

## Japan's green tea contaminated with radiation



NEWSCORE

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TOKYO -- Japanese green tea, esteemed around the world for its purity and health-enhancing properties, has become contaminated with radiation, as fallout from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant continues to blight Japan's agricultural heartlands, authorities revealed Thursday.

Authorities admitted for the first time that green tea from Japan's biggest tea-growing area, the Shizuoka prefecture, contains radiation higher than the officially-permitted level.

The contamination has opened a furious argument among local and national officials about how to measure the radiation, and what constitutes a safe level of contamination.

Dried leaves from the year's first harvest in the Honyama area of Shizuoka were found to contain radioactive cesium at a level of 679 becquerels per kilogram, above the permitted maximum of 500 becquerels. But the discovery was made by chance, and the authorities admit that earlier consignments, which were not examined and have gone to the market, may have also been contaminated.

Limits on the sale of tea from areas closer to Fukushima have been put in place, but Shizuoka is to green tea what the Champagne region of France is to sparkling wine, and the effect of the news will be devastating.

Japan produced 95,000 tons (86,000 tonnes) of dried tea in 2009, and 42 percent of that was from Shizuoka. The prefecture, supported by the ministry of agriculture, has insisted on carrying out radiation measurements in such a way as to minimize the suggestion that its precious product is dangerous.

The problem is that, unlike other vegetables, tea leaves are processed before going on sale and are not consumed directly. When fresh leaves are dried, the removal of water concentrates the radioactive elements to five times the former level.

But when they are infused in a tea pot the amount of radiation in the resulting brew is between 30 and 45 times less, according to the agriculture ministry.

The Shizuoka government wants the 500 becquerels limit to apply to the less intensely radioactive fresh leaves. But the health ministry argues that consumers might swallow dried leaves in a cup of tea, as well as in products derived from tea, such as green tea ice cream, and that the 500-becquerel limit for fresh vegetables must also apply to tea.

The high reading was discovered not by the tea grower or the local government, but by a mail order tea company in Tokyo that carried out its own measurements.

## Japan: green tea exports banned due to high radiation levels



The Japanese government has banned shipments of green tea leaves in four regions after high levels

**of radioactive caesium were found.**



Workers at the Fukushima nuclear plant are shielded with tarps Photo: AP

By Danielle Demetriou in Tokyo

7:00AM BST 03 Jun 2011

A swathe of Japan's tea making regions including parts of Tochigi, Chiba and Kanagawa prefecture as well as the whole of Ibaraki were included within the ban, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Green tea plantations were first highlighted as suffering from potential radiation contamination last month following the results of sample tests in Kanagawa prefecture.

The authorities discovered around 570 becquerels of caesium per kilogram in leaves grown in the city of Minamiashigara – compared to the legal limit of 500 – and started a recall of tea products.

Tea leaves are the latest agricultural products in Japan to be affected by problems surrounding the still-damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

From milk to spinach, a raft of items have fallen under the spotlight due to radiation fears although Japanese authorities have assured the public and its export nations that it is strictly regulating products.

#### **Quality Control Response to the Events in Fukushima, Japan**

June 10, 2011

##### ***Safety of ITO EN Sourced Shizuoka Green Tea***

To Our Valued Customers,

In light of the recent events in the Tohoku region of Japan, we would like to take this opportunity to update you on the status of our products. We are pleased to confirm that all our products remain unaffected and are safe for consumption.

The following is our response to the recent report that radioactive cesium levels were found to be just above safety levels set by Japan's Food Sanitation Law detection limit. This was detected from tea grown in the Aoi-ku, Warashina District of Shizuoka prefecture's 2011 harvest green.

Vendor response:

1. We did not purchase any of 2011 harvested green tea from the corresponding district.
2. We will continuously test all of the 2011 harvest green tea. We have a system that ensures ITO EN only ships products after extensive analysis confirms the absence of radiation.
4. We have implemented a stringent system to monitor *every* production run.
5. We have a rigorous quality control testing of raw materials, production and distribution.
6. We are hard at work to ensure the safety of our products by taking extraordinary steps and enforcing strict quality control measures.

June 9, 2011

To Our Valued Customers,

In light of the recent events in the Tohoku region of Japan, we would like to take this opportunity to update you on the status of our products. We are pleased to confirm that all our products remain unaffected and are safe for consumption.

Following are some details on steps being taken to ensure your safety and the safety of our products:

- Safety of Tea Leaves
  - We have analyzed this year's new crops of green tea. We have confirmed that all teas we source remain unaffected and are safe for consumption.
  - We have established a system that ensures we only ship 2011 harvested green tea after analysis has confirmed the absence of any radiation issues.
  - We have confirmed that all of these products remain unaffected and are safe for consumption. We have been monitoring these plants every 8 hours.

This inspection process includes careful analysis of all water used at these facilities.

- Monitoring of finished product after every production run.

- We inspect for radioactive material / measurements of finished products upon completion of every production run.

We will keep you posted on any new updates. Please be assured that we will uphold our 40 year legacy of providing products that embody our five principles. Products must be Natural, Safe, Healthy, Delicious and Well-designed.