

Japanese Food Manufacturers Convert to U.S. Potatoes as Ingredients

By convincing two major Japanese food manufacturers to switch to U.S. potatoes as an ingredient, Potatoes USA created net new usage that is expected to equate to 1,250 metric tons of U.S. dehydrated and frozen potatoes annually. The new products illustrate the success of Potato USA's strategy to broaden usage and distribution channels by educating food manufacturers and others on the range of U.S. products available and their varied applications. This strategy has helped drive growth in U.S. sales in recent years, and during the first six months of the current year, aided U.S. frozen potato exports to increase 7% to \$153.8 million and U.S. dehydrated potato exports to increase 9% to \$15.2 million, during the period from July to December 2017.

In December, Kenko Mayonnaise, the second largest mayonnaise company in Japan, launched a potato puree for restaurants and lunch box manufacturers utilizing U.S. frozen diced potatoes as the source ingredient. The weather-related shortage of local potatoes in Hokkaido had caused the company to begin seeking non-local sources for their popular product. Potatoes USA's trade servicing and merchandising visits, funded by MAP, had aided U.S. potato products in building a higher profile with the manufacturing sector and made U.S. potatoes a logical choice. As a major manufacturer, Kenko expects annual usage to total about 1,000 metric tons.

In October 2017, major food manufacturer Ajinomoto was similarly seeking high quality potatoes for their "Anpanman" frozen shaped potato product, an item based on the picture book and anime series that is among the most popular with young children in Japan. Like Kenko, Ajinomoto was seeking a solution to the unstable supply of local potatoes. Their local ingredient supplier, who has been a regular target of Potato USA's trade education, recommended they try U.S. dehydrated potatoes. As a result the company expects to use 230 metric tons a year to manufacture their popular Anpanman product.