1. General Aviation Aircraft

1. Definition of Category

Small aircraft used in general aviation, including private and leisure aircraft as well as corporate aircraft and aircraft with commercial uses. It does not include military aircraft or large passenger aircraft.

HS Numbers	Commodity
8801.10	Gliders
8801.90	Balloons and other non-power aircrafts
8802.11, 12	Helicopters
8802.20	Propeller airplanes (up to 2 tons)
	Other airplanes (up to 2 tons)

Note 1: HS Nos. 8801.10-000 and 8801.90-000 include "hang glider" and "balloon" which are not subject in this guidebook. Moreover, propeller airplanes and helicopters include those for military use for statistical purpose.

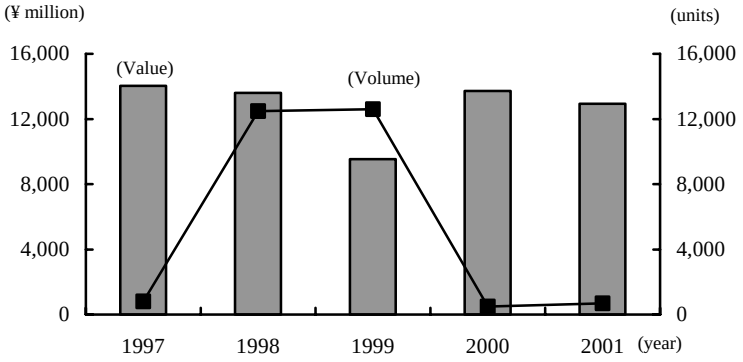
Note 2: In 2000, propeller airplanes (up to 2 tons, 8802.20-010) and other airplanes (up to 2 tons, 8802.20-090) were unified by the HS 8802.20.

2. Import Trends

(1) Recent Trends in General Aviation Aircraft Imports

Total imports of small aircraft declined by 5.7% in 2001 to ¥12.9 billion. Helicopters accounted for virtually the entire amount, with imports of 48 aircrafts worth ¥11.3 billion. Imports of gliders and other non-propelled aircraft, and of propeller aircraft, vary considerably from one year to the next, with the number of aircraft imported. While it is difficult to generalize, imports of these aircraft are generally flat, due to the impact of the recession.

Fig. 1 Japan's general aviation aircraft imports



	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value	Volume	Value
Gliders	332	234	328	205	398	190	341	181	310	210
Other non-power aircrafts	363	97	12,094	197	12,128	125	49	72	278	188
Helicopters	57	13,228	28	12,984	44	8,804	55	13,170	48	11,328
Other airplanes (up to 2 tons)	54	484	28	221	29	409	38	290	46	1,204
TOTAL	806	14,043	12,478	13,607	12,599	9,530	483	13,713	682	12,929

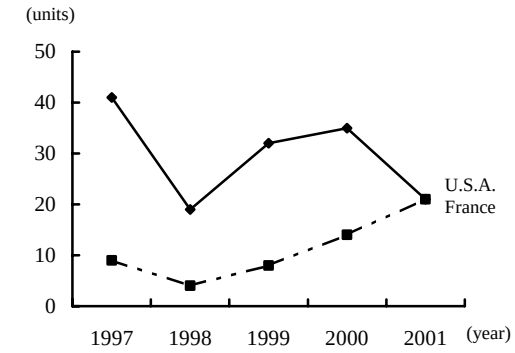
Units: units ¥ million *Source: Japan Exports and Imports*

(2) Imports by Place of Origin

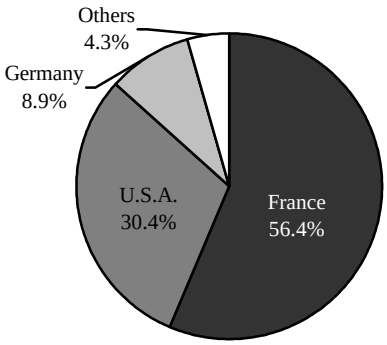
Main exporters of helicopters to Japan in 2001 were the United States (21 units, ¥3.4 billion) and France (21 units, ¥6.4 billion). Helicopter imports from France topped those from the United States for the first time ever numerically. France enjoys a sizable lead over the USA in imports on a value basis. During 2001, Japan im.ported gliders from the United States (86 units), Italy (77 units), Australia (73 units), and Germany (41 units). On a value basis, Germany accounted for large-size models dominated about half of all imports.

Fig. 2 Principal exporters of helicopters to Japan

Trends in import volume by leading exporters



Shares of helicopter imports in 2001 (value basis)

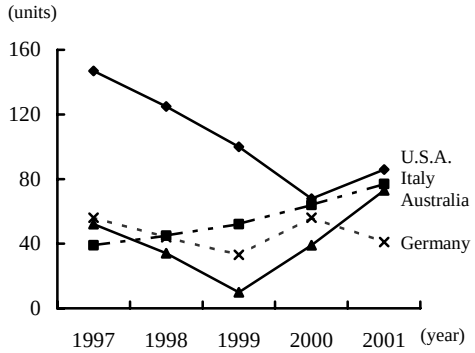


	1997	1998	1999	2000		2001			
	Volume	Volume	Volume	Volume	Value	Volume		Value	
U.S.A.	41	19	32	35	7,004	21	43.8%	3,443	30.4%
France	9	4	8	14	4,511	21	43.8%	6,383	56.4%
Germany	4	1	2	4	1,069	3	6.3%	1,009	8.9%
Italy	1	1	1	-	-	2	4.2%	489	4.3%
Others	2	3	1	2	-	1	2.1%	4	0.0%
TOTAL	57	28	44	55	586	55	0.0%	11,328	100.0%
(E U)	14	14	7	11	13,170	18	100.0%	7,881	69.6%

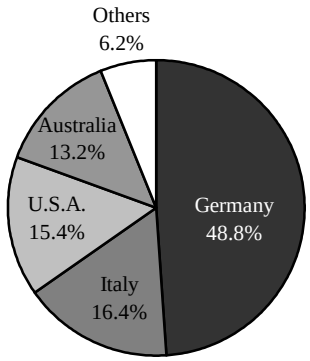
Units: units, ¥ million *Source: Japan Exports and Imports*

Fig. 3 Principal exporters of gliders to Japan

Trends in import volume by leading exporters



Shares of glider imports in 2001 (value basis)



	1997	1998	1999	2000		2001			
	Volume	Volume	Volume	Volume	Value	Volume		Value	
U.S.A.	147	125	100	68	20	86	27.7%	32	15.4%
Italy	39	45	52	64	28	77	24.8%	34	16.4%
Australia	52	34	10	39	14	73	23.5%	28	13.2%
Germany	56	44	33	56	92	41	13.2%	102	48.8%
France	11	10	28	29	10	14	4.5%	6	2.7%
Others	27	70	175	85	18	19	6.1%	7	3.5%
TOTAL	332	328	398	341	181	310	100.0%	210	100.0%
(E U)	129	121	151	165	132	146	47.1%	146	69.6%

Units: units, ¥ million *Source: Japan Exports and Imports*

(3) Imports' Market Share in Japan

No manufacturer in Japan produces small propeller airplanes, other small fixed-wing aircraft or civilian-use gliders. As a result, imports account for all small airplanes and gliders. Only two manufacturers in Japan produce helicopters. Accordingly, imports account for over 90% of civilian helicopters.

3. Key Considerations related to Importing

(1) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Importation

There are no legal regulations that apply at the time of importation. However, the following regulations apply to all aircraft operated in the skies of Japan, regardless of the country of origin.

(2) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Operation

1) Civil Aeronautics Law

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport is responsible for all matters pertaining to aviation safety. The Civil Aeronautics Law requires that the following procedural requirements be met.

<Aircraft registration>

Aircraft are registered at the General Administration Division, Administration Department, Civil Aviation Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. After all required items of information have been entered on the original copy of the aircraft registration form, the applicant receives a registration certificate. As part of this process it is confirmed whether the aircraft is registered in another country, whether the aircraft possesses a certificate of airworthiness for export issued by the country of origin, and whether a transfer of ownership is taking place or has taken place.

<Application for certificate of airworthiness>

Application, in the case of new aircraft, should be made to the Civil Aviation Bureau, which has offices in Tokyo and Osaka. A ministerial ordinance requires that propeller airplanes and helicopters be inspected by an aircraft inspector (official of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport) or a certified inspection institute, and it requires that gliders be inspected by an airworthiness inspector (private citizen). Inspections check for strength, structural integrity and performance. If the aircraft passes inspection, the applicant will receive a Certificate of Airworthiness.

2) Radio Law

The Radio Law requires that the following procedural requirements be met.

<Mobile wireless station (aircraft station) license>

Applications must be submitted to either the Aeronautical Division or the Aviation and Maritime Office at one of 11 regional Bureaus of Telecommunications (office names differ by region).

<Installed wireless device inspection>

After submitting the mobile wireless station license application, the applicant receives a temporary license. At some later time an official of the regional Bureau of Telecommunications must inspect the installed device in order to receive a standard license. However, except for registration, these procedural requirements are normally fulfilled not by the importer but rather by the aircraft repair service companies.

(3) Competent Agencies

- Civil Aeronautics Law
  General Administration Division, Administration Department, Civil Aviation Bureau,
  Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
  TEL: 03-5253-8111 http://www.mlit.go.jp
- Radio Law (for aircrafts)
  Mobile Satellite Communications Division, Radio Department, Telecommunications Bureau,
  Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications
  TEL: 03-5253-5111 http://www.soumu.go.jp
  - Registration and application
    For aircraft registration:
    General Administration Division, Administration Department, Civil Aviation Bureau,
    Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport TEL: 03-5253-8111
    For application of airworthiness:
    Airworthiness Division, Engineering Department, Civil Aviation Bureau,
    Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport TEL: 03-5253-8111
    Operations Division, Air Traffic Services and Safety Department, Tokyo Regional Civil Aviation Bureau
    TEL:03-5275-9292
    Operations Division, Air Traffic Services and Safety Department, Osaka Regional Civil Aviation Bureau
    TEL: 06-6949-6211
  - For establishing mobile wireless station / installed wireless device inspection
    Regional Bureaus of Telecommunications
    ex.) in Kanto region: Kanto Bureau of Telecommunications TEL: 03-3243-8695

4. Labeling

(1) Legally Required Labeling

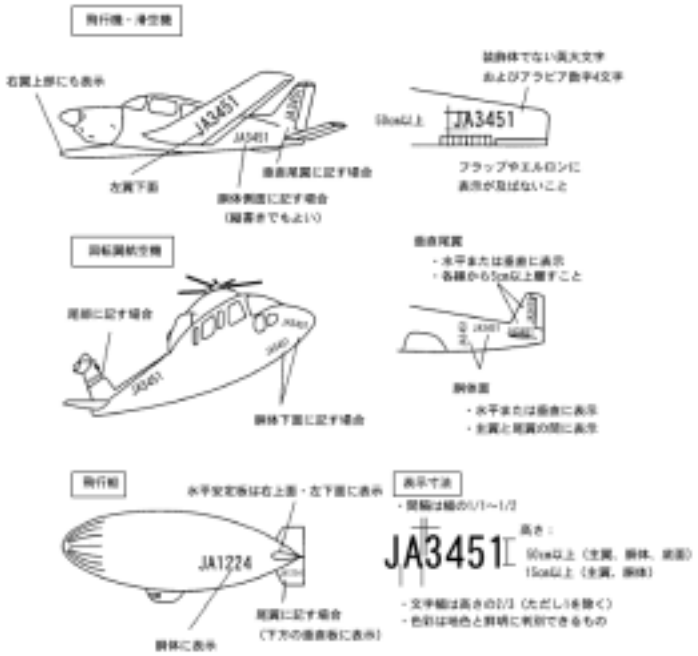
1) Nation of registry and registration code labeling

The Civil Aeronautics Law requires all aircraft to be registered and to display a symbol indicating the nation of registry ("JA" in the case of Japan) along with a registration code (4-digit Arabic numeral) in a specified location on the body of the aircraft. The Aircraft Registration Certificate must also be on display in the aircraft at all times.

2) Imprinting of the nation of registry and registration codes

Registered aircraft, with some exceptions, must have the nationality and registration number stamped on structural members of the fuselage. The nationality and the registration number of the aircraft must be stamped along with the name and address of the owner of the aircraft on a 7 cm length, 5 cm width identification plate made out of a heat resistant material. The identification plate must be attached at the door to the fuselage of the aircraft.

National registry and registration code labeling and code size requirements



(2) Voluntary Labeling based on Provisions of Law

There is no voluntary labeling based on provisions of law for small aircrafts.

(3) Voluntary Industry Labeling

There is no voluntary industry labeling for small aircrafts.

5. Taxes

(1) Customs Duties

Custom duties on general aviation aircraft are free.

Fig. 5 Customs duties on general aviation aircraft

HS No.	Description	Rate of Duty (%)			
		General	WTO	Preferential	Temporary
8801.10	Gliders and hang gliders	Free	(Free)		
8801.90	Other non-power aircrafts	Free	(Free)		
8802	Helicopters				
11	Of an unladen weight not exceeding 2 tons	Free	(Free)		
12	Of an unladen weight exceeding 2 tons	Free	(Free)		
20	Airplanes and other aircrafts, of an unladen weight not exceeding 2 tons.	Free	(Free)		

Note: Refer to "Customs Tariff Schedules of Japan" (published by Japan Tariff Association) etc. for interpretation of tariff table.

(2) Consumption Tax

CIF x 5%

6. Product Characteristics

<Characteristics by Producing Countries>

The most technologically sophisticated and reliable propeller airplanes are made in the United States, Germany and France. Furthermore, Brazilian-made helicopters are entering the international market. In the helicopter field the most experienced manufacturers are Bell in the United States and Eurocopter in France. These two makers produce far more helicopters than any other manufacturers, and their products are superior in terms of product quality and performance. Another notable difference by place of origin is the fact that the rotor of French-made helicopters spins clock-wise, while the rotors in helicopters made in other countries spins counterclockwise. Germany leads the world in glider production, and its products have the best materials and the most sophisticated technology. Poland does not have quite the same level of quality materials, but its products also have excellent technology and are less expensive than those from Germany. Japanese and European models normally have instrument panel gauges denominated in metric units, while American models generally still use English units of measure that can be difficult for Japanese pilots to interpret.

At present, no small, fixed-wing aircraft, including propeller-driven craft, are produced in Japan. Japan has only a single manufacturer of civilian helicopters (Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.), and it produces only a single model (the BK 117) under a joint-venture agreement with a European firm, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) is currently developing a new type of helicopter. Kawasaki Heavy Industries builds the fuselage, and the engine is American-made. In general, the time and expense involved in developing helicopters and other aircraft make it difficult for Japanese manufacturers to go into these areas.

7. Domestic Distribution System and Business Practices

(1) Domestic Market Conditions

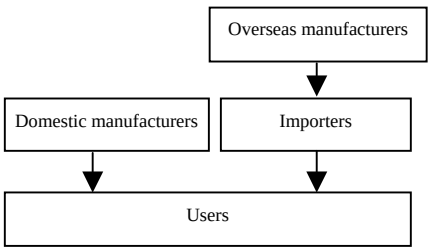
Civilian helicopter sales enjoyed robust growth in the five-year period ending in 1990. Main reason for this growth was a provision of the Special Tax Measures Law that set the depreciation period for helicopters at only two years, which led many corporations to buy helicopters for the tax advantages. Sales growth was particularly strong in the mid-range and larger models, while sales actually fell in the smaller models designed for personal use. The reason for this trend was a diversification in the uses of helicopters, which came to include not only tourism and crop spraying but also geological surveying, VIP transportation and even personal commuting to and from work.

The deepening recession in Japan combined with a number of accidents to arouse doubts about helicopter safety and put a damper on the market. In response, Kawasaki Heavy Industries opened a helicopter pilot school in an effort to address the human factors aspect of helicopter safety. The propeller airplane market experienced the same type of falloff from 1991 onward as did the helicopter market. The economic recession led many prospective purchasers to delay new purchases and try to extend the service life of existing equipment through repair.

(2) Distribution Channels

There are no wholesale or retail outlets for general aviation aircraft. Importers and the domestic manufacturer sell direct to users.

Fig. 4 Distribution channels for general aviation aircraft



(3) Key Considerations for entering the Japanese Market

There are only a small number of general aviation aircraft manufacturers worldwide, and practically all of them already have authorized import agent contracts with Japanese trading companies and other importers. It would prove very difficult for other importers to attempt to enter the market.

8. After-Sales Service

General aviation aircraft makers customarily supply users with service and maintenance manuals to enable them to maintain the aircraft themselves. Commercial providers of aircraft repair and rehabilitation services must receive authorization from the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry as required by the Aircraft Manufacturing Law. An aircraft inspector of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport must inspect aircrafts, which have undergone major repair to rehabilitation. Aircrafts that have undergone minor repairs or receive routine maintenance must be certified compliant with airworthiness standards by a qualified aircraft repair technician.

In addition, the Civil Aeronautics Law requires overhauls for engines, propellers and certain other components at standard service intervals specified in Ministry directives. Containers of oxygen and liquefied carbon dioxide that are removed from the aircraft for refilling and separate maintenance are also subject to regulatory provisions of the High-Pressure Gas Safety Law.

Manufacturers also supply users with service bulletins suggesting structural and technological improvements and recommending modifications. The Civil Aviation Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport issues airworthiness modification bulletins known as TCDs (Transport Civil Aviation Directives) when a repair or service procedure is required for safe operation of aircraft. These bulletins are merely advisory and do not have the force of law. The Ministry has the authority to have its inspectors directly oversee repair operations, and if the repair is judged to be deficient, the Ministry may require repairs to be performed in accordance with provisions of the Civil Aeronautics Law.

9. Related Product Categories

Larger aircrafts are subject to the same regulatory environment as described in this guidebook. Military aircraft are subject to import quotas, and are not imported in the private sector. Balloons and hang gliders are not classified as aircraft, and thus are not subject to regulatory provisions of the Civil Aeronautics Law or the Radio Law. However, balloonists and hang glider hobbyists must obtain permission from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport in order to fly in restricted air spaces or other areas where they might affect airplane traffic. Operators should also be aware that they face potential legal penalties under the Civil Aeronautics Law for unsafe aviation practices if they intrude on established air corridors or otherwise engage in activities that violate the Law.

10. Direct Imports by Individuals

As mentioned previously, there are no special restrictions on imports, and individuals are free to import general aviation aircraft. However, individuals ought to consider carefully whether they ought to attempt to do so given the fact that few individuals are able to pilot an aircraft into Japan themselves, that several procedural requirements of the Civil Aeronautics Law must be completed (and that hangar space must be secured and other physical preparations made in advance).

11. Related Organizations

• Japan Machinery Importers' Association	TEL: 03-3503-9736	http://www.jmia.or.jp
• Japan Aeronautical Engineers' Association	TEL: 03-3747-7600	http://www.jaea.or.jp
• Japan Aeronautic Association	TEL: 03-3502-1201	http://www.aero.or.jp