

Initiatives for Society

Our aim is to resolve social issues through food to help build a society where future generations can lead healthy lives. We are engaged in a wide range of initiatives to achieve this, including promotion of education on food culture and appreciation, support for local communities, development of sustainable procurement and supply systems, and pursuit of food safety and security.



Yakumo Shorthorn Wagyu cattle raised on organic feed at Yakumo Farm

The Starzen Group sources and markets Japanese Shorthorn Wagyu from cattle bred and fattened at Yakumo Farm, part of the Field Science Center attached to the School of Veterinary Medicine at Kitasato University. Yakumo Farm obtained organic JAS certification in 2009. The farm does not use chemical fertilizers or agrochemicals and raises livestock on organic grass using only farm-grown feed. The farm has developed a natural cycle for beef production where cattle manure is composted and spread on grasslands, and the compost is used to grow pasture grass.

In December 2023, the Ishikari Plant at Starzen Meat Processor Co., Ltd. was awarded JAS certification as a repacker of organic livestock products, which has allowed us to market Yakumo Shorthorn Wagyu portion cuts processed at this plant as a JAS-certified organic product.



Yakumo Shorthorn Wagyu cattle

Pursuing the possibilities of soy meat through our Zero Meat series

The Japan Soy Meat Association was established on September 1, 2023, with Starzen Group President Kazuhiko Yokota appointed as Vice Chair. The Association is working on a review of Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) standards for soy meat food products to make standards consistent internationally, and also plans to run campaigns to advertise and promote the consumption of soy meat. The Starzen Group has partnered with Otsuka Foods Co., Ltd. to manufacture and market for commercial use the Zero Meat series of soy meat food products, including hamburger steak and ham- and sausage-style products all made from soybeans without the use of animal ingredients. The Zero Meat series has been well received for being delicious, healthy, and environmentally

friendly for both consumer and commercial-use products. We are growing sales, particularly to restaurant chains, because the Zero Meat series helps to keep costs down at a time when prices for imported meat materials are rising. Going forward, we are committed to increasing sales of Zero Meat products as a means to set ourselves apart in order to meet the diverse tastes of consumers.



Zero Meat Demi-Glace-Type Hamburger

Ashoro grassland business

In August 2022, our Group-affiliated farm in Ashoro-cho, Hokkaido acquired some 300 ha of grassland locally. The acquisition was aimed at increasing our domestic production capacity for roughage to promote supply stability and cost savings, in response to recent disruptions to roughage imports and rising prices. The grass is fed to cattle raised on Group-affiliated farms and

also supplied as feed to local livestock producers, so we are more self-sufficient for roughage and are supporting the local community. Going forward, we plan to promote sustainable livestock management with an emphasis on the environment through research into reduced greenhouse gas emissions and circular production using farm compost.



Grassland in Ashoro



Ashoro Asahigaoka Farm

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Gifting beef and pork for school meals

Since 2014, the Starzen Group has been gifting Wagyu beef and domestic pork for school meals at elementary and middle schools in communities where we have production facilities, through the various plants operated by Starzen Meat Processor. This program aims to foster a sense of gratitude amongst the students for the bounties of the region, help them understand the appeal of locally

produced foods, and promote local pride and love for their hometowns. So far, the Group has supplied food in Misawa and Sannohe in Aomori Prefecture and in Minamisatsuma in Kagoshima Prefecture.



School meals in Misawa (left) and Minamisatsuma (right)

Supporting the activities of RMHC

Ronald McDonald House is a global charity with 380 facilities worldwide where families can stay while their child is undergoing medical treatment in a nearby hospital. Ronald McDonald House Charities Japan (RMHC) was established in 1999 and the first facility, Setagaya House, was built in 2001. The Starzen Group has been a corporate sponsor of RMHC from the outset and is actively involved in programs such as charity marathons and annual fundraising drives to support RMHC operations. In 2023, Starzen President Kazuhiko Yokota visited a House facility as a volunteer, helping to prepare meals for families staying there, as part of efforts to raise awareness among Starzen employees and broaden the scope of the Company's support activities. To help families in a

more direct fashion, the Starzen Group regularly gifts sausages, seasoned meats, and other products to the 12 RMHC Houses around Japan.



Volunteering at RMHC

Efforts to ensure animal welfare

The Starzen Group has identified "promoting animal welfare" as a materiality and is working to realize the "Five Freedoms" representing international norms for animal welfare. In 2022, to reduce livestock stress, we eliminated teeth clipping of piglets at Group-affiliated farms, installed drinking water facilities at all livestock processing plants in the Group, and completed the installation of video cameras to ensure proper handling of livestock and prevent accidents. We also produce training videos and run short courses to train employees on

humane livestock handling, and expanded this training program in fiscal 2024 to include headquarters staff and drivers transporting livestock. In addition, we are engaged in research into free stalls through an industry-en dash academia collaboration with Ibaraki University, with which we have a joint research contract, and continue to arrange opportunities for regular discussions with external experts so we can apply their recommendations to better manage farm facilities.

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Quality assurance system

We are working to build a quality assurance system befitting a leading manufacturer of meat products and to raise awareness of quality among employees.

Starzen Group Quality Policy

1. Legal and regulatory compliance

The Starzen Group complies with all legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to food.

2. Groupwide quality assurance regime

The Starzen Group continuously upgrades its quality assurance regime on a coordinated Groupwide basis to ensure that its food products are safe and reliable.

3. Customer first

The Starzen Group earnestly listens to customer feedback and strives to provide complete, accurate information to customers.

The Starzen Group focuses first and foremost on making safe and secure products. With “customer first” as a continuous motto, one of the Group’s most important missions is to deliver delicious products that customers can enjoy with peace of mind. Based on this, the Group encourages its applicable business sites to obtain SQF certification under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system.

By obtaining SQF certification in the breeding and fattening business, including partner producers, we will build an integrated quality assurance system, spanning from upstream to downstream meat distribution, thereby aiming to further increase the quality of our meats. Our integrated management structure built under SQF spanning from production to distribution is a first in Japan.

Integrated management structure under SQF spanning all processes from production to distribution

SQF certification obtained at **57** Group locations in Japan

Integrated management under SQF from production (farms) to distribution (business locations)

Breeding and fattening



Farms: 1 location

Processing and manufacturing



Domestic plants: 20 locations

Distribution



Domestic business locations: 36 locations

Also, in order to strengthen our foundation as a processed meat manufacturer, we are working to foster a culture of food safety. As a culture rather than a rule, we aim to instill an awareness of hygiene management in each and every employee. Reporting directly to the President & CEO, the Quality Assurance Division regularly instructs quality control managers of each subsidiary and business site, who in turn educate staff at their respective business sites. We also use SQF as a tool for this training.

Hygiene guidance for Group business locations

Starting in fiscal 2024, we introduced a new ranking system for our sales offices. Throughout the year, each sales office’s quality control system is closely monitored and then evaluated on a three-point scale (A, B, or C) in March. In the future, we plan to implement hygiene guidance tailored to the evaluations at each sales office. Also starting in fiscal 2024, we began conducting unannounced hygiene inspections at each business location. This includes our plants which undergo annual inspections in accordance with international certification requirements for unannounced audits. These audit results are also included in the new ranking system’s evaluation criteria. Unlike an

advance notice audit, this check aims to further improve hygiene levels by checking everyday conditions at the site.



Hygiene inspection

Developing human resources in quality management

We conduct various training programs and distribute educational videos to raise the level of knowledge on quality control among all Group employees. Specifically, we hold online training for quality control personnel at sales offices nationwide on important topics related to food safety, such as temperature control and food labeling. Quality control personnel then share the training content across all business offices to improve the knowledge of all sales office employees.

In addition, we provide tailored training to quality control personnel at our plants based on their career stage. We reviewed our training system last fiscal year and decided to focus on developing the next generation of quality control personnel. We also provide training not only for young quality

control personnel but also for mid-career employees, including transferees and mid-career hires. This includes classroom sessions for acquiring knowledge and on-the-job training at plants.



Quality control training