

Iwaki Agricultural Tour

Sunshine Tomatoes (Akai Saien: Akai, Taira, Iwaki)

Sunshine Tomatoes are a brand of tomato produced by Akai Saien and other local producers such as Tomato Land Iwaki and Ohno Hydroponics Agricultural Co-op which are all part of the Sunshine Tomato Shipment Conference. Iwaki Vision went and visited Akai Saien to learn more about their Sunshine Tomatoes.

Taste and features: High quality tomato with a long shelf life even after they've fully ripened. Unique for their balanced flavour, they're ideal for any cuisine including Japanese, Western and Chinese. The naming of Sunshine Tomatoes derives from the fact that Iwaki receives an incredibly high amount of sunshine throughout the year.

Harvesting period: October to June

Cultivating method: Produced using a method of hydroponics* where coconut shell fibres replace soil (*hydroponics uses a nutrient filled liquid solution consisting of fertiliser dissolved in water).

Apart from the large bright red Sunshine Tomatoes, Akai Saien also produces Irodori Tomatoes, which come in a colourful variety of red, orange, yellow, green and purple tomatoes.



Oyabaka Tomatoes (Tomato Kobo Ono: Kawabe, Iwaki)

Oyabaka is one of six farms in southern Iwaki that belong to the Kikuta Horticultural Research Society. The name "Oyabaka" derives from a Japanese idiom meaning a doting parent. Following this idiom, the grower puts thorough effort into maintaining a healthy soil for his tomatoes, raising them with plenty of love and care as if they were his own children.

Iwaki Vision visited Tomato Kobo Ono in Kawabe to find out more.

Taste and features: These tomatoes are unique in their rich flavour and having absorbed more minerals from being allowed to grow for a longer period of time in well-maintained healthy soil. Great eaten raw in a salad, but taste even better heated up once they've been allowed to fully ripen.

Harvesting period: December to May

Cultivating method: Produced using a soil culture that's been thoroughly tended to so that it's ideal for tomato cultivation. Has been certified as a Specially Cultivated Agricultural Product (uses less than half of the amount of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that regular farms use).

Oyabaka producer Ono is a tomato raising veteran, devoting 48 years of his life towards it. He continues producing high quality and nutrient-rich tomatoes that have a rich and balanced flavour.



Iwaki enjoys longer sunshine hours than most of Japan (around 2000hrs/yr) which is ideal for producing lots of farm produce. In this edition of Iwaki's Agricultural Tour, we introduce three facilities producing three unique brands of Iwaki tomato – a produce that typifies Iwaki itself – as well as one of the facilities in Iwaki that inspects rice for radiation.

Iwaki Aisai Tomatoes (Iwaki Onahama Saien: Sumiyoshi, Onahama, Iwaki)

Iwaki Aisai Tomatoes are an exclusive brand produced at Onahama Saien. Onahama Saien boasts one of the largest tomato growing greenhouses in Japan (equivalent to two Tokyo Domes in size), and produces a wide range of tomatoes.

Taste and features: Mild flavour and firm texture means they won't fall apart when cooking. Its fruity taste makes it a recommended addition to salad or eaten cooked with pasta or fried food.

Harvesting period: October to July

Cultivating method: Produced using hydroponics* in an advanced hi-tech greenhouse (*hydroponics uses a nutrient filled liquid solution consisting of fertiliser dissolved in water).

In addition to Iwaki Aisai Tomatoes, Onahama Saien also produces a high beta-carotene and high lycopene type that has around twice as much lycopene than normal tomatoes.



Monitoring Facility for Radioactive Materials in Rice

Iwaki Vision visited the JA Iwaki Agricultural Co-op's facility for inspecting radioactive substances in rice, one of nine such facilities in Iwaki. Iwaki, alongside the rest of Fukushima conducts mandatory inspections of all locally produced rice before they are sent off to markets in order to assure consumers that Iwaki is producing delicious rice that is safe to eat.

The rice is measured in 30kg bags using a conveyor belt system. Each bag of rice is first labelled to determine who owns the rice and where it has come from before being placed through the conveyor belt's monitoring machine, which can quickly measure whether or not the sample contains radioactive materials over the standard level of 100bq/kg limit. If such levels of radioactive substances haven't been detected then the machine will automatically label it with an [INSPECTED] label and can then be shipped off for consumption. However if there's even a slight possibility that a sample might go over the 100bq/kg standard, then it will go through a more detailed inspection using a Germanium Semiconductor. If the semiconductor reading is below the national standard of 100bq/kg, then it can be shipped out, but if it goes over then that sample cannot be consumed. In addition, those surrounding farms

must go through more stringent checks to ensure that all rice in those areas has safe levels of radiation.

However it is worth noting that since monitoring of radiation levels of locally produced rice in Iwaki began in 2012 only one sample has ever been measured over the 100bq/kg limit, back in 2012. Additionally, 99.9% of all samples last year remained under the minimal detection level.

You can find detailed results in English of all food inspections on the Fukushima Association for Securing Safety of Agricultural Products website:

<https://fukumegu.org/ok/contents/>.

