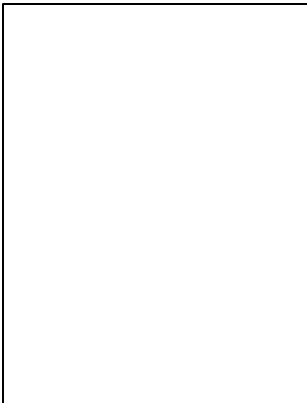


The National Food Research Institute

Emphasizing collaboration between research and industry

Takafumi Kasumi

Consumers in Japan today demand wider varieties of food and are highly conscious of the importance of safety and quality. This has compelled national R&D institutes, like the National Food Research Institute, to look at more effective ways to promote and strengthen the technological basis of the food processing business. Some of these ways have been to go corporate, to set up open research bases and to collaborate with industry and other research institutions in and outside Japan. This article describes the systematic manner in which all this is being done.



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Introduction

Besides the rapid growth of the elderly population of Japan, there has been an increase in the numbers of young people suffering from heart disease, cancer and diabetes - diseases associated with an unhealthy lifestyle. Such factors have led to increasing demands for information on food. People want to know about good diet, food safety guarantees and quality control to prevent food poisoning by pathogenic microbes.

In addition, people's lifestyles have become more diverse, and they demand good quality food. Japan's National Food Research Institute (NFRI), which became a corporation on 1 April 2001, is involved in research into the maintenance of abundant and healthy food for daily living and into the development of the food producing industry, which includes agriculture, forestry and fishing.

This article explains how, as a cor-

porate entity, NFRI has reorganized its systems – personnel, budget, facilities and equipment – to achieve efficiency in its research activities.

Food research priorities

Research into the technical development of food has been classified into four main areas for priority research.

Food and health

Cancer, strokes and coronary disease, as well as obesity and diabetes have been linked to daily eating habits. Research has therefore been conducted to investigate links between food components and physiological functions. NFRI now intends to conduct more elaborate research into the functions of specific components and compounds. They also intend to do more