

Japan
Fisheries
Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

N.W. Pacific groundfish management

Tangible progress achieved toward management of groundfish resources on the high seas

—A new management framework adopted for the Northwestern Pacific—

An inter-governmental consultation was held in Busan, Korea, from January 31 through February 2 to discuss the management of groundfish fisheries on the high seas in the Northwestern Pacific. The conference adopted a new provisional framework for the sustainable management of fish resources and the protection of vulnerable ecosystems in the area.

Further, the participants confirmed the importance of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in taking a leading role on the issue of the management of deep-sea fisheries. They also agreed on taking steps toward the formulation of international norms to that end.

Sources close to the meeting said that significant progress was achieved towards the construction of a management framework in line with the U.N. Resolutions.

The consultation was participated in by Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

At their first meeting in August of last year, the four countries—fishing nations and coastal States operating on the high seas of the Northwestern Pacific—confirmed that they would continue discussing the establishment of a new international framework in response to the consultations at the United Nations regarding the management of groundfish harvests for the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as sea mounts.

Subsequently, at the U.N. General Assembly in

autumn last year, the following resolutions, among others, were adopted.

(1) Regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and arrangements shall assess the impact of fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems based on scientific findings and take necessary measures;

(2) In case there is no RMFO or no provisional measures have been introduced, steps shall be taken to introduce such measures by the end of 2008 or halt the issuance of fishing permits; and

(3) The FAO shall formulate the working process regarding the management of deep-sea fisheries on the high seas.

With this situation in mind, the countries that participated in the consultation discussed and adopted a new provisional conservation and management framework.

The major thrusts of the framework are:

(1) It aims to cover groundfish fisheries operating on the high seas of the Northwestern Pacific;

(2) Provisional measures will be implemented, including freezing fishing effort at the present level and preventing the expansion of operation areas for groundfish fishing (limited to the sea mounts south of 45 degrees North where operations have actually

been conducted.)

(3) In addition to the provisional measures, harvests of groundfish will be suspended until the end of 2008 unless conservation and management measures are established to prevent the negative impact on the area where the presence of vulnerable ecosystems is known;

(4) A scientific working group to provide advice and recommendations will be established with a view to collect and share pertinent information; and

(5) Information on fishing vessels will be collected through the license system. Fishing vessels, including their names and registration numbers, are identified through installation of the vessel monitoring system (VMS).

The participating countries agreed on respecting the framework and implementing the provisional measures on a voluntary basis.

Agreement reached on the need to act upon FAO

At the meeting, Japan, serving as the provisional secretariat for the framework, explained about the discussion held at the United Nations last year.

Participants also confirmed the importance of the leading role of the FAO on the issue of the management of deep-sea fishing. They also agreed that they will act on the FAO to develop global standards so that the framework of conservation and management can satisfy the requirements in the U.N. resolutions. Specific proposal will be discussed in the future.

The scientific working group was established and its meeting was held prior to the inter-governmental conference.

In the U.N. resolutions, vulnerable ecosystems, such as sea mounts and deep-sea corals, are not clearly defined. Given this situation, the working group incorporated into its terms of reference the need to assess the resources of major fish species and related species and to specify the vulnerable marine ecosystems and the bottom fishing that gives impact to them. The group will collect necessary information and address the issue.

Participants in the consultation also confirmed that they will continue discussion on the formulation of a long-term framework having legal binding power.

The next consultation will be held sometime this next summer.

The First Joint Tuna RFMO Meeting

Step forward to Sustainable Management of Tuna Resources

The first meeting of all the Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in the world was held in Kobe, Japan, from January 22 through 26, 2007. The Government of Japan, with technical assistance provided by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), organized and hosted the meeting. A total of 54 members of five tuna RFMOs (IATTC, ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC and CCSBT) as well as the Secretariats of the RFMOs, inter-governmental organizations and NGOs etc. participated in the meeting.

The meeting adopted the Course of Actions for the RFMOs, describing key areas and challenges, technical work of cooperation across RFMOs etc.

The second Joint Meeting will be hosted by the European Community in 2009.

At a press conference after the meeting, Masanori Miyahara of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, who chaired the meeting, evaluated the meeting as follows: "We have reconfirmed the need for the RFMOs to take joint actions in ensuring sustainable use of tuna resources. It was a significant development that the RFMOs agreed to hold the second joint meeting after two years to assess the progress of the Course of Action. He further said that "the RFMOs made commitments and they are now burdened with heavy tasks."



Joint RFMO meeting in Kobe

ICFA Statement

The International Coalition of Fisheries Association (ICFA) presented the following statement to the joint meeting of the five regional tuna fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) held in Kobe January 22-26, 2007.

In the statement, ICFA supported the efforts by tuna fishermen to further promote sustainable fisheries, taking this meeting as a valuable occasion for the RFMOs to demonstrate their commitment and competence in the management of tuna resources around the globe.

Further, ICFA made a strong case that the primary responsibility for all the issues related to the conservation and management of tunas should primarily rest in the hands of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and RFMOs. ICFA members urged their respective governments to continue cooperation with the RFMOs so that the sustainable management of fishery resources around the world can be ensured.

ICFA is an international nongovernmental organization committed to the sustainable use of the globe's ocean resources and that adhere to the UN FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. For more information about this global collaboration, visit www.ICFA.net.

ICFA STATEMENT ON JOINT MEETING OF TUNA RFMOs

ICFA expresses its keen interest in the Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs held in Kobe January 22 through 26, 2007. The meeting is an invaluable opportunity to demonstrate its commitment and competence of RFMOs to manage global tuna resources. ICFA has long been committed to the sustainable use of global marine living resources including tunas and conservation of marine ecosystems.

ICFA supports the tuna fishers' efforts to further promote responsible tuna fisheries particularly in addressing issues of resource management, the IUU fishing, and reducing incidental catch of sea turtles and sea birds by use of technologies developed.

ICFA further stresses that the primary responsibility for the conservation and the management of tunas and all related issues lies with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.

ICFA, therefore, strongly encourages governments to continue to cooperate with Tuna RFMOs to ensure that global fish stocks are sustainably managed. In closing ICFA hopes the Joint Meeting of Tuna RFMOs to be a big step toward reinforcement of the management of global tuna resources.

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Management

Japanese government calls on traders to refrain from importing bluefin tuna in excess of ICCAT's quota

On February 2 the Fisheries Agency conducted a briefing session for traders to explain about the outcome of the intersessional meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) recently held in Tokyo.

In the briefing, the Agency specifically drew the attention of the participants to the importation of

bluefin tuna from Libya and Turkey, the two countries that did not agree with ICCAT's quota allocations.

The Agency noted that questions have been raised about the catch reports of Libya and stricter monitoring of its trade is required.

With this in mind, the Agency requested traders to consult with it when importing farmed bluefin tuna from Libya.

Also the Agency said that the Japanese government will have a consultation with Turkey to start a process of certifying that the bluefin tuna from Turkey be those fish harvested within the scope of catch allocations. Therefore, the Agency said, special procedures would be required for importing bluefin tuna from Turkey.

This briefing session shows Japan's positive posture as a major market country importing virtually

all the farmed bluefin tuna produced in the Mediterranean region to take responsible actions toward the recovery of Atlantic bluefin tuna resources.

Whaling

Resolving the IWC Gridlock

IWC Normalization meeting held in Tokyo

Delegates from 37 member countries of the International Whaling Commission met in Tokyo on February 13-15 to discuss how to resolve the gridlock within the Commission and return the Commission to its original mandate of regulating commercial whaling as provided for in the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The Conference for the Normalization of the International Whaling Commission, hosted by the Government of Japan, was open to observers and the press. Japan had extended an invitation to all 72 members of the IWC. But 26 member countries met in Washington, D.C., during the latter part of January and decided to boycott the meeting.

Japan's alternate Commissioner, Joji Morishita, said the meeting was called in good faith for all IWC members to discuss the serious problems that are preventing the IWC from functioning as a normal international resource management organization. "Japan is actively exploring all avenues to bring the IWC back to a working body and to find ways that will end the dysfunctional nature of it. We don't believe there is any future with two groups of parties talking past each other and nothing of any significance ever being achieved."

The IWC approved a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982 under the condition that it was to be reviewed and new catch limits be established by 1990 at the latest. Under the Commission's mandate, the Scientific Committee of the IWC developed a risk averse management procedure for calculating catch limits from baleen whale stocks and in 1993 recommended it to the Commission for its implementation. But the Commission has failed to implement the management procedure because several member countries who oppose the resumption of commercial whaling insisted upon a necessity to establish a comprehensive management scheme including a monitoring and control system.

Since then some countries sincerely tried to complete the management scheme, but others tried to prolong its completion and surprisingly started to claim that whaling should not be resumed irrespective of healthy stock conditions for some species. The IWC finally abandoned the establishment of a management scheme and again failed to implement an appropriate management scheme in 2006. These countries opposing the resumption of sustainable commercial whaling led by the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States are among the 26 member countries that agreed to boycott the meeting.

The 3-day meeting, chaired by Mr. Kuniwo Nakamura, former President of the Republic of Palau, had a full agenda. On the first day, participants discussed the dysfunctional nature of the IWC and possible ways of resolving the gridlock that the IWC itself engenders. A panel discussion was held on the morning of the second day to solicit the views and opinions of observers. During the afternoon session of the second day, delegates and observers broke down into four working groups tasked to develop recommendations on resolving the gridlock through various measures such as building trust, seeking compromise, enhancing communication on views and positions, gaining respect for cultural diversity, and seeking outside help to resolve disagreements. The recommendations have been forwarded to the IWC Secretariat by the Chair in his summary report of the meeting, available for member countries.

The Conference closed on the optimistic note that the participating countries can make a better effort to reach out to those who did not participate and resolve the gridlock and acrimony that has plagued the Commission for so many years. As Amalie Jessen, a delegate from Greenland, summarized, "Something has to happen drastically so both parties can have a win-win situation. That means both conservation and sustainable use."

The Japan Fisheries Association will organize the 9th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo at the Tokyo International Exhibition Center (Tokyo Big Sight) July 18-20, 2007. JFA expects that nearly 300 companies from a broad spectrum of industries, including the seafood, seasoning, food processing and seafood-related technologies, will participate in the show.