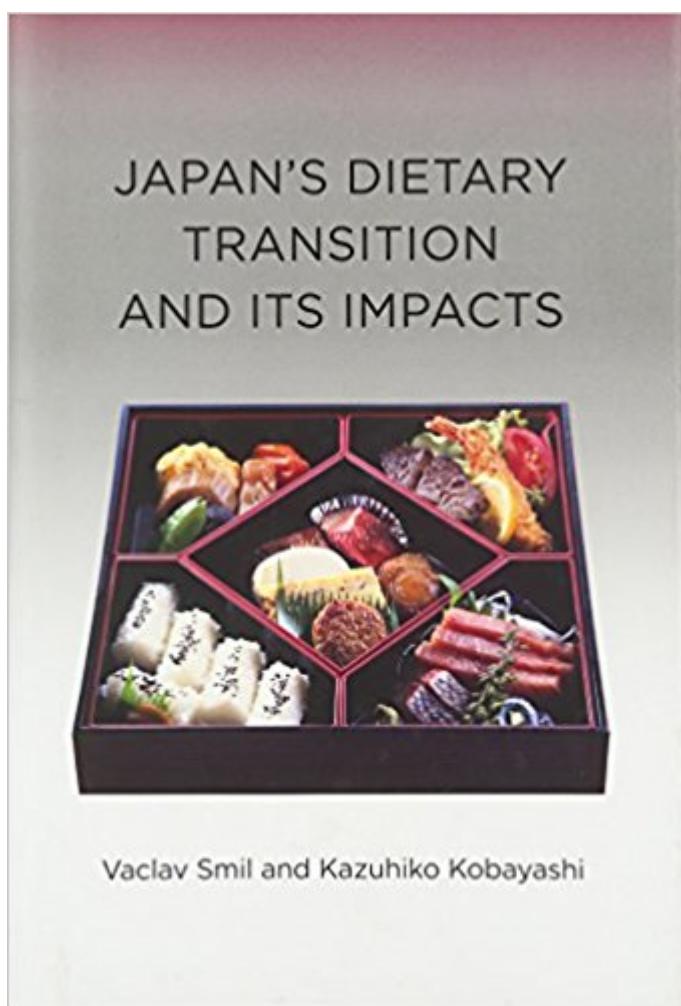


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# Japan's Dietary Transition And Its Impacts (Food, Health, And The Environment)



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts is the most illuminating book about food I have read in some time. Japan achieved dietary affluence in the 20th Century just like many other industrial

states, but with intriguing differences. While other wealthy societies now face a crisis of growing obesity, Japan has managed to keep calorie intake under control. And while excessive meat production in other wealthy states brings serious environmental risk to the atmosphere and freshwater, Japan's distinct taste for ocean fish brings environmental risks at sea. The story told by Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi is fresh, provocative, deeply researched, and constantly surprising. (Robert Paarlberg, Wellesley College) Japan has experienced a remarkable dietary transition, particularly during the post WWII period. This concise, lucid overview provides an understanding of this transformation while providing insights into reasons this high income country has also achieved the longest life expectancy in the world. (Barry M. Popkin, economist and nutritionist, W. R. Kenan, Jr. Distinguished Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) This encyclopedic study explores Japan's multiple dietary transitions since the 19th century in a framework that ranges from food production, import, and consumption across the parameters of trade, income, environment, demography, technology, and geopolitics. Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi rigorously locate Japan within global food transitions from the 1950s to the 1980s while highlighting such distinctive features as continuing preference for soy, rice and fish and the fact that this rich nation consumes on average 1000 fewer kcals per day than countries of comparable wealth. The study engages contemporary controversies including Japan's heavy international fishing (especially tuna), whaling disputes, the consequence of heavy reliance on food imports, and the nation's declining population and longevity. (Mark Selden, Cornell East Asia Program; Coordinator, The Asia-Pacific Journal)

Vaclav Smil is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba. He is the author of forty books, including *Power Density: A Key to Understanding Energy Sources and Uses* and *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing*, both published by the MIT Press. In 2010 he was named by Foreign Policy as one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers. In 2013 Bill Gates wrote on his website that "there is no author whose books I look forward to more than Vaclav Smil." Kazuhiko Kobayashi is Professor at the Graduate School of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Tokyo and has worked on the atmospheric change impacts on food production.

A thorough report on Japan's dietary transition in the last 100 years from a pre industrial diet to today's much changed and varied diet. Fascinating changes but still profound differences with the Western diet especially in average per capita intake. The impact on the longevity and health of Japanese, and on the environment is analysed with the help of the excellent Japanese records.

Comparisons with other affluent countries are made, and an outlook on the next twenty to thirty years in relation with the environment, especially oceanic, and demographics. Another eye opening work, as usual heavily referenced with many web links by professor Smil et al., and highly recommended.

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