

Proper use and management of intellectual property

Approach

▶ Group Shared Policy on Intellectual Property

▶ Press release

Framework

Basic policy for intellectual property

The Ajinomoto Group established the Group Shared Policy on Intellectual Property, which pursues the following initiatives to establish competitive advantage, generate profit, and grow globally.

1. Acquire intellectual properties strategically and efficiently, including the expertise behind the technologies that form the core of businesses
2. Incorporate external technologies and engage in cooperation, including open innovation
3. Use and exercise rights to the Group's proprietary technologies through licensing, litigation, and other means
4. Protect products and enhance brand value through trademarks and other means
5. Minimize the risk of infringement by respecting third-party IP rights and conducting thorough assessments
6. Provide survey and analytical data to the Group's business and R&D departments
7. Cultivate human resources capable of IP-related tasks and utilize both internal and external networks

The Ajinomoto Group takes a firm stance toward companies that infringe on our IP rights and we protect these rights through warnings and the filing infringement lawsuits, among other actions. The information systems department and IP department plan and execute defensive measures to protect trade secrets. In collaboration with the internal auditing department, these departments carry out overall internal control related to trade secret management and protection for the Group.

TOPIC

Participation as a founding company in the *IP Open Access Declaration Against COVID-19*

In April 2020, Ajinomoto Co., Inc. answered the call of the Kyoto University Center for Genomic Medicine, Graduate School of Medicine to become a founding member of the *IP Open Access Declaration Against COVID-19*. Under this declaration, participants open their IP for a certain period of time to facilitate activities in diagnosis, testing, treatment, hygiene management, etc., toward ending the spread of COVID-19. In the Declaration, approximately 20 companies have declared that they will not assert any IP rights for patents, utility models, designs or copyrights with respect to activities carried out solely for the purpose of stopping the spread of COVID-19.

The period covered by the declaration extends until the day that WHO declares the end of the spread of COVID-19. By declaring to request no compensation or consideration for qualifying activities, the program supports the activities of companies and organizations working to end the spread of COVID-19 by eliminating the time and effort required to investigate issues related to IP or conduct patent searches.

Intellectual property management framework

Ajinomoto Co., Inc. supervises IP (patents, designs, trademarks, etc.) for the entire Ajinomoto Group in line with Instructions Regarding Licensing and Administration of Intellectual Property. Affiliate company Intellectual Property Expert Co., Ltd. provides central services related to surveys and IP rights management. We also have resident staff in the United States, specialized staff in Russia, and key persons designated at Group companies in Southeast Asia and South America, and work with patent law firms. The three bases in Japan, the United States, and Russia cooperate to secure strong patent rights, particularly in biotechnology.

Strong Corporate Governance

Performance

Intellectual property initiatives

Impact of Ajinomoto Co., Inc. on the patents of other companies

Ajinomoto Co., Inc. was ranked No.1 in the 2019 rankings of firms capability to prevent other food industry companies from obtaining patent rights. The rankings are published by Patent Result Co., Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan). This ranking is a compilation by company of the number of patents owned by a company cited as the basis for rejection of a patent application by another company in the course of patent examination processes during 2019. Companies having a large number of patents cited are considered as advanced companies with extensive prior art that blocks competitors from obtaining rights.

Performance

Education for employees

The Ajinomoto Group conducts ongoing trademark seminars to provide Group employees basic knowledge on trademarks and the rules for displaying trademarks such as *AJI-NO-MOTO*[®]. These seminars serve to enhance employee appreciation of trademarks and prevent the *AJI-NO-MOTO*[®] trademark from being used as a generic term. We also hold regular seminars to educate Group employees on other IP-related issues.