ABSTRACT

Japan is a diverse country. From the wide open spaces of the northern island of Hokkaido, to the crowded metropolises of the Kanto plains, to the fishing villages in the southern island of Kyushu, Japan presents a rich tapestry of often quite distinct and different life-styles and traditions. These differences are reflected in differing food consumption patterns across many parts of the country. Japanese food consumption has been a popular topic of research, particularly by analysts in those countries hoping to capture a larger share of Japan’s increasingly open agricultural markets. However, variations in food consumption between different parts of Japan have been overlooked in the past, at least by Western researchers. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of Japanese food consumption by investigating regional variations in per person food consumption. This will help show whether regional differences in food consumption still exist. The data set is taken from Kokumin Eiyo Chosa [National Nutrition Survey], published by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which utilises information from approximately 6,000 households annually. The study period runs from 1974 to 1992. The results of the analysis suggest that per person consumption of beef, pork, poultry, processed meats, fish, beer and vegetables is tending to converge and that consumption patterns are in general less variable across regions than they were in the past.