

## Organic & Wellness Foods

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~ Dawn of Organics and Wellness Foods in Japan ~

The history of organic foods in Japan started in 1970. Japan introduced the organic JAS system in 2000, and the Act on Promotion of Organic Agriculture came into effect in 2006. In 2014, Japan and the USA agreed the “parity, compatibility, and certification” of organic JAS, a moment dubbed “the dawn of organics”.

“For the Expansion of Organic and Ecological Farming Methods (September 18, 2015)”, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, puts the size of Japan’s organic market at JPY143.1 billion, the world’s seventh largest. The global organic market is worth around JPY9 trillion, with the USA (largest) and Germany (second largest) taking a combined 56% share, so now Japan is finally moving into the market in earnest.

There are a couple of points in the Japanese organic market to keep an eye on over the past few years. The French organic supermarket “Bio c’Bon” opened in Azabu Juban in December 2016. Bio c’Bon was started in France in 2008 and has grown rapidly to 140 branches by now. It is now opening in Japan as a joint venture with Aeon. In November last year, Aeon, responding to rising demand for health and wellness products from consumers saying “I want to look for more natural foods”, reorganized its “Top Valu Green Eye” range of health and environment-friendly products into “Organic”, “Natural”, and “Free From” series. This new version of Top Valu Green Eye is now being rolled out to around 2,600 stores in the Aeon Group nationwide, including Aeon, Aeon Style, and Max Valu.





Organic section at the supermarket in Tokyo

In another development, Life Collaboration opened a BIO-RAL store with the slogans of “Organic, local, and healthy” and “Trusted and trendy high quality”. Other stores such as Ichiyama Mart and Inageya are laying out organic sections in their sales areas and starting to develop new shop departments. Natural House, the organic pioneer founded in 1982, is steadily adding stores, to a current total of 30.

Japan hosts the Tokyo Olympics in 2020, and 40 million people are expected to visit the country. In the run-up to the Tokyo Olympics, many countries have called for the use of safe, trustworthy, and sustainable foods that clear international standards, and that demand is certain to boost the expansion of the wellness and organic markets.