effective recycling of food waste.

In response, Toyama Prefecture established the “Toyama Prefectural Residents’ Council for Promoting the Reduction of Food Loss and Food Waste” comprising experts and representatives of related organisations. Centred on the Residents’ Council, a movement involving all residents of Toyama Prefecture the Toyama Food Loss Zero Strategy was then launched.

Food waste due to food loss in Toyama Prefecture amounts to approx. 43,000 tons per year, with 40% of this waste estimated to be generated by businesses.

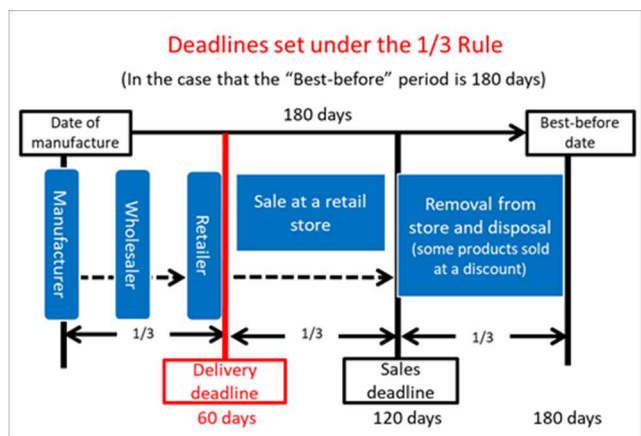
In Japan, there are stringent business practices in the field of food distribution, whereby businesses must strictly keep to short delivery deadlines in order to supply products to consumers without stock running out, and these practices are regarded as one reason behind the occurrence of large amounts of food loss. Improvement of such business practices are difficult for businesses to address individually and need to be resolved by the entire food chain, with food-related businesses working together in cooperation with consumers and government bodies.

Accordingly, in Toyama Prefecture the

Expert Committee to Consider Business Practices was established under the Prefectural Residents’ Council and is conducting discussions aimed at revising business practices such as the so-called “1/3 Rule”. At the Prefectural Residents’ Council meeting held in March 2019, it was agreed that businesses, consumers, and government bodies would collaborate together with prefectural residents all coming together as one to undertake the revision of business practices in order to reduce food loss.



Conclusion of a joint agreement by members of the Prefectural Residents’ Council



Project Aims

By revising business practices within the distribution process, the project aims to essentially resolve issues in order to reduce business-related food loss generated by food-related businesses (manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers).

Project Outline

In order to reduce food loss, the project targets business practices in the distribution process that are particular to Japan, strongly promoting understanding from the manufacturing, distribution, and consumer sectors.

1. Establishing an expert committee to consider revising business practices that are unique to Japan

An expert committee comprising of representatives of food-related businesses (manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers) and consumer organisations was established. This committee considers measures aimed at revising business practices at the food distribution stage, as well as expanding the number of businesses participating in the project.

2. Recruiting/registering businesses declaring to revise their business practices

The project recruits and registers businesses that agree to revise their business practices and endeavours to increase the number of businesses participating in the project.

<Content of main initiatives>

Manufacturers: Extend “Best-by” periods; use labelling showing “Best-by” month and year

Wholesalers: Working in collaboration with retailers; relax delivery deadlines

Retailers: Relax deadlines for delivery from manufacturers and wholesalers; extend deadlines for store sales

3. Encouraging consumers’ understanding

- Holding forums and other educational events; compiling and distributing collections of case studies and fliers
- Working in collaboration with retailers,

conducting campaigns to prioritise the purchase of products that are close to their best-by/use-by dates

4. Supporting retail store efforts to sell out products

Features and Innovation

This groundbreaking project endeavours to reduce food loss through manufacturers, distributors, and consumers coming together to revise business practices in the food distribution field.

Manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers meet together under one roof to conduct discussions and promote initiatives aimed at revising business practices throughout the food chain in Toyama Prefecture with the understanding of consumers.

Results of the Project

Awareness regarding food loss among food-related businesses and consumers has increased tremendously.

Since the launch of the project, the number of registered companies that vow to revise their business practices has grown to 24 (as of August 2020). Especially notable is the fact that supermarkets comprising approx. 80% of the food sales share in Toyama Prefecture are participating in the project.

Issues and Responses

Businesses: Prefecture-wide expansion of efforts is essential in order to revise business practices.

Businesses endeavouring to revise their business practices have commented that “the understanding of all trading partners is necessary with regard to revising business practices.” Accordingly, in addition to encouraging individual businesses to steadily implement initiatives, there is also a need to continue expanding the number of businesses participating in the project.

Consumers: Increases in awareness that go one step beyond acknowledgement are necessary

Although prefectural residents’ awareness

regarding the revision of business practices is gradually increasing, there has been little observation of consumers who purchase products close to the best-by date when it comes to items that they intend to use soon. Because it is difficult to say that the project has led to behavioural changes in a practical sense, there is a need to further promote understanding among consumers.

to retailers (delivery deadline), the deadline for the product to be sold by stores is customarily fixed. For example, for products with a best-by period of 180 days, shipment becomes impossible after 60 days (first 1/3) and the products are removed from store shelves when one-third or less of the best-by period remains; many of these removed products are then disposed of.

Future Developments

In 2020, Toyama Prefecture formulated the “Toyama Prefecture Plan for Promoting the Reduction of Food Loss”. As a frontrunner in the reduction of food loss, Toyama Prefecture intends to further accelerate initiatives, including the revision of business practices, with the aim of realising a sustainable society.

In the approx. four years since the project was launched, efforts to reduce food loss have begun to take root among both businesses and consumers. Centred on the Prefectural Residents’ Council, Toyama Prefecture will continue to steadily implement the above-mentioned plan.

Revising business practices is an issue that one prefecture cannot completely resolve alone. By disseminating information about our efforts as a pioneering model, Toyama Prefecture hopes to raise the project to the level of an initiative representative of Japan.

Reference URLs

<https://foodlosszero.jp/>

(Toyama Prefecture Food Loss Reduction Education Website: “Toyama Food Loss Zero Strategy” (available in Japanese only))

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Key Terms

◆ Delivery/deadlines for processed foods (1/3 Rule)

The period between a product’s manufacture and the deadline for its delivery