

Japan
Fisheries
Association



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Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry

Food Taipei 2012

JFA chief makes appeal on Japanese seafood at Taiwan food fair

The Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) participated in Food Taipei 2012, one of the major food fairs in Asia this year, held in Taiwan's capital on June 27-30.

The fair, the 22nd of its kind, was organized by the Taiwan Trade Center. Companies not only from Asia but also from the United States, Europe and the Middle East exhibited, attracting numbers of buyers from various regions of the world.

Along with food, a wide range of food-related products, such as food additives, tableware and food processing devices, were displayed.

The participation by Japanese exhibitors at the Japan Pavilion was orchestrated by the Interchange Association-Japan, a window organization to promote relations with Taiwan, with which Japan has no formal diplomatic ties.

At this show, the Interchange Association specifically emphasized support of the regions hit hard by the great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in March 2011, by boosting exports of their seafood.

A total of 33 Japanese participants including the JFA publicized their seafood products and engaged in active business negotiations with visiting buyers.

The JFA team was led by its president, Toshiro Shirasu. As one of the speakers at a seminar on June 28, attended by about 100 people, including government officials and fisheries industry representatives, Shirasu delivered a speech on the damage of the East Japan earthquake and tsunami and the future of fisheries in Japan.

In his speech, Shirasu expressed special gratitude to the relief aid amounting to Y60 million delivered from Taiwan to the region's fisheries industry.

He also thanked the Taiwanese people and government for continuing their imports of Japanese seafood, despite the fact that many other countries stopped importing from Japan out of fear of radioactive contamination caused by the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.



Shirasu (center) making tour at the fair site

Shirasu emphasized that steadfast inspection is now being conducted in Japan over the fish from the contaminated area and explained that no seafood having radioactive substances exceeding the allowable standard are distributed in the Japanese market.

On the enormity of the damage of the disaster, he told the audience that the equivalent of Taiwan's coastline from north to south was assaulted by the great earthquake/tsunami, resulting in a loss of Y1.26 trillion, largely on the region's fisheries and related industries.

He also elaborated on the subsequent efforts of the Japanese people and the government to restore the region from the after-effects of the unprecedented natural calamity.

He called on foreign participants to continue supporting Japan's fisheries industry by buying Japanese seafood.

At its booth at the fair, the JFA distributed pamphlets to promote Japan's seafood exports--both in English and Chinese.

Commenting on the response of participants at the fair, Shirasu said, in an interview after the fair, that the Taiwanese people, who have built up a solid friendly

relationship with the Japanese, were generally appreciative of the situation in Japan after they heard our explanations. At the same time he also admitted there were some concerns lingering among participants over the nuclear pollution.

He said he was pleased to know that companies from the disaster-hit area who exhibited together with the JFA had favorable business talks with potential buyers, with local TV stations interviewing them and airing their comments and activities.

Shirasu sounded positive in further assisting the promotion of Japan's seafood exports, by taking part in similar international food fairs to be held elsewhere in the days ahead.

Japan International Seafood Expo

Japan Seafood Expo draws record number of exhibitors

The Japan Fisheries Association (JFA) organized the 14th Japan International Seafood & Technology Expo on July 18-20 at the Tokyo Big Sight.

During the expo, under the slogan "Let's eat more fish," a total of 583 companies participated with 814 booths, registering an all-time high, largely exceeding the 350 firms with 383 booths at the 13th expo last year. The number of visitors during the three-day period totaled 26,101, showing an increase from last year's 25,537.

Japanese Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Akira Gunji visited the expo as the first incumbent minister to do so, showing the government's interest in renovating Japan's fisheries.

Speaking on behalf of the organizer at the opening ceremony, JFA President Toshiro Shirasu stated: "About 800 days have passed since the occurrence of the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami in eastern Japan, and efforts toward rehabilitation and restoration continue in the disaster area. All the people engaged in fisheries throughout Japan are supporting these efforts. There is a long way to go before this undertaking bears

fruit, but I am glad to see we are witnessing steady progress."

"The theme of the expo this year is to encourage consumers to eat more fish. This reflects our wish to vitalize fisheries not only in the disaster area but throughout Japan, and through these efforts, stimulate the Japanese economy as a whole."

"This year's show has three distinct characteristics. One is that more than 40 enterprises from the disaster area are taking part in a special section of the expo. I wish all of you will see that the people from the area are making their utmost effort. They are producing high-quality products in spite of their hardship. This aspect should be adequately publicized so that these producers will find a larger number of new users for their products.

"Secondly, as our first attempt, we have invited in partnership with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) about 20 buyers from 12 countries in the hope to expand Japan's seafood exports. We would like to see that Japanese seafood gain consumer popularity not only in Japan but also in other parts of the world."

"Thirdly, we tried to make the seminars during the show more attractive. At present, the Fisheries Agency is trying to develop ways to expand fish consumption through new initiatives and flexible ideas by forming a team of young staffers. We would like to have such young members speak about their ideas. We will also make a presentation on the Marine Eco-label Japan scheme and efforts to comply with HACCP requirements overseas."

Representing participants from the disaster area, Mr. Yasuhiro Abe of Abecho Co. from Kesennuma thanked all those from various areas of Japan for their support and encouragement. He talked about the hard experience of resuming business and protecting employees' work in the face of mountains of tsunami debris. But fishermen in Kesennuma managed to resume landings of skipjack, by rehabilitating the fishing port and market. These efforts resulted in keeping Kesennuma as the No. 1 port of landing for skipjack this year. Seeing the city revitalized by the visits of fishing boats, he believes that the revitalization of fisheries will lead to a revival of the city as a whole.

In declaring the opening of the expo, Mr. Norio Hosomi, president of Nippon Suisan Kaisha, Ltd. (a JFA member company), stressed the need to reform the fish supply chain--from catch to consumer--amid declining fish consumption in Japan in contrast with the growing demand in other parts of the world.

During the three-day show, fishing and seafood-related companies--both from Japan and overseas--as well as regional governments and academic institutions exhibited their products and state-of-the-art technology and know-how in the areas of aquaculture, seafood processing, sushi making, sales promotion and packaging. A total of 43 companies participated from the disaster-hit area, appealing the need to restore regional fisheries.

Foreign exhibitors came from 13 countries and one territory, with about 90% of them from Asia. By country, Chinese companies topped the list with 36.2%, followed by 21.0% from Korea, and 11.0% from Vietnam.



East Japan Disaster

A Year After the East Japan Earthquake/Tsunami (Part II)

Fisheries restoration gradually underway in the disaster area

(This article continues from the previous issue)

The JFA's efforts for assistance:

The JFA made calls for assistance as one of the activities of the Relief Headquarters for the Disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, established by JFA immediately after its occurrence.

(1) Collection of Relief donations

The first step the JFA took after establishing the Relief Headquarters for the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami was the collection of donations. Contributions began arriving at the headquarters only two days after the JFA started the campaign thanks to speedy action. There was widespread knowledge among the general public that fisheries had been hit severely by the disaster because they saw fishing ports washed away by giant waves on TV and other media. Donations numbered 30 in the first week, exceeding 100 before the end of March worth more than Yen40 million. This quick reaction was by far beyond our initial expectation.

As of December 2011, the donations totaled 223 worth about Yen145 million--about Yen79 million from Japan and Yen66 million from overseas.

Overseas contributors included associations and organizations related to tuna and other fisheries in the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and Micronesia. We were surprised by the speed and amount of relief offered from Taiwan and the Republic of Korea. Notably, Mr. Wen-Jung Hsieh, President of the Taiwan Deep Sea Tuna Long-line Boatowners And Exporters Association, extended relief donations exceeding Yen40 million.

It should be noted that contributions were collected through each organization's campaigns and event activities. The donations were delivered directly to the local autonomies and public organizations in the disaster areas for use to promote the restoration of fisheries.

(2) Emergency relief goods

Upon knowing that the Fisheries Agency would send the ship Nisshin-Maru to the disaster area, the JFA called on its members for contribution of daily necessity, including food, for the people affected by the earthquake and tsunami, and immediately received various relief goods from its member organizations and companies. The goods were smoothly delivered to the disaster area.

Steps taken toward rehabilitation and restoration of fisheries

Resumption of landings

Soon after they recovered from the disaster's shock, many in the fisheries industry in the Sanriku region attempted to return their fish landing operations to normal, based on their conviction that "the restoration of the Sanriku region should start with the rehabilitation



Brisk saury landings at Ofunato, Iwate--a symbol of recovery

of fisheries." First, four tons of pollock were landed at the Miyako Fish Market in Iwate Prefecture on April 11, 2011. The resumption of landings was realized in one month after the tsunami as about 800 tons of ice remained intact, although ice making facilities were broadly devastated.

The first landings in Miyagi Prefecture took place on April 14, by a longline tuna fishing vessel at Shiogama Fishing Port. Shiogama, one of major landing ports for fresh tuna in Japan, subsequently saw landings of 120 tons of fresh bluefin tuna by purse-seine fishing vessels on August 21.

On June 28, fresh skipjack were landed at Kesenuma Fishing Port for the first time after the earthquake/tsunami. Landings at Kesenuma had been considered nearly impossible as the port had been totally damaged with the surrounding land subsided by 70 cm. Prompted by the enthusiasm of fishermen to realize landings as soon as possible, the 750m wharf was leveled up by the length of 250m by installing iron sheets as an emergency measure. In place of cold-store facilities, most of which had been swept away by the tide, cold storage and ice making facilities were build provisionally. Fish bait--mostly sardine--was not available as set-net fisheries were crippled, so every possible other measure was taken to provide bait, thereby bringing landings to reality. As a result of these efforts, Kesenuma managed to maintain the position of the top fresh skipjack landing port in Japan last year--for 15 years in row.

At Ishinomaki Fish Market in Miyagi Prefecture, the landing wharf was totally ruined, together with ice making plants and cold-store facilities. However, the fish market was reopened thanks to donations of freezing containers and other equipment. Squid jigging vessels and set-net fishing vessels landed a total of 31 tons of squid, flatfish and other fish, and auctions were conducted under provisional tents.

Radioactive inspection

The government says fish with above-limit radioactivity is not sold in the Japanese market

On June 10, the Fisheries Agency of the Japanese government held a briefing session for the press regarding the effects of radioactive substances and how to cope with the issue of contamination.

This session was apparently prompted by the fact that fish from Fukushima, where the crippled nuclear power plant was located, sold poorly in the market. Only 20 of 150 cases of skipjack landed on May 21 at Onahama, a fishing port in Fukushima Prefecture, were sold at Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market, with the price holding as low as ¥100 per kg.

Almost no radioactive substances were found in the fish, and the fishing ground was located around Hachijo Island, about 280 km south of Tokyo. The Fisheries Agency's aim was to establish accurate understanding of the situation among the public in general, and distributors in particular, with regard to what is believed to be a rootless negative rumor.

At the session, Masanori Miyahara, Deputy Director-General of the Agency, explained the results of monitoring surveys and the way to handle fish when the allowable radioactive level is exceeded. Miyahara stressed that no fishing operation is taking place in the area off Fukushima. The government's benchmark level for radioactivity was raised to 100 Becquerels (Bq)/kg, and it is a fact that fish having radioactivity above that level was found in the catch from some neighboring prefectures. However, the results of the monitoring surveys were made public in their entirety, and shipments of fish having a value in excess of the standard value are halted on a voluntary basis, and surveys have been stepped up for those species in which higher radioactivity rates were detected.

That said, Miyahara emphasized that the fish with radioactivity above the standard value are not distributed in the Japanese market.

What follows is a summary of Miyahara's explanation:

<Seafood and radioactive cesium>

On the sea surface, radioactive cesium moves gradually toward the seabed after being dispersed and diluted in massive amounts of sea water. While the water is cleaned, radioactive substances are accumulated on the seabed soil. For this reason, high radioactive values were detected in sand lance and whitebait, but the amount is decreasing now, while radioactive substances are appearing in other larger groundfish like flounder and flatfish.

In the inland waters, radioactive substances move to rivers and lakes by means of rain and snowmelt. Ultimately, those substances flow into the ocean or sink onto the bottom of lakes. Surveys need to be conducted in high-radioactive zones and lower reaches of rivers in those areas, considering the relations with the radioactivity amount on land.

Cesium 137 (one type of cesium) ingested by fish is

disposed through the gills and urine. The half-period for saltwater fish is about 19-84 days. That of freshwater fish is about 50-340 days, four times longer than saltwater fish because of osmotic pressure.

<Actual state of surveys on seafood>

The current monitoring surveys have been conducted based on the new allowable radioactive standard. They target major commercial species and the species having shown a level exceeding 50 Bq/kg in the past. The surveys are reinforced when the values approach the standard level or when such values are found in nearby prefectures.

Major species are selected, considering their habitat, fishing season and the results of surveys in neighboring prefectures. With regard to migratory species such as Pacific cod, yellowtail, skipjack and saury, surveys over extensive areas are being conducted.

<Steps to be taken when the standard value is surpassed>

Measures to be taken in case the value exceeds 100 Bq/kg are:

(1) Shipments of the species are limited in which the standard value is exceeded in two or more locations; landings of the species are stopped. Market participants at the landing ports are to ensure the effectiveness of the measure. Subsequently, a shipment limitation is lifted when the survey results show the levels below the standard value at three or more locations for one month before the end of the survey.

(2) When radioactive substances are found only in one location, shipments of the fish will be restrained voluntarily, and surveys will be tightened to determine the trend accurately. The restriction will be lifted when it is ensured that the radioactive level stays below the standard on a stable basis.

MEL Japan News



4 new fisheries certified under MEL Japan

As of Oct. 1, 2012, MEL Japan has certified the following 4 additional fisheries in this year, bringing the total number of certified fisheries to 17.

(1) **Large-scale Pacific Saury Fishery**; Certification holder: Kamata Fisheries Co., Ltd. (located in Iwate prefecture); Species: Pacific Saury (*Cololabis Saura*); Date: July 31, 2012; (2) **Small-type Set-net Fishery**; Certification holder: Fujimoto Gyogyo-bu (located in Hokkaido prefecture); Species: Flatfish (*Pleuronectiformes*), Trout (*Salmoninae*), Blowfish (*Tetraodontidae*); Date: August 27, 2012; (3) **Salmon Set-net Fishery**; Certification holder: Fujimoto Gyogyo-bu (located in Hokkaido prefecture); Species: Salmon (*Oncorhynchus*); Date: August 27, 2012; (4) **Japanese Whitebait Seine Fishery**; Certification holder: Aichi Prefecture Whitebait/Sand Lance Boat Seiners Association (located in Aichi prefecture); Species: Japanese Anchovy (*Engraulis japonica*) and Japanese Sardine (*Sardinops melanostictus*); Date: October 1, 2012