



# Thinking through Japan's Food Initiatives for a Sustainable Future

**Vice-Administrative Chief (Director General),  
Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy,  
Consumer Affairs Agency, Government of Japan**

**Rie Kuroki  
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## “Itadakimasu” “Gochisousama”

It is a Japanese greeting said before and after eating a meal while clapping hands.

These words **express gratitude for** both (1) **the creatures who gave their lives for us** and (2) **the people who delivered the meals to our tables**.

### (1) The creatures who gave their lives for us

Birds and Mammals  
(chicken, beef, pork, etc.)

Fish and Shellfish  
(salmon, shrimp, octopus, etc.)

Vegetables, Fruits and Grains  
(cabbage, apples, rice, etc.)



### (2) The people who delivered the meals to our tables

The person who made the food  
(farmers, fishermen, butchers, etc.)

The person who carried it  
(carriers, couriers, etc.)

The person who cooked for us  
(family, cook, baker, etc.)



- ✓ It encourages behavior that does not waste food, leading to a **reduction in food loss**.
- ✓ It will lead to an improved **sense of responsibility and morality as a consumer**.
- ✓ It will **motivate producers and distributors**.

# 1 Culture and customs related to food in Japan

“In every grain of rice there are seven gods.”

From childhood, Japanese people are taught,

"Because there are still rice grains in the bowl,

**Don't leave a single piece of rice**, and eat it clean to the last. "

There are various theories about who the “seven gods” are, but one example is given below:



- (1) God of **Water**: Abundant water necessary for rice to grow well
- (2) God of **Soil**: Nutrient-rich soil necessary for rice to grow well
- (3) God of **Wind**: Wind necessary for rice pollination
- (4) God of **Insects**: Beneficial insects that eat rice pests (dragonflies, spiders, water striders, etc.)
- (5) God of **the Sun**: Sunlight and heat necessary for rice to grow well
- (6) God **Clouds**: Clouds that moderate the amount of sunlight or bring rainfall
- (7) **Producer (person)**: Farmers who grow rice, people who cook, etc.

Like “Itadakimasu” and “Gochisousama,”  
we cultivate an **appreciation for food**.

# 1 Culture and customs related to food in Japan

## Michi-no-Eki (Roadside Station)

- A "rest function" for road users
- An "information dissemination function" for road users and community members
- A "regional cooperation function" that connects towns and villages through roadside stations to work together to create vibrant communities.

A rest facility that combines the above three functions. (As of January 31, 2025, 1,230 roadside stations are registered nationwide.)



Roadside stations, in relation to food, play a role in **local production for local consumption**.

Local production for local consumption:

Consumption of food produced in a domestic region within the region where it is produced.  
(including selling to consumers and processing as food)

(1) Strengthen **ties between producers and consumers**

(supportive consumption, reassurance that producers' faces are visible)

(2) Contribution to **reduction of environmental impact**

(3) Preservation of **traditional food culture and rich dietary lifestyles**

(4) Improvement of **food self-sufficiency rate**



## Factors causing Food Loss and Waste

Wasted food, etc.  
22.32 million tons

Business  
wasted food, etc.  
(15.25 million  
tons)

Household  
Wasted food, etc.  
(7.07 million  
tons)

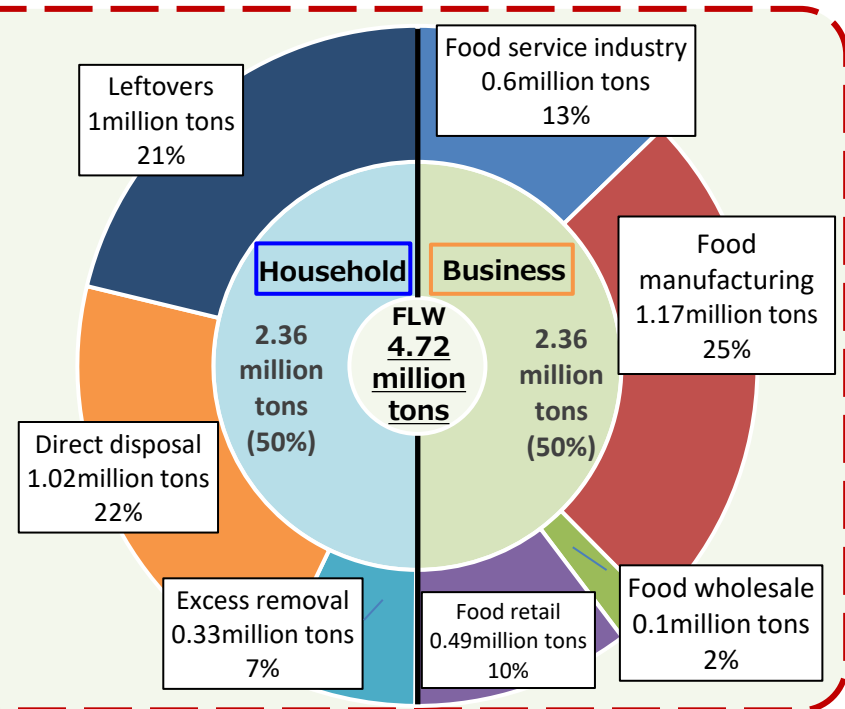
**Food Loss and Waste**  
(amount considered edible)  
**4.72 million tons**

**FLW from Business**

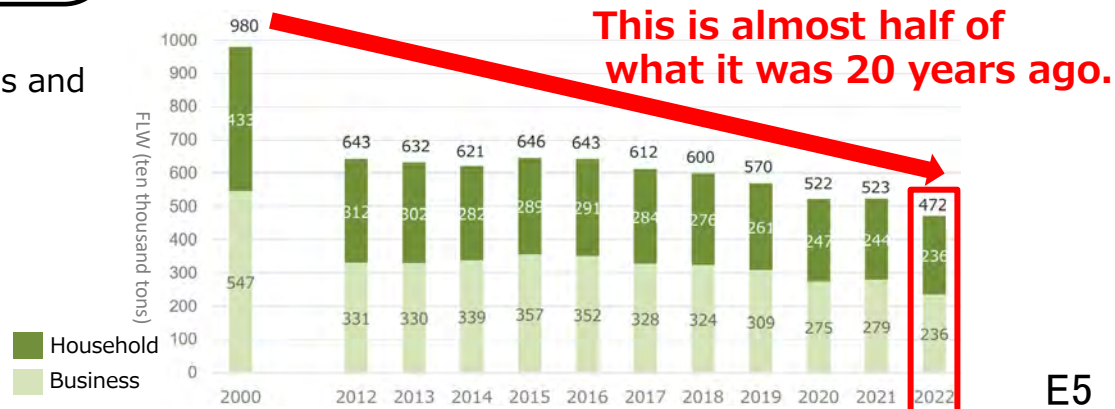
Non-standard products, returns,  
unsold products, leftovers  
**(2.36 million tons)**

**FLW from Household**

leftovers, excess removal,  
direct disposal  
**(2.36 million tons)**



Source: "FY2022 Estimates" by  
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and  
Ministry of the Environment



From the viewpoint of **Food and Nutrition Education** to make children understand the daily dietary habits and the preciousness and importance of food, **an educational picture book** was created to raise awareness about food loss reduction for children aged 5 to 6 years old. In addition, with the cooperation of some kindergartens and other institutions, we have implemented a project to **read aloud to children** using these picture books.

Created in 2021.  
"I've eaten everything!"



Created in 2022.  
"The Food Monster Appears!?"

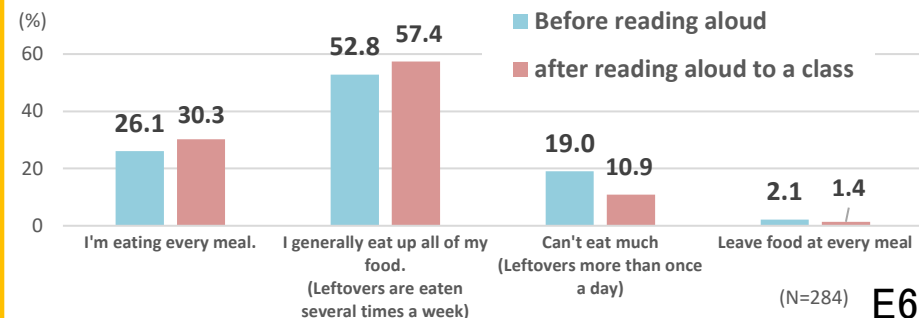


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(Reading to children at a kindergarten in Tokushima Prefecture)



(Change in infant behavior by reading picture books to children, created in 2022)  
**The percentage of children who finished their meals increased following the picture book reading sessions.**



Digital Book Edition Picture Book

<https://www.no-foodloss.caa.go.jp/index.html#ank2>

Borrowing Picture Books

[https://www.caa.go.jp/policies/future/project/project\\_008/inquiry/](https://www.caa.go.jp/policies/future/project/project_008/inquiry/)

**Food loss due to overproduction** has been a problem for dishes eaten at **seasonal events** (Ehoumaki for Setsubun, Christmas cake, etc.), so in addition to efforts by food retailers, the Consumer Affairs Agency also **called for promotion of sales that meet demand**.

- **Reserve as much as you can eat**
- **eat up** deliciously

食品ロスの削減に  
ご協力ください

○恵方巻は食べられる分だけ  
予約購入して食べきろう！

○自宅で作った料理も  
残さずおいしく食べきろう！





In Japan, which is prone to natural disasters, national agencies and local governments stockpile necessary food in preparation for disasters, with the aim of maintaining essential public services and supporting disaster victims

(Reference) Disaster food stockpiles at local governments nationwide (as of November 1, 2024)

Staple food: 92,799,895 servings; Side food: 8,721,412 servings;

Infant formula: 1,277,112 bottles; Water: 29,705,412 L

**Disaster relief food supplies that have reached their expiration date** are not discarded, but are instead **provided to food banks** and other organizations to **reduce food loss** and **support people in need**.



<Example of stockpiled food for disasters at the Consumer Affairs Agency>

Role Completed



<Provided by the Consumer Affairs Agency to the Food Bank>.



### Containers and Packaging that lead to reduction of food loss

#### Container structure

##### ■ Soy Sauce



- ❑ The double-layered structure of the bottle prevents oxygen from coming into contact with the soy sauce, resulting in a high level of shelf life.
- ❑ Pouring can be adjusted from small to large amounts depending on the amount of pressure.



#### Food Loss Reduction

- **Keeps** soy sauce **fresh for 90 days**.
- Soy sauce can be poured out to the end, **reducing residue** in the bottle.

#### Improved packaging material

##### ■ Mochi



- ❑ A film that absorbs oxygen and suppresses moisture evaporation is used for the individual mochi packages.



#### Extension of expiration date

- By preventing oxidation and retaining moisture, the **shelf life is extended from 15 to 24 months**.

#### Individually wrapped individual servings

##### ■ Hot pot soup



- ❑ Cubes of nabe-tsuyu stock are developed and individually packaged for each serving.



#### Food Loss Reduction

- The amount of food made can be adjusted, **reducing food loss due to leftovers**.

**Thank you very much  
for your attention.**

