

1 Introduction

Japanese imports of Canadian sphagnum peat moss have increased fourfold over the past eight years because of the steady growth in demand in Japan and the regular supply of high-quality Canadian peat moss products. Canada now provides about 95 per cent of Japanese import requirements of this product; in 1988, Canadian sales amounted to 48 474 metric tons valued at ¥2 214 million on a c.i.f. basis, according to Japanese statistics. Further market growth is anticipated, with the rate of increase depending on currency fluctuations and a number of other important factors presently at work in the Japanese market.

2 Import Trends

Japanese imports of peat moss rose from 7 795 metric tons in 1976 to 51 407 metric tons in 1988. (See Table 1.) The U.S.S.R. and Poland were large volume suppliers in 1976, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of Japanese imports of this product. Over the following decade, imports from Poland ceased and those from the U.S.S.R. declined sharply, leaving Canada as the main supplier. In the past three years, the main suppliers have been Canada, West Germany, the U.S. and China.

Table 1

Japanese Imports of Peat Moss by Country (Metric Tons)

Country	1976	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988
Canada	2 620	8 816	20 028	28 429	34 492	48 474
Ireland	104	60	12	—	—	—
U.S.	—	43	40	182	635	481
Denmark	176	34	—	—	—	—
Sweden	14	11	—	—	19	11
U.S.S.R.	3 087	—	34	1 759	1 884	257
New Zealand	—	—	—	70	82	56
Netherlands	41	—	—	13	—	12
West Germany	48	—	419	424	592	1 067
Finland	232	—	239	325	573	369
Poland	1 395	—	—	—	—	—
Trinidad	6	—	—	20	—	18
Taiwan	—	—	17	255	219	220
China	—	—	—	100	301	439
Total Imports	7 795	8 964	20 789	31 577	38 797	51 407
c.i.f. value (Y million)	366	625	1 674	1 783	2 100	2 351

Source: Japan Tariff Association.