Genetic recombination labeling system in Japan

November 2022

Consumer Affairs Agency Food Labeling Division

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1-1. Overview of the Conference on Genetic Recombination Labeling System

○ Implementation period

- Held 10 times from April 2017 to March 2018.
- The report was compiled on March 28, 2018.

○ Purpose

- The genetically modified labeling system has been in place for about 15 years. The analysis technology related to DNA of genetically modified foods may have improved, and the actual situation of distribution may have changed due to the increase in the planting area of genetically modified agricultural products.
- For this reason, the Consumer Affairs Agency held the "Conference on Genetically Modified Labeling System" to conduct a wide-ranging review of the future status of the genetically modified labeling system based on information required by consumers and the distribution status of genetically modified agricultural products in order to secure opportunities for voluntary and reasonable selection.

○ Member

- A total of 10 people consisting of consumers, businesses*, and academic experts

*National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations, Food Industry Center, Japan Supermarket Association

(In addition, consumers: 3 people, academic experts: 4 people)

○ Points of the report: Future of the genetically modified labeling system

- **Maintain the current system for products subject to mandatory labeling.**
- Regarding labeling to the effect that it is not genetically modified, it is appropriate to arrange it as follows.

✓ Lowering the conditions under which labeling is permitted from “5% or less” under the current system to “not detected”

✓ Foods that cannot be labeled as "not genetically modified" when downgraded to "not detected" should be allowed to be labeled as "separate production and distribution management is properly carried out."

(1) Perspective of consumer misidentification

Opinions that it is possible to label “not genetically modified” despite the fact that up to 5% of genetically modified agricultural products are mixed in will lead to misidentification

(2) Perspective of conveying to consumers the efforts of businesses that have appropriately implemented separate production and distribution management

Opinion that it is necessary to consider not only from the perspective of providing information to consumers, but also to business operators who are appropriately conducting separate production and distribution management.

(3)Perspective of expanding the range of choices for consumers

By reorganizing the current “not genetically modified” labeling into two categories, the range of choices for consumers will be expanded.

1-3. Revision of the genetic recombination labeling system

○ Based on the report, the Consumer Affairs Agency started procedures for revision of the food labeling system.

- Information exchange meetings, etc. with consumers and businesses in 7 cities across Japan
- Conducted consultations from the Consumer Affairs Agency to the Consumer Commission, and discussed at the Consumer Commission's Food Labeling Subcommittee for a total of 5 times.
- Provided public comments domestically on the proposed revision of the Food Labeling Standards (Cabinet Office Ordinance), implemented WTO/TBT notification, and received comments from each country.

○ Promulgation and enforcement of Cabinet Office Ordinance partially revising food labelling standards

- April 25, 2019: Promulgation of Cabinet Office Ordinance to partially revise food labeling standards

～：Dissemination and enlightenment of new system / switching of packaging materials by business operators

- April 1, 2023: Enforcement

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2-1. Overview of Japan's Genetic Recombination Labeling System

○ Only genetically modified crops that have undergone safety screening can be distributed domestically (Food Sanitation Law)
○ Regarding labeling, mandatory labeling system started in 2001 (currently Food Labeling Law)
・ 9 agricultural products*1 and 33 processed food groups are subject to mandatory labeling
・ Foods that cannot be detected with recombinant DNA after processing are not subject to mandatory labeling (soy sauce, vegetable oil, etc.)

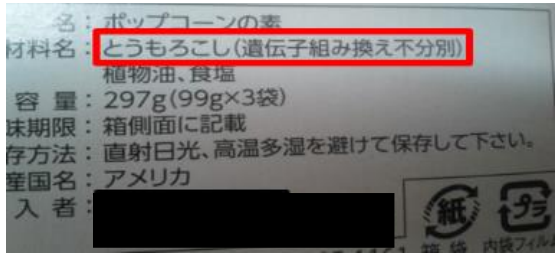
Example of obligatory indication

When distinguishing genetically modified agricultural products

"Papaya (genetically modified)" etc.

Cases where genetically modified agricultural products and non-genetically modified agricultural products are not distinguished (non-segregation)

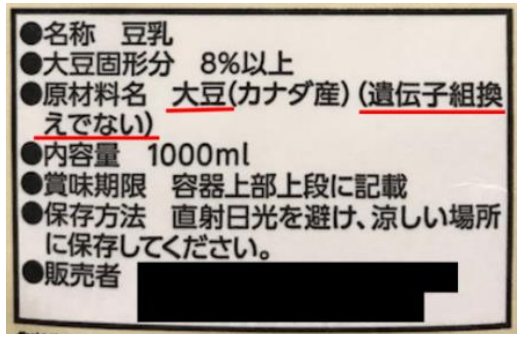
"Corn (Not segregated from GM products)", etc.



Examples of optional indication

When non-genetically modified agricultural products are distinguished (foods other than 33 processed food groups can be labeled in the same way)

"Soybean (not genetically modified)" etc.



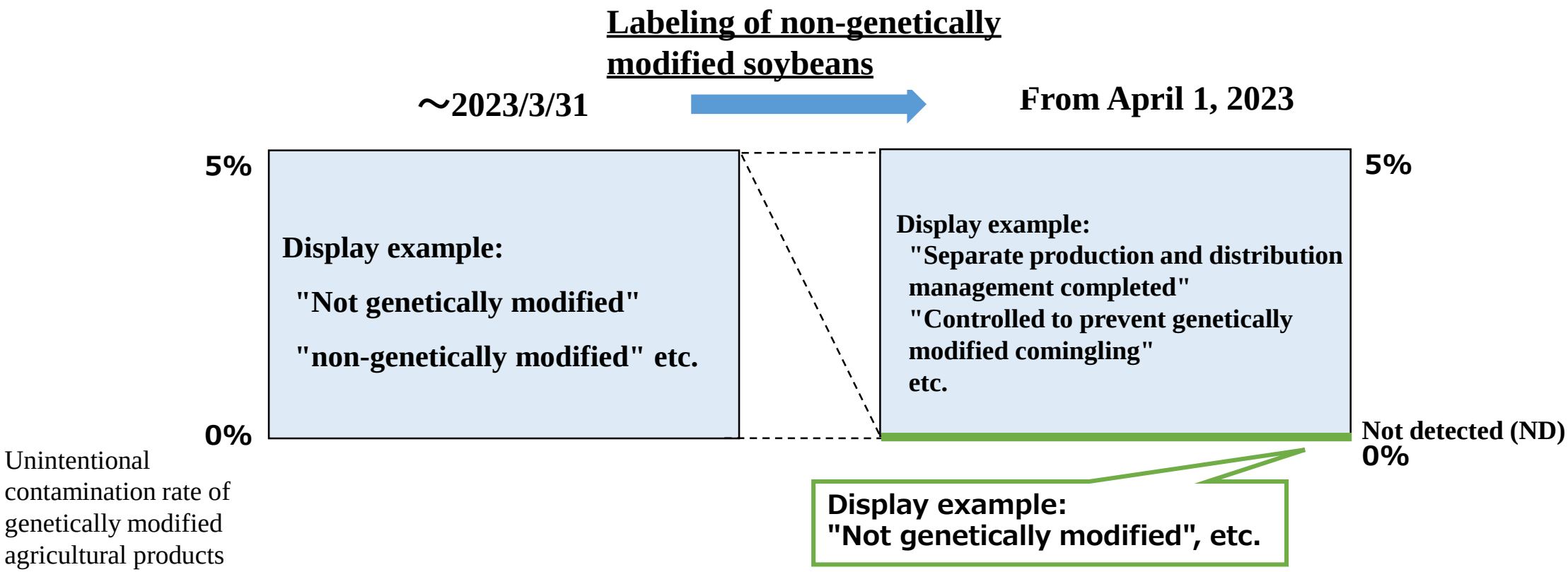
*1 Soybeans, corn, potatoes, alfalfa, sugar beet, rapeseed, cottonseed, papaya, mustard.

2-2. Changes in the new genetic recombination labeling system

Among the current systems, revise the food labeling standards regarding voluntary labeling,

i) For products that implement separate production and distribution management and contain genetically modified agricultural products to 5% or less, display factual labeling to the effect that proper separate production and distribution management is being carried out.

ii) In addition, if it is confirmed that there is no contamination with genetically modified agricultural products, it was decided to allow the labeling of "non-genetically modified".



(Note) Regarding "genetic recombination" labeling and voluntary labeling, it is assumed that the business operators are conducting separate production and distribution management.