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## **AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION NOTICE NO. 2011/13**

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### **Processing imported goods and passengers arriving from Japan**

This notice is being issued in response to requests for further information following the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. In particular, questions have been raised about potential risks associated with passengers and cargo arriving from Japan.

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing are closely monitoring and assessing the situation, including the potential exposure to radiation of people and goods travelling from Japan to Australia.

#### **Passenger processing**

ARPANSA and the Chief Medical Officer have advised Customs and Border Protection that Australians returning from Japan are highly unlikely to be contaminated or to have been exposed to significant levels of radiation, and the risks to health are very low. This includes passengers arriving on commercial aircraft, cruise ships, and in other small craft.

In addition, the risk of any contamination being 'transferred' from passengers returning from Japan to other people (such as in crowded baggage or arrival halls, or while checking in for connecting flights or during baggage handling processes) are negligible.

***Accordingly, no checks for radioactivity are required.***

#### **International mail, sea and air cargo and aircraft**

The Japanese Government, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and ARPANSA have advised that there is a small chance goods from the Fukushima region and an isolated area near Onagawa have been exposed to very low levels of radiation.

However, the risk to health of people handling mail, containers or cargo arriving from these areas is assessed as very low. This includes cars, machinery and parts imported from Japan, and other 'permeable' goods such as leatherwear, textiles or other goods made from other plant or animal material.

The risk is also very low when boarding vessels (including aircraft) for clearance or loading/unloading purposes (for example, when clearing small craft, or unloading bulk goods from container ships or commercial aircraft).

***Accordingly, at this point in time it is not considered necessary to introduce any radiation screening measures for mail, sea or air cargo, or aircraft arriving from Japan.***

This is consistent with the approach being taken in a number of other countries, such as the UK, Canada and New Zealand.

## Imports of fresh produce

Current advice from Foods Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is that the risk of Australian consumers being exposed to radionuclides in food imported from Japan is negligible. Australia does not import fresh produce from Japan. In fact, Australia imports very little food from Japan. Imports are limited to a small range of speciality products, for example, seafood, seaweed-based products, and sauces.

As a precautionary measure, FSANZ has requested that the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) tests certain fresh or frozen foods originating from the Japanese prefectures of Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki and Tochigi. The foods are milk and milk products, fresh fruit and vegetables, seaweed and seafood (fresh and frozen).

Importers of this type of produce from the four prefectures listed above should be aware that their goods will be referred to [AQIS for testing](#) to check that the foods do not contain unacceptable levels of radionuclides.

Customs is working closely with ARPANSA, FSANZ and AQIS to ensure a coordinated approach to managing any potential risks to the Australian food supply chain.

Also as a precautionary measure, passengers and importers should be aware that the following products from affected areas should be avoided:

- foods that may have been outdoors (such as fresh produce from crops grown in fields, gardens or allotments or sold in outdoor markets),
- fish, shellfish and seaweed products, and
- milk.

Food that has been stored inside (such as in warehouses or other buildings) prior to export to Australia should be safe. Further information can be obtained from the 'What's New' section on the [FSANZ website](#).

Importers should note that all food (whether imported from Japan or elsewhere) must be declared to AQIS on arrival in Australia.

***The risk of food contamination is considered to be negligible. With the exception of milk and milk products, fresh fruit and vegetables, seaweed and seafood (fresh and frozen) sourced from the Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures, no additional restrictions on imported food from Japan have been introduced at this stage.***

## Ongoing monitoring

Customs and Border Protection is working closely with ARPANSA and other Government agencies to monitor the current situation.

Stakeholders will be advised if there is any change to current advice that no additional screening of passengers, mail, cargo or produce arriving from Japan is required.

Further information can be obtained from the [ARPANSA website](#).

(signed)  
Raelene Vivian  
National Director  
Cargo Division  
25 March 2011