

Summary of Specification



1. Name of the GI + transcription in Latin alphabet or in international phonetic alphabet

行方かんしょ (transcription : Namegata Kansho), Namegata Kansho, Namegata Sweet Potato

2. Category of the product for which the name is protected

Class 1: Agricultural product (Sweet potatoes)

3. Applicant – name and address

Namegata Kansho Brand Promotion Council

3282-10 Yamada, Namegata City, Ibaraki Prefecture, 311-1704, Japan

4. Date of first protection in the country of origin

5. Description of product

Compared with other producing areas in Ibaraki Prefecture, the starch content of Namegata Kansho is higher, which is converted to sweetness through saccharification, and the longer storage period result in a sweeter vegetable with a higher Brix value.

In addition to its good taste, the quality and supply system are highly regarded not only by the Keihin market but also by market participants in other regions such as the Kansai region, thanks to the establishment of a “variety relay shipping system” that can quickly respond to the demands of actual consumers throughout the year. It is the largest volume handled per shipping yard in the Tokyo market.

In 2017, Kansho sub-committee of the Namegata Agricultural Cooperative (now Namegata

Shiosai Agricultural Cooperative) won the grand prize in the Collective Organisation Category at the 46th Japan Agricultural Awards in recognition of its efforts to increase the cultivation area and sales value by establishing high-quality cultivation technology for good-tasting varieties, to develop the region around Kansho, and to increase farmers' income. The product also won the Emperor's Cup in the Diversified Management Category at the 56th Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Festival in the same year.

6. Description/delimitation of the geographical area and of specific steps in production that must take place in the identified geographic area

(1) Producing area

Namegata City, Itako City, Kashima City, Hokota City, Omitama City, Kasumigaura City

(2) Cultivation method

(i) Cultivar

The variety of “Kansho as vegetable” specified by Namegata Kansho Brand Promotion Council (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”) is used.

(ii) Cultivation method

Cultivate in accordance with ‘Sweet Potato Cultivation Standards’ of Ibaraki Prefecture specified by the Council.

(iii) Shipping method

Timely curing treatment (including storage), sorting and variety relay shipments are implemented according to the Council's “Namegata Kansho Shipping Standards Table”.

7. Link with the Geographical Area

The area around Lake Kasumigaura and Lake Kitaura, where Namegata Kansho is produced, is located in the south-east part of Ibaraki Prefecture and is relatively warm within the prefecture. The soil around Namegata plateau is light-coloured andosol (charcoal fracture soil) with good drainage and has natural conditions suitable for growing Kansho which is strong against dryness and prefers well-drained soil.

In 1984, the producers registered as a trademark for a new variety and started selling under the name *Benikogane* which was selected and cultivated from *Beniazuma*, a recommended variety by Ibaraki Prefecture. From 1988, they also worked on the establishment of virus-free seedling propagation technology before others. In 1992, the sales of virus-free sweet potatoes started, and the entire region received guidance from the agricultural cooperative on cultivation methods and sorting techniques, which until then had been tackled by individual producers, thereby raising the awareness of producers towards *Monozukuri* (meaning craftsmanship). Under the motto “Select the land, hone your skills, and produce with your heart”, they have been growing Kansho with an emphasis on taste rather than quantity.

In 2002, *Benimasari* was introduced in addition to the mainstay *Benikogane*, and in 2009, *Beniharuka* (registered as a trademark under *Beniyuka* in 2012) was added. The most flavourful period of these three varieties have been researched, and from 2010, the shipping periods have been stated according to the result; the Variety relay shipping system has been implemented to limit the shipping period for each variety according to the appropriate time of year. The stable shipments of the products with good taste are maintained throughout the year.

In addition, the year-round shipment of Namegata Kansho is largely due to the Curing treatment, which increases the cork layer under the sweet potato skin and prevents spoilage during storage due to the penetration of pathogens, and the thermostatic storage to keep low temperature, which promotes the saccharification of the starch contained in the sweet potato. In the producing area, "Curing and temperature-controlled storage facilities" have been established to enable these processes and management, and quality control has been thoroughly implemented.

So-called 'Yaki-imo (baked/roast sweet potatoes) strategy', which sparked the boom, is indispensable when talking about Namegata Kansho. After suffering the economic downturn, since 2003, the producers, agricultural cooperatives and the government started to work in unison to sell the products in major supermarkets and to develop a 'Yaki-imo manual' resulting a system to deliver delicious baked sweet potatoes with stable quality easily at any time, changing the image of baked sweet potatoes as something expensive and only available during the winter season. This strategy has become a triggering explosive for increased consumption, which has been further appreciated by actual users and consumers.

8. History / confirmations of on-going production

In Ibaraki Prefecture, the cultivation of Kansho increased rapidly during the food control period before the Pacific War, and around 1945 the area planted was the largest in the country, but at that time, mainly high-yielding while poor-tasting varieties were used. As the post-war food supply became more stable and shared, demand for Kansho shifted from food to starch for extraction, and after the collapse of starch prices in 1959, the area planted plummeted.

In the production areas, in 1965, in addition to the varieties for starch that were originally planted as a rotation crop for leaf tobacco, efforts were made to cultivate Kansho as vegetable. In 1970, curing and storage to rise product quality began to spread to the producing area.

The production of Namegata Kansho was about 296 ha and the sales volume was 7,222 tonnes in FY1990. The introduction of several superior varieties, year-round relay shipments using these varieties, quality control through curing and thermostatic storage, and the expansion of sales channels through a 'Yaki-imo strategy' have resulted in a planted area of approximately 730 ha and a sales volume of 18,555 tonnes in FY2019, and the scale is increasing year by year, making it one of the country's top producers of Kansho as vegetable.

Furthermore, since 2012, Namegata Kansho has also been involved in exports, starting with shipments to Malaysia, expanding to Thailand and Singapore, and since 2016, the product has been exporting to Canada, France and Germany, contributing greatly to the increase in demand

for baked sweet potatoes overseas.

9. Specific rules concerning labelling and using, if any

N/A

10. Control body / control authority responsible for checking the respect of the product specifications

Control body is Namegata Kansho Brand Promotion Council.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries monitors the condition of quality control in the process of production.

11. Outline of the quality control plan

Namegata Kansho Brand Promotion Council will check (1) producing area and (2) cultivation method, etc. If a producer in the group fails to abide by the specification, the Council will issue a warning and request a correction of his/her production. In case the producer does not follow the warning, the Council may expel the producer from the Council.

In the event that a serious violation is found that significantly undermines or is likely to undermine the trust of consumers regarding the product, it shall be promptly reported to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

12. Information of registered trademark(s) identical or similar to the GI (if applied by the GI holder in other Party's territory)

N/A