

Japan  
Fisheries  
Association



NO.55, AUG. 2007

Sankaido Bldg.,  
9-13 Akasaka 1, Minato-ku,  
Tokyo, Japan 107-0052  
tel: 81-3-3585-6683  
<http://www.suisankai.or.jp>

Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

FY2007 Fisheries White Paper

Nutritional Advantage of Fish Diet Highlighted  
in FY2006 Fisheries White Paper

The Government of Japan approved the fiscal 2006 Fisheries White Paper at a cabinet meeting on May 22. The paper highlighted, among other things, (1) the importance of a fish diet including nutritional characteristics of seafood, and (2) expanding fish demand worldwide on the recognition that it is beneficial in maintaining a healthy life.

On Japan's position as a leading fish-diet country, the paper noted that seafood is supporting a healthy diet in Japan, a country having a record of one of the longest life spans in the world. The nutritional characteristics of seafood are now attracting the world's attention for their health effects. Currently, seafood accounts for about 40% of Japan's animal protein supply.

The paper said that seafood, including seaweed, abounds with important nutritional sources, such as calcium, minerals and vitamins. Notably, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), contained in fish fat, are known to have such effects as preventing thrombi, enhancing brain growth and improving visibility. Research and studies on DHA and EPA have now been advanced actively, as their characteristics are attracting increasing attention worldwide.

Japan's efforts to control excessive tuna fishing capacity

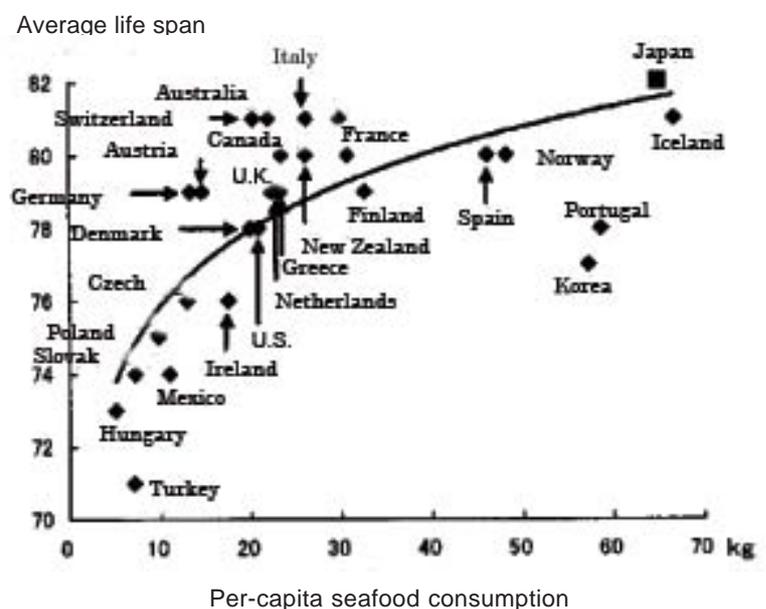
The white paper also stressed the efforts of Japan in restraining the excessive catch of tuna resources, especially by hosting the first Joint Conference of the five Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations in Kobe, in January this year. The meeting adopted such actions as countermeasures against illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and strengthening of the controls over fishing capacity. The paper noted the need for Japan to take the leadership in implementing those decisions.

Promotion of exports of high-quality and tasty Japanese sea food

Regarding promotion of seafood exports, the government established in 2005 a 5-year plan to double Japan's exports of farm and seafood products, and in 2006, introduced a target to achieve exports in the scale of 1 trillion yen.

As some concrete examples implemented under this program, the paper drew attention to the activities of the fishers in Nagasaki Prefecture, western Japan, who are striving to promote exports of small-sized mackerel to China as well as fish farmers in Hokkaido who are boosting shipments of scallops to the United States and the European Union as well as stepping up exports of pollock to the Republic of Korea.

Per-capita annual seafood consumption and average life span of major countries (Source: FAO)



## JFA President meets with EC Fisheries Commissioner on tuna and other fisheries issues

Joe Borg, Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, visited the JFA office on June 1 to exchange views with President Isao Nakasu on fisheries issues in general and management of bluefin tuna in particular.

Borg said he is now actively coping with the task to build up sustainable fisheries system within the EU, and hopes to promote dialogue with other countries pursuing a similar goal.



Borg stated that the EU instituted its common fisheries policy in 2002 and drastically reduced fishing capacity by such means as cutting catch quotas, the establishment of closed areas and the improvement of fishing gear.

He expressed the EU's hope to assist in establishing regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) in areas where there are no such regulatory bodies.

He also stressed the need to accord RFMOs with the rights to control illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing activities.

The JFA president fully concurred with these views.

Regarding the tuna issue, Borg drew the attention of Nakasu to the fact that the EU would adopt the Bluefin Tuna Recovery Plan of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) on June 11, saying that that would be a memorable day for the EU. Under this plan, bluefin tuna caught in violation of ICCAT rules will not be allowed to enter the EU market.

On this issue, Nakasu noted that Japan has taken the initiative to globally introduce the Positive List Scheme for tunas, indicating that Japan has a framework to shut out illegally-caught tunas from its market.

Touching on the issue of farmed tunas, Nakasu requested the EC Commissioner to seek ways for importing countries to refuse entry of tunas in excess of the quota.

Borg highly rated the steps Japan has taken on the tuna issue and also showed understanding regarding Japan's concern over farmed tuna.

The two leaders further exchanged views on such issues as fisheries subsidies and the issue of Taiwan's membership in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

## MEL Japan Japan's first ecolabeling system to be introduced this year

The Japan Fisheries Association announced on July 18 that Japan's first seafood ecolabeling system, "Marine Eco-Label Japan" (MEL Japan), will be introduced before the end of this year.

The announcement was made at the 9th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo held at the Tokyo Big Sight, July 18-20.

Preparations for launching of MEL Japan have been promoted by all stakeholders, including organizations and companies related to seafood production and distribution, as well as academia and the Japanese government's Fisheries Agency.

At the briefing session at the Expo, the JFA, which will serve as the Secretariat for MEL Japan, explained about the progress of the preparations to date and future plans, including the outline of the Japanese ecolabeling system.

## Power of RFMOs should be strengthened to restrain depletion of tuna resources

*In a recent lecture for the Japan Fisheries Journalists Association in Tokyo, Masanori Miyahara, Director of the Fisheries Agency, analyzed the present state of issues over tuna resources, and called for strengthening the competence of regional tuna fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to hold in check the depletion of tuna resources worldwide. What follows is a summary of his remarks at the meeting.*

### Excess fishing capacity

Demand for tunas is expanding worldwide. In previous years, Japanese longliners, which had been harvesting tunas for the sashimi market in Japan, have been decreasing in number. By contrast, in line with the increase of canned tuna consumption especially in the United States and Europe, the number of purse-seine fishing vessels saw a sharp increase. Purse-seiners are now catching not only skipjack or other tunas but also juvenile bluefin and bigeye for tuna farming. The number of purse-seiners continues to increase consistently because of high catch efficiency.

### Developing countries vs. advanced countries

Another issue over tuna resources is seen between advanced and developing countries. As developing countries face slow production domestically, they are demanding increased allocations, straightforwardly opposed to quota cuts. They tend to think that it was the

responsibility of advanced countries to have caused the decreases in the resources and that developing states have the rights to develop their own fishing.

#### Need to reinforce the power of RFMOs

We, at the Fisheries Agency, had been preparing for the Joint Meeting of Five Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations, which was realized in Kobe in January this year. Regrettably, we could not restrain the future increase in fishing capacity, but we do hope that the meeting will be evaluated in that it determined the process for effective management in the future. Especially, the agreement on

obliging observers to get onboard tuna transport vessels was a tangible step forward. This would prevent illegal catches and tuna laundering.

I believe reinforcing the power of the five RFMOs to restrain the egotism of each fishing nation will lead to a fundamental solution of the issues surrounding tuna resources.

In this sense, the holding of the five RMFO meeting itself was very significant in that each organization came to be subject to external assessment. I believe we will have some favorable consequences in the near future.

## Japan's all-out efforts to normalize the IWC end up fruitless as anti-whaling bloc chose confrontation

Makoto Ito

Secretary, Japan Whaling Association

**T**he 59th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was held in Anchorage, Alaska, on May 28-31. Japan sought to realize collaboration and dialogue in the IWC, but its efforts proved fruitless, with the meeting ending in continued confrontation.

At this year's meeting, Japan pursued normalization of the IWC and realization of catch quotas for Japan's coastal small-type whaling. The Japanese delegation offered the maximum possible concessions but could not obtain the expected results.

Toward the end of the meeting, Japan's alternate Commissioner, Akira Nakamae, also Deputy Director-General of the Fisheries Agency of Japan, stated to the effect that: "We have exhausted all means we could offer. Now we have to consider all the options to face this situation, including the possibility of withdrawing from the IWC." I believe his remark reflected the limit of patience which all the members of the Japanese delegation felt in the conference room then.

In what follows, I would like to review the present situation of the IWC.

### 1. Adoption of the catch quotas for aboriginal subsistence whaling

This year the whaling quotas were to be renewed, and especially the United States had been highly strung over securing the bowhead quota for its Inuit residents. The U.S. nervousness was in part due to its bitter experience at the IWC annual meeting in Shimonoseki, Japan, in 2002.

Aboriginal subsistence whaling quotas must be renewed every five years. Up until 2002, the quotas had been adopted by consensus (i.e. without voting), with no member States voicing opposition. However, this was not the case in 2002.

As renewal of an aboriginal subsistence whaling quota



IWC Plenary Meeting at Anchorage

falls under the category of a Schedule amendment to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, a three-quarter majority vote is required. However, at the Shimonoseki meeting, no agreement on the quota was reached as Japan, Caribbean, African, and other countries refused to endorse the adoption of the quota on the ground that "it is unreasonable that aboriginal subsistence whaling is recognized while quotas are refused for traditional coastal whaling in Japan." The United States faced the unexpected state of no quota for Alaskan aboriginal subsistence whaling from 2003.

Subsequently, the quota was granted finally at a special meeting held in Cambridge. This year, the United States apparently took a carefully-thought-out strategy to avoid the repetition of the acrimonious experience in 2002.

This year Japan did not block the U.S. proposal on the scientific grounds that there is no problem in the sustainability of the stock. As a result, a quota of 280 bowhead whales was updated for the period of five years from 2008.

## 2. Unreasonable refusal of Japan's proposal for small-type coastal whaling quota

Japan tabled a proposal for a Schedule amendment to allow a small-type coastal whaling quota of minke whales with a view to alleviate the hardships facing traditional whaling communities in Japan, such as Ayukawa and Taiji.

However, no agreement was reached as anti-whaling countries insisted that "such a quota should not be recognized while the commercial whaling moratorium is in effect." As a result, Japan voluntarily withdrew its Schedule amendment proposal.

Furthermore, Japan developed a draft resolution calling for discussion on provisional measures to alleviate the hardships in Japan's small-type coastal whaling communities, by recognizing their socioeconomic and cultural needs, but could not achieve agreement on this proposal, also resulting in Japan's withdrawal of the proposal.

In submitting a Schedule amendment proposal for a small-type coastal whaling quota, Japan incorporated all the points of demand from anti-whaling countries for completion of the Revised Management Scheme (RMS). For example, Japan attempted to reduce pressure on the stock in the entire northwestern Pacific by subtracting the coastal whaling quota from the current research quota in the area. It also pledged to limit the consumption of caught whales only to the region where the catch occurs. Also it decided to have observers onboard all the whaling vessels and require notification of vessel position.

In spite of every effort Japan has made to compromise with the anti-whaling group, the IWC rejected all of Japan's proposals. In light of this fact, the remarks of Mr. Nakamae introduced at the outset of this article were totally reasonable.

## 3. Debate surrounding commercial characteristics

The United States says that one of the reasons for opposing Japan's request for a coastal whaling quota lies in its commercial characteristics. Then what about the whaling by the Inuit which the U.S. government approves? In shops around the IWC conference venue in Anchorage, we could see artifacts made of whale bones and baleen being sold — some expensive ones fetching as high as over \$2,000. This merchandise does have commercial characteristics. There is nothing wrong in commerciality itself. It is quite natural that commercial characteristics arise out of human livelihood.

What is important, I believe, is not whether there are commercial characteristics but whether the resources are kept in sound conditions. The number of coastal minke whales Japan is proposing to take and the number of bowhead harvested by Alaskan aborigines both account for less than 1% of their population size.

But the bowhead stock is by far smaller in number than the minke whale. It is not reasonable at all that a catch of

bowhead is admitted while the catch of minke whales is refused.

## 4. IWC should respect the original objective of the Convention: promotion of orderly whaling

It is quite common that countries interested in the harvest of certain marine species, such as tunas and groundfish, come together in international organizations to examine the optimum level of stock management. But that is not the case for the IWC. The abnormal aspect of the IWC is that countries professing that not even a single whale should be caught regardless the condition of the stocks have become members and their assertion virtually dominates the IWC. Anti-whaling countries insist that "there are only three categories of whaling in the IWC: commercial, research and aboriginal subsistence whaling. To recognize coastal whaling in Japan means to recognize a new category."

However, Caribbean countries that support sustainable whaling, as Japan does, argue that "even in aboriginal subsistence whaling, depleted stocks could be exposed to a danger of extinction by harvests. There are only two types of whaling: sustainable or non-sustainable." I find this argument is quite reasonable.

## 5. Will the international society succumb to violence?

There was one positive outcome for us from the IWC annual meeting this year. The film of malicious harassment of Japan's whale research catch fleet by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a radical environmental group, in the Antarctic last February, was made public at the IWC conference hall. All the countries, including anti-whaling countries such as Australia and New Zealand, recognized the malignant nature of violent harassment. This led to the adoption of a resolution by consensus, condemning such obstructive activities and calling on member States to take responsible actions.

While the adoption of this resolution gave an encouraging sign, Sea Shepherd is declaring that it will engage in similar harassment next season as well. I believe steps should be taken to protect legal activities of the research fleet (duly recognized under the provisions of the Convention) from such a fanatic organization and ensure the effectiveness of the resolution. To that end, all the countries concerned, including flag States and port States, should implement this resolution. Unless the harassment is terminated, the international society will prove that it is succumbing to violence.

As stated in the foregoing, we renewed our recognition that it is not an easy task to normalize the IWC. But we should not become overly pessimistic. The number of the countries supporting sustainable whaling has steadily increased to 36 from a handful of members in 1982, when the commercial whaling moratorium was adopted. I believe that the path will surely be open some day if we continue our reasonable efforts even in the midst of adversity.