



# Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts (Food, Health, and the Environment)

*Vaclav Smil, Kazuhiko Kobayashi*

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In a little more than a century, the Japanese diet has undergone a dramatic transformation. In 1900, a plant-based, near-subsistence diet was prevalent, with virtually no consumption of animal protein. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Japan's consumption of meat, fish, and dairy had increased markedly (although it remained below that of high-income Western countries). This dietary transition was a key aspect of the modernization that made Japan the world's second largest economic power by the end of the twentieth century, and it has helped Japan achieve an enviable demographic primacy, with the world's highest life expectancy and a population that is generally healthier (and thinner) than that of other modern affluent countries. In this book, Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi examine Japan's gradual but profound dietary change and investigate its consequences for health, longevity, and the environment. Smil and Kobayashi point out that the gains in the quality of Japan's diet have exacted a price in terms of land use changes, water requirements, and marine resource depletion; and because Japan imports so much of its food, this price is paid globally as well as domestically. The book's systematic analysis of these diverse consequences offers the most detailed account of Japan's dietary transition available in English.

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