Overviews of *Shokuiku* Promotion

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** This paper describes the key laws, policies, and activities related to *Shokuiku* (food and nutrition education).

**Methods:** The Basic Law on *Shokuiku*, the Basic Program for *Shokuiku* Promotion, and *Shokuiku* promotion programs by prefectural and municipal governments were summarized.

**Results:** The Basic Law on *Shokuiku* (enacted in 2005) aimed to promote healthy nutrition and lifestyles for Japanese through *Shokuiku* to ensure mental and physical public health. It mandated the promotion of *Shokuiku* through the formulation and implementation of the five-year Basic Program for *Shokuiku* Promotion. Between 2005 and 2015, Japan’s Cabinet Office was in charge of *Shokuiku* promotion. After 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has been in charge of *Shokuiku* promotion. Every year, the MAFF evaluates targets and the current status of *Shokuiku* promotion measures. The Third Basic Program for *Shokuiku* Promotion was developed in light of the previous five years’ achievements and challenges to cover fiscal year (FY) 2016 through FY 2020. The third program stipulates 21 specific quantitative targets. The coverage of *Shokuiku* promotion programs implemented by the prefectural governments was 100%, whereas it was just 84.5% (by the end of 2018) at the smaller municipality levels.

**Conclusions:** While some issues around *Shokuiku* have improved partly due to *Shokuiku* promotion programs during the past 15 years after the Basic Law on *Shokuiku* was enacted in 2005, serious problems remain (i.e. skipping breakfast among children and young people). Recently, the social environment and living conditions were dramatically and rapidly changed due to COVID-19. All people who are engaged in *Shokuiku* promotion need to make an effort to respond to diet and health-related issues for creating a bright future.

**Key words:** *Shokuiku*, nutrition, public health, food education

**I. Introduction**

Life expectancy at birth in Japan is continuing to rise; as of 2017, it was 81.09 years for men and 87.26 years for women. Along with that increase, some lifestyle-related diseases, such as several types of cancers, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, have become major health problems, and obesity is now a serious public health issue. According to Japan’s 2017 National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHNS), the percentage of adults with normal body mass index (BMI) (18.5 ≤ BMI < 25 kg/m²) was decreasing. In particular, obesity (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²) among men aged 20–69 years exceeded 30%. On the other hand, about 21.7% of women aged 20–29 years were underweight (BMI < 18.5 kg/m²), which is a relatively high percentage. Moreover, underweight among older adults is becoming a crucial problem for extending healthy life expectancy at birth in Japan’s aging society. To prevent lifestyle-related diseases and the burdens caused by malnutrition (underweight and obesity), and in response to the desire to delay functional decline related to aging, it is essential to establish and continue healthy eating habits from early childhood.

Eating habits in Japan have significantly changed in response to widespread Westernization and dietary simplification (i.e. lower frequency of eating ideal meals consisting of staple food, main dish, along with side dishes). According to the NHNS, trends in the average intake of...
grains per capita per day have been decreasing while those in the average intake of meat and poultry have been increasing\textsuperscript{4}). The 2022 target amounts for mean daily consumption of vegetables and fruits are 350 g and 100 g, respectively, according to the Health Japan 21 (the second term)\textsuperscript{5}). Young and middle-aged adults (20–49 years) are particularly likely to eat low amounts of fruits and vegetables\textsuperscript{9}). These figures suggest that younger Japanese were less likely to have healthy eating habits. According to the NHNS between 1995 and 2016, the average total energy intake and their energy intake from protein decreased among Japanese adults aged 20–79 years, while their energy intake from fats increased\textsuperscript{6}).

The cultural and social dimensions of Japanese dietary habits also significantly changed because of the expansion of the food service industry, increasing urbanization, and the ubiquity of information technologies, which have diversified dietary behaviors. The numbers of three-generation households and households with children have progressively decreased while the numbers of one-person households and households without children have consistently increased\textsuperscript{7}). The Japanese traditional labor style divided by gender also has changed because women have socially advanced. Consequently, the number of traditional Japanese households with full-time working husbands and full-time housewives has decreased, while the number of two-income households has increased\textsuperscript{8}).

These changes have influenced the frequency of family meals at home, which has decreased. Some people consider that the increasing likelihood of eating alone, particularly of children\textsuperscript{9, 12)} and older adults living alone\textsuperscript{8, 10, 13)}, is a serious problem. In 2017, about 15% of Japanese ate every meal of the day alone at least one-half of the days in a given week\textsuperscript{10}). The percentage of Japanese who skipped breakfast also has gradually increased, which currently is about one in four adults aged 20–39 years\textsuperscript{9}). A cross-sectional study reported that elementary school and junior high school students who ate together with all family members more than 3 times per week were more likely to have well-balanced diet (i.e. lower intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and instant foods) compared with those who ate together with all family members less than twice per week\textsuperscript{12)}. Another cross-sectional study in Japan showed that junior high school students who reported eating alone in the morning were more likely to skip breakfast, compared to those who ate with others altogether\textsuperscript{13}). Furthermore, older adults who live alone might be seriously associated with social isolation (i.e., eating alone)\textsuperscript{13})

Public attention to food safety was also increasing at that time, which arose especially after several food safety incidents, such as food poisoning (Escherichia coli O-157:H7 in July 1996\textsuperscript{10}) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)\textsuperscript{19}). One recent study reported that comprehensive health literacy in Japan is lower than that in Europe\textsuperscript{17)}, suggesting a need to increase efforts to inform the public about nutritional problems. Health foods and dietary supplements are widely used, and some health problems have been reported on the products with misleading advertising for healthy effects\textsuperscript{18}). The National Institutes of Biomedical Innovation, Health and Nutrition has released appropriate information on the safety and effectiveness of these so-called “health foods”\textsuperscript{19}).

In response to these problems, the government enacted the Basic Law on Shokuiku in 2005 to promote healthy diets through Shokuiku (food and nutrition education) aiming to ensure mental and physical public health by June 2015. In March 2016, the Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion went into effect for fiscal year (FY) 2016 through FY 2020 to set the basic policy on the Shokuiku targets. This paper explains the key laws, policies, and activities related to Shokuiku, and presents recent evidence on the promotion of Shokuiku.

II. Method

The paper that summarized the Basic Law on Shokuiku, the Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion, and Shokuiku promotion programs by prefectural and municipal governments.

III. Results

1. The Basic Law on Shokuiku

The Basic Law on Shokuiku enacted in 2005 comprehensively and systematically aimed to promote Shokuiku to ensure that the Japanese would enjoy healthy and cultural diets and to create a prosperous and vibrant society (Table 1). Shokuiku was considered essential to people’s lives, which was a basis of intellectual, moral, and physical education and also a way to nurture people to help them
acquire knowledge and abilities to choose foods that supported healthy nutrition. Promoting healthy diets through Shokuiku was considered vital to mental and physical public health. Everyone must eat to maintain his/her life, so that the Basic Law on Shokuiku targeted the Japanese of all ages. The Basic Law on Shokuiku had the following components, which were so broad that one agency could not address them all, and significant collaboration among stakeholders was indispensable to successful Shokuiku promotion.

1) The purpose of Shokuiku was to promote physical and mental public health and enrich human life.
2) People were induced to increase their appreciation and understanding of nutrition, including the roles of the natural environment and agricultural producers, transporters, and food preparers.
3) Voluntary activities to promote Shokuiku were expected to develop throughout the country.
4) Parents, educators, and daycare providers were expected to be particularly active in promoting Shokuiku among children.
5) Promoting Shokuiku knowledge was expected to be reinforced by taking advantage of all available opportunities to do so at home, school, and in the community by offering various food-related experiences and activities.
6) Awareness and appreciation of traditional Japanese food culture and of food supply/demand situations were to be promoted, and opportunities for interactions between food producers and consumers were to be created to vitalize farming and fishing regions and boost Japan’s food self-sufficiency.
7) Appropriate information on food safety was to be disseminated to help people attain healthy diets.

The law stipulates that Shokuiku shall be encouraged through the formulation and implementation of the Basic Law on Shokuiku. This law was established on April 27, 2015, and the following table summarizes its main components.

**Table 1 Summary of the Basic Law on Shokuiku**

| Basic Law on Shokuiku |
|-----------------------|
| 1. Purpose |
| The purpose is to promote Shokuiku for people by taking comprehensive and systematic measures, so that they can maintain a healthy body and mind and cultivate a rich humanity. |
| 2. Obligations of People Concerned |
| (1) Shokuiku shall be promoted by the country, municipalities, educators, operators of agriculture, forestry and fishery, food-related businesses, and others who are concerned. |
| (2) The government shall submit to the Diet an annual report on the measures having been taken for Shokuiku promotion. |
| 3. The Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion |
| (1) The Shokuiku Promotion Meeting shall prepare the Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion including the following: |
| ① Basic policies on Shokuiku promotion measures, |
| ② Shokuiku promotion targets, |
| ③ Measures to support citizens, who are engaged in voluntary Shokuiku promotion activities, |
| ④ Measures to promote Shokuiku comprehensively and systematically. |
| (2) Prefectures and municipalities shall prepare programs for Shokuiku promotion. |
| 4. Basic Measures |
| (1) Shokuiku promotion at home |
| (2) Shokuiku promotion in schools and nursery schools |
| (3) Regional efforts for dietary life improvement |
| (4) Expansion of Shokuiku promotion movement |
| (5) Exchange between producers and consumers, and a revitalization of agriculture, forestry and fishery in harmony with the environment |
| (6) Support for activities to inherit traditional food culture |
| (7) Study, research, information services and an international exchange regarding food safety, nutrients, and dietary life |
| 5. Shokuiku Promotion Meeting |
| (1) The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) shall establish a Shokuiku Promotion Meeting which consists of 25 persons or less, including a chairman (Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) and committee members (other relevant ministers and experts). |
| (2) Prefectures and municipalities can establish their own Shokuiku promotion meetings. |

Source: MAFF (https://www.maff.go.jp/j/syokuiku/wpaper/attach/pdf/h27_index-2.pdf)
Program for Shokuiku Promotion.

2. The Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion

Between 2005 and 2015, Japan’s Cabinet Office was in charge of Shokuiku promotion throughout the country in collaborations with the relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Food Safety Commission of Japan; Consumer Affairs Agency; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). The Basic Law on Shokuiku required the government to submit annual reports on Shokuiku promotion policies (White Paper on Shokuiku) to the Diet.20 Creating a national Shokuiku movement required the central and municipal governments to be involved and required close coordination and collaboration among community-level stakeholders, such as schools, agricultural workers, forestry and fishery industries, food businesses, and volunteers. In April 2016, the responsibility for planning the Shokuiku promotion and all other administrative work conducted by the Cabinet Office was transferred to the MAFF.

The Basic Law on Shokuiku mandated formulation and implementation of the Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion covering FY 2006 through FY 2010 to encourage Shokuiku. In 2016, the Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion was developed in light of the previous five years’ achievements and challenges to cover FY 2016 through FY 2020. It set the policies and target values for Shokuiku promotion and proposed measures to comprehensively promote Shokuiku (Table 2). The following five priority agenda issues were established to promote Shokuiku: (1) among young people, (2) tailored to fit

Table 2 Summary of the Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion

| Five priority issues                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Promotion of Shokuiku among young people                   |
| It is vital to promote lifelong Shokuiku, from childhood through adulthood, and into old age. Shokuiku will be promoted among young people in particular, to provide them with a deeper understanding and greater awareness of diet, and enable them to lead a sound dietary life that promotes a healthy body and mind. As this generation will become the parents of the future, Shokuiku promotion efforts will seek to ensure that young people pass on diet-related knowledge and initiatives to the next generation. |
| 2. Promotion of Shokuiku tailored to diverse lifestyles        |
| Shokuiku promotion efforts will provide opportunities to share meals with others in a way that promotes communication and richer dietary experiences, to ensure that all people, from children through to seniors, can enjoy sound and satisfying dietary lives. |
| 3. Promotion of Shokuiku that will extend healthy life expectancy |
| As well as providing assistance to ensure that each and every person can practice a sound dietary life, with a view to preventing or treating the onset/progression of lifestyle-related diseases, Shokuiku promotion efforts will include the promotion of reduced salt intake with a view to extending healthy life expectancy, and initiatives focused on the prevention and treatment of metabolic syndrome, obesity, emaciation, and malnutrition. |
| 4. Promotion of Shokuiku with a consciousness of the food cycle and the environment |
| Shokuiku promotion efforts will demonstrate consideration for the environment, while maintaining a consciousness of the food cycle from production to consumption. |
| 5. Promotion of Shokuiku aimed at the inheritance of food culture |
| Shokuiku activities will encourage efforts to protect and pass on traditional food culture by promoting greater interest and understanding among the public concerning food culture. |

The following two perspectives will be incorporated into initiatives focused on priority issues:

- Promoting lifelong initiatives targeting everyone from children through to seniors
- Promoting Shokuiku initiatives based on diverse and independent partnership and cooperation involving the national government, local governments, educators, operators in the agriculture, forestry, and fishery industries, food-related businesses, and volunteers, among others.

Source: MAFF (https://www.maff.go.jp/j/syokuiku/npaper/attach/pfd/h27_index2.pdf)
| Target | Specific target value | Values in Fiscal 2015, When the Third Plan Was Created | Current value (FY2018) | Target value (FY2020) |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1      | Increase the percentage of people who are aware of Shokuiku | 75.0% | 76.0% | 90% or more |
| 2      | Increase the number of mutual meals such as breakfast or dinner taken together with family members | 9.7 times/week | 10.0 times/week | 11 times or more/week |
| 3      | Increase the percentage of people who want to “eat together” in communities and actually participate in such opportunities | 64.6% | △77.6% | 70% or more |
| 4      | Reduce the percentage of people skipping breakfast | 4.4% | 5.5% | 0% |
| 5      | Increase the percentage of junior high schools that provide school lunches | 87.5% (FY2014) | △93.2% | 90% or more |
| 6      | Increase the percentage of people who have a well-balanced dietary life | 57.7% | 58.6% | 70% or more |
| 7      | Increase the percentage of people who take time to eat and chew properly | 49.2% | 50.2% | 55% or more |
| 8      | Increase the percentage of municipalities that have made and are realizing a basic program for Shokuiku promotion | 76.7% | 84.8% | 100% |

Source: MAFF (https://www.maff.go.jp/j/syokuiku/wpaper/pdf/h30_eng_all.pdf)
△: The goals that have been achieved.
In 2019, the National Institute of Biomedical Innovation, Health and Nutrition launched a website named Database of Shokuiku Promotion Program by Prefectural Governments (in Japanese only)\textsuperscript{20}. The website aims to help municipalities prepare Shokuiku promotion programs and to help prefectural governments to revise their Programs as necessary. These data are free to the public, where overviews and the specific goals of the 47 prefectural Shokuiku promotion programs can be reviewed.

Kurotani and colleagues analyzed the database and reported the characteristics of the current programs\textsuperscript{20}. Of 47 prefectures, 34 prefectures (72.3%) created five-year programs as well as the Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion. As of 2018, there were 1,180 specific goals in the 47 prefectural Shokuiku promotion programs with a range of 5–92 goals and a mean of 25.1 goals in each prefecture. Of 1,180 items, 267 specific goals (22.6%) were originally created by each prefecture (i.e. preparation of Shokuiku promotion programs at school, human resource development for Shokuiku promotion, and local production for local consumption). Additionally, 251 specific goals (21.3%) were in terms of preventing lifestyle-related diseases, which was related to the specific goal “Number of food companies registered as striving to reduce salt and fat in their food products” in the Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion (see Table 1). However, the target indexes were different between prefectural ones and the third program. Of specific goals in the 47 prefectural Shokuiku promotion programs, 100 specific goals (8.5%) were related to skipping breakfast among children, which was close to the specific goal “Percentage of children who skip breakfast” in the third basic program (see Table 1). The target index in the most prefectural programs was the percentage of children who skip breakfast, which was similar to that in the third program. However, approximately half of the prefectures did not use the target value as zero, which was the target value in the third program. Additionally, there were several specific goals in prefectural Shokuiku promotion programs, which did not stipulate quantitative targets.

IV. Discussion

Japan’s comprehensive national approach to the concept of Shokuiku and its promotion is unique in the world.
Western countries are taking relatively limited steps, such as providing nutrition education programs aimed at reducing obesity and organizing participation in agricultural education. This paper describes the background and overviews of Shokuiku that has been implemented in Japan since 2005.

Based on the Basic Law on Shokuiku (enacted in 2005), the Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion has been formulated and implemented every five years. Between 2005 and 2015, Japan’s Cabinet Office was in charge of Shokuiku promotion. After 2016, the MAFF has been in charge of Shokuiku promotion. Every year, the MAFF evaluates targets and the current status of Shokuiku promotion measures. The Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion (FY 2016 – FY 2020) stipulates 21 quantitative targets. It can directly compare the values between the current one and the target one. By FY 2008, 100% of the prefectoral governments had prepared Shokuiku promotion programs. The evaluation of prefectoral Shokuiku promotion programs also should be done in each prefecture. However, several specific goals in prefectoral Shokuiku promotion programs did not stipulate quantitative targets. Generally, nutrition education, including Shokuiku, management is based on the PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle. To improve or solve some issues in each prefecture, adequate evaluation, which is depending on the prefecture’s situation, must be needed. In fact, some prefectures did not stipulate the target value for skipping breakfast among children as zero, which was the target value in the Third Basic Program for Shokuiku Promotion.

It indicated that some prefectures stipulated target values in their Shokuiku promotion programs according to their current situation (i.e. current values, feasibility). Recently, attention is focused on the dissemination and implementation (D&I) science, which can be applied to Shokuiku. It suggests that not only researchers but also nutritional experts in the local government should evaluate Shokuiku programs using multiple sciences based approach.

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations Member States. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 goals. Japanese Shokuiku is related to several SDGs, and can contribute to achieving them. For example, “Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.” is strongly related to Shokuiku. Additionally, “Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” is strongly related to Shokuiku promotion at schools. The national curriculum standards for elementary schools, lower secondary schools, elementary and junior high divisions of special-needs schools, upper secondary schools, and high school divisions of special-needs schools stipulate that Shokuiku should continue to be promoted throughout all educational activities at school. Implementation of Shokuiku can play an important role in the development of children’s physical and mental health, as well as their character. To ensure longevity and achieve dynamic and happy lives among people of all ages, it is equally important that they are educated to care about their health. Thus, the issue of Shokuiku is relevant to everybody. We believe Shokuiku as a national movement will ultimately have achieved its goals when every individual takes proper dietary actions in his or her home, in the community, and elsewhere.

V. Conclusions

Shokuiku was initiated in Japan under the Basic Law on Shokuiku enacted in 2005, which aimed to promote healthy nutrition and lifestyles for Japanese through Shokuiku to ensure mental and physical public health. During about 15 years since 2005, some issues have improved, however, serious problems remain (i.e. skipping breakfast among children and young people). Furthermore, as of May 2020, the social environment and living conditions were dramatically and rapidly changed due to COVID-19. The transition of a new lifestyle is needed. However, it may lead to new issues that were not found in a past life. To create a bright future, all people who are engaged in Shokuiku promotion need to make efforts to respond to diet and health-related issues.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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食育の推進のこれまで

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【目的】食育の推進に関連する法律、政策および活動について整理すること。

【方法】食育基本法、食育推進基本計画、都道府県および市町村における食育推進計画について情報をとりまとめた。

【結果】食育基本法は、国民が生涯にわたって健全な心身を培い、豊かな人間性を育むことができるようにすることを目的として、2005年に制定された。食育基本法では、5か年計画の食育推進基本計画の作成及び実施による食育推進を図ることが規定されている。2005年から2015年は、内閣府が食育の推進を図るための基本的な施策に関する企画、立案、総合調整の事務を担い、2016年以降は農林水産省が担当している。毎年、食育推進基本計画の推進状況について評価が行われている。第3次食育推進基本計画（2016～2020年度）では、21の目標値が設定され、共食や中学校における給食の実施、食品中の食塩や脂肪の低減に取り組む食品企業、伝統的な料理や作法等の継承、食品の安全性に関する項目が2019年現在達成されている。また、都道府県食育推進計画はすべての都道府県で作成、実施がされているものの、市町村の計画は未だ100%に達していない。

【結論】食育基本法制定後、約15年間で食育推進計画によりいくつかの課題が改善されたものの、朝食欠食などの課題が依然として続いており、COVID-19の影響で、人々の生活環境は急速に、そして断崖絶壁に変化した。国民の明るい未来の創出のために、食育推進に関わるすべての人々が食・健康課題への対応に尽力することが必要だろう。

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