

Japan Fisheries Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

Japan Seafood Show

Visitors to the 11th Japan International Seafood Show top 30,000

More environment-related businesses showed interest in the Expo

The Japan Fisheries Association organized the 11th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo at the Tokyo Big Sight on July 22-24. The show, in which 400 companies both from Japan and overseas participated, attracted 31,165 visitors during the three day session, topping 30,000 for the first time in the history of the expo, and largely surpassing the 26,882 visitors last year.

By day, the number of visitors was 9,820 on July 22; 10,516 on July 23; and 10,829 on July 24.

In retrospect, the first international show was held in 1999, with 300 companies displaying their products and technologies. The target at that time was 20,000 visitors.

This goal was achieved during the fourth expo in 2003. At the fifth show in 2005, a total of 450 firms attended, with around 26,000 visitors.

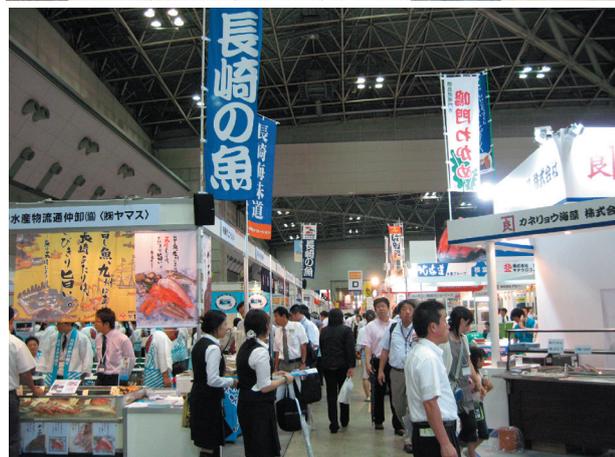
Since then the target level of visitors was raised to 30,000, but actual numbers stayed on the order of 20,000 for some years that ensued.

This year, the number of exhibitors decreased in the wake of the economic recession, while, by contrast, the number of visitors showed a drastic increase. Kazuo Ide, president of Exhibition Technologies Inc., which served as the Secretariat of the exposition, explained: "It seems that more people visited the show in the hope of getting some hints in the midst of the present economic downturn where sales of seafood are slumping. For instance, many inquiries came from high-ranking officials of supermarkets and eat-out establishments. Also there was a rising interest from environment-related businesses in aquaculture and sea cleaning technology."

In addition, the exhibition of fishery aquaculture technology was expanded this year. A total of about 20 exhibitors displayed their state-of-the-art technologies, including the Fisheries Research Institute of Kinki University in Wakayama Prefecture, western Japan, which was the forerunner in the development of full-cycle tuna farming technology.

This time there were a number of exhibitions of land-based aquaculture technology. They included the world's first indoor shrimp production system by means of closed-cycle-type aquaculture by I.M.T. Co. from Tokyo; the Bio-Reactor System, a water processing plant by KM Environment Technical Laboratory Co. from Iwate Prefecture, northern Japan; and a system to circulate water inside aquaculture ponds as well as aquaculture facilities using that technology by Aqua Tech Japan Co. from Tokyo.

Reflecting the rising Japanese food boom overseas, the Sushi Expo, which was held concurrently with the International Seafood Show, also attracted the attention of many visitors. The Sushi Expo, the third in an annual series, included a variety of merchandize related to sushi, such as sushi robots, rice, vinegar, wasabi (Japanese horseradish), gari (slices of ginger pickled in sweetened vinegar), and Japanese tea.



JFA New President

Shirasu named new JFA head

The Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) elected Toshiro Shirasu as its 20th President at an Extraordinary General Meeting on September 1, following the resignation of his predecessor Isao Nakasu.

Shirasu, born in Tokyo in 1951, graduated from the Law Faculty of the University of Tokyo in 1974, and the same year joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (later to become the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries).

In August 2006, he was appointed as Director-General of the Fisheries Agency and in September 2007 became Administrative Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. He retired from the Ministry in September 2008. His favorite pastime is oil painting.



Seafood exports

Japan set to promote exports of seafood

TV commercials and programs will be presented overseas

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will broadcast TV commercials and programs to introduce Japanese seafood in North America and Asia. This will be carried out as part of the Ministry's project to introduce Japanese cuisine and foods overseas and promote exports. TV commercials will be aired for one month in December in the United States and Canada, and in January and February in East Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania. A special TV program introducing Japan's cuisine is also expected to be presented in November 2009-March 2010 in the United States, and in December in Hong Kong.

The project is designed to convey the attractiveness of Japanese food and food materials overseas, in a bid to promote exports of Japan's farm and fishery products by expanding the sphere of consumers fond of Japanese products.

Up to now, the Ministry has been circulating publicity materials on Japanese cuisine through the Japanese government's overseas offices. This will be the first attempt to publicize Japanese food materials using overseas televised media. Besides seafood, the Ministry will produce commercials on Japanese fruit mainly targeting Asian countries.

Commercials on seafood will be broadcast to ordinary families through CNN Headlines in North America and CNN Asia in Asian countries. In the United States, broadcasting at major airports is also planned.

The major focus of the seafood commercials will be the introduction of farmed yellowtail. The Ministry is now working on the details. A Ministry official said: "Aquaculture products are suited for export because they have little impact on the environment and can

be supplied stably. We hope to publicize the quality, safety and tastiness of well-managed farmed yellowtail, presenting it in brief commercials in an easy-to-understand way using images." The timing of broadcasting was set to coincide with the season when consumption becomes active both in North America and Asia.

In the TV program, the Ministry will deploy an overseas TV crew specializing in food culture, and send it to producing places for filming.

In the United States, Japanese food will be presented in a public broadcasting service program titled "Culinary travels with Dave," in which an actor travels worldwide in search of tasty foods. Two broadcasts will be made from November to March next year, with the possibility of repeated airings. The TV team has already visited Matsuyama and Uwajima in Ehime Prefecture, western Japan. Products such as farmed yellowtail and Japanese sake (rice wine) will be presented.

In Hong Kong, the program will be aired for four weeks through I-Cable (CS Channel), in which scallops and squid from Mutsu Bay and apples and other farm products from Tsugaru, both of Aomori Prefecture, northern Japan, will be introduced.

Bluefin Tuna at CITES

The Atlantic bluefin tuna issue should be resolved under ICCAT, not CITES

On October 14, Monaco formally presented its proposal to include Atlantic bluefin tuna on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Inclusion on Appendix I would mean a total prohibition of trade). As a result, this issue will be a formal agenda item to be discussed at the CITES Conference of Parties to be held in Doha, Qatar, in March next year.

In late July, Monaco circulated the draft proposal among member countries, calling for support and encouraging other members to become co-sponsors of the proposal. The reasons Monaco cited for presenting the proposal include: (1) the Atlantic bluefin tuna population has seen a drastic decline; and (2) the function of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) to conserve this stock is not adequate, as seen in the case where the exploitable amount has been decided without fully considering the advice of scientists.

Japan is opposed to Monaco's proposal for the following reasons:

(1) The Atlantic bluefin tuna does not meet the criteria for listing on CITES Appendix I, given the current status of the population;

(2) ICCAT should be primarily responsible for the conservation of Atlantic bluefin tuna and the management of its fisheries, with CITES playing a clearly different role; and

(3) ICCAT can further improve its fisheries management measures for the conservation of Atlantic bluefin tuna.

ICCAT will hold its annual meeting November 6-15 in Recife, Brazil.

Tuna Issue

Global fishing capacity for tunas is too high --RFMOs agree in their second joint meeting--

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The second Joint Meeting of Regional Tuna Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) was held in San Sebastian, Spain, from June 29 through July 3, 2009. A total of 50 member countries of the RFMOs participated, together with international organizations, such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The first joint meeting was held in Kobe, Japan, in January 2007, in which the Course of Actions was adopted to pursue, through cooperation among RFMOs, the solution to global issues such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities and overfishing capacity (i.e. the excessive number of fishing vessels). The second meeting intended to assess the progress of the Course of Actions and decide on the next steps to be taken with regard to the impending issues.

As a result, a number of issues were brought to light, as the case of further increase in the number of fishing vessels to the level not matching the actual stock level. When we focused on the central issue of overfishing capacity alone, we came to a renewed recognition that its solution was never easy. In what follows, a brief review of the results of discussion on the issue of overfishing capacity is given.

1) The catch of tunas around the world increased, while it generated IUU fishing activities

With respect to the overfishing capacity issue, it was stated explicitly in the Report of the meeting: "the participants agreed that global fishing capacity for tunas is too high, and that this problem needs to be urgently addressed." It was thus confirmed that overfishing capacity is an issue requiring immediate action. The seriousness of the overfishing capacity issue can be readily understood if we look at the rapid increase in tuna catch in the world in recent years.

Put otherwise, the world tuna catch had been around 500,000 tons in the 1950s, but expanded to exceed 4.2 million tons in 2007 and has continued growth to date. Notably, the world tuna catches showed a sharp increase since the 1990s. The main cause of this increase was obviously the presence of purse-seine fishing vessels that catch tunas as materials for canned tuna (See Figure on next page).

The Japanese government limited the number of its licensed large-scale purse-seiners to 35, to restrain the expansion of catch volume. There seems to be only a few countries that have taken a similar effective fisheries management measure.

Furthermore, in recent years, purse-seine fishing vessels are reinforcing their catch capability by using fish aggregating devices (FADs). However,

the FAD-based fishing method causes massive catch of small-size bigeye and yellowfin tunas, creating concern over the negative impact on their population. In point of fact, this issue was debated at the first joint RFMO meeting and the need to promote studies on technology to avoid catch of small-size tunas was incorporated in the Course of Actions.

According to assessment by scientists, major tuna resources have exceeded the population level necessary to maintain their sustainable production. Rigorous catch limits have been introduced for some species like Atlantic bluefin tunas and southern bluefin tunas. Under these circumstances surrounding the tuna resources, there is a strong likelihood that it would become extremely difficult at some point in the future to continue commercial tuna fishing, regardless of fishing methods, if the expansion of fishing capacity continues as it does now.

In face of this situation, each tuna RFMO is moving toward strengthening its catch regulations in a bid to help recover and preserve the tuna resources. But no improvement of the situation is likely even when catches are restrained if the underlying issue of overfishing capacity is left unattended. Rather, it could lead to IUU fishing practices, such as falsification of catch volume and negligence in reporting, as was seen in bluefin tuna farming in the Mediterranean. There is a need to make serious efforts to implement global measures to reduce tuna overfishing capacity expeditiously.

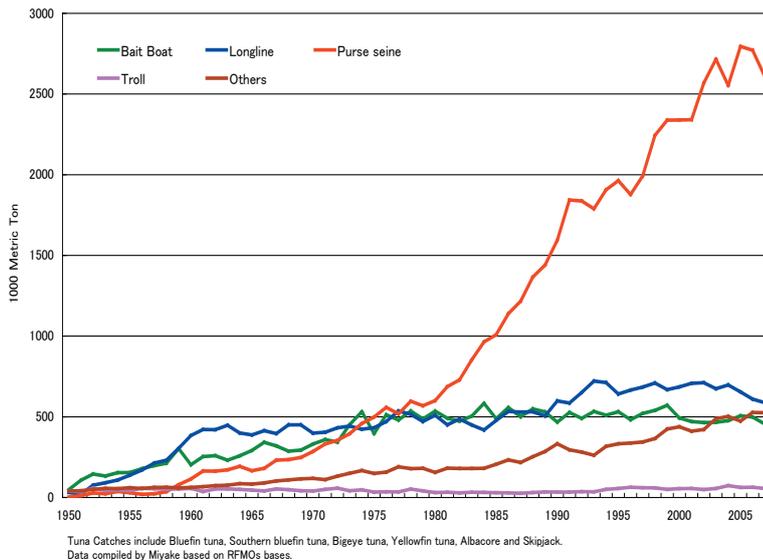
2) Difficulty in introducing concrete measures

It is to be noted that there was the position of developing countries, such as Pacific island countries, in the background of the failure for the RFMO joint meeting to reach an agreement toward introduction of the concrete measures for the solution of the issue of the overfishing capacity. The Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), which represents 17 countries and territories in the South Pacific, stressed in its opening statement "the need of full recognition of the special requirements of developing states, particularly small island developing states." It said that "RFMOs should find ways to implement Articles 24 to 26 in the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement." Thus the FFA called that the introduction of capacity limit may not block the development of those countries domestic fisheries.

In the end, it was stated in the Course of Actions, adopted at the meeting: "This problem should be addressed in a way that does not constrain the access to, development of, and benefit from sustainable tuna fisheries, by developing coastal States, in particular small island developing states, territories, and States with small and vulnerable economies."

As a result, it was decided that the management of fishing capacity would be addressed at an international

World Major Tuna Catches by Fishing Gears (1950-2007)



Workshop in the future, and no concrete steps were introduced at this meeting, such as freezing and restraint of expansion of the global tuna fishing capacity.

Needless to say, the international society should recognize and respect the special requirement of developing countries. But, at the same time, the situation where global scale management of fishing capacity has become crucial should not go unnoticed in order to ensure sustainable utilization of tuna resources. This need may be appreciated easily if we direct our attention to what now is going on in the western and central Pacific, as will be stated below,

3) Large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels are increasing rapidly in the western and central Pacific, causing an imminent threat to the sustainable use of tuna resources

At this joint meeting, the Japanese government reported that the number of large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels increased by 39 in the western and central Pacific during the past decade, and stressed the need to take expeditious actions to restrain fishing capacity. (A large-scale purse-seine fishing vessel catches 7,000 to 10,000 tons of tunas in a year.)

It is said that large-scale purse-seine fishing vessels having such a powerful fishing capacity have increased by 39 (20 of which being from developing island countries), and it is also said that further increase is projected in the future. If this situation is left unattended, it will certainly become difficult to ensure the sustainability of tuna resources in the western and central Pacific. To cite a case in point, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) has introduced a measure to reduce the catch of bigeye tuna in the area under its competence by 30% in three years from 2009.

If further expansion of overfishing capacity on tuna resources is not checked and resultantly the stock level goes down to the point where it can no longer support commercial catches, then developing countries may be compelled to terminate development of their tuna fisheries through which they intend to create a new export industry. In order

for the international society to help avoid such a consequence and respond to special requirement of developing countries, there should be a way to develop a compromise at any cost between "the willingness of developing countries to develop their tuna fisheries" and "the need for global restraint in fishing capacity." This task was entrusted to the aforementioned Workshop, but it seems a long way before an agreement can be reached under the present circumstances where the interests of nations are in a stark confrontation.

The other day, a fisheries expert reported that the yellow light is beginning to blink with regard to the catches of skipjack tunas in the western and central Pacific -- the stock that has been assessed as "robust" to date. At any rate, it seems to me that the situation has aggravated to the point where all the nations concerned have to take urgent actions to restrain

overfishing capacity, in particular that of purse-seine fishing vessels. We hope that this Workshop will develop its constructive proposal as expeditiously as possible. (As a part of the efforts in this direction, the members of OPRT from various countries have already agreed on not increasing the number of large-scale longline fishing vessels and have been implementing the measures toward that goal.)



MEL Japan News

Positive effects of MEL Japan certification scheme

--Crab Pot Association educates children on the importance of stock management--

The Sea of Japan Crab Pot Association (President: Masato Nishino) in Sakaiminato, Tottori Prefecture, Western Japan, that obtained the first Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL Japan) certification, sponsored a teaching session at Sakai Elementary School on June 19 this year to educate local children about the red snow crab fishery in the Sea of Japan.

The project was conducted with voluntary cooperation from fishermen and the Fisheries Section of Sakaiminato Municipal Office.

After the presentation on the ecology and outline of the fishery as well as the stock management that led to the acquisition of MEL Japan certification, a red snow crab was given to each of the 66 fifth graders of the school who participated in the event. The children cooked the crab using kitchen scissors and experienced the taste of the crab. The association says it is ready to accept further requests from other schools to sponsor similar teaching sessions, and the MEL Japan Secretariat is fully supportive of this initiative.

On another topic, the MEL Japan Secretariat held several meetings of its Technical Advisory Group during the past months with the aim to review the standards to examine its applicability to fisheries of broader range including enhanced fisheries.