

Popular Vietnam noodles set to make return to Japanese origins

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HO CHI MINH CITY--Fans of the popular "Hao Hao" instant noodles originally marketed for Vietnam will soon be able to enjoy the spicy and sour shrimp-flavored variety in Japan.

Osaka-based Acecook Co. will start marketing the packages by targeting retailers dealing with Vietnamese foodstuffs in the Kanto region in November.

Demand for the noodles has soared owing to a surge in Vietnamese working or studying in Japan and wanting a "taste of home."

Vietnamese represent the third-largest foreign group in Japan, after Chinese and Koreans and numbered 291,000 as of June 30, a five-fold increase from the end of 2012.

The product will be imported from Acecook Vietnam and is expected to sell for about 98 yen (87 cents).

The Vietnam arm's general director, Junichi Kajiwara, who decided to market the product in Japan in an unusual case of reverse-import, said, "We want to support Vietnamese who are working hard in Japan."

Vietnamese have a custom of eating instant noodles in the morning, and the country ranks fourth in the world in consumption of such products, following China, Indonesia and Japan.

The launch of "Hao Hao" in 2000 in Vietnam prompted the growth of noodle consumption in the country. Now, 1.4 billion packages are sold annually, representing a 30-percent market share.

Until now, the product has been exported from Vietnam to 40 countries.

A single package sells for about 3,500 dong (17 yen) in Vietnam. But a carton of 30 packages sold over the Internet through brokers goes for about 3,000 yen, a hefty markup.

The noodles are so popular that Vietnamese purchase them by the carton when they are specially sold during events in Japan.

