

Japan
Fisheries
Association



NO.69, FEB. 2011

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

JFA President message

JFA is committed to promote MEL Japan scheme; will prop up Japan's seafood supply power and boost demand

In a New Year press conference, Toshiro Shirasu, president of the Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) stated that the JFA will promote its activities in line with the three major goals in 2011: (1) enhancing Japan's seafood supply capability, (2) expansion of demand for seafood, and (3) raising consumer awareness toward fishery resource management through the promotion of the marine eco-labeling scheme. Given below is a summary of his remark at the press conference.

(1) Enhancing seafood supply capability

The seafood supply-demand has undergone a drastic change in recent years. Demand expanded significantly outside Japan, and fish prices soared. The fish catch in Japan has been on a decrease, and Japan has not been able to procure adequate amount of imported seafood as Japanese traders were outfought by foreign competitors in the buying race. There is, so to speak, a concern for the hollowing-out of the seafood market in Japan. The world catch has hit the ceiling, and fisheries are facing the issues such as the global climate change and pressures for reduction of catch from conservationist organizations. Under these circumstances, we have not much room to expect fisheries production will increase sizably in the years ahead, and we foresee more intense competition over fishery resources among countries.

In contrast with overseas markets, fish consumption in Japan has been on a declining trend. There is a concern that we may not have adequate supply when we really need fish. The recent incident involving a restriction on imports of rare earth materials from China raised the issue of how important it is to procure natural resources in our own country. We need to enhance the self-sufficiency rate of agricultural and fishery products as a national policy.

In order to ensure stable supply of fishery resources, we need to secure fisheries workforce and fishing vessels. On the issue of workforce, we have made a significant progress as compensation

of fishers' income will be implemented under the fiscal 2011 national budget. But we are facing an urgent need to ensure availability of fishing vessels because more than 70% of the fishing vessels used currently in Japan are outmoded, being 20 years or older.



(2) Expansion of demand for seafood

There is no future for the industry that suffers from shrinking demand. There would be no growth in Japan's fisheries industry without increase in demand for seafood. Fishing companies, fish markets and regional governments have been making strenuous efforts to boost demand for fish in Japan. It is necessary to review these efforts from a comprehensive perspective to identify and correct any duplications and lacks so that we can cope with this issue more efficiently. In this respect, we may be able to learn from the successful cases of efforts made in Korea, Norway and other countries.

The key to expansion of demand lies in having children (who are the future consumers) eat more fish. We are also considering giving a greater emphasis on demand expansion at the Tokyo International Seafood & Technology Expo which we plan to organize this summer.

(3) Marine eco-labeling scheme

Japan is an advanced country in terms of resource management, as seen in its initiative to reduce the number of tuna fishing vessels in advance of other countries. It is crucial to step up our efforts in ecosystem conservation in order to ensure long-lasting consumption of seafood. We have obligations to take

sufficient heed to fisheries resources in our fishing activities.

Our Marine Eco-labeling Japan (MEL Japan) Scheme is an effective means to have such efforts of fishers widely understood by consumers. This scheme drew attention of participants at COP10 of the Convention of Biodiversity held last year in Nagoya, Japan. Currently six fisheries have been certified under the MEL Japan scheme. We are committed to increase the number of fisheries in the days ahead.

At the same time, we will act upon mass retailers and other sellers to adopt the marine eco-label on the products they market, and will educate the consumers on the importance of the marine eco-label.



MEL Japan News

MEL JAPAN RECEIVED 8TH APPLICATION

Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL Japan) has received application for Japanese sand lance and whitebait seine fishery in Setsu. The applicant, Setsu Boat Seiners Association, is based in Kobe city and the fishery targets Japanese sand lance and whitebait in Osaka Bay. This is the eighth application MEL Japan has received to date. Minamikayabe set-net fishery in Hokkaido, northern Japan, is expected to be certified before summer.

MEL Japan also plans to expand its promotional activities particularly in the distribution and retail sectors this year. Such efforts will include exhibition in trade shows including Foodex (Makuhari Messe, Chiba, March 1 to 4), one of the biggest food trade shows in Asia targeting buyers from all food and beverage industry sectors.

Sustainable use and conservation

Ex-FAO leader says Japanese coastal resource management is a model case of sustainable utilization

Mr. Ichiro Nomura, former Assistant Director-General of the Fisheries Department of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), delivered a lecture under the theme: "The situation of the world's fisheries and the role of FAO," at the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology on January 10. Nomura has been named adviser to the president of the university.

In the lecture, Nomura explained the present situation of fisheries and aquaculture in the world, by outlining the activities of the FAO's Aquaculture Department.

The world fisheries and aquaculture production in 2008 was 140 million tons, of which 110 million tons were for edible use. Production from marine and inland fisheries has approached its limit and remained level in recent years. The growth of aquaculture owes much to the development in China.

From the perspective of food security, it is forecast that additional 50 million tons will most probably be

needed in 2050 on the assumption that per-capita intake of seafood in the world will stay at the same level as present. To achieve this level, it is necessary to double the aquaculture production from the present level, although there are some issues to be resolved before this goal is realized, he said.

Regarding fisheries management, Nomura explained that the regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), will manage the resources throughout the world, and action plans and guidelines have been developed with respect to specific issues such as control of overfishing and illegal fishing.

He pointed out that sufficient frameworks necessary to implement effective fisheries management are already in place, but implementation and compliance has been inadequate. It seems that fisheries managers around the world have become somewhat overwhelmed by too many frameworks that have been developed.

Fisheries management will not succeed without the understanding and backing of fishers. The top-down approach is not appropriate. In Japan, management of coastal fisheries has been conducted at the initiative of fishers, centering on fisheries cooperative associations, and there are laws that guarantee the implementation.

This type of management, which does not exist in other parts of the world, presents itself as an excellent model case, in which fisheries are managed through the consensus of fishers. I believe Japan should make greater efforts internationally to let this system known widely as a case of success.

Nomura further touched on other issues, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), marine eco-labeling and marine protected areas.

Fisheries can not last long unless fishers seriously cope with the environmental issues, he said, emphasizing the importance of coexistence between sustainable use and conservation.

Regarding the future of fisheries, Nomura noted that it is important to deliberate on ways how to make fisheries profitable, achieve food security and ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Seafood campaign

Sushi Truck campaigns for Kyushu fish in central Tokyo

A fish diet promotion event using "Sushi Truck" was carried out in a square in front of the Tokyo Tower on Nov. 21, 2010, by volunteers from Saeki City in Oita Prefecture, Kyushu, Western Japan. Saeki, is facing the Bungo Channel that separates the western area of Shikoku and the eastern area of Kyushu, linking the Setonaikai Inland Sea with the Pacific Ocean. The area is well-known for its plentiful and variety of fish.

This was the first time for the campaign truck to visit Japan's main island of Honshu. In the event, local sushi was distributed free to the visitors. Other foods like seafood bowl and tempura were sold for a reasonable one-coin price of 500 yen. Local produces such as processed seafood, citrus fruit and shochu, a

traditional distilled liquor, were also offered for sale.

At 10:00 a.m. under the clear sky, many people formed a queue for 1,111 servings of sushi to be handed out on a first-come-first-served basis. What attracted the eyes of the visitors was the loading platform of the truck which was turned into a sushi kitchen. When the wings of the truck load were opened, you could see a counter, where a cook was busily preparing sushi. Usually, visitors go up to the platform to eat sushi, but this time there were too many people to be accommodated in that space, so sushi plates were carried down from the platform to be distributed to the people waiting outside.

One plate had three pieces of sushi, consisting of fresh horse mackerel, yellowtail and sea bream from the Bungo Channel. The number "3" was chosen after 3,333 meters, which is the height of the Tokyo Tower. All the sushi was consumed in a very short period.

Sushi eating was followed by a variety of stage shows, including local folk dances, songs, drum performance and live music to entertain the visitors for the rest of the day. Especially, the local folk dance, "Yosakoi Soran," was performed by female students from Seitoku University who wore traditional "happi" livery coats, with a dyed slogan saying "Let's eat healthy fish!"

Also a banner saying "Let's eat fish" was hoisted between the truck and the stage, and numbers of booths were set up to display and sell Saeki's local cuisines and other specialties, including beautiful shells, fried surimi (fish paste), soup, pickled fish and noodles at reasonable prices. Notably, "mackerel pasta," a new locally-developed menu, attracted visitors' special attention.

Sales were brisk amid lively atmosphere, with the staff having hard time catching up with the rush of orders.

As the day closed in a great success, Mr. Katsuya Doi, the initiator and chief organizer of the event, looked much relieved. Doi, president of a trucking company in Saeki, was engaged in transport of the catch from purse-seine fishing. He had a sense of crisis about decreasing fish catch year by year, diminishing number of fishermen, and decline of the town. He thought a major cause of the slump in fisheries was the decrease in fish consumption. So he began a campaign to promote fish diet, in his company's 25-ton trucks with a slogan of "Let's eat fish!" not only in Saeki but elsewhere in Kyushu.



Further, in the hope to enliven fishermen and encourage the townsfolk to face the town's economic problems together, he opened a "Port Market" at an unoccupied factory building near the fish market to sell local fresh fish and cooked food in collaboration with his friends. He further introduced "Sushi-tora," a large engine-powered sushi stand, his second idea using a truck.

The concept was drawn from his hope to present what he calls the world's best sushi using superb fish fostered in the Bungo Channel where kuroshio current flows. Sushi-tora became well-known and popular in many places in Kyushu, where fish-related events were held.

The recent event in Tokyo was realized as this campaign was promoted by cooperative efforts of local fishermen, members of the chamber of commerce and industry, and non-profit organizations.

What Mr. Doi pursued was not only to publicize fish and sushi of Saeki but also to encourage consumption of seafood as a whole.

Topics

Japanese saury is gaining popularity in Vietnam

Vietnam's imports of Pacific saury from Japan have been increasing conspicuously in recent years, according to the Ho Chi Minh office of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Japanese saury having higher fat contents continues to enjoy high popularity in Vietnam. Last October, JETRO dispatched Vietnamese buyers to Nemuro, eastern Hokkaido in Japan, and they are now preparing to start full-scale trading shortly.

Saury exports from Japan to Vietnam showed a sharp increase to 4,808 tons in 2008 from only 284 tons in 2007. In 2009, exports further grew 9.4% to 5,258 tons.

Among importers of Japanese saury, Vietnam ranks the fifth, after Russia, Korea, China and Thailand. Saury, a species inhabiting the cold-water zone, is not harvested in Vietnam.

It is assumed that the popularity of saury was triggered in Vietnam when large quantities of frozen

saury were exported from Japan in 2008 after the strong landings in the fall of 2007.

Vietnamese people have had preference for freshwater fish, but as foreign foods and food culture were introduced, the popularity of fat-rich marine fish from northern countries is rising.

Exports from Japan in 2010 slumped, with 732 tons by September, probably because traders could not contract the volume they expected due probably to poor harvests in Japan and the strong yen. However, some importers say that Japanese saury is valued especially highly in Vietnam because it is richer in fat contents and tastier than saury from Australia and Taiwan.

In mid-October last year, JETRO sent three Vietnamese fish buyers to Nemuro, who visited processing plants and attended business meetings with local exporters. Negotiations are underway now with the target to import a bulk of fish, including saury and salmon head.

The type of fish that Vietnamese traders are considering importing is small-size saury, called "jami-samma," which are not so widely used locally. This means that fishers in Nemuro have found a new value to saury. Further, in Vietnam, salmon heads came to be used recently as the stock for soup, which also means that Nemuro has found a new commercial value for this part of fish.

Expectation is high in Nemuro for stepped up exports in 2011.

Other than Vietnam, Japanese fish, such as mackerel, have been exported to countries that depend on fish for protein source, such as Egypt and Nigeria.

First vending machine to promote ocean protection introduced in Tokyo

The first beverage vending machine to promote fund-raising for protecting oceans was installed in the campus of the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology on November 26, 2010.

The project was initiated by the Committee to Promote Ocean Protection Campaign, with the cooperation of Asahi Calpis Beverage Co. The committee is headed by Mr. Ikuhiro Hattori, president of the JF-Zengyoren, a nationwide federation of fisheries cooperative associations.

The vendor has a sticker saying "The can you bought protects the oceans," and anyone who buys beverage from it will automatically donate one yen



per can to the committee.

The committee will use the fund for the activities to protect the oceans, such as the programs to release juvenile fish and shellfish into the sea, and revitalize the seaweed beds and tidelands.

Meeting on sustainable use of whales held in Shimonoseki

The Fisheries Agency organized, jointly with the Foreign Ministry, a meeting on sustainable utilization of whales in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture, western Japan, Nov. 30-Dec.1, to promote exchange of views among countries supporting sustainable use of whales and to develop the common future plans. The meeting was participated in by 24 countries and territory. The Japanese delegation was headed by Jun Yamashita, then-Deputy Director-General of the Fisheries Agency.

The agency said that participants engaged in candid exchange of views regarding the policy toward the coming annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission and confirmed that they will continue to get united in the days ahead.

Editorial

Stop the terrorist attack to legitimate scientific research whaling program

Scientific research on the whale stock is now being conducted in the ice-cold waters of the Antarctic. This research is recognized by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as a legitimate activity pursuant to the provisions of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and the findings from the research have been valued highly by the IWC Scientific Committee.

However, a radical conservation organization has been repeatedly engaged in attacks against the Japanese research vessels in an attempt to halt the research by violence.

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) has issued a statement calling for sensible acts by the international community at large and the countries concerned in particular. In the statement ICR strongly condemned the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) and its continued dangerous and violent actions against Japan's whale research vessels in the Antarctic.

"We call on all related countries including the Netherlands which is the Steve Irwin flag state and Australia, the Gojira provisional flag state and the virtual home port of these vessels, to stop condoning the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society violent actions and to take every means available to restrain them. Further, we strongly request that these countries deal with the SSCS criminal actions in a strict and objective manner according to their international obligations," the ICR said.

Will the international community continue to tolerate this wrongful violence? Will no one act to save the people who are exposed to blatant violence?