

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Cutting-edge Insight From Industry Insiders



Japan

Environment

Veggino

Plant-based lifestyles



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ENVIRONMENT

Plant-based lifestyles ramping up in Tokyo



*Eating plant-based is more than a trend – it's a lifestyle, with positive impacts for both personal and planetary health. **Noriko Shindo**, CEO and co-founder of Veggino, a company promoting plant-based lifestyles (PBL), outlines how they can impact the world*



Noriko Shindo, CEO & co-founder, Veggino

10-second briefing

- Veggino defines plant-based as a choice that does not rely on consuming anything that comes from animals
- Main benefits: Health, environment, and morality
- Japanese have a long history of not eating meat or dairy
- Go easy on yourself, processed food, and your friends and family.

About Noriko

- Noriko currently works at a large distribution company while promoting plant-based lifestyles through Veggino
- Noriko is on a mission to expand the plant-based community in Japan through an inclusive message: "You choose how plant-based you are!"

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How would you describe Tokyo's PBL space?

While the recent progress of PBL in Japan has been promising, I would say there is a lot more room for improvement. Now, thanks to the increasing number of restaurants and services that offer plant-based (PB)/ vegetarian options, and with the bipartisan committee in the government for expediting veg-friendly options in Japan by the 2020 Olympics, there are more discussions on the topic than ever before.

However, take a step outside Tokyo and the scene has not changed much in the last decade: My hometown is Tokushima prefecture where even the word "vegetarian" is treated with some social skepticism on whether it's a reliable diet choice to obtain required nutrients.

What does eating PB mean?

Eating plant-based can mean different things depending on who you ask. At Veggino, we define plant-based as a choice that does not rely on consuming anything that comes from animals. While we believe 100% plant-based is the best way to go, we are equally supportive of the whole journey – the higher the plant-based %, the better!

What key changes are you seeing in the PBL space?

We are optimistic that more plant-based choices will be made, and that more plant-based goods and products will appear in the market in the next few years. Japan has been slow to catch onto the plant-based trend, but thanks to the global spike in healthy superfoods, plastic-free movements, and other powerful environmental movements (such as [Greta Thunberg](#)), we are confident that the upward trend in Japan will not only continue, but accelerate. Not to mention, Japan has had a longer history of not eating meat or dairy, and there are many readily available foods that are coincidentally plant-based by default such as tofu, [koyaku](#), and many of the traditional Japanese sweets. Seeking our origin, it makes sense to adopt a higher ratio of plant-based choices!

What are the main benefits of a plant-based lifestyle?

Health, environment, and morality. There are now more studies to show a higher ratio of plant-based food in your diet reduces cancer, diabetes, and strokes.



The Veggino team (Bio)

It can contribute to higher fertility, and lower blood pressure and LDL.

As for the environment, it is said that even on a conservative estimate which only takes into account the methane gas released by cows, the animal industry contributes 18% of total greenhouse gases released in the world! As for morality, it is increasingly harder to find farms and companies that raise and slaughter animals in a humane way. Why eat them if research shows we are better off without eating them?

Top tips for people newly starting a plant-based lifestyle

- 1. Go easy on yourself:** don't try to change your diet 100% from day 1 – you'll burn yourself out
- 2. Go easy on the processed food –** often people find it stressful to navigate what's PB and what's not by meticulously reading the packaging on ready-made foods. Our tip is stay away from processed foods as much as possible! Not only is it healthy, but you save yourself the stress and time of reading a long list of ingredients, only to find "milk" at the bottom of the list!
- 3. Go easy on your friends and family –** especially in Japan, be prepared to explain the PBL, why you chose it, and why it's not a religion or a dangerous choice to make for your body. Once you get the support and understanding you need from your friends and family, you'll start seeing that people will suggest places to eat or even buy food (like chocolate) that they found on their way somewhere.

What does Veggino do?

Veggino is a one-stop place and community for people living in Japan to try, pursue, and choose the plant-based life in a country where it is still not a common concept. We currently provide information through our website, a chance to connect with curious-minded people through our events and meetups, and inspiration of how fun that going plant-based can be through our social media platforms. Through facts, and bite-sized information, we offer a peek into how to easily integrate plant-based choices into your life – all without being "forceful" or excluding people who choose to go only partially, or not plant-based at all.

What makes Veggino different?

Having all our information in both English and Japanese is one edge. The other is in our core message that promotes inclusivity regardless of the choices you make. As long as you are making choices after getting to know what the implications are, we feel we are already a step closer in the right direction!

What are your main focus areas at the moment?

We are currently planning a few things: the first is a YouTube channel to offer more videos on this topic as fun videos in Japanese! The second is our series of small-sized meetups. By talking to PB and non-PB alike, we are trying to identify how we can help more people with our efforts – ultimately with a product or service that would reach more people and thus have a bigger social impact!

How are you helping the industry move forward?

Our efforts are currently grass-roots and focus on changing the awareness of the typical consumer. We believe this will contribute to a surge in demand, and promote more businesses to increase the supply. In the future, we also plan to become suppliers ourselves.

What do you need now to expand/improve your activities?

In the short term we are on the lookout for nutritionists and doctors who are ready to take a stand and promote PBL from a health perspective. In the longer term, we are looking for partners and investors to help accelerate our reach by helping us to scale.

What advice do you have about how people can support what you do?

If you choose to change one dish in your typical week to a plant-based one, we're happy. Extend that to a whole day of plant-based dishes in a typical week, and we're thrilled. Join our community, come write as guest bloggers on our website, help us translate if you're good in Japanese and English; now that would send us over the moon.

More Information

➔ [Colin Campbell Center for Nutritional Studies](#)

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