

**2nd International GI Conference
Worldwide Perspectives on GIs
Innovations and Traditions for Sustainability
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**Seeking Sustainable Performance of GI
Beef in Japan: Innovations Suggested by
Alternative Beef Production Systems**

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1. Introduction

◆ Background

- ◆ **Livestock production:** one of the most criticized sectors
- ◆ **Japanese Beef (*Wagyu*):** iconic product protected under GIs
- ◆ **Reputations:** **culinary, drinking beer, massage**
- ◆ **Reality:** limited connection with local resources → **questioned sustainability**



Photo: Sekine 2010
and 2018



1. Introduction

◆ Research question

- ◆ What are the challenges in GI Japanese Beef's sustainability?
- ◆ What are innovations made by alternative beef production systems?

◆ Methods




- ◆ Literature review, statistical analyses, interviews with **GI and organic beef producers** in 2010, 2018, 2020, 2022-2024



Photo: Sekine 2010

2. GI Systems in Japan

Table 1. Registration Systems of GI and Origin Products in Japan

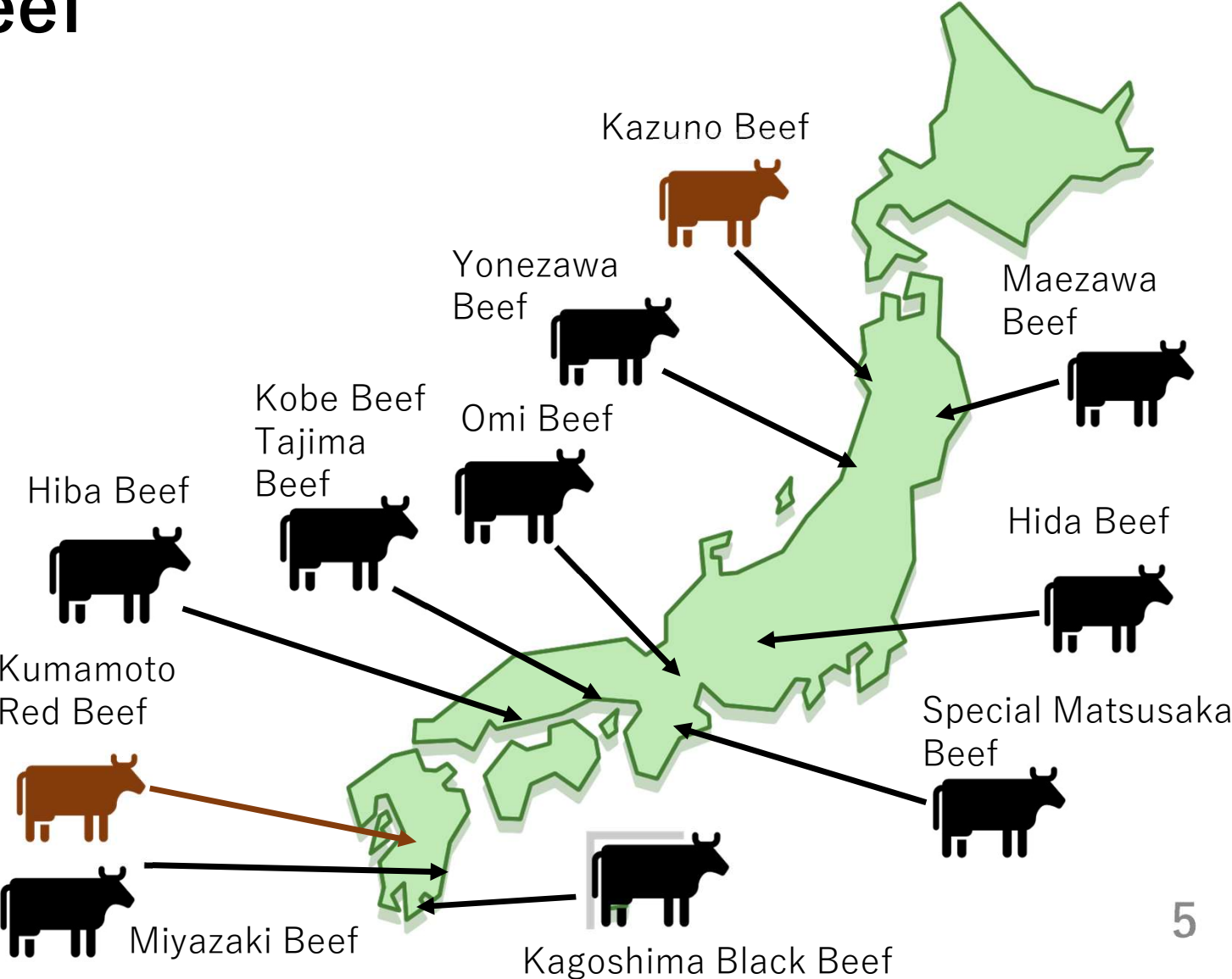
Certifications	GI for Alcohol	Collective Trademark	GI for Agri-food	Honbano Honmono
Year of Start	1995	2006	2015	2005
Certification Body	National Tax Agency (Public)	Japan Patent Office (Public)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Public)	Japan Food Industry Association (JFIA) (Private)
Legislation	Liquor Tax Law	Trademark Law	Sui generis GI Law	-
Logo	-			
No. of products (No. of beef)	30 (0)	781 (59 Beef)	154 (12 Beef)	59 (0)

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the websites of the certification bodies (Accessed on February 12, 2025).

3. GI Japanese Beef

Figure 1.
GI Japanese
Beef and Their
Production Sites

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the website of MAFF (Accessed on February 12, 2025)



4. Challenges in GI Japanese Beef's Sustainability

◆ Low genetical diversity and limited organic practice: **Environment**

- ◆ **98%** of Japanese Beef is **Japanese black** due to quality standards and related pricing systems, and productivism (Sekine & Feuer 2022)
- ◆ **Degradation of cattle health**: stillbirth, sterility, abortion, extinction of some rare strains

◆ Limited local connection: **Environment/Social**

- ◆ High dependency on feeds based on **imported GM crops** causing concerns on safety and farms' profitability (Araki 2019, MAFF 2019)
- ◆ Limited pasturing and local sourcing of feeds (Feuer & Sekine 2018)

◆ Non-mandatory regulation of **animal welfare**: **Social**

- ◆ Consumer awareness remain underdeveloped (Sekine 2023, 2024)
- ◆ Limited code of practice refer to requirements

◆ **Economic concentration** and management risks: **Economic/Governance** 6

- ◆ price hike of feed and energy, heavy investment, lack of successors/labor, agri-food business cost squeeze and vertical integration, limited participation in policy making, gender inequality

5. Innovations Made by Alternative Beef Production Systems

◆ Genetical diversity and organic/agroecological practice: **Environment**

- ◆ **Favor marginalized races**: Japanese red, short-horn, polled
- ◆ Create **new quality standards and alternative pricing systems**

◆ Encouraging local connection: **Environment/Social**

- ◆ **Pasturing**: lower production cost, improves breeding performance
- ◆ Limited beef produced in Japan is certified as **organic**

◆ Voluntary **animal welfare** certifications: **Social**

◆ **High economic performance in small family farms:**

Economic/Governance

- ◆ Higher profitability than large farms

6. Discussions and Conclusions

◆ Challenges of authenticity/sustainability of GI Japanese Beef

- ◆ **Productivist, industrial, and technocrat** orientation
- ◆ **New technologies**: genome editing, robotics, AI, low methane feeds
- ◆ Export: higher GHG emissions

◆ Suggestions derived from alternative beef

- ◆ Integrating **pasturing, local sourcing, organic, animal welfare** in GI code of practice
- ◆ Possible outcomes: **lower production cost, higher profitability, generational renewal, revitalization of rural communities**

◆ Implications for policymakers and GI stakeholders

- ◆ Create **PDO** equivalent GI classification to favor local sourcing/pasturing
- ◆ Encourage to **adapt sustainability codes** in GI code of practice
- ◆ **Educate** stakeholders on sustainability dimensions: environment, economy, social, governance
- ◆ **Improve gender inequality**: mutual aid for maternity/paternity leaves of farmers



Thank you!!!!

Photo: Sekine 2024

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