

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Japan

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Japan Extends GI Protections to 'Tsuruta Steuben'

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Fresh Fruit

Approved By:

Christopher Riker

Prepared By:

Daisuke Sasatani

Report Highlights:

After public comment and an expert committee review, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) added "Tsuruta Steuben" to its register of geographical indications (GI) on March 20, 2019. MAFF confirmed that Japan's protections extend to the compound term, "Tsuruta Steuben," but that the variety name "Steuben" remains available to all producers. Steuben is a black-skinned sweet grape variety developed by Cornell AgriTech in New York State.

Keywords: JA9031, Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), IP

General Information:

Japan's Ministry Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) announced via its [website](#) that it had added "[Tsuruta Steuben](#)" to its registry of Geographical indication (GI) protections on March 20, 2019.

MAFF confirmed that Japan's protections extend to the compound term, "Tsuruta Steuben," but that the variety name "Steuben" remains available to all producers. 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.

As reported in [JA8097](#), MAFF announced an application for GI protection for "Tsuruta Steuben," filed by an association from Tsuruta Town in Aomori Prefecture on October 18, 2018. Following the conclusion of a 90-day public comment period, an expert committee meeting was held on March 8, 2019, to review comments received and issue a final decision.

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

1. Registration number: 75
2. Date of registration: March 20, 2019
3. Application number: 166
4. Date of application for registration: March 9, 2018
5. Name of applicant: Tsuruta Steuben Japan No.1 Promotion Association
6. Applicant's address: 200-1 Hayase, Tsuruta Town, Kita-Tsugaru County, Aomori
7. Name of the applicant's representative: Yoshihiro Narita (Chairman)
8. Applicant website address: <https://steuben.jp/> (Japanese)
9. Classification of agricultural, forestry and fishery product: 1st Class, Agricultural Product, Fruit (Grape)
10. Name of agriculture product: Tsuruta Steuben
11. Producing areas of agricultural, forestry and fishery product:
Tsuruta Town 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
12. Characteristic traits of agriculture product
Steuben variety is suitable for cool climate such as Aomori Prefecture of Tohoku region. Steuben is very sweet because of high sugar content and lasts 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 appearance, selling well even after New Year’s day (by Tokyo Seika Second Operation Department).” Tsuruta Steuben sells at a 50 percent premium compared to grapes from other prefectures at fruit shops and department stores in Aomori and Tokyo.
13. Method of production of agriculture products
 - (1) Variety
Use “Steuben”.
 - (2) Cultivation Method
 - a. Use large fence.

- b. Retain 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).

14. 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 degrees 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 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 promotional 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.

15. 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. In the 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” were recognized. Continuous research and development on cultivation and storage methods by local farmers and producer organizations led to Tsuruta Town and its surroundings as the No.1 Steuben production area. Currently, there are 140 farmers producing 1,100 MT (2017) and the production area is approximately 100 ha.

16. Trademark: N/A

17. N/A

18. Photo

