

Japan
Fisheries
Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

World Fisheries Congress

Emperor calls for mobilizing wisdom for sustainable use of seafood

The 5th World Fisheries Congress 2008 was held in Yokohama, Japan, October 20-24, under the theme "Fisheries for Global Welfare and Conservation."

At the quadrennial meeting, the first to be held in Japan, delegates from about 80 countries exchanged views on issues such as the optimum management and the sustainable utilization of fishery resources as well as the conservation of biodiversity.

The commemorative ceremony, held on October 22, was attended by His Majesty Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, with the participation of about 1,000 fisheries researchers and industry representatives.

In his address at the ceremony, the Emperor stated: "Mankind has been using many kinds of aquatic life as food from time immemorial. In recent years, however, the depletion of aquatic living resources has become a serious issue as a result of the overexploitation of marine resources and environmental deterioration. While industrial production played a great role in the postwar development of Japan, it caused at the same time contamination of the sea and the loss of breeding grounds for marine species. Seaweed beds around Japan, which have an important role in the breeding of aquatic life, have decreased by as much as 40% during the past three decades, and the productivity of the oceans has declined."

"In order to improve the marine environment and recover the abundance of living species through adequate resource management, a variety of fisheries research and studies have been carried out. It is truly encouraging to see

that management measures have been introduced based on the results of such research and studies.

"In Japan, there had once been forests in many places along the coasts, which had been forbidden to be cut down as they were related to the habitats of fish. Unfortunately, many of these forests have been cut down since the middle of the 19th century. In recent years, however, the functions of forests came to be reconsidered from the viewpoint of fisheries science. Importantly, efforts have been made by fishermen to plant trees in the upper reaches of rivers."

"The oceans, which are the subject of fisheries science, link the world. I believe that cooperation among fisheries scientists transcending national borders is essential. It is my sincere wish that the wisdom of various areas related to fisheries is mobilized and the results of the research will contribute to promoting the well-being of mankind," the Emperor concluded.

After the ceremony, a reception was held, in which the Emperor and the Empress conversed with the participants.



Sustainable Fisheries Symposium

Symposium on food security and sustainable fisheries held in Tokyo

A symposium on food security and the contribution of sustainable fisheries was held in Tokyo recently under the joint sponsorship of the Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) and the Beneficiaries of the Sea Coalition, a fisheries conservation non-governmental organization (NGO).

At the symposium, also supported by the Fisheries Agency of the Japanese Government, active discussion took place regarding issues such as the role of fisheries in food security and future tasks that the fishing industry should undertake.

In a keynote speech on the contribution of fisheries to food security, Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), reviewed the present state of fisheries and aquaculture as well as the production and utilization of marine fishery resources. Nomura discussed some of the issues currently facing fisheries and aquaculture seen in the light of food security.

He expressed the hope that the Japanese fisheries system, in which the administrators are closely communicating with fishers and the actual state of fishers is well-known by the administrators, will be applied internationally as well.

Nomura told the audience that 47% of the world's overall fisheries and aquaculture production in 2006 came from aquaculture.

Noting that the proportion of aquaculture in fisheries production has been growing from year to year, he noted that whether aquaculture will keep growing in the years ahead is essential in terms of food security. Production from marine wild fishery resources has remained almost unchanged during the past 10 to 15 years, he added.

Unless aquaculture production is expanded while managing the stocks of excessively exploited fish species, mankind will not catch up with the world demand for food by 2050.

As issues facing the contribution of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture to food security, Nomura enumerated on those such as the harmony between utilization and conservation, the reinforcement of fisheries management systems and management policies, and promoting the participation of developing countries in the efforts of resource conservation around the world.

Specifically, he pointed out that a balance



Photo by courtesy of OPRT

should be kept between the FAO and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). There is a need to address some living species from both their biological protection and their utilization as food. To achieve this balance, international organizations should cooperate among themselves.

Further, changes are needed in fisheries management policies around the world. These changes might include the termination of "production-first" policies in which fishers tend to compete with each other to catch as much of a resource as they can. In connection with this issue, multilateral approaches are needed to determine the desirable state of fisheries management, he said.

At the same time, the perspective from fishers should not be overlooked. There is a need to introduce a fishing right system that is accepted from the standpoint of both resource conservation and harvesting, avoiding confrontation between differing positions as much as possible. It is also important to establish a system in which consumers can contribute to sustainable fisheries through eco-labeling systems.

For the future, there is a need to promote fisheries management policies, taking into account the conservation and utilization of marine living resources, the conservation of ecosystems, and the possible impact of aquaculture on the environment as well as the effects of resource management on the livelihoods of fishers, Nomura said.

The speech was followed by panel discussions including administrators, academics, fishers and consumers, on the importance of fisheries from the perspective to vitalize fisheries in Japan.

MEL Japan News

Promotion of sustainable fishing -- keywords to MEL Japan eco-labeling scheme

Following Mr. Nomura's speech at the symposium on food security and contribution of sustainable fisheries, JFA Executive Managing Director Toshinori Saito explained the objectives of the Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL Japan) system, which the JFA is promoting as the secretariat.

Saito observed that, while fish consumption is on a gradual decline in Japan, demand for seafood is expanding in other parts of the world. It will become increasingly realistic that seafood will support the burgeoning world population in the future, and that seafood will come to assume a greater value as an international trade commodity.

He warned, however, that the excessive use of fishery resources is now taking place around the world, posing the risk of making their sustainable use by later generations difficult.



It is against this background that MEL Japan was introduced not only as a slogan for the sustainable use of seafood but also as a means to promote cooperation for achieving the proper use of fishery resources among all stakeholders involved: producers, distributors, consumers, administrators and researchers.

Notably, under the Japanese-type fishery management system in which fishers jointly manage fishery resources, MEL Japan will support and encourage their voluntary efforts to achieve sustainable use.

As specific features of the system, Saito emphasized (1) that MEL Japan is in line with the guidelines for fishery eco-labeling established by the FAO to satisfy international criteria; (2) the excellent fishery management system of Japan will be respected and utilized; (3) a certification body, and a council and auditing body will be established to ensure that the examination and certification for the use of ecolabels be carried out equitably and objectively; (4) the costs for certification shall be restrained to a minimum possible level so that those who pursue the sustainable use of fishery resources can participate in the ecolabeling system; and (5) the system shall be reviewed every two years.

In closing his remarks, Saito called for cooperation among producers, distributors and consumers so that the MEL Japan eco-labeling system, which is aimed to promote sustainable fishing, will be accepted throughout Japan.

Little clam fishery in Aomori applies for MEL Japan certification

JF Jusan Fisheries Cooperative Association in Aomori Prefecture, located in northern Honshu (the main island of Japan), has recently applied for MEL Japan production-stage certification for its *corbicula japonica* (little clam) fishery in Jusan Lake.

In making the application, the association emphasized that it has been striving to keep this fishery sustainable under a comprehensive management system.

Specifically, the association said the fishery is carried out April 10-July 10 and August 21-15, with the period from July 10 to August 20 set as a closed season. Other established regulatory measures include closed areas, operating time and catch limitations, an anti-poaching system, and surveys on stock size and the environment.

Upon receiving the application, the MEL Japan Secretariat initiated local surveys and the examination of documents for certification of this fishery.

The MEL Japan scheme is designed to certify fisheries coping actively with the conservation of resources and their ecosystems with the aim to encourage and promote sustainable fishing practices.

Topics

DHA in fish is effective in preventing disorders in children

A symposium on children's growth and development and fish nutrition was held in Tokyo on October 27 under the joint sponsorship of

the JFA and other organizations.

About 200 people from fishing companies, food companies, and hospitals, including nutritionists, attended the symposium.

Prof. Toshiaki Shimizu of the Medical School of Juntendo University delivered a keynote speech under the theme: "Does fish make smart children? Child's nutrition should start from pregnancy."

In his speech, Prof. Shimizu emphasized that docosahexanoic acid (DHA) is necessary for fetuses and babies immediately after birth. He said that it is very important for pregnant and lactating women to eat fish for the development of a child's brain because DHA functions to reduce the rate of occurrence of disorders after the birth.

Three Sea Shepherd activists placed on wanted list

In September, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department placed three environmental activists of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society on an international wanted list through the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO) for interference in Japan's whaling activities in the Antarctic Ocean in February 2007.

On August 18, 2008, the Tokyo police obtained arrest warrants for the three men -- Ralph Koo, 41, and Jonathan Batchelor, 30, who are both U.S. nationals, and Daniel Bebawi, a 28-year-old Briton.

While anti-whaling activists have repeatedly disrupted Japan's research whaling activities since around 2000, this is the first time police have pressed criminal charges.

According to the police, on February 12 last year, Koo is suspected to have thrown smoking projectiles from the Sea Shepherd vessel onto the Kaiko Maru, a Japanese sighting vessel that was part of the Antarctic whale research program.

Batchelor and Bebawi are accused to have engaged in the prevention of the Kaiko Maru's navigation system by throwing ropes from their rubber boat to have them entangled with the Japanese vessel's propeller.

Also, on November 28, the police obtained an arrest warrant for Hester Barthels, a 41-year-old Dutch member of Sea Shepherd on suspicion of throwing smoking objects onto the Kaiko Maru. She will also be put on an international wanted list shortly.

Police suspect that there are at least two others who engaged in interference, and are now continuing investigations to identify those persons.

Answers to groundless criticism of Japan's research whaling by anti-whaling groups (3)

(continued from the previous issue)

4. Japan is recruiting its supporters at the IWC by buying votes using its official development assistance (ODA).

A. Such criticism is sheerly groundless because Japan is extending its overseas economic assistance to both anti-whaling countries and pro-sustainable use countries alike. It is an insult to developing countries receiving Japan's fisheries assistance. Countries in the Caribbean region, for example, are expressing their anger against such slanderous remarks.

5. Japan should not go to the Antarctic Ocean to catch whales. Japanese whaling should be limited to its exclusive economic zone.

A. We believe that whales are valuable food resources for mankind. Given the prospect of future stringent food shortages in the world, abundant marine resources should be utilized for mankind with utmost care. Living resources, such as whales, are renewable. If we continue to use them within their renewable capacity, the resources will never deplete. The Antarctic is a treasurehouse of whale resources. Japan believes that to continue research on the whale resources in this area will contribute to the solution of the food problem facing mankind.

Furthermore, increasing doubts have been cast on the possibility of boosting food production on land because of such problems as soil contamination and water shortage. Therefore, the sustainable use of marine living resources, whether they are in distant-waters or near-shore areas, will come to assume a greater importance in future. It is based on this perspective that Japan is carrying out its whale research catch programs not only in its near-shore areas but also in the Antarctic. To limit the research only to the exclusive economic zone and abandon any research effort in the Antarctic goes against the promotion of the principle of sustainable utilization of marine living resources.