

# Food Education and Eating Patterns in Japan

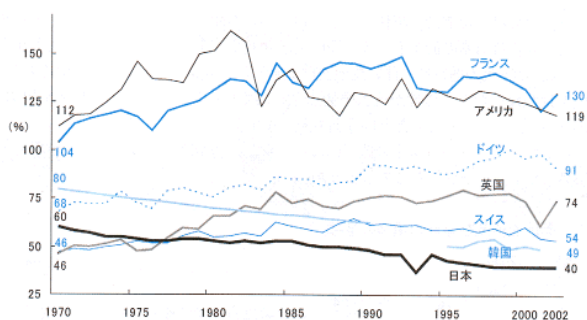
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## 1. Background

Japan imports 60% of its total food supply - one of the lowest food self-sufficiency rates in the developed world - thus compromising not only its environment and its food culture but also its national food security. Government efforts to repair this situation include a 2005 *Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas* produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. One of its strategies is a national nutrition education program inspired by Food Guides found in other countries. Because Japan's unique geography presents an added challenge to the attainment of food self-sufficiency, it needs to set goals in food education that extend beyond improvement of personal health to encompass also the goal of a healthy nation.

### National food self-sufficiency rates (1970-2002)



(Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2002)

## 2. Study objectives and methodology

Without a change in consumer behavior, support for foreign food will remain high, self-sufficiency rates will remain low and Japan will not maintain its health, either on a personal or on a national level. The focus of this thesis is to assess what impact nutritionally educated consumers will have on the government's food self-sufficiency targets. To assess current eating patterns, an analysis of food choice was done via a questionnaire administered to workers at a medium-sized company to determine their food choices and cooking behavior.

## 3. Conclusion

Taking into consideration both the uniqueness of the self-sufficiency goal of this country and also the limited success that education programs in other countries have had on influencing consumer behavior, this thesis briefly explores food education - past, present and future - demonstrating that what the Japanese consumer puts on his plate is not only his daily meal but also his country's future.