

Inside this issue

“Standards are making our world simpler and safer” 1 + 2

Key Findings of JETRO’s Survey on Business Conditions of Japanese-Affiliated Companies 3

Japanese Sake Brewing Now Figures on UNESCO Intangible Heritage List 3

Japanese Company Green Science Alliance and Innovation Park Biel/Bienne Sign Letter of Intent 4

会見

INTERVIEW

“Standards are making our world simpler and safer”

Interview with Kyoko Sato, Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment at JETRO Geneva

We are pleased to host a new member from the [Japanese Standards Association \(JSA\)](#) at JETRO Geneva. Ms Kyoko Sato, a standardization specialist, is succeeding Mr Tomoyuki Endo as Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment at our office.

Standardization plays a crucial role in global trade and industrial development. It ensures consistency, quality, and interoperability of products and services across borders. Both Switzerland and Japan, known for their precision industries, rely on standardization to maintain their reputation for quality and innovation. Both countries recognize the importance of standardization in fostering innovation, reducing costs, and enhancing global competitiveness.

JETRO Geneva will undoubtedly benefit from Ms Sato's extensive experience in this field. Her expertise will be invaluable in navigating the complex landscape of international standards. Ms Sato has kindly agreed to share her insights in this issue of our newsletter, offering our readers a unique perspective on the role of standardization in facilitating inter-



Kyoko Sato joined the JETRO Geneva office earlier in January, assuming the role of Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment

national trade and economic growth.

Could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I have more than 25 years of experience in JSA (Japanese Standards Association) and have mainly been involved in international Standardization in ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission). Before coming to JETRO Geneva, I was the manager of the Fundamental Standards Division. In my career at JSA, for quite a long time, I was involved in the development of ISO standards on organization's management such as ISO 9000 family (Quality Management System), ISO 14000

family (Environmental Management System) and ISO 26000 (Guidance on Social Responsibility). As many of the readers might know, ISO 9000 family and ISO 14000 family are the ISO's most famous standards. There, I learned how international standards are developed and what ISO management system standards (MSS) are. I also have experience of working in the department which certifies organizations based on the ISO MSS. It was a very good opportunity for me to learn how the standards we developed are used in the real world of business and how the ISO MSS's certification scheme works.

(continue on page 2)

“Standards are making our world simpler and safer”

Interview with Kyoko Sato, Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment at JETRO Geneva

会見

INTERVIEW

So, I would say that I have a kind of good combination of experiences in both development side and user side in terms of ISO MSSs.

For those who are not familiar with it, could you briefly explain what standardization is?

Standardization is the activity of developing standards. Standards are technical documents which set common rules for almost everything in our society. In fact, standards are everywhere. If you take batteries as an example, you can find batteries of the same size you are looking for everywhere in the world. It's because the size of batteries is standardized. Another good example is credit cards. You can use your credit card everywhere in the world because the size of credit cards is standardized.

Standardization is not just about the size of products. There are also standards on units, graphical symbols, technical drawing, testing, inspection and so on. It relates to a wide range of economic and social issues starting from quality and safety of products and services, improvement of efficiency and cost reduction, fair trade, consumer protection, environmental conservation and protection, emissions reduction, risk and security management and so on. You cannot think of the world without standards.

Standards are making our world simpler and safer, and you can see that standardization is playing an important role in global trade and economy.

What does the Japanese Standards Association (JSA) do, and what are your main tasks here in Geneva?

The Japanese Standards Association (JSA) is one of the Standards Development Organizations (SDO) in Japan. We are involved in the development of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) as well as international standards of both ISO and IEC, and in the promotion of the standards. My main task here in Geneva is to serve as a point of contact of communication with SDOs and other related organizations in Europe to enhance communication and collaboration with them.

What fields of standardization are especially relevant for Japan?

As I said, standards are so closely related to our daily life and business activities. So, in that sense, most of the standardization activities in ISO and IEC are relevant for Japan. Among all, JSA is interested in the development of standards related to topics such as sustainability and organization's management systems. Today, standards are not just a tool to ensure safety and quality of products and services. They are also a tool to provide businesses with guidance to adopt sustainable and ethical practices. The field of standardization in ISO and IEC keeps evolving with the changes in

technologies and business practices. Based in Geneva, the center of Europe, I would like to keep an eye on the recent trends and standardization activities in those fields.

How do you like Geneva so far? What do you look forward to the most during your stay in Switzerland?

I just love Geneva! This is the second time for me to come to Geneva. Last time, I came on a business trip, almost 20 years ago. I stayed only for a few days and didn't have enough time to walk around in the city. I wanted to come back to Geneva for a long time, and it finally came true! It's been only less than a month since I arrived, but to my great surprise, I already feel so at home. I've found Geneva safe and easy to live. Here, I would like to meet a lot of people, learn a lot of things and broaden my perspectives. I would also like to travel a lot and discover a lot of beautiful landscapes in Switzerland, too!

Thank you for the interview!

Key Findings of JETRO's Survey on Business Conditions of Japanese-Affiliated Companies Overseas

From late August to September 2024, JETRO carried out an online survey examining the operational landscape of Japanese-affiliated enterprises, encompassing local subsidiaries (with a minimum 10% Japanese investment), branches, and representative offices across 83 countries and regions, leveraging its extensive international office network.

65.9% of companies surveyed anticipate profitability in 2024, marking the first increase in two years. This optimism is largely driven by strong domestic demand in countries like India, Brazil, Mexico, and Vietnam. Conversely, many firms in China, Thailand, Germany, and the Netherlands, where there is large concentration of Japanese companies, expect their performance to decline. Less than 50% of companies expect to expand their business. In China, demand remains weak, with expansion expectations at an all-time low. Europe is also experiencing its second-lowest expansion outlook in a decade. Despite these challenges, only 1% of companies plan to relocate or withdraw from local operations; this figure rises slightly to 1.4% in China, indicating a commitment to local markets and product diversification. In Southwest Asia, particularly India, over 80% of companies intend to expand. The Middle

East (led by the UAE) and Africa also show strong expansion trends. However, competition is intensifying for Japanese companies. In India and Mexico, they have increased their market share over the past five years, while European and U.S. firms are also ramping up operations. In Thailand and Vietnam, Chinese companies are expanding rapidly amid U.S.-China tensions. Local Chinese firms lead the market with cost advantages and are expanding internationally. Meanwhile, European and U.S. companies remain strong in emerging markets such as India, Brazil, and the UAE. As cost-cutting options dwindle, prioritizing sales growth and product diversification will be crucial for future success.

JETRO's report illuminates the current performance outlook and strategic responses of Japanese companies operating in diverse global markets. It captures the intricate challenges facing international businesses, such as the slowdown in the Chinese economy, escalating geopolitical risks, and increasing protectionist restrictions on trade and investment.

Source: [JETRO](#)

動向

SITUATION

Japanese Sake Brewing Now Figures on UNESCO Intangible Heritage List

On 4 December 2024, UNESCO included the traditional Japanese knowledge and skills for producing sake in its Intangible Cultural Heritage list, marking Japan's 23rd entry on this list.

The art of traditional sake brewing had been recommended for the list in November and was recognized for its high-level technique passed down for centuries and the relevance it continues to have in modern-day Japan. Sake is a traditional Japanese alcoholic beverage produced from grains and water, with the aid of "koji" mold to convert starch into

sugar. The brewing process demands significant skill and experience, as it involves precise control over temperature and humidity to achieve the desired taste and quality. Similar techniques are also employed in the production of "shochu", "awamori", and other alcoholic drinks originating in Japan. Historically, sake brewing was exclusively the domain of men, but it is now open to all genders. Once considered a sacred gift from deities, sake continues to hold a significant role in various occasions and is passed down through ap-

prenticeships. Other notable Japanese intangible heritages include the performing arts of "Noh" and "Kabuki," as well as "washoku" traditional cuisine. With this recent listing, sake brewers aim to increase exports, revitalize local economies, and preserve traditional skills for future generations, particularly in the face of declining domestic consumption.

Learn more about traditional sake making [here](#).

Sources: [The Japan Times](#); [Kyodo News](#)

文化

CULTURE

Japanese Company Green Science Alliance and Innovation Park Biel/Bienne Sign Letter of Intent

革新

INNOVATION

In late November 2024, [Green Science Alliance](#), a Japanese company based in Kawanishi City (Hyogo Prefecture), has signed a Letter of Intent with [Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne](#), marking a significant milestone in the development of recycled lithium-ion batteries with institutions affiliated with the local network.

This collaboration aims to revolutionize battery technology and promote sustainable energy solutions across Europe. The partnership will focus on the production and advancement of so-called "black mass batteries"—a cutting-edge technology that utilizes recycled materials from spent lithium-ion batteries. Black mass, a fine black powder rich in metals such as cobalt, nickel, manganese, and lithium, forms the core of this innovative approach to battery recycling and production. *Green Science Alliance* has

strategically established a branch at the Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne, recognizing the location's unique advantages for secondary battery development. The park is home to the *Swiss Battery Technology Center*, a hub for research in electric vehicle batteries, focusing on AI, robotics, battery disassembly, testing, and recycling. The Innovation Park serves as a nexus for collaboration, bringing together private companies, start-ups, universities, and research institutions. After an extensive search for the ideal European location, *Green Science Alliance* chose Switzerland for its renowned innovative capacity, stable legal framework, world-class education system, and strong IP protection. According to *Green Science Alliance*, Switzerland's leadership in energy and cleantech technologies,

particularly those focused on achieving CO2 neutrality, aligns perfectly with the company's mission. By leveraging the *Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne*'s resources and network, the company aims to drive research, development, manufacturing, and market expansion of its innovative battery technology. As the demand for electric vehicles and renewable energy storage continues to grow, this collaboration could play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of battery recycling and resource conservation.

Sources: [swisstrade](#); [Green Science Alliance website](#)

Agenda

日程

AGENDA

✓ EXPO 2025 in Osaka

Dates: 13 April – 13 October 2025

Theme: *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*

Find more information [here](#)

The official Swiss National Day at Expo 2025 is 22 April 2025. Find more information about the Swiss Pavilion [here](#)

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva
80, Rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva
Phone: 022 732 13 04
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp



©Expo 2025