

Summary of Specification



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

大口れんこん (transcription : Okuchi Renkon), Okuchi Renkon

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

Class 1: Agricultural product (Lotus Root)

3. Applicant – name and address

Okuchi Renkon Seisan Kumiai (Okuchi Renkon Producers Association)
c/o Horticultural Products Department, Minami Eino Center, JA Niigata Nankan
773 Nakanoshima, Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture 954-0124, Japan

4. Date of first Protection in the country of origin

May 31, 2021

5. Description of product

Okuchi Renkon is a lotus root grown in Nakanoshima Kamidori District in Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture. It is characterized by a whitish flesh with a strong resistance against darkening while being cooked, as opposed to many other varieties. This district has a long-established name in Niigata Prefecture as the largest production area of lotus roots. The marketed product is known for its distinctive qualities of being free of disease, pests, injury, or other damages etc. as well as having completely mud-free clean holes (air canals), which are made possible by setting strict shipping standards.

Okuchi Renkon is highly rated by customers inside and outside of the Prefecture, particularly for the darkening-resistant white flesh when peeled, crunchy and firm texture, as well as its sweetish, umami, and tasty flavor. The Product is receiving an increasing number of orders that designate Nakanoshima Kamidori District as the production area, and its market price is on the rise.

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

(1) Production area:

Nakanoshima Kamidori District, Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture (Okuchi Village, Ikenoshima Village, Oshikiri Shinden, Omoigawa Shinden, Omagato Village, Omagato Shinden, Haijima Shinden, Nakagoya, Tsubone Village, Minamikanbara County, Niigata Prefecture, as administrative division names as of March 31, 1889)

(2) Production method:

① Varieties

Varieties selected by Okuchi Renkon Producers Association based on factors including their suitability for cultivation in the production area is used.

② Cultivation method

i. Renkon rhizomes (as a source of vegetative propagation) should be intact, disease-free and with full apical shoots, collected within the production area.

ii. Groundwater in the production area should be used as the water source. Especially in the early stages of planting, it is required to ensure water temperature maintained by deep water management.

iii. Harvesting is carried out on the day before or the day of shipping, in principle.

③ Shipping standards

Shipped products must be free of disease, pests, injury, or other damages etc. and have completely mud-free clean holes.

7. Link with the Geographical Area

There are specific geographical reasons for why lotus roots cultivation started in the Nakanoshima Kamidori District, situated in the Echigo Plain, a leading rice producer.

The production area has underground reserves of natural gas, and gas fields and hot springs have been developed there for a long time. However, the nitrogen-rich groundwater was considered unsuitable for rice cultivation, making the land difficult to use for farming.

Whereas lotus root is a megatherm plant, and the northern limit for commercial production is considered to be around Ibaraki and Tochigi Prefectures. The production area of Okuchi Renkon is located slightly north of this limit, but the production is possible thanks to the temperature of the local groundwater being slightly higher than the city's average.

In 1923, *Daruma*, a variety with roots in China (the main variety of this production area. Currently, Nakanoshima Kamidori District being the only production area using it in Japan) was introduced from Kariwa Village, Kariwa County, Niigata Prefecture, and the cultivation of lotus root was started. In 1968, Kamidori Agricultural Cooperative Okuchi Renkon Joint Shipping Association (now "Okuchi Renkon Producers Association") was established, and efforts have been made to improve the quality of the product through selecting the superior varieties, establishing the cultivation methods, and a joint selection and joint sales system.

8. History / confirmations of on-going production

The name of the product is derived from the former village's name 'Okuchi', where lotus root cultivation began in 1923.

In 1968, a production organization was established, and then the production expanded. By 1974,

the cultivated area reached approximately 40 hectares, production amounted to approximately 600 tons, and sales amounted to 100 million yen.

Since then, the Producers Association and the government jointly lead ongoing efforts to improve quality and productivity. As of 2020, there were 72 producer households, with a cultivated area of approximately 70 hectares, a production volume of approximately 1,000 tons, and sales of approximately 500 million yen, making it the largest production area of lotus roots in northern Japan.

Also, various local programs have been organized to promote the product, which has become an iconic item of the community. One major example is the traditional festival dance song themed on Okuchi Renkon produced in 1973, which has been continuously played at summer festivals and primary school events. Furthermore, the local tourist association has created a mascot character based on the motif of Okuchi Renkon to promote it, which has become a symbolic product of the region.

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 Okuchi Renkon Producers Association.

In addition, MAFF regularly monitors the condition of quality control in the process of production, through the examination of annual report submitted by Okuchi Renkon Producers Association.

11. Outline of the quality control plan

Okuchi Renkon Producers Association will check (1) production area and (2) production method, etc. If a producer fails to abide by the specification, Okuchi Renkon Producers Association will issue a warning and request a correction of his/her production. In case the producer does not follow the warning, the Producers Association may expel the producer from the Producers Association. In addition, the Producers Association will prepare an annual performance report and submit it 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