

## A Consideration on the “Green Tea Cluster” with the Tea Manufacturing Industry in Shizuoka Prefecture at its Center

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This report discusses the “Green Tea Cluster” with the tea manufacturing industry in Shizuoka Prefecture at its center, based on the concept of cluster by Michael Porter, as an example of the actual state of industrial accumulation in the food industry in Japan.

The concept of “Cluster” was pointed out by Michael Porter (1998) when he indicated that geographical concentrations of industries contribute to building competitive advantage of the involved industries. Clusters are defined as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. These companies and institutions are connected by common or supplemental features”.

This report firstly gives the overview of the positioning of the tea industry in Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan and views the state of conditions of locations related to the industry in the prefecture. The domestic production areas of raw leaves (raw materials), crude tea (intermediary goods), and processed tea (final goods) are as follows: The amount of production of raw leaves and crude tea in 2008 was the largest in Shizuoka Prefecture, followed by Kagoshima Prefecture and Mie Prefecture in this order. As for the value of the production of processed tea in 2000, Shizuoka and Kagoshima Prefectures, where raw leaves and crude tea are actively produced, ranked first and second with Kyoto Prefecture being third. Mie Prefecture that ranked third in the amount of production of raw leaves and crude tea was fourth. The change in the order of Kyoto and Mie concerning the production of processed tea and the relatively small value of production of processed tea in Kagoshima show that crude tea is processed in Shizuoka and Kyoto that have blending techniques and enjoy brand name recognition. In Shizuoka, where the tea industry is thriving, raw leaves are produced and crude tea and processed tea are processed actively in the Makinohara Area located in the middle to the western part of the prefecture. Moreover, at present, most of the processes of tea manufacturing have been mechanized and many companies that produce machinery are located in the area. Thus, there is an accumulation of farmers, processors, and machinery companies related to the tea industry in the Makinohara Area.

Next, the state of the industries that make up the “Green Tea Cluster” in Shizuoka Prefecture, related organizations and institutions, and their network will be discussed. The members of the Green Tea Cluster and their activities are as follows: Tea farms and tea merchants are engaged in tea production, agricultural cooperatives and mediators in the mediation of crude tea trading, and tea production machinery companies in machinery production. Industry organizations in respective industries, including the Chamber of Tea Association of Shizuoka Prefecture, JA Shizuoka Keizairen, the Shizuokaken Chashoukougyou Kyoudoukumiai (Shizuoka Tea Commercial and Industrial Cooperative Association), and the Nihon Seichakikai Kougyoukai (Japan Society of Tea Industrial Machinery Manufacturers), play the major role in the diffusion of technologies, marketing, and standardization. Research and development and marketing activities, which are the source of product differentiation, are actively conducted in this cluster and supported by the Tea Section, Division of Agriculture and Fishery, Department of Industry, Shizuoka Prefecture as an administrative entity and Shizuoka Tea Experiment Station as a research institution.

Moreover, Shizuoka Shimbun and Chunichi Shimbun publish the contents of operations and decisions of respective organizations for those involved in the tea industry in the prefecture. Thus, the Green Tea Cluster in Shizuoka Prefecture is established in the network of production and distribution of raw materials, intermediary goods and final goods, production technologies, research and development, marketing, and information provision.

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