

Japan to remove tariffs on 95% of products

①TOKYO -- Japan is to eliminate import tariffs on 95% of 9,018 products under the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, the government announced on Tuesday.

②It is the highest liberalization rate among free trade agreements Japan has concluded.

③The Japanese government on Tuesday unveiled details of tariff removal measures to be taken under the 12-nation TPP, about two weeks after a broad agreement was reached on the historic deal.

④Japan is to eliminate import tariffs on many agricultural products, excluding some sensitive items such as rice, beef and pork. The elimination of tariffs is to cover 51% of 2,328 farm products immediately after the pact takes effect. Eventually, imports of 81% of the products are to be allowed tariff-free.

⑤The TPP is seen greatly benefiting Japanese makers of industrial products, more than 99% of which will be allowed into the U.S. and other TPP countries tariff-free.

⑥The pact is expected to significantly boost economic activity in the Asia-Pacific region.

⑥Akira Amari, Japan's minister for economic and fiscal policy, who was also in charge of the TPP talks, said at a regular press conference on Tuesday that the TPP is "balanced as a whole."

⑦Amari also said Japan has successfully protected the core part of five key agricultural product categories, including rice.

⑧Speaking at a separate regular press conference, Hiroshi Moriyama, the minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, defended Japan's agreement to abolish import tariffs on 81% of farm products.

⑨"Despite very strong pressure for tariff elimination in the TPP negotiations," Moriyama said, the percentage of agricultural products exempted from tariff removal "is exceptionally high, at 19%."

⑩After marathon talks, Japan, the U.S. and 10 other TPP partners reached a broad agreement on the trade deal at a ministerial meeting in Atlanta, in the southern U.S. state of Georgia, on Oct. 5.

⑪During the negotiations, Japan tried to protect many items in five key agricultural product categories, including rice, beef, pork and dairy products, as "sanctuaries" and retain import tariffs on them.

⑫As a result, Japan is to maintain its high tariff of 341 yen per kilogram of imported rice while setting up special import quotas for U.S. and Australian rice totaling 78,400 tons per year.

⑬Japan's import tariff on beef is to be cut gradually from the current 38.5%; in 16 years' time, it is to decline to 9%. But Japan will not eliminate the import tariff on beef.

⑭Also, Japan is to remove import tariffs on all 100 main vegetables. As for fruits and fishery products, Japan is to eliminate import tariffs in principle, except on some items that would put domestic growers under tough competition from tariff-free imported products.

⑮Japan, which already imports many industrial products duty-free, is to abolish tariffs on 95% of industrial products immediately after the TPP takes effect and on all of them eventually.

⑯The Japanese government plans to compile a package of measures as early as November to help the farm and other sectors cope with the TPP.【October 20, 2015/Nikkei】

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. What is tariff? What is the importance of having it?
2. What is TPP? Please share what you know about it.
3. Five key agricultural products are partially exempted from tariff-free trade. What can you say about this?
4. As a consumer, what rules do you follow when buying groceries?
5. What do you think are the long-term effects of the TPP agreement?
6. Make sentences using the following words: eliminate, unveil, excluding, exceptionally, quota, cope with, retain and sanctuary.

日本の参加後 2 年に及んだ環太平洋経済連携協定交渉が大筋合意に達した。太平洋を囲む 12 カ国、の国境を越えての貿易や企業活動等が大きく自由化される。日本が輸入する農産品や工業品など 9018 品目のうち、8575 品目の関税が撤廃される。日本が輸入する工業製品にかかる関税は大半がすでに撤廃済みだが、協定発効後、すぐにもしくは段階的にすべての品目で撤廃される。日本政府が「聖域」と位置付けてきた「重要 5 項目(全 586 品目)」のコメ、麦、牛・豚肉、乳製品、砂糖でも品目数でも約 30 パーセントにあたる 174 品目の関税がなくなる。