

## Preface

Canadian exporters are discovering a new Japan. Firms which have focussed their efforts on specific target market segments have seen their results soar. Their success bears witness to important changes which have recently occurred in the Japanese market.

Since the mid-1980s, the substantial appreciation of the yen, Japan's concerted policy of domestic demand stimulation and a shift towards a more open import regime have significantly enhanced the competitiveness of Canadian goods in the Japanese market.

New export opportunities are not limited to the greater Tokyo area where soaring real estate prices add to the high cost of doing business in Japan's largest and most densely populated city. Major cities such as Sapporo in the Hokkaido region have experienced significant economic growth.

Home to 5.7 million people, Hokkaido accounts for approximately 4 per cent of Japan's total population. Despite its relatively small population base, the island contributes over 10 per cent of the country's total food production. In 1988, Hokkaido's gross domestic product stood at ¥14.4 trillion, which placed it sixth among regional economies. By the mid-1990s, Chitose International Airport — an hour closer to Canada than Narita Airport near Tokyo — will offer 24-hour service to freight forwarders and passengers. With expansion of the airport, and as major infrastructural projects redistribute the island's economy, Hokkaido could become Japan's "front door" by the next century.

This guide describes Hokkaido as a market and outlines the opportunities it holds for Canadian exporters.

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*The Canadian Embassy and Consulate General in Japan have made important contributions to this series of market studies. Additional assistance and information is available from the Embassy in Tokyo, the Consulate General in Osaka and the Consulate in Fukuoka.*

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