

Assurance of product safety

Since our founding, the Ajinomoto Group has always placed the customer first, striving for safety and security in our products and services. As a company that creates products our customers ingest into their bodies, quality assurance and appropriate information disclosure are very important matters for us. We also believe in the importance of listening carefully and responding to customer requests. As we continue this cycle of interaction, we produce products and services that help us build deeper relationships of trust with customers and generate greater satisfaction. Under the leadership of our management, each employee endeavors to provide customers with safe, high-quality products and services, contributing to better lives of customers around the world.

Specific examples

- Product quality and safety
- Fair disclosure and labeling
- New technology application
- Religious standards

Related opportunities and risks (○ Opportunity ● Risk)

- Brand trust gained by increasing customer satisfaction
- Trust gained through fair disclosure to stakeholders
- Impact on business of growing negative rumors regarding umami and MSG
- Lower customer confidence due to product quality complaints or incidents

Key initiatives by the Ajinomoto Group

- Providing proper information via product packaging and online
- Reflecting customer feedback on developing and improving products and services
- Enhancing communication to share the benefits of umami and MSG
- Comprehensive quality assurance activities and human resources development

Related SDGs



Assurance of Product Safety

Quality management

Ajinomoto System of Quality Assurance (ASQUA)

Approach

GRI416-DMA

GRI417-DMA

> Group Shared
Policy on Quality

> Group Shared
Policy on Food
Safety and
Security

> Ajinomoto
System of Quality
Assurance
(ASQUA)

The Ajinomoto Group has our own quality assurance system, ASQUA. As of March 2022, 96 Group companies have implemented ASQUA.

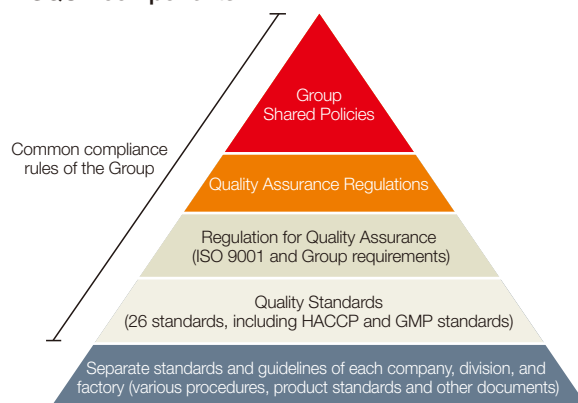
The core of ASQUA is based on ISO 9001, the international quality management system standard. We supplement this standard with other manufacturing management standards such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)^[1], Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)^[2], and the Group's own rules and requirements. Furthermore, ASQUA is composed of Group Shared Policies^[3], and associated quality assurance rules, regulations and standards, as well as other rules established by each internal organization.

Quality standards range from development and procurement and sales of raw materials to customer communications. We review these standards constantly in light of internal and external trends. In fiscal 2021, we revised our Food Safety Management Standards and Food GMP Standards to respond to updated laws and regulations, as well as to strengthen linkage with global standards.

ASQUA framework



ASQUA components



[1] Management standards for manufacturing foods in a safe and sanitary manner

[2] Standards relating to manufacturing management

[3] Group Shared Policy on Quality, Group Shared Policy on Food Safety

Promotion framework for quality assurance

Framework

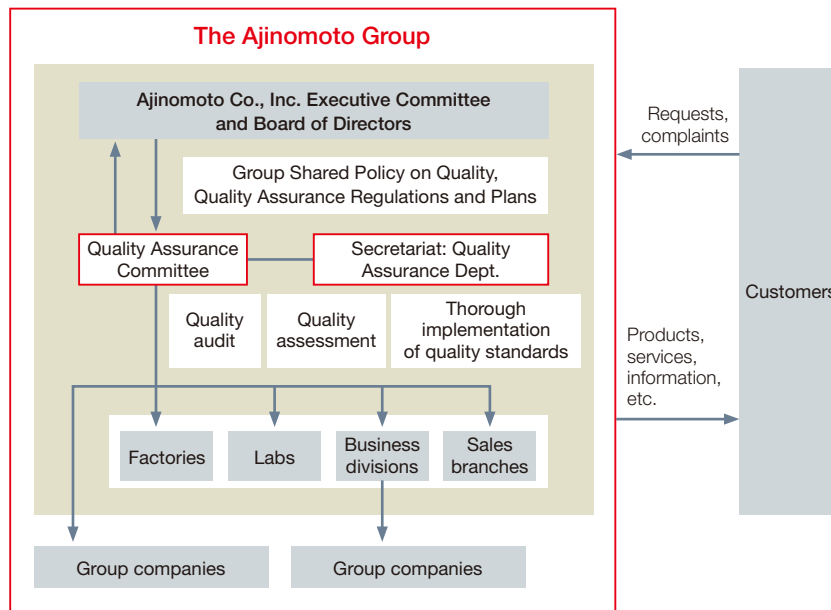
GRI416-DMA

GRI417-DMA

> Quality Assurance

The Ajinomoto Group established the Quality Assurance Committee under the Executive Committee to deliberate policies and various measures regarding quality assurance. The committee drafts basic policies and plans, and escalates Group-wide implementation once approved by the Executive Committee. The status of these policies is reviewed by the Quality Assurance Committee every six months. Matters decided and deliberated by this Committee shall be reported to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

Assurance of Product Safety



Obtaining and maintaining third-party certifications

The Ajinomoto Group encourages Group companies to acquire and maintain ISO 9001 certification. As of March 2022, 59 of 74 eligible Group companies have acquired ISO 9001 certification. The Group is working to build a certification system for eligible companies not yet certified, many of which are newly acquired or established companies. In response to customer requests or other cases, the Group acquires certification of other standards such as FSSC 22000 approved by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

Develop human resources to improve quality assurance levels

The Ajinomoto Group focuses on human resources development to further improve quality assurance levels. Each year, the Group reviews our quality training plan, implementing systematic programs to meet the needs of individual organizations. In fiscal 2021, the spread of COVID-19 meant that most of this training was conducted online or via e-learning.

Main programs in fiscal 2021

■ Japan

- Quality training for Group employees
- Programs for managers responsible for quality assurance scheduled for posting to overseas offices
- Ajinomoto Management and Technical Conference on Quality for Group company executives and employees
- New Top Management Quality Training Course for newly appointed organizational heads, domestic Group company heads, and new quality assurance personnel and managers
- ISO 9001 food product business operations training for newly transferred employees

■ Overseas

- QMS Training Course for managers responsible for quality assurance at Group company regional headquarters
- Global Regulatory Affairs online seminar on Risk Management for Asia, Europe, and US Regulatory Affairs heads

Performance

GRI416-DMA
GRI417-DMA

Assurance of Product Safety

Framework

GRI416-DMA

GRI417-DMA

> Group Shared
Policy on Quality> Group Shared
Policy on Food
Safety

Framework / Performance

GRI414-1

GRI416-DMA

GRI416-1

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Framework / Performance

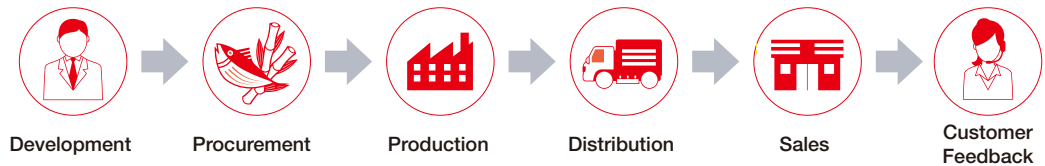
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GRI416-DMA

GRI416-1

Quality assurance across the supply chain

The Ajinomoto Group practices strict quality assurance by applying the ASQUA globally at each stage, from product development to customer communication. Our efforts are guided by the Group Shared Policy on Quality and the Group Shared Policy on Food Safety.



Development

To deliver safe, high-quality products, the Ajinomoto Group implements strict quality assessments in each stage of the product development process in accordance with the ASQUA Standard for Quality Assessment. Only products that have passed all assessments reach the end customer.

Raw materials procurement

We select suppliers in accordance with the Standard for Quality Control of Ingredients provided in ASQUA. Raw materials purchased from suppliers are strictly controlled through lot-by-lot inspections.

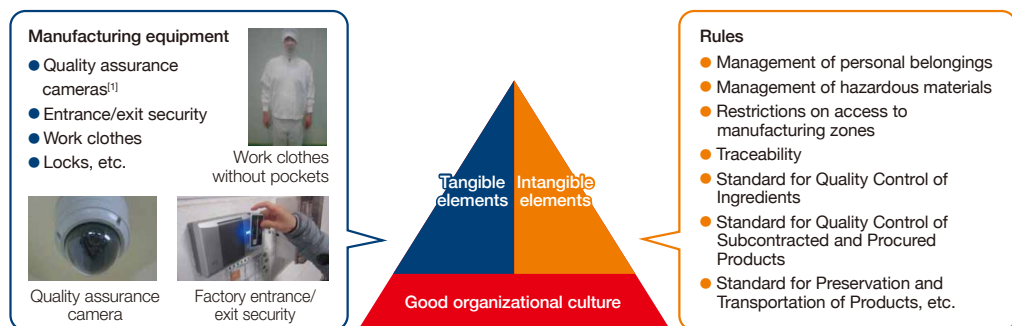
We work with our suppliers to improve quality and reduce quality risks through measures that include regular appraisals, quality audits, information sessions, and surveys. We make continuous quality improvements through close cooperation with suppliers.

Production

Structural enhancements for food safety

We believe that creating a workplace culture that is open and based on employee trust is the key to strengthening our food safety system. We also review and improve tangible elements, such as production facilities, and intangible elements, such as quality standard and guidelines. In this way, we minimize the risk of intentional product tampering and strengthen quality assurance across the supply chain.

Diagram of food safety assurance concept



[1]Confirm no problems or operational errors in the plant. Secure customer trust via quality assurance cameras.

Assurance of Product Safety

GRI416-2
GRI417-2

Framework

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GRI416-1

Performance

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GRI416-1
GRI417-DMA
GRI417-1

> Product package
labeling (Japanese
only)

> Quality Assurance

■ Measures to prevent manipulation of quality-related data

We continue to foster employee compliance and awareness of quality assurance from the customer's perspective. The validity of data related to development, production, and the functional features of food products is evaluated and judged objectively and fairly in quality assessment meetings and by committees of internal experts. To ensure the proper operation of these systems, we conduct ongoing quality audits and third-party certification audits.

In addition, global standards require systems that store and prevent the manipulation of analysis data on manufactured pharmaceuticals and active pharmaceutical ingredients. We continue to strengthen management based on these standards.

■ Initiatives to reduce quality-related claims and incidents

We carefully investigate the causes of all quality complaints and problems that occur, one by one, to prevent recurrence. Details of any quality-related incident and information on preventative measures are communicated promptly to Group companies in Japan and abroad to prevent recurrences. We have also created a database of major past issues, using this information to evaluate risks.

During fiscal 2021, the Ajinomoto Group issued five recalls/collections from distributors due to foreign substance contamination or mislabeling.

Number of recalls and distribution collections by the Ajinomoto Group

Fiscal year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number	4	4	3	4	5

■ Distribution

The Ajinomoto Group exercises strict control over product quality, which includes factors such as freshness, temperature, and moisture, during storage and transportation from factories until our products reach the customer. These activities follow ASQUA standards regarding the management of storage, transportation, warehouses (in Japan only), and other operations.

■ Sales

We publish helpful information on our product packaging and websites to offer customers greater confidence in their purchases.

■ Product packages

The packages of retail products marketed by the major Group companies in Japan indicate not only all legally required information, but also other quality-related information of the following type (except when space is limited, etc.).

- Method of storage (once opened)
- Product usage warnings
- Explanations of raw materials that may be unfamiliar to customers and prompt a large number of inquiries
- Easy-to-identify list of allergens (both mandatory and recommended)
- Easy-to-identify labeling of packaging materials
- Customer service contact

■ Websites

Our global website publishes information on group quality assurance activities in multiple languages. Group companies operate their own owned media through which they provide information to customers in each country/region.

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Framework

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GRI416-1

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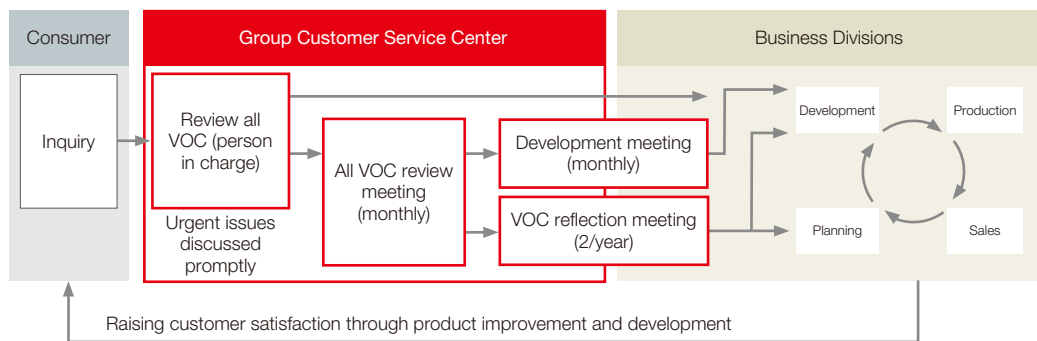
> Quality Assurance

Customer feedback

Initiatives to reflect customer feedback

We reflect the voice of our customers (VOC) in the development and improvement of appealing products and services in accordance with the ASQUA standards. As of March 2022, we operate under these standards in a total of 11 countries.

Product development system reflecting VOC at the Group Customer Service Center^[2]

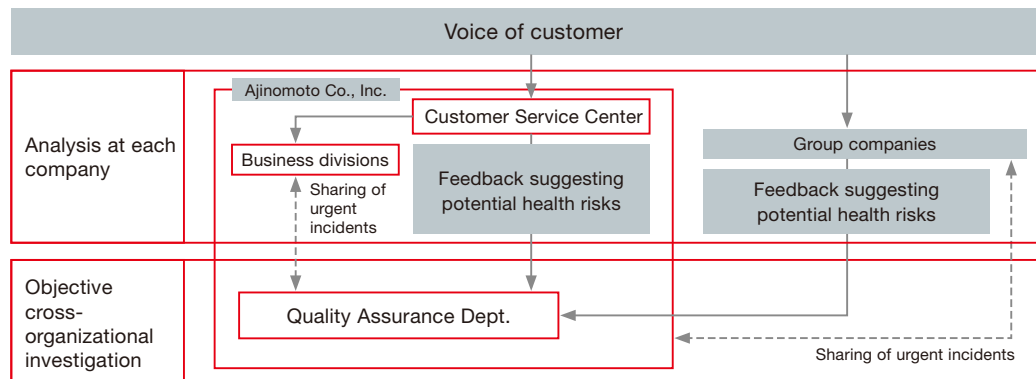


[2] Handling customer service functions for Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Ajinomoto Frozen Foods, Co., Inc. and Ajinomoto AGF, Inc.

Enhanced monitoring of customer feedback

Any customer feedback is analyzed by a group company, and any such feedback that concerns a serious issue that could lead to health risks or a violation of law is also checked and analyzed promptly, objectively, and in a cross-organizational manner by Ajinomoto Co., Inc. The system ensures that any case deemed to be urgent is shared with relevant departments immediately. As of March 2022, we operate under these standards in a total of 15 countries.

Customer feedback monitoring system for preventing health damage



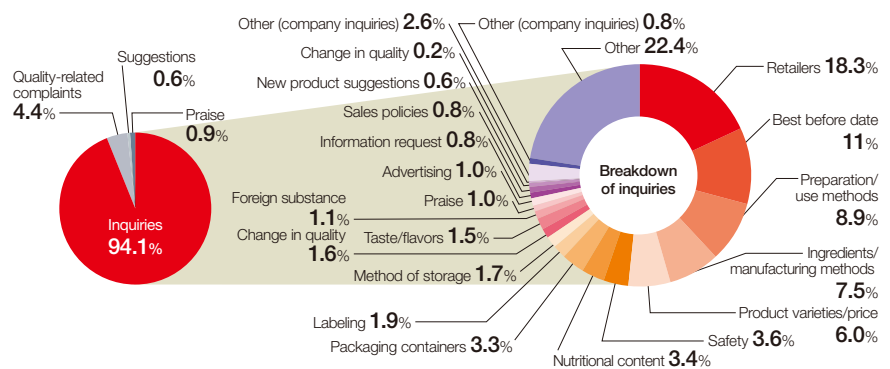
Performance

Breakdown of VOC in fiscal 2021

- VOC received by Ajinomoto Co., Inc.: 23,413 (+0.2% versus fiscal 2020)
- VOC received by three Ajinomoto Group food product companies^[1] in Japan: 39,716 (+6.0% versus fiscal 2020)

Assurance of Product Safety

Breakdown of customer feedback (Ajinomoto Co., Inc.)



[1] Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Ajinomoto Frozen Foods, Co., Inc. and Ajinomoto AGF Co., Inc.

■ Efforts to improve customer satisfaction

The three food product Group companies in Japan regularly conduct surveys to confirm and improve customer satisfaction regarding the quality of response to customer quality-related claims. The investigation, business, and customer service departments work to share specific feedback to improve customer satisfaction. Surveys conducted during fiscal 2021 by Ajinomoto Co., Inc. indicated that 95.2% of customers were satisfied with the response to issues they raised, 86.5% were satisfied with the investigation reports, and 94.4% intend to continue to use the company's products.

Assurance of Product Safety

Disseminating information on MSG safety and benefits

Approach

GRI417-DMA

> P24

> Know MSG

Activities to promote a correct understanding of MSG

The Ajinomoto Group is the world's first company to commercialize an umami substance called glutamic acid (a type of amino acid) as a seasoning. We have promoted the benefits of monosodium glutamate (MSG), the sodium salt of glutamic acid, across the world. MSG offers a variety of value. MSG improves flavor, reduces salt intake, shortens cooking time, and reduces the cost of meals at schools and other facilities.

At the same time, MSG has been the subject of nebulous anxieties for many years as a purported chemical harmful to health. Labels such as "additive-free," "no chemical seasoning," or "No MSG," have led to unsubstantiated rumors and misunderstandings among consumers that continue to this day.

We see a tremendous opportunity today in how consumers around the world communicate online, as well as in the rising global interest related to food safety, food security, and health. We are seizing on this opportunity to leverage various media in actively sharing information to consumers based on facts and scientifically backed evidence. Not only do we resolve misunderstandings about safety, but we also engage in initiatives to spread information about the benefits of MSG to the world, including MSG's role in improving flavor, reducing sodium intake, and improving nutrition for the elderly.

Assurance of Product Safety

TOPIC

Guideline on Non-use Labeling of Food Additives

After a year of deliberations in Japan by the expert-led Study Group on Guideline on Non-use Labeling of Food Additives, in March 2022, the Consumer Affairs Agency formulated the *Guideline on Non-use Labeling of Food Additives*. This guideline has been adopted due to consumer confusion about the safety of additives and contents due to voluntary non-use labeling by food-related business operators, etc., despite scientific confirmation of safety and effectiveness for the additives used to improve the taste and shelf life of food. The guideline is to be used by food-related business operators for self-assessments to determine whether labeling falls under prohibited items (i.e., misidentification of quality or contents) stipulated in the Food Labeling Standards. Ten categories have been defined related to non-use labeling that require careful consideration so as to avoid misleading consumers. Examples of labeling highly likely to fall under prohibited practice are also provided in the guidelines.

(Examples)

Classification: Labeling using terms not specified in food labeling standards (synthetic, artificial, chemical, natural, etc.) → "No chemical seasoning added" and "No artificial sweetener used" are considered highly likely to fall under prohibited terms.

Classification: Labeling on foods using ingredients with the same or similar functions → "No additives used as seasonings" (amino acids, etc.) for foods using yeast extract is considered highly likely to fall under the prohibited items.

The Consumer Affairs Agency emphasizes consumer understanding of food additives, and we intend to engage in activities to promote and raise awareness.

Communication activities across the world

The Ajinomoto Group began actively conducting communication activities by launching the World Umami Forum (WUF) in September 2018 in the United States.

Forums for consumers in Japan

In 2019, Ajinomoto Co., Inc. established a new opportunity for risk communications, declaring a commitment to work with consumers to share correct information related to food and health, contributing to a healthy, more abundant society.

As one part of this commitment, the company began the online Food & Wellness Future Forum in 2020. In September 2021, Ajinomoto Co., Inc. held the second forum titled, *Toward a Rich and Sustainable Diet—Let's Discuss Food Additives*. Experts from various fields took the stage as panelists and engaged in direct dialogue through short surveys and chats with over 2,700 viewers regarding concerns about food additives, usefulness, and the importance of relying on objective information. More than 3,000 comments were received in the chat, indicating a high level of interest in food additives and food safety. A short survey conducted immediately after the opening and just prior to the end of the event indicated that viewer concerns about food additives fell from 44% to 19%.

Performance

GRI417-DMA

> Food & Wellness
Future Forum
(Japanese only)

Assurance of Product Safety

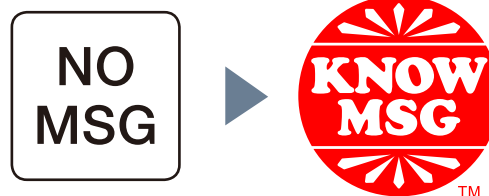
> Know MSG

Umami and MSG promotions in the United States

The Ajinomoto Group strives to ensure that reliable information regarding the effect of umami on salt reduction and the safety of MSG reaches consumers through direct and indirect channels. Consumer interest in salt reduction is rising, and in October 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced guidelines for businesses to voluntarily reduce sodium in foods. We continue to provide nutritionists with information on the benefits of MSG for salt reduction through webinars by opinion leaders and influencers. At the same time, communications to consumers through our Know MSG campaign^[1], offered via social media and specialized websites, has encouraged an understanding of MSG among Gen Z and Millennials, who have a high interest level in food. Our efforts have been leading to a shift in attitudes.

In January 2022, the Whole30[®] diet program, said to be practiced by nearly 1 million people in the U.S. each year, declared that MSG would be removed from the list of foods to avoid due to the lack of scientific evidence against MSG. We engage in consistent efforts to provide accurate information to the authors of negative articles on MSG and to foster better understanding. As a result, certain erroneous articles have been retracted, and we are building new relationships with information providers. Through these and other means, we will continue to suggest MSG as a means toward delicious, nutritionally balanced meals.

[1] A consumer campaign started in December 2020. Through a tie-up campaign with an Asian-inspired food company located in the United States, where we promote a video through our Know MSG website and social media, calling upon our audience to know more about the safety and benefits of MSG (including salt reduction). As a part of the campaign, the seasoning company launched a seasoning rich in umami with the Know MSG logo.



Survey results in the United States

Segment	KPI	FY2020 Result	FY2021 Result	FY2022 Target
Registered Dietitians	Likelihood to recommend MSG/tell others about the safety of MSG	52%	53%	60%
	Positive attitude toward MSG	29%	31%	40%
	Believe MSG reduces sodium while maintaining flavor	—	60%	63%
Food Forward Consumers	Positive attitude toward MSG	49%	53%	—
	Believe MSG is safe to eat	75% ^[1]	80%	90%
	Believe MSG reduces sodium while maintaining flavor	—	76%	78%

[1] The definition of food forward consumers was adjusted in fiscal 2021; fiscal 2020 figures updated to reflect this change.
(Per Ajinomoto Co., Inc. survey)

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Other communication activities

- Japan: Ajinomoto Co., Inc. launched a website for professionals involved in food and health to provide science-based knowledge of food and amino acids. The website includes information on the use of umami seasonings to reduce salt intake in delicious ways and to increase the amount of food consumed by the elderly who are cutting back on their salt intake. In April 2021, the website featured a pamphlet article for consumers on the founding of AJI-NO-MOTO® titled, *Oishiku meshi-agare! (eat deliciously)*. The website produced with the cooperation of culinary influencers, featured the founding spirit of deliciousness, nutrition, and quality assurance, which has been passed down to the present day.
- Singapore: In February 2022, the Ajinomoto Group held online lectures about Japanese cuisine and umami for 80 students at the National University of Singapore. In addition to presenting information about Japanese cuisine, the lecture included explanations of umami and how to reduce salt intake by using MSG. The lectures also presented the changing attitudes toward MSG as a result of initiatives in the United States.