

**Japan  
Fisheries  
Association**

**ISARIBI**  
**漁火**  
**Fishing Fire**

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**Views and Opinions of Japan's Fisheries Industry**



**MEL Japan News**

## MEL Japan-labeled products promoted at prestigious Tokyo Department Store's fair

The number of fisheries certified under the Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL Japan) scheme has increased to 19. These include fisheries targeting a variety of species, such as skipjack tuna, alfonsino, corbicula clam, sand lance, stardust shrimp and snow crab. However, it has not been easy to boost the sales of certified products as some fisheries cater only to local consumption. It has thus been the wish of the MEL Japan Secretariat to publicize the bulk of certified products at one time in one place. But this wish has not been realized because it means additional financial burden on the part of MEL Japan product marketers.

It was then found that a MEL Japan Product Fair had been planned at the prestigious Mitsukoshi Department Store in the Ginza--the best known and fashionable shopping district in Tokyo. The organizer was Yoshikawa Suisan Co., which operates a fresh fish section in the department store.

The company had so far sold troll-caught skipjack, with an emphasis on that product being a MEL Japan product, at the Kochi Prefecture Fair held at Mitsukoshi late April last year. Because the MEL Japan label had not been so familiar with consumers at that time, the event did not have enough power to boost sales of the product. But the secretariat was told later that the MEL Japan label attracted the interest of some consumers.



A variety of MEL Japan products on display

This time, Yoshikawa Suisan, having experience in arranging a seafood sales section best fitted to a department store, proposed to Mitsukoshi to organize a MEL Japan product fair, thus making a breakthrough for the presentation of a variety of products at that event. Kenji Katagiri, assistant sales manager of Mitsukoshi's Food & Restaurant Business Section, observed: "Our department store has been looking for high-grade products that are safe and secure, and that can make a social contribution through sales. Those products should be the kind that cannot be dealt with easily by supermarkets. I believe MEL Japan-labeled products fully match with such conditions."

He further said: "What we are doing is to present the products with a future perspective,

rather than the kind of products that can be sold right now. I consider customers having such a perspective would react to the MEL Japan label. This time we placed a pre-notice for opening the fair in the catalog issued by the Food Section every month. From now, we will eventually publicize the products through flyers from time to time in the hope to make them our basic items."

The fair was conducted for two weeks from March 27 to April 9. Displayed during the fair were skipjack, spotted mackerel and alfoncino from Kochi Prefecture, corbicula clams from Jusan Lake, Aomori Prefecture, and snow crab from Sakaiminato in Tottori Prefecture. Stardust shrimp from Yui, Shizuoka Prefecture had been planned but unfortunately there was no delivery of the products at the time of the fair.

Atsushi Fukui, head of the Ginza store of Yoshikawa Suisan, noted that "the customers, who bought skipjack at the Kochi Fair last year, visited our section again. To customers who were interested in the MEL Japan label, we tried to explain the fishing methods so they can better understand the intent of the scheme. But our customers rather give priority to high-quality products than labeling. We would like to match good taste with the MEL Japan label."

## Aid from Alaska

### Alaskans donate \$375,000 to aid Japanese fishermen

#### 10 tsunami recovery projects funded

Japanese fishermen are still recovering from the effects of the March 2011 tsunami, but the task has become a little easier thanks to Alaska seafood processors and fishermen's 2012 donations totaling more than \$375,000.

The Alaska Fishing Industry Relief Mission, the Juneau, Alaska-based organization that initiated the relief fund shortly after the tsunami devastated Northern Japan fishing communities, coordinated the donations. According to the organization, Seattle-based Unisea, American Seafoods and Glacier Fish Co. encouraged donations from the vessel, plant and office employees, and then matched the contributions.

Bering Sea crab and groundfish fleets added major donations collected from vessels and

skippers, including a fundraiser in Hawaii featuring fishermen from Discovery Channel's popular reality show "Deadliest Catch." In total, more than 190 fishing and processing industry participants made contributions to help northeastern Japan's fishing industry rebuild its fishing and processing infrastructure.

AFIRM says 100 percent of the money collected goes directly to relief efforts with zero administrative overhead. The 2012 donations will fund 10 projects that will aid the Northern Japan fishing fleets' recovery.

The trick, says United Fishermen of Alaska Executive Director Mark Vinsel, AFIRM's secretary-treasurer, is to get the most out of the donations. "We only send money to things that are tangible projects."

Vinsel says Linda Ohama, a Vancouver, British Columbia-based filmmaker who volunteered her services, proved instrumental to finding the best projects. Ohama, who traveled to the region, helped identify opportunities to help, and translated the Japanese fishermen's requests.

--Linc Bedrosian

(Reprinted from the National Fisherman, February 2013)

## Radioactive survey

### Surveys on radioactive substances continue steadily

Immediately after the accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Co. Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in the wake of the great earthquake and tsunami in eastern Japan in March 2011, the Fisheries Agency of the Japanese Government launched monitoring surveys on radioactive substances in fishery products in Japan, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, related prefectural governments and industry organizations. The basic goal the agency upheld was to ensure a stable supply of safe food to the Japanese people.

A framework was built so as to prevent market distribution of the products having radioactivity in excess of the benchmark level through restriction on shipments. Accordingly, the seafood now distributed in the market can be said to be safe from contamination. But, what guarantees the safe distribution of seafood on a continuous basis is the steady monitoring surveys.

Masanori Miyahara, Deputy Director-General

of the Fisheries Agency, says that surveys may have to be continued at least 10 years from now, or semi-perennially, depending on the course of event.

The benchmark value of radioactive cesium, which had been set at 500 becquerels (Bqs) on a provisional basis, was reduced to 100 Bqs from April last year--the most rigorous level in the world as compared with 1,200 Bqs in the European Union and 1,000 Bqs in the United States.

Although any value over 100 Bqs does not necessarily mean immediate risk, some suppliers and marketers have set their own standards that are even below the 100-Bq mark.

At any rate, the determination of a benchmark value is crucial, but it is very time-consuming to measure the contents of radioactive substances accurately.

The Fisheries Agency is now entrusting the implementation of the monitoring surveys to the research center of the Marine Ecology Research Institute in Onjuku, Chiba Prefecture, west of Tokyo.

In the surveys, edible parts are taken from samples collected from industry organizations in 14 prefectures. Those parts are processed into minced form and are sent to an analytical center for close analysis.

The work involves detailed processes, including identification of the fish species, size measurements, data input and making samples. An average 30 to 40 samples have to be analyzed in a day---on an exceptional day as many as 100 samples are processed. The work is carried out with the help of 27 part-time workers. The results of the surveys are made public in their entirety on the Fisheries Agency's website.

## International exchanges

### **Russian fisheries leader exchanges views with JFA head on bilateral fisheries relations**

**O**n March 3-9, 2013, Mr. Yuri Kokorev, then President of the All-Russia Association of Fisheries Enterprises, Entrepreneurs and Exporters (VARPE), visited Japan to survey the situation of fisheries in Japan.

Mr. Kokorev paid a courtesy call on Toshiro Shirasu, President of the Japan Fisheries Association (JFA), on March 4 at the JFA office in Tokyo to exchange views on Japan-Russia fisheries relations and seafood consumption trends in Japan.

Both leaders reconfirmed the need for cooperation and agreed to continue the current cooperative relationship in the years ahead.

VARPE, a private-sector fisheries organization like the JFA, is a member of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA), of which the JFA is also a member. As Shirasu and Kokorev had already been acquainted with each other through ICFA meetings, the exchange of views was carried out in a friendly atmosphere.

After the meeting, Kokorev flew to Hokkaido, where he met with high-ranking officials of the prefectural government and the Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Associations. He actively made tours of fisheries sites in Hokkaido, including salmon hatcheries.

In a later development, Kokorev stepped down as president at the VARPE annual meeting on March 26, where Mr. Alexandr Fomin, Deputy Head of the Russian Federal Agency for Fishery, was elected the new president.

Mr. Fomin is now serving as Russia's chief delegate to the Japan-Russia government-level fisheries negotiations. He will continue to serve his post at the Fisheries Agency, even after assuming the VARPE presidency.

### **JFA and Chile discuss promotion of seafood consumption**

**O**n March 26, a Chilean delegation visited the Japan Fisheries Association to exchange views on ways to promote seafood consumption in their respective countries.

The 8-strong Chilean team was headed by Undersecretary of Fisheries, Mr. Pablo Alberto Galilea Carrillo.

At a meeting in the JFA conference room, which followed the delegation's courtesy call on JFA President Toshiro Shirasu, Mr. Galilea stated that the "per-capita annual seafood consumption in Chile is only 7 kg, less than one tenth of livestock meat consumption which stands at 82 kg."

"The government," he continued, "has set a policy to expand domestic seafood consumption but the progress is slow. Major reasons are the long-established habit of eating meat in the



country and the relatively high prices for seafood as compared with those for livestock meat. In point of fact, the high price has been a major bottleneck in introducing fish menus into lunch services at schools and various organizations."

"As seafood exports and domestic seafood sales constitute Chile's major national industry, the government is striving to strengthen safety and hygienic controls over seafood as the top national priority," Galilea said.

JFA representatives explained the situation of seafood production and consumption in Japan as well as the issues related to the promotion of seafood consumption. The two parties recognized that the two countries are facing similar issues.

At the end of the meeting, the JFA presented for reference two booklets: "Fish Diet Network" and "Fish Handbook," which the Chilean delegates received with much interest.

Galilea expressed his hope to continue the exchange of information and views in the days ahead.

## Whaling

### Sea Shepherd blamed for holding the court order in contempt

**Makoto Ito**

**President, Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Ltd.**

The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) and Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Ltd. (KS) filed, on 11 February, 2013, a Motion for Contempt against the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) for breaching the Injunction Order issued by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on 17 December 2012.

The background leading to this action can be summarized as follows.

On 18 December 2011, the ICR and KS, along with the research vessels' Master, filed a lawsuit with the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington against the SSCS and its founder Paul Watson, seeking the court's ruling and Preliminary Injunction that would prevent the SSCS and Watson from engaging in activities at sea that could cause injuries to the crew and damage to the vessels conducting cetacean research in the Antarctic.



Sea Shepherd vessel (right) rams at a vessel in Japanese research fleet in the Antarctic (Photo: ICR)

The SSCS is based in Friday Harbor, Washington, on the U.S. Pacific coast.

On 19 March 2012, the court decided that it would not award the Preliminary Injunction.

Dissatisfied with the court's decision, the ICR and KS filed a Notice of Appeal seeking review by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals of the March 19 Order entered by the District Court.

In December 2012, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued its Order that it would preliminarily enjoin the SSCS, Watson and anyone "acting in concert with them" from physically attacking the Japanese research vessels or any person on them and from navigating in a manner that is likely to endanger safe navigation at sea. The Order also prohibited the SSCS and Watson from approaching the Japanese research vessels "any closer than 500 yards" when the research vessels are navigating on the open sea.

On 25 February, 2013, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued the Court's Opinion which reversed the District Court's original ruling on all counts, ordered the appointment of another judge by the District Court for the case, and maintained its Injunction Order "until further order" of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

However, the SSCS engaged in repeated harassment activities in the Antarctic in disregard of the Injunction. Accordingly, the ICR and KS filed a Motion for Contempt against the SSCS for breaching the Preliminary Injunction Order issued by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on 17 December 2012.

It is the sincere hope of both the ICR and KS that the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will issue a rigid ruling against the SSCS.