

WELCOME TO
IZUMIBASHI
Vol.03



Thank you for checking “IZUMIBASHI NEWSLETTER”.



Thank you very much for picking up the Izumibashi newsletter. Although we once declared that we would publish four times a year, nearly a year has passed since Vol.2... I'm so sorry. Still, we will continue updating at our own pace without giving up, and we hope you will stay with us along the way. Once again, the brewing season has arrived. All of us at Izumibashi will continue working hard to bring you delicious sake. We sincerely appreciate your continued support.

Marketing Dev.

HARUNA HASHIBA



Who are we ??

Established in 1857, Izumibashi is a rare “Cultivation Brewery.” Driven by our belief that “sake starts with rice,” we cultivate and mill our own rice from nearby fields right here in our hometown of Ebina.

Our brands are “IZUMIBASHI”, “TONBO(Red dragonfly)”, and seasonal brands express dragonfly’s lifecycle. We use red dragonflies as a symbol mark because we want to protect the regions and countries and the earth where many red dragonflies fly in the autumn sky.



[Address] 5-5-1 Ebina, Kanagawa-pref, JAPAN

*It takes 20mins by foot or 5mins by taxi from Ebina station.

[Business hours] Our shop, called “SHU-YU-KAN” open 10:00-18:00.

[Holiday] Open all year round without from 13th to 16th in August, and New year holiday season.

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Professional from IZUMIBASHI



02. FROM HARVEST TO RICE MILLING

In Newsletter Vol.2, we shared about sake rice cultivation from planting to just before harvesting. This time, we will take you through the process from the actual harvest to rice inspection and polishing!



As of 2025, Izumibashi cultivates five varieties of sake rice: the early-maturing Rakufumai; the late-maturing Yamada-Nishiki, Shinriki, and Omachi; and, for the first time this year, Gin-no-Sato. By brewing sake with five different sake rice varieties, we not only expand our product lineup but also benefit from the staggered harvest times. Growing varieties that mature at different times allows us to harvest each rice at its peak. Furthermore, the earlier-harvested varieties can immediately move on to polishing and brewing, enabling us to produce new sake sooner.

From planting to harvest, we regularly inspect the rice fields several times for each variety together with members of the Kanagawa Agricultural Technology Center, and the Sagami Sake Rice Research Association. Under the guidance of technical

advisors, we check basic growth conditions such as plant height, number of stalks, and leaf color, while also assessing whether additional fertilization is needed, whether there are signs of pests or diseases, and estimating the likely harvest timing as growth progresses. Harvest season then begins in late September.

Sake Rice Varieties and Best Harvest Timing

Rakufumai	LATE SEPTEMBER
Yamada-Nishiki	EARLY OCTOBER
Gin-no-Sato	EARLY OCTOBER
Shinriki	EARLY OCTOBER
Omachi	LATE OCTOBER

IT'S HARVEST TIME!

Once the rice reaches its optimal harvest time, it's time to begin! At our brewery, we use a combine harvester for most of the fields. Operating a combine may look simple, but in reality it's quite challenging!

In particular, when the rice has fallen over, the machine must be guided so that it scoops the stalks up from the base in the direction they are lying. This means we can't simply drive straight forward the whole time. Instead, we advance a little, cut some rice, back up slightly to adjust the machine to the fallen direction, and then move forward again—repeating this process over and over.

Our combine harvesters are equipped with taste and yield sensors, allowing us to measure yield, protein content, and moisture levels during harvest. The data can also be transferred to a smartphone app and later used to optimize the rice polishing process.

Freshly harvested rice (paddy) contain a high level of moisture. If left as they are, they will naturally sprout, so drying is essential. We use a drying machine until the moisture content reaches 14%. Currently, as we only have one dryer, we schedule our harvest work based on its capacity, which means harvesting about roughly half a hectare of fields per day.



The combine harvester used for harvesting. The harvested and threshed rice grains are transferred into flexible container bags for transportation.



On the combine's operator monitor, you can view:
"Average protein content", "Moisture content",
"Cumulative weight"



Discovery While Harvesting!!

(Left) A rice ear that fell into the irrigation channel during harvesting and naturally sprouted.

This shows why drying is essential—if the grains still contain moisture, they will sprout on their own...

(Right) A new ear that grew again from the cut stump.

The power of nature is truly amazing! But of course, the inside of this ear was hollow and empty.

RICE HULLING

The process of removing the husk from dried rice (paddy) to produce brown rice is called rice hulling. Inside a rice hulling machine, there are two rubber rollers that rotate at different speeds. When the paddy passes between them, the difference in speed creates friction, which strips away the husk and leaves brown rice.

After hulling, the rice is passed through a color sorter, which separates the brown rice from other materials such as stones, foreign matter, or discolored grains. The sorting criteria—such as the type of objects to be removed or the color threshold—can be adjusted depending on the machine.



Immature and discolored grains separated during sorting

GRADING INSPECTION

Grading inspection evaluates rice based on grain size, shape, and the proportion of immature or discolored grains. A small sample is taken from a bag of brown rice, spread on a petri dish, and examined. The rice is then classified as First, Second, or Third Grade.

Only rice that passes this inspection can officially display its “origin, variety, and harvest year.” For example, labeling rice as “Kanagawa-grown Yamadanishiki” requires this step. The inspection works both as a guarantee of quality and as the rice’s “birth certificate.”

At Izumibashi, we go further by attaching labels that state the variety, grower, field location, and grade for the sake rice grown by us and the Sagami Sake Rice Research Association. Because we oversee both rice cultivation and sake brewing, we can fully trace not only “where and by whom the rice was grown,” but also its quality—knowledge that directly shapes our sake. This is our greatest strength.



Brown rice randomly sampled into a petri dish, graded by a certified inspector.



Inspection certificate on the rice bag (Grade 1). The shape of the stamp varies by grade.

Registered designation of origin and variety : 産地品種銘柄

“SANCHI HINSHU MEIGARA: 産地品種銘柄” is a system established by Japan’s MAFF and each prefectural government, officially recognizing the combination of a rice’s production area (region) and its variety.

Back in 1996, when our sixth-generation brewer, Yuichi Hashiba, decided, “Let’s grow our own sake rice!”, only one variety—Wakamizu—was registered in Kanagawa.

In 1998, we began cultivating sake rice ourselves, together with fellow members of the Sagami Sake Rice Research Association. Thanks to years of effort and the strong support of the agricultural cooperative, Kanagawa Prefectural Government, and the Agricultural Technology Center, three additional varieties were officially registered as “産地品種銘柄” in Kanagawa: Yamada-Nishiki in 2014, Rakufumai in 2018, and Omachi in 2022.

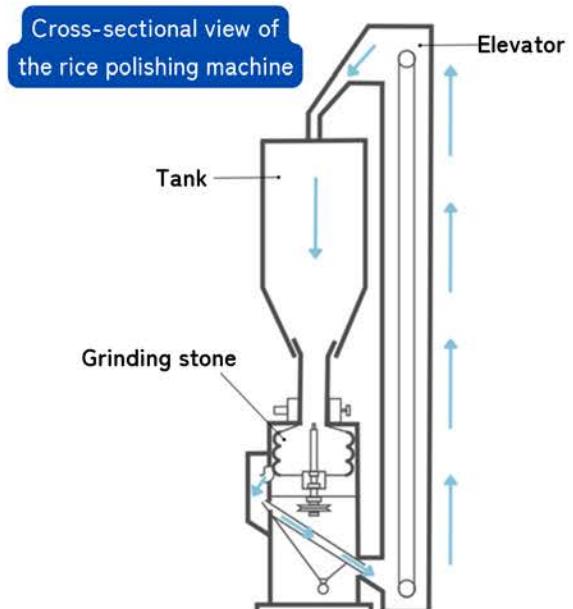


Around 2005—
Top: Sixth-generation Hashiba planting rice
Bottom: Soil analysis meeting with local farmers

RICE POLISHING

In 2006, Izumibashi replaced its old rice polishing machine with a modern vertical one. Since then, we have done all of our rice polishing in-house.

The machine works by using a large grinding stone that spins while the rice passes around it, gently polishing off the outer layers of each grain. The more we polish, the longer it takes. For example, polishing the rice down to 20% of its original size once took as long as 180 hours!



This process also produces “NUKA”(rice bran), which is the outer part of the rice that gets polished away. Because this rice is carefully grown by our farmers, we never waste it—we always find ways to make good use of it.



After rice planting, rice bran is spread in the fields to prevent weeds and act as fertilizer.



Fermented rice bran is used as feed for chickens.



Some is also used as an ingredient for the rice-flour pizza served at our shop.

WE FILED A PATENT APPLICATION

FROM THE SKY TO THE FUTURE OF SAKE BREWING: DRONES DETECTING THE QUALITY OF SAKE RICE

Izumibashi has filed a long-cherished patent application for a technology that predicts the quality of sake rice before harvest. This patent application is the result of joint research with the Kanagawa Institute of Industrial Science and Technology (KISTEC) and Chiba University (Assistant Professor Hama). The newly filed technology uses drones equipped with special cameras to capture images of rice fields. From these images, it analyzes quality indicators such as protein content and makes it possible to select the most suitable sake rice for brewing—plot by plot. It is a groundbreaking system that could transform sake rice production.



Brewery worker flying a drone

In this issue, we interviewed sixth-generation brewer Yuichi Hashiba and Kosuke from our Cultivation & Brewing Devision about the background of this quality prediction technology and how it may be applied in the future.

—Why Analyze Rice Quality Before Harvest?

As many of you may know, one of the key factors that greatly influences the flavor of sake is the protein content in the rice. In general, a higher level of protein can lead to unwanted flavors, which is why the rice polishing process is essential for creating clean and elegant sake.

Until now, brewers could only estimate rice quality by observing the growth of the plants and considering external conditions. Based on those assumptions, decisions were made on how much to polish the rice and which produ-

ct it would be used for.

Of course, it is possible to analyze rice quality after harvest. However, because polishing and brewing begin immediately after harvesting, analyzing the rice only at that stage makes it difficult to incorporate the results into the polishing and brewing schedule, often causing delays. With this new technology, however, we can measure protein content and other quality indicators before harvest. This allows us to identify, at an early stage, which plots of rice are best suited for sake brewing.

Based on that information, we can plan the

harvest, polishing, and brewing schedules more precisely. As a result, we can improve the accuracy of sake quality design and produce sake with the exact flavor profile we are aiming for. (Kosuke)



A drone with a special camera
more compact than you might expect!

— You said this patent application comes after nine years of effort. What have you been working on during that time?

In fact, we have been carrying out quality prediction in an analog way since 1997. Rice plants with higher protein content tend to have darker green leaves. So, we used to visit each sake rice field, comparing leaf color against a color chart to estimate quality, then ranked the paddies from A to D. When we first began cultivating sake rice, we had only about half a hectare of our own fields, and even counting the fields of the Sagami Sake Rice Research Association, it was just 0.7 hectares. At that scale, it was possible to make the rounds. But as our cultivation area expanded year by year, we eventually could only check about 10% of the fields. That's when I started thinking seriously about a more efficient method.

Our encounter with drones came in 2016, when a professor from Keio University specializing in drones visited our brewery. By the following year, 2017, we conducted test flights over rice paddies in Ebina and Sagamihara city. That was the first time we thought, "Maybe this technology could be applied to sake rice cultivation."

At that stage, we hadn't figured out exactly how to use it. But we knew that unless we could operate drones ourselves, we couldn't move forward. So in 2019, we began preparations in earnest—attending drone seminars and pilot training sessions, practicing flights, and taking images over our own fields.

From 2020 onward, we started working with the Kanagawa Institute of Industrial Science and Technology (KISTEC) and others. Using existing services, we analyzed images of rice paddies taken by drones to measure leaf color values and apply them to quality assessment. However, since the service only returned leaf color data on a per-field basis, we felt it lacked practical value. That pushed us to look for a new approach.

In 2021, Assistant Professor Hama from Chiba University joined us, and the project developed into part of Kanagawa Prefecture's DX promotion program. We shifted our focus from simple leaf color analysis to exploring the correlation between protein content in sake rice and photosynthetic activity, as measured by NDVI (a vegetation index). Our hypothesis was that if we could estimate protein content before harvest, it could revolutionize brewing plans.



(Top) 2000 – Inspecting rice paddies
(Bottom) 2024 – Checking leaf color

By 2022, this research took concrete shape. We harvested sake rice from two fields managed by drones—each with different protein levels—and conducted trial brewing. Some of you may remember that we even released it as a study set for side-by-side tasting. That same June, our project, “Development of a System to Estimate Protein Content in Sake Rice,” was adopted as an industry-academia-government collaboration, officially launching the research.

In 2023, we succeeded in organizing the theoretical framework, but faced the issue that data processing took too long. Finally, in 2024, analysis software was completed, enabling us to efficiently estimate protein content and other quality factors from drone imagery. With this, we established a practical system to predict sake rice quality before harvest. It was at this point, as the culmination of years of effort, that we filed a patent application for the technology. (Yuichi)

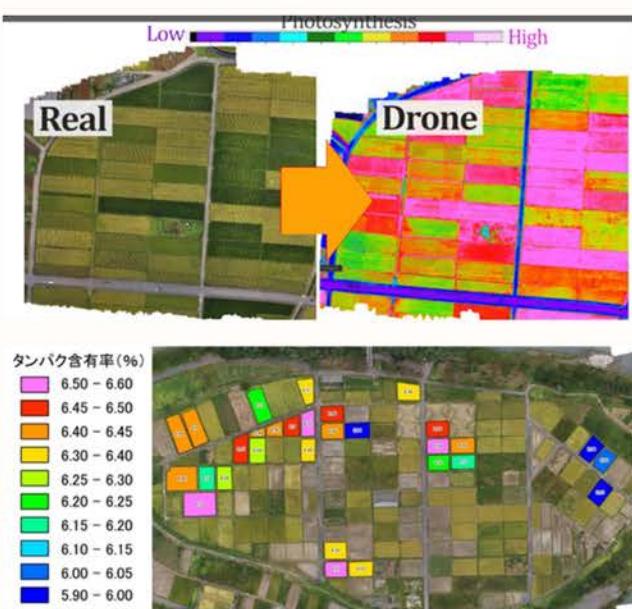
—So, by knowing the protein content, how do you plan to apply that to sake brewing?

For example, if the harvested sake rice has a low protein content, we don’t need to polish it as much in order to make a clean and elegant sake.

On the other hand, if the protein level is high, we could choose to polish it more aggressively and produce a highly polished Junmai Daiginjo. As I mentioned earlier, when people hear “off-flavors caused by protein,” it may sound unappealing. But in fact, these off-flavors are more precisely amino acids. A higher level of amino acids in sake actually brings out more umami, so it’s not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be quite interesting to deliberately take advantage of higher protein levels to create a sake with very high amino acid content and a distinctive character.

Before harvest begins, we always draw up our brewing plan for the year. With this new technology, we will be able to decide in advan-

ce which rice from which fields to use for what kind of sake—even before the harvest. It makes me truly excited about the future of sake brewing. (Kosuke)



(Top) Rice field photo taken with a special camera

(Bottom) Digitized map

Protein levels—high and low—made visible at a glance!

How was that? We now live in an age where even in rice cultivation, drones can be used to analyze quality. Of course, there are still many challenges—such as environmental changes and labor shortages—but our approach is to actively embrace new technologies while also preserving the traditions and values that must be protected. With that balance in mind, we will continue to devote ourselves to rice growing and sake brewing. We truly appreciate your continued support.



む

2024BY

辛口純米酒
山田錦



Grown, produced and bottled by
Izumibashi Shuzo Co.,Ltd.
Ebina, Kanagawa, Japan.
Since 1857

生
酛

Since 2022, Izumibashi has been taking on a new challenge: brewing sake without using the association yeasts distributed by the Brewing Society of Japan, and relying only on the natural wild yeasts living in our brewery. The name “Mu” comes from the Japanese word “mutenka” (meaning additive-free). We took the first character “mu” to express the idea of brewing without adding association yeast.

This year, the third release, “Mu 2024BY Dry Junmai Sake,” is ready. It is sharp, dry, and refreshing, yet also carries the rich depth and umami typical of the traditional kimoto method.

The yeasts that live naturally in our brewery have created a taste that is both accidental and inevitable—born from the hand of nature itself. We invite you to enjoy this unique expression of sake.

*The products listed are announced according to our release dates in Japan and are not necessarily exported overseas. For inquiries regarding new products and other matters, please contact Izumibashi.

The yeast-free ‘Mu’ series delivers a unique taste every year. Let’s dive into the flavors of the 2024BY edition and hear some behind-the-scenes stories!



The 2022BY was rich and dry, the 2023BY had a white wine-like acidity, and now comes the third release. With ‘Mu 2024BY,’ was there something you paid special attention to?

In 2023BY, the natural yeast living in the Izumibashi multiplied rather slowly. Because of the low fermentation temperature at the early stage of the fermentation starter, lactic acid bacteria grew together with the yeast, resulting in a sake with high acidity and strong flavor.

For the third release, “Mu 2024BY,” we took the previous year’s results into account and raised the fermentation temperature during the early fermentation starter stage to suppress the growth of lactic acid bacteria. As a result, the yeast fermented more vigorously, creating a sake that is sharp and dry, yet also carries the full-bodied umami and depth typical of the kimoto style.

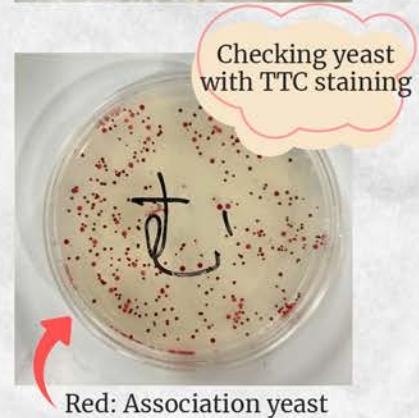
I see... So what kind of yeast was actually responsible for the fermentation?

This year’s “Mu” was naturally fermented by two types of yeast: the wild yeast rooted in our brewery, and also the association yeast (most likely No. 9 yeast) that had been floating in the air during our daily brewing.

As a result, fermentation became a kind of “coexistence,” with about 90% from the association yeast and about 10% from the wild yeast. The fermentation was extremely vigorous.



When the yeast first begins to grow



Checking yeast with TTC staining

Wow, so around 90% was cultured yeast? I didn’t expect that!

That’s right! In fact, when making the fermentation starter for “Mu 2024BY,” we carefully separated the tools and kept it isolated from the association yeast starters, waiting for the wild yeast in the brewery to emerge. But in the end, the association yeast multiplied instead, which really surprised us.

From my perspective as the MOTOYA (fermentation starter specialist), you could even say it was a kind of contamination by the association yeast. So honestly, there’s a bit of frustration as well.

Red: Association yeast
White: Wild yeast

For the upcoming fifth release, ‘Mu 2025BY,’ what will you be paying attention to?

Well... for the next batch, I’m thinking of increasing the proportion of koji used in brewing compared to previous years. I’d like to take on the challenge of creating a richer, denser sake with more of the rice’s natural sweetness and umami.

Also, the yeast that appeared naturally this time is currently undergoing genetic analysis. Once we have the results, I’d like to rethink our microorganism management methods and apply those insights to the next brewing.

Thank you so much! Every bottle in the “Mu” series is unique—you’ll never taste the same flavor twice.

Don’t miss the chance to enjoy this special, one-time-only sake!

LEMON LIQUEUR



Chill it, then enjoy
on the rocks or with soda!



Ingredients
*Kasutori Shochu
*Lemon juice
from Odawara
*Rock sugar



Alcohol

7%



Our second collaboration liqueur made with “Amaskotonaku”—a spirit distilled from sake lees—and local fruits is here! This time, we’re using lemons from Odawara City in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Odawara lemons are grown with an eco-friendly philosophy: no chemical fertilizers or herbicides are used, and the harvested fruit is free from preservatives and wax. Compared to the well-known lemon-growing regio-

ns of Hiroshima or Shikoku, Odawara lemons are said to have less acidity and a softer, sweeter flavor.

We’ve crafted a liqueur that highlights the lemon’s refreshing tang, balanced with a gentle sweetness for a smooth finish. Enjoy it on the rocks or with soda, or try it frozen as a sherbet, even drizzled over ice cream as a sauce. There are so many delicious ways to enjoy it!

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“SHUYUKAN” Store Manager
Miyuki Kikuchi

Who is Kikuchi?

The manager of our brewery shop “SHUYUKAN”, located on the main premises. Since its renewal in March 2025, the new shop not only sells sake but also offers rice-flour pizza and light snacks, making every day a busy one. Even so, she is a reliable leader who keeps the whole staff working smoothly together.

Please tell us about your main responsibilities and what you value most in your work.

I am mainly in charge of sales at shop and the management of our official online shop. My work includes checking daily sales trends and handling product ordering and inventory management.



What I value most is teamwork and communication with my colleagues. I truly believe that it is because all of us staff members come together as one and support each other that Izumibashi's sake can be created.

What do you like about your work, and please tell me the reasons.

I think what I enjoy most is being able to meet all kinds of customers—those who come because they are curious about Izumibashi, those who visit because they already love our brewery, and those who simply stopped by because we happen to be nearby. Seeing everyone's smiles truly gives me energy and motivation for my work!

Which product do you like, and please tell us your recommended how to drink and pairing with foods?

Megumi Red Label! This was the very first sake I tried after starting work at Izumibashi. Even though it's a Genshu, it has a smooth finish and is easy to drink—I highly recommend it.

Rice: Yamadanishiki, Polishing ratio: 65%, Alcohol: 18%



Do you have some place you recommend near Izumibashi or in Kanagawa?

My top recommended spot would definitely be Izumibashi's rice fields!

In summer, you can often see our brewery staff working out in the paddies, and in autumn you can enjoy the sight of red spider lilies (Higanbana in Japanese).

Starting around 2008, members of the Sagami Sake Rice Research Association gradually planted them, creating the beautiful scenery you see today.



What is your hobby?

My hobby is going to the cinema—I love watching movies, and whenever there's one that catches my interest, I make sure to go see it.

I also love animals, and at home I have dogs, parakeets, turtles, and flying squirrels. On my days off, I'm always playing with them (and they keep me busy, haha).



By the way, I recently started raising eels! He or She is still very small. And even when they grow bigger, I won't be eating them—promise! (haha)

Please say a few words to readers.

Please do come and visit Izumibashi Shuzo—we'd love to welcome you! You're sure to discover delicious sake here.

You see only the rice, but in truth it carries the weight of many years of effort.

“Rice is cheap, and that’s just the way it is”—many people may think so.

But as someone who grows rice and brews it into sake, I see this view as dangerous. Until just a year ago, rice prices were so low that farmers could barely survive, let alone support the next generation. In our region, few live on rice alone, and most rely on other crops or jobs.

So why is it that rice in Japan can be “so cheap”?

It is thanks not only to today’s farmers but also to centuries—millennia—of work by our ancestors, who carved paddies, maintained waterways, and built the infrastructure of rice farming. Those enormous “investments” were made long ago and, in a sense, fully amortized. That is why rice can be grown at relatively low cost today. (Our paddies in Ebina city, for example, have been cultivated for at least 2,000 years.)

It is also important to remember: rice paddies are not natural landscapes. They exist because people care for them, allowing water, plants, and life to circulate—frogs, dragonflies, and birds included. The beautiful “traditional Japanese landscape” is the gift of generations of farmers.

At our brewery, we grow our own sake rice. Each variety needs different care, and its large, delicate grains mean that even small changes in water or harvest timing affect flavor. Sometimes we must rush to harvest before the rain. Each decision shapes the aroma, sharpne-

ss, and balance of the sake. Truly, “the rice field and the brewery are one.”

The brewery itself is the same. While we have gradually updated some equipment, the foundation is still the rice paddies, buildings, and environment preserved by our ancestors for generations. The ecosystem of microorganisms, including the wild yeasts that live in the brewery, cannot be developed overnight. This too is a precious inheritance created by time.

At the same time, rice cultivation in Japan today depends heavily on machinery such as tractors, rice planters, and combines, as well as on fossil fuels. If fossil fuels were ever cut off, we might only be able to cultivate one-tenth of what we do now. Meanwhile, costs continue to rise year by year.

So I want people to see rice not as something “cheap and ordinary,” but as something “precious and worthy of gratitude.” We are standing on the miracle of rice paddies created by those who came before us. Delicious rice, fine sake, and the beauty of rural landscapes all exist thanks to the continuous efforts of people. Our mission is to keep standing in the paddies, so that we can pass this baton on to the next generation.

Yuichi Hashiba, 6th-generation

*This article is an excerpt from a message posted by the six generation, Yuichi Hashiba, on Facebook on May 28, 2025, in response to the rice crisis that occurred in Japan.