

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

Voluntary - Public

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Japan

Post: Tokyo

GI Application Submitted for 'Tsuruta Steuben' Grapes

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Fresh Fruit

Wine

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Report Highlights:

Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) announced an application for a geographical indication (GI) for "Tsuruta Steuben" grapes on October 18, 2018. Steuben is a black-skinned sweet grape variety developed by Cornell AgriTech in New York State. Public comments on the application are due to MAFF by January 18, 2019. Interested U.S. parties are welcome to share a copy of any comments submitted with FAS/Tokyo at agtokyo@fas.usda.gov.

Keywords: JA8097, EU EPA

General Information:

Japan's Ministry Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) announced via its [website](#) an application for Geographical indication (GI) protection for “[Tsuruta Steuben](#),” filed by an association from [Tsuruta Town](#) in Aomori Prefecture on October 18, 2018 – See Appendix 1 for an unofficial English translation.

Steuben is a black-skinned hybrid grape variety developed in the United States, originating from a cross made in 1925 between Wayne and Sheridan grapes by the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (now known as Cornell AgriTech) in Geneva, New York (Slate et al. 1962¹). The variety is grown mostly in the Northeastern United States, such as New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Ohio. Steuben is a high quality dessert grape, but also suitable for juice and wine production. However, Steuben wines often appear as rosé or blush wines rather than single-variety wine.

Japan implemented GI systems for agricultural and food products in 2015 (see [JA5008](#)). As of November 2018, Japan designated 69 domestic GIs for agricultural, forestry, and fishery products. In addition, MAFF has approved 71 European Union (EU)-proposed GIs for agricultural and food items (see [JA7151](#)). These EU-proposed GI protections will become effective in Japan on the date the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) enters into force.

If Tsuruta Steuben is designated as a new GI product, the compound term “Tsuruta Steuben” will be protected in Japan. It is also possible that this term may be protected in countries with whom Japan has concluded an EPA.

Japan produced 180,500 MT of grapes (approximately five percent of Japan's fruit production by volume) in 2015. Japan imported 31,319 MT of fresh grapes in 2017, 35 percent of which were from the United States (valued at \$36 million). For additional information on the Japanese fresh fruit market, see [JA8706](#).

How to Submit Comments to MAFF

MAFF will accept public comments on this GI application for three months, to be received by January 18, 2019. Interested parties are invited to comment using a comment [form](#) available on MAFF's website (comments must be submitted in Japanese, but see Appendix 2 for an unofficial English translation).

Sealed or signed comments are to be filed in-person by hand or via post to:

Intellectual Property Division, Food Industry Affairs Bureau, MAFF
1-2-1, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100-8950, Japan
(Opens between 10:00-12:00, 13:00-17:00, except Saturdays, Sundays, regular holidays, and year-end and New Year holiday week)

or via email to: gi-info@maff.go.jp.

¹ Slate G.L., Watson J., and Einset J. 1962. Introduced by the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station 1928-1961. Bulletin No.794, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Cornell University, Geneva, NY. 28-30p.

Interested U.S. parties are welcome to share a copy of any comments submitted to the Government of Japan on the application with FAS/Tokyo at agtokyo@fas.usda.gov.

Appendix 1. Unofficial Translation of the GI Application for “Tsuruta Steuben”

1. Number of application for registration: 166
2. Date of registration application: March 9, 2018
3. Name of Applicant: Tsuruta Steuben Japan No.1 Promotion Association
4. Applicant's address: 200-1 Hayase, Tsuruta Town, Kita-Tsugaru County, Aomori
5. Name of the applicant's representative: Yoshihiro Narita (Chairman)
6. Applicant website address: <https://steuben.jp/> (Japanese)
7. Classification to which agricultural, forestry and fishery products belong: 3rd Class, Fruit, Grape
8. Name of agriculture products: Tsuruta Steuben
9. Producing areas such as agricultural, forestry and fishery products:

Tsuruta Twon and Itayanagi Town (Obata, Nonaka, Kakeochibayashi, Kashiwagi, and Botanmori) of Kita-Tsugaru County, Nanatsudate of Goshogawara City, and Kashiwakuwanokida of Tsugaru City in Aomori Prefecture
10. Characteristic traits of agriculture products

Steuben variety is suitable for cool climate such as Aomori Prefecture of Tohoku region. Steuben is very sweet because of high sugar content and last for two months under normal refrigeration. With a special cultivation method, “Tsuruta Steuben” maximizes the good features of the variety. Clusters are large having large numbers of berries, but each berry is juicy and firm. Also, we can store and ship the grape from October to February maintaining good flavor and freshness, as we have learned the special storing method through historical apple cultivation. Distributors of Tsuruta Steuben appreciate and say “Tsuruta Steuben is one of the rare domestic grapes that have small variabilities, good flavor, and good looking appearance while can sell even after the New Year day (by Tokyo Seika Second Operation Department).” Tsuruta Steuben has 50 percent premium compared to grapes from other prefectures at fruit shops and department stores in Aomori and Tokyo.
11. Method of production of agriculture products
 - (1) Variety

Use “Steuben”.
 - (2) Cultivation Method
 - a. Use large fence.
 - b. Remain longer branches (as short as 1 meter) for trimming.
 - c. Leave fewer leaves (just 3-4 leaves, while 5 is normal).

d. Use bags to store long-term.

(3) Standards for Shipment

Sugar content: 18 or higher, larger than M-size.

(4) Final Product

Sell “Tsuruta Steuben” as grape (fruit).

12. Reasons of attributes of agriculture products mainly originate from their production areas

The production area of “Tsuruta Steuben” (i.e., Tsuruta Town and surrounding) is located on the same latitude as New York State where Steuben was developed, and also the climate including annual precipitation and temperature is very similar. Thus, Tsuruta is very suitable for Steuben. The difference between maximum average monthly temperature and minimum average monthly temperature during the cultivation period is about 8-10 degree Celsius, and the temperature difference between daytime and nighttime contributes to the high sugar content.

The cultivation of Tsuruta Steuben adopts the combination of above methods, and also adopts unique Tsugaru method. Accordingly, we increase the number of clusters and increase the longevity. In addition, we invented special cooling storing method using bags, which can maintain the freshness after harvesting. “Tsugaru Grape Association” had originally promoted the production of Steuben, but we established a new organization called Tsuruta Steuben Japan No.1 Promotion Association in 2014 and started aggressive PR activities in Tokyo metro area and other large cities. Furthermore, we use the uniform branded package labeling “Winter Grape Tsuruta Steuben” as the local community would like to increase the name value of the product.

13. History of agriculture products at their production areas

Steuben is developed by the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, and introduced to Japan in approximately 1952. The test planting was started in Aomori, where the climate is similar to New York. Around early 1970s, the chairman of Aomori Prefecture Grape Association promoted the cultivation. In 1979, Tsugaru Grape Association was founded by producers around Tsuruta Town and have cultivated Steuben.

Suitable cultivation methods and storing methods were well established by around 1984, and the features of “Tsuruta Steuben” was recognized. Continuous research and development on cultivation and storage methods by local farmers and producer organizations led to Tsuruta Town and surrounding as the No.1 Steuben production area. Currently, there are 140 farmers produce 1,100 MT (2017) and the production area is approximately 100 ha.

14. Trademark: N/A

15. N/A

16. Photo



17. Date of Notice: October 18, 2018

18. Inspection period of applications etc.
(Two months from public notice date) until December 18, 2018

19. Comment period
(Three months from public notice date) until January 18, 2018

Note: It is permissible to inspect the detail of the submission until December 18, 2018 at MAFF.

Appendix 2. Unofficial Translation of MAFF's Opinion Submission Form

To: Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries

Date:

Submitted by:

Address:

Name/company & representative's name:

Phone:

I hereby submit my comment as below in accord with Article 25 of the Act on Protection of the Names of Specific Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Products and Foodstuffs (hereinafter "Act")

1 State which designation you would like to comment on

- (1) Public notice number and date prior to designation
- (2) Category of specific agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and foodstuffs
- (3) Name of specific agricultural, forestry, and fishery products and foodstuffs

2 Details of opinion

I believe the designation stated above under 1

Should be protected

Reason(s):

Should not be protected for the following reason(s)

Item 1, Paragraph 1 of Article 29 applies

Reason(s):

Item 2, Paragraph 1 of Article 29 applies

Reason(s):

Other

3 List of attachments*

*You may attach documents in support of your comment