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NEW GENETIC ID TASTE EVALUATION TEST HELPS FOOD EXPORTERS GAIN GREATER ACCESS TO JAPANESE MARKET

*Breakthrough analysis provides objective measure of subjective quality
and market acceptance in Japan*

(Fairfield, Iowa, May 6, 2005)— For Japanese consumers, the taste, texture, and fragrance of a food product is of prime importance. As a result, companies exporting foods to Japan need to ensure their product will pass the “taste test” of discriminating Japanese consumers. Genetic ID’s new Taste Evaluation Test helps exporters objectively evaluate these key qualities of their product, enabling them to better meet the taste preferences of the Japanese highly discriminative consumers.

How to measure taste?

According to Akira Hanawa, president, Genetic ID Japan, Inc., Japanese food buyers often request that exporters adjust the “taste” quality of a product to fit the Japanese market. “The question is ‘how can you identify Japanese taste?’” says Hanawa.

In addition, Japan’s major retail companies increasingly select food products on standardized specifications and evaluate products based on scientific data. However, taste is difficult to measure because it is a subjective, sensory experience. As a result, taste evaluations are performed by retailers’ employees or consumer groups.

Hanawa saw that an objective measurement of taste would help exporters gain greater acceptance in the Japanese market. “If you can determine the taste quality profile of your product, based on scientific data, you can better meet the requirements of demanding Japanese buyers,” he says.

Taste Evaluation Test

In 2003, Genetic ID Japan developed the Taste Evaluation Test based on comprehensive analyses of appearance, taste, texture, and fragrance using mass spectrometry technology.

“It is a scientific analysis focused on various components which contribute positively or negatively to taste,” says Hanawa. “While the test cannot describe “taste,” with 100% accuracy, it provides a very important profile of the elements that contribute to taste.”

Genetic ID Japan began with a taste evaluation for rice in 2003 and has since collected more than 1,000 data points on rice, including chemical profile, texture, optical analysis, and fragrance data.

Genetic ID Japan expanded the test to evaluate tastes for wheat flour, soy, fruit juice, fresh produce, and traditional Japanese foods, such as tofu, rice crackers, boiled fish products, and meats such as, pork, beef and fried chicken.

Major retail supermarkets, convenience stores, consumer and farmer cooperatives, food manufacturers, and importers in Japan now use the Taste Evaluation Test.

Bill Thompson, CEO, Genetic ID North America, says the Taste Evaluation Test compliments Japan’s use of “taste panels” involving consumers. “Together, an exporter would have a greater understanding of product quality and how it will be received by Japanese consumers. The Taste Evaluation Test provides an objective measurement of quality and consumer acceptance in the market.”

Rice exporter increases sales

As a result of its success in Japan, Genetic ID now offers the Taste Evaluation Test to food exporters worldwide that want to enter the Japanese market.

For example, a Chinese rice exporter evaluated the taste of its rice and found that it compared positively to the taste of Japanese rice. The exporter used data from the Genetic ID Taste Test as a marketing tool and increased sales significantly in Japan.

Thompson says a US based multi-national food company is using the Taste Evaluation Test to help launch a new food product in Japan. “This company is using the taste test as a vehicle to differentiate themselves from their competition, demonstrate their commitment to quality, and increase sales,” he says.

Gain greater acceptance in the Japanese market

Food exporters that want to use the Taste Evaluation Test to gain greater acceptance in the Japanese market should contact Genetic ID, which would evaluate the food category and propose a testing protocol to meet the exporter’s needs.

For more information on the Taste Evaluation Test contact Bill Thompson, Genetic ID at +1-641-472-9979 ext. 146 or email: taste-test@genetic-id.com