

## 1

**Article :****[Corona ni Makeruna] Exports of Luxury Sake Flourish, Especially to Affluent Classes in Asia**

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

Exports of premium sake from Japan made using sophisticated techniques are going smoothly.

The quantity of sake exported in 2020 has fallen for the second year due to pandemic-related reasons such as less demand among Japanese restaurants, but the export value increased to a new high for the 11th year running.

Notably, “drink-at-home” demand among the affluent classes in Asia has risen for luxury sake such as Daiginjo. Daiginjo has a refined taste, and a rice polishing rate of at least 50%.

Moreover, improved techniques surrounding quality control have facilitated the export of sake. The domestic market may be struggling due to the state of emergency across parts of Japan, but the overseas market is thriving.

According to the Ministry of Finance, the amount of sake exported from Japan decreased by 12.7% in 2020 compared to 2019, but the value increased by 3.1%. These statistics suggest that sake fans overseas are favoring quality over quantity.

In particular, the export value increased significantly in Hong Kong and China. The export value in the U.S., which had been the top importer for many years, decreased by 25.0% to 5.1 billion yen, but the value increased by 56.7% to 6.2 billion yen in Hong Kong and 15.8% to 5.8 billion yen in China. As a result, both Hong Kong and China overtook the U.S.

“U.S. demand for sake is centered around Japanese restaurants, so restrictions on going out in the U.S. due to COVID-19 has meant that demand has fallen,” explained Hitoshi Utsunomiya of the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association.

On the situation in Hong Kong and China, Utsunomiya added: “There are many occasions for drinking at home, and the demand for luxury sake has increased rapidly to compensate for not being able to travel due to the pandemic.”

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The sake expert also thinks that a stronger sense of being near the end of the pandemic tunnel in Hong Kong and China, compared to the U.S. and Europe, has boosted demand in those regions.

Another factor behind the trend is improved transportation technology. Sake from Japan is often exported slowly via ship, and heat-treated to prevent deterioration, at the expense of taste.

Until recently, it had been difficult to transport fresh sake without performing heat treatment. However, the introduction of instant cooling technology in recent years has solved this issue, making the export of sake with high added value from Japan possible.

The Japanese government itself has been trying to boost sake exports, by expanding online shopping and tasting events, and focusing on sake in an export strategy put together in 2020.

In addition, it is expected that the abolition of tariffs on sake in many

Countries—due to economic partnership agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership—will lead to even better sake-export statistics in the future.

Source: [Corona ni Makeruna] Exports of Luxury Sake Flourish, Especially to Affluent Classes in Asia

<https://japan-forward.com/corona-ni-makeruna-exports-of-luxury-sake-flourish-especially-to-affluent-classes-in-asia/>

## 2 Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. such as 例えば～のような、例を挙げると～など

There are many religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam.

2. struggle

(問題などに)苦勞する・悪戦苦闘する、

(ある状態から脱しようともがく・あがく、奮闘する、力を振り絞る

I had been struggling with alcohol addiction for a long time.

3. compensate 埋め合わせをする、釣り合いをとる、補償する、相殺する

Victims of the crash will be compensated for their injuries.

4. compared to(with) ～ ～と比較して、～と比べると

The pricing of private brand product are usually cheaper compared to name brands.

5. lead to ～ ～に至る、～を引き起こす、～(事態など)を招く、～につながる

This new technology could lead to reduction in medical costs and improvement in health care.

## 3 Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What happened to the export value in 2020 while the quantity of sake exported has fallen?

2. In which area can we see the phenomenon above particularly?

3. What is the other factor that is possibly making this trend happen?

4. Is the export of sake expected to grow even more in the future? And why/why not?

## 4

## 日本語関連記事：

## 高級日本酒の輸出、コロナ禍で追い風、アジアの富裕層需要拡大

製法にこだわった高級日本酒の輸出が好調だ。新型コロナウイルスが世界中で猛威を振るう中、和食レストラン向けの落ち込みなどで、昨年の日本酒の輸出量は2年連続で減少した。一方、輸出金額は11年連続で過去最高を更新。原料のコメを半分以上磨き、雑味を少なくした大吟醸酒などがアジアの富裕層の「家飲み」需要を捉えた。品質管理の難しい日本酒の輸出を可能にした技術革新も後押しし、緊急事態宣言の再発令で苦しむ国内に反して海外市場は過熱している。

財務省の貿易統計によると、令和2年の日本酒の輸出量は前年比12・7%減と落ち込んだが、輸出金額は3・1%増に伸び、海外の愛飲者が量よりも質を求める傾向が強まった。

特に大幅な輸出金額の伸びを見せたのが香港と中国だ。昨年まで長年1位を維持していた米国が25・0%減(金額50・7億円)へ落ち込んだのに対し、香港は56・7%増(61・7億円)、中国は15・8%増(57・9億円)とそれぞれ急増し、米国を抜いて1位、2位に躍り出た。

日本酒造組合中央会の宇都宮仁理事は「米国の日本酒需要は和食レストランが中心で、外出が制限されたコロナの影響を強く受けた」と指摘。対して香港や中国は「家で飲む機会が多く、コロナ禍で旅行などを楽しめなかった分、品質の高い酒の需要が急拡大した」と分析する。加えて、欧米に比べコロナの収束に早くめどがついたことも追い風になったとみている。

さらに奏功したのは輸送技術の進展だ。輸出される日本酒は長期間の船輸送が多く、劣化を防ぐ火入れ(加熱処理)したものが主流だ。そのため、火入れせず新鮮な味わいが特徴の「生酒」など品質管理の難しい酒の輸出は困難だった。だが、近年は瞬間冷却技術などを活用することで、その課題を解決。より付加価値の高い日本酒の輸出を可能にした。

政府は昨年策定した農林水産物・食品の輸出拡大に向けた実行戦略で日本酒を重点品目に設定しており、通販や試飲会の拡大など輸出戦略を積極化している。環太平洋戦略的経済連携協定(TPP)などの経済連携協定の発効で日本酒の輸出関税が多くの国で撤廃されたことで、今後さらに輸出拡大に拍車がかかると期待されている。