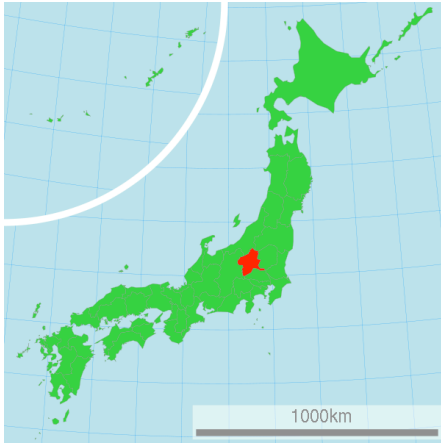


Japan.

Gunma Prefecture (first map, highlighted in red) is in the northwestern tip of Kanto Plain (second map)—the largest flat land in Japan spreading southeastward toward the Pacific Ocean. The southern section of Kanto Plain includes the Greater Tokyo Metropolis, the largest urbanized and industrialized region of the nation. Gunma's climate, location and landscape make it an ideal place to produce many types of agricultural products.



Gunma's topsoil consists of volcanic ashes that accumulated over the centuries. The mountain range on the north blocks the moisture traveling from the Sea of Japan, creating much precipitations—in the form of rain in the summer and snow in the winter—on the “back” (northern) side, giving Gunma the most sunny days per year in the nation. Gunma also has varying levels of altitude generated by the mountain range gradually tapering down to the Kanto Plain. This allows the food producers to alter the growing temperatures by switching the altitude on which the crops are grown. When combined, the fertile volcanic soil with rich minerals, the temperate climate, and the terrace-like farming fields produce nearly ideal condition for producing a variety of agricultural products. As one informant said, Gunma is a “farmer's heaven” where “you can produce many different kind of products within very little proximity.”