



AS IT IS

Price of Famous Japanese Snack Goes Up for First Time in 40 Years

January 27, 2022

The cost of a well-loved **snack** in Japan is increasing for the first time in over 40 years.

Umaibo corn puff was introduced in Japan in 1979. Its name means “**delicious** stick.” People have loved Umaibo for many years for its special **crunch** and its 10-yen price. One Japanese yen is less than one U.S. cent – or one-hundredth of a dollar.

The maker of Umaibo, Yaokin Corp, is increasing the price to 12 yen. The snack’s first-ever price increase will begin in April.

The price change is a reminder that Japan is feeling the effects of rising costs of raw materials and transportation. Prices of goods have been rising in many countries. But Japanese companies have so far avoided increasing prices out of fear of losing buyers.

Longtime fans of Umaibo are surprised and saddened by the cost change.

“Umaibo have been the same price for so long, so a 2-yen increase is a big deal,” 59-year-old Noriko Eda told Reuters. “I was surprised.”

Umaibo come in 15 flavors, or tastes, such as cheese, seasoned fish egg and creamy corn soup.

Around 700 million of the crunchy sticks are sold each year. The cost has stayed so low that even children can buy themselves Umaibo. For many Japanese, the snack reminds them of when they were young.

Takeshi Nemoto has been in charge of purchasing snacks at Tokyo snack shop Kawahara Shoten for many years. He said other snack manufacturers may also have to raise prices.

"There's nothing we can do," he said. "From the manufacturer's **point of view** they can't stay profitable anymore unless they raise the price."

Some fans of Umaibo saw the change as the end of an **era**.

"We're witnessing a turning point of history," rock musician Atsushi Osawa said on Twitter. His band, Uchikubi Gokumon Doukokuai, included the snack in a 2010 song. They sang about Umaibo's "**miracle** price."

The musician said, "The price has started to **diverge** from the **lyrics**."

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Reuters news agency reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English.

***Editor's note:** An earlier version of this story incorrectly said 10 Japanese yen were less than one U.S. cent. At current exchange rates, one Japanese yen is worth less than one U.S. cent. We apologize for the mistake.*

Words in This Story

snack *-n.* a small amount or kind of food eaten between meals

delicious *-adj.* very tasty

crunch *-n.* the sound of something being crushed (often by the teeth)

point of view *-n.* a way of looking at or thinking about something

era *-n.* a period of time associated with an event or some thing

miracle *-n.* an unusual or wonderful event
